



**MARIN COUNTY PLANNING DIVISION
ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION
McDonald's Sign Review**

Decision: Denied
Date: August 25, 2020

Project ID No:	P2821	Applicant(s):	David Ford
		Owner(s):	McDonald's USA, LLC
		Assessor's Parcel No(s):	043-241-18
		Property Address:	600 Redwood Highway, Mill Valley
		Project Planner:	Kathleen Kilgariff 415.473.7173 kkilgariff@marincounty.org
		Signature:	<i>Kathleen Kilgariff</i>
Countywide Plan Designation:		GC (General Commercial / Mixed Use, F.A.R. = 0.10 to 0.20)	
Community Plan Area:		Strawberry Community Plan	
Zoning District:		BFC-CP (Bayfront Conservation Combing District, Planned Commercial)	
Environmental Determination:		Statutorily Exempt from CEQA per Section 15270	

PROJECT SUMMARY

The applicant requests Sign Review approval to install the following signs at an existing McDonald's in Mill Valley:

- Two internally illuminated yellow "M" arch logos, measuring 14 square feet in area (28 square foot total).
- Two internally illuminated white "McDonald's" signs, measuring approximately 26.5 square feet in area (53 square foot total)
- One drive-thru canopy sign, measuring 10 feet, 8 inches in height, and 8 feet, 8 inches in width, with a "Drive-Thru, Clearance 9 feet" sign atop. The proposed sign measures approximately 15 square feet in area.
- One canopy sign, measuring 11 feet, 5 inches in height, 9 feet, 4 inches in width, with a small "Order Here" sign atop.

- One “Pay Here” and one “Pick Up Here” drive-thru sign, measuring 2.5 square feet in area (5 square feet total).
- Three internally illuminated ground mounted directional signs, measuring four feet in height, 1 foot 11 inches in width.

Sign materials include painted acrylic, aluminum, and PVC board. Colors include yellow, white, and gray.

Sign Review approval is required due to the number of signs and sign area, and because the project entails free standing, illuminated signs as outlined in Section 22.60.020.A.2.

KEY ISSUES

The project was reviewed by the Strawberry Design Review Board (the SDRB) on July 20, 2020 (draft minutes included in Attachment 1). The SDRB found the proposed plans difficult to evaluate as the architectural plans vary from the existing site conditions. Additionally, it was unclear whether the existing signs were proposed to remain. These items are further discussed in the findings below.

In addition to the comments above, the SDRB did not support an increase in sign area on the property, the internal illumination for any signs on the property, and recommended that the logos be removed from the directional signage.

COUNTYWIDE PLAN CONSISTENCY

The proposed project is consistent with the Marin Countywide Plan (CWP) for the following reasons:

- A. The project is consistent with the CWP woodland preservation policy (BIO-1.3) because the project would not entail the irreplaceable removal of a substantial number of mature, native trees.
- B. The project is consistent with the CWP special-status species protection policy (BIO-2.2) because the subject property does not provide habitat for special-status species of plants or animals.
- C. The project is consistent with the CWP natural transition and connection policies (BIO 2.3 and BIO 2.4) because the project would not substantially alter the margins along riparian corridors, wetlands, baylands, or woodlands.
- D. The project is consistent with the CWP stream and wetland conservation policies (BIO-3.1 and CWP BIO-4.1) because the proposed development would not encroach into any Stream Conservation Areas or Wetland Conservation Areas.
- E. The project is consistent with CWP water quality policies and would not result in substantial soil erosion or discharge of sediments or pollutants into surface runoff (WR-1.3, WR-2.2, WR-2.3) because the grading and drainage improvements would comply with the Marin County standards and best management practices required by the Department of Public Works.

- F. The project is consistent with CWP seismic hazard policies (CWP Policies EH-2.1, EH-2.3, and CD-2.8) because it would be constructed in conformance with County earthquake standards, as verified during review of the Building Permit application and the subject property is not constrained by unusual geotechnical problems, such as existing fault traces.
- G. The project is consistent with CWP fire hazard management policies (EH-4.1, EH-4.2, EH-4.5) because it would meet all fire safety requirements, as verified by the local fire protection district during review of the Building Permit application.
- H. The project is consistent with CWP aesthetic policies and programs (DES-4.1 and DES-4.e) because it would protect scenic quality and views of ridgelines and the natural environment from adverse impacts related to development.

STRAWBERRY COMMUNITY PLAN CONSISTENCY

The proposed project is consistent with the Strawberry Community Plan for the following reasons:

- A. The project is consistent with the Natural Resource Conservation policies, including policies 1.1 and 1.2 because it would not result in any Bay or wetland fill or affect any protect historical or archeological resources.
- B. The project site is located along the Redwood Highway frontage road. The commercial area along the frontage road contains an assortment of signs, ranging in colors and illumination styles. However, the majority of the sites that include internal illumination are limited to a few per site. The installation of seven internally illuminated signs will impact the natural setting of the site. As such, the project is inconsistent with the scale and character policies, including policy 2.1, which encourages preserving the natural appearance of hills, ridgelines, and other prominent significant landforms.
- C. The project is consistent with the safety policies, including policies 3.1 through 3.4, because it would be built in conformance with all safety standards related to slope stability, subsidence, and seismic activity.
- D. The project is consistent with the open space policies, including policies 4.1 through 4.35, because it would not adversely affect the access to or habitat quality of open space areas.

DEVELOPMENT CODE CONSISTENCY

Mandatory Findings for Sign Review (Marin County Code Section 22.60.040)

- A. Exceeding the General Standards for Permanent Signs By Use (22.28.040) and/or the Standards for Specific Sign Types (22.28.050) is necessary to overcome a visibility disadvantage caused by an unfavorable orientation of the front wall to the public right-of-way or by an unusually large setback.**

The project site is located along the Redwood Highway Frontage Road in Mill Valley. The location of the existing structure is visible from the roadway as well as Highway 101. The installation of new signage is not required to overcome unfavorable orientation. Instead, it is proposed to compliment proposed changes to the exterior (which would require Design

Review approval) and improve wayfinding once on the project site (i.e. directional signs that identify entrances, exits, the drive thru location, order/pick-up locations, etc.)

B. The sign would be in proper scale with the uses and structures on the property and in the surrounding community.

The proposed sign program includes the removal of existing signage and the installation of 10 signs. Project materials do not indicate that existing signage is to remain, including the existing internally illuminated, pole mounted golden arches. The removal of this sign would bring the property into greater conformance with the surrounding community as this existing free standing sign is large and incompatible with existing frontage road signage.

The installation of signs on the building façade is more effective in blending with the project site and does not detract from the overall character of the area, including the marsh at the rear of the property.

C. The colors, contrast, typography, and materials used for the sign would be simple and attractive and compliment the architectural design found on the property and in the surrounding community.

The colors and materials of the selected signs are in keeping with the McDonalds brand. Internal illumination is common along the frontage road, but typical internal illumination is limited to fewer signs than the seven internally illuminated signs that are proposed on site.

As the project is not consistent with the overall surrounding environment, the proposed materials are secondary to the overall impacts that the illuminated signs pose to the site surroundings.

The current architecture is not shown on the proposed sign plans. Instead, the plans include proposed elevations that are subject to Design Review. Section 22.42.025.P exempts commercial projects from design review if the exterior modifications are considered minor and incidental in nature.

Since the proposed modifications are not minor and incidental in nature, the modifications require Design Review. It is best to consider the proposed signage modifications at the same time as the modifications to the facades to ensure that the proposed materials for both the exterior of the structure and signage are simple, attractive, and complement one another.

D. The location and appearance of the sign would be compatible with other signs in the vicinity and the character of the surrounding community.

The frontage road contains a mix of signs and materials. There are several properties with internally illuminated signs on poles, but these are typically limited to gas stations, where the pole also includes the government required cost of gas listings. The 7-11 in the vicinity contains internally illuminated signage, but this is limited to one sign. The proposed project includes seven internally illuminated signs, which is not in keeping with the character of the surrounding community.

ACTION

The project is denied because it is inconsistent with the Strawberry Community Plan and Marin County Development Code.

VESTING

Unless conditions of approval establish a different time limit or an extension to vest has been granted, any permit or entitlement not vested within three years of the date of the approval shall expire and become void. The permit shall not be deemed vested until the permit holder has actually obtained any required Building Permit or other construction permit and has substantially completed improvements in accordance with the approved permits, or has actually commenced the allowed use on the subject property, in compliance with the conditions of approval.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

This decision is final unless appealed to the Planning Commission. A Petition for Appeal and the required fee must be submitted in the Community Development Agency, Planning Division, Room 308, Civic Center, San Rafael, no later than eight business days from the date of this decision (September 4, 2020).

cc: *{Via email to County departments and Design Review Board}*

CDA – Assistant Director

CDA – Planning Manager

Strawberry Design Review Board

Attachments:

1. Strawberry Design Review Board Minutes, July 20, 2020
2. Letters from the public

Strawberry Design Review Board
118 E. Strawberry Drive, Mill Valley, CA 94941
Strawberry Recreation Center
July 20, 2020

DRAFT SUMMARY MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:36PM by Joe Sherer, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT (via video conference)

Joe Sherer, Chair (JS)
Julie Brown (JB)

Penna Omega (PO)
Matt Williams (MW)

Rebecca Lind (RL)

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

OPEN TIME / PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. NONE

MINUTES REVIEW

The board reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting held on Jan. 20, 2020, prepared by JB.

M/S: JB/MW to approve minutes as drafted. Vote: 3-0 (JS yes; JB yes; MW yes) Motion carries.

The board also reviewed the minutes from the Feb. 3, 2020, minutes, prepared by RL, as amended by JS.

M/S: MW/RL to approve minutes as drafted. Vote: 3-0 (JS yes; JB yes; MW yes) Motion carries.

AGENDA ITEMS

<u>ITEM #1</u>	<u>APPLICANT</u>	<u>PLANNER</u>
2 Harbor Point Drive -sign	Signcraft	Michelle Levenson

APPLICANT PRESENTATION

Brad Westbrook (BW), of Signcraft, presented the proposed main monument sign for the corner of E. Strawberry Dr. and Weatherly Dr. to replace the existing one for Harbor Point. The proposed 29.3 square foot (SF) sign replaces the existing 27.5 SF sign board. It is an painted aluminum with a wood grain giclée accent and a circular Harbor Point logo protruding from the top. The main box of the sign is 48”H x 84”W x 18”D, with the logo reaching 57-3/8”H. There are no lights.

BOARD CLARIFICATIONS & DISCUSSION:

JS: The existing (E) sign is 68”W x with varying heights: 72” & 66”, which roughly equals +/-32SF. The sign regulations say Harbor Point is entitled to 6SF total.

RL: The code also requires the base to be a min. of 40% of the sign width.

MW: This is 100%, so we’re OK.

JB: Why is this sign not consistent with the wooden sign across E. Strawberry Dr. and elsewhere?
(shows photo)

MW: Why is this sign inconsistent with the Club & Lighthouse sign and the Harbor Point 450 sign at Strawberry Lane across the street from each other along E. Strawberry Dr? (showing photos of the two large stone clad signs, which are aluminum on wood and raised lettering on wood, respectively)

RL: The logo seems too big, and I don't like it protruding from the top - it should be removed.

PO: The blue logo isn't consistent with anything else. It's also visually too light and not very distinctive, there is little contrast. I don't like it.

JB: The logo is a bit strange – it's not the same logo as on the wooden signs, which are dark background with the bridge and say "Harbor Point" above it.

JS: The logo should be removed.

JB: If the logo is removed, then the wood part may be too far down and might appear to have what MW called a "heavy forehead".

General discussion that the wood part should be moved higher on the monument.

MW: I'm still distracted by it not being consistent with the other prominent road signs.

BW then talked about how the raised letter sign at Strawberry Ln. will be replaced to be consistent and showed us the mockup. It has a similar logo to the wooden signs and then the lettering to the right.

This prompted discussion of there seems to be a program to replace all the signage and in light of that, we should be seeing this as a whole, not piecemeal.

JB: There is a master signage program, obviously. Why not present your sign program, a full master signage package, for our review?

MW: Putting them all together will show them they should be consistent with one another. Doing them together will sort out the outliers.

JB: I think that is appropriate. We'd be abdicating our responsibility to future Board members if we don't give them some guidelines for approval, some record that this is what it should be like, especially since we all seem to be OK with Harbor Point exceeding it's allowed signage.

ACTION:

It was M/S by JB/RL to RECOMMEND A CONTINUANCE for resubmittal with the FOLLOWING MODIFICATIONS to be conveyed to Staff:

1. Resubmit the sign to be consistent with a Master Sign Program for Harbor Point with consistent logos, colors, backgrounds, and lettering.
2. Elimination of the protruding logo at the top of the sign, making only the 48"H x 84"L x 18"D sign is acceptable.
3. Study the height of the wood section on the monument, moving it up from its current position.

Vote: 5 – 0 (JB yes; RL yes; JS yes; PO yes; MW yes)

600 Redwood Highway – McDonald’s Sign Review

David Ford

Kathleen Kilgariff

APPLICANT PRESENTATION

David Ford (DF), of Yesco, presented the proposed illuminated sign package which is additive to the complete remodel of the McDonald’s, which did not come before the Board. The applicant isn’t aware of or able to speak to all the other work beyond what is in his submittal.

BOARD CLARIFICATIONS & DISCUSSION

RL: We are not fond of illuminated signage along the freeway. Are there other lighting on the site?

MW: What is happening with the existing large illuminated sign? Does it remain?

DF did not know. This submittal was only for his scope of work, there is no supplemental reference architectural plans, nor any indication on this submittal if/what is to remain or go on the site. Since there was an Interagency Referral sent to us and we don’t think we have enough information to even understand the submittal, the Board decided to respond to the Referral:

ACTION:

It was M/S by RL/PO to RECOMMEND A CONTINUANCE for resubmittal with the FOLLOWING SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION & SUBSTANTIAL MODIFICATIONS to be conveyed to Staff:

From the Interagency Referral:

In your response to this referral, please provide the following information:

1. Indicate whether the application materials contain enough information for you to determine whether the applicant can readily comply with your agency’s standards.

SDRB: There is not enough information to determine what extent of illumination is proposed. There are no reference architectural plans nor any indication if the (E) large McDonald’s sign is to remain or be removed.

2. If the application does not contain enough information for you to determine whether the project can readily comply with your agency’s standards, please list the information that you will need to make this determination.

SDRB: We need the reference architectural and landscaping plans and/or other information to understand:

- A. If the (E) large illuminated sign is to remain.
- B. What other exterior illumination on the building and in the landscaping is proposed? Is outdoor seating proposed? Will it be illuminated? There is a wetland behind this site that needs to be considered and shouldn’t be negatively impacted.
- C. Is the existing screen wall along the frontage to remain? If not, then we believe we need to understand the amount of illumination (lighting & menu boards) visible on the interior relative to the amount of glazing proposed as well as the screening proposed.
- D. What improvements to the sidewalk are proposed?
- E. What is happening with the storage structure in the rear? Is there illumination there?

- F. What level of illumination of the menu boards is proposed at the drive through? Is there lighting at the new canopies at the cashier and pick up?
- G. Additionally, recently the car lineup has extended onto the street frontage, which seems like a safety concern – what improvements are proposed? *(added for clarification by MW after meeting).*
- H. What were the prior Conditions of Approval related to this site? Is the accessory building compliant?

3. *If the application contains sufficient information for your review, please indicate whether the project is feasible as proposed or needs substantial modifications to comply with your agency's standards.*

SDRB: There is not sufficient information to review. Not understanding the full extent of illumination is problematic.

4. *If the project needs to be substantially modified to comply with your agency's standards, please describe the scope of those modifications. In your response, please indicate whether you would like to impose requirements on the project.*

SDRB: A. We support the removal of the (E) large McDonald's sign. If it is to remain, we cannot support ANY illuminated signage on the building. The (E) sign exceeds the allowable area.

B. Logos should be removed from the illuminated directional signage.

We will forward your comments to the applicants/owners so they are aware of your agency's requirements.

Vote: 5 – 0 (JB yes; RL yes; JS yes; PO yes; MW yes)

ITEM #3

PLANNER

Marin County Objective Design & Development Standards (ODDS)

N/A

General discussion of the ODDS centered on the ineffectiveness of the Survey Monkey list and its presentation of photos and generalizations. It didn't seem to deal with good design, massing, or neighborhood cohesion. JB and MW were concerned that this approach could lead to cookie-cutter or watered-down designs. Worse, it could lead to bad imitations of what is held up as "good" design.

JS talked with a Planner who thought that these ODDS would only apply to one site in Strawberry. However, in discussion, we were unsure if any renovation or improvement could then implement the ODDS. Better understanding of the potential future impact to Strawberry would be appreciated.

RL walked the Board through some of the Design Guidelines on the City of Oakland website, specifically the Commercial Corridor Design Guidelines, or the Broadway Valdez District Specific Plan Appendix C. The Board liked the idea of "do this, not that" format in general.

ADJURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05PM.

Notes prepared by Matt Williams: 08.05.20

From: [Josh Sale](#)
To: [Kilgariff, Kathleen](#)
Cc: [Parton, Maureen](#)
Subject: Project: P2821 McDonalds
Date: Monday, July 6, 2020 2:38:36 PM

Dear Ms. Kilgariff,

I received a postcard regarding installations of new signs and drive-thru materials at the McDonalds on Redwood Highway. I've tried calling a couple of times to learn more about what is being considered but can't get beyond your voicemail.

I live at 150 Chapel Dr. My home is probably 1.5 miles or so away from McDonalds as the bird flies. Nonetheless, I can see the "arches" from my house ... particularly at night when they are illuminated.

I can see no commercial value in McDonalds advertising towards my home. If they are changing their signage, I would like to request that they be directed to limit the exposure of their signage to Hwy 101 and perhaps the Redwood Highway. They should be directed to shield their signage to all other exposures.

If you have any questions, please feel free to give me a call.

Thank you,

Josh Sale
415 388-8866