



REPORT to the LA MESA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

DATE: February 26, 2024

SUBJECT: PROJECT 2023-2466 (MANN ENTERPRISES INC.) –
DESIGN REVIEW CONSIDERATION OF A TWO-
TENANT RETAIL SHELL BUILDING OF 32,550 SQUARE
FEET AND A SINGLE-TENANT RETAIL SHELL OF
2,880 SQUARE FEET AT 8790 GROSSMONT
BOULEVARD, APN 490-660-53-00 IN THE C-D
(GENERAL CO

ISSUING DEPARTMENT: Community Development

SUMMARY:

Issue:

Does the proposed design meet the intent of the Urban Design Program policies?

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Design Review Board approve the project, subject to City Council ratification.

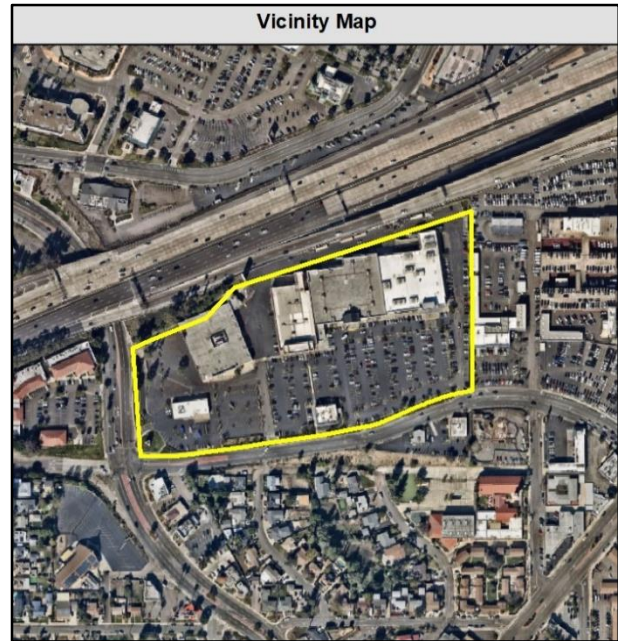
BACKGROUND:

A commercial retail center has occupied the 13.4-acre site along the south side of I-8, east of Jackson Drive, since the 1960s. The 1990s buildings occupied by Hobby Lobby and Walmart Neighborhood Market and the 2014 building occupied by Ross Dress for Less all replaced earlier buildings in roughly the same location. A drive-thru credit union situated near Grossmont Boulevard was completed in 2015. Substantial parking lot improvements and re-landscaping accompanied each revitalization campaign. Towards the west end of the Center is an approximately 38,000-square-foot retail building that dates to the 1970s. It has been unoccupied since the departure of the prior tenant, Toys-R-Us, six years ago. The only remaining original building is the Sherwin-Williams paint store near the southwest corner of the site.

An Assessor Parcel Map sheet is provided as **Attachment A**, and photos of the project site are provided in **Attachment B**. A vicinity map is provided below.

The existing shopping center (Center) is served by four curb openings on Grossmont Boulevard and two on Jackson Drive. A tree-lined embankment, partially improved with a retaining wall, separates the project site from Jackson Drive. Surrounding development includes Grossmont Shopping Center on the opposite side of I-8 to the north, a smaller retail center to the west, single-family residential and small-scale commercial service uses to the south, and a regional car dealership to the east.

A three-sided pylon sign marks the entrance to the property, commonly known as the Grossmont Retail Center, at the signalized intersection. Signage within the Center is subject to a comprehensive sign program that was most recently updated by the Planning Commission in 2016.



Design Review by the City's Design Review Board (DRB) is required for all projects within the C-D (General Commercial/Urban Design Overlay) zone to ensure that projects are consistent with the adopted Urban Design Program. DRB decisions are ratified by the City Council. The Urban Design Program identifies the project site as one of nine major commercial nodes in the City subject to design guidelines specifically for commercial centers (**Attachment C**) in addition to the more general development guidelines contained within the Program. The entitlement process also includes site development plan review approved by the Director of Community Development.

DISCUSSION:

The property owner proposes to demolish the former Toys-R-Us building and construct two new buildings in its place, a two-tenant retail shell building of 32,550 square feet, and a single-tenant retail shell of 2,880 square feet. Project plans are provided as **Attachment D**. The new buildings are proposed to retain the same south-facing orientation as the former building and align with the other building storefronts across the site.

Circulation

To continue to provide sufficient, safe, and minimal interference with on and offsite walkways and crossing, existing curb openings remain unchanged and only minor

modifications are proposed to internal site circulation. East/west angled parking at the front of the site will be reconfigured to match north/south drive aisles and right-angle alignment found on the rest of the site which will propose a more consistent circulation pattern. New parking lot landscaping is also proposed that will provide clear separation of pedestrian pathways and vehicular circulation. Overall the project appears to provide for improved circulation.

Building Location and Orientation

While it is generally preferred that on larger sites a substantial portion of the building area be located at the street perimeter, the placement of existing buildings within this Center and a significant grade change from Jackson Drive prescribes continuation of the established site orientation. Operational activities are situated towards the rear, including the loading dock and trash enclosure, and angled away from the parking lot to minimize their view from customers. The proposed covered trash enclosure has metal gates and stucco finish to match the building.

Landscaping

To provide a parking area that is screened from public streets through the use of landscaping, the landscape plan provides for 33 new 36-inch box carrotwood trees in the parking lot to match the existing landscape palette, eight new 36-inch box Eldarica Pines in the west portion of the site, and four 36-inch box Podocarpus Gracilior hedge trees at the northwest corner of the building. Shrubs include Natal Plum, Indian Hawthorn, Texas Privet, Deer Grass, and Cape Rush. All of the proposed plant material has been selected for water efficiency, to provide canopy coverage, and to screen the parking areas. Existing mature Torrey Pines in the western portion of the site are proposed to remain. Similarly, existing mature landscaping in the adjacent right-of-way will be undisturbed. The landscape arrangement appears to provide for safe pedestrian/vehicular orientation and provides additional shade canopy.

Roofs

Where exposed rooftop mechanical equipment is visible, screening is an important architectural element. Proposed roof-mounted mechanical equipment is screened behind parapet walls that are fully integrated into the building design.

Unified Design Theme

Individual storefronts can be expected to vary somewhat to reflect the character of the store use, but the overall theme of the Center must be respected through the use of consistent building materials, colors, and textures. This Center's theme is expressed through the use of stucco exteriors, a neutral color palette, and prominent storefront entrances flanked by pilaster-type elements in a contrasting neutral tone. Cornices are present along rooflines. Differentiated accent colors provide individual character and visual interest. The proposed buildings continue the use of pilasters, canopies, and cornice treatments. Colors include a white tone for the field color, tan primary accents,

and red secondary accents, depicted on a materials board provided by the applicant. The proposed color scheme and styling appears to be compatible with the other buildings in the Center.



Signage

No new freestanding signs are proposed. The adopted sign program for the Center allows individual face illuminated channel letter wall signs on all exterior elevations, sized relative to the tenant lease areas. The applicant is not proposing to amend the Comprehensive Sign Program at this time.

Lighting

The project's exterior lighting has been designed as part of the overall site design, to match the existing decorative fixtures in the Center. The proposed parking lot lighting is down-directed and designed to minimize glare.

Consistency

To provide architectural consistency between all building elevations, elevations not directly facing a street should not be ignored or expected to receive minimal architectural treatment. While the project does provide a low bulkhead around the building in a contrasting color, the sides and rear are otherwise unadorned. Given that the sides and rear are visible from I-8, a project condition of approval is proposed to incorporate additional color patterning in those areas.

Form and Texture

The proposed building exteriors appear to provide sufficient variety in the surface planes, forms and textures. Staggered footprints, horizontal and vertical offsets, and varying roof projections have all been applied to achieve visual interest.

The project fully achieves the design and architectural quality and character expressed by the guidelines in the Urban Design Overlay Zone.

CONCLUSION:

Approve Project 2023-2466, with conditions, based on a finding that the project is consistent with the Urban Design Program, subject to City Council ratification.

Respectfully submitted by:

Allyson Kinnard
Associate Planner

Reviewed by:

Lynnette Santos
Director of Community Development

Attachments:

- A. Assessor Parcel Map Sheet
- B. Site Photographs
- C. Design Guidelines for Major Commercial Nodes
- D. Project plans