#### CITY OF MERCED Planning & Permitting Division

STAFF REPORT:	#19-21	AGENDA ITEM: 4.1	
FROM:	Kim Espinosa, Planning Manager	PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE: August 21, 2019	
PREPARED BY:	Francisco Mendoza-Gonzalez, Associate Planner		
SUBJECT:	<b>Conditional Use Permit (CUP) #1232</b> , initiated by United Signs System, applicant for Isenberg and Ericson, Inc., property owner. This application involves a request to install a 20-foot-tall freestanding pylon sign for the shopping center located at 3155 R Street. The subject site is generally located on the west side of R Street, approximately 575 feet north of W. Olive Avenue. This property is located within Planned Development (P-D) #7 and has a Regional/Community Commercial (RC) General Plan Designation. *PUBLIC HEARING*		
ACTION:	Approve/Disapprove/Modify		
	1) Environmental Review #1	9-19 (Categorical Exemption)	

2) Conditional Use Permit #1232

#### **SUMMARY**

United Signs System is requesting approval to install a new freestanding pylon sign for the shopping center located at 3155 R Street. The shopping center is located on the west side of R Street, approximately 575 feet north of Olive Avenue (Attachment A) within Planned Development (P-D) #7 and has a General Plan designation of Regional/Community Commercial (RC). The North Merced Sign Ordinance allows shopping centers within an RC General Plan designation to have shopping center signs with Conditional Use Permit approval. To qualify for a pylon sign, a shopping center must satisfy all qualification requirements from Section 17.36.667, which includes, but is not limited to, having a minimum building square footage and arterial street frontage. The subject site satisfies these requirements as shown in the "Compliance with Sign Ordinance" section of this staff report. The new 20-foot-tall pylon sign (with internal illumination) would be located next to the southernmost driveway for the shopping center along R Street (Attachments B and C). Staff has reviewed this request and is recommending approval with conditions

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Planning staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve Environmental Review #19-19 (Categorical Exemption) and Conditional Use Permit Application #1232, per the draft Resolution at Attachment F and subject to the following conditions:

\*1) The proposed project shall be constructed/designed as shown on Exhibit 1 (site plan) and Exhibits 2 (elevations) – Attachments B and C.

- \*2) All conditions contained in Resolution #1249 ("Standard Conditional Use Permit Conditions") shall apply.
- \*3) All other applicable codes, ordinances, policies, etc., adopted by the City of Merced shall apply.
- \*4) The developer/applicant shall indemnify, protect, defend (with counsel selected by the City), and hold harmless the City, and any agency or instrumentality thereof, and any officers, officials, employees, or agents thereof, from any and all claims, actions, suits, proceedings, or judgments against the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, and any officers, officials, employees, or agents thereof to attack, set aside, void, or annul, an approval of the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, advisory agency, appeal board, or legislative body, including actions approved by the voters of the City, concerning the project and the approvals granted herein. Furthermore, developer/applicant shall indemnify, protect, defend, and hold harmless the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, against any and all claims, actions, suits, proceedings, or judgments against any governmental entity in which developer/applicant's project is subject to that other governmental entity's approval and a condition of such approval is that the City indemnify and defend (with counsel selected by the City) such governmental entity. City shall promptly notify the developer/applicant of any claim, action, or proceeding. City shall further cooperate fully in the defense of the action. Should the City fail to either promptly notify or cooperate fully, the developer/applicant shall not thereafter be responsible to indemnify, defend, protect, or hold harmless the City, any agency or instrumentality thereof, or any of its officers, officials, employees, or agents.
- \*5) The developer/applicant shall construct and operate the project in strict compliance with the approvals granted herein, City standards, laws, and ordinances, and in compliance with all State and Federal laws, regulations, and standards. In the event of a conflict between City laws and standards and a State or Federal law, regulation, or standard, the stricter or higher standard shall control.
- \*6) The maximum height for the shopping center sign shall not exceed 23 feet.
- 7) The shopping center signs shall be located outside of the 10-foot visual corner at the driveway entrance on R Street and shall maintain a minimum 3-foot setback from all property lines.
- 8) The pylon sign's materials, colors, and design shall be compatible and consistent with the shopping center.
- 9) All exterior sign surfaces shall be regularly maintained. Any damage caused by weathering, vandalism, or other factors shall be repaired in keeping with approved materials, colors, and finishes.
- \*10) A building permit shall be obtained prior to the installation of the pylon sign. Building permits shall also be obtained prior to the installation or replacement of signage on the pylon sign.

11) Pylon sign paint samples shall be reviewed and approved by Planning staff during the building permit stage. Appropriate colors are those that match or complement the existing buildings within the shopping center.

(\*) Denotes non-discretionary conditions.

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

United Signs System is requesting approval to install a new freestanding sign for the shopping center located at 3155 R Street. The shopping center is located on the west side of R Street, approximately 575 feet north of Olive Avenue (Attachment A) within Planned Development (P-D) #7 and has a General Plan designation of Regional/Community Commercial (RC). The pylon sign could only be used to advertise the tenants within the shopping center. The shopping center is located on a 4.56-acre lot with an approximately 45,000-square-foot building with two tenant suites (one is Planet Fitness, and the other is yet to be determined). The suites can be reconfigured or subdivided in the future to allow for more businesses onsite. It will be up to the property owner's discretion to determine which tenants may advertise their business name on the pylon sign.

The pylon sign would be located within the 32.5-foot-wide landscape strip along R Street. The 20-foot-tall double-sided pylon sign (with internal illumination) will have an aluminum finish and approximately 200 square feet of surface area per face. Both faces will have 3 signage slots to advertise tenants. Building permits shall be required before the installation or replacement of any signs on the pylon structure (Condition #10).

Surrounding Land	Existing Use of Land	City Zoning Designation	City General Plan Land Use Designation
North	In-Shape Health Club	Planned Development (P-D) #8	Regional/Community Commercial (RC)
South	99 Cents Only Store	Planned Development (P-D) #7	Regional/Community Commercial (RC)
East	Merced Mall (across R Street)	Planned Development (P-D) #1	Regional/Community Commercial (RC)
West	Apartment Complex	Planned Development (P-D) #7	High to Medium Density Residential (HMD)

Surrounding Uses

#### **BACKGROUND**

According to City records, the subject site was built during the 1980's and was originally occupied by Tell-A-Friend Advertising. The latest tenant to occupy this site was Orchard Supply Hardware between 1997 and 2013. The building has remained vacant since then. In 2018, the Site Plan Review Committee approved a proposal to remodel and reuse the subject site. The

proposal consisted of dividing the building into two suites (20,298 square feet and 23,772 square feet). Planet Fitness will occupy the 20,298-square-foot suite (Attachment D). The other tenant has yet to be identified, and the space could possibly be subdivided. The developer is requesting approval to install a shopping center sign to advertise the new businesses onsite.

#### **FINDINGS/CONSIDERATIONS:**

#### **General Plan Compliance and Policies Related to This Application**

A) A shopping center sign is allowed with Conditional Use Permit approval within the zoning classification of Planned Development (P-D) #7 and complies with the General Plan designation of Regional/Community Commercial (RC).

#### **Compliance with Sign Ordinance**

B) To qualify for a pylon sign, the North Merced Sign Ordinance requires that a shopping center satisfy several requirements from the MMC Section 17.36.667 – Free-Standing Signs Identifying Shopping Centers, such as having a Regional/Community Commercial (RC) General Plan designation, having at least 35,000 square feet of building area, and having at least 800 feet of combined arterial frontage (frontage exception made for building constructed before 1992). The subject site satisfies these requirements as it is located within an RC General Plan designation, has approximately 45,000 square feet of building area, and because the building was constructed before 1992, it is exempt from satisfying the street frontage requirements. These requirements and associated development standards are shown below:

#### 17.36.667 - Free-Standing Signs Identifying Shopping Centers

Shopping centers having at least thirty-five thousand square feet of gross floor area and located within commercial zones and P-D zones may be allowed a free-standing sign with a conditional use permit subject to review by the planning commission and to the following limitations:

- A. The shopping center sign may advertise the name of the center, the tenants in the center, or both the center and tenant names. Tenant advertising on a shopping center sign is part of the overall sign area permitted by Section, 17.36.650, "Total Square Footage—Commercial Zone." The area of the name of the shopping center is in addition to the permitted copy area.
- B. Individual letters are required; Logos may be permitted. The background area immediately adjacent to the copy portion of the sign may include trademark colors, however, it may not be illuminated and must be constructed of a material that is compatible with the texture and materials of the shopping center buildings. Additionally, background area with trademark colors will be considered part of the total allowed signage. Individual letters and logos may be internally illuminated.
- *C. Materials, color and arrangement shall be compatible and consistent with the shopping center buildings.*

D. A maximum of two shopping center signs may be allowed. At least eight hundred feet of combined arterial street frontage is required to qualify for one sign, except that shopping centers existing at the time of adoption of this section meeting all other requirements of this section are not bound by this requirement. An additional one thousand five hundred feet of frontage is required for a second sign.

In addition to satisfying the above requirements, the applicant must show that the shopping center has sufficient signage available to accommodate both the existing wall mounted signs and the proposed pylon sign. The shopping center qualifies for a maximum of 120 square feet of signage (based on building frontage and distance from property lines as shown on MMC 17.36.650 – Total Square Footage – Commercial Zone). Pylon signage and future wall mounted signs may be limited by signage availability. Signage availability will be monitored by Planning staff as building permits are submitted for the installation and replacement of signs. If changes occur to the Sign Ordinance prior to construction, and are less restrictive, the applicant will be allowed to modify the sign to meet new standards.

#### **Traffic/Circulation**

C) The installation of the shopping center sign would not increase the traffic to the site or change the circulation on the site. Other than traffic during the construction/installation period, there would only be additional traffic to the site when maintenance is required. If changes occur to the Sign Ordinance prior to construction, and are less restrictive, the applicant will be allowed to modify the sign to meet new standards.

#### **Parking**

D) No additional parking spaces are required with this use. The installation of the shopping center sign does not affect the existing parking on the site.

#### **Pylon Sign Design**

E) The proposed double-sided pylon sign would be 20 feet tall and 9 feet +wide. The proposed height of the pylon sign and appurtenance is below the maximum allowed within the Regional/Community Commercial General Plan designation [MMC 17.36.667 (E)] one requirement for freestanding signs is that their design matches or complements the design of the shopping center. The orthogonal design of the pylon sign is similar to the rectilinear shape and form of the shopping center. The proposed colors for the pylon sign (light grey and dark grey) are consistent with the colors that will be used for the shopping center. The pylon sign would be divided into three advertisement sections. Each individual tenant advertisements will be reviewed with a building permit application.

#### <u>Site Plan</u>

F) The applicant is requesting to locate the pylon sign next to the southernmost driveway entrance along R Street, within a 32.5-foot-wide landscape strip. The shopping center sign shall be located away from the City's 10-foot driveway visual corner triangle so that

the pylon sign does not block a driver's visibility of pedestrians crossing the driveway (Condition #7).

#### **Environmental Clearance**

G) The Planning staff has conducted an Environmental Review (#19-19) of the project in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and a Categorical Exemption is being recommended (Attachment E).

#### Attachments:

- A) Location Map
- B) Site Plan
- C) Pylon Sign Elevations
- D) Shopping Center Remodel
- E) Categorical Exemption
- F) Draft Planning Commission Resolution



# ATTACHMENT A

# ATTACHMENT B



**3155 R STREET** 

8



## ATTACHMENT C















#### **NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

То:	Office of Planning and Research P.O. Box 3044 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044	From: (Public Agency) City of Merced 678 West 18th St.		
<u>    X    </u>	County Clerk County of Merced 2222 M Street Merced, CA 95340	Merced, CA 95340		
<b>Project</b> Title:	Conditional Use Permit #1232	(Environmental Review #19-19)		
Project Appli	icant: United Signs System for Insenberg	and Ericson, Inc.		
Project Locat	tion (Specific): 3155 R Street APN: 058-09	90-004		
Project Locat	tion - City: Merced Project Location	a - County: Merced		
<b>Description</b> o	f Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Pro	oject:		
Name of Publ	ic Agency Approving Project: City of	Merced		
Name of Pers	on or Agency Carrying Out Project: Creat and Ericson, Ir			
Exempt Statu	s: (check one)			
	nisterial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);			
	clared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)); ergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));			
	egorical Exemption. State Type and Section Nun	nber 15301(a)		
Stat	tutory Exemptions. State Code Number:			
	neral Rule (Sec. 15061 (b)(3))			
<b>Reasons why</b> ]	<b>Project is Exempt:</b> As defined under the al project consists of min	bove referenced Section, the proposed for alterations only, such as installing		

project consists of minor alterations only, such as installing a pylon sign, which are considered to be exempt under the CEQA Guidelines per Section 15301 (a).

Lead Agency: Contact Person:	City of MercedFrancisco Mendoza-GonzalezArea Code/Telephone: (209) 385-6858
Signature:	Date: 08-05-2019 Title: Associate
X Signed by Lead Ag	ency Date Received for Filing at OPR:

(If applicable)

Authority Cited: Sections 21083 and 21110. Public Resources Code Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1. Public Resources Code

## ATTACHMENT E

## **CITY OF MERCED Planning Commission**

### Resolution #\_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, the Merced City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of August 21, 2019, held a public hearing and considered **Conditional Use Permit #1232,** initiated by United Signs System, applicant for Isenberg and Ericson, Inc., property owner. This application involves a request to install a 20-foot-tall freestanding pylon sign for the shopping center located at 3155 R Street. The subject site is generally located on the west side of R Street, approximately 575 feet north of W. Olive Avenue. This property is located within Planned Development (P-D) #7 and has a Regional/Community Commercial (RC) General Plan Designation; also known as Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 058-090-004; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Merced City Planning Commission concurs with Findings A through G of Staff Report #19-21; and,

**NOW THEREFORE**, after reviewing the City's Draft Environmental Determination, and discussing all the issues, the Merced City Planning Commission does resolve to hereby adopt a Categorical Exemption regarding Environmental Review #19-19, and approve Conditional Use Permit #1232, subject to the Conditions set forth in Exhibit A attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

Upon motion by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by

Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, and carried by the following vote:

AYES: NOES: ABSENT: ABSTAIN:

## ATTACHMENT F

### PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION #\_\_\_\_ Page 2 August 21, 2019

Adopted this 21<sup>st</sup> day of August 2019.

Chairperson, Planning Commission of the City of Merced, California

ATTEST:

Secretary

<u>Attachment:</u> Exhibit A – Conditions of Approval

n:shared:planning:PC Resolutions: CUP#1232 New Shopping Center Sign

### Conditions of Approval Planning Commission Resolution #\_\_\_\_\_ Conditional Use Permit #1232

- 1. The proposed project shall be constructed/designed as shown on Exhibit 1 (site plan) and Exhibits 2 (elevations) Attachments B and C of Staff Report #19-21.
- 2. All conditions contained in Resolution #1249 ("Standard Conditional Use Permit Conditions") shall apply.
- 3. All other applicable codes, ordinances, policies, etc., adopted by the City of Merced shall apply.
- The developer/applicant shall indemnify, protect, defend (with counsel 4. selected by the City), and hold harmless the City, and any agency or instrumentality thereof, and any officers, officials, employees, or agents thereof, from any and all claims, actions, suits, proceedings, or judgments against the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, and any officers, officials, employees, or agents thereof to attack, set aside, void, or annul, an approval of the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, advisory agency, appeal board, or legislative body, including actions approved by the voters of the City, concerning the project and the Furthermore, developer/applicant shall approvals granted herein. indemnify, protect, defend, and hold harmless the City, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, against any and all claims, actions, suits, proceedings, or judgments against any governmental entity in which developer/applicant's project is subject to that other governmental entity's approval and a condition of such approval is that the City indemnify and defend (with counsel selected by the City) such governmental entity. City shall promptly notify the developer/applicant of any claim, action, or proceeding. City shall further cooperate fully in the defense of the action. Should the City fail to either promptly notify or cooperate fully, the developer/applicant shall not thereafter be responsible to indemnify, defend, protect, or hold harmless the City, any agency or instrumentality thereof, or any of its officers, officials, employees, or agents.
- 5. The developer/applicant shall construct and operate the project in strict compliance with the approvals granted herein, City standards, laws, and ordinances, and in compliance with all State and Federal laws,

regulations, and standards. In the event of a conflict between City laws and standards and a State or Federal law, regulation, or standard, the stricter or higher standard shall control.

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n:shared:planning:PC Resolutions: CUP #1232 Exhibit A