



**COUNTY OF MENDOCINO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES**  
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**POLICY REGARDING COMMERCIAL SIGN EXEMPTIONS IN THE TOWN OF MENDOCINO**

**PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:** Consistent with MCC Section 20.760.040, provide guidance for Department approval of changes to commercial signs located within the Town of Mendocino. Pursuant to MCC Section 20.760.040(H), copy changes on legally existing signs are exempt from MCC Chapter 20.760 provided that the Department finds that the change:

- (1) Conforms to sign size and design standards contained in MCC Chapters 20.760 and MCC 20.712, and
- (2) Is similar in color and design to the original sign
- (3) Is not larger than the original sign, and
- (4) Is in the same location on the property as the original sign.

In June of 2021, a memorandum summarized the Review Board's guidance about sign regulations and exemptions. At that time, the Review Board asked that Staff revise the traditional condition limiting sign copy changes that had been often adopted with MHRB permits. In March 2023, the Review Board requested a policy. In June 2023, the Review Board re-interpreted the June 2021 memorandum and determined that when a business ceases or relocates, the approved sign permit remains valid and may be allowed to have the sign copy changed. And further, a copy change to an existing sign may be a copy change to any previously existing sign that was permitted in the same location on the property and is not limited to the most recently issued MHRB permit.

**GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND AUTHORITY:** Coastal Element Chapter 4.13, Mendocino Town Plan, Subsection 4.3, includes Policy DG-1 which states, "All new development shall be designed to be compatible with the historical design character of the Town;" and Actions DG 1.1, 1.3, and 1.4. Coastal Element Chapter 4.13 Appendix 7, Section VIII, provides guidelines specific to signs and lighting. MCC Section 20.712.005 states the intent of sign regulations is to "encourage signs that are a quality design, pleasing in appearance and appropriate in size, materials and illumination to the activity to which they pertain."

The authority for this procedure is contained in MCC Chapter 20.760. MCC Section 20.760.030(F) *et seq* lists when work in the Historic District requires prior approval from the Review Board; for example, an MHRB Permit is required for construction, erection, installation, relocation or alteration of any outdoor advertising sign, whether lighted or unlighted, including new sign copy (except as exempted in Section 20.760.040), and any indoor commercial self-contained lighted sign which is visible from a walkway normally used by the public. And MCC Section 20.760.040 establishes an exemption specific to commercial signs.

**PLAN:** Businessowners are encouraged to leverage local sign regulations and sign exemptions, and are obliged to adhere to existing MHRB Permit conditions or obtain a new MHRB Permit. At the Review Board's direction and when appropriate, Staff suggests the following conditions instead:

- Replacement signs shall be the same shape and size, and similar in color, brightness, tone, and hue. Fluorescent, metallic, iridescent, or otherwise "modern" colors shall be avoided. Replacement signs shall be in the same location on the property.
- Alterations or copy changes to approved signs shall be brought to the attention of Planning & Building Services prior to any changes.

**PROCEDURE.** Prior to sign alterations or copy changes on legally existing signs, businessowners or their agent will provide PBS with (1) a site plan showing the location of the sign and (2) an 8x11 color rendering of the proposed sign. The rendering shall identify the sign colors, size, shape, and copy. Planning staff will determine whether the proposal satisfies regulations, or conflicts with MHRB Permit Conditions, and is consistent with MCC Section 20.760.040 Exemptions and determine if a MHRB permit is required. If it is deemed MHRB review is not required, Staff shall approve the 8x11 rendering within 3 business days (excluding weekends). Said rendering shall be kept on file.

Policy Initiated By: Mendocino Historical Review Board.

Policy Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair Ian Roth, Mendocino Historical Review Board

Date: 11/6/23

Policy Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Director Julia Krog, Planning and Building Services

Date: 11/2/2023