

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



City Manager's Report

March 10, 2026, City Council Meeting

Prepared by: Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

Item #: 10.1

Subject: Consideration of Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) 25-03 – Title 10 (Zoning), Section 10-4-17 (Sign Regulations) to Allow Regulated A-Frame/Sandwich Board Signs in the Commercial Business District (CBD) zone; and Finding that the Project is Exempt from CEQA.

Recommendation: Conduct a public hearing to receive public input on the proposed amendments. Determine that the proposed amendments are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(c)(2) and (3), 15061(b)(3) (General Rule/Common Sense Exemption), and 15305 (Class 5: Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations), as the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. Introduce and waive the first reading of Ordinance No. ___ amending Title 10, Chapter 4, Section 17 of the Placerville Municipal Code to allow regulated A-frame/sandwich board signs in the Commercial Business District (CBD) zone (substantially in the form attached as Attachment A to this report).

Purpose: 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; and ensure public safety, ADA accessibility, and unobstructed pedestrian flow in the public ROW.

Strategic Plan Strategy: Maintain/Improve Quality of Life – Strategy 6 Maintain and Update Planning Documents.

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 within the Commercial Business District (CBD) zone. It aligns with practices in comparable historic California downtowns, such as Grass Valley, where similar signs are permitted under strict guidelines.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on January 6, 2026, received public input, and adopted Resolution No. 2026-01 (Attachment B) recommending approval of the amendment to the City Council by a vote of 3 yes, 0 no, 1 absent, and 1 abstention, with modifications based on stakeholder feedback.

At the Planning Commission meeting, the public raised concerns regarding boundaries, obstacles (e.g., trash cans and tree wells), proximity to the building façade, and appropriate content (e.g., menus). Staff attended the Merchants on Main meeting on January 7, 2026, to present the draft and solicit comments. Feedback focused on clarifying the one-sign limit to allow rotation among tenants under a single shared permit. Staff incorporated these modifications into the proposed ordinance.

At the regular City Council meeting on February 10, 2026, this item (ZOA 25-03) was agendaized for consideration. The Council discussed the proposed regulations, including enforcement needs, potential revenue from permit fees, and benefits of regulated allowances to reduce unauthorized signs and complaints. The item was continued from the February 24, 2026, City Council meeting. The revised draft ordinance (Attachment A) reflects the version for introduction and waiving of the first at this hearing.

Discussion:

Key Provisions of the Proposed Amendment

The amendment adds a new definition for “Sandwich Board or A-Frame Sign” in Subsection (B) of Section 10-4-17 and removes “sandwich board” from the list of prohibited temporary freestanding signs in Subsection (D)3. It then adds a new subsection creating a limited exception for these signs in the CBD zone. Signs are subject to an annual Sign Permit administered by the Development Services Department. The standards are as follows:

Exception for A-Frame/Sandwich Board Signs in the CBD zone: Notwithstanding any provision in this section prohibiting temporary freestanding signs, A-frame or sandwich board signs may be placed on public sidewalks in the Commercial Business District (CBD) zone, subject to obtaining an annual Sign Permit from the Development Services Department and strict compliance with the following standards:

Sign Permit Requirement: An annual Sign Permit is required. The application shall include sign design, materials, proposed placement (with photo or site sketch), and content. Fee: Approximately \$50 (or as established by City resolution) for administrative cost recovery. Permits may be revoked for non-compliance and are not transferable.

Number of Signs: Limited to one (1) sign deployed at any given time per building or multiple tenant buildings with two (2) or three (3) tenants. Buildings including multiple tenants and with more than four (4) tenants are limited to two (2) signs deployed at any time. Tenants may rotate usage of the sign during their respective business hours, with all proposed signs requiring approval under a single shared permit.

Size: Maximum six (6) square feet per side, with a maximum width of 24 inches.

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

Temporary in Nature: Limited to temporary events/promotions. Sandwich boards may not be used for only business identification but may include business identification in conjunction with identifying temporary events/promotions. Off-site advertising is prohibited.

Placement: Placed adjacent to the building façade (within 12 inches of the wall).

- (a) Ensure a continuous minimum 48-inch-wide (4-foot-wide) 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.
- (b) If sidewalk width at the location does not permit a 48-inch clear path with the sign in place, no permit shall be issued.
- (c) Displayed only during business hours; must be removed and stored indoors when the business is closed.
- (d) No obstruction of doorways, ramps, fire hydrants, utilities, crosswalks, driveways, or sight lines.
- (e) The property/sign owner will be solely responsible for any injuries or damages arising from the placement of the sign.

Safety and Maintenance: Signs must be stable and weighted to resist wind; no attachment to public fixtures.

- (a) Full compliance with ADA/PROWAG, California Fire Code, and City safety standards.
- (b) Signs must be maintained in good repair; damaged or non-compliant signs are subject to immediate removal at the owner's expense.

Grace Period: 90-day period from adoption for merchants to replace non-compliant signs.

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 Grass Valley Ordinance No. 828 with adjustments for Placerville's narrower sidewalks.

Public Communications: A public notice was published in the Mountain Democrat. As of the preparation of this report, the Development Services Department has received no public comments, with the exception of comments received at the January 6, 2026, Planning Commission meeting from Kathi Lishman and Michael Drobesh and comment made by the Merchants on Main on January 8, 2026, and comments from Sue Rodman, Allen Ming, Tony Windle, Kathi Lishman, and James Marquez at the February 10th City Council meeting. Public comments were received by Kathi Lishman at the February 24th City Council meeting. Any comments submitted before the scheduled City Council meeting will be presented to the Council during the public hearing.

Options:

1. Introduce and waive the first reading of Ordinance No. ____, as recommended by the Planning Commission (with edits incorporated).
2. Introduce and waive the first reading of Ordinance No. ____ with further modifications.
3. Continue the item for further review.
4. Deny the ordinance.

Environmental: The project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), as it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility of a significant effect on the environment. The amendment is a regulatory update to zoning text for compliance with State law, does not approve any specific development project, and facilitates ministerial permitting of A-Frame/Sandwich Board temporary sign permits that remain subject to site-specific review and applicable codes. No unusual circumstances exist that would cause potentially significant environmental effects. 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.

Cost: None anticipated. The amendments are ministerial in nature and may reduce the number of complaints generated regarding A-frame/sandwich board signs. Any future permits will generate a standard nominal fee of \$50 per permit.

Budget Impact: It is anticipated that the proposed ordinance amendment will generate approximately \$2,000 a year.



Dave Warren, City Manager



Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

Attachments:

Attachment A: Draft Ordinance No. ____

Attachment B: Planning Commission Resolution No. 2026-01

Incorporated by Reference

- City of Placerville General Plan
- City of Placerville Zoning Ordinance
- City of Placerville Planning Department file ZOA 25-03