

February 22, 2022

Montebello Market Roof Sign Project Description and Letter of Justification

Project Description:

Install one new roof sign to read “Montebello” per the attached plans as the primary business sign for the new Montebello Market located at 9 Montebello Way.

Letter of Justification:

Dear Planning Commission,

We are requesting approval of the Montebello Market roof sign as outlined in the staff report. Montebello Market is unique in many ways and will be a new and exciting benefit to the residents, businesses, and especially visitors to the downtown area. Due to the orientation of the building where the project is located, we determined that a roof sign is most appropriate for the business. We want to be able to easily attract customers and identify where the new market is located. From the intersection of N. Santa Cruz Ave and Main St. this presents a challenge due to all of the trees in Town Plaza blocking the visibility. The design, size, and scale of the sign from that viewing distance has been recommended by our architect and sign manufacturer, to strike a balance between visibility at a distance and appropriateness given the scale of the building and other surrounding buildings. This is a first-class project and you can be assured the look, feel, and quality of this sign will be top notch and appropriate for the downtown.

The Commercial Design Guidelines that discuss signage were written in 2005, 17 years ago. A revision to this document has been discussed for many years now but is way down on the list for the Town staff workplan, so it is unknown when it will be updated. It is very likely that an update to the document, particularly regarding signage, would modernize the sizes and types of signs that would be appropriate in various districts in Town as society evolves and Los Gatos needs to remain competitive with commercial districts in other areas.

Until such time as the Commercial Design Guidelines and Town sign code can be updated, certain proposed signs, such as ours, should be evaluated for what they are on a case-by-case basis. Something proposed that may not conform to the previous guidelines could be a significant improvement by today’s standards. A good example of this mentality is when the Town began to approve “Wine Bars.” The table of uses had not contemplated that kind of use and they did not wait until they changed the policies, ordinances, or code. The Town handled it for what it was on a case-by-case basis. We now have several thriving wine bars that have benefited this community by that type of reasoning. We would encourage taking a similar approach when making your decision.

Below we have outlined some points to consider when making your decision as well as support for the necessary findings.

Commercial Design Guidelines:

- Section 6.1.2 – Prohibited Sign Types - Roof-mounted Signs (except where other types of signage cannot be effectively employed).

In this circumstance, we feel the roof sign is appropriate and there is no option for an alternate sign type as outlined below.

- 6.1.3 – Maximum allowed sign area.

The proposed sign conforms to the guidance. Please pay particular attention to the reasonable exception that was created for the auto dealerships:

- Signage compatibility with the scale and character of Los Gatos Boulevard.

If similarly applied, the proposed sign certainly meets the scale and character of the surrounding area. The sign height is in fact lower than the “Le Boulanger” sign in the immediately adjacent building.

- Signage sizes needed for readability from reasonable viewing distances

This is the critical issue for the proposed sign. We want to ensure it is readable from a distance to draw customers through the park to an area that was previously unknown as a market/food use.

- Limitation of text content to the minimum necessary to convey ownership and brand recognition.

The text is limited to the business name “Montebello.”

- Compatibility of the signage and supporting structures to the architecture of the dealership.

Our architect has designed the sign and font type to be compatible with the structure and our branding.

Montebello Market and the proposed roof sign meet all of those objective standards if similar logic is applied that was outlined for the auto dealers. We are a community service that needs visibility from the intersection through the trees in Town Plaza.

Town Code Section 29.10.125 states:

(8) Roof signs. Roof signs must:

a. Be erected only on a roof whose pitch is at least one (1) vertical to four (4) horizontal.

The roof in question is 90 degrees to the parapet.

b. Have a face no more than two (2) feet measured vertically.

The proposed sign is 18" vertically.

c. Be located so the face is parallel to the eave in front of the sign.

The proposed sign will run parallel to the eave.

d. Be set no more than eight (8) inches above the roof.

The sign will be installed 2" above the roof in a raceway.

e. Be designed and erected so that no part of its face is higher than either the peak or an elevation five (5) feet above the eave in front of the sign.

The proposed sign is +/- 36" below the top of the parapet and +/- 20" from the eave.

f. Have architecture and site approval. Architecture and site approval may only be issued on the basis of findings that a wall sign is not feasible because the wall of the building is set back beneath and obscured by the porch or roof overhang which is an extension of and integral with the sloping roof of the building, and that the sign cannot be suspended between posts or columns supporting the roof without obstructing safe passage for pedestrians.

Installing the sign on the parapet is not feasible for other reasons than as outlined in item (f) above (which seems unusually specific and restrictive), requiring an exception or accommodation. This is an older building, and we are concerned with the ability to properly attach this amount of weight to the parapet, as well as the ability of the attachment to remain in place permanently. We don't know the exact type of construction or what condition the interior of the parapet is in. However, through the improvements that were recently done for the market, we opened up the inside of the lower roof structure and verified the conditions are suitable to support the proposed sign and have prepared the structure to accommodate it.

We would appreciate your taking a close look at what we are proposing and hope to apply some reasonable decision making to approve the sign for all of the aforementioned reasons. We can't reiterate enough how critical this will be to identify this new and amazing amenity we are bringing to Town. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



View from the intersection of N Santa Cruz Ave & Main St.

Thank you!



Jim Foley
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Jason Farwell

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