



# REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION City of Sacramento

# 5

915 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814-2671

PUBLIC HEARING  
September 22, 2011

To: Members of the Planning Commission

**Subject: Wells Fargo Signage Variance (P11-022)**

A request to locate a new 32 square-foot monument sign at an existing office development in the Central Business District Special Planning District (C-3-SPD) zone.

- A. Environmental Determination: Exempt (per CEQA Guidelines Section 15311, Accessory Structures);
- B. Variance to allow a detached monument sign to be located within ten (10) feet of a property line.

**Location/Council District:**

400 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 95814

Assessor's Parcel Number 006-0144-029

Council District 1

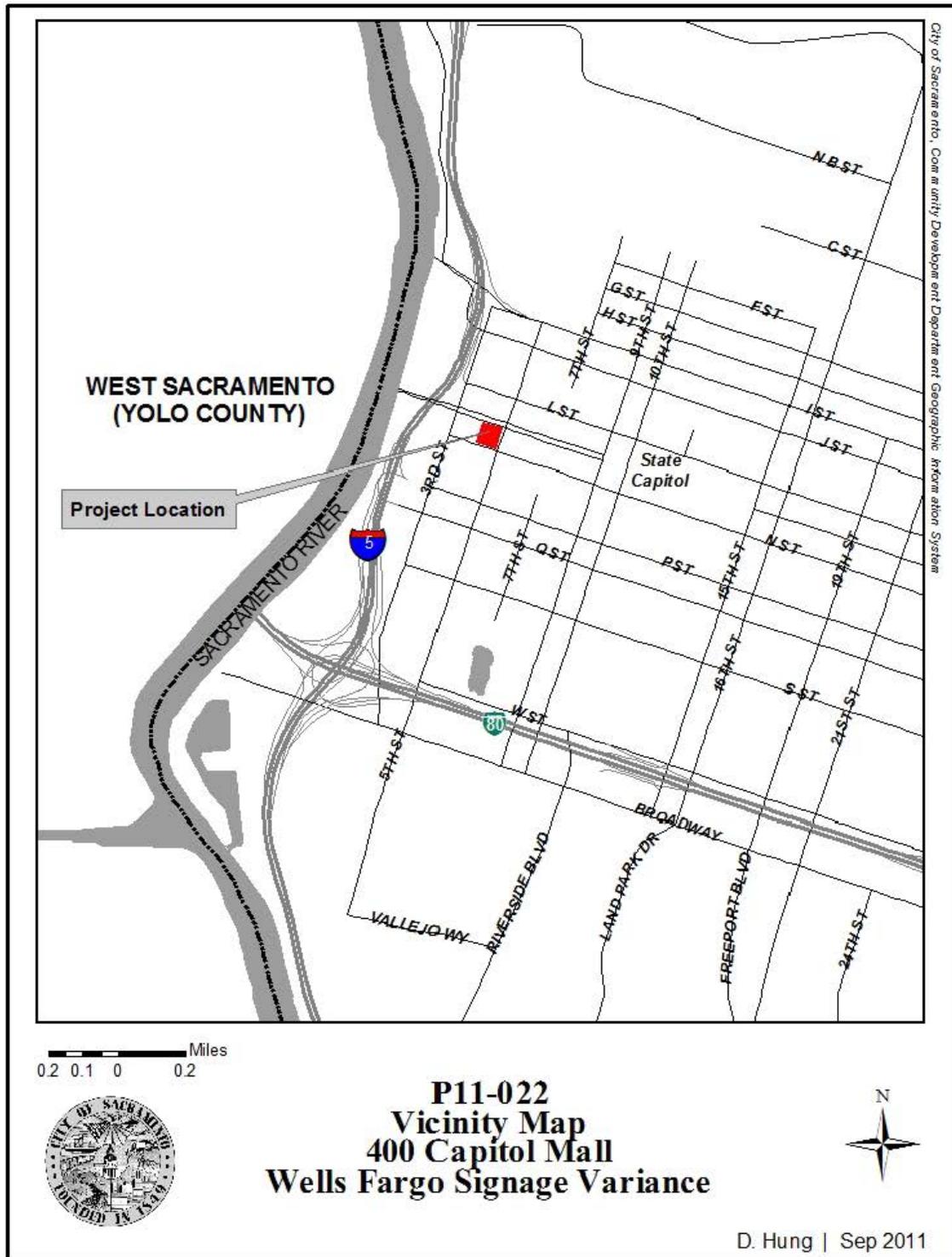
**Recommendation:** Staff recommends the Commission approve the request based on the findings and subject to the conditions listed in Attachment 1. **The project is non-controversial at the time of writing this report.** The Commission has final approval authority over items A to B above, and its decision is appealable to City Council.

**Contact:** David Hung, Associate Planner, (916) 808-5530; Stacia Cosgrove, Senior Planner, (916) 808-7110

**Applicant:** Vitae Architecture, Attn: Brendan Koon, (415) 356-6400, 55 Hawthorne Street, Suite 550, San Francisco, CA 94105

**Owner:** Hines, Attn: Marc Smith, (916) 614-8850, 400 Capitol Mall, Suite 670, Sacramento, CA 95814

Vicinity Map



**Summary:** The applicant is requesting to locate a new 32 square-foot monument sign at an existing office development to replace an existing monument sign. The project requires a Variance to allow a detached monument sign to be located less than ten (10) feet from a property line. Staff has sent early notices to various neighborhood groups in the area and has not received any opposition on the proposal. Notices were also sent to property owners within 500-foot radius of the property for the public hearing.

<b>Table 1: Project Information</b>
<b>General Plan designation:</b> Central Business District
<b>Design Review District:</b> Central Business District
<b>Existing zoning of site:</b> Central Business District Special Planning District (C-3-SPD)
<b>Existing use of site:</b> Office
<b>Property area:</b> 2.39 acres

**Background Information:** On November 16, 1989, the Planning Commission approved various entitlements to allow the construction of a 30-story office building, the Wells Fargo Center (P88-358), on the subject site. The project was appealed to the City Council. On January 23, 1990, the City Council denied the appeal and approved the project. As a condition of the approval, the applicant was required to submit a comprehensive exterior signage program for the review and approval of the Planning Director prior to issuance of any sign permits. There are currently two detached monument signs on Capitol Mall between 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Street; one at the corner of Capitol Mall and 4<sup>th</sup> Street and the other at the corner of Capitol Mall and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposal is to replace the existing monument sign on the corner of Capitol Mall and 5<sup>th</sup> Street with a new sign within the landscape area in front of the building.

**Public/Neighborhood Outreach and Comments:** Staff sent early notices to various community groups including the Downtown Sacramento Partnership, the Sacramento Old City Association, the China Mall Committee and the Sacramento Metro Chamber. Staff has not received any comments from the above community groups at the time of the writing of this report.

**Environmental Considerations:** The Community Development Department, Environmental Planning Services Division has reviewed this project and determined that this is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15311, Accessory Structures. The project consists of the construction and placement of on-premise signs accessory to (appurtenant to) an existing office building.

**Policy Considerations:** The 2030 General Plan Update was adopted by City Council on March 3, 2009. The 2030 General Plan's goals, policies, and implementation programs define a roadmap to achieving Sacramento's vision to be the most livable city in America. The 2030 General Plan Update designation of the subject site is Central Business District (CBD) which provides for mixed-use high-rise development and single-

use or mixed-use development within easy access to transit. The vision for the CBD is a vibrant downtown core that will continue to serve as the business, governmental, retail, and entertainment center for the city and the region. The proposed project meets the 2030 General Plan goals and policies related to Citywide Land Use and Urban Design and the development of the Central Business District designation.

### **Project Design:**

Monument Sign: A 32 square-foot detached monument sign for the Wells Fargo Center is being proposed to replace the existing detached sign. The proposed sign is located approximately two feet from the property line at Capitol Mall and approximately nine feet from the sidewalk adjacent to 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The monument sign has an overall width of 4'-0" and a height of 8'-0", or approximately 32 square feet, and is erected over a 21'-10" long by 1'-10" tall plinth that runs perpendicular to the sign (see Exhibit 1A). The monument sign is finished with granite with color to match the building and the plinth is finished with granite veneer to also match the color of the building. New landscape planting will be provided between the plinth and the sidewalk on Capitol Mall to serve as a physical buffer. The sign is proposed to be indirectly illuminated with light source placed within the landscape area. The Department of Transportation has conditioned that the applicant shall construct the proposed plinth and sign using a footing system (three footings) to minimize excavation and to protect the root system of the existing trees.

The Sign Ordinance contains the following criteria regarding minimum clearance for detached signs (section 15.148.350): A detached sign shall have a minimum clearance of ten feet between the ground surface and the bottom of the sign, provided that the minimum clearance standard shall not apply if the sign is located in an area not accessible to pedestrian or vehicular traffic, the sign is located at least ten (10) feet from any property line and ten (10) feet from the edge of any driveway entrance, and the sign will not obstruct free and clear vision of motor vehicle operators. Since the proposed sign is not an elevated sign and it is less than ten feet from adjacent property line at Capitol Mall, a variance is required for not meeting the required setback.

The City of Sacramento Sign Ordinance, per section 15.148.1040, states that the planning commission shall have authority to grant a variance when the following is shown:

- That exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions apply to the case referred to in the application that do not apply generally in the same district and the enforcement of the regulations of this article would have an unduly harsh result upon the utilization of the subject property;
- That the variance will not result in a special privilege to one individual property owner and that the variance would be appropriate for any property owner facing similar circumstances;
- That the requested variance will not materially and adversely affect the health and safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood, and will not be

materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property and improvements in the neighborhood.

Staff supports the setback variance based on the following findings:

1. An exceptional site condition is present in that existing established landscaping in the vicinity of the monument sign makes it difficult to achieve the required ten-foot setback from Capitol Mall;
2. The variance does not result in a special privilege to one individual property owner and that the variance would be appropriate for another site with similar restrictive site conditions;
3. The requested variance will not materially and adversely affect the health and safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood, and will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property and improvements in the neighborhood since the monument sign does not encroach onto sidewalks or driveways and is outside the driveway visibility triangle for signage.

Per Section 15.148.190 of the Sign Ordinance in respect to C-3 zone signage, there are no specific criteria for detached signage for office towers. Given the scale of the office tower, which is located on an entire city block abutted by four public streets, and given the existing landscape buffer on Capitol Mall, staff believes the proposed monument sign is compatible with the surrounding and not out of scale with the building. The proposed sign is also similar in height to the existing sign that will be removed and is being setback from the sidewalk at Capitol Mall and 5<sup>th</sup> Street, as opposed to the existing sign which directly abuts the sidewalk.

The site is within the Central Business District Design Review District and the proposal was reviewed and approved by Design Review staff. Design Review conditions of approval are shown in Attachment 2. The proposed sign was also reviewed and approved by Urban Forest Services and Department of Transportation as conditioned.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends the Commission approve the requested entitlements based on the findings and subject to the conditions listed in Attachment 1.

Respectfully submitted by: David Hung  
DAVID HUNG  
Associate Planner

Approved by: Stacia A. Cosgrove  
STACIA COSGROVE  
Senior Planner

Recommendation Approved:

Joy Patterson  
for GREGORY BITTER, AICP  
Principal Planner

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**Attachment 1**  
**Proposed Findings of Fact and Conditions of Approval**  
**Wells Fargo Signage Variance (P11-022)**  
**400 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 95814**

**Findings of Fact**

**A. Environmental Determination: Exemption- Accessory Structures**

Based on the determination and recommendation of the City's Environmental Planning Services Manager and the oral and documentary evidence received at the hearing on the Project, the Planning Commission finds that the Project is exempt from review under Section 15311 (Accessory Structures) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines as follows:

The project consists of the construction and placement of on-premise signs accessory to (appurtenant to) an existing office building.

**B. The **Variance** to allow a detached monument sign to be located less than ten (10) feet from a property line is approved subject to the following Findings of Fact and Conditions of Approval:**

1. An exceptional site condition is present in that existing established landscaping in the vicinity of the monument sign makes it difficult to achieve the required ten-foot setback from Capitol Mall;
2. The variance does not result in a special privilege to one individual property owner and that the variance would be appropriate for another site with restrictive site conditions;
3. The requested variance will not materially and adversely affect the health and safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood, and will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property and improvements in the neighborhood since the monument sign does not encroach onto sidewalks or driveways and is outside the driveway visibility triangle for signage.

**Conditions of Approval**

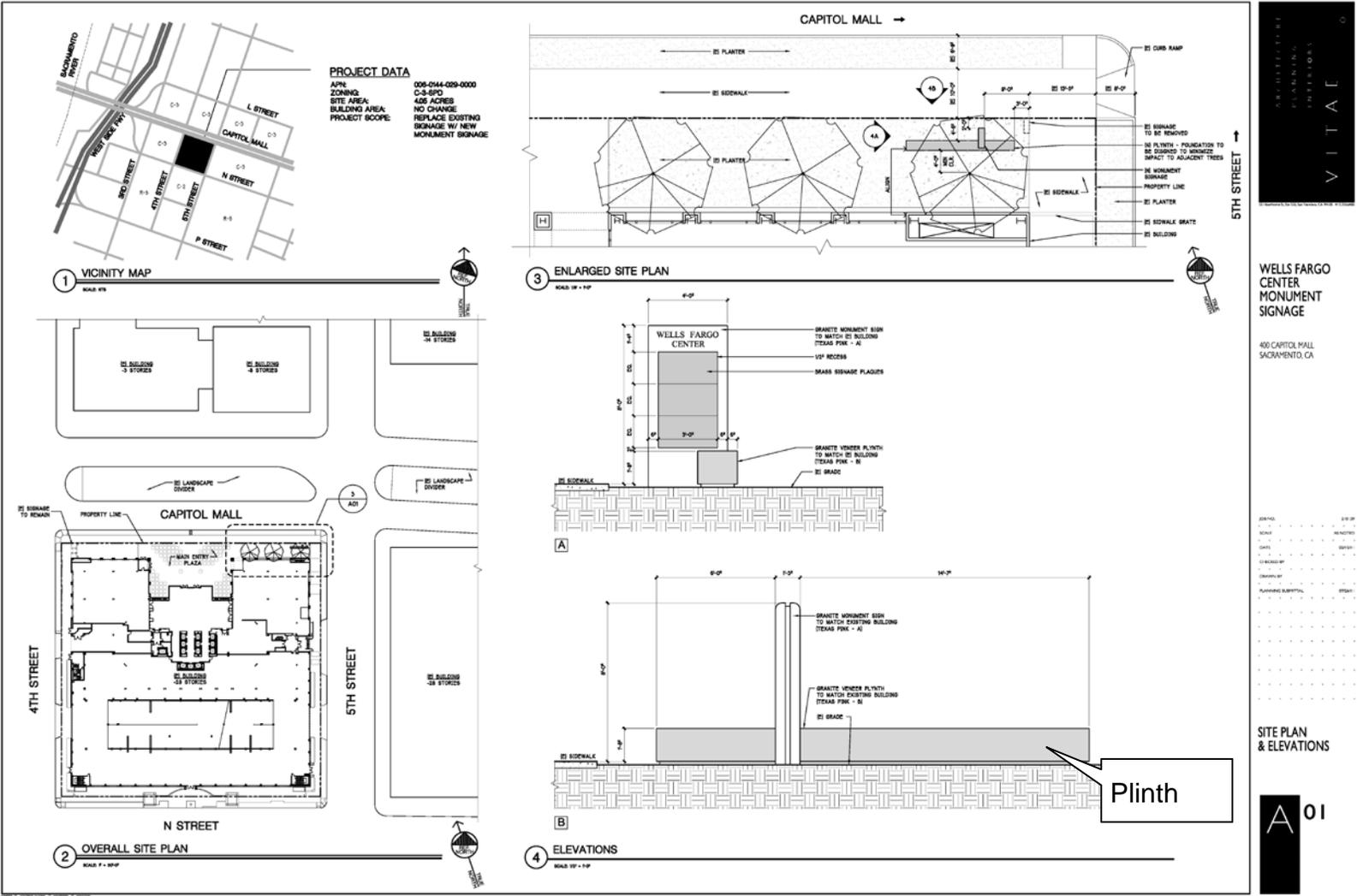
- B. The **Variance** to allow a detached monument sign to be located less than ten (10) feet from a property line is **approved** subject to the following Conditions of Approval:**

Planning Division

- B1. The applicant shall obtain all necessary building and/or sign permits in relation to the monument sign and the attached sign shown on Exhibit 1A-1B.
- B2. Modifications to the sign reviewed under this application shall be subject to approval by the Planning Division prior to the issuance of sign permits.
- B3. Applicant shall comply with Design Review conditions on Attachment 2.

Department of Transportation

- B4. The applicant shall construct the proposed plinth and sign using a footing system (three footings) to minimize excavation and to protect the root system of the existing trees to the satisfaction of the Department of Transportation.





Attachment 2: Design Review Approval



CITY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

PHONE 916-808-5656

300 Richards Blvd, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95811

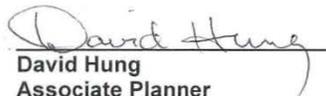
STAFF LEVEL PROJECT REVIEW

File Number:	P11-022	Applicant:	Vitae Architecture
Address:	400 Capitol Mall	Date Filed:	03/24/2011
APN:	006-0144-029-0000	Date Approved:	09/06/2011
Description:	<b>Wells Fargo Monument Sign</b>	Staff Contact:	David Hung, Assoc. Planner

STAFF ACTION AND CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

Staff has reviewed the proposed project, and approves it with the following conditions of approval:

1. New 32 square-foot monument sign to be erected at location as shown on plans.
2. New monument sign to be granite with color (Texas Pink) to match existing building.
3. New plinth to be granite veneer with color (Texas Pink) to match existing building.
4. Any new signage shall require issuance of a sign permit.
5. Landscaping shall be installed as shown on Planting Plan.
6. Any additional exterior work not approved with this application shall be subject to Design Review approval.
7. All other notes and drawings on the final plans as submitted by the applicant are deemed conditions of approval. Any changes to the final set of plans stamped by Design Review staff shall be subject to review and approval prior to any changes. Applicant shall comply with all current building code requirements.
8. A signed copy of the Affidavit of Zoning Code Development Standards, along with the Conditions of Approval, shall be scanned and inserted into the final set as a general sheet to be submitted for building permit.
9. This approval shall expire in three years from the approval date.

  
 David Hung  
 Associate Planner

Attachment 3: Land Use & Zoning Map

