

To: Merced City Council

February 6 , 2017

From: Michael Belluomini

Ref: ENTRY SIGNS ON HIGHWAYS IN MERCED

BACKGROUND: Many cities in the central valley have entry signs on Highway 99 at the north and south sides of the city. Merced is one of the few cities of its size that does not. Some signs are free-standing monument signs, others are mounted to retaining walls or embossed on concrete freeway structures. They are typically in the highway right-of-way and prominent. Such signs may be funded by the city, the chamber of commerce, the visitors/tourist bureau, or service clubs/organizations. All are scrutinized and issued permits by Cal Trans. The signs serve to identify arrival at the city, and to give a sense of welcome to visitors while revealing something of the character of the inhabitants. Entry signs can be one of the remembered impressions of a city.

STATE PROCESS AND COSTS OF ENTRY SIGNS: The placement of an entry sign in the right-of-way of a highway requires an encroachment permit from Cal Trans, Stockton office. The Cal Trans Coordinator and the Landscape Architect Program review for state policy conformance, safety, quality assurance, and approve/change the entry sign proposal. There is a fee for Cal Trans processing. Signs are provided and regularly maintained by the city. They may include slogans, symbols, and the logo of the city. Sign proposals must include plans prepared by a licensed architect, landscape architect, or engineer. Plans should include construction schedule, sign life expectancy and traffic control measures during construction if any. A resolution of the city council approving the sign(s) is required.

In order to obtain a generalized sense of what an entry sign might cost, a concept sign "design" in the form of signs superimposed on photos of the actual Highway 99 exits at the north and south end of Merced was prepared (See attached). The concept designs were sent to a sign design/processing company with experience in highway entry signs. The firm will provide design work, construction documents, structural engineering and assistance with Cal Trans permitting process for \$24,500. The south entry sign would be mounted to the Campus Parkway/Mission Ave overpass above north bound lanes of Highway 99. It would have three foot internally lighted letters with cabinet background. It is estimated to cost \$40,000 to \$50,000. Construction would be competitively bid. The north entry sign at the 16th St. Highway 99 exit ramp area would be a free-standing sign with two foot letters spelling "Merced" with internal lighting, and one foot tall letters for the city slogan not lighted. The sign words would be mounted on a 16 foot square cabinet with stone veneer. The sign is estimated to cost \$50,000 to \$70,000 if locally bid.

PARTNERSHIPS IN ENTRY SIGN DEVELOPMENT: In other cities, service clubs sometimes participate in development of entry signs and include their club logos on the signs. To preliminarily assess the interest of service clubs, this entry sign information was shared with representatives of the Merced Breakfast Lions Club, The Board of Realtors, The Merced Rotary Club, and The Sunrise Rotary Club. This group is a sampling of service clubs recognizing that if the city decides to move forward with developing entry signs, other service clubs and business organizations may want to participate. The club representatives were unanimously supportive of entry signs to the city. In addition to the Highway 99 entry signs, they were interested in smaller entry signs on Highways 140 and 59. Such signs would have the logos of the service clubs active in Merced and state "Welcome to Merced" or similar text. The sign designer estimates such signs will cost \$12,000 to \$16,000 each depending on design size and materials. There would be four such signs. In addition to assisting with funding for the signs, the service clubs discussed assisting with the work of coordinating service clubs and community input regarding the design of the signs. The Sunrise Rotary Club representative said he believed his club would be willing to serve as design input coordinator. Discussions were preliminary in nature, but the representatives thought a 50/50 match of funding by service clubs/community organizations to city funding might garner club support. Some club representatives believed the signs should be changed to be less costly. Current estimates total sign costs for six signs of \$162,500 to \$208,500.

PROPOSAL: Based on this information I recommend that the city council

- 1) Establish an ad hoc subcommittee of the city council to work with staff, service clubs, and other community groups to prepare entry sign designs, budget, and funding sources.
- 2) That council direct staff to work with Cal Trans and a sign design professional regarding establishment of entry signs.
- 3) That the subcommittee report its progress to the council every two months.

Los Angeles



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Gustine

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MERCED
GATEWAY TO
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