



Filed: December 12, 2014
Staff: Trever Parker
Staff Report: February 5, 2015
Commission Hearing Date: February 18, 2015
Commission Action:

STAFF REPORT: CITY OF TRINIDAD

APPLICATION NO: 2014-03

APPLICANT (S): Gail and Steven Saunders

AGENT: N/A

PROJECT LOCATION: Saunders' Shopping Center, Main St.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Design Review and Coastal Development Permit to remove the existing 56 sq. ft., 15 ft. tall Murphy's Market marquee sign and replace it with an approximately 48 sq. ft., 8 ft. tall monument sign that will identify the various businesses located within the shopping center.

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER: 042-063-35

ZONING: C – Commercial

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: C – Commercial

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: Categorically Exempt from CEQA per §15302 of the CEQA Guidelines exempting placement or reconstruction of existing structures, and §15311 exempting construction or placement of minor accessory structures such as signs.

APPEAL STATUS:

Planning Commission action on a coastal development permit, a variance or, conditional use permit, or design review application will become final 10 working days after the date that the Coastal Commission receives a "Notice of Action Taken" from the City unless an appeal to the City Council is filed in the office of the City Clerk at that time. Furthermore, this project ~~is~~ **X** **is not** appealable to the Coastal Commission per the requirements of Section 30603 of the Coastal Act and the City's certified LCP.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS:

Saunders' Shopping Center is located on the south side of Main Street between View Avenue and Scenic Drive. The new sign will be placed in approximately the same location as the existing marquee, which is on the west side of the second (western) driveway off Main Street, between the Lighthouse Grill and the main Murphy's parking area. Access to the property as a whole is via driveways located on Main Street, View Avenue, or Scenic Drive. The parcel is zoned Commercial (C). Surrounding uses include the commercial businesses within the shopping center, such as Murphy's Market and Salty's Tackle Shop to the south, the Chevron Station, and the Trinidad Park / Museum / Library across Main St. to the north, Trinidad Trailer Courts to the west and Hwy 101 to the East. The surrounding parcels fronting Main Street are zoned C and PD. The is mostly developed with retail buildings and paved parking areas; the property has minimal slope.

STAFF COMMENTS:

The existing sign was approved in 1995. The property owners feel that the sign is somewhat old, outdated and unattractive. The sign also blocks views of Trinidad Head when entering town from the freeway. The purpose of the project is to improve the aesthetics and function of the existing marquee by replacing it with a smaller, lower sign that is constructed of more natural materials. It will also serve to identify all the businesses located within the shopping center.

The exact sign specifications are not fully determined at this point. This is partially due to the fact that natural materials, such as driftwood will be utilized for the construction. However, the sign designer will be in attendance at the hearing to better explain what is being proposed. The main body of the sign will be approximately 96" – 100" wide and 60" – 70" tall. The entire sign will be approximately 8' tall and will not exceed the height of the adjacent existing bus stop. Each business will be allocated an approximately 4' wide by 1' tall rectangle to advertise their business in their own font and colors. A reference to the name of the shopping center may be included at the top. The framing of the sign will be done with driftwood and raw logs possibly with "thick nautical rope and subtle metal highlights." The new sign will require a building permit, but referrals were not sent to the City Engineer or DEH, because the project will not affect wastewater nor streets, access, drainage or other engineering issues.

The City of Trinidad is currently in the process of conducting a city-wide sign compliance review. The applicants requested that such a compliance review be part of this application for the replacement sign. However, I suggested that such a process would overly complicate the review of this project due to the public interest in and sometimes controversy over signs. I will note though that the preliminary review of signs in town indicates that individual signs within the shopping center are generally in compliance with the City's regulations, other than many of them not having gone through the required design review process. It is possible that the total square footage of signage on the shopping center properties exceeds the maximum allowable square footage per property. However, this determination will likely require some policy

determinations as to what exactly constitutes signage. Such policy decisions should be made on a city-wide basis rather than for individual properties. The City is currently working through that process.

TRINIDAD SIGN REGULATIONS

Definitions:

§17.08.610, "**Sign**," *"means any message, word, symbol, design, picture, or visual medium, which is intended to draw attention to a product, service, business, person, institution, location and is placed or painted on the ground or on any tree, wall, fence, rock, structure, or thing whatsoever, and placed thereon whether indoor or outdoor so as to be visible from off premises, exclusive of legal notices, safety, and directional signs posted by public agencies."*

§17.08.020, "**Advertising Area**," *"means the total number of square feet within the boundaries of a parallelogram or triangle which encloses the message, work, symbol, design, picture or visual medium visible on the surface of any sign. For signs where the letters of a word are each located on separate surfaces facing in the same direction, the advertising area shall be the total number of square feet within the boundary of separate parallelograms enclosing each letter. Where a sign includes surfaces facing in different directions, the advertising area shall be the largest total of advertising area visible from any one direction, and in the case of a cylindrical or spherical shaped sign, the advertising area shall be the largest cross section thereof."*

§17.08.620, "**Sign, freestanding**" *"means a sign which is supported by one or more uprights, poles, or braces in or upon the ground, and which is self-supporting in a fixed location and not attached to a building or structure."*

§17.08.630, "**Off-premise sign**" *"means a sign other than an on-site sign and includes signs erected by the outdoor advertising industry in the conduct of the outdoor advertising business."*

§17.08.650, "**On-premise sign**" *"means a sign relating in its subject matter to accommodations, services, commodities, or activities on the premises upon which it is located as distinguished from a sign which directs attention to or advertises an occupancy, accommodation, service, or activity supplied or originating on other premises."*

Signs:

§17.56.160:

B. In the PD, VS and C zones, on-premise signs shall be permitted, subject to the following regulations and the review of the [Planning Commission]:

- 1. The total advertising area permitted for any parcel of land shall be one square foot for each foot of street frontage, provided that any parcel shall be permitted at*

least twenty square feet, but in no case shall the advertising area for any parcel exceed three hundred square feet. No individual sign established after the adoption of the ordinance codified in this title shall be greater than fifty square feet in area.

- 2. No freestanding sign shall exceed the maximum building height for the zone in which the sign is located. Signs attached to buildings shall not project more than three feet above the roof line.*
- 3. Signs projecting over public right-of-way...*
- 4. Signs that rotate, blink, flash, sparkle, resemble traffic control signs, obstruct the visibility of any traffic sign, and portable signs in a public right-of-way are prohibited. Nonappurtenant signs are prohibited except that a maximum of two directional signs of not more than four square feet each may be permitted adjacent to primary collector streets subject to obtaining a use permit, and provided that multiple identification signs included within a community business directory shall be permitted in the C zone, subject to a use permit.*

ZONING ORDINANCE/GENERAL PLAN CONSISTANCY:

The property where the project is located is zoned C – Commercial. The purpose of this zone is to provide for the commercial services that meet the convenience and retail needs of the residents, visitors and the fishing industry. Retail and service businesses are a principally permitted use in this zone. The minimum lot size allowed in the C zone is 8,000 sq. ft.; the property well exceeds that at almost 1.5 acres (62,000 sq. ft.) The maximum density allowed in the C zone is one motel unit per 2,500 sq. ft. of lot area, or one dwelling unit per 8,000 sq. ft. of lot area. The proposed project will not alter the density or lot size, and the existing improvements meet the current criteria. In addition, maximum allowable building size and height are not applicable.

Required setbacks within the C zone are front 20', rear and side none unless adjacent to another zone, then 5' is required. A previous Planning Commission decision (Chevron 2007-01) determined that signs do not need to meet setbacks. However, the 'vision triangle' regulations do apply for safety purposes. Zoning Ordinance §17.56.110 requires that structures over 2.5' in height be located at least 15' from the point where a driveway meets a street / property line. Although this section specifically applies to "fences, walls, and hedges," because it is a safety issue, it should apply to any view blocking structures or vegetation. It appears that the existing location of the marquee would meet this requirement (though poles are not subject to the regulation), and there is room for the proposed sign to also meet the 15' requirement if it is oriented at a similar angle to the existing sign. A condition of approval has been included for the Building Inspector to ensure and verify this requirement is met.

In terms of the sign regulations, the property has well over 300' of street frontage, so the total maximum square footage of signage allowed is 300. Note that the shopping center is made of two large parcels; the one the proposed sign will be located on contains Murphy's Market and the Post Office. The other businesses and structures are on the other parcel. Because the proposed sign is going to be advertising businesses on both

properties, it could be viewed as a offsite or 'nonappurtenant,' allowed, but requiring a use permit in the C zone. However, because the two properties are managed as one and are indistinguishable, I feel that the proposed sign should not be regulated as an offsite sign or community business directory. This is also consistent with how parking has been considered on the properties in the past.

As mentioned above under 'staff comments,' it is possible that one or both of the parcels exceed the 300 sq. ft. maximum. However, the City will address that issue as part of a City-wide review of signage. In addition, the proposed sign is smaller than the marquee it is replacing, so total square footage will not be increasing. The maximum allowable size for any one individual sign is 50 sq. ft.; the proposed sign is just under this amount. The proposed sign meets all other applicable regulations: the proposed 8' sign does not exceed the 25' height limit of the C zone; it does not project over a public right-of-way; it does not rotate, blink or sparkle; and it is not an offsite sign.

Though not shown on the plans, a new light will be installed near ground level in front of the proposed sign in order to illuminate it at night. The existing marquee sign is internally lit, visible from both sides. Because the new sign will be one-sided and lower, lighting impacts will likely be someone reduced. Lighting and light intensity is not specifically regulated in the Trinidad Zoning Ordinance, although it often is in other cities. Although Trinidad has no formal lighting standards, this issue can be addressed by the Planning Commission through the Design Review process. Lighting may be appropriately discussed under Design Review finding 'C' that deals with the compatibility of materials and color used in construction. The Planning Commission may require, for example, that lighting not be increased on the site as a result of this project.

Parking in the Commercial Zone is governed by Zoning Ordinance (§ 17.56.180) and is generally based on the square footage of the use / business. In this case, existing parking is in compliance with applicable regulations and the square footage and uses are not changing, and so no change in parking is required.

The Trinidad General Plan and Zoning Ordinance protect important public coastal views (including Trinidad Head) from roads, trails and vista points and private views from inside residences located uphill from a proposed project from significant obstruction. The removal of the large marquee sign will significantly improve views, particularly of Trinidad Head. The shorter proposed sign will be lower than other development around it, so will likely not block views.

No grading or excavation is required for this project.

SLOPE STABILITY:

The a portion of the property lies within a Special Study (Fault Rupture) Zone, as designated by the State Division of Mines and Geology under the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act. The purpose of the Zone is to ensure that local development patterns do not create seismic hazards. There are two fault zones within Trinidad: the Trinidad Head fault zone and the Anderson Ranch fault zone. Certain

projects are exempt from these requirements, including new, single-story, single-family homes and alterations of existing structures and structures not used for human occupancy. The proposed project falls under the latter exemption, and no studies are required. A geologic report was prepared for previous projects and no evidence of fault rupture was found on the site.

The project site is not mapped as being unstable or of questionable stability on Plate 3 of the General Plan.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL:

There is no sewage disposal associated with this project.

LANDSCAPING AND FENCING:

Required landscaping / screening is governed by §17.56.170. Subsection C requires screening along property lines separating a non-residential use from a residential use. It also requires screening of storage areas and screening of open areas with goods for sale from adjacent properties. None of these situations applies to this project. Subsection E requires landscaping between parking areas (of five or more vehicles) and the street that includes a tree and protecting curb, which is generally already provided on the property, but the proposed sign doesn't intensify the existing development such that any upgrades or changes are required. However, the applicants do plan on redoing some of the landscaping in the planter where the sign will be in order to compliment the new sign.

DESIGN REVIEW / VIEW PROTECTION FINDINGS:

Because the project is located within the Coastal Zone and alters the external profile and / or appearance of some structures on the property, §17.60.030 of the Zoning Ordinance requires Design Review and View Protection Findings to be made as well as approval of a Coastal Development Permit. Application materials show the proposed changes and provide a rationale for them. Recommended Design Review / View Preservation Findings are written in a manner to allow approval, without endorsing the project. However, if public hearing information is submitted or public comment received indicating that views, for instance, may be significantly impacted, or the structure proposed is obtrusive, the findings should be reworded accordingly.

Design Review Criteria

- A. *The alteration of natural landforms caused by cutting, filling, and grading shall be minimal. Structures should be designed to fit the site rather than altering the landform to accommodate the structure.* Response: Minimal grading is required for the proposed project.

- B. *Structures in or adjacent to open space areas should be constructed of materials that reproduce natural colors and textures as closely as possible.* Response: The project is not in or adjacent to any open space areas.
- C. *Materials and colors used in construction shall be selected for the compatibility both with the structural system of the building and with the appearance of the building's natural and man-made surroundings. Preset architectural styles (e.g. standard fast food restaurant designs) shall be avoided.* Response: The proposed sign will be custom made with natural materials such as drift wood, redwood logs, rope and metal highlights in order to blend with the forest and seaside nature of the community.
- D. *Plant materials should be used to integrate the manmade and natural environments to screen or soften the visual impact of new development, and to provide diversity in developed areas. Attractive vegetation common to the area shall be used.* Response: No new landscaping is required for the project. The applicants will alter the existing landscaping in order to compliment the new sign.
- E. *On-premise signs should be designed as an integral part of the structure and should complement or enhance the appearance of new development.* Response The proposed sign will be custom made with natural materials such as drift wood, redwood logs, rope and metal highlights in order to blend with the forest and seaside nature of the community.
- F. *New development should include underground utility service connections. When above ground facilities are the only alternative, they should follow the least visible route, be well designed, simple and unobtrusive in appearance, have a minimum of bulk and make use of compatible colors and materials.* Response: Underground utilities are already provided to the site.
- G. *Off-premise signs needed to direct visitors to commercial establishments, as allowed herein, should be well designed and be clustered at appropriate locations. Sign clusters should be a single design theme.* Response: No off-premise signs are associated with this project.
- H. *When reviewing the design of commercial or residential buildings, the committee shall ensure that the scale, bulk, orientation, architectural character of the structure and related improvements are compatible with the rural, uncrowded, rustic, unsophisticated, small, casual open character of the community. In particular:*
- 1. Residences of more than two thousand square feet in floor area and multiple family dwellings or commercial buildings of more than four thousand square feet in floor area shall be considered out of scale with the community unless they are designed and situated in such a way that their bulk is not obtrusive.*
 - 2. Residential and commercial developments involving multiple dwelling or business units should utilize clusters of smaller structures with sufficient open space between them instead of a consolidated structure.*
- This project does not involve any new buildings.

View Protection

- A. *Structures visible from the beach or a public trail in an open space area should be made as visually unobtrusive as possible.* Response: The project site is not readily visible from a beach, trail or open space area.
- B. *Structures, including fences over three feet high and signs, and landscaping of new development, shall not be allowed to significantly block views of the harbor, Little Trinidad Head, Trinidad Head or the ocean from public roads, trails, and vista points, except as provided in subdivision 3 of this subsection.* Response: The proposed project will not alter the external profile of any structures except for the marquee sign, which will be replaced with a smaller, lower sign.
- C. *The committee shall recognize that owners of vacant lots in the SR and UR zones, which are otherwise suitable for construction of a residence, are entitled to construct a residence of at least fifteen feet in height and one thousand five hundred square feet in floor area, residences of greater height as permitted in the applicable zone, or greater floor area shall not be allowed if such residence would significantly block views identified in subdivision 2 of this subsection. Regardless of the height or floor area of the residence, the committee, in order to avoid significant obstruction of the important views, may require, where feasible, that the residence be limited to one story; be located anywhere on the lot even if this involves the reduction or elimination of required yards or the pumping of septic tank wastewater to an uphill leach field, or the use of some other type of wastewater treatment facility; and adjust the length-width-height relationship and orientation of the structure so that it prevents the least possible view obstruction.* Response: The proposed project will not alter the external profile of any buildings.
- D. *If a residence is removed or destroyed by fire or other means on a lot that is otherwise usable, the owner shall be entitled to construct a residence in the same location with an exterior profile not exceeding that of the previous residence even if such a structure would again significantly obstruct public views of important scenes, provided any other nonconforming conditions are corrected.* Response: There was no residence that was destroyed by fire associated with this project.
- E. The Tsurai Village site, the Trinidad Cemetery, the Holy Trinity Church and the Memorial Lighthouse are important historic resources. Any landform alterations or structural construction within one hundred feet of the Tsurai Study Area, as defined in the Trinidad general plan, or within one hundred feet of the lots on which identified historical resources are located shall be reviewed to ensure that public views are not obstructed and that development does not crowd them and thereby reduce their distinctiveness or subject them to abuse or hazards. Response: *The proposed project is not within 100 feet of the Trinidad Cemetery, Holy Trinity Church, Memorial Lighthouse or the Tsurai Study Area.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The project is consistent with the City's Zoning Ordinance and General Plan as well as the Coastal Act, and the necessary findings for granting approval of the project can be made. Should the Planning Commission find that the project is constant with all of the above provisions as described in this staff report, then staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the project with a motion similar to the following:

Based on application materials, information and findings included in this Staff Report, and based on public testimony, I find that the proposed project is consistent with the City's certified LCP, and I move to make the required Design Review findings and approve the project as submitted and described herein and as conditioned below.

PLANNING COMMISSION ALTERNATIVES:

If the Planning Commission does not agree with staff's analysis, or if information is presented during the hearing that conflicts with the information contained in the staff report, the Planning Commission has several alternatives.

- A. Add conditions of approval to address any specific concerns on the part of the Commission or the public.
- B. Delay action / continue the hearing to obtain further information.
 - In this case, the Planning Commission should specify any additional information required from staff or the applicant and / or suggestions on how to modify the project and / or conditions of approval.
- C. Denial of the project.
 - The Planning Commission should provide a motion that identifies the Finding(s) that can not be made and giving the reasons for the inability to make said Finding(s).

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. The applicant is responsible for reimbursing the City for all costs associated with processing the application. *Responsibility: City Clerk to place receipt in conditions compliance folder prior to building permits being issued.*
2. Based on the findings that community values may change in a year's time, design review approval is for a 1 year period starting at the effective date and expiring thereafter unless an extension is requested from the Planning Commission prior to that time. *Responsibility: City Clerk to verify prior to building permits being issued.*
3. The applicant shall ensure that the sign is a minimum of 15 ft. from where the driveway crosses the property line. *Responsibility: Building Official to confirm at time of building permit issuance.*

December 12, 2014

RECEIVED DEC 17 2014

Trinidad Planning Commission
City of Trinidad

Dear Commission,

For some time now, a number of Trinidad citizens have expressed an interest in making Trinidad an even more beautiful place by looking at how all the signs around town impact the experience of the residents and citizens alike. They have pointed out the impact of the number of signs, the age and beauty of signs, the non-compliance of some signs to existing ordinances, the impact of some signs on our beautiful views, and even the ability of some signs to divide the community over long-standing conflicts. We appreciate all the work that these folks have done to raise this awareness and would like to join in the effort to beautify our City while still balancing the need for our local businesses to attract customers to their store fronts.

One of the largest, if not the largest, sign in the City is the Murphy's marquee. There are a number of problems with this sign. It is aging, outdated, and let's face it, plain ugly. The biggest problem however, is one that may not be obvious to someone who has driven by it multiple times per day for decades. The problem is that as folks come down into Trinidad from the freeway this signs blocks a significant portion of the view of Trinidad Head. Once this is pointed out to someone, it's hard not to be startled by the impact.

We would like to offer our contribution to improving signage in town by proposing the attached design for a new sign which we think solves most if not all of the problems with the existing marquee. The design is by Richard Betournay of Expo Art, one of the most respected sign designers in Humboldt County. It consists of a combined nautical/forest theme of old growth redwood, thick nautical rope and subtle metal highlights. The height will be at or below the height of the current bus stop and the view to Trinidad Head restored. At the same time, it will clearly identify businesses in the shopping center. Landscaping will be redone to further highlight and compliment the new sign. Richard will be available to answer questions and explain features that cannot be captured on the drawing.

As far as the sign approval process goes, we do have one request. We would like to tie the approval of this new sign in with the current compliance review of all signs on our properties. In other words, let's please review all the signs in the plaza and other Saunders' properties together including this one as a package deal. We are as interested as everyone in balancing both the beauty of Trinidad and the viability of our tenant's businesses.

Sincerely,

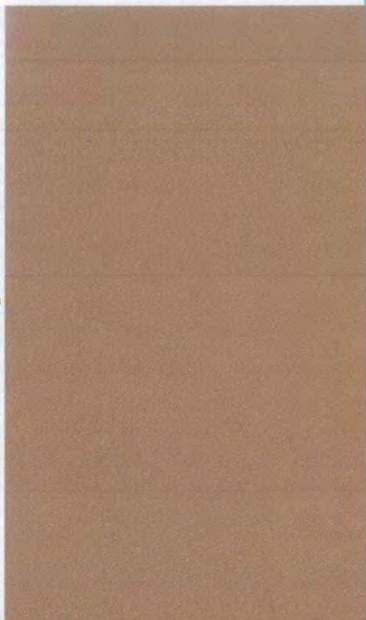


Gail L. Saunders
Steven W. Saunders
GLS Properties, LLC

EXISTING SIGN



Bus Stop area

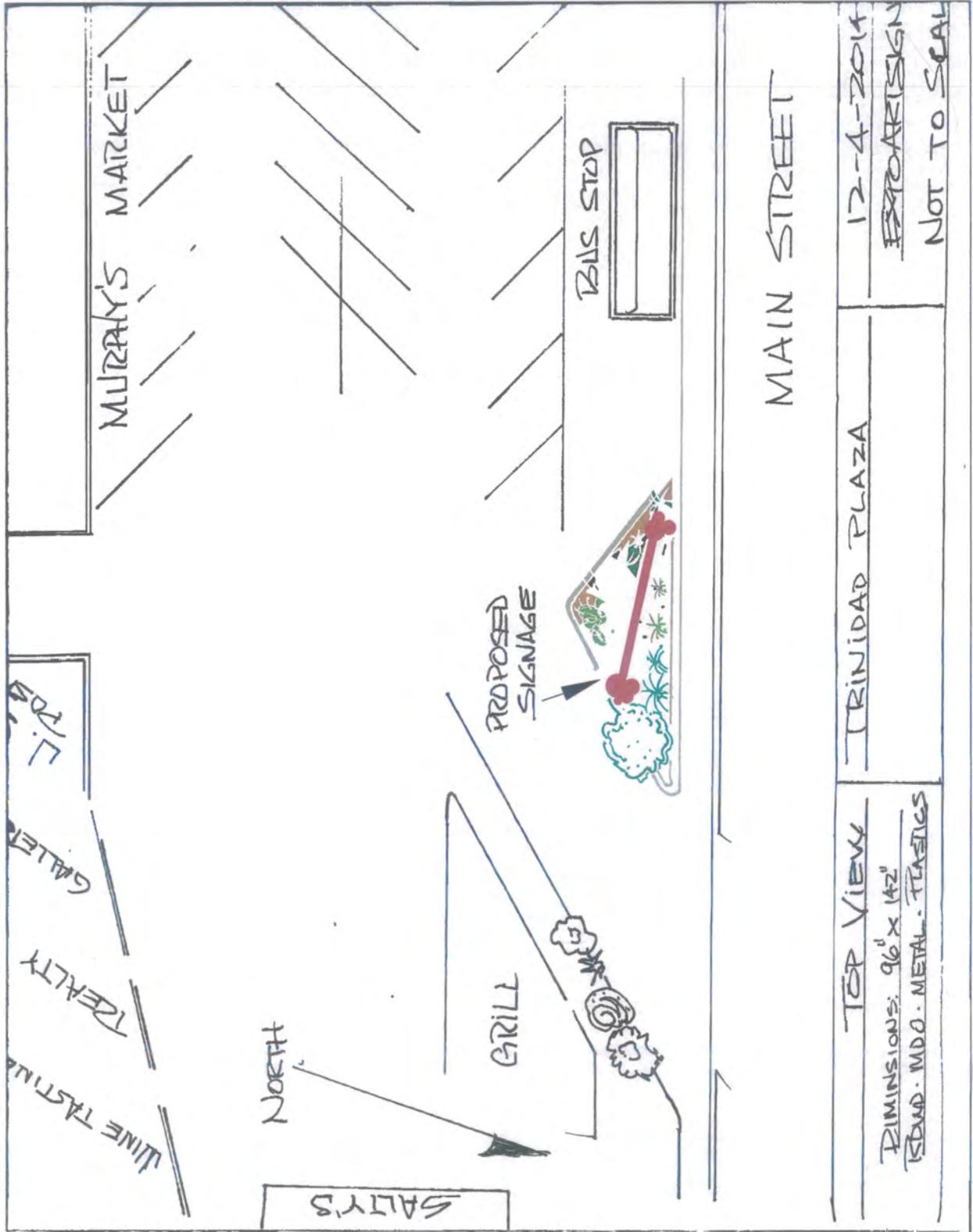


old redwood post in ground

1x4 (small squares)

96 wide (-100)
X 60-70

48.6 s.f.



LINE TASTING
 REALTY
 GALETTA
 L. TRS.

MURRAY'S MARKET

NORTH

SALTY'S

GRILL

PROPOSED SIGNAGE

BUS STOP

MAIN STREET

TOP VIEW	TRINIDAD PLAZA	12-4-2014
DIMENSIONS: 96" x 142"		EXPO DESIGN
ISLAND - MDO - METAL - FINISHES		NOT TO SCALE

DISCUSSION/ACTION AGENDA

Date: August 13, 2014

Item: Consider a partial fee waiver for sign permitting at Murphy's Center

Background: There is considerable interest in working toward consistent application of the city's sign rules and regulations, and funds have been budgeted in fiscal year 2014-15 to work toward such compliance. The Building Inspector will be tasked with creating an inventory of signs, and staff will work toward bringing signs into compliance and/or removing those that are non-permitted. Some of the signs have been in existence for some time, and it is important that the city work cooperatively with its valued businesses toward the goal of permit consistency.

Although the marquee at Murphy's is beneficial in that it is used for community announcements, and the folks at Murphy's have been wonderfully cooperative about including information to announce community events on the marquee, there are some who object to the sign's obstruction of the view of Trinidad Head at the entry to town. Although the marquee is a permitted sign, there are a number of other signs within Murphy's center that have been placed without benefit of a permit. With limited exceptions, most signs are only permitted subject to specific regulations and review and approval by the City's Planning Commission.

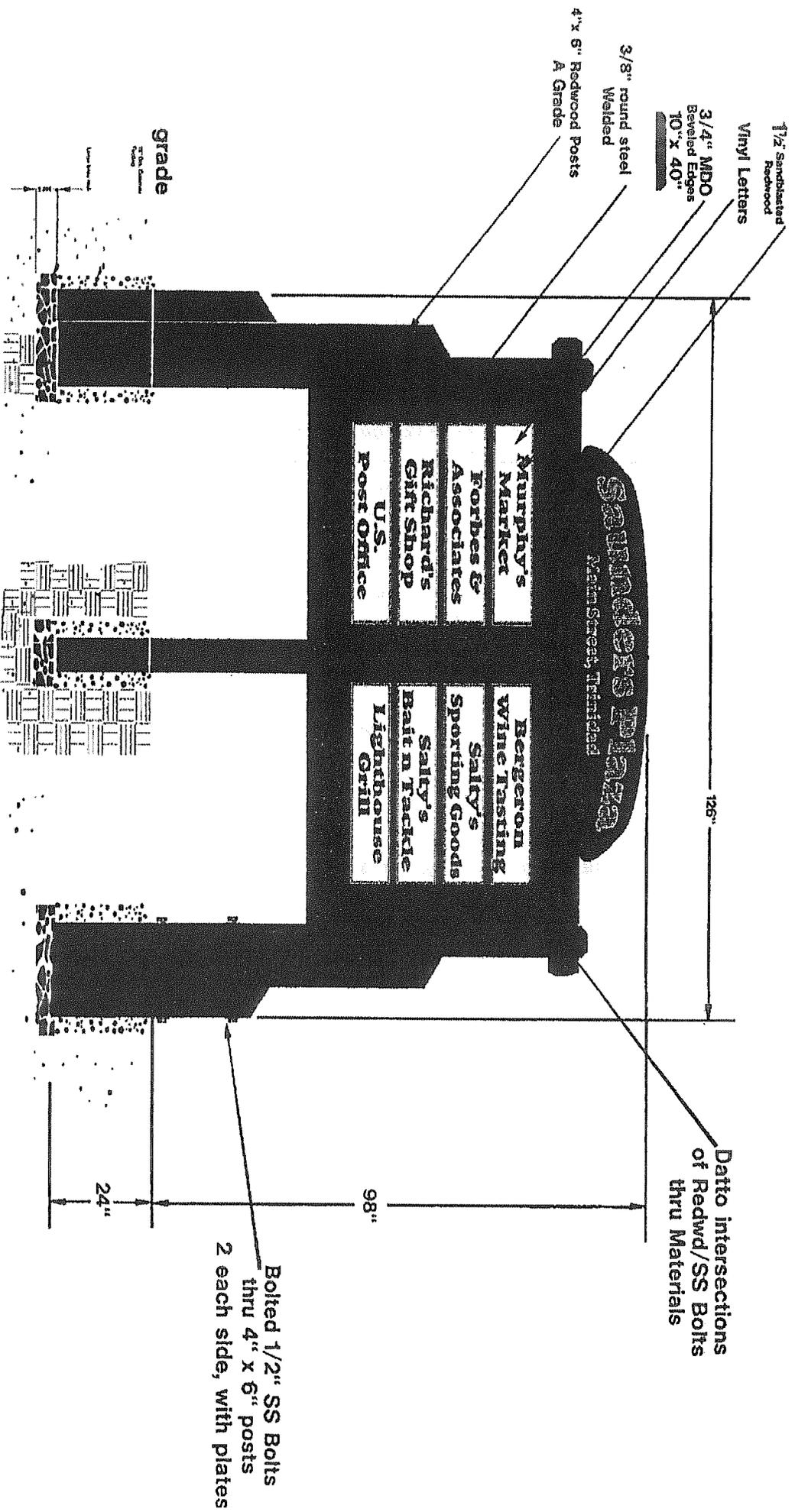
The Saunders family is proposing to remove the marquee and work with the tenants on existing signs (and new proposed signs) to bring the center into sign compliance. The family has already met with the tenants and is working on the design of a new and lower (non-view obstructing) wooden sign that would list the business names, and at the same time identifying "Saunders Plaza" on the new sign.

Because the marquee is a permitted sign, a partial fee waiver is recommended to be considered for city costs (primarily Planner costs) involved in permitting the new sign. Our normal process would be to collect a \$750 deposit up front, with actual costs accumulated and the difference either billed or refunded to the applicant. A cost share to remove and replace a permitted sign is suggested at 75% city/ 25% applicant. In exchange, the applicant would remove the marquee, and will work with the center's business owners to bring all center signs into compliance with the city's municipal code.

Proposed Action: Approve a 75% sign permit fee waiver (applicant to pay 25% of costs) to remove and replace the permitted sign at Murphy's.

Attachments:

1. Sign proposal to be submitted for Planning Commission Review
2. Trinidad Municipal Code section 17.56.160 pertaining to permitted signs



1 1/2" Sandblasted Redwood
Vinyl Letters

3/4" MDO
Beveled Edges
10" x 40"

3/8" round steel
Welded

4" x 6" Redwood Posts
A Grade

126"

Datto intersections
of Redwd/SS Bolts
thru Materials

Murphy's
Market

Forbes &
Associates

Richard's
Gift Shop

U.S.
Post Office

Bergeron
Wine Tasting

Salty's
Sporting Goods

Salty's
Bait n Tackle

Lighthouse
Grill

98"

Bolted 1/2" SS Bolts
thru 4" x 6" posts
2 each side, with plates

24"

grade



←
438 Main St
Trinidad, California
Street View - Jun 2012

MARKET & DELI
FRESH MEATS & PRODUCE
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
CHICKEN BREASTS \$14.99 LB
BONELESS PORK CHOPS \$12.99 LB
ORGANIC WRAPPERS \$11.99
DIVERSE ICE CREAM \$1.99

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