

FINDINGS

(As amended by the City Planning Commission at its meeting on October 22, 2020)

A. The requested Sign District is in conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the City of Los Angeles General Plan.

The Grand Sign District is in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent, and provisions of the General Plan. In addition, the Grand Sign District is consistent with and implements policies in the Central City Community Plan, a component of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, and the Bunker Hill Specific Plan, as explained below:

Framework Element. The General Plan Framework sets forth a citywide comprehensive long-range growth strategy and defines citywide policies regarding such issues as land use, housing, urban form, neighborhood design, open space, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, and public services. The Framework Element denotes the Project area as a “Downtown Center”, which is identified as an international center for finance and trade that serves the population of the five-county metropolitan region. Downtown Los Angeles is the largest government center in the region and the location for major cultural and entertainment facilities, hotels, professional offices, corporate headquarters, financial institutions, high-rise residential towers, and regional transportation facilities. The Downtown Center is generally characterized by a floor area ratio up to 13:1 and high-rise buildings.

The Sign District involves tailored signage including Wall signs, Projecting signs, Monument signs, Advertising Kiosks, Window signs, Digital Displays, on- and off-site advertising and other standard sign types. The Sign District would enhance a sense of identity by concentrating project identification signage along visible corridors, providing functional way-finding signage and directories, and activating the central on-site plaza by incorporating a variety of sign typologies. As such, the Sign District would support the mix of housing and employment to the Downtown Center area, and the objectives of the Framework Element.

General Plan Land Use Designation. The Project Site is located within the Central City Community Plan, updated, and adopted by the City Council on January 8, 2003. The existing Plan designates the Site for Regional Center Commercial land uses with corresponding zones of CR, C1.5, C2, C4, C5, R3, R4, R5, RAS3, and RAS4. The Regional Commercial land use designation is subject to Footnote No. 3 which restricts parcels to Height Districts 3 and 4 and establishes a maximum FAR of 6:1 unless a transfer of floor area is requested, which would then permit a transfer of floor area up to 10:1 or 13:1, respectively. On September 19, 2007, the City Council approved a zone change for various properties (The Grand Avenue Project as a whole) including the Project Site from R5-4D to the [T][Q]C2-4D Zone. In the course of the legislative action, the City Council found that the zone change and zone establishment were consistent with the proposed land use designation and footnotes and were in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the General Plan as reflected in the adopted Community Plan. The Project Site is currently zoned [Q]C2-4D and the proposed Sign District would result in a zone change to [Q]C2-4D-SN to establish the Grand Avenue Sign District over the entire site. As such, the Sign District would be consistent with the existing land use designation for the Site.

General Plan Text. The Central City Community Plan (Plan) categorizes the Framework’s Downtown Center into various uses and defines the Project Site as Regional Center Commercial. The Plan guides the development and improvement of the community to meet existing and anticipated needs and conditions, as well as balance growth and stability. Further, the Plan identifies the Grand Avenue Cultural Corridor as an arts, culture, and architectural asset “that promotes pedestrian use and provides a unique and striking environment that links together the important civic, cultural, and institutional uses and facilities concentrated there.”

The Plan further discusses the need to create a pedestrian friendly environment and to implement the streetscape improvements guided by the Bunker Hill Specific Plan.

Bunker Hill Specific Plan. The City adopted the Bunker Hill Specific Plan in 2013 to replace and refine the regulations of the prior Community Redevelopment Agency Redevelopment Plan. The Bunker Hill Specific Plan combined with the Central City Community Plan encourages mixed-use districts with expanded housing opportunities and commercial retail uses that create a 24-hour downtown environment. The Bunker Hill Specific Plan also encourages infill development that enlivens the street and public spaces, as well as a mix of land uses that support high levels of transit use and additional employment opportunities. The Site is located within the boundaries of the Bunker Hill Specific Plan, specifically in the subarea of Parcel Q and supports the goal to create pedestrian access with the introduction of a through mid-block with wayfinding signage and active uses. Regarding signage, the Bunker Hill Specific Plan encourages congruency with the Downtown Design Guide. The Specific Plan does not further restrict land uses or add any signage limitations and is superseded by the Sign District. The Site is not otherwise located within any other specific plan or special land use district.

The Sign District is consistent with the General Plan Framework, Central City Community Plan, land use designations, and Bunker Hill Specific Plan. Due to the unique nature of the Grand Avenue Mixed-Use development as a regional-scale commercial center and a residential development, the proposed signage would be generally appropriate for the use of the Site and is in-line with the City's signage policies. The proposed sign program would create a unified aesthetic and sense of identity by concentrating project identification signage along visible corridors, ensuring the appropriate identification of individual tenant spaces, providing functional way-finding signage and directories, and activating the plaza as a focal point of the Site through the use of a variety of sign typologies. Additionally, the Digital Displays hours of operation and refresh rates are comparable to nearby sign districts, creating level opportunities for commercial identification and advertising as with other sites located within the Downtown Center area. The Sign District would improve the economic vitality of the area by integrating signage to identify, enliven and support commercial uses onsite, in-line with Plan policies for the Bunker Hill area and specifically the Grand Avenue Cultural Corridor. Therefore, the proposed Sign District is consistent with the General Plan and the land use designation and will serve to implement the goals and objective of the adopted Community Plan.

B. The Sign District would conform to public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice.

The unique characteristics of the Grand Avenue Sign District would include specific sign regulations designed to enhance the theme and unique qualities of the Sign District. The Sign District proposes a comprehensive sign program for the 3.22-acre Site, primarily focused on the connection between the surrounding cultural venues, including the Walt Disney Concert Hall and The Music Center as well as the Metro Civic Center/Grand Park Station.

The Sign District conforms to the public necessity, convenience, and general welfare of the City. The Grand Sign District would be located on Grand Avenue, 1st Street, Olive Street, and 2nd Street and surrounded by the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Los Angeles Superior Courthouse, the Colburn School and nearby the Broad Museum and MOCA, adjacent to rail transit and various bus lines, and in proximity to office uses and Grand Park. Due to the unique nature of the Sign District location, the proposed signage would be generally appropriate for the use of the Site and in-line with other sign districts within approximately one mile of the

Project Site (including the Olympia Sign District Ordinance No. 186,466, the Figueroa and Olympic Sign District Ordinance No. 182,200, and the Figueroa and Seventh Street Sign District Ordinance No. 181,637) and the City's signage policies. In particular, the Sign District would support the convenience and public necessity of the area and specifically, the Grand Avenue corridor's identity as an arts and cultural district, compatible with venues that have regional draws, such as the Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Music Center. The Sign District Ordinance (Exhibit A) proposes specially tailored signage regulations that will advance the general welfare and goals for economic development of the area by creating an engaging visual environment for visitors and residents of the district. The proposed sign program creates a unified aesthetic and sense of identity by setting standards for uniform signage design, instilling flexibility in signage design, providing well-planned placement of signage with consideration for surrounding uses, while also providing functional way-finding and building identification along streets, thereby connecting regional transit, entertainment, and cultural venues in the area.

The Sign District signage regulations reflect good zoning practice in that they establish signage design criteria, standards, locations, illumination levels, and types of permitted and prohibited signs within the Sign District. Appropriate and balanced sign regulations are necessary to maintain compatibility with surrounding development while fostering a vibrant urban environment. The Digital Displays and Advertising Kiosks would be concentrated on the interior of the site and would not face any residential uses, with the closest residential use being a high-rise apartment located on the southeast corner of 2nd street and Olive Street. The Sign District would therefore establish regulations that allow signs which are appropriate for the context of Grand Avenue and the Bunker Hill area.

In addition, the proposed Sign District meets the technical requirements for establishment of the district, as defined in LAMC Section 13.11. The Sign District includes one parcel in the commercial "C" zone, and the Site is comprised of one block or 3.22 acres in area. On December 12, 2019, the City Council voted initiated a Sign District for the Grand Mixed-Use development site or Parcel Q (Council File No.19-1468).

CEQA Findings

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq. (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Sections 15000 et seq. (CEQA Guidelines), in November 2006, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Grand Avenue Project (State Clearinghouse No. 2005091041) was certified by the Los Angeles Grand Avenue Authority (Authority)¹, for 1) the creation of Grand Park (formerly Civic Park), 2) streetscape improvements along Grand Avenue, and 3) the development of five parcels, referred to as Parcels Q, W-1, W-3, L, and M-2. The City found that the Certified EIR was completed in compliance with the CEQA, State, and City CEQA Guidelines, and adopted findings and a Mitigation Monitoring and Report Program.

¹ The Los Angeles Grand Avenue Authority (Authority) was established through a Joint Exercise of the Powers Agreement between the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles.

The Grand Avenue Mixed-Use development, located on Parcel Q, is a mixed-use building currently under construction and will contain up to 176,000 square feet of commercial and retail uses, 309 hotel guest rooms/hotel condominium units, and up to 436 residential units (a mix of apartment and condominium units), of which 89 units would be designated as affordable units (50% AMI and below) on a 3.22-acre site. After approval of the Grand Avenue Mixed-Use development, three addenda were prepared. In 2010, an addendum (First Addendum) was prepared and approved that addressed two proposed changes to the Certified EIR consisting of (1) changes to development of Parcels L and M-2 to reflect a different mix of land uses and a different site configuration; and (2) changes to the original schedule for implementation of the overall development. Specifically, the Approved Project included a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA) and a Ground Lease, which set forth a schedule for implementing the various phases and components of the Approved Project. Intervening events necessitated the modification and extension of this schedule to allow for extended time frames to complete all phases and project components.

In 2013, a second addendum (Second Addendum) was prepared and approved to address changes in the location of approved towers on Parcel Q and the overall net square-footage of proposed retail and restaurant uses. Particularly, the Second Addendum addressed revisions to the overall height envelope, tower locations, minor changes to driveways, a reduction in the overall amount of retail, restaurant, and health facility uses from 284,000 square feet to 220,000 square feet, and the addition of 50,000 square feet of office space.

In 2018, a third addendum (Third Addendum) was prepared and approved to assess impacts related to the proposed non-protected street tree removals and replacements, and to assess potential impacts related to air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise, associated with a haul route application for the development of Parcel Q. The Addenda, collectively with the Certified EIR, concluded that the proposed changes would not cause any new significant impacts or substantial increase in the severity of the previously identified impacts in the Certified EIR. The Project analyzed in the Certified EIR as modified by these Addenda currently represent the approved Grand Mixed-Use development.

CEQA Authority for an Addendum

CEQA establishes the type of environmental documentation required when changes to a project occur after an EIR is certified. Specifically, Section 15164(a) of the CEQA Guidelines states that: *"The lead agency or responsible agency shall prepare an addendum to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred."*

Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines requires a subsequent EIR to a certified EIR or subsequent Negative Declaration to an adopted MND when one or more of the following circumstances exist:

1. Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
2. Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken, which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or

3. New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:
 - a. The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;
 - b. Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
 - c. Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or
 - d. Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

Likewise, California Public Resources Code Section 21166 states that no subsequent or supplemental environmental impact report shall be required by the lead agency or by any responsible agency, unless one or more of the following events occur:

1. Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the environmental impact report;
2. Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken which will require major revisions in the environmental impact report; or
3. New information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time the environmental impact report was certified as complete, becomes available.

CEQA Addendum Findings

The City of Los Angeles Planning Department, acting on behalf of the City as lead agency, prepared an Addendum to the Certified EIR, dated August 2020, pursuant to Section 15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines, for the Grand Avenue Project. The August 2020 Addendum analyzes the proposed modifications to the Grand Avenue Mixed-Use project approved in 2007 and demonstrates that all of the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed modifications would be within the envelope of impacts as already evaluated in the Certified EIR.

The Addendum specifically addressed potential impacts associated with the establishment of the Sign District, which would result in a comprehensive signage program in conjunction with the development of the Grand Mixed-Use development on Parcel Q, a 3.22-acre portion of The Grand Avenue Project.

In accordance with the CEQA, this Addendum analyzed the proposed modifications to the Grand Mixed-Use development to determine whether such modifications would result in any new significant environmental impacts that were not identified in the Certified EIR or a substantial increase in the severity of impacts set forth in the Certified EIR or otherwise require preparation of a supplemental or subsequent EIR; and concluded that the anticipated environmental impacts

associated with the Sign District are consistent with the analysis contained in the Certified EIR, and implementation of the Sign District would not generate significant impacts not previously analyzed or require additional mitigation measures.

Additionally, the Addendum supplements the information necessary for evaluation of the Sign District and does not present new information of substantial importance which would create one or more significant effects not previously disclosed or increase the severity of the significant events already evaluated in the previously Certified EIR. Lastly, all of the mitigation measures included as part of the Certified EIR would continue to be implemented under the Grand Mixed-Use development as outlined in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, dated November 2006. As such, this Addendum is the appropriate CEQA document for the proposed modification to establish a Sign District for a comprehensive signage program in conjunction with the Grand Mixed-Use project on Parcel Q, a 3.22-acre portion of the Grand Avenue Project. The signage program would include Wall signs, Projecting signs, Monument signs, Advertising Kiosks, Window signs, Small-Scale Digital Displays, , on- and off-site advertising, and other standard sign types in accordance with said modifications to the Project, pursuant to Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

The record of proceedings for the decision includes the Record of Proceedings for the original CEQA Findings, including all items included in the amendment file, as well as all written and oral information submitted at the hearing on this matter. The documents and other materials that constitute the record of proceedings on which the City of Los Angeles' CEQA Findings are based are located at the Department of City Planning, 221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 1350, Los Angeles, CA 90021. This information is provided in compliance with CEQA Section 21081.6(a)(2).