



**ATTACHMENT D**

**PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**



**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE:**

MAY 18, 2026

**SUBJECT:**

**..Title**

RESOLUTION PC 26-5212 FOR A MASTER SIGN PROGRAM (CSP19-00003) TO GOVERN THE DESIGN, TYPE, AND DETAILS OF ALL SIGNAGE PROPOSED FOR THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN AREA, KNOWN AS NORTH CITY.

**LOCATION/APN:**

THE NORTH CITY PORTION OF THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN AREA, LOCATED SOUTH OF STATE ROUTE 78 AND CARMEL STREET, NORTH OF BARHAM DRIVE AND DISCOVERY STREET, EAST AND WEST OF TWIN OAKS VALLEY ROAD AND WEST OF THE SPRINTER RAIL LINE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF AN EXISTING AREA EAST OF THE SPRINTER LINE, MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS PORTION OF BLOCK 58, MAP 806, RANCHO LOS VALLECITOS DE SAN MARCOS; MAP NO. 15997, MAP NO. 16126, MAP NO. 16126, MAP NO. 16246, PARCEL MAP NO. 2617, PARCEL MAP NO. 20991, PARCEL MAP NO. 2786, PARCEL MAP NO. 21264, AND PORTIONS OF NORTH CITY DRIVE, JUNE WAY, CAMPUS WAY, AND INDUSTRIAL STREET. ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO.: 220-202-12 THROUGH -69 and 221-110-09 THROUGH -78.

**CASE NUMBER:**

MASTER SIGN PROGRAM (CSP19-00003)

**..Body**

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**Recommendation**

**..Recommendation**

APPROVE the following:

Resolution PC 26-5212 (Comprehensive Sign Program CSP19-00003) to allow a Master Sign Program to govern the design, type, and details of all future signage proposed for the North City portion of the University District Specific Plan area.

**..Body**

**Board or Commission Action**

Not applicable

**Background**

The University District Specific Plan (UDSP) was adopted by the City Council in November 2009 with the intent of creating a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and active urban center that would serve as a downtown area for the City of San Marcos. According to Section VII.1 of the UDSP, "having a visibly unique identity is essential to creating an active urban center, especially within a city's downtown



core. This identity can be achieved through the use of public art, landscaping, and by creating a hierarchy of sign types that are linked by a consistent theme.” In an effort to further develop the identity of the UDSP area, the applicant is requesting approval of a Master Sign Program for the portion of the UDSP area known as North City. As the subject area progressively becomes activated with visitors, residents, students, and new businesses, users will benefit from a wayfinding and district-oriented sign program.

The applicant, Urban Villages San Marcos, LLC, is requesting approval of a Master Sign Program for the portion of the UDSP known as North City. The proposed Master Sign Program serves to establish sign criteria and regulatory guidelines for wayfinding and district signage throughout the project area on both public and private property. While sign types and general locations are regulated by Section VII of the UDSP, the specific architectural details of signs require the City’s Planning Commission approval.

In addition, the approved UDSP amendments in 2025 allowed for updates to the general sign guidelines for the district, with the exception of wayfinding and right-of-way signage. Now that the amendments have been approved, Staff has worked with the applicant to create the Master Sign Program to address the wayfinding and right-of-way signage and to ensure compliance with the City’s Zoning Ordinance sign regulations and for conformity with the UDSP.

### **Discussion**

North City is interconnected by Campus Way, June Way, and North City Drive, as well as public plazas and paseos (vicinity map in Attachment A). Currently, the area is developed with projects including The Quad, Block C South, Block C North, 222 mixed-use apartments, Pima/Scripps, Draft Republic Restaurant, Block 3 Student Housing, the CSUSM Extended Learning Building, Mesa Rim Rock Climbing & Fitness Gym. These projects contain a mix of residential, commercial, student housing, educational, and entertainment type uses. The area also contains a mix of legal nonconforming industrial, residential, and commercial uses.

The UDSP conceptually regulates permitted district and wayfinding sign types and locations, while the specific architectural design and details of signage are subject to Planning Commission approval. Chapter VII.A of the UDSP identifies the general locations for permitted signage.

The Master Sign Program would regulate the district and wayfinding signage for the entire North City project area. Individual business identification signs on private property would not be regulated by this master sign program and would continue to be reviewed and approved by the Planning Division.

The proposed Master Sign Program includes nine distinct sign types:

1. District Identity Statement
2. Primary Entry Gateway
3. Secondary Entry Gateway



4. Vehicular Oriented Directional & Directories
5. Pedestrian Oriented Directional
6. Pedestrian Oriented Directional & Directory
7. Vehicular Oriented Parking Directional
8. Neighborhood Identification
9. Light Pole Banners

The proposed sign program contains an existing and developing architectural theme that will be enhanced from a hierarchy of sign types linked by a consistent style. The signs are designed in a modern architectural style consisting of vertical/linear rectangular forms with clean lines and faces. Primary materials include oil-rubbed steel, perforated metal panels, precast concrete with vertical reveals, powder coated rusted metal, and reclaimed wood in some locations. Perforated metal panels contain a pattern abstracted from a cluster of succulent plants, which will appear white during the day and will be illuminated at night. Illumination levels of the perforated metal panels and letters will be controlled with a dimmer to ensure illumination is not considered a visual impact and is compatible with the surrounding environment. The color scheme for the signs includes Agave Green, Hummingbird Pink, Sunshine Yellow, Forest Green, Hibiscus Orange, Black, White, and light Gray. The proposed Master Sign Program contains photos and descriptions of all proposed materials, colors, and textures (Attachment D).

To enhance sign visibility, aesthetic value, and reinforce the district identity, the proposed signs will be located on both private property and in the public right-of-way. Construction of signs on private property will require issuance of a building permit. Signs within the public right-of-way will require issuance of a building permit and an encroachment agreement. The location of every sign will be reviewed to ensure an unobstructed pedestrian path of travel. Staff will identify signs that could potentially obstruct vehicular or pedestrian visibility and require line-of-sight exhibits to ensure the signs are appropriately located.

All signs within public or private properties within North City are subject to maintenance and management in accordance with the Master Sign Program, encroachment permits, and the conditions of approval. The agreement will outline the required ongoing maintenance requirements, specify lighting standards and operations, identify the applicant as the responsible entity for the electricity costs, and specify enforcement measures if banners or poles do not meet the established conditions.

#### District Identity Statement – Sign Type “A1”

The District Identity Statement sign is the tallest and most visibly prominent sign proposed in the Master Sign Program. This sign is a 45-foot-tall by 9-foot-wide environmental graphic that announces arrival to North City to passing motorists on State Route (SR) 78. The sign will display the North City logo and the district name. It is scaled to provide appropriate visibility to passing motorists traveling at freeway speeds. No animation or flashing illumination is proposed or will be

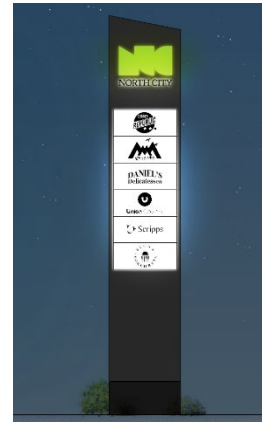
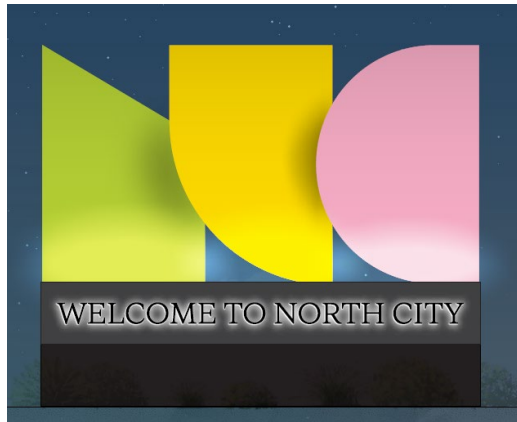


permitted to ensure the signs will not distract or negatively impact the motorist on all streets and the freeway. Primary materials include black hot oil rubbed steel with a custom textured concrete base and perforated metal trim, which will appear white during the day and will be internally illuminated during the night. In compliance with the UDSP, major commercial and/or corporate anchor names (i.e. retail, cinemas, hotels, etc.) are permitted to be displayed on the sign. Details of the District Identity Statement can be found on pages 6 and 7 of Attachment D. The UDSP allows for six District Identity Statement Signs and the applicant is proposing two, one on the East side and one on the West side of North City.



#### Primary Entry Gateway Signs – Sign Type “A2”:

Primary Entry Gateway signs identify key entry points into North City from SR 78, Twin Oaks Valley Road, Discovery Street, and East Barham Drive. The signs are smaller in size than the District Identity Statement signs and are appropriately scaled to be read by motorists entering the project area. Sign Type A2a includes a vertical design that reflects the District Identity Statement on a smaller scale, measuring 18-feet 5-inches tall by 3-feet 4-inches wide, and displays the North City logo. Sign type A2b measures 11-feet 8-inches tall by 14-feet 2-inches wide. It is a linear aluminum panel steel cabinet built on a custom textured concrete base with push-through acrylic letters stating, “WELCOME TO NORTH CITY” and the North City logo. Both A2a and A2b signs would be installed within landscape planters. A total of four Primary Entry Gateway signs are proposed by the applicant, and the UDSP permits up to five in the North City Area. The specific locations of the proposed Primary Entry Gateway signs are shown on pages 8, 9, 10, and 11 of Attachment D.



### Secondary Entry Gateway Signs – Sign Type “A3”

Secondary Entry Gateway signs are a scaled-down versions of the primary entry gateway signs; they are designed for motorists and pedestrians traveling at slower speeds on narrower streets. These signs include a vertical form measuring 12 feet tall by 30 inches wide, and they consist of the same materials as the primary entry gateway signs. The signs are located at secondary points of entry into the North City area. A test replica of this sign type has been installed in the northern center median at the intersection of Campus Way and Barham Drive, where it is proposed to remain as a permanent installation subject to this CSP approval, encroachment permit, and building permit. Additional details are provided on page 12 of Attachment D. The applicant proposes three secondary entry gateway signs and the UDSP permits up to four.

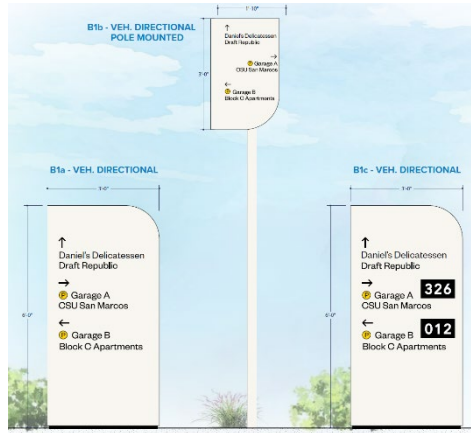


### Vehicular-Oriented Directional and Directories Signs – Sign Type “B1”

Vehicular-Oriented Directional and Directory signs are distributed throughout the project area to assist visitors navigating to destinations within North City. Sign sizes are 5 feet 11 inches tall by 3 feet wide; they are appropriately scaled to cater to motorists traveling at slower speeds. These signs will reinforce the district identity by utilizing the same materials, colors, design elements, and lighting

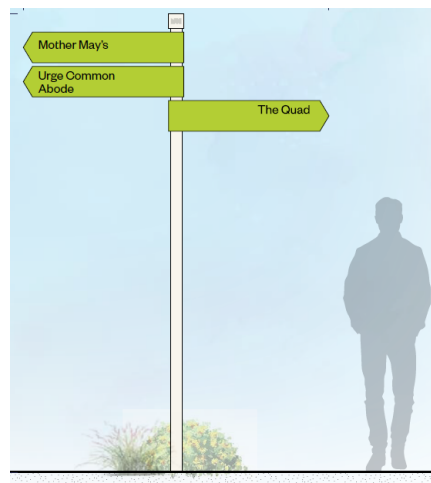


as the gateway signs. Signs located on private property may contain specific business names with directional arrows, while signs in the public right-of-way may contain such information, subject to approval of an encroachment permit. Directional signs will be located and positioned to direct vehicle and pedestrian traffic to prominent destinations. These signs may also direct motorists to parking facilities and provide real-time parking availability information. Details of Vehicular Oriented Directional and Directory signs can be found on pages 13, 14, 15, 16, 22 and 23 of Attachment D.



### Pedestrian-Oriented Directional Signs – Sign Type “B2”

Pedestrian-Oriented Directional signs provide wayfinding information to pedestrians along sidewalks and paseo areas. Sign locations include both private property and the public right-of-way; in the right-of-way, they are designed to minimize encroachment into active pedestrian areas. The design consists of a 10-foot-tall vertical metal post with 4-inch-thick metal message panels at the top. Pedestrian Oriented Directional Signs may contain specific business names with directional arrows; approval of an encroachment permit is required for these signs in the right-of-way. Details of Pedestrian Oriented Directional signs can be found on page 18 of Attachment D.





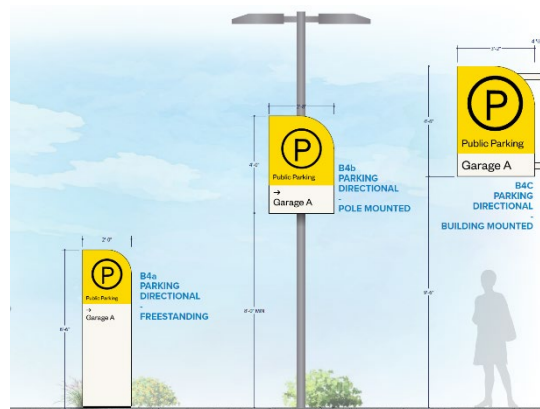
### Pedestrian-Oriented Directional and Directory Signs – Sign Type “B3”

Pedestrian-Oriented Directional signs are intended to provide directional information to the public on active pedestrian pathways (i.e. sidewalks, paseos, plazas, etc.) on both private property and in the public right-of-way. These signs combine directional information with static directory maps identifying restaurants, retailers, and other destinations. The signs reinforce the district identity by using a similar palette of colors to complement the other district signs. Pedestrian Oriented Directional and Directory may contain business names with directory arrows; an encroachment permit is required for their location in the public right-of-way. Details of Pedestrian Oriented Directional and Directory signs can be found on pages 17, 18, 19, 20 & 21 of Attachment D.



### Vehicular-Oriented Parking Directional Signs – Sign Type “B4”

Vehicular-Oriented Parking Directional signs are strategically located to direct visitors to parking areas throughout North City. The applicant is proposing three types of parking directional signs. As noted on page 23 of Attachment D, Parking Directional Sign B4a is a freestanding sign that is 6 feet-tall by 1.5 feet-wide and incorporates the same vertical form, colors, and materials as the identity statement and directional signs. The upper portion of sign type B4a contains a “P” encircled in blue and white text pointing towards the parking area. The second proposed sign type, identified as sign type B4b on page 24 of Attachment D, is a 6-foot 5-inch-tall by 4-foot 8-inch-wide cabinet sign mounted on light poles throughout the district. All letters are proposed to be push-through illuminated channel letters. Although mounted on City-owned light poles, these signs will be powered by a private energy source and will not utilize City power. Approval of an encroachment permit will be required for installation of the signs.



### Neighborhood Identification Signs – Sign Type “C1”

Neighborhood Identification signs serve as a distinctive architectural feature within North City and will be placed along the perimeter of the center portions of all roundabouts. The design of these signs consists of individual illuminated channel letters mounted on top of a 1-foot-thick wood-clad base. The height of the signs was designed to be seen at eye level as motorists are driving through the area on Campus Way, North City Drive, and June Way. A total of three Neighborhood Identification signs are proposed.



### Light Pole Banners – Sign Types C2a and C2b

The applicant proposes light pole banners to further reinforce the identity and visual character of North City. There are two different banner sizes and four different color schemes. The small banners measure 3 feet 2 inches tall by 1 foot 2 inches, and the large banners measure 8 feet 6 inches tall by 3 feet wide. Each size will be installed perpendicular to the adjacent curb to be viewable from the sidewalk and street. Banners are planned to be displayed year round, will be installed utilizing a mounting bracket system, and will be maintained by the applicant per the required encroachment agreement. As banner designs may evolve over time, a condition of approval requires that any future design modifications be subject to review and approval by the Planning Division Director.



As previously mentioned, the applicant will be responsible for the maintenance and management of the light-pole banners in accordance with the encroachment agreement.

### **Environmental Review**

The Master Sign Program (CSP19-00003) has been found to be within the scope of the certified Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) and 2025 Addendum (SCH No. 2008101083) for the UDSP, which is in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15162. CEQA Section 15162(a) allows a lead agency to utilize the existing and adopted/certified EIR when no substantial changes are proposed in the project that require a major revision to the previous EIR or when a substantial increase in the severity of the previously identified significant effects is not found. As such, staff has analyzed the proposed CSP and found this project to meet the intent of the certified FEIR. Staff found this project will not result in substantial changes in the original project, will not involve substantial changes to the circumstances for which the project was originally undertaken, and proposes no major changes to the intent for original development or new information of substantial importance not known at the time of the initial CEQA review. Therefore, the City, serving as the lead agency, has determined that the proposed CSP can rely on the certified FEIR for the project without modification.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The proposed Master Sign Program will not result in a fiscal impact.

### **Public Comment**

No public comments were received during the processing of the Master Sign Program.



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### **Attachment(s)**

Adopting resolution:

RESOLUTION PC 26-5212 (CSP19-00003) – A RESOLUTION FOR A MASTER SIGN PROGRAM (CSP19-00003) TO GOVERN THE DESIGN, TYPE, AND DETAILS OF ALL SIGNAGE PROPOSED FOR THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN AREA, KNOWN AS NORTH CITY

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Aerial Photo
- C. Requested Entitlements
- D. Proposed Master Sign Program

Prepared by: Sam Dominguez, Associate Planner

Reviewed by: Stephanie Kellar, Deputy City Engineer

Submitted by: Joseph Farace, Planning Division Director