



CITY of CALABASAS

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT
OCTOBER 21, 2021

TO: Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Glenn Michitsch, Senior Planner

FILE NO(s): SGNP-2021-003, SGN-2021-008, and MSCP-2021-005

PROPOSAL: Request for a new Sign Program, Sign Permit and Minor Scenic Corridor Permit to establish a new sign program, and for the installation of 1 monument sign, 4 building mounted signs, 3 vinyl window (informational) signs, and 1 vinyl address (informational) sign for the Audi Automobile Dealership located at 24650 Calabasas Rd (APN: 2069-009-027 within the Commercial Limited (CL) zoning district, and the Scenic Corridor (-SC) and Commercial Auto Retailer (CAR) overlay zones.

APPLICANT: Rick Rice (representing Audi)

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 2021-734, recommending that the City Council approve File No(s). SGNP-2021-003, SGN-2021-008, and MSCP-2021-005.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission adopt Resolution No. 2021-734 recommending that the City Council approve File No(s). SGNP-2021-003, SGN-2021-008, and MSCP-2021-005, a request for a Sign Program, Sign Permit and Minor Scenic Corridor Permit to establish a new sign program, and for the installation of 1 monument sign, 4 building mounted signs, 3 vinyl window (informational) signs, and 1 vinyl address (informational) sign for the Audi Automobile Dealership.

REVIEW AUTHORITY:

The project is before the Planning Commission for review pursuant to Calabasas Municipal Code Section 17.30.050(C), which stipulates that the Planning Commission is the approval authority for all new sign programs. However, in this case, the Planning Commission will

review and provide a recommendation to the City Council because the applicant has requested an increase in the height and area of the proposed monument sign, and pursuant to Section 17.30.080(B)(3), the City Council is the approval authority for requests for additional sign height and area for monument signs within the Calabasas Road District. Additionally, the City Council is the review authority for all associated application requests because pursuant to Calabasas Municipal Code Section 17.60.020, the higher review authority shall be the final review authority for all related applications ordinarily subject to a lower review authority.

BACKGROUND:

The subject site is currently developed with the existing Audi auto dealership, which is located on Calabasas Road, approximately 600 feet east of the Calabasas Road/Mureau Road intersection. A remodel of and addition to the existing facility was approved by the Planning Commission via PC Resolution No. 2019-687 on June 6, 2019, and the site is currently under construction. No signage was approved under PC Resolution No. 2019-687.

To upgrade the auto retailer's signage to Audi's new corporate branded signage, and to accomplish an array of signs that fits the new building design, on May 14, 2021, the applicant submitted applications for a Sign Permit and a Minor Scenic Corridor Permit. The applications were deemed incomplete on June 11, 2021. During the City's review, it was also determined that pursuant to CMC Section 17.30.080(B), a new Sign Program would be required because the proposed signs included supportive graphics such as a company logo. To this end, the applicant submitted an added application for a new Sign Program on August 9, 2021. The Development Review Committee reviewed the amended applications on August 16, 2021, and following re-submittal of revised plans, the amended applications were deemed complete on October 6, 2021. Subsequently, the Architectural Review Panel reviewed the proposed sign program and the proposed signs on September 24, 2021, and recommended to the Planning Commission approval of the sign program.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

- A. Site Design/Building Layout: The subject site is currently developed with the existing two story Audi auto dealership, which is located on the south side of Calabasas Road, approximately 600 feet east of the Calabasas Road/Mureau Road intersection. A remodel of and addition to the existing facility was approved by the Planning Commission via PC Resolution No. 2019-687 on June 6, 2019, and the site is currently under construction.

The dealership structure is generally oriented toward Calabasas Road and the US 101 Freeway to the north. The northern (narrower) portion of the reconfigured two-story structure contains a showroom, sales and other offices, auto parts department

that includes storage areas, and a covered auto service drive. Customer access is via three entrance doorways, two on the eastern side that serve the sales offices/showroom area and service center, and one on the western side that also serves the sales/showroom area. The rear (southern) portion of the structure is wider and contains the service center on the ground floor, and rooftop inventory parking above. Access to the site is via two driveways on both the east and west sides of the dealership structure that access both customer parking and parking for vehicle inventory. The eastern driveway accesses the service center drive and wraps around the structure where there is additional customer and inventory parking, and also includes a separate service center vehicle storage parking area. An outdoor display area is sited north of the building and adjacent to Calabasas Road.

In terms of visibility, the dealership is highly visible to drivers traveling on Calabasas Road. From the US 101 Freeway, the dealership is visible to drivers traveling westbound. However, views of the dealership for eastbound traffic are somewhat limited due to both topography related to the Mureau Road freeway-overpass bridge and related embankments, and existing mature landscape both native and introduced between the freeway and the Audi dealership.

- B. Proposed Signs: The applicant is proposing to upgrade the signage on-site with new corporate-branded signs (Exhibit B; overall depiction of proposed signs found on pages 6 - 9). The specific proposal includes:
- 1) a 62.64 s.f. building-mounted, internally-illuminated franchise sign featuring the Audi “rings” logo, located on the front facade (Sign #1);
 - 2) a 49.08 s.f. building-mounted, internally-illuminated retail tenant identification sign featuring the retailer name “Calabasas Audi”, located on the front facade (Sign #2a and #2b);
 - 3) a secondary 2.7 s.f. building-mounted, non-illuminated retail tenant identification sign featuring the retailer name “Audi” and the Audi “rings” logo, located on the east building elevation by the showroom entrance (Sign #3);
 - 4) a 6 s.f. building mounted, internally-illuminated “Service” identification sign, located centered on the wall over the covered service entrance (Sign #4);
 - 5) a 150 s.f., 25 foot high, internally illuminated monument sign, sited in a landscaped area near the eastern driveway (Sign #5);
 - 6) three 2.95 s.f. vinyl non-illuminated window informational signs, two sited on the glass door entrances on the eastern side of the building, and one sited

on the glass door entrance on the western side of the building (Sign #6, #7, and #8); and

- 7) a 2.44 s.f. building-mounted non-illuminated informational sign featuring the site address, sited on the front façade (Sign #9).

C. Sign Program/Sign Design: The purpose of a sign program is to integrate a project's signage into the architectural design of structures on the subject site. A sign program achieves a consistency and cohesiveness to the design and display of multiple permanent signs, while also ensuring adequate visibility of all signs and encouraging creativity and excellence in the design of signs. A sign program shall consist of a description, including dimensions, materials, locations, and illustration of all signs proposed on the site (CMC 17.30.050). The sign program shall have a unifying design theme or style, as approved by the Commission.

There is currently no existing approved sign program for the subject site. The proposed new sign program (Exhibit B) provides standards for the auto dealership's signage (i.e. building mounted signs, the monument sign, and the informational signs). All proposed signs have been designed to conform with Chapter 17.30 of the Calabasas Municipal Code (CMC), including the proposed 25-foot high, 150 sq. ft. monument sign, which is allowable pursuant to the City Council granting approval as described in CMC Section 17.30.080(B)(3). Additionally, the sign program has been designed to ensure compatibility with the architectural style of the building. The sign program establishes allowed color, font and materials for each sign.

The approved new design of the Audi of Calabasas dealership features a modern style building consistent with Audi's corporate image. The front (north) façade, when completed, will include a unique (gray colored) metal honeycomb cladding (diamond shaped perforated corrugated metal rainscreen) and 25-foot tall glass storefront windows that wrap around the sides of the building. The honeycomb cladding is featured on each side of the building beyond the glass store frontage. Rear portions of the building will utilize natural gray CMU masonry blocks; however, the portions of the "service area" structure visible from Calabasas Road will be articulated with a greenscape wire rope system with vine vegetation to grow through the wire system to cover the CMU wall (creating a green wall).

The proposed colors and materials for the signs are complimentary to the colors and materials of the buildings. The Alucobond (metal) paneling for the monument sign (Sign #5) and acrylic returns for the channel lettering (of Sign #1, #2a, #2b, and #4) propose to use gray and silver tones to match the building. Sign faces for all the signs are generally acrylic and use corporate branded colors including red, a day/night color system (black during the day and white by night when illuminated), and silver. Sign #6, #7, #8, and #9 are vinyl, and also include gray, silver, black and

red colors.

D. Sign Permit: Per CMC Section 17.30.050, sign programs and sign permits may be approved as long as the review body finds that: 1) the proposed signs are permitted in the zoning district, and complies with the provisions of CMC Chapter 17.30 (Signs), and all other applicable provision of the City’s Land Use and Development Code, and 2) the signs are in compliance with CMC Section 17.30.060 of the Land Use and Development Code, which contains the City’s Sign Design Criteria. The subject property is located within the Commercial Limited (CL) Zoning District and the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone. CMC Section 17.30.080 contains provisions for sign type, sign class, maximum number, maximum area, maximum height, location requirements, lighting, and contains additional requirements. All nine proposed signs comply with all CMC Section 17.30.080 requirements. Details for all proposed signs are contained below in Table 1, and the technical appendix.

Table 1

Type	No.	Proposed Area	Proposed Height	Description / Illumination	Compliance With CMC Chapter 17.30
Building Mounted – Franchise Sign (Sign #1)	1	62.64 sq. ft. (one sign face)	Below Roofline	Business Identification featuring the Audi “Rings” Logo – Poly One white plastic sign face – internally illuminated.	Yes
Building Mounted – Retail Tenant Identification Sign (Sign #2a and #2b)	1	49.08 sq. ft. (one sign face)	Below Roofline	Business Identification featuring – “Audi Calabasas” – acrylic sign faces and returns – Internally Illuminated	Yes
Building Mounted – Retail Tenant Identification Sign (Secondary) (Sign #3)	1	2.7 sq. ft. (one sign face)	Below Roofline	Business Identification featuring the Audi “rings” logo and business name “Audi” – acrylic sign faces – non-illuminated	Yes
Building Mounted – Special Service Sign (Sign #4)	1	6 sq. ft. (one sign face)	Below Roofline	Accessory Use Identification featuring “Service” – acrylic sign face and returns – internally illuminated	Yes
Monument Sign (Sign #5)	1	150 sq. ft. * (two sign faces)	25 ft. *	Business Identification featuring the Audi “Rings” logo, business name “Audi”, and the property address	Yes *
Window Signs (Sign #6, #7, and #8)	3	2.95 sq. ft. (one sign face)	5 ft.	Informational signs featuring business name “Audi Calabasas”, days and hours of operation – vinyl – non-illuminated	Yes
Informational Sign (Sign #9)	1	2.44 sq. ft. (one sign face)	Below Roofline	Informational sign featuring the street address – vinyl – non-illuminated	Yes

**Per CMC Section 17.30.080(B)(3), the maximum sign height and sign area for monument signs in the Calabasas Road District is 20 feet high and 100 sq. ft. in area; however, the City Council may grant an exception to sign area and height, up to a maximum of 25 feet high and 150 sq. ft. in area.*

CMC Section 17.30.060 contains the City’s Sign Design Criteria, which addresses a sign’s relationship to the structure and other signs, illumination, materials, colors, maintenance requirements, relationship to streets/rights-of-way, and screening of

electrical transformer boxes. Specific design criteria include:

- Building wall and fascia signs shall be compatible with predominant visual elements of the structure;
- All on-site signs shall be visually consistent with each other in terms of letter size, copy style, general overall shape, materials, method of support, type of illumination and location
- Lighting that minimizes spillage onto the public right-of-way or adjacent properties;
- All on-site signs shall use durable materials which are compatible in appearance with the building supporting or identified by the sign
- All on-site signs should use colors and materials that are compatible with the building design and contribute to legibility and design integrity
- Monument signs shall be landscaped at the base, and designed to be complementary of the building architecture, color and materials;
- Signs shall be maintained and kept in good repair;
- Signs should be designed and located to not obstruct any pedestrian, bicyclist, or driver's view of the public right-of-way, including:
 - Not located in or projecting into the right-of-way;
 - Not interfering with sight distances of motorists or cyclists on adjacent streets and pedestrians proceeding on or approaching adjacent sidewalks;
 - Not projecting into or suspended above a driveway area without a minimum vertical clearance of 15 feet;
 - Not suspended over or projecting into a walkway without a vertical clearance of 8 feet 6 inches; and
- All electrical transformer boxes and raceways shall be screened from public rights-of-way and adjacent properties.

As mentioned above, the design of the “approved” auto dealership building is modern in style, featuring a unique (gray colored) metal honeycomb cladding (diamond shaped perforated corrugated metal rainscreen), 25-foot tall glass storefront windows that wrap around the side of the building, and natural gray CMU masonry blocks. All proposed signs include Audi's corporate-branded colors including silver, gray, red and a day/night color scheme that displays a black color by day and a white color by night, all of which are complimentary to the color scheme of the building. The building mounted signs' acrylic faces and returns, and the monument sign's Alucobond metal paneling both complement the design of the building which features metal cladding and tall glass features.

Of the proposed building-mounted signs (Signs #1, #2a, #2b, #4, and #9) are oriented toward Calabasas Road and the US 101 Freeway to the north. These signs include crisp graphics and can easily be viewed from vehicle and pedestrian areas to the north. Nighttime internal illumination (LEDs behind acrylic sign faces) will provide a soft light, but visually clear images, and thus also comply with the

requirement to minimize light spillage onto public rights-of-way or adjacent properties. Signs #3, #6, #7, and #8 are oriented toward public parking and patron entrance areas to the east and west of the dealership and do not include nighttime illumination. These signs are smaller in size, also featuring crisp graphics, and meant for customers walking into the facility.

The monument sign will be situated within a landscaped area near the eastern driveway entrance. It is proposed at a height of 25 feet and has an area of 150 sq. ft., but is sufficiently set back from Calabasas Road (20 feet) so as not to impede the views of drivers, cyclists or pedestrians entering and exiting the facility or traveling along Calabasas Road.

None of the proposed signs are situated to project into any street rights-of-ways, driveways, or sidewalks. Acrylic and metal sign material components are durable. Furthermore, all signs utilize uniform font, style, lettering and graphics for a unifying design throughout the dealership.

E. Scenic Corridor Design Guidelines / West Calabasas Road Master Plan / Architectural Review Panel (ARP): The project site is located within a designated scenic corridor, and as such, is required to comply with the Scenic Corridor Design Guidelines, which include the following applicable design standards:

- *Signage should be visually proportionate to the building façade and have balance and scale with the overall building mass. Color, lettering style and size should be consistent with adjacent signs*

As already discussed above, the proposed new signs, like the approved design remodel revisions (under construction) for the dealership, are designed consistent with Audi's corporate image. Colors and materials of all the signs are complimentary to each other, and the colors and materials of the building. The most prominent of the signs (Sign #1, #2a, and #2b,) are large enough to present a clear image, but are proportionally subordinate to the building façade element against which they are proposed. The largest of the signs, the Audi "rings" logo is approximately 4 foot 8 inches tall by 13 feet 6 inches wide against a building façade element that measures approximately 38 feet high and 79 feet wide. Likewise, Signs 2a and 2b (considered one sign) that identify the business name are 2 feet high by 27 feet wide collectively (both #2a and #2b) on the same building façade element. The building mounted "Service" sign (Sign #4), proposed at one foot high by 6 feet wide is centered over the covered service drive element that is approximately 18 feet 8 inches tall and 37 feet wide. The remainder of the building mounted signs (Sign #3, #6, #7, #8, and #9), with the exception of Sign #9 (address), are pedestrian oriented and very small in relation to the building. Sign #9 (address) is necessary for building address identification and is less than 1 foot tall

and 3 feet 8 inches wide against the same front façade as Sign #1, #2a and #2b.

The monument sign (Sign #5) is proposed at a height of 25 feet and at a width dimension (with support structure) of 10 feet 4 ½ inches. The monument sign will be separated from the building by approximately 110 feet and sited within a landscaped area in the northeastern portion of the site, adjacent to the eastern driveway. The site itself has a width (street frontage) of just over 381 feet in length. The full width of the dealership structure is approximately 246 feet, and has building elements up to approximately 44 feet in height. In this respect, placement of a 25-foot high and approximately 10 ½ foot wide monument sign is proportional to both the site and the structure. Furthermore, as indicated previously in this report, the proposed monument sign complies with the maximum allowable height and sign area standards.

The project is also located in the West Calabasas Road Master Plan (WCRMP) area. The Master Plan was adopted in 2006 to address the unique evolution of the area, and set forth guidelines to help with use planning and design. It identifies two distinct sub-areas: a medical-related located west of the Mureau Road intersection with Calabasas Road, and an auto-related area which includes everything east of the Mureau Road intersection with Calabasas Road.

The subject property is located within the auto-related sub-area, which describes a broad design theme of “Country Corporate”. The plan acknowledges the fact that a “Country Corporate” design theme is highly subjective, and broadly seeks design that is more rural in character. Furthermore, auto dealership designs within this theme are recognized within the plan as having to comply with mandated corporate design standards that may not exactly reflect the City’s desired design theme. To this end, the Master Plan encourages compromise and balance between the City’s design goals and that of the dealerships. In regards to signage, the design guidelines include the following:

- *Wall signs are to be mounted flat against and parallel to a building wall or roof fascia and located on a prominent site on the building.*
- *Signs should be legible, using a brief message and avoiding intricate typefaces.*
- *Use of natural colors and materials.*
- *Encouragement to use contrasting colors such as light colored letters on a dark background.*
- *Encouragement to use either direct source illumination, or “halo” (backlit) lighting*
- *Use of natural materials such as stone or wood, or if structural integrity is a concern, use of concrete or fiberglass, but made to look like wood.*
- *Wall sign colors that complement the building.*

The proposed new signs for the “Audi” dealership consist of either acrylic sign

faces or metal paneling that is complementary to the contemporary design and color palette of the approved building. Sign copy is formed crisply for better readability, and the internal illumination proposed for the north-facing building mounted signs (Sign #1, #2a, #2b, and #4) and the monument sign (Sign #5) will present softly, but with a visually crisp image. Also, as is encouraged by the WCRMP, the proposed wall mounted signs are mounted flat against the walls, and located on the most prominent portion of the dealership structure. For these reasons, the design of the proposed signs generally meet the design guidelines of the WCRMP guidelines. Furthermore, although the proposed signs do not use “natural” materials like stone or wood, as encouraged by the WCRMP guidelines, the corporate-branded building design also does not use natural materials, and therefore signs using natural materials would not be consistent with the building design as encouraged by the WCRMP. To this end, the proposed signs are consistent with the WCRMP sign guidelines.

The proposed signs were reviewed by the Architectural Review Panel (ARP) on September 24, 2021. Based on a determination that the proposed sign program complies with the provisions of the Municipal Code and all applicable design guidelines, the ARP unanimously recommended approval of the signs as designed.

- F. Monument Sign: The monument sign is proposed at a height of 25 feet and at an area of 150 sq. ft. Per CMC Section 17.30.080(B)(3), following review and recommendation by the Planning Commission, the City Council may approve a monument sign of up to a maximum of 25 feet high and 150 sq. ft. in area if the City Council finds that it is necessary to allow the applicant visibility comparable to other properties in the Calabasas Road District.

The subject property is one of four existing auto dealerships located in the Calabasas Road District, and one of five total developed properties. Of the four other developed properties (not including the subject site), two properties have monument signs that exceed the 20 foot high maximum (both are 25 feet high), and exceed the 100 sq. ft. maximum sign area (150 sq. ft. for BMW and 133 sq. ft. for Mercedes). The other two developed properties (Volvo and Calabasas Auto Spa), both have monument signs that comply with the maximum height and area requirements in the Calabasas Road District.

All five of the developed properties in the Calabasas Road District have good visibility from Calabasas Road. All five properties have good visibility from the westbound lanes of the US 101 Freeway. However, of the five developed properties with the Calabasas Road District, the subject property is the most visually limited from the eastbound lanes of the US 101 freeway. From the eastbound approach, the property is visibly shielded by topography and existing mature landscaping associated with the Mureau Road freeway bridge and related

embankments. Eastbound travelers do not get a good view of the property until they reach a location adjacent to the Audi building. For this reason, an exception to increase the height and area of the monument sign to the maximum of 25 feet high and 150 sq. ft. in area respectively is warranted to grant this property owner comparable sign visibility to other properties within the Calabasas Road District.

REQUIRED FINDINGS:

The findings required in Section 17.62.050(D) of the Calabasas Municipal Code for a Minor Scenic Corridor Permit and Section 17.30.050(F) for a Sign Program/Sign Permit are contained in the resolution attached as Exhibit A.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

This project is Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301 (e)(2) (Existing Facilities) and Section 15311 (Class 11 – Accessory Structures (a) on-premise signs) of the California CEQA Guidelines.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit A: Planning Commission Resolution No. 2021-734
- Exhibit B: Sign Program / Plans
- Exhibit C: Examples of Installed Audi Signage Including with Nighttime Illumination
- Exhibit D: Draft ARP Minutes from September 24, 2021

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

	Proposed	CMC Requirement	CMC Compliance
Building Mounted, Franchise Sign			
Sign Area	62.64 sq. ft.	80 sq. ft. max	Yes
Maximum Number	1 per franchise	1 per franchise	Yes
Location	Flat on wall	Flat on wall	Yes
Sign Copy	Logo of Franchise	Name of Franchise	Yes
Illumination	Interior illumination	Lighting allowed	Yes
Building Mounted, Primary Sign			
Sign Area	49.08 sq. ft.	½ sq. ft. per linear foot allowed – 15 sq. ft. min. and 80 sq. ft. max. (80 sq. ft. based on linear frontage)	Yes
Quantity	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	Yes
Location	Centered on wall	Centered on wall or canopy	Yes
Sign Copy	Tenant identification	Tenant identification	Yes
Lighting	Interior illumination	Interior or exterior lighting allowed	Yes
Building Mounted, Secondary Sign			
Sign Area	2.7 sq. ft.	½ total signage allowed for primary sign	
Quantity	1	1 per secondary entrance - Max 2 signs per business	Yes
Location	Adjacent to showroom entrance on east side of building adjacent to public parking	At secondary main entrance on the side of a building adjacent to public parking	Yes
Sign Copy	Tenant identification	Tenant identification	Yes
Lighting	None	Lighting allowed	Yes

Building Mounted, Special Service Sign			
Sign Area	6 sq. ft.	10% of building face, 25 sq. ft. max.	Yes
Quantity	1 per service	1 per service	Yes
Location	Centered above covered service drive, flat on wall	Flat on wall	Yes
Sign Copy	Special service use	Special service use	Yes
Lighting	Internal Illumination	Interior or exterior illumination	Yes
Monument			
Sign Area	150 sq. ft., subject to City Council approval	150 sq. ft. max, <u>if approved by City Council</u>	Yes
Sign Height	25 ft., <u>subject to City Council approval</u>	25 ft. max., <u>if approved by City Council</u>	
Quantity	1 sign	1 sign max.	Yes
Location	In landscaped area	In landscaped area	Yes
Sign Copy	Name of major tenant with logo, and address.	Allowed to advertise the name of the center or complex and one major tenant	Yes
Lighting	Internal Illumination	Interior or exterior illumination allowed	Yes
Window signs – Informational (Exempt)			
Sign Area	2.95 sq. ft. per sign	< 4 sq. ft. per sign	Yes
Sign Height	N/A	N/A	N/A
Quantity	3 signs	N/A	Yes
Location	On entrance glass doors	N/A	Yes
Sign Copy	Days/hours of operation	Addresses, telephone numbers, days and hours of operation, open/closed, etc.	Yes
Lighting	N/A	N/A	N/A

Informational Sign - Address (Exempt)			
Sign Area	2.44 sq. ft.	< 4 sq. ft. per sign	Yes
Sign Height	N/A	N/A	N/A
Quantity	1	N/A	Yes
Location	Building mounted on north elevation	N/A	Yes
Sign Copy	Address	Addresses, telephone numbers, days and hours of operation, open/closed, etc.	Yes
Lighting	None	N/A	Yes

Location Map:



Surrounding Properties:

	Existing Land Use	Zoning	General Plan Designation
Site	Auto Retail	Commercial, Limited	Business – Limited Intensity
West	Auto Inventory Parking Lot	Commercial, Limited	Business – Limited Intensity
East	Auto Retail	Commercial, Retail	Business – Retail
North	101 Freeway	N/A	N/A
South	Open Space	Open Space – Development Restricted	Open Space – Resource Protected