

## **Height Pole, Flagging, Netting, and Signage Policy For Additions and New Construction**

### **I. Purpose:**

It is a policy of the Town of Los Gatos Town Council to have story poles and project identification signs installed on the sites of an active development application. The placement of story poles is extremely helpful and important during the course of Town's review of applications for new development. Proper and accurate placement of story poles demonstrates the planned rooflines and heights and provides some indication of the potential massing of the proposed structure. Story poles enhance understanding of the project for Town residents, staff, advisory bodies, and decision making bodies. Story poles also provide a visual notice to the community of a forthcoming land use public hearing.

Project identification signs present both written and graphical information that will further communicate the proposed project to the community as well as provide the public hearing dates for the development application.

This policy is for the benefit of the Town and community and is not intended to create a requirement under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

### **II. Height Poles and Netting/Flagging:**

Height story poles and netting/flagging shall be used for the following types of Community Development Department, Planning Division, land use applications:

For single-family and two-family residential projects:

- If proposed project is a two-story house or second story addition where the adjacent properties on the same side of the street both contain only single-story houses.
- If proposed project includes a variance or exception to the physical development standards for the primary structure.

For non-residential projects:

- New primary structures.
- Non-residential additions exceeding 20 percent of the existing building floor area.
- If proposed project includes a variance or exception to the physical development standards for the primary structure.

For properties in the Historic Resource Inventory:

- New residential (excluding single-story accessory structures) and non-residential buildings.
- Residential second story additions.
- Non-residential additions exceeding 100 square feet.

For properties in the Hillside Area as defined in the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines:

- New primary structures.
- New second story additions.

Exemptions/Alternatives (per Section II.G below):

- Affordable housing projects where 30 percent of the housing units are deed restricted to be Below Market Price, or 20 percent are deed restricted to be Low or Very Low Income shall comply with alternative/video rendering requirements in place of story poles.
- Buildings over 55 feet in height shall comply with alternative/video rendering requirements in place of story poles.
- Multi-family and mixed-use projects that include residential may choose to comply with alternative/video rendering in place of story poles.

The terms height poles and story poles are used interchangeably.

#### **A. Procedure:**

When it is determined that story poles are required, the applicant's engineer, architect, or building designer may, but is not required to, prepare a "Story Pole Plan" to indicate the locations where the poles will be installed. If submitted, the Story Pole Plan shall be approved by the project planner prior to the placement of the poles on the site. Once the placement of the story poles is complete, the applicant shall inform the project planner and submit photographs showing installation.

The height poles and netting/flagging shall be installed prior to the neighborhood notification process and shall remain in place until 60 days after the first public hearing on the project, or end of final appeal period, whichever is first. If the project is substantially modified, staff may direct removal or modification of the story poles.

## **B. Timing**

Public notices will not be mailed and/or application(s) shall not be advertised until the height poles and netting/flagging have been installed and photographs have been submitted to the project planner, as required in Section II.A.

## **C. Location and Number:**

The number of story poles may vary with each specific project. Story pole locations shall adequately demonstrate the height, mass, and bulk of the project requiring review. At a minimum, story poles shall be placed at all outside building corners of the building wall (excluding eaves) and along the rooflines of the proposed structure(s) or addition. Architectural elements such as towers, spires, elevator and mechanical penthouses, cupolas, mechanical equipment screening and similar elements not used for human activity or storage which are visible from the streetscape shall be represented by the story poles. For multi-building developments, story poles shall only be required for the tallest structures and those along the perimeter of the site.

While guy wires may sometimes be attached to existing fencing or similar onsite structures, pursuant to Section 29.10.1005 of the Tree Protection Ordinance, the attachment of wires, signs, or ropes to any protected tree is prohibited. Trees may not be "flagged" or used as a substitute for the erection of story poles.

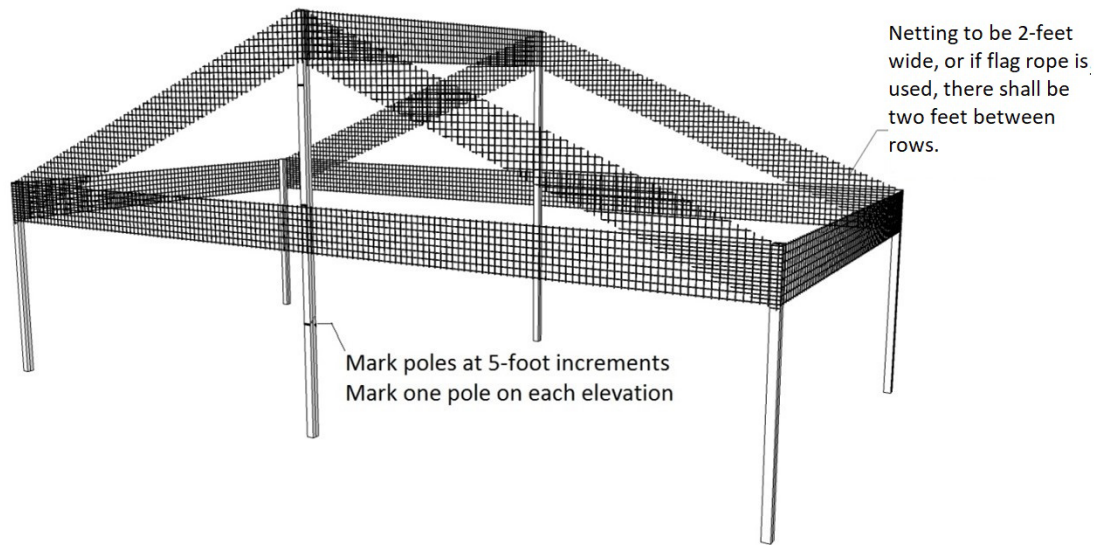
After the placement of the story poles on-site, the applicant shall provide the project planner with photographs of the story poles taken from a variety of vantage points. The vantage point from where the photograph was taken shall be indicated on each photograph.

A licensed surveyor or civil engineer shall submit written verification that the height and position of the poles and netting/flagging accurately represents the height and location of the proposed structure(s) or addition.

## **D. Materials:**

The material of the story poles shall be indicated on the Story Pole Plan. Story poles shall be constructed of 2"x4" lumber, metal poles, or other sturdy building material acceptable to the project planner. Telephone poles; mechanical equipment, such as cranes; or other materials may be acceptable for higher structures if the Community Development Director determines that the material will adequately portray the height, bulk, and mass of the proposed structure(s) or addition and withstand the wind and weather. Either a double row of orange flag rope/flagging, or orange woven plastic snow fencing (netting) must be erected to represent the rooflines of the proposed structure(s) or addition. If flagging is chosen, the two rows shall be

placed with one located two feet below the other. If netting is used, it shall be at least two foot (2') wide. Netting/flagging must be supported by height poles that are strong enough to accurately maintain the outlines and height of the structure(s). One of the height poles on each elevation must be clearly marked and labeled in five foot (5') increments measured from existing or finished grade, whichever creates a higher profile.



#### **E. Public Safety:**

All story poles shall be placed, braced, and supported to ensure the health, safety, and general welfare of the public. Applicants shall sign an agreement that holds the Town harmless for any liability associated with the construction of, or damage caused by the story poles. If at any time, the Town determines the story poles to be unsafe, they shall be repaired and reset immediately by the project applicant or, at the Town's discretion, removed. Depending on the scope of the poles, the applicant may be requested to verify with the Building Division of the Community Development Department that no permits and/or inspections are required for the poles.

#### **F. Exceptions:**

In the event there are justifiable reasons why story poles cannot be accommodated for all structures proposed to be constructed on the project site, the applicant shall submit a letter to the Community Development Director no later than 45 days prior to the required installation date, clearly articulating the reasons why an exception to the Story Pole requirement is warranted. Requests for an exception and alternative plan will only be considered if the applicant can clearly demonstrate to the Town,

and the Town agrees, that the installation of the story poles would: (1) cause a threat to public health and safety or (2) would impair the use of existing structure(s) or the site to the extent it would not be able to be occupied and the business or residential use would be infeasible. Some form of poles and netting/flagging and/or on-site physical representation of the project will be required, even if an exception is granted.

Planned Development applications with multiple detached commercial structures and/or residential units may request to erect story poles on the locations where the key structures will be placed. The deciding body will take into account the density of the development when considering an exception request. The story poles shall be installed on all corner structures and the structures with the greatest height and mass. An exception to providing story poles for all structures in a Planned Development application with multiple commercial structures and/or residential units shall follow the same procedures as outlined below.

The Town Manager will review all justifiable requests for an exception to the Story Pole requirement within 14 days of receipt of the request and shall place the matter on the next available Town Council agenda for consideration by the Council. Written notice of the exception request shall be mailed to property owners and residents of properties within 300 feet of the project site. All requested and approved exceptions shall be posted on the Town's Web site under "What's New," in agenda posting locations at Town Hall and the Library, and in the online development activity report when established.

If an exception is approved, the applicant will be required to demonstrate the proposed structure height and mass using alternative means as outlined in Section II.G.

- G. Alternatives/Visual Renderings:** If an alternative is allowed (Section II) or an exception is granted (Section II.F) to the Story Pole requirements, digital imagery simulations, computer modeling, built to-scale models or other visual techniques shall be required in-lieu of the Story Pole requirements. Simulations shall be prepared by the Town's consultant. The applicant shall be responsible for all technical review(s), materials, and cost of the Town's evaluation and/or preparation process.

#### **H. Removal:**

Story poles and netting/flagging may be removed 60 days after the first public hearing on the project or once a final action has been taken and the appeal period is over. Once a final action has been taken and the appeal period is over, the height poles and netting/flagging shall be removed at the applicant's expense within 30 days. If not removed, the height poles and netting/flagging will be considered rubbish and will be in violation of Section 11.10.020 of the Town Code and the matter will be forwarded to Code Compliance for enforcement action.

### **III. Project Identification Signs:**

All development applications that include public notification shall also provide project identification signs on the development site consistent with the following requirements.

#### **A. Timing:**

Project identification signs shall be installed within 30 days of the first staff review. Public notices will not be mailed and/or application(s) shall not be advertised until project identification sign(s) have been installed. The applicant shall submit a photo showing the on-site sign(s) installed on the subject property prior to the distribution of the public notices.

#### **B. Size:**

- Single-Family or Duplex Residential Projects: One, 2'x2' sign placed on the street frontage. The top of the sign shall be five feet (5') from existing grade and visible from the main street frontage. The sign shall indicate the scheduled public hearing date and the availability of plans for review at the Community Development Department.
- Multi-Family, Mixed-Use, Commercial/Industrial Projects: One 4'x8' sign on each of the property frontages that are visible to surrounding public right of ways, including pedestrian trails such as the Los Gatos Creek Trail. The top of the signs shall be six feet (6') from existing grade. The Community Development Director may require additional signs for development sites that have large frontages.
- Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Only Projects: One 2' by 3' vertical sign on or inside the window of a building, provided the sign is visible from public locations outside the building.

- Downtown (C-2 Zone) Remodels or New Commercial Development: One 2' by 3' vertical sign constructed of metal frame with water resistant plastic or laminated face. In cases where it is infeasible to install a free-standing sign, the posting of a durable, all weather sign on or inside the window of a building is permitted, provided the sign is visible from public locations outside the building. Requests for an exception to the free-standing sign requirements shall be made to the Community Development Department in writing no less than 30 days prior to the public hearing for the project.

#### **C. Number and Placement of Signs:**

With two exceptions, on-site signs shall be placed on each street frontage of the site. The first exception is for permits related to an individual new single family dwelling, where, only one sign on the street frontage is required. The signs shall be oriented towards the street, within one foot (1') of the front property line or two feet (2') of the back of the sidewalk. The second exception is for projects that involve only a Conditional Use Permit for use of an existing building, where only one sign located at the business frontage is required.

#### **D. Materials:**

Signs shall be constructed of durable materials, such as foam core or plywood, and shall be laminated during the rainy season (October through April) if posted outdoors. The sign colors shall be a white background with black printing, and color graphics (excluding single family, which may have black and white graphics). As noted under Section III.B., signs in the Downtown C-2 Zone shall be constructed of higher grade materials, including a metal frame and a plastic or laminated poster board face.

#### **E. Sign Content:**

Up to 75 percent of the overall sign area must be used to provide a general description of the project; including number of residential units or commercial buildings and square footage; a color perspective drawing, three-dimensional image or photographic simulation and the name and contact information of the project applicant. Signage designs that are visually striking are encouraged. Single family remodel projects are not required to provide a rendering on the sign. Projects that do not include review of exterior changes to an existing building are not required to provide drawing or building image. The public notice portion of the sign message must constitute 25 percent of the overall sign area and notify the community of the public hearing date and time and contain the following message, "For more information about this project, please contact the Town of Los Gatos Planning

Division at 110 E. Main Street, Los Gatos, (408) 354-6872. Plans can be reviewed on the Town's website at: [www.losgatosca.gov/2216/Pending-Planning-Projects](http://www.losgatosca.gov/2216/Pending-Planning-Projects)." The project address, application number, applicant email contact information, and a QR code shall be included on the notice sign.

**F. Duration of Sign Posting:**

Project identification signs shall be placed on site within 30 days of the first staff review of the proposed project and shall be removed within 30 days of the final action.

**G. Maintenance:**

The applicant is responsible for replacement of any missing, damaged, or vandalized signs within five days of request by the Town. The Town may cease processing of the application if the signs are not replaced and/or maintained.

**IV. Definitions:**

Height: As defined by the Zoning Ordinance, height is determined by the plumb vertical distance from the natural or finished grade, whichever is lower and creates a lower profile, to the uppermost point of the roof edge, wall, parapet, mansard, or other point directly above that grade. For portions of a structure located directly above a cellar (refer to Section 29.10.020 of the Zoning Ordinance for definition of cellar), the height measurement for that portion of the structure shall be measured as the plumb vertical distance from the existing natural grade to the uppermost point of the structure directly over that point in the existing natural grade.

Roofline or edge: The contour or shape of a roof.

*This policy was adopted by Town Council on April 16, 2024 (Resolution 2024-017)*