STANISLAUS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 18, 2022

STAFF REPORT

USE PERMIT APPLICATION NO. PLN2022-0029 OUTFRONT MEDIA

REQUEST: TO REPLACE A 35-FOOT-TALL EXISTING BILLBOARD SIGN WITH A NEW 60-FOOT-TALL DIGITAL TWO-SIDED BILLBOARD IN THE INDUSTRIAL (M) ZONING DISTRICT.

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Applicant: Kevin Johnson, OUTFRONT Media Property owner: Crown View Corporation (Keith and Evelyn Ingebritson and Forrest and Karen Aarvig) Kevin Johnson, OUTFRONT Media Agent: Location: 1027 North Emerald Avenue, between Lone Palm Avenue and Kansas Avenue, west of State Route 99, in the Modesto area. Section, Township, Range: 30-3-9 Supervisorial District: Three (Supervisor Withrow) Assessor's Parcel: 029-012-073 Referrals: See Exhibit E **Environmental Review Referrals** Area of Parcel(s): 1.79± acres Water Supply: City of Modesto City of Modesto Sewage Disposal: General Plan Designation: Industrial Community Plan Designation: N/A Existing Zoning: Industrial (M) Sphere of Influence: City of Modesto Williamson Act Contract No .: N/A

Present Land Use:

Sense Exemption)

Various industrial and commercial uses within two existing warehouse buildings.

Environmental Review:

Surrounding Land Use:

Industrial and commercial uses in all directions; State Route 99 to the east; single-

family dwellings to the west.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (Common

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the discussion below and on the whole of the record provided to the County, Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission approve this request, as presented in this Staff Report. If the Planning Commission decides to approve the project, Exhibit A provides an overview of all of the findings required for project approval.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a request to replace an existing 35-foot-tall two-sided billboard sign with a new 60-foot-tall digital two-sided billboard in the Industrial (M) zoning district. The proposed digital billboard will be a monopole design and will consist of two screens, 672 square feet each, facing north and south along State Route (SR) 99 (see Exhibit B-8 and B-9 – *Maps, Site Plan, and Elevation*). The digital billboard may cycle through up to nine (9) different advertising messages every minute. The proposed digital billboard will be located in the same general location as the existing billboard.

As proposed, the 60-foot-tall digital billboard will exceed the 35-foot maximum height allowed in the M zoning district for separate standing advertising structures. The M zoning district allows for additional height to be granted for advertisement signs provided that a use permit is obtained. No other modifications to the site are proposed as part of this project request.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The project site is located at 1027 North Emerald Avenue, between Lone Palm Avenue and Kansas Avenue, west of State Route 99 in the Modesto area. The site is surrounded by industrial and commercial uses in all directions; State Route 99 to the east; and single-family dwellings to the west. The site is within the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) adopted Sphere of Influence (SOI) of the City of Modesto.

The project site is developed with two industrial warehouse buildings, totaling 33,250 square feet. The buildings have been occupied by various industrial users over the years such as: an auto customization and fabrication business; sign shops; carpet wholesalers, etc. The existing 35-foot-tall advertising billboard is located at the northeast end of the project site within a landscaped area. The remaining balance of the project site is developed with 80 paved parking spaces and frontage landscaping.

ISSUES

No issues have been identified during the review of this project, however, the requirement for a use permit to be obtained for a sign meeting city sign standards within a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) adopted sphere of influence (SOI) is an unusual circumstance.

The County's Zoning Ordinance does not permit digital advertisement signs as permitted uses, and billboards (outdoor advertising signs) are only permitted within the M zoning district; however, Section 21.08.070 - Signs of the County's Zoning Ordinance allows for city standards to be applied within the LAFCO adopted SOI of a city. In this case, the project site is located within the City of Modesto's SOI.

For discretionary projects located within a LAFCO adopted SOI of a city, the County's General Plan SOI policy states that development, other than agricultural uses and churches, which

requires discretionary approval, shall be referred to that city for preliminary approval. The project shall not be approved by the County unless written communication is received from the city memorializing their approval. If approved by the city, the city should specify what development standards are necessary to ensure that development will comply with city development standards. Approval from a city does not preclude the County's decision-making bodies from exercising discretion, and it may either approve or deny the project.

A proposed 60-foot-tall digital billboard is allowable under the City of Modesto's sign ordinance, provided the developer meets the standards of the City's Municipal Code Section 10-6.108(3), which include: the sign is within 660-feet of State Route 99 and is not located within 2,500 feet from another digital billboard; that at least four (4) additional billboard signs are removed prior to operation of the digital billboard; and that the developer reserve a single advertising slot for community messaging.

In response to the project referral, the City stated they would be in support of the digital billboard, provided the developer enters into an operating agreement (hereafter "agreement") with the City prior to the operation of the billboard. The City's implementation of the agreement would normally occur through a discretionary land use action; however, the City has no land use authority for this site. As such, the requirement for a use permit, as would be required by the County's Zoning Ordinance for the increased height of the structure, has been applied to this request. The applicant has begun discussions with the City regarding the agreement, including the removal of up to six (6) existing billboards, including one other billboard located within the unincorporated area. Additionally, the City and the County have agreed to share the one public messaging slot. The shared message slot will be equally divided between City and County but will allow for flexibility on how each jurisdictions share will be administered. Conditions of Approval have been added to the project regarding the finalization of the agreement and sharing of the public messaging slot prior to operation of the digital billboard sign.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

Consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of the various elements of the General Plan must be evaluated when processing all discretionary project requests. The project site has a General Plan designation of Industrial. The intent of this designation is to indicate areas best suited for various forms of light to heavy industrial uses, including but not limited to, manufacturing and warehousing.

As discussed in the Issues section of this report, the Stanislaus County General Plan Sphere of Influence (SOI) policy states, that development, other than agricultural uses and churches, which requires discretionary approval, shall be referred to the city for preliminary approval. The project shall not be approved by the County unless written communication is received from the city memorializing their approval. If approved by the city, the city should specify what development standards are necessary to ensure that development will comply with city development standards. The project was referred to the City of Modesto, who responded with support of the project provided their standards for digital billboards are met. Conditions of Approval have been added to the project to ensure those standards are met.

As required under Goal Two, Policy 12, of the Safety Element, development within areas protected by the Airport Land Use Commission Plan (ALUCP) shall only be approved if the adopted plan requirements are met. The project site is within the Modesto City-County Airport (MOD) ALUCP Referral Area 2 and, as such, was referred to the Airport Land Use Commission

(ALUC). The ALUCP Referral Area 2 includes locations where airspace protection and overflight area compatibility concerns may be present but not noise or safety. The ALUC has determined that the project site is not located within any applicable safety, noise, or airspace protection zone. While the site is located within a Recorded Deed Notice area of the MOD ALUCP, the requirement would only apply to residential development. This area requires deed disclosure of the potential low flying aircraft for proposed residential development of 10 acres or greater. The ALUC has recommended input from the MOD manager for any concerns for development of the digital billboard. The applicant has provided correspondence with the MOD manager, in which the manager states that the project would not impact any airport operations. Being the proposed project is located within an M zoning district and is not residential in nature, the proposed project is considered to be consistent with the County's ALUCP.

Staff believes that the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan policies discussed above. The City of Modesto has provided written support for the project as proposed.

ZONING CONSISTENCY

The site is zoned Industrial (M). Pursuant to Section 21.60.040 of the Stanislaus County Zoning Ordinance, separate standing advertising structures are permitted provided they do not exceed 35 feet in height. Exceedance of the 35 feet in height limit requires that a conditional use permit be granted by the Planning Commission. As discussed in the Issues section of this report, the use permit is also required to implement the agreement needed between the applicant and the City of Modesto.

In order to approve a use permit, the decision-making authority shall make a finding that the establishment, maintenance, and operation of the proposed use or building applied for is consistent with the General Plan and will not, under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, and general welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood of the use and that it will not be detrimental or injurious to property and improvements in the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the County. If after receiving and considering the evidence, and any proposed conditions, the decision-making body is unable to make the findings, the use permit shall be denied. In this case, the Planning Commission serves as the decision-making body for the use permit.

While County's Zoning Ordinance does not permit digital advertisement signs, the project sites location within the City of Modesto's LAFCO adopted Sphere of Influence (SOI) makes the sign subject to the City's sign standards; thus, superseding the County's restriction on digital billboards. With City of Modesto conditions applied to the project, County staff believes that the proposed project is consistent with the County's Zoning Ordinances.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed project was circulated to interested parties and responsible agencies for review and comment and no significant issues were raised (see Exhibit E – *Environmental Review Referrals*). Staff has prepared a Notice of Exemption for the project, which declares that the project is exempt from CEQA on the basis of CEQA Guideline Section 15061 – Common Sense Exemption (see Exhibit D – *Notice of Exemption*). The CEQA Guidelines provide that where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Aside from the digital nature of the sign, which requires the

applicant to enter into an operating agreement with the City, the billboard would be approved under a ministerial permitting process. The proposed sign is a replacement of an existing billboard sign and will be subject to approval by Caltrans due to its proximity to State Route (SR) 99. In response to a project referral, Caltrans has identified the need for the applicant to obtain a regulatory permit from Caltrans, but has not identified any potential impacts associated with the sign. The applicant has already received preliminary approval from Caltrans for the digital billboard. Conditions of Approval reflecting referral responses have been placed on the project (see Exhibit C – Conditions of Approval).

Note: Pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 711.4, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (formerly the Department of Fish and Game) has determined that this project has no potential effect on Fish and Wildlife and the project as described does not require payment of the CEQA filing fee.

Contact Person: Jeremy Ballard, Associate Planner, (209) 525-6330

Attachments:

Exhibit A - Findings and Actions Required for Project Approval

Exhibit B - Maps, Site Plan, and Elevation

Exhibit C - Conditions of Approval Exhibit D - Notice of Exemption

Exhibit E - Environmental Review Referrals

Findings and Actions Required for Project Approval

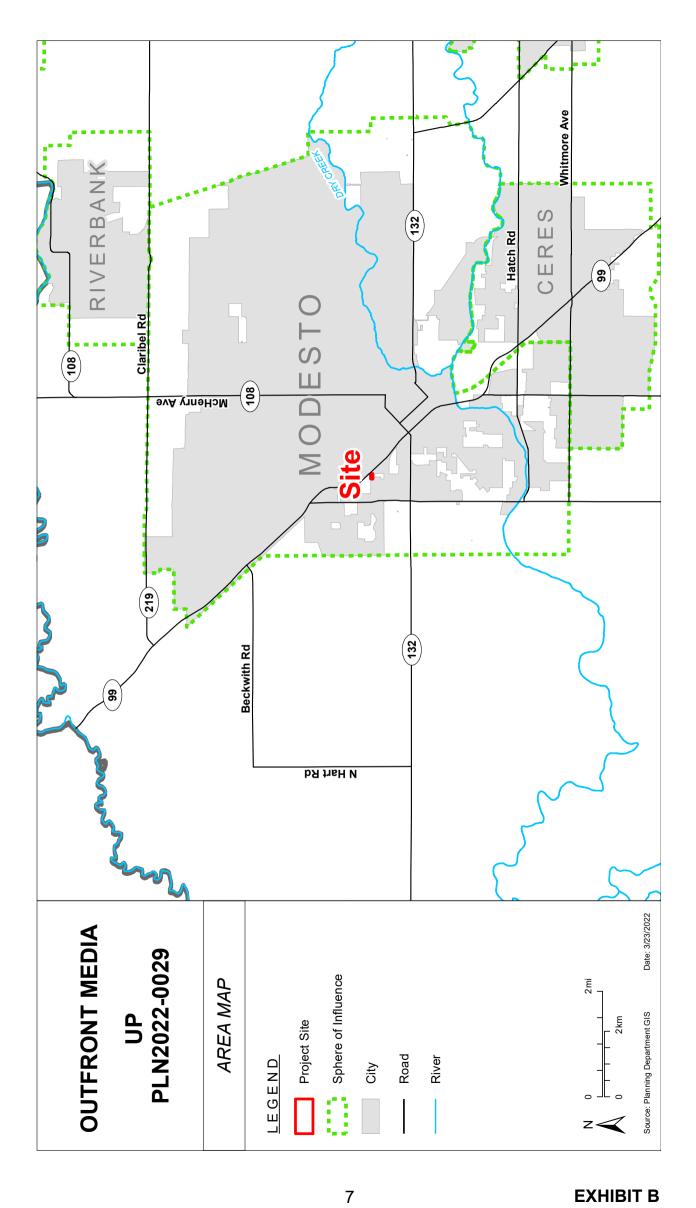
- 1. Find the project is exempt from CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061, Common Sense Exemption, by finding that on the basis of the whole record, including any comments received, that there is no substantial evidence the project will have a significant effect on the environment and that the exemption reflects Stanislaus County's independent judgment and analysis.
- 2. Order the filing of a Notice of Exemption with the Stanislaus County Clerk-Recorder's Office pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15062.

3. Find That:

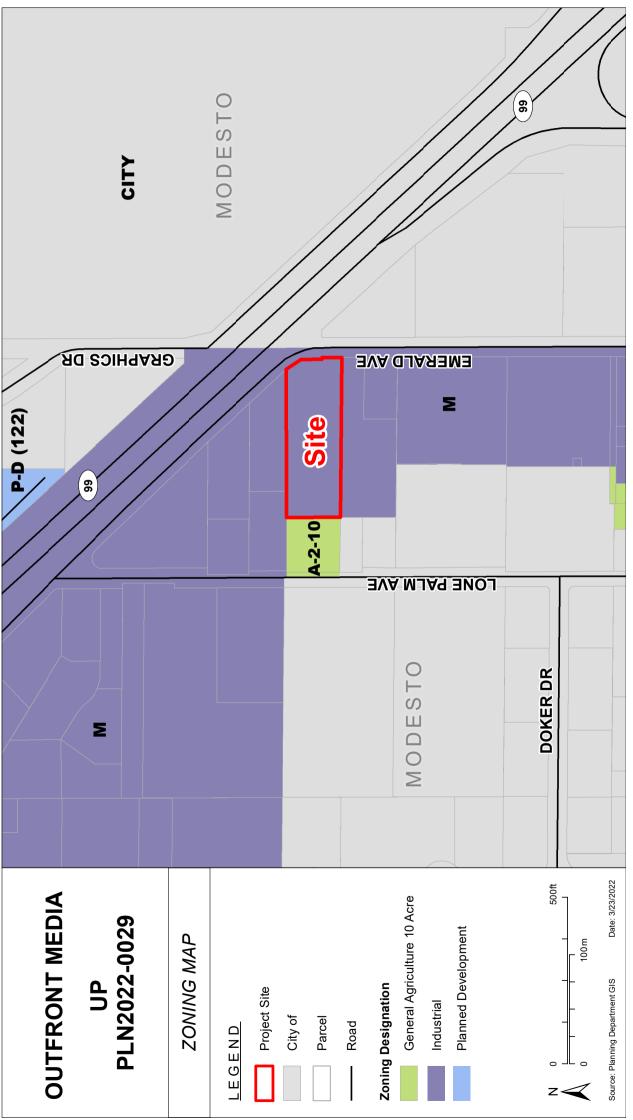
- a. The establishment, maintenance, and operation of the proposed use or building applied for is consistent with the General Plan and will not, under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, and general welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood of the use and that it will not be detrimental or injurious to property and improvements in the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the County.
- 4. Approve Use Permit Application No. PLN2022-0029 OUTFRONT Media, subject to the attached Conditions of Approval.

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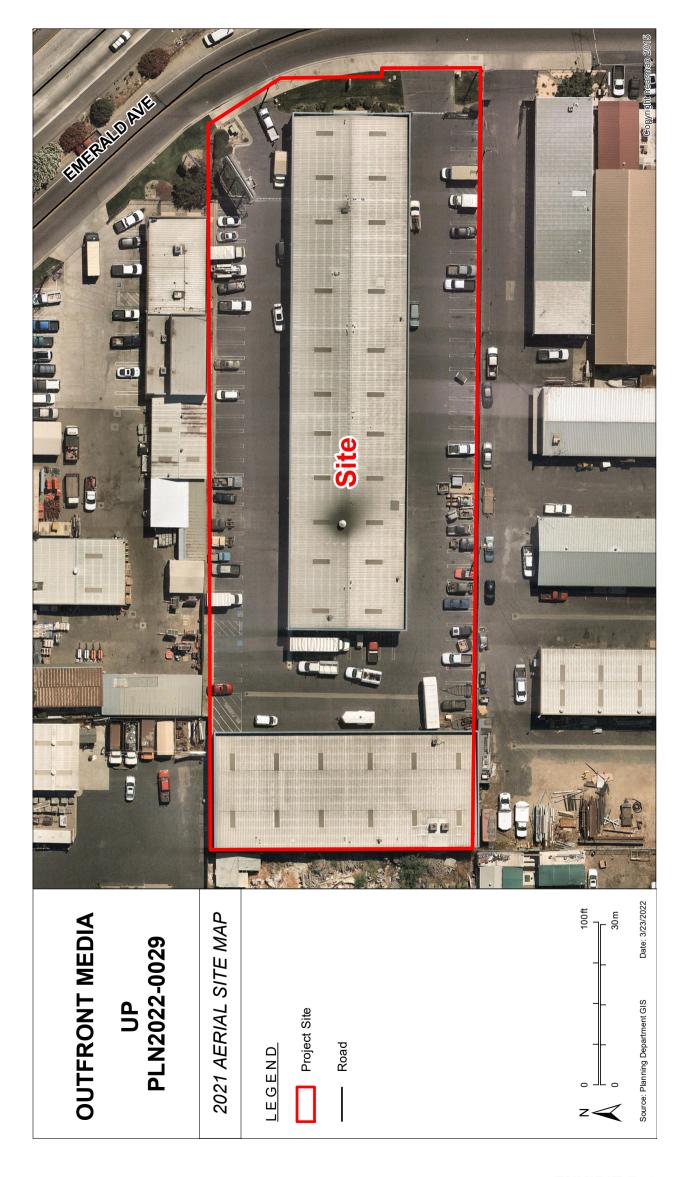
EXHIBIT A



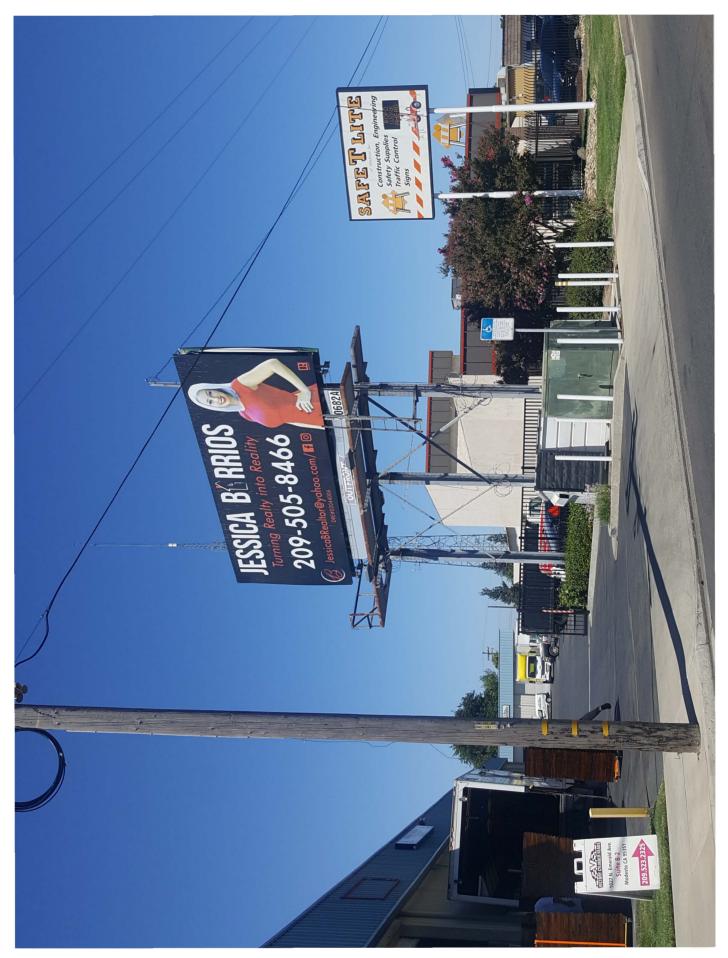
8











13 EXHIBIT B-6

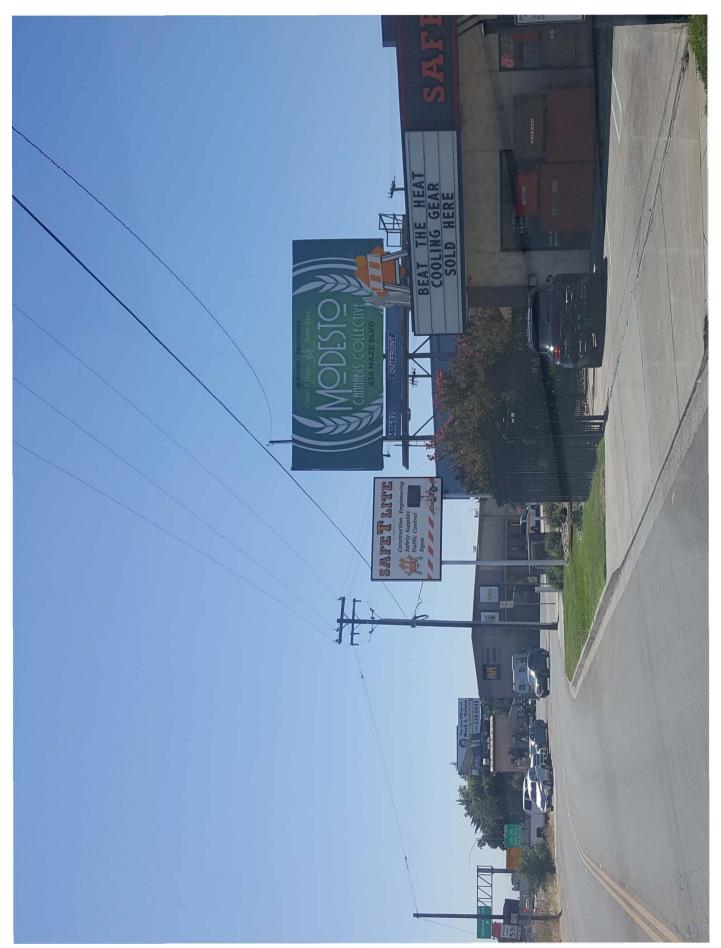
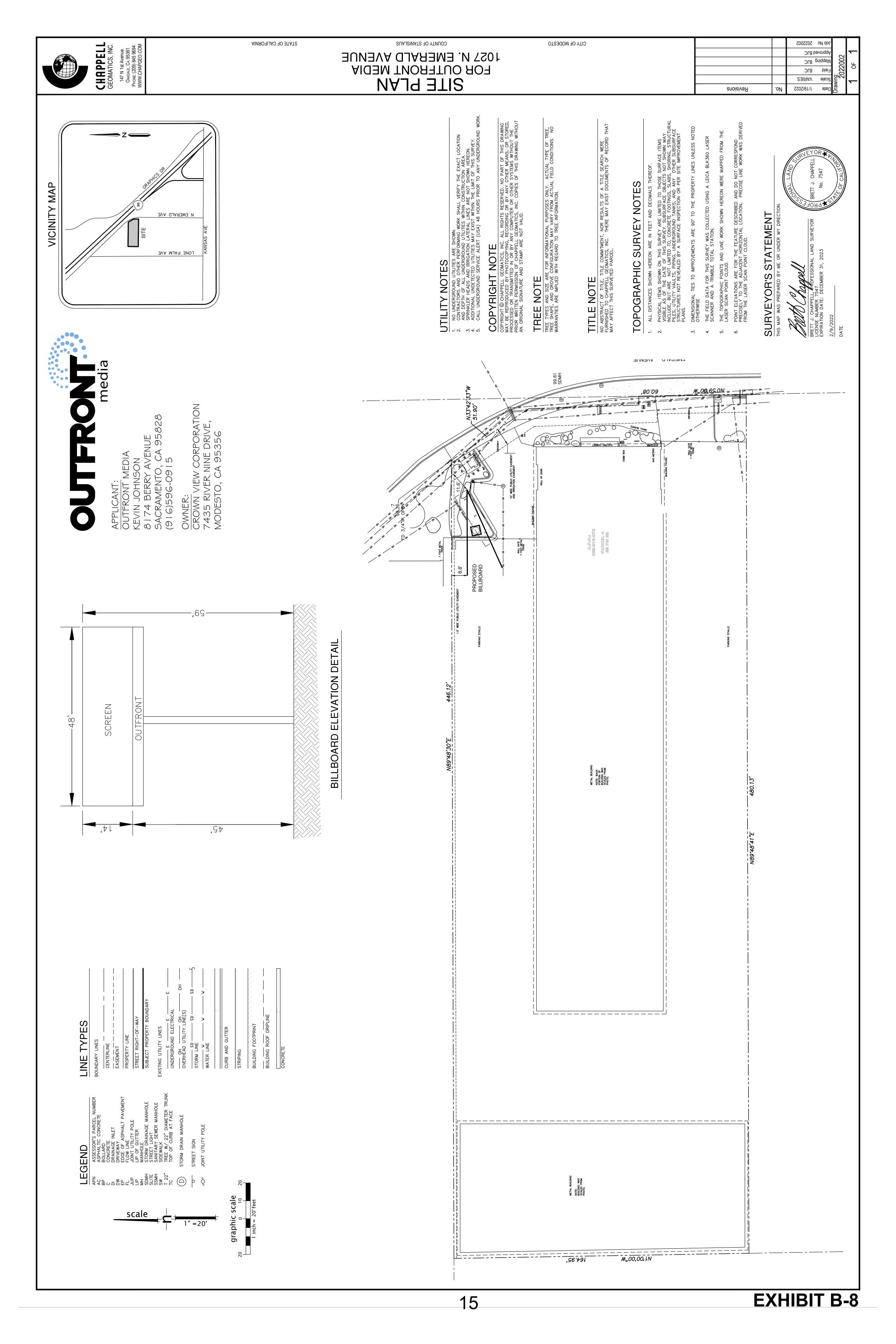
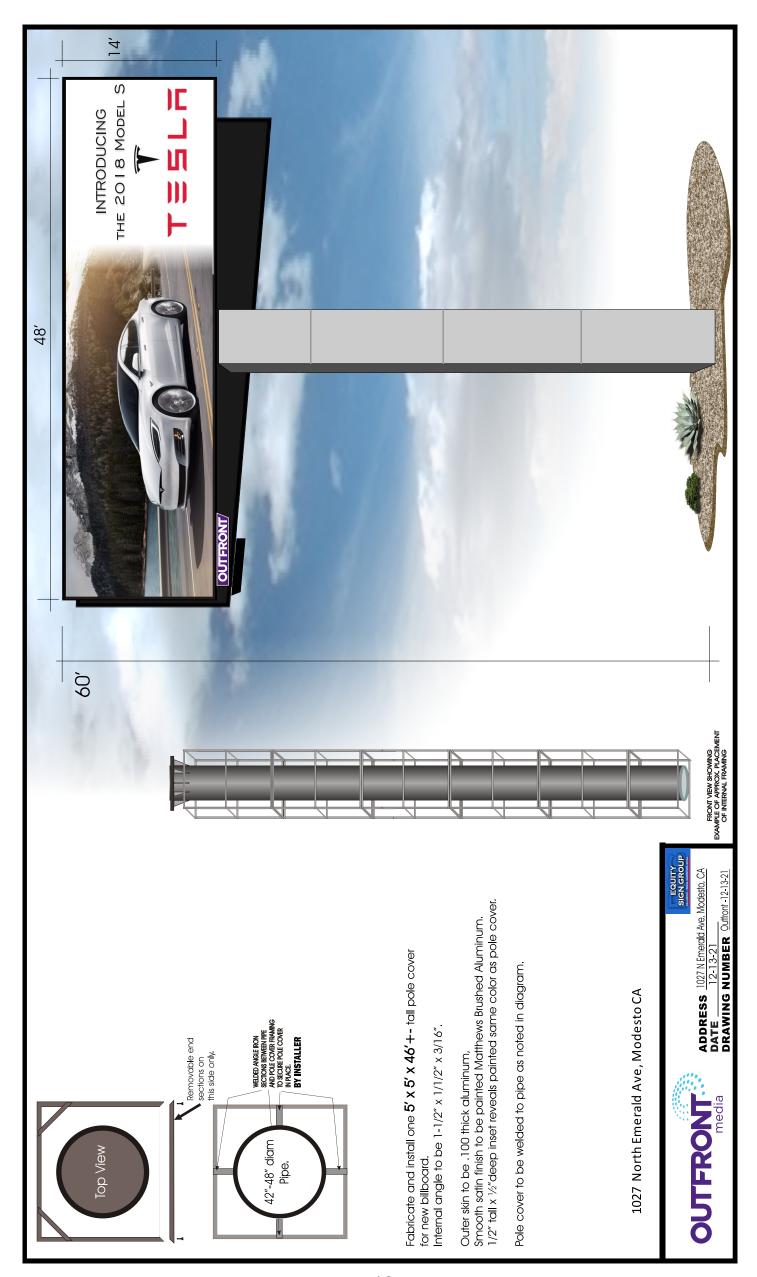


EXHIBIT B-7





NOTE: Approval of this application is valid only if the following conditions are met. This permit shall expire unless activated within 18 months of the date of approval. In order to activate the permit, it must be signed by the applicant and one of the following actions must occur: (a) a valid building permit must be obtained to construct the necessary structures and appurtenances; or, (b) the property must be used for the purpose for which the permit is granted. (Stanislaus County Ordinance 21.104.030)

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

USE PERMIT APPLICATION NO. PLN2022-0029 OUTFRONT MEDIA

Department of Planning and Community Development

- 1. Use(s) shall be conducted as described in the application and supporting information (including the plot plan) as approved by the Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors and in accordance with other laws and ordinances.
- Developer shall pay all Public Facilities Impact Fees and Fire Facilities Fees as adopted by Resolution of the Board of Supervisors. The fees shall be payable at the time of issuance of a building permit for any construction in the development project and shall be based on the rates in effect at the time of building permit issuance.
- 3. The applicant/owner is required to defend, indemnify, or hold harmless the County, its officers, and employees from any claim, action, or proceedings against the County to set aside the approval of the project which is brought within the applicable statute of limitations. The County shall promptly notify the applicant of any claim, action, or proceeding to set aside the approval and shall cooperate fully in the defense.
- 4. Any construction resulting from this project shall comply with standardized dust controls adopted by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) and may be subject to additional regulations/permits, as determined by the SJVAPCD.
- 5. The Department of Planning and Community Development shall record a Notice of Administrative Conditions and Restrictions with the County Recorder's Office within 30 days of project approval. The Notice includes: Conditions of Approval/Development Standards and Schedule; any adopted Mitigation Measures; and a project area map. Prior to filing, within five days of approval of this project by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors, the applicant shall submit to the Department of Planning and Community Development a check for \$57.00, made payable to Stanislaus County, for the payment of Clerk-Recorder filing fees.
- 6. Should any archeological or human remains be discovered during development, work shall be immediately halted within 150 feet of the find until it can be evaluated by a qualified archaeologist. If the find is determined to be historically or culturally significant, appropriate mitigation measures to protect and preserve the resource shall be formulated and implemented. The Central California Information Center shall be notified if the find is deemed historically or culturally significant.

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7. Prior to issuance of a building permit, all relevant provisions of the operating agreement between the applicant and the City of Modesto, shall be met and the City of Modesto shall have reviewed and approved the construction plans for the digital billboard.

Building Permits Division

8. Building permits, including demolition permits for signage located in the unincorporated areas of the County, are required and the project must conform with the California Code of Regulations, Title 24.

Public Works

9. An erosion sediment control plan shall be included in the construction plans.

City of Modesto

- 10. Prior to the issuance of a building permit of the digital billboard, an operating agreement shall be executed.
- 11. Proof of demolition of all existing billboards, as stipulated by the operating agreement, shall be provided prior to final occupancy of the building permit for the proposed sign.
- 12. The public messaging advertising stipulated by the executed operating agreement shall be equally split between the City and County, as determined by City and County staff.

Modesto Irrigation District

- 13. High voltage is present within and adjacent to the project area. This includes 12,000 volts overhead primary, 12,000 volts underground primary, and overhead and underground secondary facilities. Use extreme caution when operating heavy equipment, using a crane, ladders, scaffolding, handheld tools or any other type of equipment near the existing MID electric lines and cables. Workers and equipment should always maintain a distance no less than 10 feet from overhead facilities. Assume all overhead and underground electric facilities are energized.
- 14. Any trenching shall maintain a 1:1 horizontal distance from any existing pole, determined by the depth of the trench. If trenching encroaches on this requirement, the Contractor shall contact the MID Electric Engineering Department to brace any effected poles during the trenching process. The cost of any required pole bracing will be assumed by the requesting party. The contractor shall verify actual depth and location of all underground utilities prior to the start of construction.
- 15. All existing overhead and underground easements adjacent or within the site shall be maintained. Prior to the issuance of a building permit for the sign, MID shall review construction plans to ensure existing overhead and underground easements are not encroached upon.

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Caltrans

16. Prior to issuance of a building permit, an Outdoor Advertising Display Permit shall be obtained.

Please note: If Conditions of Approval/Development Standards are amended by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors, such amendments will be noted in the upper right-hand corner of the Conditions of Approval/Development Standards; new wording is in **bold**, and deleted wording will have a line through it.

STANISLAUS COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 1010 10th Street, Suite 3400 Modesto, California 95354

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

Proje	ct Title: Use Permit Application No. PLN2022-0029 – OUTFRONT Media
Appli	cant Information: Kevin Johnson, OUTFRONT Media, 8174 Berry Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95828.
	ct Location: 1027 North Emerald Avenue, between Lone Palm Avenue and Kansas Avenue, west of State 99, in the Modesto area. Stanislaus County (APN: 029-012-073).
	ription of Project: Request to replace a 35-foot-tall existing billboard sign with a new 60-foot-tall digitaded billboard in the Industrial (M) zoning district.
Name	e of Agency Approving Project: Stanislaus County Planning Commission
Lead	Agency Contact Person: Jeremy Ballard, Associate Planner Telephone: (209) 525-6330
Exem	pt Status: (check one)
	Ministerial (Section 21080(b)(1); 15268);
	Declared Emergency (Section 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
	Emergency Project (Section 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
	Categorical Exemption. State type and section number:
	Statutory Exemptions. State code number:
X	Common Sense Exemption. 15061 (b)(3)
Comm	ons why project is exempt: The project is considered exempt per CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3), non Sense Exemption, because the proposed sign would be replacing an existing billboard sign and would be in height then other more intensive structures, permitted in the Industrial (M) zoning district.
Augus Dated	Signature on file. Jeremy Ballard Associate Planner

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EXHIBIT D

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW REFERRALS

PROJECT: UP PLN2022-0029 - OUTFRONT MEDIA

REFERRED TO:				ONDED	RESPONSE			MITIGATION MEASURES		CONDITIONS	
	2 WK	PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE	YES	ON	WILL NOT HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	MAY HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO COMMENT NON CEQA	YES	NO	YES	ON.
CA DEPT OF FISH & WILDLIFE	Х	Х		Х							
CA DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION DIST 10	Х	Х	Х				Х			Х	
CA OPR STATE CLEARINGHOUSE	Χ	Х	Х				Х				Х
CA RWQCB CENTRAL VALLEY REGION	Х	Х		Х							
CITY OF: MODESTO	Χ	Х	Х				Х			Х	
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION	Х	Х		Χ							
FIRE PROTECTION DIST: WOODLAND	Х	Х		Χ							
IRRIGATION DISTRICT: MID	Х	Х	Х				Х			Х	
MOSQUITO DISTRICT: EASTSIDE	Х	Х		X							
MT VALLEY EMERGENCY MEDICAL	z	Х		X							
PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC	Х	Х		X							
SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY APCD	Х	Х		X							
SCHOOL DISTRICT 1: MODESTO UNION	Х	Х		X							
STAN CO ALUC	Х	Х	Х				Х				Х
STAN CO BUILDING PERMITS DIVISION	Х	Х	Х				Х			Х	
STAN CO CEO	Χ	Х		Χ							
STAN CO DER	Х	Х	Х				Х				Х
STAN CO ERC	Χ	Х	Х				Х				Х
STAN CO HAZARDOUS MATERIALS	X	Х	Х				Х				Х
STAN CO PUBLIC WORKS	X	Х		X							
STAN CO SHERIFF	X	Х		X							
STAN CO SUPERVISOR DIST 3: WITHROW	Х	Х		Х							
STAN COUNTY COUNSEL	Х	Х		Х							
STANISLAUS FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU	Х	Х		X							
STANISLAUS LAFCO	Х	Х		X							
TELEPHONE COMPANY:	Х	Х		Х							

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