



CITY of CALABASAS

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT
APRIL 7, 2022

TO: Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Ryan Carr, Associate Planner

FILE NO.: APR 2022-001, SGN 2022-001, SCP 2022-001

PROPOSAL: A request for an Administrative Plan Review, Scenic Corridor Permit, and Sign Permit for exterior façade modifications and new signage for an existing retail auto dealership located at 24400 Calabasas Road, in the Commercial Retail (CR) zoning district, Scenic Corridor overlay zone, and the West Calabasas Road Master Plan area.

APPLICANT: Jay McKeen

MEETING DATE: April 7, 2022

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission adopt Resolution No. 2022-738, approving File No. APR 2022-001, SGN 2022-001, and SCP 2022-001.

REVIEW AUTHORITY:

The Planning Commission is reviewing this project because Section 17.62.050(C) of the CMC stipulates that the Planning Commission is the decision-making body for a Scenic Corridor Permit. Additionally, although Section 17.62.090 and Section 17.30.050 both stipulate that an Administrative Plan Review and Sign Permit, respectively, would require review and approval by the Community Development Director, in this case, Section 17.60.020 stipulates that whenever applications that ordinarily require a decision by a lower review authority are processed with applications requiring a decision by a higher review authority, the higher review authority becomes the decision-making authority for all applications.

BACKGROUND:

On January 11, 2022 a request for an Administrative Plan Review, Sign Permit and Scenic Corridor Permit was submitted to convert an existing vacant retail auto dealership (formally Volvo) into a new Cadillac dealership. The scope of work includes an interior remodel, exterior façade changes, and new signage, including a new monument sign, at an existing developed retail auto dealership. The proposed project is located at 24400 Calabasas Road, in the Commercial Retail (CR) zoning district, Commercial Auto Retailer (CAR) Overlay Zone, Scenic Corridor (SC) Overlay Zone and the West Calabasas Road Master Plan (WCRMP) area.

The subject site is currently developed with a two-story 36,691 square foot auto dealership and associated services. The original auto dealership was approved via the adoption of City Council Resolution No. 2003-841 on September 17, 2003, and construction was completed in August 2005. Subsequently, the City approved applications for an Administrative Plan Review, Scenic Corridor Permit, and Sign Permit for a 2,836 square foot addition, and modification of the façade, landscape, and signage (via PC Resolution 2012-534) in 2012 in conjunction with the occupation of the dealership by Mini, which resulted in the current design and color scheme of the structure. Regarding signs, the City approved a sign program in 2007 for the Volvo auto dealership. The approved sign program was most recently amended in 2015, after the Mini auto dealership occupied the building vacated by Volvo, and augmented the sign program to include new graphics (in the form of two life-sized “mini” cars made out of fiberglass) on the north building elevation. The building was then briefly re-occupied by Volvo before being vacated again. Now, the new building occupant, Cadillac, has different architectural design and signage needs than Mini, and, as a result, the applicant has submitted an Administrative Plan Review, Sign Permit and Scenic Corridor Permit application for new signage and exterior modifications to the existing building to allow changes consistent with Cadillac’s corporate design.

On January 13, 2022, the Development Review Committee reviewed the proposed project. The Building and Safety Division had comments regarding parking stalls, vehicular access, and a note on the plans regarding a reduction in square footage. On January 28, 2022, the application was presented to the Architecture Review Panel (ARP). The Panel discussed adding additional landscaping, adjusting the building mass, and modifying building materials. Specifically, the Panel suggested some design changes including: 1) that the glazing along the front elevation be extended in front of the existing columns to screen them from the outside, 2) that the applicant consider increasing the height of the building above the front elevation to articulate the entrance, and 3) that all project renderings be revised to include the proposed landscaping. The Panel continued the project to the following ARP meeting on February 25, 2022. At the February 25, 2022 ARP meeting, the Panel reviewed proposed plan modifications, and noted that that the updated design is responsive to the Panel’s comments, and a significant improvement over the original submittal. The Panel motioned to recommend approval of the project to the Planning

Commission. Final revised plans were submitted to the Planning Department on March 10, 2022 and the project was deemed complete on March 23, 2022.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

The key issues related to this project are discussed below:

- A. Existing Conditions:** The subject site is an irregularly shaped lot located at 24400 Calabasas Road, within the Commercial Retail (CR) zoning district, Scenic Corridor (SC) overlay zone and the West Calabasas Road Master Plan (WCRMP) area. The Commercial Retail zoning district generally allows for a variety of retail uses and conditionally permits auto dealerships and associated services. The 2.79 acre subject lot was part of a larger parcel that had previously been subdivided and had a large portion dedicated as open space. The resulting subject site is bound by Calabasas Road to the north, vacant, Commercial Limited – Scenic Corridor zoned property to the west, the remainder of the CR-zoned subdivided parcel to the east, and open space to the south. Further south, and upslope from the subject property is the Westridge community.

The site is developed with a 36,691 square-foot building comprised of two levels and roof-top parking, two driveways, asphalt parking, retaining walls, landscaping and signage. The structure on-site is currently vacant, but was previously used as a Volvo auto dealership. As previously mentioned, the existing dealership was originally approved in 2003 via a conditional use permit, oak tree permit, and variance (to allow the exit driveway access grade to exceed code requirements). The approvals allowed for construction of the two-story dealership, removal of two heritage oak trees and the right to operate an auto dealership inclusive of car repair services. As a result, the subject site has all the required permits to operate a full-service car dealership (See: **Exhibit G**). The site has generally remained in continuous operation as an auto dealership since its opening in 2005.

- B. Proposed Project:** The subject site will remain an auto dealership in conformance with current entitlements. The proposed project does not involve a change or expansion of use, nor does it include an expansion in square footage. However, the applicant is requesting to make exterior changes in order to bring the existing structure and site into compliance with Cadillac's corporate design image (**Exhibit B**). The proposed changes include:

- Demolition of the existing second floor cantilevered "Jewel Box.";
- Interior remodel of existing vehicle storage areas, showroom, offices, and restrooms;
- Addition of electric vehicle chargers throughout the site;

- New mechanical equipment upgrades (no change in location), with the height not to exceed the total height of the existing structure (39 feet);
- Exterior façade improvements to include the use of white and light grey (mica) aluminum composite metal panels;
- New building mounted signs, directional signs and a monument sign to identify the Cadillac brand (consistent with the existing approved sign program);
- New entry features to compliment the architectural design of the building; and
- Landscape improvements to enhance the vehicle display area and customer parking in front of the dealership, along Calabasas Road.

C. Architecture: The proposed project involves keeping the modern style building, but updating the colors and materials to be consistent with Cadillac's corporate image. The black aluminum composite metal panels and the glass elements of the building will be replaced with Cadillac's white and anodic clear mica aluminum composite metal panels. The existing LED illuminated color accent frames will be removed for a more subdued building appearance. The cantilevered portion of the existing "Jewel Box" will be removed to keep uniformity for the rest of the building. The "Jewel Box" is a structural glass box that currently cantilevers over the front entrance. The area will be replaced with additional windows used to display cars. Cadillac's original design submittal can be seen in Image 1 below:



(Image 1: Daytime Rendering depicting the original submitted design)

The Architectural Review Panel reviewed this project On January 28, 2022 (**Exhibit F**). The Panel discussed adding additional landscaping, adjusting the building mass and proportions, and modifying building materials. Specifically, the Panel suggested that the glazing along the front elevation extend in front of the existing columns to screen them from the outside. The panel also requested that the architect consider adding to the front elevation to articulate the entrance. Finally, the Panel requested that the architect update the color rendering to include landscaping and walls, and to provide a night time rendering. The panel continued the project to the February 25, 2022 meeting. At the February 25, 2022 Architectural Review Panel review, the panel noted that the revisions addressed the Panel's comments, and that the updated design is a significant

improvement over the original submittal (seen below in **Image 2** and **Image 3**). The Panel approved a motion to recommend approval of the project to the Planning Commission.



(Image 2: Daytime Rendering depicting the updated design changes incorporating the Panel's recommendations).



(Image 3: Nighttime Rendering depicting the updated design changes incorporating the Panel's recommendations).

- D. Scenic Corridor:** The subject site is located within the Ventura Freeway Scenic Corridor (SC) Overlay Zone. The purpose of the Scenic Corridor overlay zone is to protect the economic and cultural base of the City by preventing the destruction of the natural beauty and environment of the City. The Scenic Corridor applies to major roadways identified in the General Plan as Scenic Corridors, from which the public may enjoy views of the hills and mountains within and surrounding the City. In order to protect the visual character of the Scenic Corridor, all development must comply with the City's Urban Design Guidelines in Section 17.20.070 of the CMC and the City's adopted Scenic Corridor Development Guidelines.

As stated in the Scenic Corridor Development Guidelines, “All structures within the Scenic Corridor shall avoid large straight, blank facades”. Additionally, the Urban Design Guidelines in Section 17.20.070 of the CMC includes similar requirements. The project proposes only façade changes to the existing building. The proposed colors and materials will comply with the Guidelines by utilizing non-glare building and roof colors that match with the other existing buildings in the area (**Exhibit E**). Furthermore, in conformance with the Urban Design Guidelines, the modern design, colors and materials will be incorporated throughout the entire building, not just the front façade.

The existing building is nestled into a hillside rather than developed on flat ground, which provides more visual integration into the existing setting. Additionally, the proposed landscaping improvements will further integrate the site development with the natural vegetation on the adjacent hillside by utilizing similar plant material (**Exhibit D**). As a result, the proposed project conforms to both the Scenic Corridor Development Guidelines and the Urban Design Guidelines.

E. West Calabasas Road Master Plan area: The subject site is located within the West Calabasas Road Master Plan area (the Master Plan). The purpose of the Master Plan is to provide clear recommendations for the design, construction, review and approval of development within the West Calabasas Road area. While not adopted as law, the Guidelines are a tool to help achieve attractive functional projects that realize the goals of both the City and the community. The Master Plan specifies that the portion of Calabasas road between Mureau Road and Parkway Calabasas should accommodate vehicular dealerships and similar uses. Dealerships should be designed to attract and appeal to customers who are in the market for luxury vehicles. The following design elements are outlined in the Guidelines:

1. Use high-quality authentic materials that are structurally heavy in appearance. Stucco is discouraged.
2. Each structure should reflect a single architectural style.
3. Blank walls are strongly discouraged.
4. Divide the structure mass of wide buildings by using a change of roof or wall plane, projecting or recessing elements, or varying rooflines.
5. Use vertical elements on large structures to break up massing.
6. Emphasize the main entrance using lighting landscaping and architecture.

The existing building was approved and constructed in compliance with all of the above-mentioned Master Plan design elements. Also, the proposed design modifications do not significantly alter the building’s (modern) architectural style, size, massing, and articulation. Rather, the proposed modifications transform the existing building via changes to color and materials to Cadillac’s corporate design requirements. Specifically, the proposed replacement of the existing aluminum composite metal panels with new aluminum composite metal panels will continue to maintain the

building’s structurally heavy appearance. To this end, the building will continue to use a single, modern, and uniform architectural style with windows and existing architectural projections and design elements, such as a boneline feature, to enhance the building’s visual appearance. Additionally, the existing elements of the building’s design that break up the horizontal massing such as use of varying rooflines will be maintained, consistent with Master Plan design elements. Finally, the use of existing lighting and new landscaping enhancements will emphasize the main entrance. As a result, the proposed project maintains consistency with the West Calabasas Road Master Plan.

Signage: On March 25, 2004, the Planning Commission approved a sign program and variance to allow for the subject site to have three (3) building-mounted signs with a total of 140 square feet, two (2) monument signs and two (2) directional signs. On October 1st, 2015, an additional sign program was approved in order to accommodate the installation of two fiberglass replica Mini cars on the front elevation of the existing auto dealership. The replica Mini cars have since been removed. In comparison, the applicant is proposing to install new signs, including two (3) building-mounted signs (totaling approximately 107 square feet) and one (1) 20-foot tall monument sign. The design of the proposed signs, including the monument sign (see **Exhibit C**) will feature Cadillac’s logo, name, and “certified service.” **Table 1** below provides an overview of the proposed sign type, material, sign copy, and illumination details.

Table 1: Proposed Sign Details

Sign Type	Sign Material	Sign Copy	Illumination
<u>Sign 1</u> – Monument Sign	Acrylic on Aluminum Composite Material panels	Tenant logo, business name “Cadillac”, and dealer name.	Internal - LED
<u>Sign 2</u> – Freeway Facing Building Mounted Sign: Main tenant sign	Acrylic, chrome film, and digital print	Tenant logo and business name “Cadillac”	Internal - LED
<u>Sign 3</u> – Freeway Facing Building Mounted Sign: Service sign	Acrylic and vinyl	Certified Service identification	Internal - LED
<u>Sign 4</u> – Freeway Facing Building Mounted Sign: Tenant logo	Acrylic, chrome film, and digital print	Tenant Logo	Internal - LED

To this end, all proposed new signs are consistent with the previously approved sign program, and comply with the City’s sign ordinance.

F. Landscaping: The proposed project involves enhancing the landscape along the front of the property, adjacent to Calabasas Road. Such improvements include replacing the paneling on the decorative walls to match the building, maintaining the existing trees, and expanding the landscaping. The proposed landscape improvements will complement the Modern architectural style of the building, use drought tolerant plants, and help to better blend the project with the surrounding native vegetation.

REQUIRED FINDINGS:

The findings required in Sections 17.62.090(E), 17.30.050, and 17.62.050(C) of the Calabasas Municipal Code for approval of an Administrative Plan Review, Sign Permit and Scenic Corridor 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 (a) Existing Facilities and 15311 (a) Accessory Structures of the California CEQA Guidelines.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

See conditions contained in the resolution attached as **Exhibit A**.

PREVIOUS REVIEWS:

Development Review Committee (DRC):

January 13, 2022

Building and Safety comments regarding stalls, vehicular access, and a note regarding a reduction in square footage on the plans. These comments were addressed in subsequent submittals. Recommended approval.

Architectural Review Panel (ARP):

January 28, 2022

The Panel discussed adding additional landscaping, adjusting the building mass and proportions, and modifying building materials. The Panel suggested that the glazing along the front elevation extend in front of the existing columns to screen them from the outside. The panel also requested that the architect consider adding to the front elevation to articulate the entrance. Finally, the Panel requested that the architect update the color rendering to include landscaping and walls, and to provide a night time rendering.

February 25, 2022

The panel recommended approval of the project as designed.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit A: Planning Commission Resolution No. 2022-738
- Exhibit B: Plans
- Exhibit C: Signage Plans
- Exhibit D: Landscape Plans
- Exhibit E: Colors and Materials Sample
- Exhibit F: Architecture Review Panel Draft Minutes
- Exhibit G: City Council Resolution No. 2003-841 (for CUP 03-12)

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Location Map:



Development Standards:		Code Limit	Meets Code
Lot Size:	121,749 Sq. Ft.		
Floor Area:			
Existing:	36,691 Sq. Ft.		
Proposed:	36,691 Sq. Ft.		
Total:	36,691 (no change) Sq. Ft.		
Floor Area Ratio (FAR):	0.30	0.20-0.40	Yes
Height:	39 Ft.	39 Ft.	No*
Site Coverage:			
Existing:	36,691 Sq. Ft.	30 %	
Proposed:	36,961 Sq. Ft.	30 %	78% of the net site area maximum Yes

Parking Calculations

of Spaces Provided: 217 70 min Yes

Proposed Color Palette:

Body Color: Cadillac White – Aluminum Composite Metal Panel
 Trim Color: Anodic Clear Mica – Aluminum Composite Metal Panel
 Accent Color: Marina Gray – Paint
 Accent Color: Snow White – Paint

Surrounding Properties:

	Existing Land Use	Zoning	General Plan Designation
Site	Auto Dealership	Commercial Retail – Scenic Corridor (CR-SC)	Business Retail (BR)
West	Parking Lot	Commercial Limited – Scenic Corridor (CL-SC)	Business Limited Intensity (B-Li)
East	Vacant	Commercial Retail – Scenic Corridor (CR-SC)	Business Retail (BR)
North	Las Virgenes Municipal Water District	Commercial Retail – Scenic Corridor (CR-SC)	Business Retail (BR)
South	Vacant	Open Space Development Restricted (OS-DR)	Open Space Resource Protected (OS-RP)