



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
(831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123

KATHY PREVISICH, PLANNING DIRECTOR

August 29, 2013

AGENDA DATE: SEPTEMBER 11, 2013

Planning Commission
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Agenda Item #: 7

SUBJECT: CONSIDER AMENDING CHAPTER 13.10 OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CODE TO ALLOW ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL OF SIGN EXCEPTIONS. CHAPTER 13.10 IS A COASTAL IMPLEMENTING ORDINANCE.

Members of the Commission:

The purpose of today's hearing is to consider amending the Santa Cruz County Code to clarify sign regulations in of the Santa Cruz County Code and to allow administrative approval of sign exceptions, with public notice.

Minor amendments to the County Code

The proposed amendments (Exhibit B; strikeout version in Exhibit C) are part of the ongoing Planning Department program to streamline permit review, modernize the County Code, and facilitate economic development.

The County's restrictive sign regulations frequently trigger variance applications by new businesses seeking adequate public visibility. Variances, however, are allowed only where "special circumstances" such as steep slopes or unusual lot geometry deprive owners of rights and privileges enjoyed by others. In some cases, variance findings cannot be made; in others, a variance elevates the approval from administrative review to a public hearing before the Zoning Administrator, adding expense, uncertainty, and delays in permitting for owners attempting to open new businesses.

The proposed amendments would substitute an administrative process for specified sign "exceptions" in place of the existing process requiring a variance. Exception permits would require public notice but no public hearing. Criteria would be established to limit the application, scope, scale and environmental effects associated with sign exception permits. The proposed criteria for approving sign exceptions would provide planners with an improved basis for permit review, because the criteria and findings will relate more to architecture, setting and design rather than the configuration of the property.

The strategy of the current sign ordinance is to strictly limit the number and cumulative area of site signs rather than provide separate standards and site criteria for monument signs, wall signs, hanging signs and other types of signage. The County's approach diverges from widespread planning practice, which is to provide dimensional standards and guidelines specific to the different kinds of signs that are allowed under different circumstances (e.g. office building vs. shopping center). The frequency of applications for sign variances shows that business owners are having difficulty meeting their visibility needs while complying with existing County sign regulations. A comprehensive sign ordinance

amendment would improve the quality of signage and the visual environment, and also expedite permit processes and reduce costs associated with processing sign approvals.

CEQA

Staff prepared a Notice of Exemption (Exhibit D) for the proposed ordinance amendment. The proposed project is a minor alteration in land use limitations (Class 15305). It will add a specific permit process for and criteria for approving certain sign exceptions and should reduce the level of unpermitted sign activity.

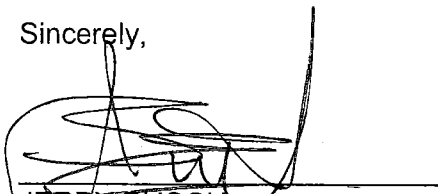
Recommendations

Staff believes that the proposed ordinance amendments would clarify sign regulations, improve the quality of sign exception approvals, and streamline the permit process.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Commission take the following actions:

1. Conduct a public hearing on the proposed sign ordinance amendments to the County Code (Exhibit B); and
2. Adopt the Resolution (Exhibit A) recommending that the Board of Supervisors: 1) determine that the proposed amendments to the General Plan / LCP and Santa Cruz County Code are exempt from further review under Class 15305 of the California Environmental Quality Act, and direct staff to file the attached Notice of Exemption (Exhibit D); and 2) approve the proposed ordinance amendments (Exhibit B).
3. Recommend that Board of Supervisors direct staff to meet with stakeholders, consult with other County jurisdictions and develop a comprehensive update to the sign ordinance and related General Plan policies, with the goal of producing a proposed draft within a year.

Sincerely,



JERRY BUSCH
Planner III



KATHY M. PREVISICH
Planning Director

Exhibits:

- (A) Resolution recommending that the Board of Supervisors approve a Categorical Exemption and approve the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendments
- (B) Clean copy of proposed ordinance
- (C) Underline/Strikeout copy of ordinance
- (D) Notice of Exemption

cc: County Counsel

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RESOLUTION NO. _____

On the motion of Commissioner
duly seconded by Commissioner
the following is adopted:

**PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING AMENDMENT OF SUBSECTION
(4) OF SUBDIVISION (H) OF SECTION 13.10.324, 13.10.581 AND SUBSECTION (A) OF
SUBSECTION (1) OF SUBDIVISION (F) OF SECTION 13.11.072, AND ADDITION OF
SUBDIVISION 13.10.587, OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CODE, TO ESTABLISH AN
ADMINISTRATIVE PERMIT PROCESS FOR EXCEPTIONS TO SIGN STANDARDS**

WHEREAS, the restrictive nature of the County's sign ordinance frequently triggers the need for modification from applicable sign standards by businesses seeking adequate identification and visibility; and

WHEREAS, any inconsistency with County sign standards currently requires a variance; and

WHEREAS, variances may be approved only in limited instances where special circumstances related to the property deprive property owners of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity or zoning district; and

WHEREAS, variance approval often elevates the level of review for a new commercial use from an administrative review to a public hearing before the Zoning Administrator, adding cost, uncertainty and delay in permitting for owners attempting to open new businesses; and

WHEREAS, the variance review process does not provide criteria specific to signage for accepting and reviewing applications for sign variances; and

WHEREAS, revising sign regulations to establish an administrative process with public notice for reviewing sign exceptions would reduce costs and shorten the processing periods for sign exceptions while continuing to provide public notification and opportunity for comment; and

WHEREAS, revising sign regulations to establish criteria for accepting and reviewing permit applications for sign exceptions would enhance the quality of permit review; and

WHEREAS, all sign exceptions would remain consistent with County General Plan policies protecting visual resources; and

WHEREAS, at its regular meeting on September 11, 2013, the Planning Commission conducted a duly noticed public hearing to consider the proposed amendments to Chapter 13.10 of the County Code relating to sign regulations, and considered all

testimony and evidence received at the public hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Coordinator has determined that the project is exempt from further review under CEQA, pursuant to Section 15305 of the Public Resources Code, "Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations," and a Notice of Exemption (Exhibit D) has been prepared; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed amendments to the County Code and to the General Plan / LCP are consistent with all other provisions of the County Code and the General Plan / LCP, and with State law; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 13.10 of the County Code is an implementing ordinance of the LCP and amendments of these chapters constitute amendments to the LCP; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed amendments to the LCP are consistent with the Coastal Act.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors: determine that the proposed amendments to the General Plan / LCP and Santa Cruz County Code are exempt from further review under the California Environmental Quality Act, and direct staff to file the attached Notice of Exemption (Exhibit D); adopt the proposed ordinance amending Chapter 13.10 of the Santa Cruz County Code (Exhibit B) and direct staff to submit the adopted amendments to the California Coastal Commission.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the County of Santa Cruz, State of California, this _____ day of _____, 2013 by the following vote:

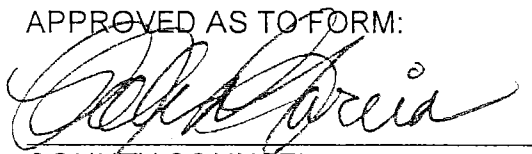
AYES: COMMISSIONERS
NOES: COMMISSIONERS
ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS
ABSTAIN: COMMISSIONERS

RACHEL DANN, Chairperson

ATTEST:

Ken Hart, Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



COUNTY COUNSEL

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**ORDINANCE AMENDING SUBSECTION (4) OF SUBDIVISION (H) OF SECTION 13.10.324,
SECTION 13.10.581 AND SUBSECTION (A) OF SUBSECTION (1) OF SUBDIVISION (F)
OF SECTION 13.11.072, AND ADDING SECTION 13.10.587
TO THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CODE, ALL RELATING TO SIGN EXCEPTIONS**

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz ordains as follows:

SECTION I

Subsection (4) of Subdivision (H) of Section 13.10.324 of the Santa Cruz County Code is hereby amended to read:

(4) Signing. To be consistent with SCCC sections 13.10.580 through 13.10.586.

SECTION II

Section 13.10.581 of the Santa Cruz County Code is hereby amended to read:

13.10.581 Signs in C, CT, VA, PA, PF and M Districts.

(A) No sign, outdoor advertising structure or display of any kind shall be permitted except the following:

(1) One primary business or identification sign per site, one small, pedestrian-oriented business or identification sign per site, and signs pertinent to uses conducted on site. All business or identification signs and use-related signs are subject to the maximum aggregate sign area provided in the following table:

MAXIMUM AGGREGATE SIGN AREA ALLOWED	
Basis for Calculation	Aggregate Sign Area* Allowed
Front width of building on an interior lot; or Front width plus street side width of building on a corner lot	1/2 square feet (72 square inches) of sign area per foot of building width
Width of site along the street (interior or corner lot)	1/4 square feet (36 square inches) of sign area per foot of site width
Maximum allowable area on an interior lot less than 40 feet wide at the street	20 square feet
Maximum allowable area	50 square feet

MAXIMUM AGGREGATE SIGN AREA ALLOWED	
Basis for Calculation	Aggregate Sign Area* Allowed
<p>* "Sign area" means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The area within a well-defined border; or, - The area of one side of a double-sided sign; or, - On a sign with no defined border, the area within the perimeter which encloses the letters, symbols or logo. 	

(2) The following signs, whose areas are in addition to the maximum aggregate area defined in subsection (1) above:

- (a) Direction signs for off-street parking and loading facilities not exceeding four square feet.
- (b) One sign pertaining to the sale, lease, rental or display of a structure or land, not exceeding six square feet.
- (c) Gas station price displays, limited to numerals, business logo and discount information required by State statute.

(B) Permanent and temporary window signs allowed pursuant to 13.10.581(A)(1) are each limited to a maximum of 20 percent of the window area of the building. Temporary window signs not displayed for more than two weeks are not included in the total sign size limitation.

(C) Signs directly across the street from a residential zone district shall be limited to 30 square feet in area and shall not be directly illuminated or flashing.

(D) A freestanding sign detached from a building shall be of a design consistent with the architectural character of the building and shall be designed as an integral part of the landscaped area. Freestanding signs shall not exceed seven feet in height, measured from the existing grade at the edge of the road. Where on-street parking limits the visibility of freestanding signs, such signs may be erected to a maximum height of 12 feet, measured from the existing grade at the edge of the road.

(E) Signs located on a wall or on a roof fascia shall be designed as an integral part of the building design. Building signs shall be located on or below the upper line of the roof fascia.

(F) Signs and supports shall be set back a minimum of five feet from the edge of the right-of-way or roadway, whichever is greater, and shall not obstruct vehicular sight distance or pedestrian/bicycle circulation.

(G) No sign other than a directional sign shall project more than 12 inches into a required rear yard or required interior side yard.

(H) Visibility of signs within scenic corridors shall be minimized by the use of appropriate material, size, location, and orientation. No illuminated signs shall be permitted within a scenic corridor.

(I) Where sign lighting is permitted, only indirect illumination or low-intensity interior illumination shall be used. It is preferred that lighted signs be designed with light-colored translucent letters and logos, on a semi-opaque dark background. Any permitted sign lighting shall be unobtrusive to adjacent properties and any glare shall be directed onto the site.

(J) Moving signs, flags, banners, sandwich board signs or flashing signs shall not be permitted.

(K) Shopping Centers.

(1) A sign program shall be developed for any shopping center or any group of business uses with shared sign facilities. The program shall include a name sign containing the name of the center, a directory sign either separate or combined with the name sign, and one small pedestrian-oriented sign for each shop. The sign program shall specify sign designs, dimensions, materials, colors, lighting, if any, and placement.

(2) The total area of the center's name sign(s) and directory sign shall not exceed 50 square feet. The area of each individual shop sign shall not exceed one-half square foot per foot of building width measured across the front of the building, and shall not exceed a maximum of 18 square feet, whichever is smaller. [Ord. 4346 § 33, 1994; Ord. 3432 § 1, 1983].

SECTION III

The Santa Cruz County Code is hereby amended by adding Section 13.10.587 to be entitled "Sign Exceptions," to read as follows:

13.10.587 Sign Exceptions.

(A) In any district, exceptions to any applicable ordinance standards for a sign, sign program, temporary sign or directional sign may be considered for approval where warranted by site-specific circumstances such as restricted visibility, distance from thoroughfare, location on a corner, unusually large structure, or historic preservation concerns. A sign exception shall be processed as an Administrative Permit with public notice, in accordance with Section 18.10.222.

(B) Sign exceptions shall meet the following criteria:

(1) The exception shall vary from sign standards in the Santa Cruz County Code only to the extent necessary and appropriate to address site-specific circumstances.

(2) The signage is architecturally and aesthetically compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, environmental setting and associated buildings; does not create or contribute to visual clutter, and, if lighted, avoids undue incidental illumination away from the signage.

(3) If the exception proposes illumination of a sign visible from a scenic road, the sign shall be situated within a commercial or visitor serving area or the urban Highway 1 corridor.

SECTION IV

Subsection (a) of Subsection (1) of Subdivision (F) of Section 13.11.072 is hereby amended to read as follows:

(a) All requirements relating to signs set forth in SCCC Sections 13.10.580 through 13.10.586 shall be met.

SECTION V

This Ordinance shall take effect on the 31st day after the date of final passage or upon certification by the California Coastal Commission, whichever date occurs last.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2013, by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz by the following vote:

AYES: SUPERVISORS
NOES: SUPERVISORS
ABSENT: SUPERVISORS
ABSTAIN: SUPERVISORS

Chairperson, Board of Supervisors

Attest: _____
Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



County Counsel

Copies to: County Counsel
Planning Department

**ORDINANCE AMENDING SUBSECTION (4) OF SUBDIVISION (H) OF SECTION 13.10.324,
SECTION 13.10.581 AND SUBSECTION (A) OF SUBSECTION (1) OF SUBDIVISION (F)
OF SECTION 13.11.072, AND ADDING SECTION 13.10.587
TO THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CODE, ALL RELATING TO SIGN EXCEPTIONS**

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(A) No sign, outdoor advertising structure or display of any kind shall be permitted except the following:

(1) One primary business or identification sign per site, ~~and one small, pedestrian-oriented business or identification sign per site, and signs pertinent to uses conducted on site. All business or identification signs and use-related signs are subject to the maximum aggregate sign area as provided below, in the following table: A variance to allow more than one business sign may be considered under the provisions of SCCC 13.10.230 if justified by special circumstances such as limited visibility or unusually large size of a structure, location on a corner, historic preservation concerns, or consistency with a village design plan.~~

(2) ~~Signs pertaining to a use conducted on the site, with aggregate areas according to the following table. The following formulas for calculating sign area shall be used unless a variance is obtained under the provisions of SCCC 13.10.230.~~

<u>TOTAL MAXIMUM AGGREGATE SIGN AREA ALLOWED</u> (Includes All Signs Displayed)	
Basis for Calculation	<u>Total Aggregate Sign Area*</u> Allowed
Front width of building on an interior lot; or Front width plus street side width of building on a corner lot	1/2 square feet (72 square inches) of sign area per foot of building width
Width of site along the street (interior	1/4 square feet (36 square inches)

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TOTAL <u>MAXIMUM AGGREGATE</u> SIGN AREA ALLOWED	
(Includes All Signs Displayed)	
Basis for Calculation	Total <u>Aggregate</u> Sign Area* Allowed
or corner lot)	of sign area per foot of site width
Maximum allowable area on an interior lot less than 40 feet wide at the street	20 square feet
Maximum allowable area	50 square feet
* "Sign area" is defined as means: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The area within a well-defined border; or,- t<u>The</u> area of one side of a double-sided sign; or,- e<u>O</u>n a sign with no defined border, the area within the perimeter which encloses the letters, symbols or logo.	

(32) The following signs, whose areas are in addition to the maximum aggregate area defined in subsection (1) above:

- (3a) Direction signs for off-street parking and loading facilities not exceeding four square feet.
- (4b) One sign pertaining to the sale, lease, rental or display of a structure or land, not exceeding six square feet.
- (c) Gas station price displays, limited to numerals, business logo and discount information required by State statute.

(B) Permanent and temporary window signs allowed pursuant to 13.10.581(A)(1) are each limited to a maximum of 20 percent of the window area of the building. Temporary window signs not displayed for more than two weeks are not included in the total sign size limitation.

(C) Signs directly across the street from a residential zone district shall be limited to 30 square feet in area and shall not be directly illuminated or flashing.

(D) A freestanding sign detached from a building shall be of a design consistent with the architectural character of the building and shall be designed as an integral part of the landscaped area. Freestanding signs shall not exceed seven feet in height, measured from the existing grade at the edge of the road. Where on-street parking limits the visibility of freestanding signs, such signs may be erected to a maximum height of 12 feet, measured from the existing grade at the edge of the road.

(E) Signs located on a wall or on a roof fascia shall be designed as an integral part of the building design. Building signs shall be located on or below the upper line of the roof fascia.

Strikethrough / Underline Version

- (F) Signs and supports shall be set back a minimum of five feet from the edge of the right-of-way or roadway, whichever is greater, and shall not obstruct vehicular sight distance or pedestrian/bicycle circulation.
- (G) No sign other than a directional sign shall project more than 12 inches into a required rear yard or required interior side yard.
- (H) Visibility of signs within ~~a scenic corridors~~ shall be minimized by the use of appropriate material, size, location, and orientation. No illuminated signs shall be permitted within a scenic corridor.
- (I) Where sign lighting is permitted, only indirect illumination or low-intensity interior illumination shall be used. It is preferred that lighted signs be designed with light-colored translucent letters and logos, on a semi-opaque dark background. Any permitted sign lighting shall be unobtrusive to adjacent properties and any glare shall be directed onto the site.
- (J) Moving signs, flags, banners, sandwich board signs or flashing signs shall not be permitted.
- (K) Shopping Centers.
- (1) A sign program shall be developed for any shopping center or any group of business uses with shared sign facilities. The program shall include a name sign containing the name of the center, a directory sign either separate or combined with the name sign, and one small pedestrian-oriented sign for each shop. The sign program shall specify sign designs, dimensions, materials, colors, lighting, if any, and placement.
- ~~(2) A variance to allow more than one name sign for the center may be considered under the provisions of SCCC 13.10.230 if justified by special circumstances such as limited visibility or unusually large size of structure, location on a corner, historic preservation concerns, or consistency with a village design plan.~~
- (32) The total area of the center's name sign(s) and directory sign shall not exceed 50 square feet. The area of each individual shop sign shall not exceed one-half square foot per foot of building width measured across the front of the building, and shall not exceed a maximum of 18 square feet, whichever is smaller. [Ord. 4346 § 33, 1994; Ord. 3432 § 1, 1983].

SECTION III

The Santa Cruz County Code is hereby amended by adding Section 13.10.587 to be entitled "Sign Exceptions," to read as follows:

13.10.587 Sign Exceptions.

(A) In any district, exceptions to any applicable ordinance standards for a sign, sign program, temporary sign or directional sign may be considered for approval where warranted by site-specific circumstances such as restricted visibility, distance from thoroughfare, location on a corner, unusually

Strikethrough / Underline Version

large structure, or historic preservation concerns. A sign exception shall be processed as an Administrative Permit with public notice, in accordance with Section 18.10.222.

(B) Sign exceptions shall meet the following criteria:

- (1) The exception shall vary from sign standards in the Santa Cruz County Code only to the extent necessary and appropriate to address site-specific circumstances.
- (2) The signage is architecturally and aesthetically compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, environmental setting and associated buildings; does not create or contribute to visual clutter, and, if lighted, avoids undue incidental illumination away from the signage.
- (3) If the exception proposes illumination of a sign visible from a scenic road, the sign shall be situated within a commercial or visitor serving area or the urban Highway 1 corridor.

SECTION IV

Subsection (a) of Subsection (1) of Subdivision (F) of Section 13.11.072 is hereby amended to read as follows:

(a) All sign regulations shall be met according to SCCC 13.10.580 through 13.10.586, inclusive. All requirements relating to signs set forth in SCCC Sections 13.10.580 through 13.10.586 shall be met.

SECTION V

This Ordinance shall take effect on the 31st day after the date of final passage or upon certification by the California Coastal Commission, whichever date occurs last.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2013, by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz by the following vote:

AYES: SUPERVISORS
NOES: SUPERVISORS
ABSENT: SUPERVISORS
ABSTAIN: SUPERVISORS

Chairperson, Board of Supervisors

Attest: _____
Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

County Counsel

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

The Santa Cruz County Planning Department has reviewed the project described below and has determined that it is exempt from the provisions of CEQA as specified in Sections 15061 - 15332 of CEQA for the reason(s) which have been specified in this document.

Project Location: Countywide

Project Description: Adoption of an ordinance amending Chapter 13.10 of the Santa Cruz County Code to provide for administrative review of sign exceptions and to clarify certain other provisions of existing sign regulations.

Person or Agency Proposing Project: County of Santa Cruz.

Contact Phone Number: 831-454-3234

- A. _____ The proposed activity is not a project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.
B. _____ The proposed activity is not subject to CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 (c).
C. _____ **Ministerial Project** involving only the use of fixed standards or objective measurements without personal judgment.
D. _____ **Statutory Exemption** other than a Ministerial Project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15260 to 15285).

Specify type:

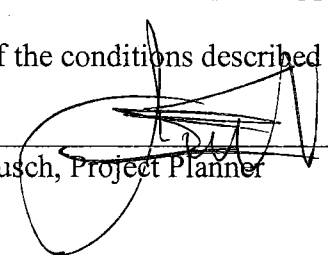
E. X **Categorical Exemption**

Specify type: Class 5 - Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations (Section 15305)

F. Reasons why the project is exempt:

The proposed project is a minor change to the Santa Cruz County Code that will 1) allow for administrative review, with public notice, of certain sign exceptions that currently require variance applications and a public hearing, and 2) provide criteria to guide review of administrative sign exception applications.

None of the conditions described in Section 15300.2 apply to this project.



Jerry Busch, Project Planner

Date: 8/30/2013