



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning Commission **DATE:** February 12, 2025

DEPARTMENT: Community Development Department

PREPARED BY: Sarah Peters, Assistant Planner

PRESENTER: Sarah Peters, Assistant Planner

AGENDA TITLE: Receive Report and Consider Approval of Sign Permit 2-24 (SP 2-24) for New Signage at Eel River Fuels Gas Station, 105 South Main Street

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of sign permit SP 2-24 as conditioned and based on the findings for approval.

BACKGROUND

In 2022 a code enforcement letter was sent to the former property owner regarding the gas station canopy at 105 S. Main Street, which was damaged in a windstorm (see aerial view of site and canopy photo below). The property has since been acquired by a new owner, who wishes to substantially remodel the convenience store, replace the gas station canopy with a larger canopy, and rebrand the gas station.

Figure 1 –Aerial View of Eel River Fuels at Oak and Main Streets



Figure 2: Photo illustrating damaged canopy



On April 10, 2024, Planning Commission approved a project to remodel the existing 1,536 SF convenience store with an addition of 447 SF into a 1,809 SF convenience store; install 660 SF of new landscaped area; replace and expand the existing gas station canopy; and replace existing gas dispensing units located at 105 South Main Street. At that time, the applicant had not yet contracted with a franchise, so complete information on new and replacement signage was not available for review. Therefore, during the hearing, direction was given that a completed sign permit application be brought back to Planning Commission for review and a decision.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Applicant has chosen Gulf Oil as their franchise, and proposes to install signage on the North, South and East facing sides of the canopy; replace each of the existing gas dispensing unit valances with the Gulf brand signage; and replace the existing nonconforming monument sign with a rebranded monument sign that is more conforming in height. The primary proposed colors are Gulf Orange, Gulf Blue and Gulf White. See proposed sign plan attached.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The approval of a sign permit shall require the Planning Commission to first establish a basis for the findings listed in CLUDC Section 18.38.030.D. The applicant proposes to install three new signs as follows: Two 19.24 SF signs on the canopy and reuse of the existing monument sign at the corner of Main and Oak Streets. CLUDC Chapter 17.38.060 outlines general sign standards and 17.38.070 outlines standards for each zone and sign type.

Height. The canopy signs meet all requirements regarding height as they are below the roof line of the canopy as required by CLUDC 17.38.070.B, Table 3-12.

The existing monument sign is of non-conforming height at 12 feet, and is built with wood beams reflecting the timber culture of the area. The size of the sign face, excluding prices, would be 14.46 square feet.

This application proposes to use existing platform and framing, and reface the freestanding sign with the new Gulf branding. The sign height will be reduced from its non-conforming height of 12 feet, to a more conforming height of 10 feet to meet the requirements for a non-conforming monument sign.

Figure 3 – Existing and Proposed Freestanding Monument Signs

C

MID Sign Visuals



Existing: Side 2



Proposed: Side 2



Existing: Side 4



Proposed: Side 4



Existing: Side 3



Proposed: Side 3

THIS IS NOT AN INSTALLATION GUIDE

Permit Pack
BIG RED ROOSTER FLOW
 7 Northfield Plaza, Ste 250
 Northfield, IL 60093
 P: (847) 441-1818 F: (847) 592-9568

Facility #	Date	Customer	Created by	Revision #	Page #
92067932	02_03_2025	Van De Pol Enterprises, Inc	B.DIGHERO	R11	7 OF 12

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The Planning Commission can pre-approve the proposed sign height change as a reduction in non-conforming status so long as the following specific findings can be made, per Section 17.38.090(B) of the Coastal Land Use and Development Code.

1. The new proposed sign is significantly more conforming in height and/or area than the existing sign.
2. By approving the new sign, the exception will eliminate the existing nonconforming sign.
3. The non-conforming sign shall be brought into conformance with the sign ordinance within five years of the application date.

These findings can be made as a new sign would be non-conforming in height, but it would be more conforming than the existing sign, and the non-conforming sign will be brought into

conformance with the sign ordinance within five years of the application date. The Planning Commission could adopt **Special Condition 1** to define the final height of the Monument Sign.

Special Condition 1. The Monument Sign shall be limited to 10 feet in height, and the non-conforming sign will be brought into conformance with the sign ordinance within five years of the application date.

Alternatively, the Planning Commission could deny the exception to the height limitation requirement or require a different height.

Monument Sign Illumination. The proposed monument sign would be internally illuminated. Design guidelines for internally illuminated signs require the following:

“Monument signs may be internally illuminated; however, the sign copy shall be the only portion of the sign face that is illuminated. The sign background or field shall be opaque with a non-gloss, non-reflective finish.”

Therefore, **Special Condition 2** is recommended, as applied to the sign face. Per 17.38.040.E.5 of the sign code, service station price signs required by State law are exempt from the City’s sign permit requirements, thus are not considered part of the sign face.

Special Condition 2. The face of the monument sign shall include internal illumination only of the sign copy and logo.

Sign Location. The proposed locations for signs conform with requirements. The proposed monument sign would be located in the same location as the current monument sign, which does not conform with the minimum 20-foot setback from the curb for the traffic safety visibility area but is a pre-existing non-conforming sign. Staff referred this project to Public Works and they requested that the applicant consider sign modifications to make it more compliant with the traffic safety visibility codes, which could be done by removing the non-load-bearing wood paneling on the bottom of the sign on both sides to create a visibility window. They also recommended that applicant eliminate the cash price column (and post this information elsewhere) or otherwise narrow the sign width in order to create additional view windows on each side of the sign to increase pedestrian safety.

After discussion with staff, Applicant amended the proposed monument sign to include removal of the wood paneling (see Figure 4 below) to improve visibility. Planning Commission could elect to impose **Optional Special Condition 3** to remove the cash prices column from the monument sign to create room for view windows on each side of the sign which would also increase traffic visibility safety at this intersection.

Optional Special Condition 3. The freestanding monument sign width shall be sufficiently decreased to increase through visibility on either side of the sign between frame and sign face.

Color. The proposed canopy signage complies with the Citywide Design Guideline sign standards as described below:

1. The canopy signs have been “designed to relate to the architectural features of the building on which they are located.” The sign design relates to the utilitarian architectural features of the canopy and store.
2. The proposed canopy signs may be seen to “coordinate with the building design, materials, color, size, and placement” as illustrated in the visual simulation as shown in Figure 4. The blue color on the Gulf discs coordinates with both the blue and grey of the store entrance.

However, the large amount of bright orange signage is not entirely in keeping with the Design Guidelines, which state that “Colors west of Highway 1 should recede in the view shed or be subordinate to the view shed... in the coastal zone, color palette should focus on earth tone colors. Bright and sharply contrasting colors should be avoided.”

Figure 4 – Partial East Elevation of Approved Store Colors, Proposed Sign Plan



The Planning Commission has the option to require an amendment to colors and/or color ratios. For example, the orange panels on the canopy could be entirely, or in part, replaced with the Gulf Blue, Gulf White, or one of the Gulf Grays shown in the Gulf Oil color palette, This would be more consistent with the Design Guidelines, while still allowing use of the existing orange in the two canopy Gulf discs, the monument sign, all of the dispenser valances, and canopy posts. To that end, **Optional Special Condition 4** is included for consideration.

Special Condition 4. Applicant shall submit an amended sign plan that replaces some or all of the orange canopy panels with color design more in keeping with the Design Guidelines, as approved by the Director.

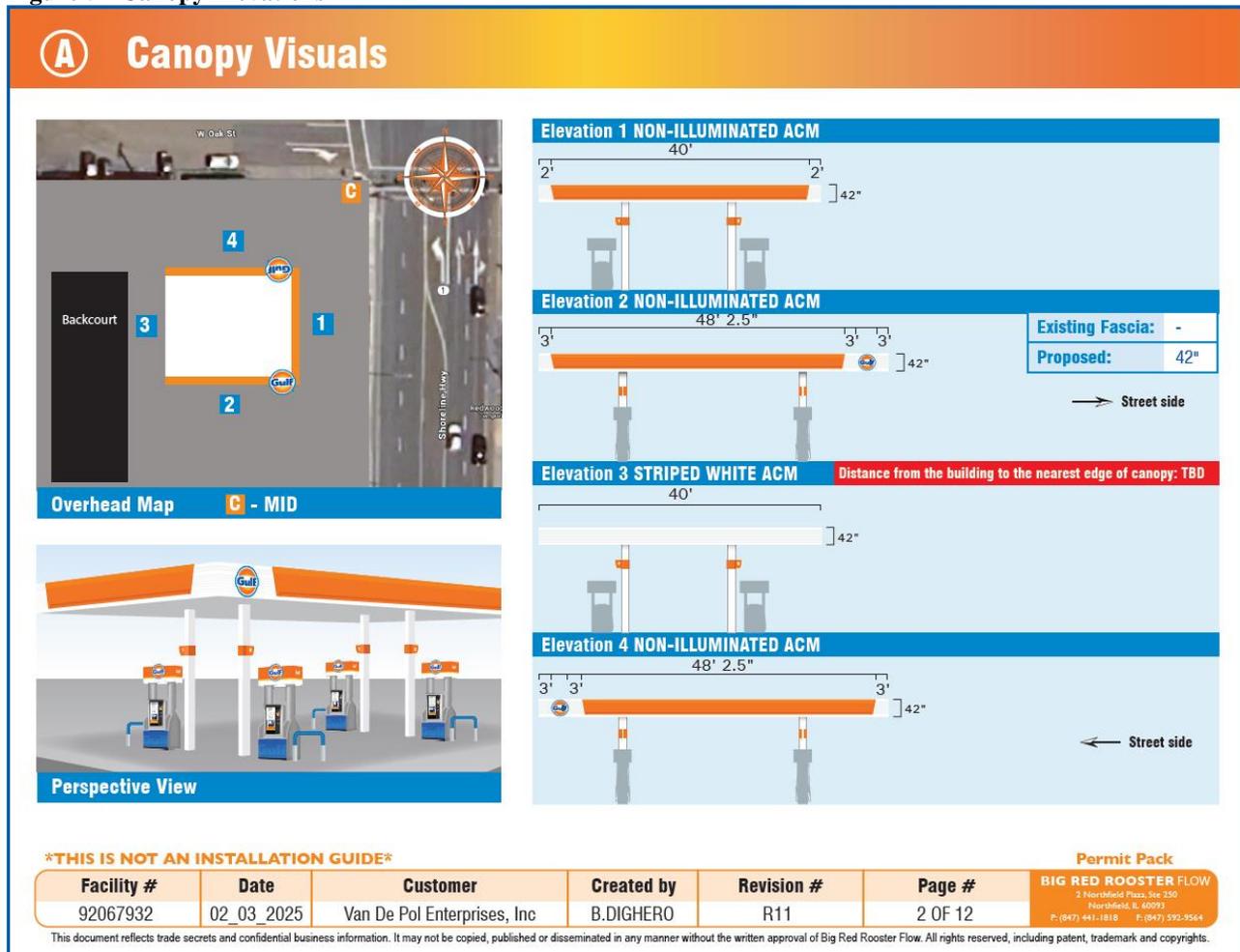
Legibility. The proposed signage also complies with sign legibility preferred standards with regard to:

- Providing a brief message
- Avoiding faddish and bizarre typefaces
- Using significant contrast
- Using easy to read lettering styles

Placement. The project complies with the Citywide Design Guideline sign placement mandatory standards as described below:

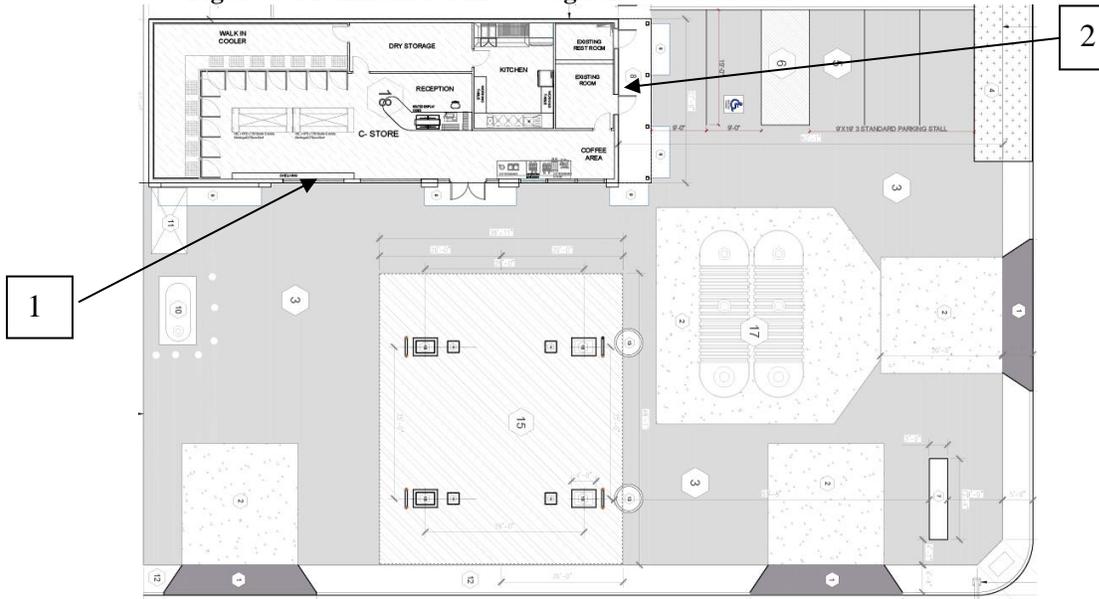
1. The project’s canopy signs do “not project above the edge of the rooflines” or “obstruct windows and/or doorways”
2. The location and extent of the signs will “not obstruct scenic views.”

Figure 5 - Canopy Elevations



Maximum Sign Area. Table 3-12 of the CLUDC outlines sign standards and allows maximum sign areas based on building frontage. The subject building will have a frontage of 77 linear feet on Main Street, and 27 linear feet of secondary frontage on Oak Street, permitting a maximum of 65 square feet of total signage (see Figure 6 and 7).

Figure 6: Maximum Permitted Sign Area Calculation



This application proposes a total of 58.26 square feet of total signage, in compliance with the CLUDC (see Figure 8). The proposed monument sign would be 14.46 SF total (only one face of each double sided sign is counted towards the total allowable square footage) which complied with the sign code. The dispenser valances and door skirts would be 43.8 SF for a total proposed square footage of 58.26 SF. Gulf discs on canopy were not included in the overall sign square footage, as the City has not been in the practice of including branded logos in overall signage calculations.

Figure 7 - Total Square Footage Allowance Calculation

Dimension	Frontage Type	Length	Multiplier	Square Footage Allowance
1	Primary	77	.66	51
2	Secondary	27	.50	14
Total Permitted Square Footage				65

Figure 8 - Total Proposed

Sign	Square Feet
Freestanding sign	14.46
Dispenser Valances	16.76
Door Skirts	27.04
TOTAL:	58.26

Monument Sign. The monument sign complies with the other requirements of the Design Guidelines, as follows:

- It is “placed perpendicular to the street.”
- It is “placed so that sight lines at entry driveways, pedestrian throughways, and circulation aisles are not blocked.”
- It provides “architectural elements on the sides and top to frame the sign pane(s).”
- It incorporates materials and colors are “compatible with materials and colors of the development the sign serves.”
- It is in “scale with its adjacent building.”
- It “incorporates landscaping at the Sign Base.”

As conditioned, the proposed signage is consistent with the City’s Design Guidelines.

FISCAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE

Privately funded, no fiscal impact to City.

STRATEGIC PLAN/COUNCIL PRIORITIES/GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

As conditioned, this project would be consistent with the Design Guidelines for colors/signs.

ALTERNATIVES

See discussion above.

STANDARD CONDITIONS

1. This action shall become final on the 11th day following the decision unless an appeal to the City Council is filed pursuant to CLUDC Chapter 17.92 - Appeals.
2. The use and occupancy of the premises shall be established and maintained in conformance with the requirements of this permit and all applicable provisions of the CLUDC.
3. The application, along with supplemental exhibits and related material, shall be considered elements of this permit, and compliance therewith is mandatory, unless an amendment has been approved by the City.
4. This permit shall be subject to the securing of all necessary permits for the proposed development from City, County, State, and Federal agencies having jurisdiction. All plans submitted with the required permit applications shall be consistent with this approval. All construction shall be consistent with all Building, Fire, and Health code considerations as well as other applicable agency codes.
5. The applicant shall secure all required building permits for the proposed project as required by the Mendocino County Building Department.
6. If any person excavating or otherwise disturbing the earth discovers any archaeological site during project construction, the following actions shall be taken: 1) cease and desist from all further excavation and disturbances within 25 feet of the discovery; 2) notify the Fort Bragg Community Development Department within 24 hours of the discovery; and

- 3) retain a professional archaeologist to determine appropriate action in consultation with stakeholders such as Native American groups that have ties to the area.
7. This permit shall be subject to revocation or modification upon a finding of any one or more of the following:
- (a) That such permit was obtained or extended by fraud.
 - (b) That one or more of the conditions upon which such permit was granted have been violated.
 - (c) That the use for which the permit was granted is so conducted as to be detrimental to the public health, welfare, or safety or as to be a nuisance.
 - (d) A final judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction has declared one or more conditions to be void or ineffective, or has enjoined or otherwise prohibited the enforcement or operation of one or more conditions.
8. Unless a condition of approval or other provision of the Coastal Land Use and Development Code establishes a different time limit, any permit or approval not exercised within 24 months of approval shall expire and become void, except where an extension of time is approved in compliance with CLUDC Subsection 17.76.070 (B).

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

1. The Monument Sign shall be limited to 10 feet in height, and the non-conforming sign will be brought into conformance with the sign ordinance within five years of the application date.
2. The face of the monument sign shall include internal illumination only of the sign copy and logo.
3. The freestanding monument sign width shall be sufficiently decreased to increase through-visibility on either side of the sign between frame and sign face.
4. Applicant shall submit an amended sign plan that replaces some or all of the orange canopy panels with color design more in keeping with the Design Guidelines, as approved by the Director.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Application
2. Site Plan
3. Sign Plan

NOTIFICATIONS

Applicant Agent:
McHale Sign Company
3707 Electro Way
Redding, CA 96002

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