CITY OF WEST COVINA

PLANNING COMMISSION - REGULAR MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025 - 7:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1444 W. GARVEY AVENUE SOUTH
WEST COVINA, CALIFORNIA 91790

Sheena Heng, Chair
Livier Becerra, Commissioner
Nickolas Lewis, Commissioner
Dario Castellanos, Commissioner
Jose Reyes, Commissioner

Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices prior to entering the Council Chambers.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
The City complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need special assistance at Planning Commission meetings, please call (626) 939-8433 (voice) or (626) 960-4422 (TTY) from 8 to 5 Monday through Thursday. Please call at least one day prior to the meeting date to inform us of your particular needs and to determine if accommodation is possible. For sign language interpreter services at Planning Commission meetings, please request no less than four working days prior to the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/ADDRESSING THE COMMISSION
Any person wishing to address the Planning Commission on any matter listed on the agenda or on any other matter within their jurisdiction is asked to complete a speaker card that is provided on the speaker podium and submit the card to a Planning Division staff member.

Please identify on the speaker card whether you are speaking on an agenda item or non-agenda item.
Requests to speak on non-agenda items will be heard during "Oral Communications" before the Public Hearing section of the agenda. Generally, comments are limited to three minutes per speaker unless further time is granted by the Chairperson. ***The Chairperson may also, at his or her discretion, further limit the time of each speaker in order to accommodate a large number of speakers and/or to ensure that the business of the Planning Commission is effectively conducted.***

Any testimony or comments regarding a matter set for Public Hearing will be heard during the public hearing for that item.

MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER/MEDITATION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Regular meeting, February 11, 2025 - PC Minutes 2.11.25.
   Regular meeting, March 11, 2025 - PC Minutes 3.11.25.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

This is the time when any member of the public may speak to the Commission on any matter within the scope of duties assigned to the Commission relating to non-agendized or consent calendar items. Other matters included on this agenda may be addressed when that item is under consideration. For all oral communications, the chairperson may impose reasonable limitations on public comments to assure an orderly and timely meeting. The Ralph M. Brown Act limits the Planning Commission and staff's ability to respond to public comments at this meeting. Thus, your comments may be agendized for a future meeting or referred to staff. The Commission may ask questions for clarification, if desired, at this time.

By policy of the Commission, Oral Communications at this time on the agenda is limited to a total of 15 minutes.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

2. **VARIANCE NO. 24-03**
   CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION
   APPLICANT: AKC Permit Inc. (Kasey Clark)
   LOCATION: 3120 E. Garvey Avenue S
   REQUEST: The applicant is requesting the approval of a variance to allow the installation of two (2) 78.16 square-foot electronic reader board signs to advertise business-related products and promotions. The variance request is to deviate from the development sign standards, which permits one (1) readerboard sign per site with a maximum size of 40.5 square feet.

NON-HEARING ITEMS

3. **PLANNING COMMISSION REORGANIZATION**

TEN-DAY APPEAL PERIOD: Actions taken by the Planning Commission that are not recommendations to the City Council will become final after ten (10) calendar days unless a written appeal with the appropriate fee is lodged with the City Clerk's Office before close of business on the tenth day.

COMMISSION REPORTS/COMMENTS AND MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

This is the time when any member of the Commission may bring a matter to the attention of the full Commission that is within the scope of duties assigned to the Commission. Any item that was considered during the Agenda is not appropriate for discussion in this section of the agenda. NO COMMISSION DISCUSSION OR ACTION CAN BE CONSIDERED AT THIS TIME. If the Commission desires to discuss an issue raised by a speaker or take an action, the Commission may vote to agendize the matter for a future meeting.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

This is an oral presentation of City Council matters and actions, which are in the Commission's area of interest.

ADJOURNMENT

AGENDA
ITEM NO. 2
DATE: 05/13/2025

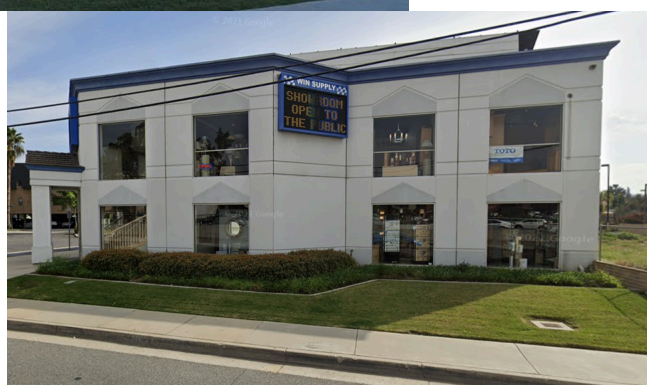
PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT
VARIANCE NO. 24-03
CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION
APPLICANT: AKC Permit Inc. (Kasey Clark)
LOCATION: 3120 E. Garvey Avenue S
REQUEST: The applicant is requesting the approval of a variance to allow the installation of two (2) 78.16 square-foot electronic reader board signs to advertise business-related products and promotions. The variance request is to deviate from the development sign standards, which permits one (1) readerboard sign per site with a maximum size of 40.5 square feet.

BACKGROUND
The subject property is currently a commercial office building occupied by Allied Restoration located in the Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use (NMU) Zone.

The subject property was previously occupied by Win Supply Company, which had received Planning Commission approval for a similar signage request. On September 23, 2008, the Commission approved Variance No. 08-09, allowing the installation of two (2) readerboard wall signs to replace existing signage. This approval granted deviations from standard sign regulations, including total sign area and the portion allocated to electronic readerboards. Each approved wall sign measured 66.38 square feet, with 53.75 square feet designated for the readerboard component. Below are photographs of the subject building with the previously approved electronic readerboard signs.





Allied Restoration acquired the property in 2019. Since then, the previously installed readerboard signs became nonoperational and were subsequently removed. As the electronic readerboards have been removed and

inactive for more than six (6) months, the approval granted under Variance No. 08-09 has been null and void. A new Variance must be approved to permit the reinstallation of oversized readerboard signs.

The table below summarizes the use, zoning, and land-use designation for the project site and its adjacent parcels, and provides an overview of the public hearing notice process.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
ZONING AND GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATION	Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use (NMU) Commercial (C)
SURROUNDING ZONING AND LAND USES	**North**: Interstate 10 Freeway **East**: Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use (NMU) **South**: Walnut Creek, Residential Agriculture (R-A) **West**: Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use (NMU)
CURRENT DEVELOPMENT	Commercial/Office Building
LEGAL NOTICE	A Public Hearing notice was posted on-site at least thirty (30) days prior to the public hearing meeting. Notices were also sent out to all owners of properties located within 500 feet of the subject site at least ten (10) days prior to the public hearing.

DISCUSSION

The applicant is requesting a variance to exceed the allowable number of signs, sign area, and electronic readerboard area to install two (2) electronic readerboard signs, each 78.16 square feet in size. The proposed electronic readerboard would advertise the services offered by the business.

Sign Code Standards

According to Section 26-102 of the West Covina Development Code (WCDC), commercial properties located within 300 feet of the freeway centerline are permitted one (1) electronic readerboard sign per site, which must be incorporated into a standard, allowable sign and oriented toward the freeway. Additionally, the readerboard portion may not exceed 75% of the total permitted sign area on each face. The intent of the 75% readerboard size limitation is to reserve the remaining allowable area (25%) for a static sign identifying the building or business, which must be placed above, below, or to the side of the readerboard.

SIGN TYPE - READERBOARDS	MAXIMUM NUMBER	MAXIMUM AREA
Commercial Uses Located within 300 Feet of Freeway Centerline - Only Freeway Oriented Electronic Readerboards Allowed	One (1) readerboard per site and incorporated into a normally allowed sign.	The readerboard area shall be no more than 75 percent of total allowable sign area, per face.
SIGN TYPE - WALL SIGNS	**MAXIMUM NUMBER**	**MAXIMUM AREA**
Building Identifcation	One (1) per wall facing a street or a parking lot.	2% of the building face

According to the WCDC, one (1) building identification wall sign is permitted on a side of the building that faces a street or parking lot, with a maximum area equal to 2% of the building face. The allowable sign area is calculated by multiplying the building's height by the length of its frontage which, in this case, totals approximately 2,700 square feet—allowing for a maximum wall sign area of 54 square feet. Of this, a readerboard sign may occupy up to 75% of the total allowable sign area, which equates to a maximum of 40.5 square feet for one (1) readerboard sign. The proposed 78.16 square-foot electronic readerboard sign exceeds the maximum allowed sign area by 37.66 square feet.

Design, Variance Justification, and Concerns
Given the building's distinctive architectural design, characterized by smooth stucco walls, strong vertical and horizontal lines, and decorative triangular features above the windows, the empty/blank wall space above the front portico offers an ideal and visually balanced location for the electronic readerboard sign. The portico, with its gable roof and large square columns, draws attention to this part of the building. The proposed 78.16 square-foot electronic readerboard wall sign is appropriately scaled to fit the 11'-2" wide by 7'-8" high wall area located above the portico.

A standard-sized channel letter wall sign in this area would appear undersized and disproportionate to the building's size and architecture, while the proposed readerboard would complement the building's design and create a more cohesive, visually appropriate focal point. In addition, requiring the building/business identification to be placed above, below, or to the side of the electronic readerboard sign would create visual clutter and make the signage appear undersized and out of proportion.

Additionally, the use and location of the site are not typical for properties within the "Neighborhood Commercial Mixed Use" (NMU) Zone. Neighborhood commercial centers are usually located along major and collector streets to serve nearby residential areas. In contrast, this site fronts Garvey Avenue South, a two-lane street directly adjacent to the I-10 San Bernardino Freeway, and the nature of the business, which provides restoration services, significantly depends on freeway visibility.

While the request for one (1) 78.16 square-foot electronic readerboard sign located on the northeasterly corner of the building can be justified, the request for two electronic readerboard signs can not be supported. The request for more than one electronic readerboard sign, if granted, would unfairly provide the property a privilege that is not afforded to larger freeway-fronting commercial centers within the City. No other commercial property or center in the City has been granted more than one electronic readerboard sign. Therefore, permitting two (2) electronic readerboard signs would conflict with existing standards and current practices. Allowing multiple electronic readerboards on each freeway-facing property could lead to visual clutter, increased light pollution, and potential distractions for drivers. In addition, it would set a new precedent and would appear arbitrary, potentially opening the City to risks of complaints or lawsuits by others who are not allowed the same.

Rather than allowing a second electronic readerboard sign to be located on the building's angled facade at the middle of the building frontage, a condition of approval is included in the draft resolution requiring the installation of an illuminated (internal or halo) channel letter wall sign with two rows of texts and/or a cabinet sign strictly for the business logo to be installed at this location to identify the building/business in lieu of the WCDC required building/business identification located directly adjacent to the electronic readerboard. The maximum letter height for each row shall be no more than 27" (2.25 feet), with the total wall sign area limited to 54 square feet (the maximum wall sign area allowed for the building).

To address concerns about driver distraction and brightness, the following conditions of approval are included in the draft resolution:

- No special visual effects, including moving or flashing lights, screen, or picture shall be permitted during the display of any message or transition of the message.
- Each message shall remain static for a minimum of eight (8) seconds.

- The transition time between messages shall not exceed one (1) second.
- In the event of the sign malfunctioning, the sign shall be turned off until the issue is resolved.
- The brightness of the electronic readerboard shall not exceed 0.3 candles above ambient light levels measured at 23.448 feet or at the minimum distance recommended by the International Sign Association.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

Before any Variance may be granted, the Planning Commission must make the following findings:

a. There are special circumstances (which may include, but are not limited to, size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings) applicable to the property which are not applicable to other property in the property's vicinity under identical zoning classification.

There are special circumstances applicable to this property that are not typical of other properties in the "Neighborhood Commercial Mixed Use" (NMU) Zone. The site is located along Garvey Avenue South, a two-lane street that runs adjacent to the I-10 San Bernardino Freeway. Unlike most NMU properties, which are typically located along major and collector streets and serve nearby neighborhoods, the site and use relies heavily on visibility from the freeway due to the nature of the business (restoration services). In addition, unlike other buildings within the vicinity and with the same zoning, the specific siting and architectural design of the building, featuring a prominent portico and rectangular blank wall area above the portico, creates a logical and proportionate location for one (1) 78.16 square-foot electronic readerboard wall sign. Therefore, as conditioned, this finding can be made.

b. As a result of the special circumstances, the strict application of the Development Code deprives the property of meaningful privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zoning classification.

Due to the site's location being greater than 750 feet from any intersection (traveling distance) and the existing building's siting and design, strict application of the Development Code's limitations on wall sign and electronic readerboard size would deprive the property of the visibility and functional signage that similar properties within the vicinity and same zoning enjoy. The maximum permitted sign size of 54 square feet, with only 40.5 square feet allowed for a readerboard, would be inadequate for the subject building and would fail to provide sufficient visibility from the freeway, a key factor in attracting customers to this service-based business.

c. Such variance is necessary to allow the property in question to have the same substantial property right possessed by other property in the same vicinity and zone.

As conditioned, granting the variance for one (1) 78.16 square-foot electronic readerboard wall sign would allow the property to enjoy the same substantial property rights as other commercial properties located along the freeway. Businesses similarly situated with freeway exposure often have larger, more prominent signage. The variance allows this property to achieve a comparable level of visibility and advertising capacity. However, the request to exceed the allowable number of electronic readerboard signs cannot be supported. The Development Code permits one (1) electronic readerboard for properties within 300 feet of the freeway centerline, and no other commercial property or center in the City has been granted more than one. Therefore, allowing two would be inconsistent with established standards and precedent.

d. The granting of such variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or materially injurious to residents or owners of nearby properties.

As conditioned, the proposed signage will not be materially detrimental to the public or nearby properties. The electronic readerboard sign is designed to complement the architecture of the building. The use of one electronic readerboard is allowed in the Development Code for freeway-facing properties, and this project does not introduce any new or incompatible use. In addition, the applicant is required to obtain a building permit and comply with all applicable provisions of the Building Code to ensure that the installation meets structural,

electrical, and safety standards. These requirements will help ensure the sign is securely installed and does not pose any hazard to the public or adjacent properties.

e. That the granting of such variance shall be consistent with the adopted General Plan and any applicable specific plans.
The variance supports the goals of the General Plan by promoting economic development and supporting local businesses. The variance is consistent with the following policies of the General Plan:

- Policy 2.1: Maintain and enhance the City's current tax base
- Policy 2.9: Support local businesses

f. The variance does not authorize a use or activity which is not otherwise expressly authorized by the zoning regulations governing the parcel of property.

As conditioned, the variance does not authorize a use or activity that is otherwise prohibited in the NMU zone. Electronic readerboard signage is permitted for commercial uses located within 300 feet of the freeway centerline, and the proposed electronic readerboard located on the northeasterly corner of the building is consistent with that use. Additionally, the installation of two (2) readerboards is not permitted by the West Covina Development Code.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY
The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan. The proposal is consistent with the following General Plan Policies and Actions:

- Policy 2.1: Maintain and enhance the City's current tax base
- Policy 2.9: Support local businesses

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION
Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed project is considered to be categorically exempt, pursuant to Section 15301 and Section 15311 (Class 1, Existing Facilities and Class 11, Accessory Structures) in that the project consists minor alterations of the existing structure to operate the requested use and of the installation of on-premises signs.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS
The Planning Commission may choose to either:

1) Adopt Resolution No. 25-6167 approving Variance No. 24-03 as requested (one (1) 78.16 electronic readerboard and one (1) 54 square foot channel letter wall sign); or
2) Adopt Resolution No. 25-6167 with added conditions, approving Variance No. 24-03; or
3) Deny Variance No. 24-03.

LARGE ATTACHMENTS
Plans may be viewed at the West Covina City Hall Planning Division Counter at 1444 W. Garvey Avenue South, 2nd Floor - Room 208, West Covina, CA 91790.

Submitted by: Miriam Machado, Associate Planner

Attachments

Attachment No. 1 - Draft Resolution of Approval

AGENDA
ITEM NO. 3
DATE: 05/13/2025

PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT
PLANNING COMMISSION REORGANIZATION

DISCUSSION
Chapter 2 (Administration), Article III (Advisory Commission) of the West Covina Municipal Code (WCMC) outlines the duties of each advisory commission, including the Planning Commission. WCMC Section 2-71 requires the annual election of officers (chair and vice chair) for the Planning Commission be held the first regular meeting in May. The order of succession is as follows: Livier Becerra, Nick Lewis, Dario Castellanos, Jose Reyes, and Sheena Heng.

Submitted by: Jo-Anne Burns, Deputy Community Development Director

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