



**CITY OF SALINAS  
PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT**

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**DATE:           OCTOBER 16, 2024**

**TO:             PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM:          COURTNEY GROSSMAN, PLANNING MANAGER**

**BY:            THOMAS WILES, SENIOR PLANNER**

**TITLE:          PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 2024-001; THIRD  
AMENDMENT TO PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 2014-001  
TO CHANGE THE EXTERIOR BUILDING ELEVATIONS, ADD  
ADDITIONAL EXTERIOR COLORS TO THE APPROVED COLORS AND  
MATERIALS BOARD, ADD NEW EXTERIOR SIGNS, AND INCREASE  
MAXIMUM SIGN AREA IN CONNECTION WITH A PROPOSAL TO  
CREATE MULTIPLE TENANTS WITHIN THE FORMER TWO-STORY  
137,366 SQUARE-FOOT SEARS STORE ON A 2.85-ACRE PROJECT SITE  
LOCATED AT THE NORTHRIDGE MALL SHOPPING CENTER AT 1100  
NORTHRIDGE MALL IN THE COMMERCIAL RETAIL (CR) ZONING  
DISTRICT**

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:**

A motion to approve a Resolution recommending that the City Council find the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15332 and approve a Resolution approving Planned Unit Development Permit 2024-001 to change the exterior building elevations, add additional exterior colors to the approved colors and materials board, add new exterior signs, and increase maximum sign area by 136.15 square-feet above the maximum allowed 675.48 square-feet for a total of 811.63 square-feet of sign area in connection with a proposal to create multiple tenants within the former two-story 137,366 square-foot Sears store on a 2.85-acre project site located at the Northridge Mall Shopping Center at 1100 Northridge Mall.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Ethan Conrad Properties has applied for a Third Amendment to Planned Unit Development Permit 2014-004 (PUD 2014-001) to change the exterior building elevations, add additional exterior colors to the approved colors and materials board, add new exterior signs, and exceed the

maximum allowed sign area in connection with a proposal to create multiple tenants within the former two-story 137,366 square-foot Sears store on a 2.85-acre project site located at the Northridge Mall Shopping Center at 1100 Northridge Mall in the Commercial Retail (CR) Zoning District. Development at the Northridge Mall is regulated by PUD 2014-001.

DISCUSSION:

Background:

Ethan Conrad Properties (Applicant and Property Owner) is requesting a Third Amendment to Planned Unit Development Permit 2014-001 (PUD 2014-001) to change the exterior building elevations, add additional exterior colors to the approved colors and materials board, add new exterior signs in connection, and increase in maximum sign area by 136.15 square-feet above the maximum allowed 675.48 square-feet for a total of 811.63 square-feet of sign area with a proposal to create multiple tenants within the former two-story 137,366 square-foot Sears store on a 2.85-acre project site located at the Northridge Mall Shopping Center. The project site is located on a 2.85-acre portion of APN: 253-201-054-000 (Project Site) located at the northwest corner of North Main Street and Madrid Street. Access to the site is from an existing driveway onto Madrid Street as well as through the internal drive aisles within the Northridge Mall.

The proposed project consists of converting a former two-story 137,366 Sears store located at the Northridge Mall Shopping Center into multiple tenants. The former Sears store consists of the following floor area:

First Floor Area:	75,456 s.f.
First Floor Auto Center:	6,890 s.f.
Second Floor Area:	55,020 s.f.

The First Floor Auto Center was recently approved as a separate Commercial Recreation and Entertainment use (Smashen Axe) via Conditional Use Permit 2023-041 (CUP 2023-041). The Applicant proposes to partition an approximate 117,101 square-foot portion of the building into five (5) separate commercial tenants as follows:

	<u>Suite</u>	<u>Sq.ft.</u>	<u>Proposed tenant</u>
1.	“A”	25,423 s.f.	Burlington Coat Factory
2.	“B”	26,964 s.f.	O’Reilly’s Auto Parts
3.	“C”	16,075 s.f.	Gohan Ayce Buffett
4.	“2A”	22,677 s.f.	Dave & Buster’s
5.	“2B”	26,232 s.f.	Future tenant

Currently, a pending Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application for a Commercial Recreation and Entertainment use with on-sale alcohol sales (CUP 2024-024) is proposed within Suite “2A” (Dave & Buster’s). The application is incomplete because the proposed use includes exterior changes to

the building, which are subject to approval of a PUD Amendment (PUD 2024-001). Also, there are three pending Minor Modifications to PUD 2014-001 for Suites “A”, “B” and “C”, (MM 2023-029 – O’Reilly Auto Parts, MM 2024-006 – Gohan Ayce Buffett, and MM 2024-007 – Burlington Coat Factory). Following final approval of this Third Amendment to Planned Unit Development Permit 2014-001, said Minor Modifications would be incorporated into the PUD Amendment (see Analysis below).

The application includes a request to change the exterior building elevations for the entrances to the proposed tenants (Burlington, Dave & Buster’s, Gohan Ayce Buffett, and O’Reilly’s). The Applicant is also requesting approval of additional colors and materials and exterior wall signs to those previously approved for the Northridge Mall Shopping Center to allow for proposed changes to the exterior building (see attachments to the PUD).

#### Mall Background:

Northridge Mall consists of 12 individual parcels totaling approximately 93.74-acres (4,083,410 square-feet) located in the Commercial Retail (CR) District. The property is located in the Commercial Retail (CR) Zoning District. The following provides an overview of the land uses and zoning districts adjacent to the project site:

North:	Commercial Retail/Commercial Retail (CR)
South:	Multi-Family Residential/High Density Residential (R-H-2.1)
East:	Commercial Retail/Commercial Retail (CR) and Commercial Office (CO)
West:	U.S. Hwy. 101 and the Salinas Auto Center/Industrial – General Commercial/Salinas Auto Center Precise Plan Overlay (IGC-SP-4)

Per City records, the mall was originally authorized by Planned Unit Development Permit 1969-006 (PUD 1969-006) and related Amendments One and Two. Planned Unit Development Permit 1978-008 (PUD 1978-008) was approved by the City Council on January 15, 1979 and again to clarify technical changes in the wording on May 14, 1979. Planned Unit Development Permit 1978-008 superseded the original Planned Unit Development Permit 1969-006 and related Amendments One and Two and approved the Phase Two expansion of the mall, including the addition of the former Sears store and an expansion to the former Mervyns store.

Planned Unit Development Permit 2014-001 (PUD 2014-001), which amended Planned Unit Development Permit 1978-008, was approved by the City Council on April 14, 2015. The project approved by PUD 2014-001 consisted of several phases. One of the phases included development of five (5) new commercial pads, four (4) along North Main Street and one (1) along the U.S. Highway 101 frontage. Currently, two of the four pads along North Main Street have been developed with Panera Bread and Chick-Fil-A. The two remaining pads have had requests for development from Starbucks and In-N-Out Burger, but development has yet to occur. There are currently no requests for development of the fifth pad located along U.S. Highway 101. A Second Amendment to PUD 2014-001 approved a sixth commercial pad located at the northwest corner of North Main Street and Madrid Street south of the current Big 5 Sporting Goods store. Another

phase of PUD 2014-001 included the addition of approximately 48,337 square-feet to accommodate the relocation of J.C. Penney, which occurred a few years ago.

A First Amendment to PUD 2014-001 was approved by the City Council on January 22, 2019, which authorized development of an LED reader board sign located along US 101 and installation of a new 17-foot high sign shaped as a bowling pin for Round One (PUD 2018-001). The reader board sign has yet to be built. Round One was authorized by Conditional Use Permit (CUP 2018-001), which included reuse of approximately 53,500 square foot of the former JC Penney retail area for Commercial Recreation consisting of a bowling alley, arcade, billiards, dining area with on-sale alcohol sales of beer and wine (Type 41 ABC license).

A Second Amendment to PUD 2014-001 was approved by the City Council on January 9, 2024, which approved a 1.651-acre building pad to construct a 3,501 square-foot restaurant with a drive-through, outdoor seating, 41 off-street parking spaces, and an 87.6 square-foot (58.6%) increase in sign area. The restaurant with a drive-through has subsequently been approved as administrative Site Plan Review 2024-006 (SPR 2024-006).

#### Analysis:

#### Commercial uses:

The Northridge Mall Shopping Center is governed by Planned Unit Development Permit 2014-001 (PUD 2014-001), and an Amendment to the PUD is required to effect the proposed changes.

Per Zoning Code Section 37-10.430, Shopping Centers are defined as a group of two or more commercial establishments including indoor swap meets, the perimeter of which is clearly definable, developed on a single parcel or contiguous parcels of land, planned, and developed as a single site and providing shared on-site parking and vehicular access, landscaping, signage, and other facilities. The proposed tenants for the five (5) suites are considered commercial uses by Zoning Code Section 37-10.270 and would be allowed in the Northridge Mall Shopping Center. Per Zoning Code Section 37-30.200, Table 37-30.90, shopping centers are permitted in the CR District with a Site Plan Review (SPR).

Per Zoning Code Section 37-60.1030, the following findings for Planned Unit Development Permits are required to be established (refer to the findings contained in the draft Resolution):

- (a) The location of the Planned Unit Development is in accord with the objectives of this Zoning Code and the purposes of the district in which the site is located;
- (b) The Planned Unit Development and the proposed conditions under which it would be developed or maintained are consistent with the Salinas General Plan, applicable specific plan, and other plans and policies adopted by the Salinas City Council and will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare of persons residing or working in or adjacent to the planned unit development, nor

detrimental to properties or improvements in the vicinity or to the general welfare of the city; and

- (c) The Planned Unit Development does not represent an exception to the standards of this Zoning Code but rather an alternative resulting in an equal or superior design in comparison to development, which strictly complies with base district property development regulations.

The proposed development would reconfigure the former two-story 137,366 square-foot former Sears store into a five (5) tenant commercial space. The former Sears store closed in approximately 2020. The proposed reconfiguration would consist of three additional commercial tenants on the first floor (Burlington Coat Factory, Gohan Ayce Buffett, and O'Reilly's Auto Parts), the first floor entrance for a proposed commercial recreation and entertainment use with an on-sale alcohol use (Dave & Busters), and a commercial recreation and entertainment use that was previously approved with a separate Conditional Use Permit (Smashen Axe). The second floor would contain the primary operation of Dave & Busters and a future commercial tenant that is undetermined as this time. The Applicant is proposing no increase in the gross floor area of the existing building.

The proposed development can be found to be in accord with the Zoning Code and the purposes of the Commercial Retail (CR) District. Per Zoning Code Section 37-30.190(k)(3), one of the purposes of the CR District is to provide areas for a wide range of commercial uses, such as those proposed as a part of the PUD Amendment.

#### Reciprocal Easement Agreement (REA):

Currently, the subject property (Assessor Parcel Number: 253-201-054-000) does not have reciprocal access with the other properties located in the Northridge Mall Shopping Center. A previous access agreement for the Northridge Mall Shopping Center expired in early 2024. Accordingly, vehicular access and loading of goods and materials to the project site through the Northridge Mall Shopping Center is currently not permitted. In addition, the use of off-street parking spaces located on adjacent properties for tenants of the proposed project is not permitted.

A condition is recommended requiring the Applicant, or successor-in-interest, to obtain a Reciprocal Easement Agreement (REA) with all other applicable property owners of the Northridge Mall Shopping Center prior to final inspection of the first building permit in connection with the reconfiguration of the former Sears building. The REA will allow for legal access to the project site and for the proposed project to utilize adjacent off-street parking on other properties.

#### Off-street parking/Landscaping:

Per the Site Plan (Exhibit "C" of PUD 2024-001), the project site includes an existing 20-space off-street parking area located on the western portion of the project site. Currently, there are landscaped islands on the both the west and east side of the project site which are missing landscaping and irrigation. In addition, there are landscaped areas located on the southwest portion

of the building and to the south side of the loading dock. The Applicant, or successor-in-interest, will be required to replace all missing landscaping and irrigation located within the project site. In addition, the Applicant, or successor-in-interest, is proposing to install missing landscaping and irrigation located outside of the project site (see shaded areas on Exhibit “C”). The project includes construction of a new recycling and solid waste enclosure on the west side of the building, which will need to be comply with Zoning Code development standards, including landscaped planters.

Signs:

The project includes new exterior wall signs for the proposed tenants on the east and south exterior building elevations. The proposed signs include Burlington Coat Factory, Dave and Buster’s, and Gohan Ayce Buffett on the east elevation and Gohan Ayce Buffett and O’Reilly;s Auto Parts on the south elevation. Per Zoning Code Section 37-50.540, “Sign or Signage” is defined as the following:

“**Sign or Signage.** A visual communications device used to convey a message to its viewers. A sign shall mean and include every advertising message, announcement, declaration, insignia, color, surface, or space erected or maintained in view of the observer thereof for identification, advertisement, or promotion of the interests of any person, entity, product, or service.”

Per Zoning Code Section 37-50.390, the purposes of the Sign Ordinance are as follows:

- (a) Implement the City's community design and safety standards as set forth in the General Plan;
- (b) Maintain and enhance the City's appearance by regulating the design, character, location, number, type, quality of materials, size, illumination, and maintenance of signs;
- (c) Protect and improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic safety by balancing the need for signs which facilitate the safe and smooth flow of traffic (e.g., traffic directional signs) without an excess of signage which may distract motorists, overload their capacity to quickly receive information, visually obstruct traffic the signs, or otherwise create congestion and safety hazards;
- (d) Eliminate the traffic safety hazards to pedestrians and motorists posed by off-site signs bearing commercial messages;
- (e) Generally limit commercial signage to on-site locations in order to protect the aesthetic environment from the visual clutter associated with the unrestricted proliferation of signs, while providing channels of communication to the public;
- (f) Allow the communication of information for commercial and noncommercial purposes without regulating the content of noncommercial messages;

- (g) Allow the expression of political, religious, and other noncommercial speech at all times and allow for an increase in the quantity of such speech in the period preceding elections;
- (h) Respect and protect the right of free speech by sign display, while reasonably regulating the structural, locational, and other noncommunicative aspects of signs, generally for the public health, safety, welfare, and, specifically, to serve the public interests in traffic and pedestrian safety and community aesthetics;
- (i) Minimize the possible adverse effects of signs on nearby public and private property;
- (j) Serve the City's interests in maintaining and enhancing its visual appeal for tourists and other visitors, by preventing the degradation of visual quality which can result from excess signage;
- (k) Defend the peace and tranquility of residential zones and neighborhoods by prohibiting commercial signs on private residences, while allowing residents the opportunity, within reasonable limits, to express political, religious, and other noncommercial messages from their homes; and
- (l) Enable the fair, consistent, and efficient enforcement of the sign regulations of the City.

The wall sign area for the proposed project is stated as follows:

<b>Tenant Name</b>	<b>Sign Location</b>	<b>Occupancy Frontage</b>	<b>Max. allowed sign area per Northridge Mall Master Sign Plan</b>	<b>Proposed sign area</b>
Dave & Buster's	East elevation	83-feet, 11-inches (83'-11")	104.9 sf. (83'-11" x 1.25)	<b><u>258.75 sf.</u></b> 1. 81 sf. logo (9' x 9') 2. 177.75 sf. wall sign (19'-9" x 9')
Burlington	East elevation	108-feet, 8-inches (108'-8")	135.8 s.f. (108'-8" x 1.25)	<b><u>131.78 sf.</u></b> 1. 131.78 sf. wall sign (25' x 5'-3")
Gohan Buffett Ayce	East elevation	86-feet, 7-inches (86'-7")	108.23 sf. (86'-7" x 1.25)	<b><u>33.66 sf.</u></b> 1. 33.66 sf. wall sign (10'-11" x 3'-1")
Gohan Buffett Ayce	South elevation	69-feet, 2-inches (69'-2")	86.45 sf. (69'-2" x 1.25)	<b><u>108.17 sf.</u></b> 1. 108.17 sf. wall

				sign (19'-8" x 5'-6")
O'Reilly's Auto Parts	South elevation	154-feet, 2-inches (154'-2")	192.71 sf. (154'-2" x 1.25)	<b>231.88 sf.</b> 1. 231.88 sf. wall sign (37'-1" x 6'-3")
Future Tenant	South elevation	37-feet, 11-inches (37' - 11")	47.39 sf. (37' x 11")	None proposed

As shown on the table above, the maximum allowed sign area is 675.48 square-feet (maximum allowed 348.93 square-feet on east elevations and 326.55 square-feet maximum allowed on south elevation). The total proposed sign area is 764.24 square-feet, which exceeds the maximum allowed by 88.76 square-feet. In addition, the future tenant per the Northridge Mall Master Sign Plan is allowed 47.39 square-feet of sign area, which increases proposed sign area to 811.63 square-feet, and the amount of non-conforming sign area to 136.15 square-feet (which is 120% increase of sign area). This is less than the 143% increase that was approved for the Second Amendment to PUD 2014-001 (PUD 2022-001) for the Raising Cane's restaurant pad. Per the proposed sign elevations shown on Exhibits "O" and "P", the signs are within the maximum allowed 75 fascia height and width. The Burlington sign includes a red background architectural feature which extends from the existing second floor roof line.

The Master Sign Plan for the Northridge Mall Shopping Center limits exterior signs for the mall and the nearby Convenience Center to those with either exterior access or a minimum of 20,000 square-feet of gross floor area if they do not have exterior access. All of the proposed tenants are over 20,000 square-feet in gross floor area and all except the future tenant include exterior access. Allowing the proposed 811.63 square-foot sign area for the proposed project could be deemed to provide an economic and competitive advantage over similar adjacent commercial uses and contribute to excess visual clutter and blight to the community. Per Zoning Code Section 37-50.620, Table 37-50.170, Footnote 1, greater sign area may be approved as a part of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), as reasonable and necessary for identification of a development or use on a site of more than two (2) acres in size. The proposed project exceeds two-acres in size and the proposed signs and increase in sign area may be considered reasonable and necessary.

Building colors and materials:

Per Exhibit "N" of PUD 2024-001, the Applicant is proposed additional colors and materials for the proposed project. The colors and materials for most of the existing building will remain and will not change. There will be additional colors and materials primarily for tenant entrances and proposed signs. These proposed new colors and materials include but are not limited: red, black, blue, orange, white, and aluminum. Staff recommends approval of the proposed colors and materials because they are generally consistent with those of the Northridge Mall Shopping Center.



Findings:

The Planning Commission may recommend City Council approval of an application for an Amendment to Planned Unit Development Permit 2024-001 if all of the findings set forth in the attached proposed Planning Commission Resolution are established.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The project has been determined to be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Section 15332 (*In-fill Development Projects*) of the CEQA Guidelines. The project to change the exterior building elevations, add additional exterior colors to the approved colors and materials board, add new exterior signs, and increase the sign area in connection with a proposed to create multiple tenants on a 2.85-acre project site including a former two-story 137,366 square-foot Sears store and adjacent off-street parking spaces located at the Northridge Mall Shopping Center, which is less than five (5) acres. The site is served by existing utilities and public services and approval of the project does not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality or water quality.

TIME CONSIDERATION:

The project was deemed complete on October 16, 2024. Final action is required by December 15, 2024, pursuant to the Permit Streamlining Act.

ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE TO THE COMMISSION:

The Planning Commission has the following alternatives:

1. Affirm the findings set forth in the attached Resolution and recommend that the City Council approve Planned Unit Development Permit 2024-001 with modifications; or
2. Find that the proposal is not appropriate and establish findings at the public hearing recommending that the City Council should not approve Planned Unit Development Permit 2024-001

ATTACHMENTS:

Proposed Planning Commission Resolution

Draft PUD 2024-001 approval document with the following exhibits:

- Exhibit “A” - Vicinity Map
- Exhibit “B” – Cover Sheet (Sheet G001)
- Exhibit “C” – Site Plan (Sheet A001)
- Exhibit “D” – First Floor Plan (Sheet A101)
- Exhibit “E” – Second Floor Plan (Sheet A102)
- Exhibit “F” – Construction Details (Sheet A103)

Exhibit “G” – As-Built Landscape Plan (Sheet A104)  
Exhibit “H” – As-Built Irrigation Plan (Sheet A105)  
Exhibit “I” – Overall Exterior Elevations (Sheet A401)  
Exhibit “J” – Enlarged Exterior Elevation (Sheet A402)  
Exhibit “K” – Enlarged Exterior Elevation (Sheet A403)  
Exhibit “L” – Enlarged Exterior Elevation (Sheet A404)  
Exhibit “M” – Enlarged Exterior Elevation (Sheet A405)  
Exhibit “N”-- Material Color Board (Sheet A406)  
Exhibit “O” – Eastern Elevation Signage Area (Sheet A407)  
Exhibit “P” – Southern Elevation Signage Area (Sheet A408)  
Exhibit “Q” – Construction Details (Sheet A600)  
Exhibit “R” – Engineer’s Report dated July 4, 2024

Cc: Ethan Conrad Properties, Applicant and Property Owner  
Other interested parties

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