



**PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
NOVEMBER 21, 2023**

Prepared by: Amy Wolfson, City Planner

DATA SUMMARY

Application Number: 23PLN-29
Subject: Development Review and Sign Permit for a 18.67 sq ft sign
Location/APNs: 170 East Main Street
Applicant: Smith Wendell C Family Holdings LLC, property owner
Representative: LaVonne Mullin
Zoning/General Plan: Town Core – Historic District/ Commercial
Entitlement: Development Review Sign Permit
Environmental Status: Categorical Exemption

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Planning Commission approve the “Welcome to Grass Valley” sign as presented, or as modified at the public meeting, which includes the following actions:
 - a. Determine the project Categorically 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 Development Review Permit and Sign Exception as presented in the Staff Report; and,
 - c. Approve the Sign Permit for the “Welcome to Grass Valley” sign in accordance with the Conditions of Approval, attached to the Staff Report.

BACKGROUND:

At their July 17, 2007 meeting the planning commission approved a development review project for the construction of a 3,194 square foot brick building with iron shutters, along with aesthetic amenities such as historic artifacts and ore cart tracks along Richardson Street (07DRC-14). The proposed sign was included in the approval but was never installed. According to the 2007 staff report, the sign and the mining equipment “reflect the entry area defined in the Downtown Strategic Plan.” The Downtown Strategic Plan was adopted by City Council in 2003 and among its recommended “strategies for enhancing the downtown retail sector,” is a recommendation to “improve signage on the highways and at the entrances to Downtown to increase visibility to visitors and local residents and to help maintain competitiveness in the market areas.” The approved sign was modeled after the sign that was previously located at the corner of Neal and South Auburn Streets. Property owner, LaVonne

Mullin has indicated that the city had asked her to build the welcome sign during her application process.

In 2018 the city removed the prior sign at Neal and South Auburn and constructed a new city entrance sign that features vertical and metal elements, as approved by City Council at their meeting on February 21, 2018. At that time, the city designated several locations throughout the city where a scalable sign of similar design could be located, including across the street from the proposed sign location (at the corner where Maria’s restaurant is located)



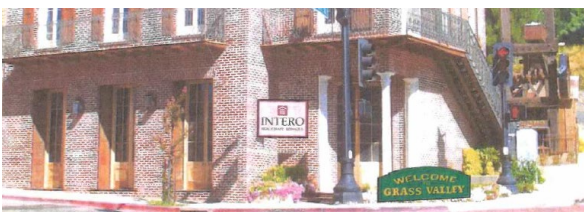
Previously approved entry sign



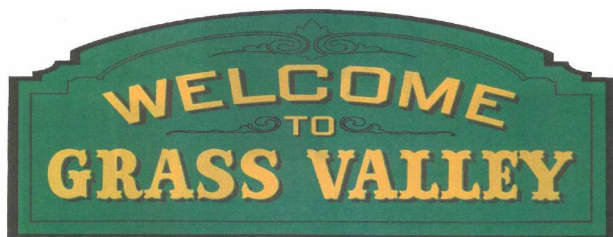
Proposed entry sign at Richardson and East Main

PROJECT PROPOSAL:

This Development Review Permit is for the re-review of the proposed “Welcome to Grass Valley” monument sign. The sign measures 7 feet wide and will be just over 2 ½ feet tall at its tallest point, for a total square footage of 18.67 square feet. The sign will be ground-mounted and bolted to two iron “C” channels placed in concrete and located within an existing flower bed at the corner of East Main Street and Richardson Street. The sign will be one-sided and will feature a green background and 24 karat gold-leaf lettering. The sign will be mounted on a mahogany backboard, which will frame the sign.



Proposed sign location



Rendering of sign

The Development Review Committee considered the sign at their meeting on October 24, 2023. At that meeting, the DRC voted 4 to 0 (Hutchins absent), to approve the sign based on the claim that the sign was a request made by the city and because there are no specific

design elements that are in conflict with code standards (other than the size as discussed below) or with design guidelines.

Regulatory Authority: The proposed monument sign is considered a “Tourist Oriented Directional Sign,” the standards for which are outlined in Section 17.72.030 (C) GVMC, and include the following provision:

1. The signs shall be smaller in size, each not exceeding four square feet in sign area
2. The signs shall be non-illuminated in order to be compatible with their generally rural surroundings
3. The signs shall be hand crafted, generally made of wood or other natural materials.
4. The signs shall be subject to the issuance of an encroachment permit (where applicable)

Pursuant to Table 3-9 GVMC, a sign exception permit may be granted by the planning commission, with a recommendation by the Development Review Committee, when a sign “exceeds standards specified in the sign ordinance.” In this case, the sign exceeds the four-square foot sign area limit so a Development Review Committee recommendation, followed by Planning Commission is the appropriate review process.

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.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:

The site is built-out with a 3,194 sq ft commercial building and associated parking. The lot is located in the Historic District, a designation that begins at the subject parcel and continues west and south.

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 tourists and is not associated with a business. Therefore, the proposed sign will not result in an expansion of use of the commercial property on which it will be located.

FINDINGS:

1. The City received a complete application for Development Review Application 23PLN-29.
2. The Grass Valley Development Review Committee reviewed Development Review Application 23PLN-29 at their regular meeting on October 24, 2023, and the Planning Commission reviewed the application at their regular meeting on November 24, 2023.
3. The Planning Commission 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 not inconsistent with City's General Plan and any specific plan.
5. The project is consistent with the applicable sections and development standards in the Development Code.
6. The project, as conditioned, complies with the City of Grass Valley Community Design Guidelines, including that "signage should be designed as an integral architectural element of the project and site to which it relates."
7. The proposed use is allowed within the applicable zone and complies with all other applicable provisions of this Development Code and the Municipal Code.
8. The design, location, size, and operating characteristics of the proposed activity are compatible with the existing and future land uses in the vicinity.
9. The site is physically suitable in terms of design, location, shape, size, and operating characteristics. It ensures that the density, intensity, and type of use being proposed would not endanger, jeopardize, or otherwise constitute a hazard to the public convenience, health, interest, safety, or welfare, or be materially injurious to the improvements, persons, property, or uses in the vicinity and zone in which the property is located.

A. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

1. The approval date for planning commission review of the proposed sign is November 24, 2023, with an effective date of Thursday, November 30th, pursuant to Section 17.74.020 GVMC. This project is approved for a period of one year and shall expire on November 30, 2024, unless the project has been effectuated or the applicant requests a time extension that is approved by the Development Review Committee pursuant to the Development Code.
2. The final design shall be consistent with the Development Review application and plans provided by the applicant and approved by the Planning Commission (23PLN-29). 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.

3. 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.
4. Prior to any work occurring, building permits shall be obtained from the Community Development Department, Building Division.
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. Application
2. Proposed signage renderings/photographs
3. 2007 approved sign rendering

Sign # 1 Sign Type: ^{entr.} Monument Sign Total Sq. Ft.: 21^{sq} Dimensions: 7' x 32"

Text: _____

Colors: black, green, 24K gold leaf

Materials: mahogany back board + frame Other Features: _____

Method of Attachment: laged to 8" "C" Channels Footings 12x12x30" deep (2)

Sign # _____ Sign Type: _____ Total Sq. Ft.: _____ Dimensions: _____

Text: _____

Colors: _____

Materials: _____ Other Features: _____

Method of Attachment: _____

Sign # _____ Sign Type: _____ Total Sq. Ft.: _____ Dimensions: _____

Text: _____

Colors: _____

Materials: _____ Other Features: _____

Method of Attachment: _____

Departmental Comments

Per 070RC-14 plans

APPROVALS

Attached Conditions

[Signature] _____ 3/20/13 _____
Planning Dept. Date

[Signature] _____ 3/19/13 _____
Building Dept. Date

_____ Date
Engineering Dept.

PRIOR TO BUILDING DEPT. FINAL, INSPECTION REQUIRED BY: Planning _____ Engineering _____

**CITY OF GRASS VALLEY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SIGN PERMIT - DRC CHECKLIST**

TO APPLICANTS: The following list includes the requirements necessary for review by City Staff. Some specific types of information may not apply to your project. If you are unsure, ask Planning Division Staff. Planning Staff will use a copy of this list to check your application for completeness after submittal. If your application is incomplete, a copy of the list will be returned to you marked according to the legend. The Planning Staff encourages submission of one set of plans to allow for application completeness check. This allows revisions to be made for submission of 8 sets of plans.

I. SITE PLAN An 8 1/2" x 11" Site Plan for the property on which the sign(s) will be placed including:

- Location of existing and proposed signage on site
- Square footage; each sign type and square footage sum total for all signs
- For multiple signs; provide each a number starting with #1
- For suspended or projecting signs; note distance between sidewalk and bottom of sign.
- For wall signs; include illustration with dimensions and total square footage of building walls where signage will be placed
- For monument signs; show sight distance from driveways and intersection corners

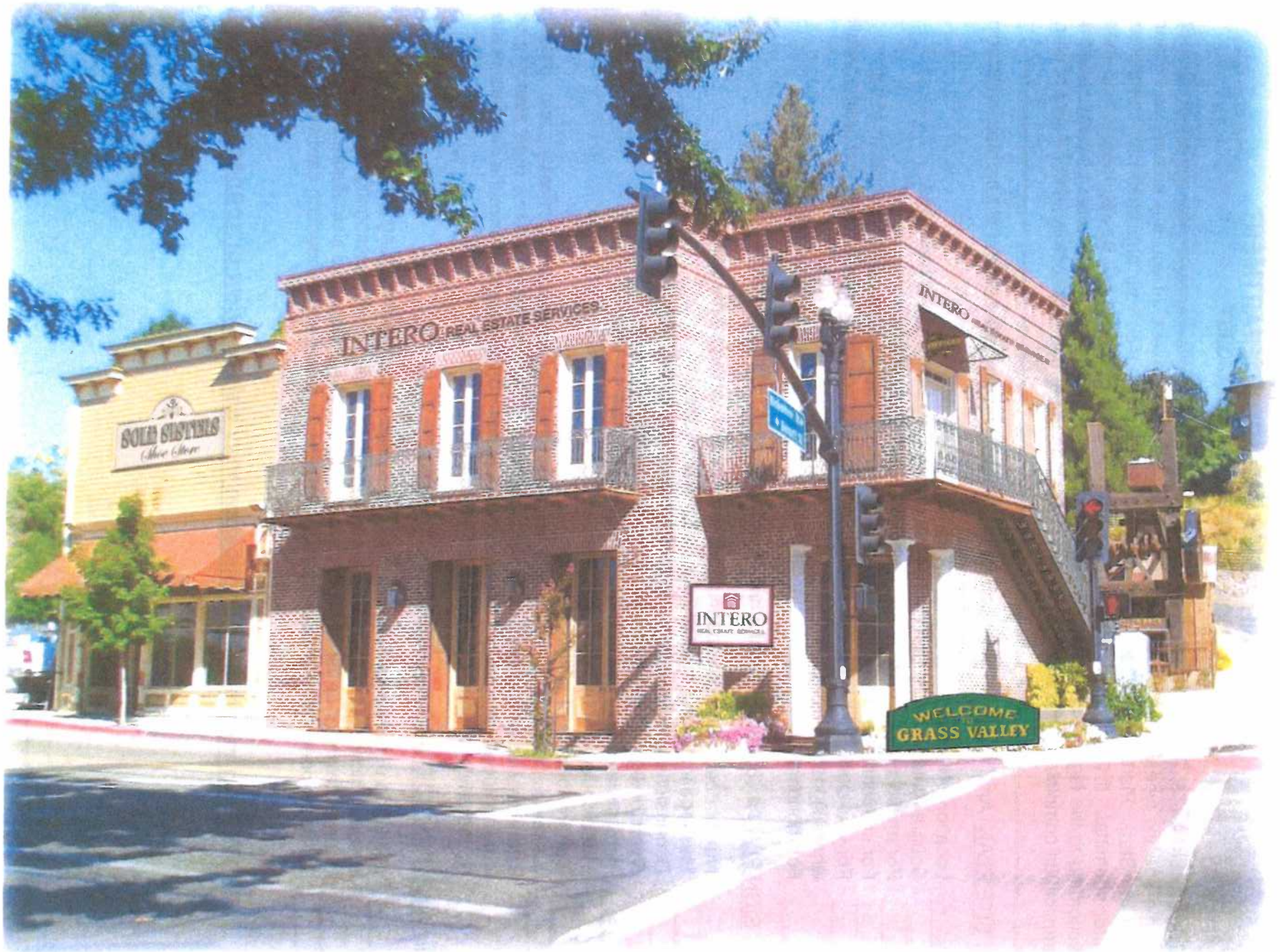
II. SIGN PLAN an 8 1/2" x 11" color drawing of each proposed sign including:

- Number each sign corresponding to the number shown on the site plan
- Message including; typeface, font, and design details
- Dimensions in feet and total square footage of proposed signage
- Overall height of all monument and freestanding signs
- Total square footage of existing signage to remain on-site
- Lineal footage of building frontage
- Square footage of building façade
- A scaled drawing of proposed signage including dimensions, colors, and materials; accurately depicting sign design and location on the building or site. Free standing signs shall include a site plan of the proposed location noting distances from the sidewalk or street; include any proposed external lighting for the sign

III. MOUNTING DETAILS must include the following:

- Description of materials used in the construction of the sign including dimensional lumber
- Material thickness and approximate weight of suspended or projecting signs
- Means of exterior or interior lighting including shielding, type, and size of lamps (if applicable)
- For suspended signs, provide details of anti-sway devices and mounting hardware

NOTE: An incomplete application may delay review of your application.



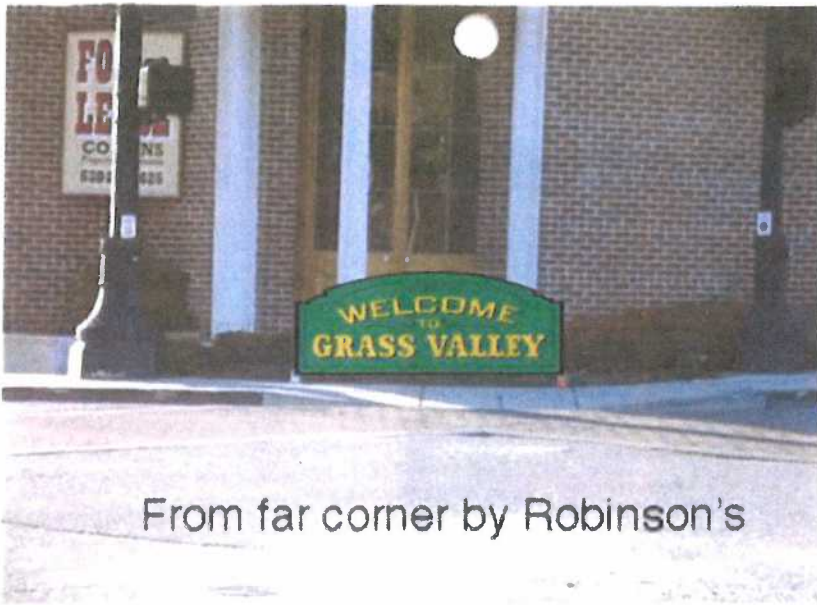
SOLD SISTERS
Catherine Gilbert

INTERO REAL ESTATE SERVICES

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WELCOME
TO
GRASS VALLEY

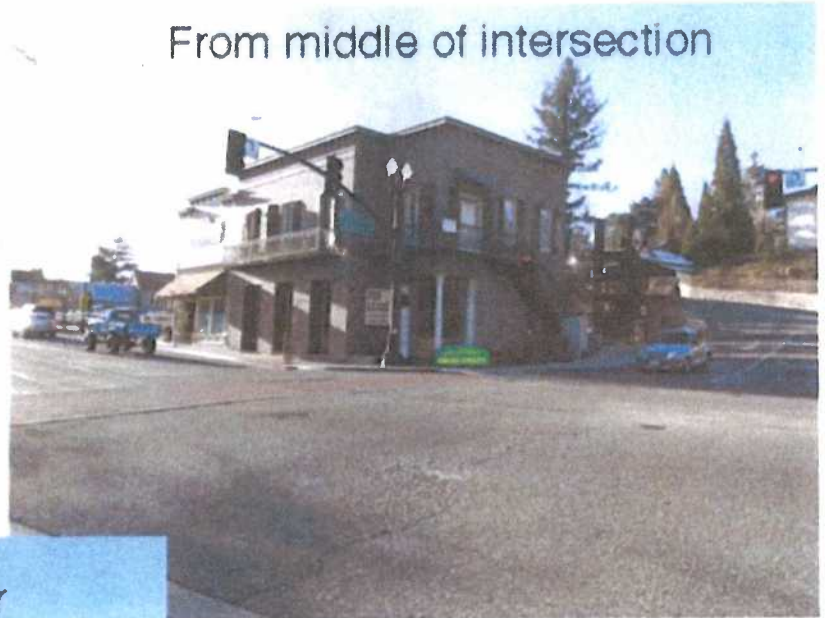


From far corner by Robinson's

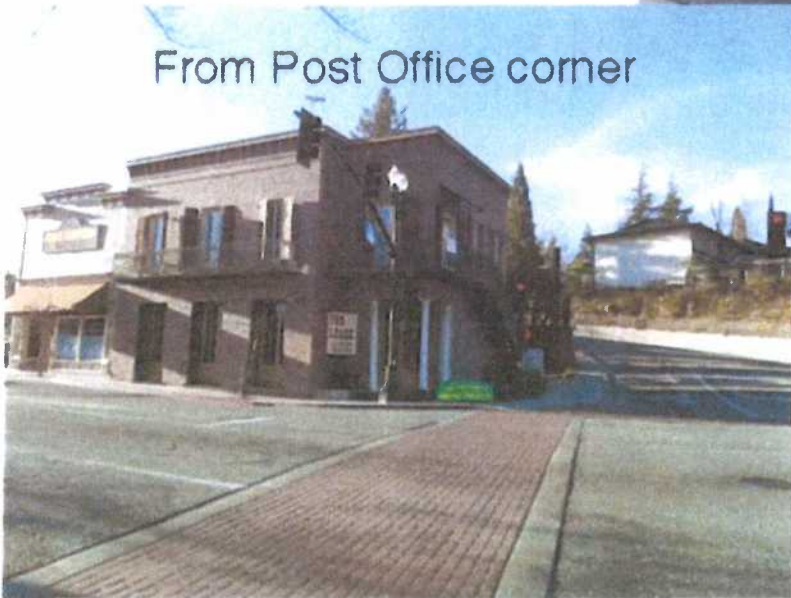
Welcome to Grass Valley

7 feet wide x 32 inches tall
Green, black trim,
24 carat gold leaf, letters
mahogany back board
and frame

From middle of intersection

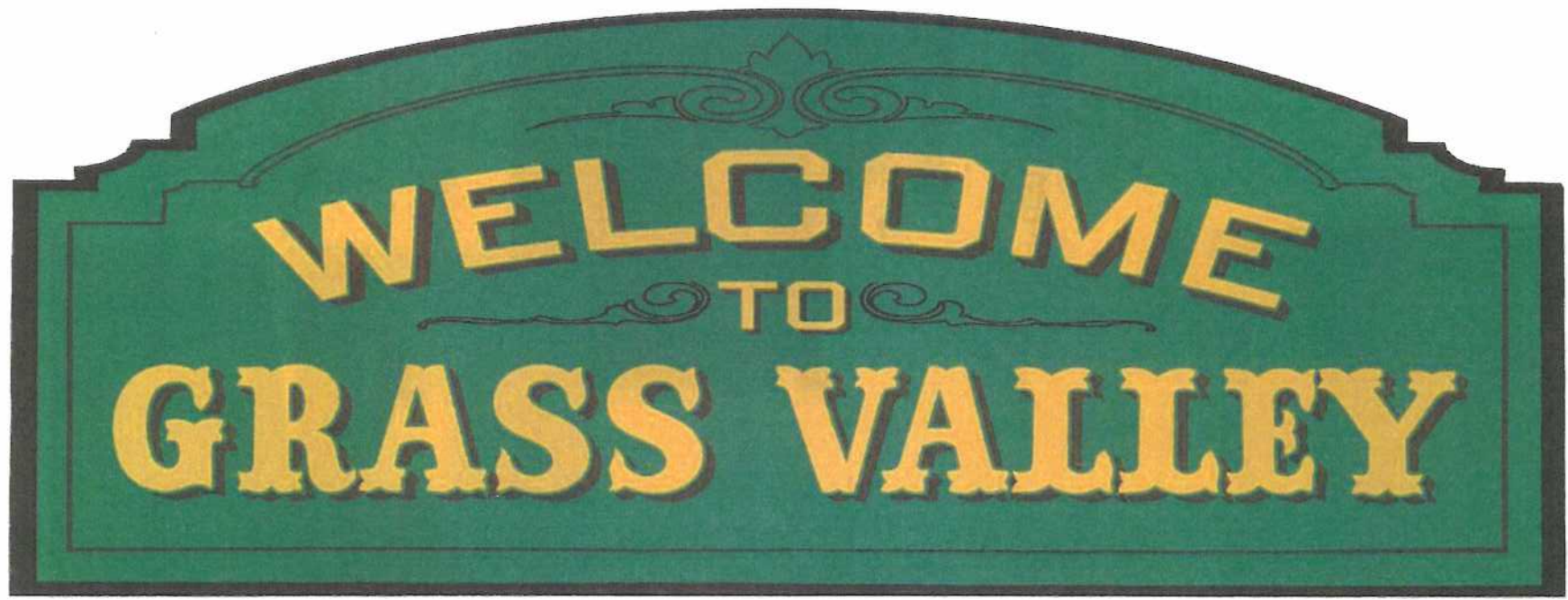


From Post Office corner



*Located 3" back from
sidewalk*

*Bolted to 2 iron "C" channels
(placed in concrete)
(behind sign)*



WELCOME

TO

GRASS VALLEY





Sign rendering approved in 2007 with development approval