

CITY OF ROSEVILLE PLANNING & REDEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT DESIGN COMMITTEE MEETING NOVEMBER 16, 2006

Prepared by: Ron Miller, Assistant Planner

ITEM III-A: SIGN VARIANCE - 933 PLEASANT GROVE BOULEVARD - NCRSP PARCEL 21A (GRANITE COMMUNITY BANK) FILE# 2006PL-179 (V-000033)

REQUEST

The applicant, Granite Community Bank, requests approval of a Sign Variance to allow three wall signs where the existing sign program and Sign Ordinance allows two. Granite Community Bank is located in Pleasant Grove Pointe Center, which consists of seven shops/restaurant buildings with associated parking and landscaping totaling 49,500 square feet.

Applicant: Granite Community Bank N.A., Carol C. Garcia Owner: E.J. Plesko & Associates, Inc., Debbie Merrill

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Department recommends that the Design Committee:

- A. Adopt the three findings of fact for denial of the Sign Variance;
- B. Deny the Sign Variance;

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The applicant is not in agreement with Staff's recommendation. It is the applicant's position that the bank should be allowed three signs, with one sign per elevation. The applicant feels that a third sign on the west facing wall is necessary in order to provide adequate visibility for northbound and southbound traffic on Pleasant Grove Boulevard and to be consistent with other tenants in the building.

BACKGROUND

Location: Granite Community Bank is located in the Pleasant Grove Pointe Center at 933 Pleasant Grove Boulevard, between Roseville Parkway and Highway 65, within the North Central Roseville Specific Plan (NCRSP) (see Vicinity Map – Attachment 1). Granite Community Bank is located in the tenant space on the south end of Pad 4, and shares the building with three other tenants, including The Habit Burger Grill at the north end of Pad 4, which also has three elevations. The rear side of the tenant spaces of Pad 4 face Pleasant Grove Boulevard, with the storefronts facing the parking area east of the building. Because of Granite Community Bank's location on the south end of the building, the bank also has a wall on the south side of the building.

Permit History: On May 20, 2004, the Design Committee approved a Design Review Permit (DRP# 03-80) to construct Pleasant Grove Pointe Center, with seven (7) shops/restaurant buildings totaling 49,500 square feet. The shopping center is complete, with most tenant space occupied. The applicant has received approval for two wall signs to be placed on the south and east elevations. The sign on the south side of the building is visible from Pleasant Grove Boulevard (see Attachment 3), facing the Starbucks Drive-thru, while the sign on the east side of the building is visible from the parking lot. The third sign is proposed to be placed on the west elevation facing Pleasant Grove Boulevard.

EVALUATION

Staff has not identified a hardship or other unique circumstance that applies to the subject property that would warrant approval of a variance.

The subject property, Pad 4 of Pleasant Grove Pointe Center, is defined as a "freestanding pad building" in the Sign Ordinance. The Sign Ordinance has specific provisions for the number of wall signs that can be placed on a freestanding pad building within a complex. Section 17.06.230 A.3 states, "Freestanding pad buildings with two or more tenants are permitted two wall signs per tenant, provided the signs for each tenant are located on a different side of the building and face a public entrance, a public street or a parking lot."

The applicant has submitted a justification letter (Attachment 2) that requests an additional wall sign because of the lack of visibility from Pleasant Grove Boulevard, and to establish consistency with other tenants of Pad 4, who have signage on the west side of the building. Section 17.78.060(B) of the Sign Ordinance requires that three findings be made in order to approve a Sign Variance. The required findings for a Sign Variance are listed below in **bold italics**, followed by an evaluation.

1. There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applying to the land, building or signs involved which do not generally apply to other land, buildings or signs in the neighborhood.

The Granite Community Bank tenant space is located on the south end of the building on Pad 4, and has two wall signs that are currently approved. One sign is located on the east wall, the building's front, facing the parking area, and the other sign is on the south wall, adjacent to the Starbuck's drive-thru, and visible from northbound Pleasant Grove Boulevard. The Sign Ordinance allows freestanding building tenants to have two wall signs, with no exception for tenants occupying the end space of a building. While the Sign Ordinance restricts the quantity of signs, it provides flexibility on sign locations, providing that they are located on a different side of the building and face a public entrance, a public street or a parking lot.

The applicant has requested a third sign, stating that there is no view of signage from southbound Pleasant Grove Boulevard, and only limited visibility from the northbound direction. Additionally, the applicant states that the blank wall creates a void on the pad and is inconsistent with retail signage throughout the center. The proposed location of the sign on the west elevation is shown in Attachment 4.

Planning staff finds that the applicant has not demonstrated any unique or extraordinary circumstances to warrant approval of this request. It is not staff's position, however, to prevent the applicant from placing a sign on the west wall of their tenant space. The Bank is entitled to place a sign on the west wall, per the Sign Ordinance; however, the Sign Ordinance does restrict the number of wall signs for the tenant space to a maximum of two.

The Granite Community Bank tenant space enjoys an immediate frontage along Pleasant Grove Boulevard, with both the south and west walls of the tenant space visible from the street. Staff has visited the site and found no unique conditions at the site that impair passing motorists or pedestrians' views of the Granite Community Bank tenant space. In addition, Granite Community Bank could remove the southern sign and erect another sign on the west elevation, which would improve tenant identification consistent with the Bank's goals. The sign on the south side of the building is fully visible from the street and effectively identifies the tenant space on the south side of Pad 4 as that of Granite Community Bank (see Attachment 3).

The Design Committee denied a similar Sign Variance request from Fidelity Investments in August 2005. Fidelity Investments is located in Creekside Center at 1220 Roseville Parkway in the NCRSP area. The request was for a Sign Variance to allow a third wall sign because their tenant space had

more than two building fascias on which a sign could be placed. The project was denied based on similar findings as included in this report.

In 2004, the Design Committee also denied a similar request for the Union Bank project. The request was for a PSPP modification and Sign Variance for the Union Bank tenant located in the Highland Crossing Shopping Center at 1020 Pleasant Grove Blvd in the NCRSP area, approximately ¼ mile south of the subject site. The Union Bank is a corner tenant that requested approval of a third wall sign on the tower element of the building located on the fascia. The applicant for the Union Bank project believed that a building with three fascias should be allowed three signs and felt that their existing signs on the building did not provide adequate visibility, much like the case with Granite Community Bank. The request was denied based on similar findings as included in this report.

2. The granting of this variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of substantial property rights of the applicant.

As noted above, there are no unique circumstances that apply to this property, building, or tenant space. The building in which the bank is located enjoys unrestricted visibility from Pleasant Grove Boulevard and the parking lot. The site is not located in an area where there is a difference between the grades of the buildings and the adjacent streets. Further, the center is not in an area that is difficult to locate geographically.

The applicant believes, however, that a third sign is necessary, as the absence of a sign on the west wall "creates a void on the pad and is inconsistent with retail signage throughout the center." The applicant explains that the third sign will be "more pleasing to the eye to view consistent signage on the rear pads of Pleasant Grove Pointe Center."

In discussions with the applicant, staff suggested moving the existing sign from the south wall to the west wall and was advised that the dimension of the sign will not permit its installation on the west wall. To accommodate the applicant's need for a sign on the west wall, a new sign could be manufactured and installed on the west wall, and the sign on the south wall could be removed.

Staff does not find the granting of this Sign Variance necessary for the enjoyment of property rights by the applicant. Presently the tenant enjoys the same property rights relating to signs as other tenants with three building elevations within the center and throughout the City.

3. The granting of this variance will not materially and adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of persons in the neighborhood, nor be materially detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the neighborhood.

Staff has found that because the tenant enjoys full frontage with two walls visible from Pleasant Grove Boulevard, the third wall sign would be excessive and would allow for an unfair advantage over other businesses in the center and throughout the City. The proposed Sign Variance deviates from the number of wall signs allowed for a multi-tenant freestanding pad building. Given the number of other tenants with three building elevations in this center, and in other areas of the City, approval of this request creates the potential to allow a significant increase in the number of signs that may result in visual clutter. Staff examined potential tenant spaces in the center that this request may affect and found that an additional four tenants have circumstances similar to the applicant. Staff arrived at this figure by counting the number of tenants along Pleasant Grove Boulevard that have more than two fascias on which to apply signs. Buildings labeled as Pad 1, Pad 4, and Shops 1 fit this category. Please see the attached site plan (Exhibit A).

The Findings section of the Sign Ordinance, section 10.02.020(B), states, "where signs are not properly regulated, they contribute to visual clutter, confusion, aesthetic blight, and create an unpleasant impression." Staff feels that while one additional sign may not constitute visual clutter or be distracting to

motorists, the quantity of signs requested would not be consistent with other centers in the area. The increase in the number of signs would also result in the granting of a special privilege not enjoyed by other buildings, businesses or persons in the area or the City.

The special privilege would also create a competitive advantage to the applicant not shared by other buildings, businesses, and persons. The advantage has the potential to negatively affect the health and welfare of other businesses and persons in the area. The Sign Ordinance treats sign users uniformly, creating a level playing field for all sign users. Staff believes that the granting of this request would tilt the field unfairly, and conflict with past denials of similar Sign Variance requests. Staff is also concerned that an approval of this request may promote other similar requests that would result in a greater disparity in the application of sign standards.

CONCLUSION

Staff has been unable to identify any unique circumstances that affect Granite Community Bank. The standard for two wall signs for multi-tenant freestanding buildings is a long-standing standard that has been successfully applied to commercial centers throughout the City.

As discussed above, the Design Committee has denied requests similar to the Granite Community Bank request in the past. These projects were denied based on the same evaluation and findings as described in this report.

The denial of the Sign Variance for Granite Community Bank will maintain a level playing field for other businesses and sign users within the City. Given the goals of the Sign Ordinance, and past Design Committee actions and direction on sign variances, staff cannot support the current request. The Sign Variance would, in fact, grant a special privilege not enjoyed by other properties in the NCRSP, and the City of Roseville.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15311(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, which exempts on-premise signs.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Department recommends that the Design Committee take the following actions:

- A. Adopt the three findings of fact for denial of the Sign Variance NCRSP Parcel 21A, Granite Community Bank File #2006PL-179 (V-000033):
 - For the reasons cited in the staff report, there are no exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applying to the land, building or signs involved which do not generally apply to other land, buildings or signs in the neighborhood.
 - 2. For the reasons cited in the staff report, the granting of this variance is not necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of substantial property rights of the applicant.
 - 3. For the reasons cited in the staff report, the granting of this variance will materially and adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of persons in the neighborhood, and be materially detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the neighborhood.
- B. Deny the Sign Variance NCRSP Parcel 21A, Granite Community Bank File #2006PL-179 (V-000033).

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1. Vicinity Map
- 2. Applicant's Justification Letter
- 3. Photograph of Building Looking North from Pleasant Grove Boulevard
- 4. Photograph Depicting Proposed Sign Location

EXHIBITS:

- A. Site Plan
- B. Building Elevation Sign Specifications

Note to Applicant and/or Developer: Please contact the Planning Department staff at (916) 774-5276 prior to the Design Committee meeting if you have any questions on any of the recommended conditions for your project. If you challenge the decision of the Commission in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues which you or someone else raised at the public hearing held for this project, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Director at, or prior to, the public hearing.