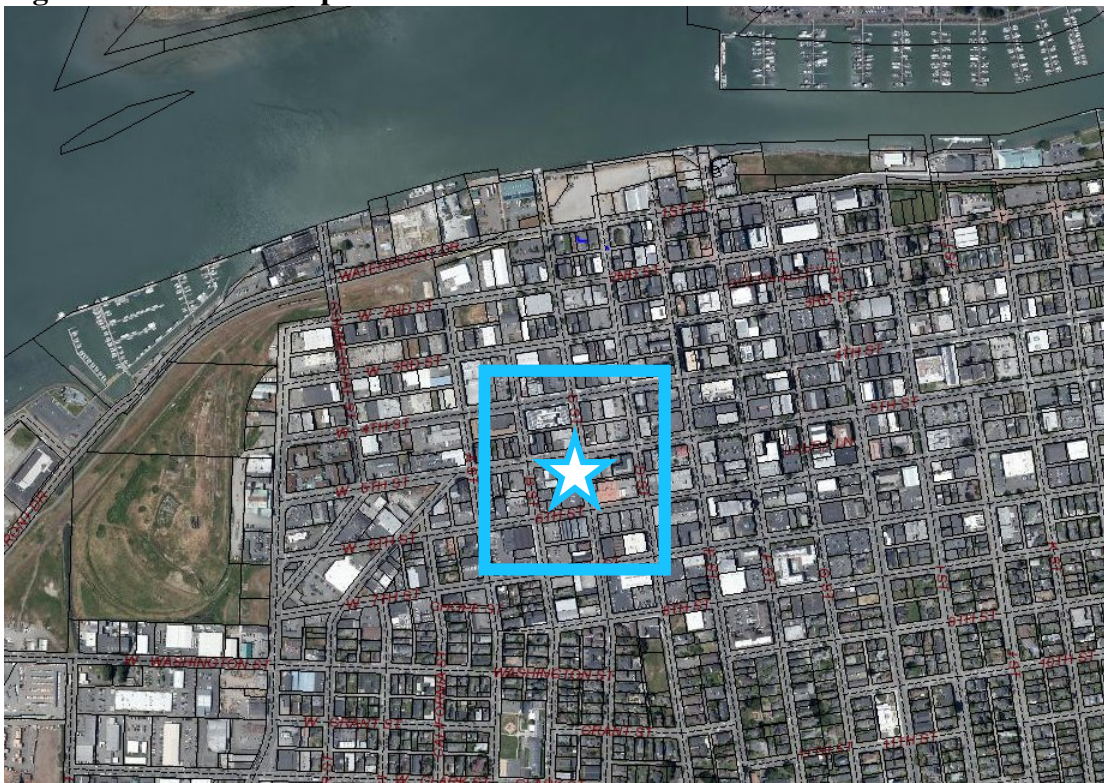


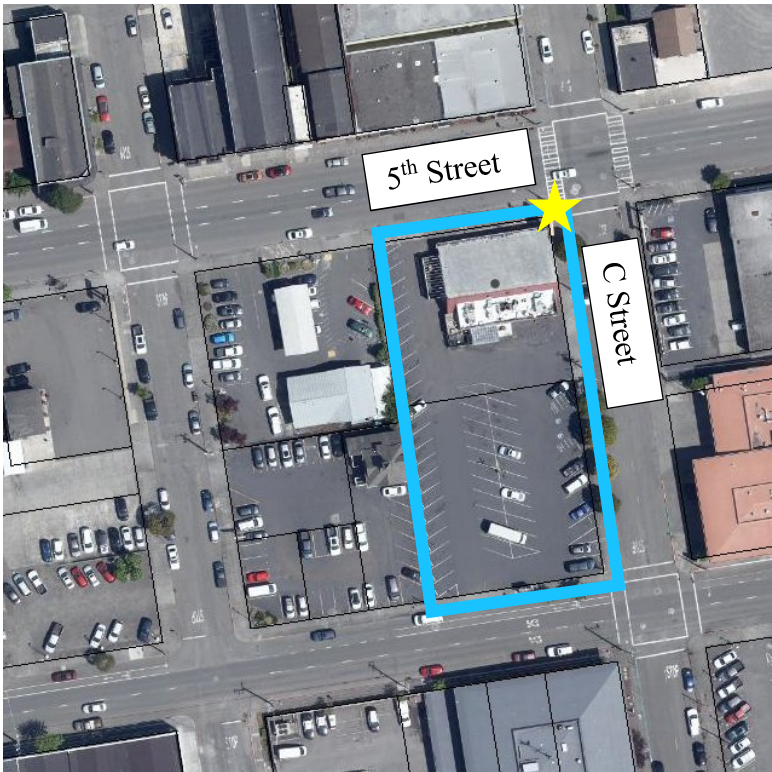
May 22, 2024

<b>Title:</b>	IHOP Creative Sign Permit Modification
<b>Project:</b>	Creative Sign Permit SGNC-24-2 (Modification of SGNC-23-2)
<b>Location:</b>	136 5 <sup>th</sup> Street
<b>APN:</b>	001-073-002
<b>Applicant:</b>	Geoff Wills
<b>Property Owner:</b>	Safar S & L Holdings LLC CO
<b>Purpose/Use:</b>	Modification of previously approved Creative Sign Permit for the IHOP pole sign at the southwest corner of 5 <sup>th</sup> and C Streets.
<b>Application Date:</b>	March 25, 2024
<b>General Plan:</b>	DC – Downtown Commercial
<b>Zoning:</b>	DW – Downtown West
<b>CEQA:</b>	Exempt under §15301, Class 1 Existing Facilities
<b>Staff Contact:</b>	Penelope Ponce, Assistant Planner
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Hold a public hearing; and Adopt a resolution finding the project exempt from CEQA and approving with conditions.
<b>Motion:</b>	“I move the Design Review Committee adopt a resolution finding the project exempt from CEQA and conditionally approving the modifications to the IHOP pole sign on the corner of 5 <sup>th</sup> and C Streets.”

**Figure 1: Location Map**



**Figure 2: Site Map** (pole sign location indicated by star)



**PROJECT SUMMARY**

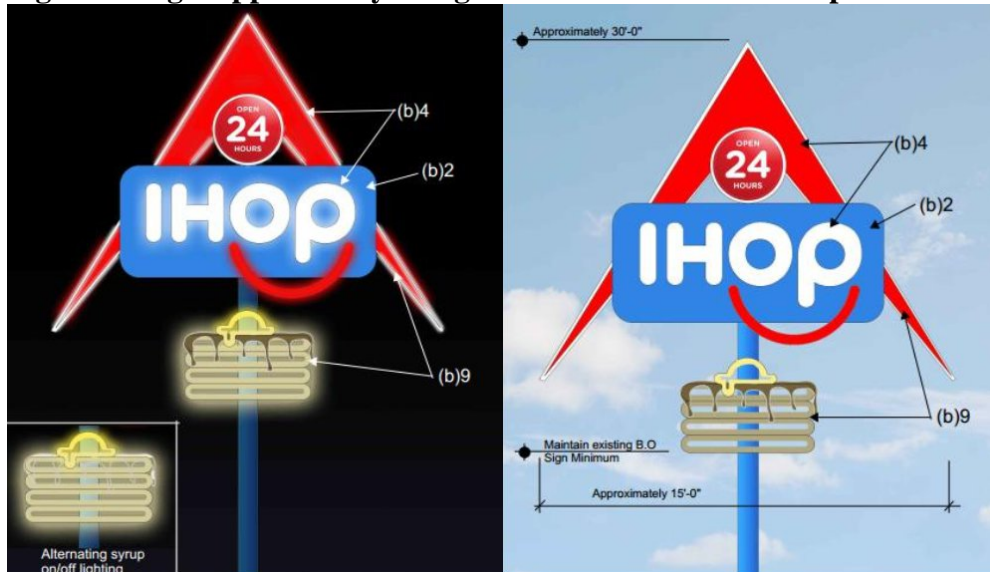
The Applicant, Geoff Wills (All Point Signs), on behalf of IHOP, is requesting a modification to a previously approved Creative Sign Permit (SGNC-23-2) to allow a modified version of the IHOP pole sign at 136 5<sup>th</sup> Street to remain as-is.

**BACKGROUND**

In September 2023, the Design Review Committee approved new IHOP signage and façade improvements. At that time, the applicant proposed to utilize and modify the existing 30 ft tall pole sign depicting “Denny’s” located on the southwest corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and C Streets, and replace the Denny’s logo with a new and creative IHOP sign. The approved pole sign had a

midcentury design which incorporated a red triangular “roof” representative of IHOP’s iconic A-Frame gabled roof, as well as IHOP’s blue box logo with extruding LED/neon white letters and red smile located in the center of the red illuminated A-Frame gable. The approved pole sign design also included a stack of pancakes with neon lighting that was supposed to alternate on/off to give an illusion of dripping syrup below the IHOP logo portion of the sign. Lastly, the approved sign was to have a small illuminated red circular sign with white letters reading “Open 24 Hours” located above the IHOP logo towards the top of the red A-Frame gable (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Sign Approved by Design Review Committee in September 2023**



In January 2024, it was brought to the City of Eureka’s (City) attention the IHOP pole sign was installed on the existing pole (which previously supported the Denny’s sign) on the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and C Streets without a building permit (Figure 4). The sign installed in January did not resemble the sign’s creative design approved by the Design Review Committee last fall. The applicant then applied for a building permit shortly after being contacted by the City for working without a permit, but it could not be approved as it did not substantially conform to the original approval.

**Proposed Modifications**

The applicant is now requesting a modification to the approved Creative Sign Permit (SGNC-23-2) to leave the pole sign as-is. The pole sign does not include the stack of pancakes on the east side of the pole, it does not include brown syrup lighting that alternates on/off to give the illusion of dripping syrup, and the pancakes are placed on a digitally printed cabinet instead of being constructed out of neon. The sign’s “Open 24 Hours” button located at the top of the red A-Frame gable has also been modified, and instead reads “Now Open” and it does not have white border. The modified sign has not changed the design of the red A-Frame gable, or the IHOP’s blue box logo with extruding LED white letters and red smile located in the center of the red illuminated A-Frame gable (See Attachment 2 for comparison).

**Figure 4: Sign Installed Without a Building Permit (4/12/2024)**



**ANALYSIS**

To approve a modification to a sign previously approved under a Creative Sign Permit, the Design Review Committee must find that the modified sign meets all of the General Design criteria and incorporates three or more of the Sign Features, Materials, and Contextual Criteria, as provided below.

**Creative Sign General Design Criteria.** The sign meets all of the following four general design criteria:

1. The sign constitutes a substantial aesthetic improvement to the site and has a positive visual impact on the surrounding area;
2. The sign is of unique design, and exhibits a high degree of thoughtfulness, imagination, inventiveness, and spirit;
3. The sign is of a higher creative, artistic, and/or sculptural nature than the average sign typically found in Eureka; and
4. The sign provides strong graphic character through the imaginative use of graphics, color, texture, quality materials, scale, and proportion.

The design approved in September 2023 constituted a substantial aesthetic improvement to the site because it resulted in the replacement of standard franchise signs common throughout the United States with one-of-a-kind signage specifically designed to complement the midcentury architecture of the restaurant, conform with IHOP branding standards, and capture the artistic, playful spirit of Eureka. Although the modified sign does not include all of the specific features (neon pancakes with illusion of dripping syrup on both sides, and round “open” button does not include “24 Hours”) approved by the Design Review Committee, it still has a positive visual impact on the surround area as it still has bright colors and uses multiple shapes to provide visual interest and a higher design aesthetic (Criteria 1). The pole sign still has a red A-Frame gable to represent the distinctive midcentury architecture that IHOP’s diners had in the early 1960’s and the stack of pancakes with butter and syrup, which are unique and exhibit a high degree of spirit for the IHOP brand (Criteria 2).

The modified sign still includes the IHOP box logo approved by the Design Review Committee with illuminated white letters that extrude from the blue background, and a red smile that comes down off the blue background. The extruding white letters, the red smile dropping below the blue box logo, the red A-Frame, and the stack of pancakes on the modified pole sign are still considered a creative design approach which differs from IHOP’s traditional logo, and is therefore of a higher creative nature than the average sign typically found in Eureka (Criteria 3).

The pancake graphic approved had neon tan lighting for the stack of pancakes, neon yellow lighting for the butter, and neon brown lighting alternating on/off to represent syrup dripping down the stack of pancakes. The pancakes have been modified to a digitally printed cabinet which is internally lit, and they do not include the syrup light alternating on/off. The modified stack of pancakes still provides a colorful illuminated graphic to represent IHOP’s most popular breakfast item, and provides strong graphic character through the imaginative use of color, texture, quality materials, scale, and proportion (Criteria 4). Although the modified sign does not include the special design feature (i.e. the stack of pancakes with the alternating on/off neon lighting) approved under the current sign permit, the pancake cabinet sign feature is still a unique design that will provide drivers and pedestrians along 5<sup>th</sup> and C Streets with an aesthetically pleasing pole sign. Additionally, to ensure the modified sign has a positive visual impact on the surrounding area and not just for drivers traveling north on Highway 101, a condition has been added requiring an identical illuminated pancake sign cabinet be installed on the other side (the east side) of the pole (Criteria 1).

Therefore, the proposed changes to the pole sign conforms with the Creative Sign General Design Criteria.

**Sign Features, Materials, and Contextual Criteria.** The sign must incorporate 3 of 12:

1. **Criteria 2:** Projecting, recessed, or cut-out text (e.g., push-through illuminated acrylic letters, routed letters, routed metal).
2. **Criteria 7:** Highly irregular multi-dimensional sign shape (e.g., a sign that has at least five or more straight sides, a sign that has a few straight sides and multiple variable rounded sides, a sign with an unusually disproportionate height-to-width ratio).
3. **Criteria 9:** Sign shape includes inventive representation of the use, name, or logo of the structure or business (e.g., a fish-shaped sign for a fishing store).

The IHOP box logo on the pole sign still incorporates a routed blue background with extruding white box LED letters, and the sign still has an LED-illuminated red smile that drops below the logo, giving the sign a creative cut-out feature that is different from traditional IHOP brand signs (Criteria 2). The sign continues to have a disproportionate height-to-width ratio as previously approved with its 12' x 14'-8" A-Frame gable with an "Now Open" button which tops the 9' x 5' box IHOP logo cabinet with a punch out smile, and has a 4' x 6' cabinet shaped like a stack of pancakes. Therefore, the sign includes multiple distinctive IHOP brand elements which have unique shapes and sizes not found on typical digitally printed box signs. Additionally, with the condition to add the pancake stack sign cabinet to the other side of the pole so the sign features are consistent on each side, the overall design of the pole sign can still be considered as having a highly irregular multi-dimensional sign shape (Criteria 7). The smile dropping below the IHOP box logo, the red A-Frame gable, and the illuminated stack of pancakes are an inventive representation of the mainstay food and midcentury design of IHOP restaurants (Criteria 9). The sign approved included neon lighting that alternated on/off to create an illusion of dripping syrup which helped it qualify for Criteria 4 (creative use of lighting). Although the modified sign installed varies from what was previously approved, it still conforms with 3 of the 12 Creative Sign Features, Material, and Contextual Criteria.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS**

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 §15301, Existing Facilities, Class 1 if the CEQA Guidelines, which consists of the operating of private structures involving negligible or no expansion of use. As there are no proposed changes to the pole sign's support structure and only involves modifications to the sign displays, the project qualifies for a Class 1 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 May 10, 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 May 10, 2024.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis above, the proposed modifications to the design of the IHOP pole sign at the southwest corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and C Streets, combined with the condition to add a pancake stack to the other side (east side) of the pole so each side is even, is consistent with general design criteria, and incorporates at least 3 of the required features, materials and contextual criteria, for approval of the modification to the Creative Sign Permit (SGNC-23-2). Other conditions have been added to the resolution (Attachment 1) to ensure the applicant is aware of the previously approved

conditions under SGNC-23-2 and DR-23-0004 in Resolution No. 2023-04 are still adhered to, as well as the need to report any future proposed sign modifications to this specific pole sign to Development Services – Planning.

**DOCUMENTS ATTACHED**

Attachment 1: Design Review Committee Resolution

Attachment 2: IHOP Pole Sign Comparison (Approved vs Proposed/Already Installed)

Attachment 3: Design Review Staff Report (SGNC-23-2 and DR-23-0004)