

Title:	Broadway Animal Hospital Digital Monument Sign
Project:	Creative Sign Permit SGNC-23-1
Location:	3700 Broadway
APN:	019-231-002
Applicant:	Geoff Wills, Allpoints Advertising, Inc.
Property Owner:	Folden Properties LLC
Purpose/Use:	Replace existing monument sign with new digital monument sign that deviates from maximum sign height and area standards.
Application Date:	July 24, 2023
General Plan:	GSC – General Service Commercial
Zoning:	CS – Service Commercial
CEQA:	Exempt under §15311, Class II: Accessory Structures
Staff Contact:	Vanessa Odom, Planning Technician
Recommendation:	Hold a public hearing; and Adopt a resolution finding the project exempt from CEQA, and conditionally approving the project.
Motion:	<i>“I move the Design Review Committee adopt a resolution finding the project is exempt from CEQA, and conditionally approving the Broadway Animal Hospital digital monument sign at 3700 Broadway.”</i>

Figure 1: Location Map

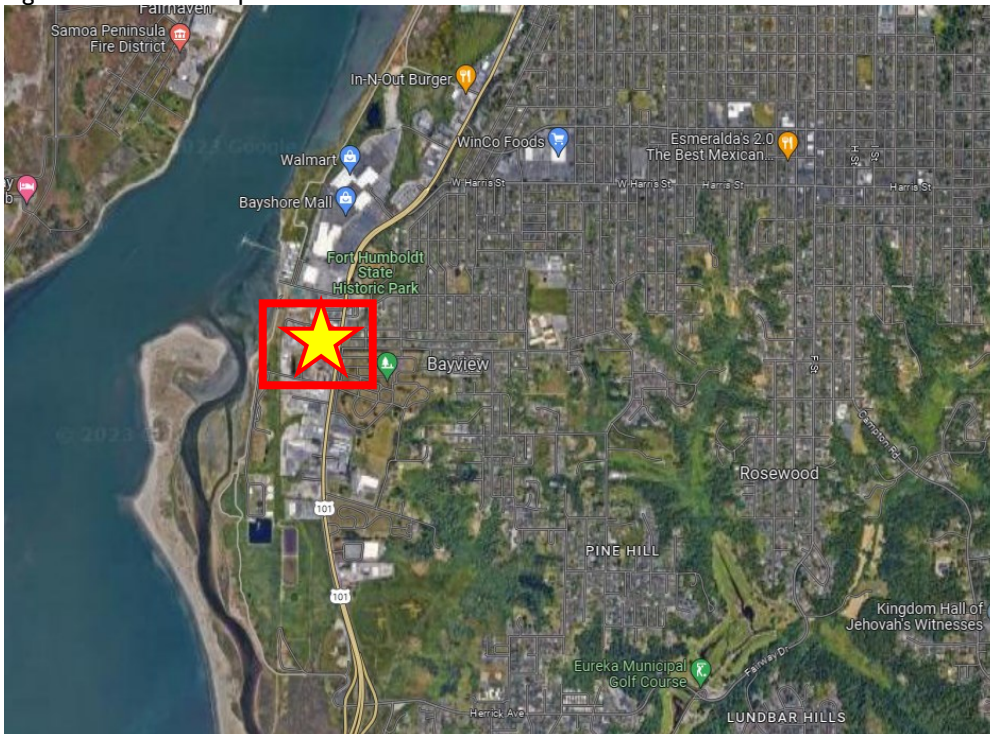
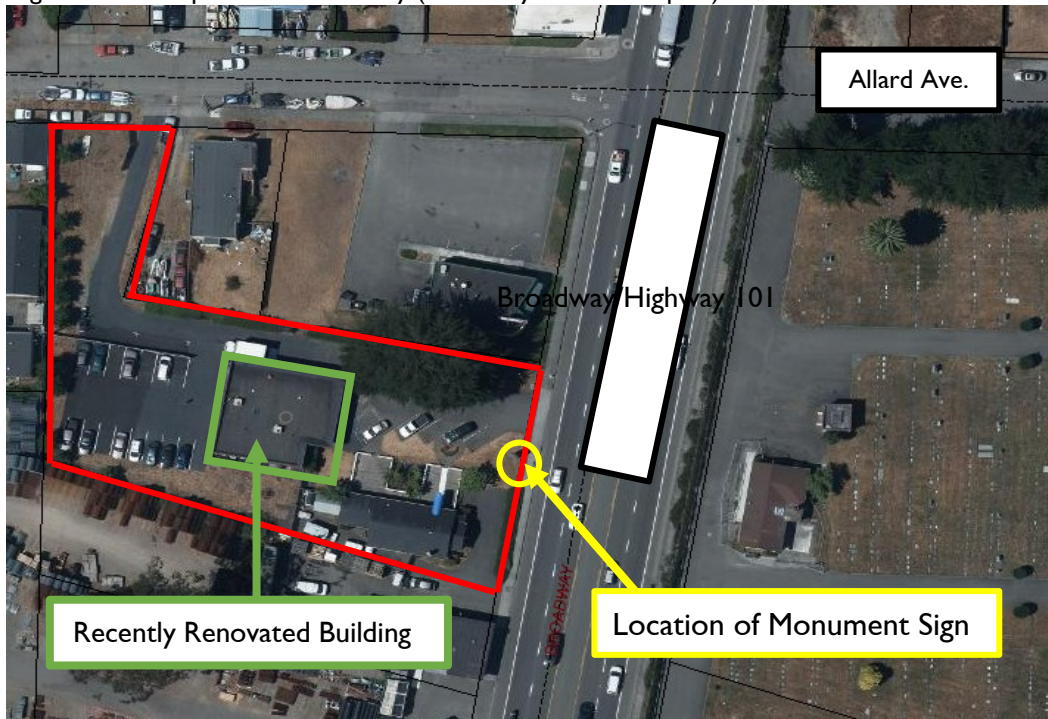


Figure 2: Site Map of 3700 Broadway (Broadway Animal Hospital)



PROJECT SUMMARY

The applicant is proposing to replace an existing monument sign with a new monument sign with a digital display to complement recent exterior renovations at the Broadway Animal Hospital at 3700 Broadway (Highway 101) in the Coastal Zone. The proposed new sign exceeds the maximum height and sign area standards for monument signs contained in Eureka Municipal Code (EMC) Title 10, Chapter 5, Article 17: Signs. A Creative Sign Permit is required to allow the proposed deviations from maximum height and area standards and to allow the use of a digital display.

Figure 3: Applicant's rendering of proposed monument sign depicting "Broadway Animal Hospital" with incorporated digital display and photo of newly renovated animal hospital entrance.



Background

The project site surrounded by commercial, residential, and public facilities uses. Directly north of the site is a restaurant (Golden Harvest Café). Directly west are residences, and directly to the south is a retail hot tub business (Pure Water Spas) and a retaining wall contractor business (Hilfiker Pipe Co). Across Broadway to the east is a long and tall retaining wall associated with the cemetery (Ocean View).

Figure 4: Google street view (July 2022) looking west showing existing monument sign (circled in red).



Proposed Sign Details

The proposed new 14-foot-tall monument sign will include a 4-foot-by-8-foot LED-illuminated sign cabinet that reads “Broadway Animal Hospital” in bold blue push-through illuminated acrylic lettering, and a 4-foot-by-8-foot digital sign cabinet located directly below the illuminated sign cabinet, for a total of 64 square feet of sign area (Figure 3). The new sign will be constructed in the same location as the existing sign to be replaced and will be 14 feet tall with blue support posts and a blue triangular "truss" roof that matches the design of the new covered front entrance porch of the animal hospital (see Figures 3 and 4). The sign will appear the same on either side. Cut-out silhouettes of a cat and dog in front of an illuminated circular heartbeat symbol will be included above the illuminated sign cabinet, in front of the sign’s triangular roof. Landscaping will be installed at the base of the sign. Multiple materials will be incorporated into the sign’s design, such as wood for the truss, aluminum for the skirting, asphalt shingles for the roof, and Hardipanel siding for the base.

The current “Broadway Animal Hospital” sign (Figure 5 below) is located on the eastern property line along Broadway (Figures 2 and 4 above), and was permitted in 2003 (SIGN-03-004). Recently-approved tenant improvements (B22-0260) to the existing animal hospital building prompted the proposed sign replacement, with the design of the new sign matching the new exterior building entrance design (Figures 2 and 6).

Figure 5: Existing monument sign on site. Image on the left is a rendering of the existing monument sign when it was initially permitted in 2003.

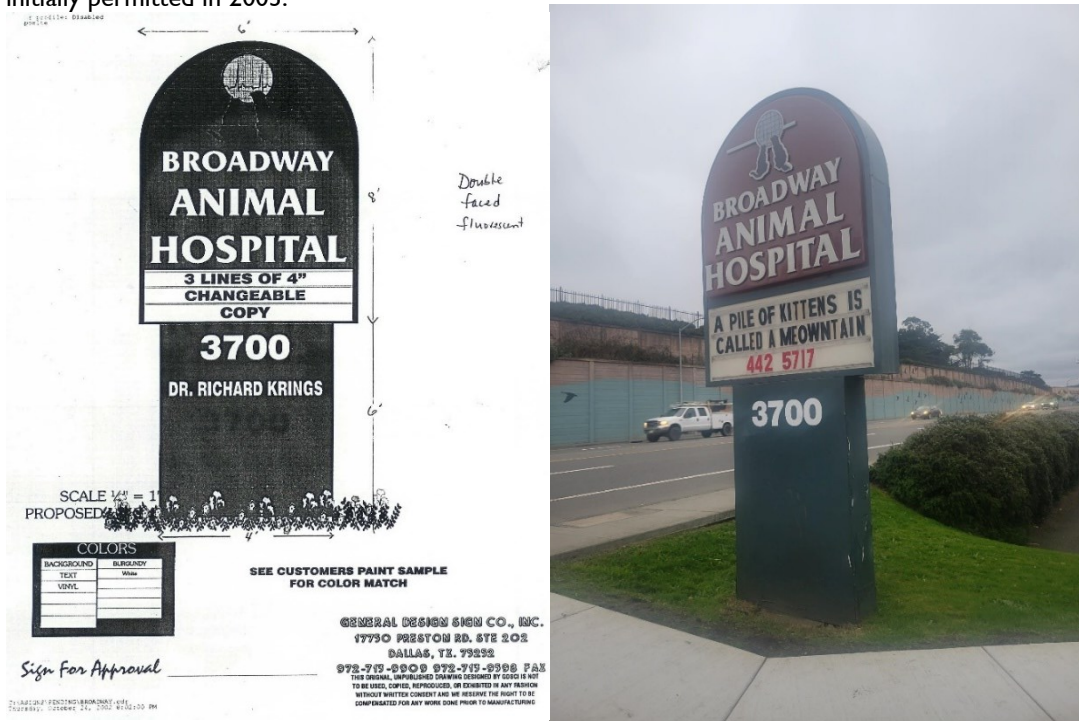


Figure 6: existing newly-renovated building entrance (as of December 2023).



Applicable Regulations

The sign regulations in the City's Coastal Zone were comprehensively updated on October 13, 2022. The new regulations only permitted digital signs with a Creative Sign Permit and only when incorporated into a monument sign, wall sign, or pole sign. Then, on February 10, 2023 the sign

regulations were further amended to ban all new digital signs. The application for the proposed new digital monument sign was submitted in December 2022, prior to the effective date of the digital sign ban, and is subject to the previous sign standards in effect at the time of application. Therefore, the proposed digital sign display can be allowed with a Creative Sign Permit.

The project site is located in the CS – Service Commercial Zoning District. Pursuant to Table 17-8, monument signs in the CS District are allowed a maximum height of 12 feet, and a maximum sign area of one square foot for every foot of tenant building frontage that abuts a parking lot, street or pedestrian walkway, to a maximum of 50 square feet per tenant. The site appears to have ~70 feet of tenant frontage, which would allow a maximum digital monument sign area of 50 square feet. The proposed monument sign is 14 feet tall with a total proposed sign area of 64 square feet, exceeding the height limit by 2 feet and the sign area maximum by 14 square feet.

A Creative Sign Permit can allow not only the digital display, but also the proposed deviations from maximum height and area standards. Pursuant to EMC §10-5.1707.4, a Creative Sign Permit allows for unique, high-quality signs which deviate from sign standards. Creative Sign Permits are intended to encourage signs of unique design, and which exhibit a high degree of thoughtfulness, imagination, inventiveness and spirit, and allow for creative signs which deviate from sign standards while minimizing adverse impacts on neighboring properties and the community at large. Upon initial review of the application, Staff determined that the first rendering of the proposed sign would not meet the criteria for a Creative Sign Permit. As a result, the application was presented to the Design Review Committee for review and comment at their regular meeting on September 13, 2023. The proposed sign rendering (Figure 3) resulted from that discussion.

Lastly, EMC §10-5.1707.7 specifies signs located in the Coastal Zone are subject to the requirements of Article 29 (Coastal Development Permit [CDP] Procedures) unless the sign is subject to the Categorical Exclusion Order E-88-2. The new monument sign is within the City's Categorical Exclusion area and is associated with a principally permitted use. Therefore, the proposed monument sign is exempt from CDP requirements pursuant to EMC §10-5.29304.1(a).

CREATIVE SIGN PERMIT ANALYSIS

To approve a Creative Sign Permit, the Design Review Committee (DRC) must find the proposed sign meets all four of the General Design criteria and meets three or more of the twelve Sign Features, Materials, and Contextual Criteria, as provided below.

Creative Sign General Design Criteria (must conform with all five):

- A. The sign constitutes a substantial aesthetic improvement to the site and has a positive visual impact on the surrounding area.*
- B. The sign is of unique design, and exhibits a high degree of thoughtfulness, imagination, inventiveness, and spirit.*
- C. The sign is of a higher creative, artistic, and/or sculptural nature than the average sign typically found in Eureka.*

- D. The sign provides strong graphic character through the imaginative use of graphics, color, texture, quality materials, scale, and proportion.*
- E. The sign is consistent with the International Dark Sky Association's Guidance for Electronic Message Centers (EMCs) for luminance level and curfew.*

The proposed digital monument sign is designed to match the renovated building's front entrance, containing different shades of blue with asphalt shingles on the roof and off-white trim. The different materials, such as, aluminum with push-through acrylic letters, wood for the truss and side posts, asphalt shingles for the roof, and Hardipanel siding for the base, provide variation in the monument sign's visual texture, and the aluminum dog and cat silhouettes and LED sign cabinet depicting an animated heart-beat (all laid over the wood truss at the top of the sign structure), provide a strong graphic character that is more proportional to the massing of the sign (Criteria D). Most signs in Eureka don't include as many different building materials or visual design elements as the proposed sign, therefore it can be considered to have a higher creative nature than the average sign typically found in Eureka (Criteria C). The proposed sign also thoughtfully incorporated many of the suggestions from the DRC. For example, the dog and cat silhouettes were enlarged and moved up to the apex of the "roof" of the monument sign increasing the imagination and spirit of the sign and how it relates to the animal hospital use (Criteria B). The proposed sign will be more visually appealing than the basic wall and pole signs associated with the retail hot tub and restaurant businesses located directly north and south of the site, and it will complement the large mural on the retaining wall across the street with bird silhouettes on a blue background which is a similar color theme as the proposed sign. It will also complement and contribute to the sign environment along South Broadway which already includes a number of thematic signs like the nearby Pierson's hammer sign several properties to the south, and the Bucksport fish sign a couple properties to the north. Unlike the existing sign which only had grass around its base, the new sign is conditioned to ensure that a 32-square-foot of area around it is landscaped (which is half of the 64-square-foot sign area as required by monument sign standards) and at least 50% of the landscape area is covered with non-invasive plants, the plants near the driveway from Broadway don't affect the driveway's Vision Clearance Area, and any area not landscaped with plants must be covered in mulch, bark, pebbles, or similar non-plant material so that no bare ground is exposed. Therefore, the proposed sign constitutes a substantial aesthetic improvement to the site and will a positive visual impact on the surrounding area (Criteria A). Additionally, because no information was provided regarding the luminance level and curfew of the digital sign, the project is conditioned to provide evidence of conformance with the Dark Sky Association's guidance for EMCs prior to issuance of the building permit (Criteria E).

Sign Features, Materials, and Contextual Criteria (the sign must incorporate at least three of twelve criteria; the proposed sign meets three criteria as discussed below):

- 1. Criteria A: Materials of a higher quality than typically used for signs in Eureka (e.g., stone, sculptural steel, sandblasted wood, gold leaf, hand-painted content with an artistic mural-like component).*

2. *Criteria B: Projecting, recessed, or cut-out text (e.g., push-through illuminated acrylic letters, routed letters, routed metal).*
3. *Criteria D. Creative and unique use of lighting (e.g., chase, neon lighting, LED faux neon, a well-coordinated combination of at least three different types of site-appropriate illumination).*
4. *Criteria F: Sign design successfully emulates the architecture of the building (e.g., a sign with roof-like covering that matches the general design of the roof of the building it serves).*

The static “Broadway Animal Hospital” sign features push-through illuminated acrylic letters on an aluminum panel (Criteria B). The monument sign support structure and truss will be made of wood, asphalt shingles will be used on the roof, and Hardipanel siding will be used for the base, all of which are higher quality materials than standard digitally-printed aluminum signs typically seen in Eureka (Criteria A). The circular LED illuminate sign cabinet at the apex of the truss roof includes an animated heartbeat which is a creative use of LED lighting (Criteria B), and the digital monument sign design successfully emulates the architecture of the building as it resembles its covered front entrance porch with wooden trusses (Criteria F).

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The City of Eureka, as Lead Agency, has determined the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to §15311, Accessory Structures, Class II of the CEQA Guidelines, which consists of construction or replacement of minor structures accessory to existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities, including on-premise signs. Because on-premise signs count as an exempted accessory structure, the proposed project qualifies for a Class II CEQA exemption.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notification consisted of notification by mail of property owners within a 300-foot radius of the site on or before January 11, 2024. In addition, the notice was posted on the City’s website and bulletin boards. A public hearing notice sign was posted on the site on or before January 11, 2024.

CONCLUSION

With the addition of the landscaping, luminance level, and curfew of the digital sign conditions, the proposed digital monument sign meets all of the Creative General Design Criteria. The proposed digital monument sign also meets four of Sign Features, Materials, and Contextual Criteria with four (A, B, C, and F), exceeding the minimum requirement of three. Conditions have been added to the resolution (Attachment I) to ensure the applicant is aware of other necessary authorizations and approvals, as well as the need to report any future proposed sign modifications to Development Services – Planning, and obtain any necessary amendments to this Creative Sign Permit approval if needed.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED

Attachment 1: Draft Design Review Committee Resolution
Attachment 2: Applicant’s submitted materials