



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 09/23/2026

ITEM NO: 3

DATE: September 18, 2026
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 Wall Signs (ROEM) to Exceed the Maximum Letter Height on Property Zoned C-1. **Located at 536 N. Santa Cruz Avenue.** APN 529-07-090. Sign Permit Application SN-26-024. Categorically Exempt Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15301: Existing Facilities. Property Owner: Robert Emami. Applicant: David Ford. Project Planner: Suray Nathan.

RECOMMENDATION:

Denial.

PROJECT DATA:

General Plan Designation: Neighborhood Commercial
Zoning Designation: C-1, Neighborhood Commercial
Applicable Plans & Standards: Zoning Code and Commercial Design Guidelines
Parcel Size: 20,748 square feet

Surrounding Area:

	Existing Land Use	General Plan	Zoning
North	Commercial	Neighborhood Commercial	C-1
South	Commercial	Neighborhood Commercial	C-1
East	Commercial	Commercial-Industrial	LM
West	Commercial	Neighborhood Commercial	C-1

PREPARED BY: Suray Nathan
Assistant 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:

- The project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15301: Existing Facilities.
- The proposed signs are consistent with applicable provisions of the Commercial Design Guidelines with the exception of the maximum letter height for wall signs in the C-1 District.

ACTION:

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

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is located on the east side of N. Santa Cruz Avenue, one block south of Roberts Road (Exhibit 1). The subject property consists of a single 9,030-square foot building with one tenant.

On April 10, 2026, the applicant applied for a Sign Permit (SN-26-024) for one new wall sign at the front, two new wall signs at the rear, and one refacing of an existing ground sign.

On August 10, 2026, the applicant requested an exception to the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines to allow wall signs with a letter height of 24 inches at the primary frontage and 15 inches at the secondary frontage, where a maximum of 12 inches is permitted.

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 letter height for a wall sign located in the C-1 zone.

A. Location and Surrounding Neighborhood

The subject property is located on the east side of N. Santa Cruz Avenue, one block south of Roberts Road (Exhibit 1). Existing commercial uses are located on surrounding properties, which are zoned C-1 to the north, south, and west, and LM to the east.

DISCUSSION:A. Project Summary

The applicant proposes one primary frontage wall sign facing N. Santa Cruz Avenue and two secondary frontage wall signs facing Industrial Way (rear) (Exhibit 5, Sheets 4 and 6). The proposed signage exceeds the maximum allowable letter height of 12 inches for wall signs located in the C-1 zone per the Commercial Design Guidelines. The applicant requests exceptions to permit a 24-inch letter height for the N. Santa Cruz Avenue frontage and a 15-inch letter height for the two secondary rear signs. The applicant states in their Letter of Justification that the proposed larger lettering represents a unified logo design, and strict adherence to the 12-inch standard height limit would compromise the logo's aesthetic proportions and impede legibility from the public right-of-way (Exhibit 4).

Total Sign Area

The proposed wall signs comply with the Town Code requirements for total sign area. The combined length of the primary and secondary business frontage is 141.5 linear feet. Pursuant to Town Code Section 29.10.135 (c), the maximum allowable signage area for the subject business is 106.12 square feet. The proposed signage consists of one 41.7-square foot primary sign and two secondary signs totaling 44.5 square feet, for a cumulative sign area of 86.2 square feet, which remains below the allowable threshold.

Total Sign Area - Three Wall Signs	
Proposed	Maximum Allowed
86.2 square feet	106.12 square feet

Wall Sign Letter Height

Pursuant to the Commercial Design Guidelines, wall sign letter heights are limited to a maximum of 12 inches in the C-1 district. The applicant is requesting exceptions to allow a 24-inch letter height for the primary frontage wall sign and a 15-inch letter height for two wall signs along the secondary (rear) frontage (Exhibit 5, Sheets 4 and 6).

Wall Sign Letter Height	
Proposed	Maximum Allowed
24-inches (primary)	12-inches
15-inches (secondary)	12-inches

Section 6.2.5 of the Commercial Design Guidelines provides the following guidance for maximum letter height for wall signs:

Sign height and width should be appropriate to the building on which it is placed and the distance of the sign from the fronting streets. Generally, wall sign letter heights should not exceed the following: C-1 zone, 12 inches.

The subject site is located in the C-1 zone and is subject to a maximum letter height of 12 inches. An exception from the Commercial Design Guidelines is required to exceed the maximum letter height.

B. Neighborhood Compatibility

The following table provides a summary of sign letter height for wall signs located within the immediate business district.

Sign Letter Height within Immediate Business District		
Tenant Name	Sign Letter Height	Address
The Bywater	12-inches	532 N. Santa Cruz Ave
VCA Animal Hospital	12-inches	524 N. Santa Cruz Ave
Obsession	16-inch letter "O" and "b"	529 N. Santa Cruz Ave
INTERO	Sign permit not on file with the Town	518 N. Santa Cruz Ave
Subway	14-inches (Maximum allowed per Sarah's Center Sign Program)	540 N. Santa Cruz Ave

An evaluation of existing permitted commercial signage in the vicinity indicates approved letter heights ranging from 12 to 16 inches. Staff verified that valid sign permits are on file for all identified adjacent businesses, except for "Intero," located at 518 N. Santa Cruz Avenue.

C. Neighbor Outreach

The applicant has not reached out to surrounding neighbors.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Project signage was installed on the subject property prior to the mailing of notices for the public hearing. Written notice was sent to property owners and residents within 300 feet of the subject property. At the time of preparation of this report, no public comment has been received.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

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

CONCLUSION:

A. Summary

The applicant is requesting approval of an exception to the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines to exceed the maximum letter height for a wall sign located in the C-1 district.

B. Recommendation

Based on the analysis provided above, staff recommends that the Planning Commission deny the request for approval of an exception to the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines to exceed the maximum letter height for a wall sign (ROEM) on property zoned C-1. Located at 536 N. Santa Cruz Avenue.

C. Alternatives

Alternatively, the Commission can:

1. Approve the requested exception and approve the Sign Permit Application by taking the following actions:
 - a. 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);
 - b. Make the finding that the project complies with the applicable Commercial Design Guidelines with the exception of exceeding the maximum letter height for a wall sign located in the C-1 district(Exhibit 2); and
 - c. Grant the exception request and approve Sign Permit Application SN-26-024 with the conditions contained in Exhibit 3 and the development plans in Exhibit 6
2. Continue the matter to a date certain with specific direction; or
3. Approve the application with additional and/or modified conditions.

EXHIBITS:

1. Location Map
2. Required Findings
3. Recommended Conditions of Approval
4. Letter of Justification
5. Development Plans

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