

<h1 style="margin: 0;">REPORT</h1> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;">To the Honorable Mayor and City Council From the City Manager</p>
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July 11, 2005

Subject
Middlefield Road name change to Theatre Way

Recommendation
Approve Alternative 2 below for new "Theatre Way" signage on Middlefield Road between Veterans Boulevard and Winslow Street.

Background
The Retail/Cinema project now under construction at the intersection of Middlefield Road and Broadway in downtown is an important element in the revitalization of downtown. The key to the feasibility of that project was the attraction of a financially successful and stable cinema operator. The presence of a cinema then attracts other retail and restaurant tenants to the project and makes the project financially feasible. After extensive discussions, the developer was able to attract Century Theaters, one of the top cinema operators in the Bay Area.

One issue in attracting Century Theaters was the adequacy of the downtown parking supply to serve the parking needs of both the project and other downtown businesses. To respond to this need, the City¹ agreed to construct a public parking garage with approximately 600 new public parking spaces under the Retail/Cinema project and to make additional public parking spaces available on the City owned parking lot between Middlefield Road and the Caltrain railroad tracks as well as the Marshall Street Garage.

When the Retail/Cinema project opens, the peak parking demand downtown will be on nights and weekends and Century wanted additional public parking to be provided on nights and weekends. Rather than meeting that request with an additional expensive new parking garage, the City contracted with the County of San Mateo for some weekday night and weekend public parking use of approximately 800 spaces in the County garage on Middlefield Road two blocks north of the Retail/Cinema.

There was some concern that the County Garage was not within a comfortable walking distance of the project/city core and that it would not be used by patrons of downtown businesses. To make the County Garage attractive for use by downtown visitors, the City agreed to explore two possible enhancements:

¹ The term "City" also includes the City's Redevelopment Agency.

1. enhance the portion of Middlefield Road between the County parking garage and Broadway, and
2. consider changing the name of Middlefield Road between the County parking garage and Broadway to Theatre Way, so that people will recognize that it is a direct connection to the Theatre District in downtown.

These agreements were included in the Parking Facilities Agreement between the City and the Developer dated July 12, 2004 and approved by the City Council on June 28, 2004.

The name change, if implemented by a legal change in the name of the street, would affect approximately 11 parcels and 21 businesses by giving them a new address. Two public meetings were held on May 12 and May 17. Approximately 12 people attended the two meetings. Some of the affected parties strongly opposed the name change, while others indicated support. The key reasons stated for opposition were (1) the cost as well as the inconvenience of the address change for the businesses; (2) the perceived incompatibility of legal and medical uses that see themselves closely aligned with the County Government Center rather than with an entertainment district; and (3) the perception that the needs of the "outside" developer were more important than those of existing, long-term businesses.

Alternatives

After listening to the concerns expressed at the meeting, staff has developed a new alternative for implementing the "Theatre Way" concept through new signage rather than changing the wording on the street signs (#2 below).

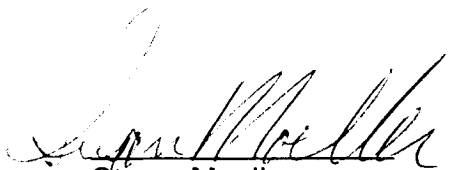
Below are three alternatives:

1. Rename "Middlefield Road" to "Theatre Way"
 - a. Literally complies with the Agreement
 - b. Achieves the Agreement's goal of publicizing the connection between the County Parking Garage and the Retail/Cinema block location
 - c. Requires existing residents and businesses to change their mailing addresses
2. Erect new "Theatre Way" signage that does not replace the Middlefield Road street signs
 - a. Achieves the Agreement's goal of publicizing the connection between the County Parking Garage and the Retail/Cinema block location
 - b. Does not require existing residents and businesses to change their mailing addresses
3. Take no action on the renaming request
 - a. Does not achieve the Agreement's goal of publicizing the connection between the County Parking Garage and the Retail/Cinema block location
 - b. Does not require existing residents and businesses to change their mailing addresses

The staff believes that Alternative 2 will achieve the Agreement's goal of publicizing the connection between the County Parking Garage and the Retail/Cinema block location with minimal disruption of residents and business on Middlefield Road and recommends that the City Council approve this alternative. If the City Council concurs, the new signage will be developed as part of the City's "Way Finding" program currently being prepared for downtown signage.

Fiscal Impact

None.


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Redevelopment Manager


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Services Director


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