



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 01/13/2021

ITEM NO: 3

DATE: January 8, 2021
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Consider a Request for Approval of an Exception to the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines to Allow Four Panels on an Existing Ground Sign on Property Zoned C-2. Located at 201-223 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road. APN 510-14-009. Sign Permit Application SN-20-035. Property Owner: Joey McCarthy, McCarthy Ranch. Applicant: Michele Richmond.

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider a request for approval of an exception to the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines to allow four panels on an existing ground sign on property zoned C-2, located at 201-223 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road.

PROJECT DATA:

General Plan Designation: Central Business District
Zoning Designation: Central Business District, C-2
Applicable Plans & Standards: Zoning Code and Commercial Design Guidelines
Parcel Size: 28,455 square feet (0.65 acres)

Surrounding Area:

	Existing Land Use	General Plan	Zoning
North	Commercial and office	Neighborhood Commercial	C-1
East	Commercial	Central Business District	C-2
South	Commercial, office, and residential	Central Business District and Medium Density Residential	C-2, O:LHP, R-1D:LHP
West	Commercial	Central Business District	C-2

PREPARED BY: RYAN SAFTY
Associate Planner

Reviewed by: Planning Manager and Community Development Director

CEQA:

The project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15301: Existing Facilities.

FINDINGS:

- As required, the project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15301: Existing Facilities; and
- The proposed project is consistent with the applicable Commercial Design Guidelines with the exception of exceeding the maximum number of tenants listed on a ground sign.

ACTION:

The decision of the Planning Commission is final unless appealed within ten days.

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is located at the southwest corner of North Santa Cruz Avenue and Los Gatos-Saratoga Road (Exhibit 1). The subject property consists of three separate buildings, with four tenants, as outlined in the applicant's Letter of Justification (Exhibit 4). The property is currently under construction for site improvements.

On May 19, 2020, the Town approved a Sign Permit application (SN-20-010) for a new ground sign with three tenant panels at the subject property (Exhibit 4). This ground sign has been constructed.

On July 17, 2020, the applicant applied for an additional sign permit (SN-20-035) to add a fourth tenant panel to the existing sign. The request requires an exception to the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The project is being considered by the Planning Commission as the applicant is requesting an exception to the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines to exceed the maximum number of tenants listed on a ground sign.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (continued):

A. Location and Surrounding Neighborhood

The subject property is located at the southwest corner of North Santa Cruz Avenue and Los Gatos-Saratoga Road (Exhibit 1). The property abuts commercial properties to the east and west, commercial and office to the north, and commercial, office, and residential to the south.

B. Project Summary

The applicant is requesting approval of an exception to the Commercial Design Guidelines to exceed the maximum allowed number of tenants listed on a ground sign.

DISCUSSION:

A. Project Summary

The applicant proposes to add a fourth tenant to an existing ground sign with three tenant panels to be able to advertise all their tenants on one ground sign. The proposed change would not increase the size or sign area of the existing ground sign, but would reduce the space of an existing tenant panel (Exhibit 6). The number and area of the existing sign, and proposed changes, comply with the sign regulations for nonresidential zones in Town Code Section 29.10.135.

B. Commercial Design Guidelines

The Town's Commercial Design Guidelines, Section 6.8.2-b, states the following:

Multi-tenant ground signs are strongly discouraged. However, the display of up to three tenants may be considered for small ground signs so long as the sign and background color is common throughout, and the type style and logo colors of each tenant are the same.

The existing three-tenant ground sign and background color is common throughout, and the type style and logo colors of each tenant are the same. The proposed additional tenant panel type style and logo color would also be the same (Exhibit 6).

C. Neighborhood Compatibility

The applicant's Letter of Justification (Exhibit 5) lists the Lark Business Center (16780 Lark Avenue), Lester Square (15991 Los Gatos Boulevard), Almond Grove Professional Center (301-321 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road), and 100 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road, as examples of

DISCUSSION (continued):

properties nearby that have ground signs with more than three tenants. Both the Lark Business Center and Lester Square have approved Master Sign Programs, which allow for exceptions to the Commercial Design Guidelines. The Almond Grove Professional Center, located two blocks to the west, has a two-sided ground sign that lists 12 tenants. 100 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road, located on the opposite side of Los Gatos-Saratoga Road and to the east of North Santa Cruz Avenue, has a two-sided ground sign that lists four tenants.

D. Neighborhood Outreach

The applicant has not reached out to surrounding neighbors due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and ongoing Santa Clara County restrictions.

E. CEQA Determination

The project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15301: Existing Facilities.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

At this time, the Town has not received any public comment.

CONCLUSION:

A. Summary

The applicant is requesting approval of an exception to the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines to exceed the maximum number of tenants listed on a ground sign.

B. Recommendation

If the Planning Commission finds merit with the proposed project, it should:

1. Make the finding that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt, pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15301: Existing Facilities (Exhibit 2);

CONCLUSION (continued):

2. Make the finding that the project complies with the applicable Commercial Design Guidelines with the exception of exceeding the maximum number of tenants listed on a ground sign (Exhibit 2); and
3. Approve Sign Permit Application SN-20-035 with the conditions contained in Exhibit 3 and the development plans in Exhibit 6.

C. Alternatives

Alternatively, the Commission can:

1. Continue the matter to a date certain with specific direction; or
2. Approve the application with additional and/or modified conditions; or
3. Deny the application.

EXHIBITS:

1. Location Map
2. Required Findings and Considerations
3. Recommended Conditions of Approval
4. Approved Sign Permit SN-20-010 – May 19, 2020
5. Letter of Justification, received December 9, 2020
6. Development Plans, received December 8, 2020

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