



**DEVELOPMENT REVIEW  
COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT  
January 23, 2024**

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**Prepared by:** Lucy Rollins, Senior Planner

**DATA SUMMARY**

**Application Number:** 23PLN-47  
**Subject:** Minor Sign Review for Native Wren above-awning sign.  
**Location/APNs:** 125 Mill Street / 008-346-011  
**Applicant:** Wrynna Kohler  
**Zoning/General Plan:** Town Core – Historic Combining (TC-H) / Commercial  
**Entitlement:** Minor Sign Review Permit  
**Environmental Status:** Categorical Exemption

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the Development Review Committee approve the Minor Sign Review permit for Native Wren as presented, or as modified by the Development Review Committee, which includes the following actions:
  - a. Determine the project Categorical Exempt pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1, of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Guidelines, as detailed in the Staff Report;
  - b. Adopt Findings of Fact for approval of the Minor Sign Review permit as presented in the Staff Report; and,
  - c. Approve the Minor Sign Review permit in accordance with the Conditions of Approval, as presented in this Staff Report.

**BACKGROUND:**

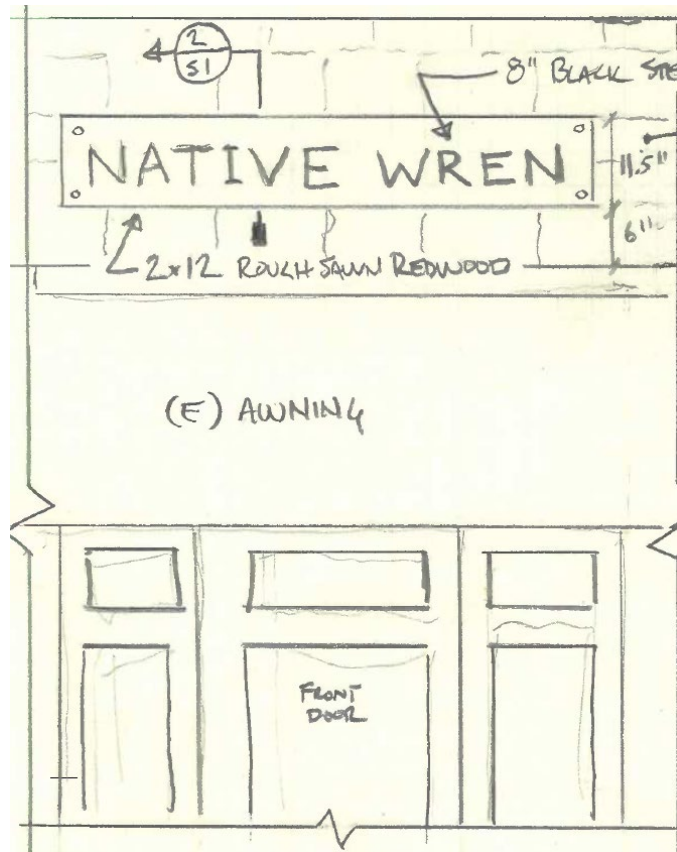
Built in the mid- to late-1880s, 125 Mill Street is a 1,617 square foot commercial structure. The Grass Valley Design Review Guidelines for the 1872 Historic Townsite note that, historically, signs in the historic district were manufactured of wood and were hand painted. Signs were mounted to exterior walls using cleats or metal brackets, or adhered to buildings using chains or ropes. Today, the façade of the building at 125 Mill Street consists of street-level windows, an awning or canopy, and approximately 13 feet of concrete block wall above the awning. Since 2005, approved signage on the building front has included awning signs, window and door signs, and suspended signs that have changed with each tenant.



*Existing storefront façade*

**PROJECT PROPOSAL:**

This Minor Sign Review permit is for a proposed “Native Wren” wall-mounted sign above the existing awning. The sign measures 7 feet in length by 11.5 inches in height, for a total square footage of approximately 6.7 square feet and will be centered above the front door. The edges of the sign will be approximately 5.5 feet from the right edge of the building and 20.75 feet from the left edge of the building. The top of the sign is 13.5 feet above the sidewalk and 11.75 feet below the top of the parapet. The sign will be constructed of a redwood background with 8-inch black steel letters and will be bolted 6 inches above the awning to the concrete wall.



**Proposed Above-Awning Sign**

Staff has requested the applicant provide a rendering of the sign showing the full building frontage and a material board for the Development Review Committee's consideration.

**Regulatory Authority:** The Community Design Guidelines call for signs "to be compatible with other signs on the premises," and to be "designed as an integral architectural element of the project."

Pursuant to Section 17.28.040.6 of the GVMC, a sign permit for signs located above the awning in the Historical combining zone, where there was not previously a sign, is to be reviewed and approved, denied, or approved with conditions by the Development Review Committee.

**GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING:**

**General Plan:** The Grass Valley 2020 General Plan identifies the site as Commercial (COM). The intent of the Commercial General Plan designation includes all types of commercial retail and service establishments on the highway and along major streets.

**Zoning:** The Town Core (TC) zoning designation is intended to strengthen the mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented nature of the existing downtown. The TC zone permits a full range of retail, restaurant, and housing uses. The Historical combining zone (-H) is intended to identify important cultural resource sites and structures in the city, to ensure that any proposal to alter the state of the site or structure is carefully considered prior to implementation.

**SITE DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:**

The site is built-out with a 1,617 square foot, 2-story commercial building located in the Historic District.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

The proposed project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1, of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Guidelines. A Class 1 Categorical Exemption consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alternation of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency’s determination. The proposed sign is intended to orient visitors to Mill Street and increase visibility of the store. Therefore, will not result in expansion of use of the commercial property.

**FINDINGS:**

1. The City received a complete application for Minor Sign Review 23PLN-47.
2. The Grass Valley Development Review Committee reviewed Minor Sign Review application 23PLN-47 at their regular meeting on January 9, 2023.
3. The Development Review Committee reviewed the project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and concluded that the project qualifies for a Class 1, Categorical Exemption in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and CEQA Guidelines.
4. This project is consistent with the City’s General Plan and any specific plan.
5. The proposed sign relates to the architectural design of the structure.
6. The proposed sign does not unreasonably block the sight lines of existing signs on adjacent properties.
7. The placement and size of the sign will not impair pedestrian or vehicular safety.
8. The design, height, location, and size of the sign is visually complementary and compatible with the scale, and architectural style of the primary structures on the site, any prominent natural features on the site, and structures and prominent natural features on adjacent properties on the same street.
9. The proposed sign, as conditioned, is in substantial compliance with the design criteria in Subsection 17.38.060.F (sign design criteria and guidelines) and the city's design guidelines.

**B. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:**

1. The final design shall be consistent with the Minor Sign Review application and plans provided by the applicant and approved by the Development Review Committee (23PLN-47). The project is approved subject to plans on file with the Community Development Department. The Community Development Director may approve minor changes as determined appropriate.
2. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall provide documentation demonstrating that no portion of the proposed sign will be located within the city right-of-way.
3. Prior to any work occurring, a building permit shall be obtained from the Community Development Department, Building Division.
4. An approved Encroachment Permit shall be obtained from the Engineering Division prior to any work being done within the City right of way.
5. The sign shall be maintained in good repair and functioning properly at all times.
6. The applicant agrees to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City of Grass Valley in any action or proceeding brought against the City of Grass Valley to void or annul this discretionary land use approval.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Aerial Map
3. Universal Application
4. Sign Drawing