

CALISTOGA PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

To: Calistoga Planning Commission
From: Zach Tusinger, Planning & Building Director
Meeting Date: June 24, 2020
Subject: Sign Permit Application for an I 'Heart' Calistoga Mural Sign at 1339 Lincoln Avenue

ITEM

Consideration of a sign permit application from Laurie Shelton to paint an "I 'Heart' Calistoga" mural sign on a fence at a vacant parcel at 1339 Lincoln Avenue.

BACKGROUND

Laurie Shelton, owner of CAMi Art & Wine at 1333 Lincoln Avenue has received permission from the property owner of the vacant adjoining parcel to paint a large "I ♥ Calistoga" mural sign on the wooden sidewalk facing privacy fence. The property has been vacant for a little over a year after the former building was demolished due to seismic concerns (it was determined to be infeasible to seismically retrofit the building).

While sign permits are generally reviewed at the staff level, there are some types of sign permits that either are required to go to the Planning Commission for review, or which are unique and staff elects to refer to the Planning Commission for the final review and decision. Mural signs, such as the one proposed, are specifically required to go to Planning Commission under CMC Section 17.58.060(B)12.



The fence at 1339 Lincoln Avenue

The mural sign as proposed would be painted on an existing 8-foot-tall wooden fence. The letters would be roughly two to three feet in height and extend for most of the fence's 30 foot length. The mural's letters would be painted white with black outlines for contrast, while the heart would be painted red. There would also be a smaller "#visitcalistoga" hashtag painted on the fence. No other improvements are proposed as part of this project.

DISCUSSION

Zoning Code

32 Review of this application is subject to Chapter 17.58, Signs and Advertising, of the
33 Zoning Code. The purpose of this chapter is to:

34 (A) provide standards for the regulation of signs in order to promote and protect the
35 public health, safety and welfare;

36 (B) provide for signage that effectively presents a business name or message for
37 public convenience, while also preserving and enhancing the scenic beauty of
38 Calistoga as an economic asset; and

39 (C) prevent excessive and confusing signs which can result in visual clutter and
40 increase hazards to pedestrians and motorists. (CMC 17.58.010)

41 As noted in the Background section, large mural signs are specifically reviewable by the
42 Planning Commission and should be considered in a manner similar to a conventional
43 design review.

44 Section 17.58.070(C) says that “sculptures, statues, mosaics, murals and similar
45 decorative depictions that do not contain a name, logo, image or symbol related to a
46 business, their design shall complement the architectural character of the building and
47 adjoining structures.” The design and text of the proposed mural sign would not appear
48 to conflict with the designs or character of any of the adjoining properties.

49 Calistoga General Plan

50 In order to maintain and enhance Calistoga’s small-town character and the urban
51 design quality of the downtown, development in the DC: Downtown Commercial Zoning
52 District is to be guided by relevant policies of the General Plan’s Community Identity
53 Element and the character areas, gateways and entry corridors of the Land Use
54 Element.

55 The Community Identity Element of the General Plan states that “attention to urban
56 design criteria can help ensure that future development fits within the existing built
57 environment and permit the continued growth of Calistoga in a manner which maintains
58 its existing small-town atmosphere. Landscaping, signage, traffic and noise all play a
59 key role in enhancing the quality of life.”

60 The subject property is located in the Downtown Character Area’s Historic District. The
61 objectives of the Historic District are to:

- 62 • enhance the commercial primacy and dominance of the Historic District
- 63 • ensure that all development shall respect and draw inspiration from the
64 architectural language of the Historic District
- 65 • provide for a visitor experience that shall be enhanced by a sense of discovery
- 66 • encourage the Historic District experience to be seamless without large gaps of
67 inactivity

68 Other Considerations

69 The proposed signage also offers an economic development opportunity for Calistoga
70 as well. It is easy to envision the mural, with its “#visitcalistoga” hashtag as becoming
71 an icon for the City that is shared on social media by residents and visitors alike. At a
72 minimum, dressing up a blank fence at a strategic point along the downtown
73 streetscape with public art represents an opportunity to improve downtown’s
74 appearance until the property owner proposes something new for the now otherwise
75 vacant parcel. It would help bridge a gap of inactivity in the Lincoln Avenue streetwall.

76 At issue is whether the proposed signage is in accordance with the various policies of
77 the General Plan and Urban Design Plan, as well as the Zoning Ordinance.

78 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

79 As of June 16, 2020, two emails regarding this application had been received.

80 **RECOMMENDATION**

81 Staff recommends that the Planning Commission discuss the proposed mural sign
82 design application and either approve with conditions or decline to approve the
83 application. A draft resolution with conditions of approval is attached.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Resolution with Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Plans and Request Letter
4. Public Comments