



"We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history."

Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: January 6, 2026

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PROJECT INFORMATION SUMMARY

Case File: Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) 25-03 A-Frame/Sandwich Board Sign Standards for the Downtown.

Request: Public Hearing and Recommendation to City Council on Proposed Amendments to Title 10 (Zoning), Section 10-4-17 (Sign Regulations) to Allow Regulated A-Frame/Sandwich Board Signs on Main Street in the Historic District; and Finding that the Project is Exempt from CEQA.

Summary Recommendation:

1. Conduct a public hearing and receive public input on the proposed ordinance amendment.
2. Provide direction to staff regarding any desired modifications based on public input and Commission discussion.
3. Adopt Resolution No. XX recommending that the City Council approve the amendment to Title 10, Section 10-4-17, as described herein (or as modified by the Commission).

BACKGROUND

The City of Placerville's Sign Ordinance (Title 10, Zoning, Section 10-4-17), originally adopted in May 2002, prohibits temporary freestanding signs, including A-frame signs, sandwich boards, and sidewalk menu signs, throughout the City. This prohibition was intended to protect public health, safety, welfare, and the aesthetic and historic character of the community by preventing visual clutter, hazards, and obstructions in public rights-of-way (ROW).

In February 2024, the City Council directed staff to explore revisions to the Sign Ordinance to address evolving community needs, including support for downtown businesses. Recent observations indicate increasing unauthorized use of A-frame/sandwich board signs on Main Street, highlighting the need for regulated allowances to promote economic vitality while maintaining safety and aesthetics.

This proposed amendment creates a limited exception for A-frame/sandwich board signs on public sidewalks along Main Street within the Historic District boundaries (generally from Canal Street to Sacramento Street). It aligns with practices in comparable historic California

downtowns, such as Grass Valley and Nevada City, where similar signs are permitted under strict guidelines.

Staff has not yet conducted formal stakeholder outreach but is scheduled to meet with Main Street merchants on January 15, 2026, to discuss the proposal and gather feedback.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION/PROPOSED CHANGES

A. Purpose of the Amendment

The amendment aims to:

- Enhance economic opportunities for Main Street businesses by allowing limited, temporary signage for specials and promotions.
- Preserve the historic and aesthetic character of downtown Placerville.
- Ensure public safety, ADA accessibility, and unobstructed pedestrian flow in the public ROW.

B. Key Provisions of the Proposed Amendment

The amendment adds a new subsection to Section 10-4-17, creating an exception to the prohibition on temporary freestanding signs. Signs would be subject to an annual Sign Permit administered by the Development Services Department. The standards are as follows:

1. Sign Permit Requirement:

- Annual permit required, including submission of sign design, materials, proposed placement (with photo or site sketch), and content.
- Fee: Approximately \$50 annually for cost recovery.
- Permits may be revoked for non-compliance.

2. Number of Signs:

- Limited to one (1) sign per building, regardless of the number of businesses or tenants, to minimize visual clutter.

3. Size:

- Maximum 6 square feet per side (e.g., 24 inches wide by 36 inches tall), consistent with regulations in similar historic downtowns.

4. Materials:

- Constructed of durable, non-plastic materials (e.g., wood, metal, chalkboard) to maintain the historic aesthetic. No illuminated, digital, or reflective elements.

5. Content:

- Restricted to daily specials, menus, or temporary events/promotions. No permanent business identification or off-site advertising.

6. Placement on Sidewalk (Public Right-of-Way):

- Placed immediately adjacent to the building façade (within 12 inches of the wall).
- Ensure a continuous minimum 48-inch (4-foot) clear pedestrian pathway along the sidewalk, measured as the unobstructed width between the sign and the curb edge (or any other obstruction), in compliance with Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) and ADA standards.
- If the sidewalk width at a specific location does not allow for a 48-inch clear path with a sign in place, no permit shall be issued.
- Displayed only during business hours; must be removed and stored indoors when the business is closed.
- No obstruction of doorways, ramps, fire hydrants, utilities, crosswalks, driveways, or sight lines.

7. Safety and Maintenance:

- Signs must be stable and weighted to resist wind; no attachment to public fixtures.
- Compliance with ADA/PROWAG, California Fire Code (no egress obstruction), and City safety standards.
- Signs must be maintained in good repair; damaged or non-compliant signs are subject to removal at the owner's expense.

C. Consistency with City Policies

- General Plan: Supports Economic Development Goal ED-1 (promote downtown vitality) and Historic Preservation Goal HP-1 (preserve aesthetic character).
- ADA Compliance: The 48-inch clear path meets or exceeds PROWAG requirements, ensuring accessibility for all users.
- Fire Code: Aligns with 2025 California Fire Code updates by preventing obstructions to emergency access.
- Comparables: Modeled after ordinances in Grass Valley (Ordinance No. 828) and Nevada City, with adjustments for Placerville's narrower sidewalks.

D. Potential Impacts and Mitigation

- Visual/Aesthetic: Limited size, materials, and number per building mitigate clutter.
- Safety/Accessibility: Site-specific permit review ensures ADA compliance; enforcement via permit revocation addresses violations.
- Economic: Expected to increase foot traffic and sales without permanent alterations to historic buildings.
- Fiscal: Minimal administrative costs offset by permit fees; no significant budget impact.

Staff will present feedback received from Main Street merchants at the January 15, 2026, meeting to the City Council as part of future consideration of this item.

Environmental Review:

The proposed ordinance amendment is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the "common sense" exemption. This exemption applies where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment.

The amendment is a minor regulatory change to the City's Sign Ordinance that allows limited, temporary signage under strict standards (e.g., size limits, placement requirements, permit review). It does not authorize any physical construction, ground disturbance, or changes in land use that could result in environmental impacts. Individual sign permits issued under the amended ordinance would be administrative actions with site-specific reviews to ensure compliance with safety and accessibility standards, further confirming no potential for significant effects.

Additionally, the amendment may qualify under CEQA Guidelines Section 15305 (Class 5: Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations), as it involves minor changes to existing regulatory limitations without resulting in changes to land use or density. No exceptions to these exemptions apply (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2).

Upon City Council adoption, staff will file a Notice of Exemption with the El Dorado County Clerk and the State Clearinghouse, as appropriate

Public Communications:

A public notice was published in the Mountain Democrat on December 17, 2025, as shown in the Proof of Publication (Attachment C). As of the preparation of this report, the Planning Department has not received any public comments. Any comments submitted before the scheduled Planning Commission meeting will be presented to the Commission during the public hearing.

DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY

The **Planning Commission's** authority to hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council on proposed amendments to Title 10, Chapter 4, Section 20 of the Placerville Municipal Code (regarding Short Term Rentals) comes from the following sources:

- **City of Placerville Practices and Descriptions:** The official City website and related documents describe the Planning Commission as responsible for reviewing land use proposals and making recommendations to the City Council on amendments to the Zoning Ordinance (Title 10 of the Municipal Code), rezoning requests, General Plan amendments, and other planning matters. This includes preparing and reviewing ordinance amendments for consistency with the General Plan and State law.

- **Standard California Local Government Structure:** Under California law (Government Code Sections 65100 et seq. and 65800 et seq.), local planning commissions serve in an advisory capacity to the legislative body (City Council). They typically conduct public hearings on zoning ordinance amendments and forward recommendations to the Council, which holds final adoption authority. This process aligns with Placerville's practices, as evidenced by historical examples where the Commission has reviewed and recommended zoning text amendments to the Council.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

Hold a public meeting; and,

The Planning Commission may take one of the following actions based on the analysis provided:

1. Forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council
2. Forward a recommendation of approval with modifications to the City Council
3. Forward a recommendation of denial to the City Council

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Ordinance No. XX – Draft
- B. Planning Commission Resolution No. XX - Draft
- C. Proof of Publication

INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

City of Placerville General Plan

City of Placerville Zoning Ordinance

Mountain Democrat article https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/placerville-city-council-gives-staff-sandwich-board-orders/article_9f65037c-cb7e-11ee-a1fb-0b1d52cedb7a.html

ADA/PROWAG Compliance (48-inch Clear Path)

California Fire Code Alignment