



**DEVELOPMENT REVIEW  
COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT  
SEPTEMBER 9, 2025**

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**Prepared by:** Amy Wolfson, City Planner

**DATA SUMMARY**

**Application Number:** 25PLN-31  
**Subject:** Sign Exception Permit for Shell Station Sign Lighting  
**Location/APN:** 2001 Nevada City Highway  
**Applicant:** Sal Pablo, Sign Development Inc, representing SEI Fuel Services  
**Zoning/General Plan:** Central Business District (C-2)  
**Entitlement:** Sign Exception Permit  
**Environmental Status:** Categorical Exemption

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the Development Review Committee recommend that the Planning Commission approve the lighted “Shell” signage as presented, or as modified at the public meeting, 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 Development Review Permit as presented in the Staff Report; and,
  - c. Approve the Sign Exception Permit for the “Shell” signage in accordance with the Conditions of Approval, attached to the Staff Report.

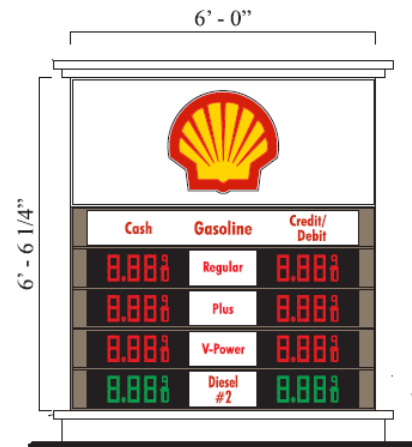
**BACKGROUND:**

The gas station was constructed around 1980 when the property was in the jurisdiction of Nevada County. The monument sign appears to have been installed around 1990. Most recently, the site has been operated by the gas company, Speedway. The property owner has decided to rebrand as a Shell station. In the process of this rebranding, and in reviewing the proposed signage, staff determined that several proposed signage features, all having to do with lighting, were in conflict with the signage code.

**PROJECT PROPOSAL:**

This Sign Exception Permit is for review of the following sign features:

- The light bar proposed around the perimeter of the two pump canopies;
- The internally illuminated price sign; and
- The internal illumination of the “Shell” symbol on the two canopies at three locations.



**Proposed canopy light bar, and internally illuminated “Shell” symbol and price sign**



**Existing Site**

Regulatory Authority: Section 17.38.050 of the City Municipal Code prohibits internally illuminated signage “except where authorized by a sign exception permit and determined by the review authority to constitute a design element that is integrated with and enhances building architecture.”

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 proposed signage exceeds the standard of prohibiting internally illuminated signage and explicitly states that it can only be allowed with a sign exception permit.

## **GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING:**

**General Plan:** The Grass Valley 2020 General Plan identifies the site as Commercial (C). The Commercial designation is a broad category intended to encompass all types of retail commercial and commercial service establishments.

**Zoning:** The property has a zoning designation of Central Business District (C-2) which is intended for auto-oriented commercial development.

## **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 exception is intended to aid in navigation to the business and 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 Sign Exception Application 25PLN-31.
2. The Grass Valley Development Review Committee reviewed Sign Exception Application 25PLN-31 at their regular meeting on September 9, 2025.
3. The Grass Valley Planning Commission reviewed Sign Exception Application 25PLN-31 at their meeting on \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Grass Valley 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.
5. The internally illuminated light bar around the perimeters of the canopies constitute a design element that is integrated with and enhances building architecture.
6. The internally illuminated "Shell" signs placed at three locations on the two pump station canopies constitute a design element that is integrated with and enhances building architecture
7. The internally illuminated price sign constitutes a design element that is integrated with and enhances building architecture
8. 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.

**A. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:**

1. The approval date for Planning Commission review of the proposed sign is \_\_\_\_\_, with an effective date of Thursday, \_\_\_\_\_, pursuant to Section 17.74.020 GVMC. This project is approved for a period of one year and shall expire on \_\_\_\_\_, 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 (25PLN-31). 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 any work occurring, building permits shall be obtained from the Community Development Department, Building Division.
4. The sign shall be maintained in good repair and functioning properly at all times.
5. 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. Aerial Map
2. Vicinity Map
3. Universal Application
4. Sign Exception Permit Application
5. Sign Proposal