



Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board Agenda Report

Meeting Date 10/23/19

DATE: October 14, 2019

File: AR 19-20

TO: Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board

FROM: Mike Sawley, AICP, Senior Planner, (879-6812, mike.sawley@chicoca.gov)
Community Development Department

RE: Chico Mall Comprehensive Sign Program, 1950 East 20th Street, APNs Various
The Chico Mall site is bounded by State Route 99, East 20th Street, Forest
Avenue, Springfield Drive and the Kohl's Shopping Center in Southeast Chico

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The applicant proposes a Comprehensive Sign Program (CSP) for the Chico Mall, located on a 50-acre site at 1950 E. 20th Street in Southeast Chico. The proposed CSP includes:

- (1) a Center Identification Sign, 57-feet in height, oriented toward State Route 99,
- (2) six other ground-mounted signs, each 20 feet in height, and
- (3) a common materials palette for wall-mounted signs and façade improvements to be used on the mall building itself as tenants change over time.

Staff recommends that the Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board adopt the required findings contained in the agenda report and approve the CSP, subject to the recommended conditions.

Proposed Motion

I move that the Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board adopt the required findings contained in the agenda report and approve Architectural Review 19-20 (Chico Mall CSP), subject to the recommended conditions.

BACKGROUND

The applicant proposes to install a total of seven ground-mounted signs around the perimeter of the Chico Mall site and establish a common design theme for future wall signs and façade improvements on the mall building as tenants change over time (see **Attachment A**, Location Map, and **Attachment B**, Sign Locations). Designated Regional Commercial and located within the East 20th Street Opportunity Site identified by the General Plan, the site is also zoned CR (Regional Commercial). The Chico Mall site is bounded by State Route 99, East 20th Street, Forest Avenue, Springfield Drive and the Kohl's shopping center in southeast Chico.

The applicant requests approval of three types of freestanding signs at multiple locations as follows:

1. Sign A: a two-sided, freeway-oriented pylon sign with backlit lettering for the "Chico Mall" and tenant listings. Sign A would be 57 feet in height above finished grade and approximately 20 feet wide and 10 feet in profile depth, with a larger supporting base (see **Attachment C**).

2. **Sign B:** a two-sided monument sign with backlit lettering depicting “Chico Mall.” Five instances of Sign B are requested, one at each of the public-street entrances to the mall site. Sign B would be 20 feet in height above finished grade and approximately 5.5 feet wide and 1.5 feet in profile depth, with a larger supporting base (see **Attachment D**).
3. **Sign C:** a two-sided pylon sign with backlit lettering for the “Chico Mall” and tenant listings. Essentially a scaled-down version of Sign A, Sign C would be 20 feet in height above finished grade and approximately 6 feet wide and 2.5 feet in profile depth, with a larger supporting base (see **Attachment E**). One instance of Sign C is requested near the intersection of Forest Avenue and Springfield Drive.

In addition to the freestanding signs listed above, a common palette of materials is provided with the proposal which would be used in conjunction with future wall-mounted signs and minor exterior façade improvements as the suites change tenants and configurations over time (see **Attachment F**).

DISCUSSION

The proposed sign package would establish a hierarchy for Chico Mall signage based on the vantage points of surrounding travelers and will freshen the mall’s appearance. The new freestanding signs are complementary in that they utilize consistent materials and convey a unified, modern design theme. Continuing to use materials from the palette for the freestanding signs as tenant improvements are made on the façade of the mall building will further improve the aesthetics of the mall over time.

In the face of tremendous competition from online retailers existing brick-and-mortar retail outlets, particularly shopping malls, are severely challenged with maintaining existing tenants and acquiring new ones as vacancies occur. Just last month it was announced that the national clothing store *Forever 21*, which occupies one of the mall’s four anchor tenant spaces, filed for bankruptcy. With this large vacancy looming mall management is proposing new signage that would enable them to offer greater visibility for prospective future tenants.

Freestanding center identification signs are typically limited to 20 feet in height and one per street frontage in the CR zoning district (see **Attachment G, Sign Standards**), however, a CSP may authorize deviations from the development standards for signs so long as the total maximum allowed sign area is not exceeded.

In this case, the subject site represents the largest retail center in the City (comprising over 50 acres and 500,000 square feet of floor area). It is therefore warranted to consider special signage criteria acknowledging the Chico Mall’s prominence in Chico. Additional rationale and analysis for the CSP is provided by the project architect in **Attachment H**.

The signs reflect a high-quality design which will facilitate attracting and retaining the most desirable uses of land at this regional commercial shopping mall. Allowing two center identification signs on each street frontage is justified due to the uniquely large size of the site, with multiple driveways each separated by several hundred feet.

Although Sign A, at 57 feet, would be much taller than otherwise allowed for a center identification sign, it would be situated between State Route 99 and a new hotel (*Hampton*

Inn & Suites, AR 17-20), which has recently been approved for construction. The new hotel will be approximately 60 feet in height, including parapets, and occupy a footprint of approximately 16,400 square feet near Springfield Drive. The presence of the hotel will largely block views of the new freeway sign from the east, limiting its visibility to just the intended audience: motorists traveling either direction on State Route 99.

Importantly, the method of illumination for all proposed freestanding signs would be indirect, backlit “halo” lettering which will give a softer appearance than would internally illuminated lettering. A nighttime photo rendering of Sign A is provided below:



Together, the three freestanding sign types would create a uniformity and hierarchy of scale based on the purposes served by each. Sign A would announce the mall’s presence as the hub of a regional commercial area to regional travelers using State Route 99; Sign B would

provide basic, discrete wayfinding at each entry point to the mall from public surface streets; and Sign C would be a version of Sign A scaled down to 20 feet in height, which is an appropriate size for its location at the corner of Forest Avenue and Springfield Drive.

The proposed CSP is consistent with Design Guidelines that encourage signage which enhances a project's identity, while also respecting the site's architecture and character of the nearby streetscape (DGs 1.3.51 and 1.6.11). The project is also consistent with DGs that call for signs and lettering of appropriate size for their site and, as conditioned, avoiding excessive illumination that could negatively impact night skies in the area (DGs 1.6.12, 1.6.13 and 1.6.14).

Overall, the style and placement of the proposed signs is compatible with the existing mall buildings and surrounding uses, and will heighten visibility and enhance wayfinding for the mall tenants. Staff recommends approval of the project.

REQUIRED FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL

Environmental Review

The project has been determined to be categorically exempt pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15311 (Accessory Structures). Consistent with this exemption, the project consists of minor structures that are appurtenant to an existing regional commercial shopping mall, including but not limited to on-premise signs.

Architectural Review

According to the Chico Municipal Code Section 19.18.060, the Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board (Board) shall determine whether or not a project adequately meets adopted City standards and design guidelines, based upon the following findings:

1. *The proposed development is consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, and any applicable neighborhood or area plans.*

The proposed signs will aid wayfinding to the Chico Mall for motorists using major surrounding roadways, including State Route 99, consistent with General Plan Policy LU-5.1 direction to facilitate increased intensity of development and revitalization of the East 20th Street corridor, and the vision statement for the East 20th Street Opportunity Site, which highlights the mall's "*convenient location near an exit from State Route 99 [which] increases its revitalization potential as a thriving regional commercial center.*"

Allowing the freeway-oriented sign at the maximum height limit for the zoning district (57 feet), would support visibility for the multiple co-anchor tenants of the mall and is consistent with Action LU-5.1.1 (Incentives for Opportunity Site Development), which encourages the City to utilize incentives identified in Action LU-2.3.1 to support economic development opportunities, including flexibility in development standards on designated Opportunity Sites.

No aspects of the proposed signs have been identified as inconsistent with the General Plan. The site is not included in the City's Historic Inventory or located within a Neighborhood Plan or area plan.

- 2. The proposed development, including the character, scale, and quality of design are consistent with the purpose/intent of this chapter and any adopted design guidelines.*

The signs reflect a high-quality design which will facilitate attracting and retaining the most desirable uses of land at this regional commercial shopping mall. The proposal is consistent with Design Guidelines that encourage signage that enhances a project's identity, while also respecting the site's architecture and character of the nearby streetscape (DGs 1.3.51 and 1.6.11). The project is also consistent with DGs that call for signs and lettering of appropriate size for their site and, as conditioned, avoiding excessive illumination that could negatively impact night skies in the area (DGs 1.6.12, 1.6.13 and 1.6.14).

- 3. The architectural design of structures, including all elevations, materials and colors are visually compatible with surrounding development. Design elements, including screening of equipment, exterior lighting, signs, and awnings, have been incorporated into the project to further ensure its compatibility with the character and uses of adjacent development.*

The modern design, materials and colors of the proposed new signs are visually compatible with the comparable upgrades anticipated for the existing mall building and existing detached restaurant buildings, specifically regarding the use of individually-mounted backlit letters, words and symbols rather than a plastic-faced cabinet design. Electrical wiring for the new signs will properly screened through concealment within the supporting structure.

- 4. The location and configuration of structures are compatible with their sites and with surrounding sites and structures, and do not unnecessarily block views from other structures or dominate their surroundings.*

The proposed CSP consists of seven new freestanding signs, each of which are appropriately scaled for the locations where they are proposed and will not unnecessarily block views or cause the site to dominate its surroundings. Once the new, approximately 60-foot tall Hampton Inn hotel is constructed between the freeway pylon sign and Springfield Drive the new pylon sign will blend into the landscape of commercial development in the area and will only be obvious to motorists using State Route 99.

- 5. The general landscape design, including the color, location, size, texture, type, and coverage of plant materials, and provisions for irrigation and maintenance, and protection of landscape elements, have been considered to ensure visual relief, to complement structures, and to provide an attractive environment.*

The proposal consists of seven freestanding signs that will be located in existing or proposed landscaped areas with a minimum of two square feet of landscaping for each square foot of sign face as required by the municipal code.

Comprehensive Sign Program Findings

According to the Chico Municipal Code Section 19.74.070, in approving a CSP, the Board shall determine whether or not a project adequately meets all of the following findings in addition to those required by Chapter 19.18:

1. *The proposed Comprehensive Sign Program is consistent with the purpose and intent of this chapter;*

The proposal effectively uses flexibility allowed by the CSP process by using well-designed, aesthetically pleasing signs that reflect a modern design theme and are appropriately scaled based on the immediate viewsheds and travel modes of potential customers within the parking area and on surrounding roadways.

2. *The signs are visually related to other signs included in the Comprehensive Sign Program and to the structure and/or developments they identify and to surrounding development;*

The new signs will visually relate to one another and the CSP design criteria will establish a consistent palette of materials that will result in a unifying theme for the mall over time. The modern style of the signs will complement existing and new development planned in and around the Chico Mall.

3. *The Comprehensive Sign Program accommodates future revisions which may be required due to changes in use or tenants; and*

Conditions have been included to accommodate future changes to the sign program, specifying that staff may administratively approve substitutions of similar signs or new signs that meet code requirements for the zoning district.

4. *The Comprehensive Sign Program complies with all of the standards of this chapter, including the maximum overall sign area allowable, except that flexibility is allowed with regard to individual sign area, number, location, and/or height to the extent that the Comprehensive Sign Program will enhance the overall development and will more fully accomplish the purposes of this chapter.*

The sign program complies with the standards of CMC 19.74, with flexibility given to: (1) the height of a freeway-oriented pylon sign which is approved up to a height of 57 feet above finished grade, and (2) the number of center identification signs, two of which are approved on each public street frontage. Illumination of copy on the pylon signs would be backlit as opposed to internally illuminated letters, and therefore will not negatively affect nearby properties.

Allowing added height for the freeway pylon sign would enhance the viability of the East 20th Street business area, consistent with stated purposes of the City's sign ordinance to: encourage signs that are well-designed, balanced, and pleasing in appearance; protect and enhance the character of business areas, provide a reasonable system of sign controls, and to accommodate the need for signs to direct members of the public to the various destinations contained in the City's largest retail and service environment for public convenience.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. All approved building plans and permits shall note on the cover sheet that project signage shall comply with AR 19-20 (Chico Mall CSP). No building permits related to this approval shall be finalized without authorization of Planning staff.

2. The signs and common materials approved under this Comprehensive Sign Program are shown on the accompanying drawings date-stamped October 14, 2019, by the Planning Services Division and include the following:
 - a. Sign A: a two-sided, freeway-oriented pylon sign with backlit lettering for the “Chico Mall” and tenant listings. Sign A is 57 feet in height above finished grade and approximately 20 feet wide and 10 feet in profile depth, with a larger supporting base. One instance of Sign A is approved near the site’s frontage on State Route 99.
 - b. Sign B: a two-sided monument sign with backlit lettering depicting “Chico Mall.” Sign B is 20 feet in height above finished grade and approximately 5.5 feet wide and 1.5 feet in profile depth, with a larger supporting base. Up to 5 instances of Sign B are approved, one at each vehicle entrance to the mall site from adjacent public streets.
 - c. Sign C: a two-sided pylon sign with backlit lettering for the “Chico Mall” and tenant listings. Essentially a scaled-down version of Sign A, Sign C is 20 feet in height above finished grade and approximately 6 feet wide and 2.5 feet in profile depth, with a larger supporting base. One instance of Sign C is approved near the intersection of Forest Avenue and Springfield Drive.
 - d. Wall signs: future wall signs and façade improvements on the main mall building shall demonstrate architectural consistency with the approved shared materials palette, subject to administrative approval by planning staff.

Signs under this approval may be substituted over time with new signs of substantially similar style, or any new sign that meets typical sign code requirements for the district.

3. Illumination of the freestanding signs under this approval shall not be brighter than the illumination limit recommended by the International Sign Association (ISA) for Electronic Message Center signs, or 0.3 footcandles above ambient light when measured at the recommended distance as set forth by the ISA.
4. It is acknowledged that the existing main mall building contains up to four anchor tenants for the purposes of determining allowable wall signage area for individual business identification
5. All approved building plans and permits shall note that exposed conduit, mounting brackets, flashing, and similar visible hardware and appurtenances shall be painted using appropriate colors. Adequate finishing details for the sign installation shall be verified by Planning staff prior to permit final.
6. The permittee shall comply with all other State and local Code provisions, including those of the Building Division, Public Works Department, Fire Department, and California Department of Transportation. The permittee is responsible for contacting these offices to verify the need for permits.
7. The applicant shall defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City of Chico, its boards and commissions, officers and employees against and from any and all liabilities,

demands, claims, actions or proceedings and costs and expenses incidental thereto (including costs of defense, settlement and reasonable attorney's fees), which any or all of them may suffer, incur, be responsible for or pay out as a result of or in connection with any challenge to or claim regarding the legality, validity, processing or adequacy associated with: (i) this requested entitlement; (ii) the proceedings undertaken in connection with the adoption or approval of this entitlement; (iii) any subsequent approvals or permits relating to this entitlement; (iv) the processing of occupancy permits and (v) any amendments to the approvals for this entitlement. The City of Chico shall promptly notify the applicant of any claim, action or proceeding which may be filed and shall cooperate fully in the defense, as provided for in Government code section 66474.9.

PUBLIC CONTACT

A notice was published in the Chico Enterprise Record 10 days prior to the meeting date, notices were mailed out to all property owners and tenants within 500 feet of the project site, and two notices were placed on the project site. The meeting agenda was posted at least 10 days prior to the Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Location Map
- B. Site Plan
- C. Sign A Details
- D. Sign B Details
- E. Sign C Details
- F. Materials Palette for Signage and Future Façade Improvements
- G. Signage Criteria for CR Zoning District
- H. Architect's Narrative

Provided Under Separate Cover:

Chico Mall Signage Comprehensive Program Revision 10/14/19

DISTRIBUTION

Bruce Ambo, Principal Planner

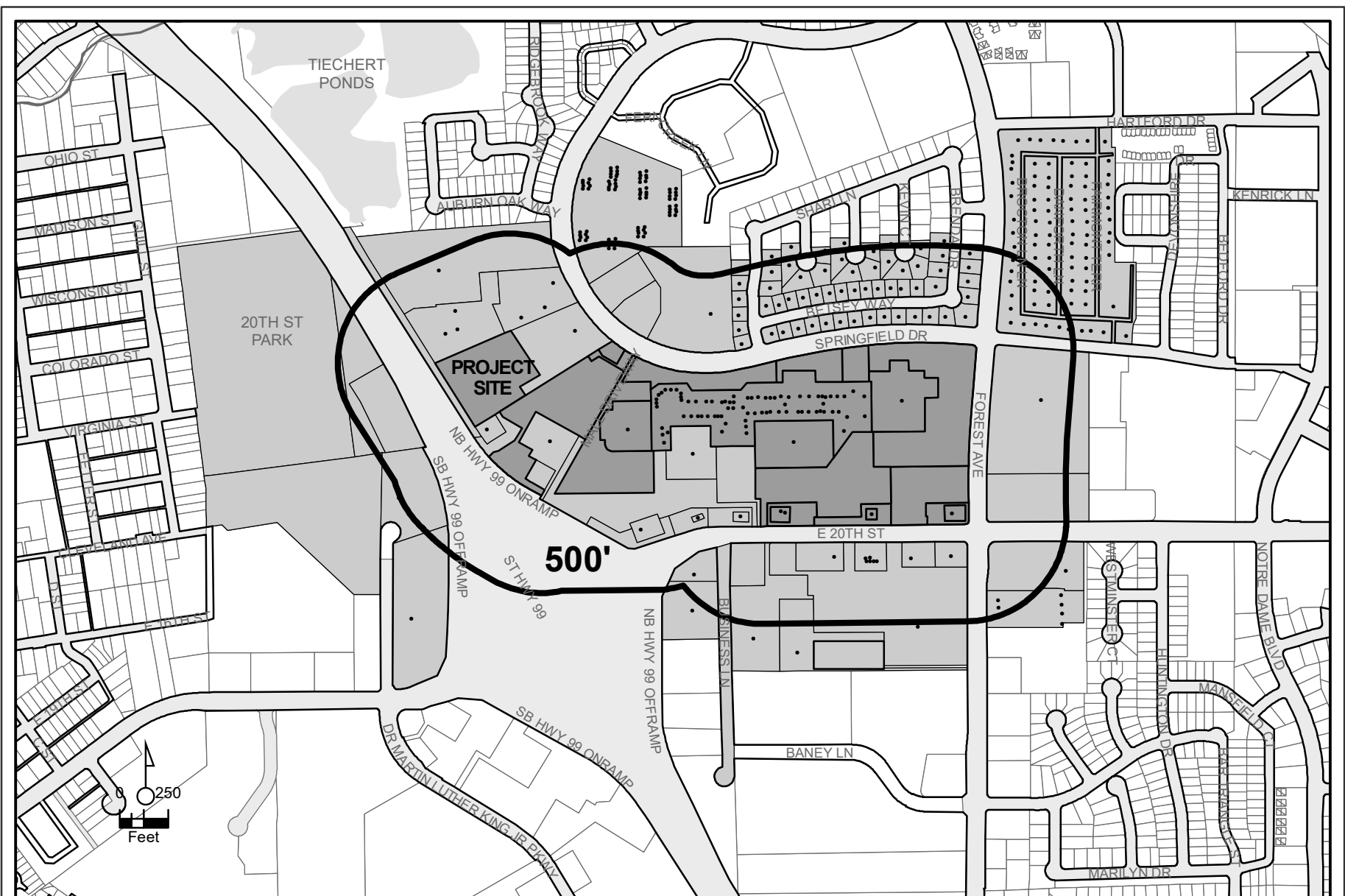
Mike Sawley, Senior Planner

Matt Gallaway via email: Matt@rgachico.com

Files: AR 19-20 (Chico Mall CSP)

X:\Current Planning\AR\2019\20 Chico Mall CSP\ARHPB report 10-23-19.doc

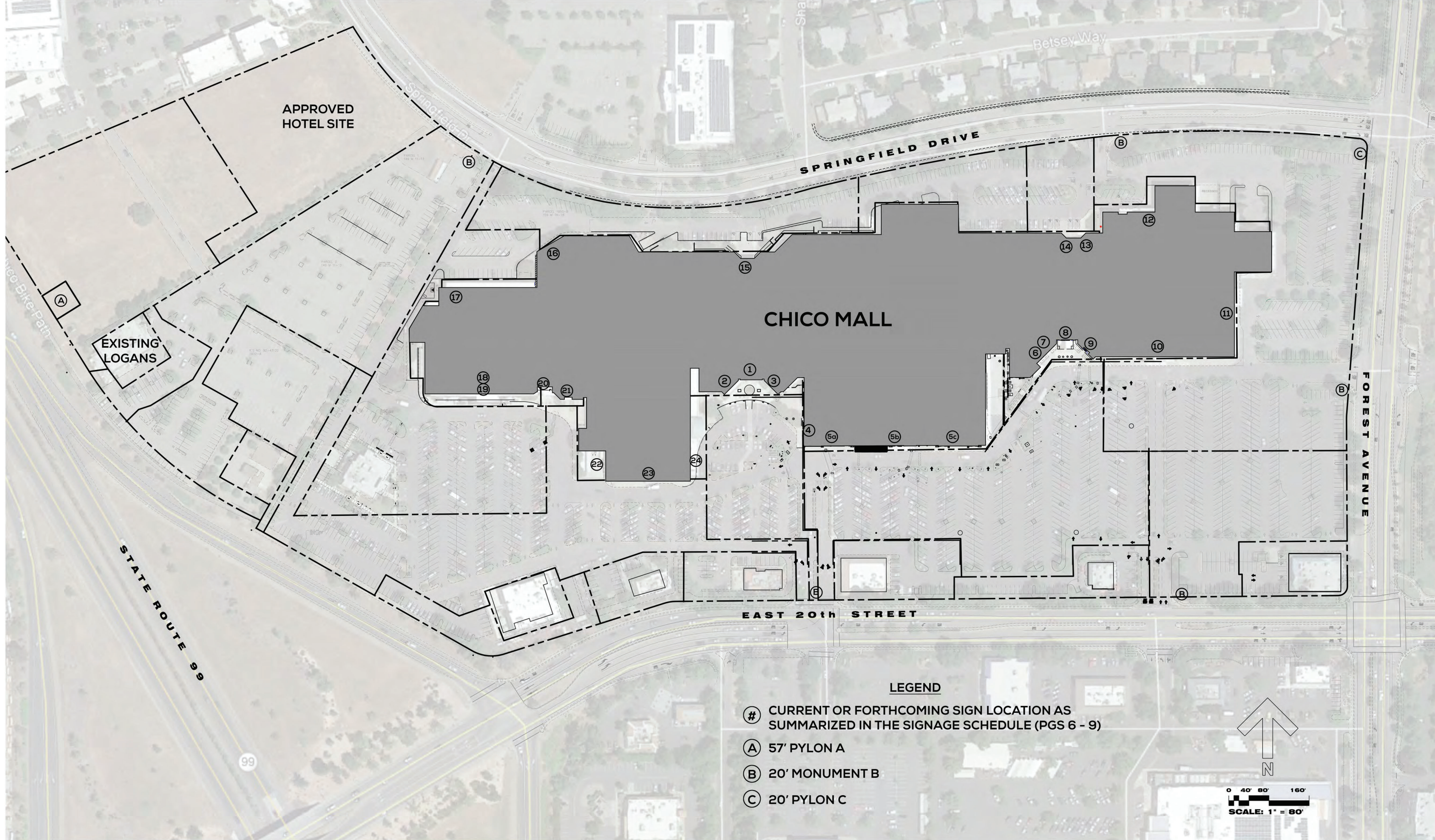
Attachment A



AR 19-20 (Chico Mall Signage)
1950 East 20th Street
APNs Various

- Notified Addresses
- Notified Parcels





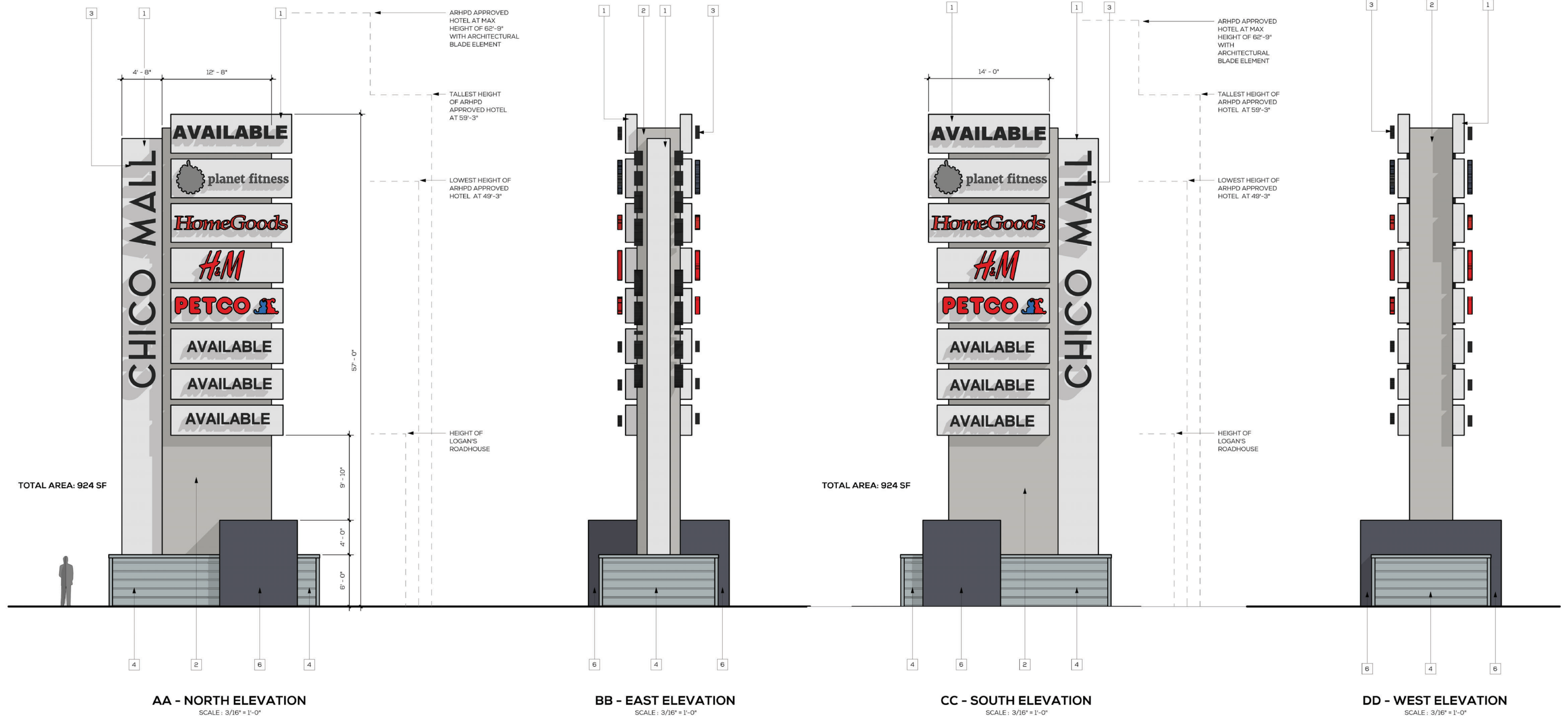
PYLON A

TOTAL CUMULATIVE AREA: 1,848 SF

- 1 CHEMETAL 420 CASCADE BRUSHED xx GAUGE ALUMINUM
- 2 TBD PLASTER SYSTEM, COLOR: SW 7018 DOVETAIL
- 3 LETTERS WITH BACKLIGHTING, MATERIAL DEPENDANT ON SIGANCE CO.
- 4 AEPSPAN PRESTIGE SERIES 2" REVEAL, COLOR: COOL OLD TOWN GRAY
- 5 AEPSPAN BOX RIB, COLOR: COOL OLD TOWN GRAY
- 6 NICHIIA TUFFBLOCK, COLOR: STEEL
- 7 ALUMINUM POWDERCOATED PRISMATIC POWDERS: BLACKBOARD PSB 6865 SOLID TONE

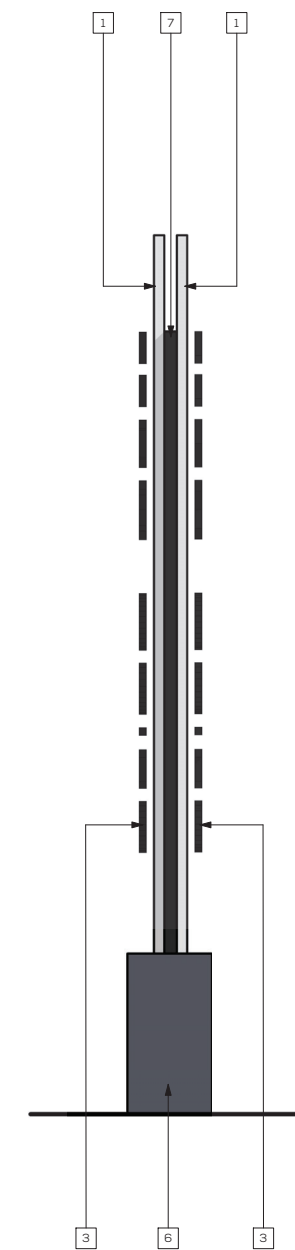
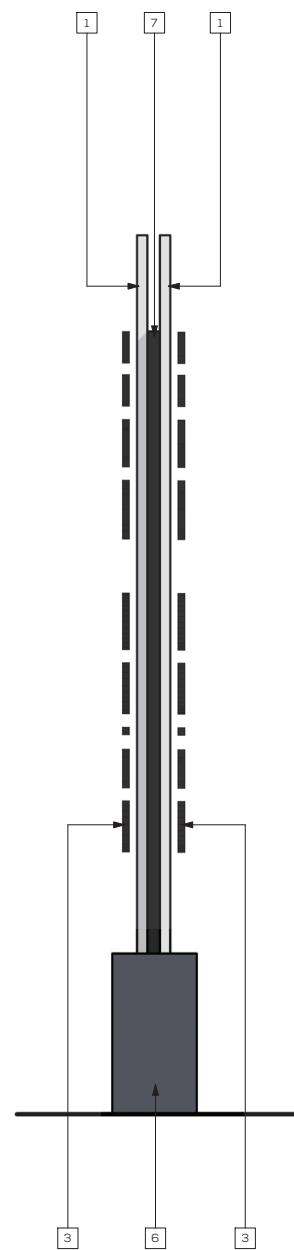
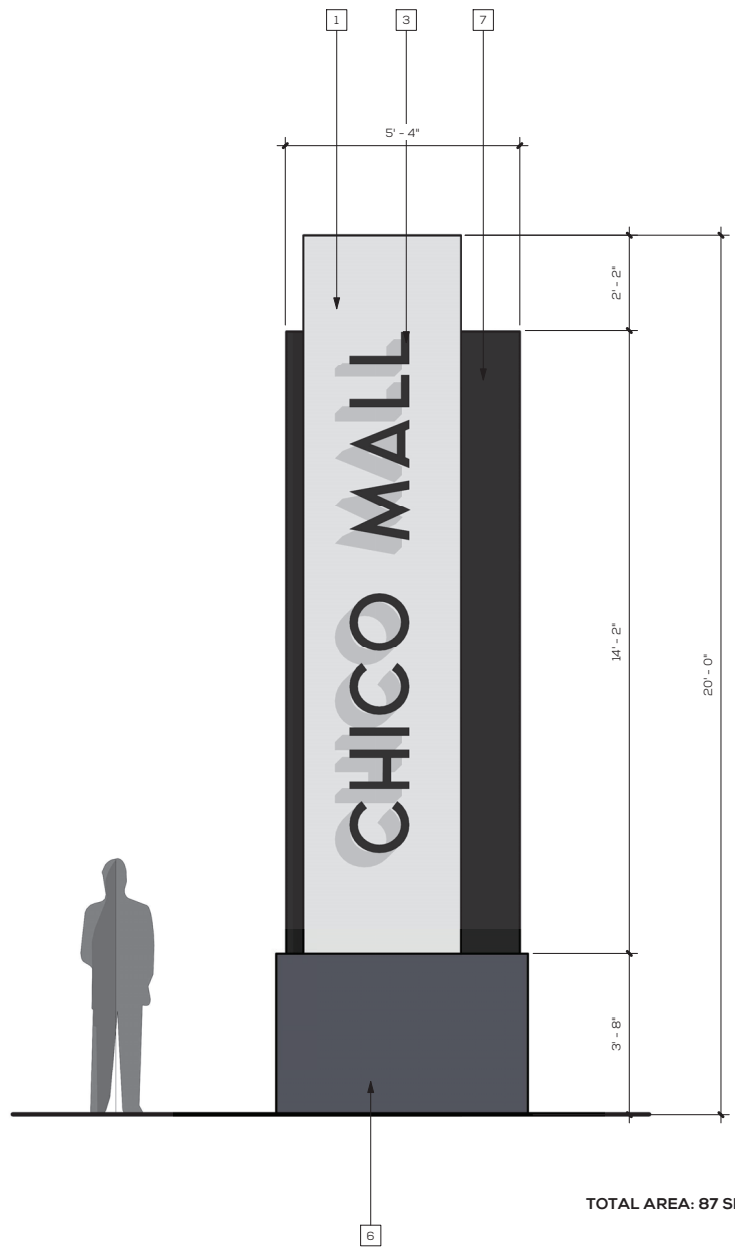
EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS KEYNOTES

SCALE: NONE



MONUMENT B

TOTAL CUMULATIVE AREA: 174 SF (AT FIVE LOCATIONS) = 870 SF



- 1 CHEMETAL 420 CASCADE BRUSHED xx GAUGE ALUMINUM
- 2 TBD PLASTER SYSTEM, COLOR: SW 7018 DOVETAIL
- 3 LETTERS WITH BACKLIGHTING, MATERIAL DEPENDANT ON SIGANGE CO.
- 4 AEPSPAN PRESTIGE SERIES 2" REVEAL, COLOR: COOL OLD TOWN GRAY
- 5 AEPSPAN BOX RIB, COLOR: COOL OLD TOWN GRAY
- 6 NICHIIA TUFFBLOCK, COLOR: STEEL
- 7 ALUMINUM POWDERCOATED PRISMATIC POWDERS: BLACKBOARD PSB 6865 SOLID TONE

EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS KEYNOTES
SCALE: NONE



DRAWING SCALE: As indicated

CHICO MALL

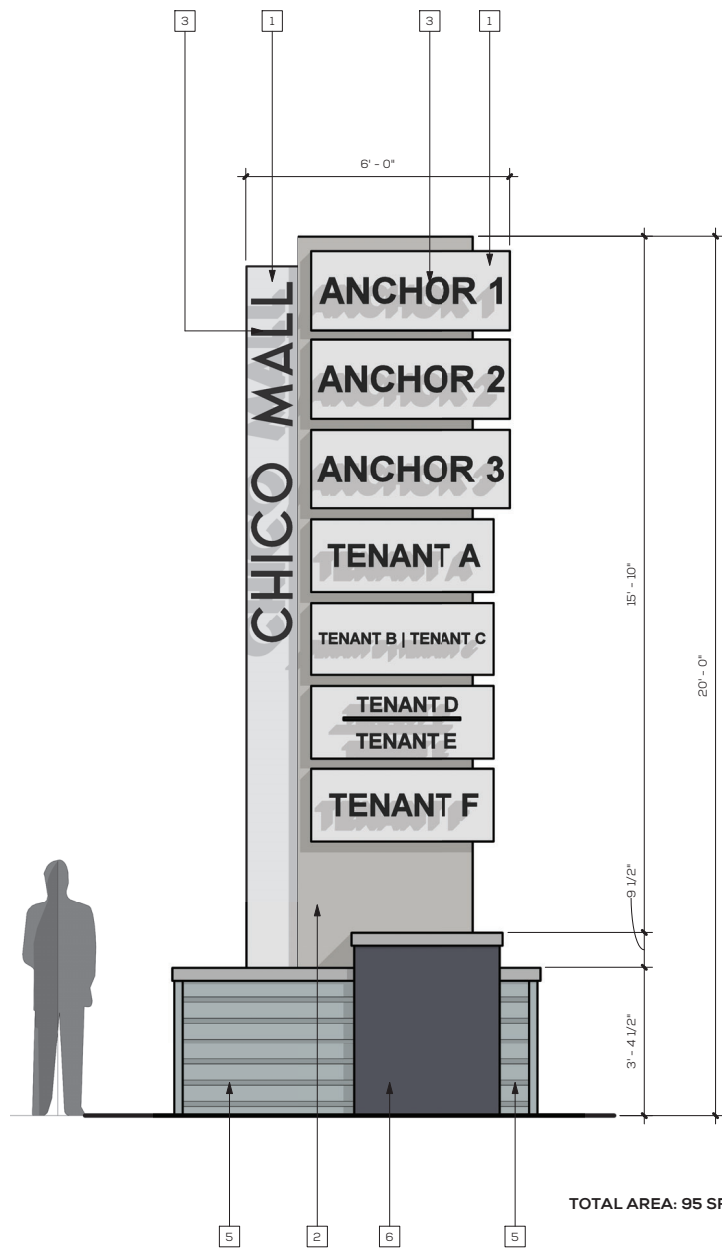
COMPREHENSIVE SIGNAGE PROGRAM - EXHIBIT B.9

Attachment D

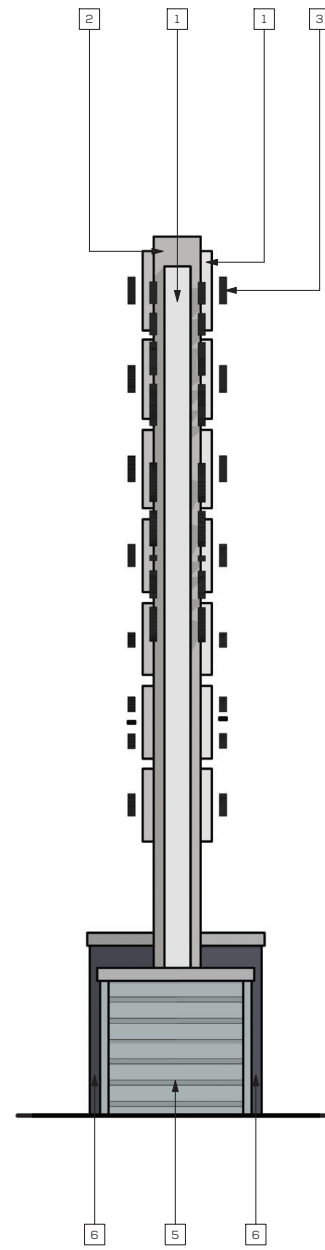
2019.09.09

PYLON C

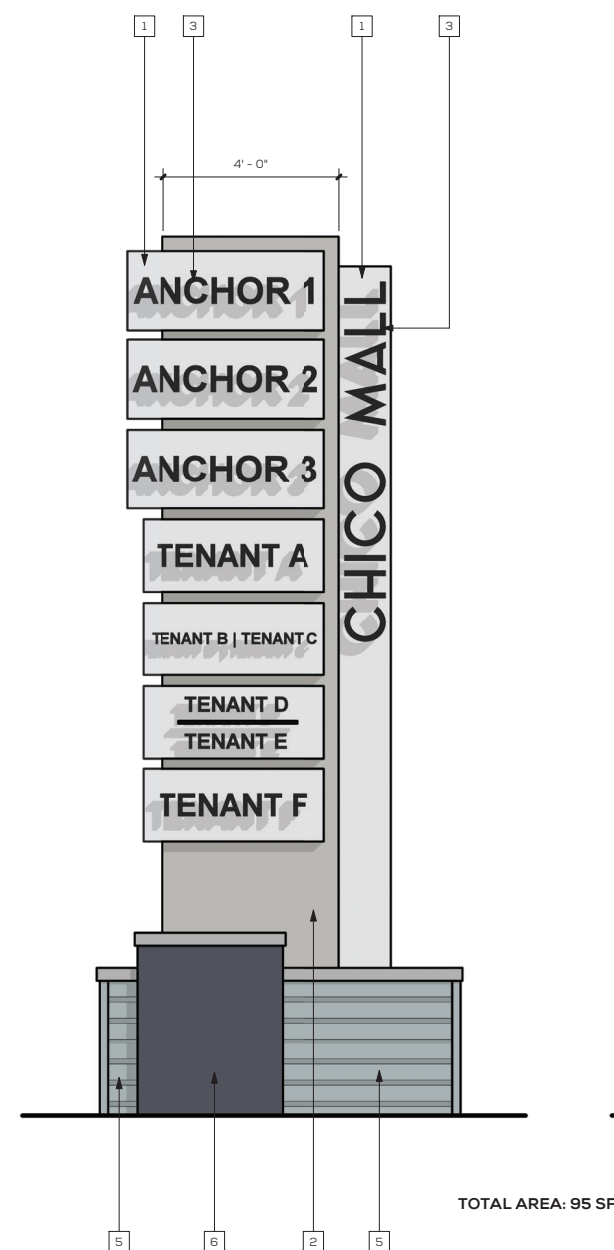
TOTAL CUMULATIVE AREA: 190 SF



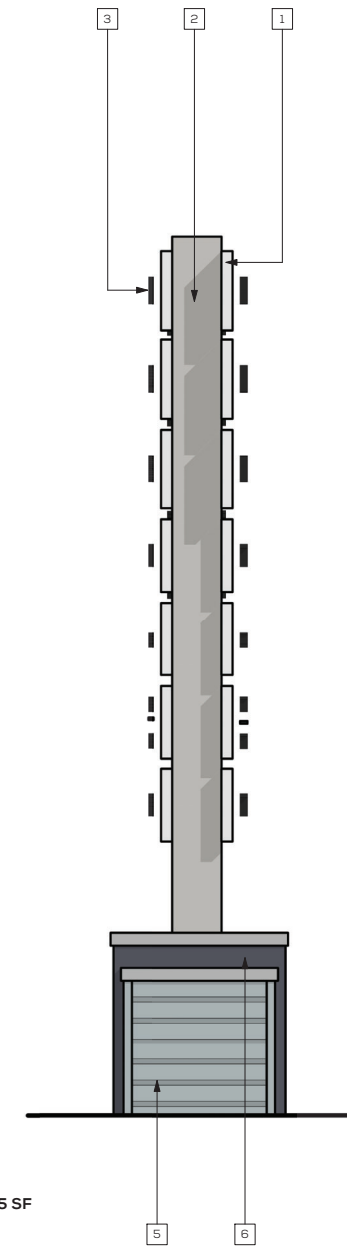
AA - NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



BB - EAST ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



CC - SOUTH ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



DD - WEST ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

- 1 CHEMETAL 420 CASCADE BRUSHED xx GAUGE ALUMINUM
- 2 TBD PLASTER SYSTEM, COLOR: SW 7018 DOVETAIL
- 3 LETTERS WITH BACKLIGHTING, MATERIAL DEPENDANT ON SIGANGE CO.
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- 6 NICHIIHA TUFFBLOCK, COLOR: STEEL
- 7 ALUMINUM POWDERCOATED PRISMATIC POWDERS: BLACKBOARD PSB 6865 SOLID TONE

EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS KEYNOTES
SCALE: NONE



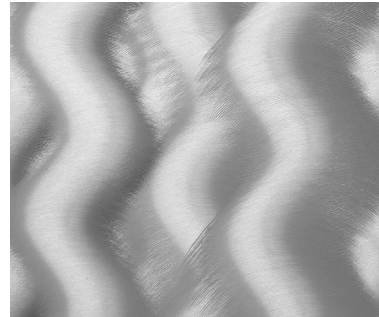
Signage Connection to Façade – Shared Materials



Nichiha Tuffblock, Color: Steel



Omegaflex plaster system
painted SW 7018 Dovetail



Chemetal Cascade Brushed
Aluminum, to be used in future
façade design



Raise your visibility with a smart portfolio of illuminated letters and logo solutions. From brilliant stopping power, to precise sophistication, to endless creative possibilities, we have a product to fit any type of project. For the highest quality in lighted dimensional signage, turn to Gemini. Learn more at GeminiSignProducts.com/Illuminated

Craftsmanship, illuminated



Potential Lighting Methods



AEPspan metal profile, Color: Old
Town Gray



*Conceptual façade design for illustrative purposes only

**TABLE 5-8
SIGN STANDARDS BY ZONING DISTRICT (Continued)**

I. Signs Permitted in the CR (Regional Commercial) Zoning District (Continued)

Sign Class	Sign Type	Maximum Number	Maximum Sign Area	Maximum Sign Height	Location Requirements	Lighting Allowed?	Additional Requirements
Multi-tenant sites, shopping centers 1. Center identification	Ground-mounted	1 per street frontage	100 s.f. per sign face, 200 s.f. minimum and 400 s.f. max. per sign	20 ft.	Sign shall be set back 5 ft. from property lines and shall not block sight distance area	Yes	Allowable in addition to other signs for individual businesses.
2. Business identification (detached buildings greater than 10,000 s.f. gross floor area)	Monument	1 per street frontage if located within 50 ft. of public street	16 s.f. per sign face, 32 s.f. maximum per sign	5 ft.	Sign shall be set back 5 ft. from property lines and shall not block sight distance area	Yes	Total allowable sign area includes wall, monument, and awning signs.
3. Business identification	Wall	1 per street frontage and/or per customer public entrance.	2 s.f. of sign area per linear foot of bldg. frontage for ground floor uses. 0.5 s.f. per linear foot of business frontage for uses on second or higher floors. 32 s.f. minimum and 200 s.f. max. per business.	Below eave		Yes	Total allowable sign area includes wall, monument, and awning signs. Anchor tenants within a multi-tenant site are allowed up to 75 percent additional s.f., 350 s.f. maximum per business.



September 25, 2019

City of Chico Planning Department
411 Main Street
Chico, CA 95928

RE: Chico Mall – Comprehensive Signage Program Submittal- Resubmittal
Address: 1950 East 20th Street
APN: Multiple- Main Building is 002-450-043

Dear Planner:

It is with pleasure that we can present this Comprehensive Signage Program (CSP) to you for review.

The project has been discussed on several different occasions with senior planning staff. At present, the only way that the land use regulations for signage allow for a taller sign is through the CSP. It is the intent of the attached PowerPoint presentation to illustrate a few of the studies that we and other consultants have engaged upon to determine appropriate designs for visibility and style. This has been a collaborative and iterative effort with ownership and the design team. What you see in the attached package represents a selection and refinement of many versions, including the most recent discussion with Bruce Ambo and Mike Sawley on September 20, 2019.

It is the intent of this proposal to create a signage package that emphasizes the importance of this region. Let's face it, in today's age of cell phones and navigation, most visitors are not using the off ramp when they see the sign. It is more than just going to the Chico Mall. By creating visibility to those who are 'passing by' we set a "mind -space" for the entire 20th Street corridor. We convey the fact that "there is a lot going on here." This is one of very few areas in the city that warrants a regional icon.

As we have discussed with staff, the height of the main pylon is going to be a point of discussion. We are proposing a sign that we feel is unlike any we have seen elsewhere, yet still utilizes materials and standards common to the industry. We avoided concepts that featured a pinnacle center name and attempted to keep the copy legible and

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115 Meyers Street Suite 110
Chico, California 95928
www.rgachico.com

f 530 342 1882

Attachment H

simple. A key point to make is that the sign is only visible to small areas of the city from vehicular and pedestrian levels. The key vantage for this design is for both north and south bound traffic on Highway 99. The proposed and funded bicycle passing at 20th Street has also added to the complexity of studies in that sight lines and potential sign locations will be limited by the new bridge.

The package should provide findings consistent with 19.74.070.E, but as we have stated in the past, we want this to be a collaborative effort with staff as well. This is the first time that staff has seen the proposed pylon and monument signs and we welcome continued discussion.

Compromises have been made to reduce the main pylon signs height from 85' feet to 57' which should be noticeably lower than the approved hotel on the adjacent parcel to the East. We have included one of the exhibits from that project as Appendix B. It is important to note that the attached print out of the Powerpoint presentation completely replaces the originally submitted document. In an effort to help differentiate this revision from the last, we have changed the binding from blue to black.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Matt Gallaway' in a cursive script.

Matt Gallaway, AIA, LEED AP
Principal Architect
Russell, Gallaway, Associates inc.