

**CITY OF CALISTOGA
STAFF REPORT**

TO: CHAIRMAN MANFREDI AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

FROM: ERIK V. LUNDQUIST, ASSOCIATE PLANNER

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 24, 2008

**SUBJECT: DESIGN REVIEW (DR 2008-09) - RAINBOW AG. SERVICES
MONUMENT SIGN AT 1856 LINCOLN AVENUE (APN 011-050-010)**

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2 **REQUEST:**
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4 Consideration of a Design Review requested by Jim Mayfield, on behalf of Rainbow Ag
5 Services, for the installation of a interior illuminated monument sign pursuant to the
6 Chapter 17.58.060.B.10 Signs Requiring a Permit – Interior illuminated signs. The
7 subject property is located at 1856 Lincoln Avenue (APN 011-050-010) within the “CC-
8 DD” Community Commercial-Design District. This proposed action is exempt from the
9 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15311 of the CEQA
10 Guidelines.

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12 **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:**
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14 Calistoga Municipal Code, Section 17.58.060(B)(10) requires that the Planning
15 Commission find that interior illuminated signs are compatible with the architectural
16 character of the building relating to its scale, light intensity, color and other similar
17 design characteristics. This requirement was established on the basis of two
18 considerations. First, the community expressed differing opinions about the design of
19 interior illuminated sign fixtures when the Sign Ordinance was being revised in 2003/04.
20 Rather than allow interior illuminated lighting through an Administrative or Staff-level
21 process, authority to approve these signs was passed to the Planning Commission.
22 Second, there was some discussion by the community when the Sign Ordinance was
23 being prepared that interior illuminated light boxes were “old fashion” and represented a
24 character that was intrinsic with most other towns experiencing a proliferation of signs in
25 the 1970s. These signs tended to be relatively inexpensive when considering the long-
26 term goals of business owners, since the panels could simply be changed as the
27 business changes. However, there were some in the community (and Staff strongly
28 supported this opinion) that believed the practicality of interior illuminated light boxes
29 should be balanced with the aesthetic values of the community and the changing times.
30 This is not to say that interior illuminated light boxes should not be allowed. To the
31 contrary, the Sign Ordinance simply requires the Planning Commission to review these
32 signs and to consider the context in which they are designed.

33
34 Staff believes that the design presented in the sign plans dated June 5, 2008 provides
35 uniqueness in design that would offset concerns relating to outdated interior illuminated
36 light boxes. This issue, combined with the importance of Rainbow Ag Services as a
37 local serving business and enterprise that provides strong economic benefits to the
38 community, has led to the Staff's position to support the proposal.

39
40 On the other hand, a case could be made that the proposed interior illuminated sign
41 presents a universal design, which does not reflect a level of uniqueness to Calistoga
42 (e.g., such as the case with the Hydro sign with its use of channel letters).
43 Alternatively, the signs could be designed with exterior illumination (e.g., such as the
44 case with the Best Western sign which is designed of wood with exterior light
45 sources)—interior illumination is not a design of necessity.

46
47 If an alternative design is more desirable to the Planning Commission, Staff would work
48 with the applicant to provide alternative designs for consideration at an upcoming
49 meeting. It should be noted that while corporate designs rarely provide for flexibility at
50 the local level, it should be understood that municipalities have the ability to regulate the
51 design of signs, even in instances where signs are registered trademarks, provided that
52 the colors and proportions are not required to be changed. However, should the
53 Planning Commission find that the design of proposed interior illuminated sign is
54 appropriate an approval may be granted based upon the following findings.

55
56 **FINDINGS:**

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58 In addition to the above discussion, the analysis of this project includes reference to the
59 Findings for Design Review Approval (CMC 17.06.040). These are discussed generally as
60 follows:

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62 A. *The extent to which the proposal is compatible with the existing development pattern*
63 *with regard to massing, scale, setbacks, color, textures, materials, etc.;*

64
65 Response: The proposed colors and textures are compatible with and signify the
66 existing use(s) on the property and the proposed signage is compatible in the
67 project vicinity and Calistoga as a whole, in that it identifies the rural character
68 and predominate agricultural uses in the region.

69
70 B. *Site layout, orientation, location of structures, relationship to one another, open spaces*
71 *and topography;*

72
73 Response: The site layout and location of structures will not change as a result of
74 this application. Therefore, this finding is not applicable.

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76 C. *Harmonious relationship of character and scale with existing and proposed adjoining*
77 *development, achieving complementary style while avoiding both excessive variety and*
78 *monotonous repetition;*

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80 Response: The proposed work will neither adversely affect the significant
81 architectural features of the building nor adversely affect the character of the
82 historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value of the surrounding area.

83
84 D. *Building design, materials, colors and textures that are compatible and appropriate to*
85 *Calistoga. Whether the architectural design of structures and their materials and colors*
86 *are appropriate to the function of the project;*

87
88 Response: The proposed design upholds community aesthetics through the use of
89 an internally consistent, integrated design theme and is consistent with all adopted
90 and/or applicable design standards.

91
92 E. *Harmony of materials, colors, and composition of those sides of a structure, which are*
93 *visible simultaneously;*

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95 Response: This project involves a sign. Therefore, this finding is not applicable.

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97 F. *Consistency of composition and treatment;*

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99 Response: This project involves a sign. Therefore, this finding is not applicable.

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101 G. *Location and type of planting with regard to valley conditions. Preservation of specimen*
102 *and landmark trees upon a site, with proper irrigation to insure water conservation and*
103 *maintenance of all plant materials;*

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105 Response: No significant plantings are proposed. Therefore, this finding is not
106 applicable.

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108 H. *Whether exterior lighting, design signs and graphics are compatible with the overall*
109 *design approach and appropriate for the setting;*

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111 Response: The sign is compatible with the building's materials, colors and design
112 motif.

113
114 I. *The need for improvement of existing site conditions including but not limited to signage,*
115 *landscaping, lighting, etc., to achieve closer compliance with current standards;*

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117 Response: The proposed sign meets all applicable design standards. No need for future
118 improvement is warranted.

119
120 J. *Whether the design promotes a high design standard and utilizes quality materials*
121 *compatible with the surrounding development consistent with and appropriate for the*
122 *nature of the proposed use;*

123
124 Response: The proposed design upholds community aesthetics through the use of
125 an internally consistent, integrated design theme and is consistent with all adopted
126 and/or applicable design standards.

127
128 K. *Responsible use of natural and reclaimed resources.*

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130 Response: Materials will be reused to the maximum extent practicable for the proposed
131 sign.

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133 **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

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135 Staff has determined that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt from the
136 requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section
137 15311 of the CEQA Guidelines.

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139 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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141 Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

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143 A. File a Notice of Exemption for the Design Review pursuant to Section 15311 of the
144 CEQA Guidelines.
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146 B. Approve Design Review (DR 2008-09) to allow an interior illuminated monument
147 sign, based upon the above findings and subject to conditions of approval.
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149 **SUGGESTED MOTIONS:**

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151 Categorical Exemption

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153 I move that the Planning Commission direct Staff to file a Notice of Exemption for the
154 Project pursuant to Section 15332 of the CEQA Guidelines.

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156 Design Review

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158 I move that the Planning Commission adopt PC Resolution 2008-29 approving Design
159 Review (DR 2008-09) to allow an interior illuminated monument sign located at 1856
160 and Lincoln Avenue (APN 011-050-010) within the “CC-DD”, Community Commercial -
161 Design District, subject to the findings presented in the Staff Report and conditions of
162 approval.

163
164 **ATTACHMENTS:**

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166 1. Draft Design Review Resolution PC 2008-29
167 2. Sign Plans and Permit Submittal dated June 5, 2008