



CITY OF ATASCADERO

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING

NOTICE OF ACTION

Item: 3
 Department: Community Development
 Date: 08/03/26

TO: Phil Dunsmore, Administrative Hearing Officer
FROM: Kelly Gleason, Planning Manager
PREPARED BY: Samantha Cabrera, Planning Intern

SUBJECT: USE26-0050 Momotaro Ramen Commercial Sign

RECOMMENDATION:

The Administrative Hearing Officer approve Administrative Use Permit USE26-0050, allowing the installation of a 564 SF commercial painted wall sign, in addition to the allowed signage, at 6405 El Camino Real Unit A (APN 029-344-009), based on findings and subject to conditions of approval.

DISCUSSION:

PROJECT SUMMARY

The applicant, The Equality Mural Project, requests a painted wall sign installation to allow a 564 SF painted sign at 6405 El Camino Real Unit A. The subject property is a one-story building on a 0.061-acre lot in the Downtown Commercial (DC) zone, with Momotaro Ramen occupying Unit A. The sign was initially proposed as a mural; however, the depicted image portrays ingredients traditionally used in Asian cuisine. The combination of these ingredients and the current commercial tenant (Momotaro Ramen) is consistent with commercial signage as it communicates the nature of the business. The application for a painted wall sign does not include signage for the restaurant. The sign will be painted on a parking lot-facing façade of the existing building.

ANALYSIS

The existing building has a 16' frontage along El Camino Real and approximately 60' side façade facing the adjacent property's commercial parking lot. Signs, such as projecting signs and painted wall signs, are permitted within the DC zone, with one allowed per building face with a public street frontage or parking lot not exceeding one SF per lineal foot of building frontage, up to 50 SF, or whichever is less. Because the proposed mural was determined to contain content that could be associated with the restaurant, the mural is considered a sign and therefore, the size standards are exceeded.

The applicant is proposing a 47'x 12' painted wall sign, on the side façade facing the commercial parking lot. The proposed painted wall sign contains a light grey background, geometric elements, and a collage of multi-colored fresh food ingredients, such as bok choy, green onions, and shrimp that are inspired by Asian cuisine, depicted in Attachment 2.

The property does not have an existing commercial sign, and the applicant has not applied for a sign. Based on City standards, a wall sign on the street-oriented face of this building would be limited to 50 SF. The subject sign measures 564 SF, exceeding Municipal Code standards by 514 SF. Conditions have been included to allow Momotaro Ramen to apply for a sign without

encumbrance of this approval. Condition #2 allows the business to install a maximum 50 SF sign facing El Camino Real, consistent with City code.

The Atascadero Municipal Code (AMC) allows design and size exceptions for signs with approval of an AUP and are subject to the findings below.

FINDINGS:

1. **FINDING:** Modification of the applicable standard will not result in a project that is inconsistent with the General Plan;
FACT: The project is consistent with the 2025 General Plan Goal LOC 4 to create a strong and distinct downtown area. The elements of the painted wall sign will provide a distinct feature and assist in enhancing the character of Downtown.
2. **FINDING:** Modification of the applicable standard will not result in a project that is inconsistent with the immediate neighborhood or contrary to its orderly development;
FACT: The project is consistent with development of the immediate neighborhood as it assists in improving and maintaining the aesthetics of the City's downtown area.
3. **FINDING:** Modification of the applicable standard will not result in a project that is not in compliance with any pertinent City policy or criteria adopted by ordinance or resolution of the City Council;
FACT: The project, as conditioned, will not conflict with any applicable City policy or criteria and is consistent with all applicable provisions of the Atascadero Municipal Code.
4. **FINDING:** Modification of the applicable standard will not result in the authorization of a use not otherwise allowed;
FACT: No new or modified uses are proposed
5. **FINDING:** The sign is consistent with the purposes set forth in the Section 9-15.002 ("Intent");
FACT: The sign is consistent with the intent of the Sign Ordinance. It is reasonable in size and placement and is not designed to be unduly distracting or obstructive.
6. **FINDING:** The opportunity to combine signs for more than one use on a single sign structure has been considered.
FACT: The sign is not a sign structure.
7. **FINDING:** The sign conforms with all other applicable standards and ordinances of the City, including, but not limited to, the Zoning Ordinance, the General Plan and its several elements, and the appearance review guidelines.
FACT: The proposed sign complies with all other applicable codes and ordinances of the City.
8. **FINDING:** The size, location, and/or medium used will not pose any safety risks to drivers
FACT: The project will be located on the side façade facing the adjacent property's commercial parking lot. It will be visible when traveling south on El Camino Real towards Downtown and no reflective media or otherwise distracting elements are proposed. The size and location do not pose a safety risk to drivers.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The proposed project qualifies for a Class 11 categorical exemption from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code §§ 21000, et seq., "CEQA") and CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations §§ 15000, et seq.) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15311, which exempts the installation of accessory signs on existing commercial facilities.

CONCLUSION:

The request to allow the installation of a 564 SF painted wall sign meets the intent of the code and all applicable City standards. The sign is compatible with the commercial nature of the downtown zone.

CONDITIONS:

1. The approval of Administrative Use Permit USE26-0050 allows the installation of a 564 SF painted wall sign on a parking lot-facing façade of an existing building at 6405 El Camino Real Unit A (APN 029-344-009), as depicted and described on the attached exhibits. The approval of this entitlement runs with the land, regardless of the owner.
2. The allowance for the painted wall sign is granted in addition to, and not in lieu of, the total signage area allowed by the Municipal Code for the commercial business occupying 6405 El Camino Real Unit A. The square footage permitted by this exception shall be excluded from the tenant's standard maximum signage calculations.
3. The approval of this entitlement shall become final and effective for the purposes of issuing building permits fourteen (14) days after the Administrative Hearing Officer's action unless an appeal is made in accordance with the Atascadero Municipal Code.
4. Approval of this entitlement shall be valid for twenty-four (24) months after its effective date. At the end of the period, the approval shall expire and become null and void unless the signs have been installed, or the project has received a time extension consistent with the Atascadero Municipal Code.
5. The Community Development Department shall have the authority to approve minor changes to the project that result in a superior site design or appearance.
6. The applicant shall defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City of Atascadero or its agents, officers, and employees against any claim or action brought to challenge an approval by the City, or any of its entities, concerning this Administrative Use Permit.

CODE REQUIREMENTS:

1. AMC 9-1.112 Administrative Use Permit
2. AMC9-15.011 Design Exceptions
2. General Plan Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element Goal LOC 4

ACTION:

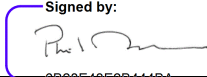
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☒ APPROVE

☐ APPROVE AS MODIFIED

☐ DENY

☐ CONTINUE TO ALLOW _____

SIGNED:  Signed by: 8/5/2026

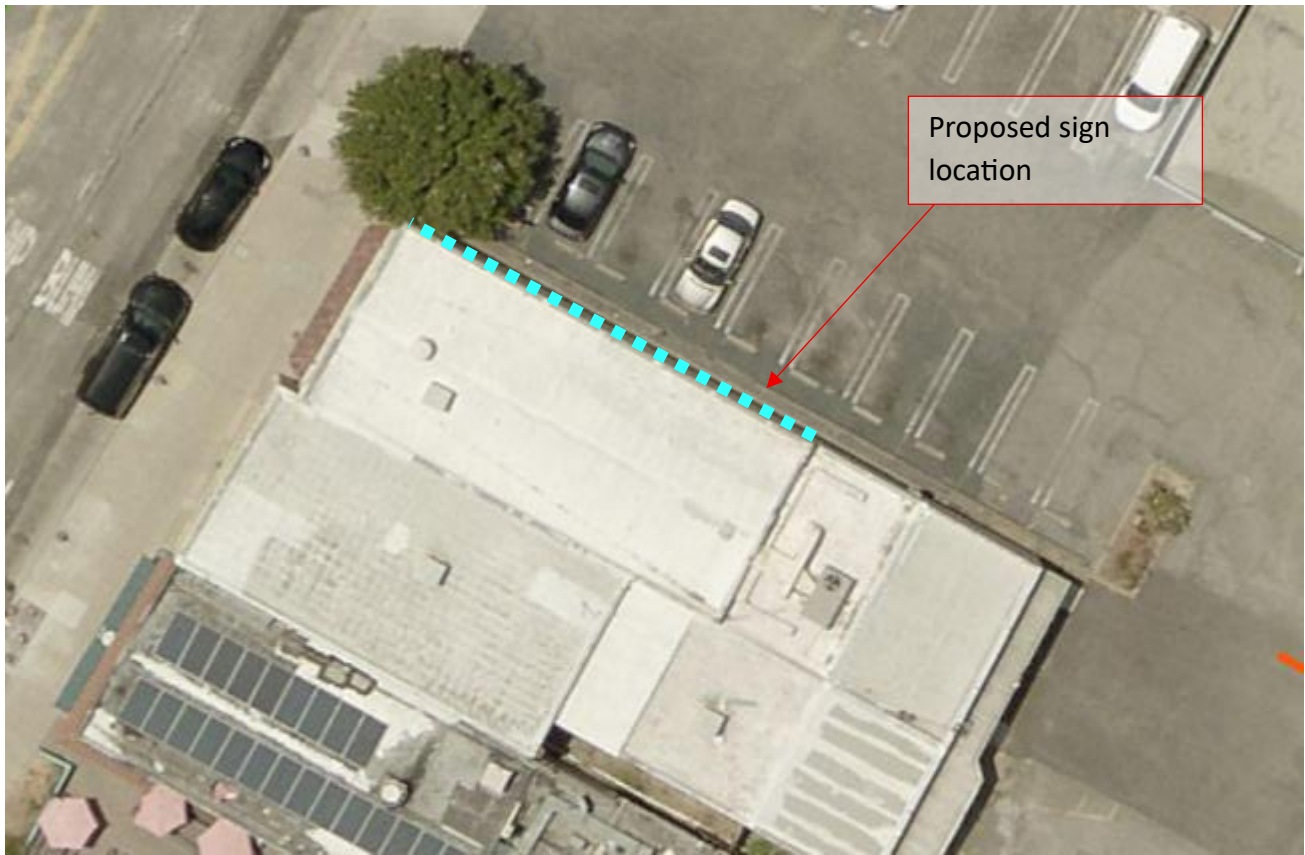
Phil Dunsmore, Administrative Hearing Officer Date

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Proposed sign location
2. Proposed sign

Attachment 1: Proposed Sign Location

USE26-0050



Attachment 2: Proposed Sign

USE26-0050

