

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Mayor J.B. Lawrence and Blowing Rock Town Council

From: Kevin Rothrock, Planning Director

SUBJECT: Appalachian Ski Mountain Welcome Center Sign  
Amendment to Sign Ordinance

DATE: January 6, 2015

On December 9, 2014, a conditional use permit for construction of a welcome center for Appalachian Ski Mountain on the corner of Hwy 321 and Edmisten Rd was approved by Council. The proposed freestanding sign is currently under staff review and will require some code modification in order to be approved as submitted or with a similar design (plan design and photos attached).

Noting the historical and tourism related significance of Appalachian Ski Mountain and the need to direct traffic, the Applicant is requesting a change to the sign ordinance to allow an increase in overall sign height at the welcome center to 18 feet above grade. The standard ground-mounted freestanding sign is limited to 6 feet above grade. Other tourism attractions in the area have freestanding signs between 18 feet and 28 feet in height. For example:

The Blowing Rock – approximately 18 feet  
Tweetsie – approximately 23 feet  
Grandfather Mountain – approximately 28 feet

The sign ordinance currently allows an increase in the overall height of freestanding signs if the ground elevation is below the road elevation of Hwy 321. The maximum sign structure height is limited to 10 feet above the road elevation and not more than 22 feet above the ground elevation. This provision of the ordinance applies to pole-mounted signs only.

In the attached draft ordinance amendment, Appalachian Ski Mountain would be allowed to construct a ground-mounted sign up to 18 feet in height as long as landscaping is maintained at the base of the sign to a minimum height of 3 feet. The App Ski Mtn signature orange color would be allowed on the sign as well.

The sign design indicates a separation of 8 feet between the back of the sign panels to provide an angled view for display. The maximum distance of sign panels in the draft ordinance is 10 feet.

### **PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning Board reviewed the draft ordinance at their regular December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting and made a recommendation to approve the draft ordinance with some modifications. Those modifications are reflected in the attached draft ordinance.

I can provide further clarification on the ordinance amendment during the meeting on January 13th, or questions can be directed to me at 295-5240 or [krothrock@townofblowingrock.com](mailto:krothrock@townofblowingrock.com).

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft ordinance No. 2015-01
2. Letters of support from Blowing Rock Chamber and Blowing Rock TDA
3. Photos and plans/diagrams of proposed App Ski Mtn sign

**ORDINANCE NO. 2015-01****AN ORDINANCE TO MODIFY SIGN REGULATIONS SPECIFIC TO THE  
APPALACHIAN SKI MOUNTAIN WELCOME CENTER**

WHEREAS, the Article 17 of the Land Use Ordinance provides sign regulations within the Town of Blowing Rock's planning and zoning jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, Appalachian Ski Mountain has been a unique tourism partner with Town of Blowing Rock and the overall Blowing Rock and High Country community for over 50 years; and

WHEREAS, Appalachian Ski Mountain has displayed a directional billboard across from the Hwy 321/Edmisten Road intersection for over 40 years; and

WHEREAS, with the pending removal of the billboard triggered by bridge construction for an access road, Appalachian Ski Mountain will lose an effective directional sign that cannot be replaced due to a federal law protecting scenic byways (Blue Ridge Parkway); and

WHEREAS, Appalachian Ski Mountain is authorized to construct a welcome center on the corner of Edmisten Road and Hwy 321; and

WHEREAS, Appalachian Ski Mountain draws thousands of visitors to the area and many of those visitors are traveling at night, needing clearly recognizable signs and landmarks; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Blowing Rock Land Use Ordinance limits the overall height of an on-premise ground mounted sign and limits sign face separation; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board and Town Council find there should be exceptions to the sign ordinance limitations based on the historic and unique tourism benefits associated with Appalachian Ski Mountain; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board and Town Council confirm that the regulation of directional signage is consistent with the 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Blowing Rock, North Carolina, that:

Section 1. Section 16-17.12.3 of the Land Use Ordinance is hereby added and will read as follows:

**"Section 16-17.12.3 Appalachian Ski Mountain Welcome Center Sign. Due to its unique tourism/directional-related significance based on skier traffic volume and**

nightly activities, the Appalachian Ski Mountain Welcome Center shall be allowed to construct a ground-mounted freestanding sign up to 18 feet from the ground. The overall length of the sign shall not exceed 17 feet. The sign face shall be limited to 60 square feet per side based on the posted speed limit exceeding 35 mph, similar to allowances in Section 16-17.12.2.2. The sign faces shall not be separated by more than 10 feet. All sides of the base of the sign shall be landscaped to a height not less than 3 feet above grade.

Unless otherwise specified herein, this sign shall meet the size, style, height, materials, and design criteria in Section 16-17.12 and shall be located outside the NCDOT designated right-of-way. The sign colors are regulated by Conditional Use Permit No. 2014-04, approved on December 9, 2014.

The sign shall meet all requirements of this Article with regard to lighting, maintenance and safety.”

Section 2. Severability; Conflict of Laws. If this ordinance or application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the ordinance which can be given separate effect and to that end, the provisions of this ordinance are declared to be severable. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

Section 3. Effective Date. This ordinance shall be effective upon adoption.

Adopted this the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2015

TOWN OF BLOWING ROCK

\_\_\_\_\_  
J.B. Lawrence, Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sharon H. Greene, Town Clerk



Friday, December 5, 2014

Honorable Mayor and Town Council:

The board of directors of the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce is presenting this letter to encourage the Town to continue in the spirit of forward progress by working with Appalachian Ski Mountain to facilitate Appalachian Ski Mountain's proposed Welcome Center to be located on US 321 and Ski Mountain Road.

Since 1963, Appalachian Ski Mountain and the Moretz family have been instrumental in making Blowing Rock a year round tourism destination. By adding winter sports to the list of "attractions" in the summer and fall, the winter economy of Blowing Rock has improved dramatically over the years. For example, in 1963, there were only a couple of restaurants that operated here year round. Today, there are 28 restaurants operating year round within the city limits. In 1963 there were only two or three hotels operating year round while today there are 16 hotels and inns open year round.

In addition to the significant contributions from the introduction of skiing in the High Country, the Town has benefited from the volunteerism of the Moretz family. The Chamber encourages the Council to be solution-oriented as it considers Appalachian Ski Mountain's request(s) to enable it to maintain a signage presence on US 321 after the removal of its almost-historic billboard.

Respectfully,

Charles Hardin  
Executive Director  
Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce  
828.295.7851  
[HardinCE@BlowingRock.com](mailto:HardinCE@BlowingRock.com)



12/16/2014

Blowing Rock Planning Board  
Mr. Jim West, Chairman  
Blowing Rock Town Council  
Mr. JB Lawrence, Mayor

Dear Mr. West, Planning Board, Mayor Lawrence and Town Council,

This letter is to let you know that the Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors, at both its Quarterly Meeting held October 18<sup>th</sup>, and its Board Retreat held on December 9<sup>th</sup>, reviewed and unanimously support the Appalachian Ski Mountain Welcome Center project and the proposed code amendment to the Town of Blowing Rock Sign Ordinance.

Since 1962, Appalachian Ski Mountain has been a major winter tourism draw to the region and an iconic partner with the Town of Blowing Rock. The ski area is listed as a Blowing Rock attraction with the NC Division of Tourism and continues to be a major player in winter sports across the Southeast.

Because of the number of new visitors and winter sports enthusiasts visiting each year, it is imperative that the ski area have proper signage to direct travelers to the facility. The TDA has always strived to ensure that visitors get to their intended destinations without confusion or delay. The proposed new signage and welcome center will help to that end with the removal of their old directional billboard.

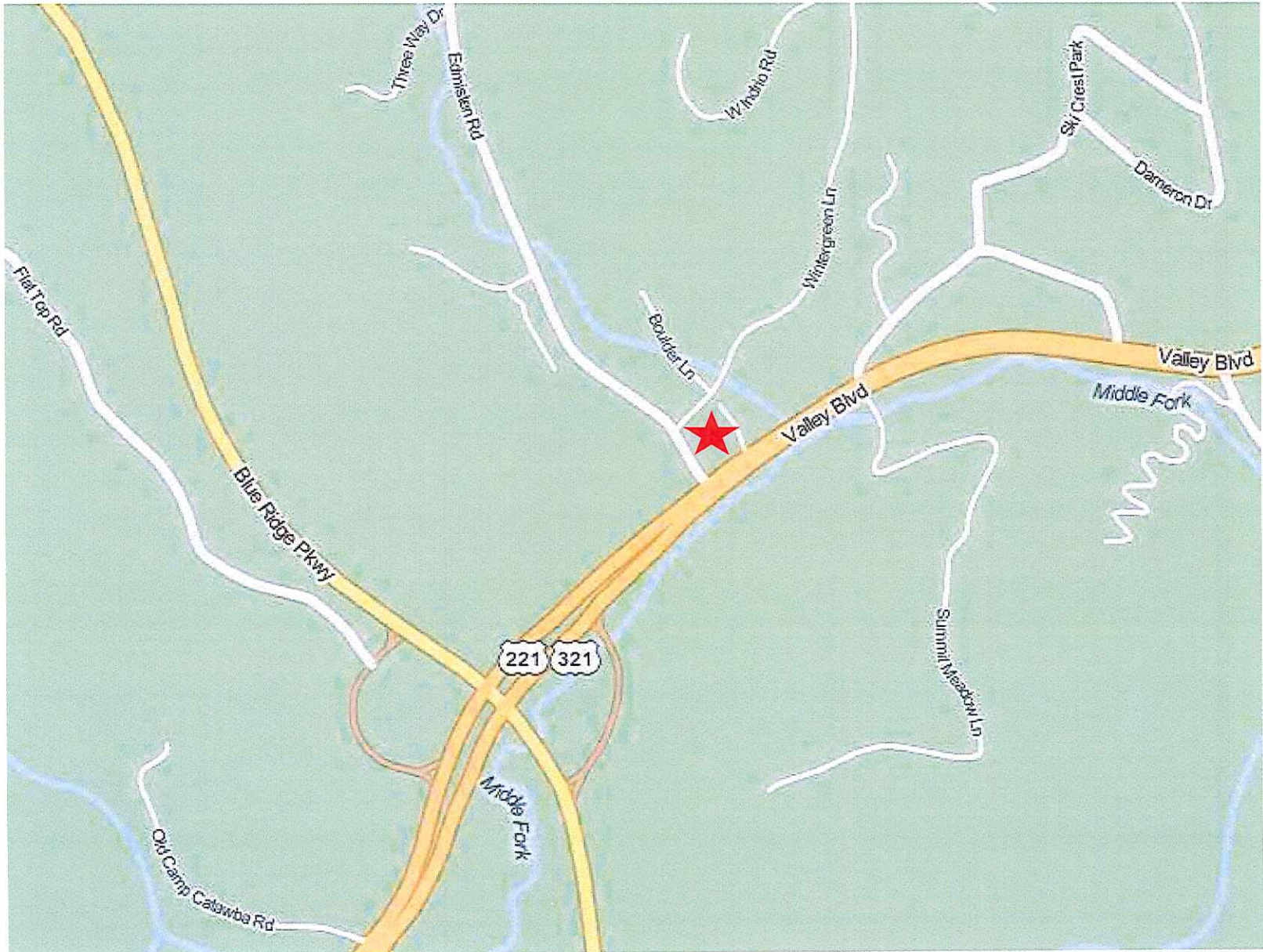
Please let this letter serve as support from the Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority in your decision-making process. Please do not hesitate to call me or Kent Tarbutton, Chairman of the Blowing Rock TDA, at 295-4636 if you have any questions.

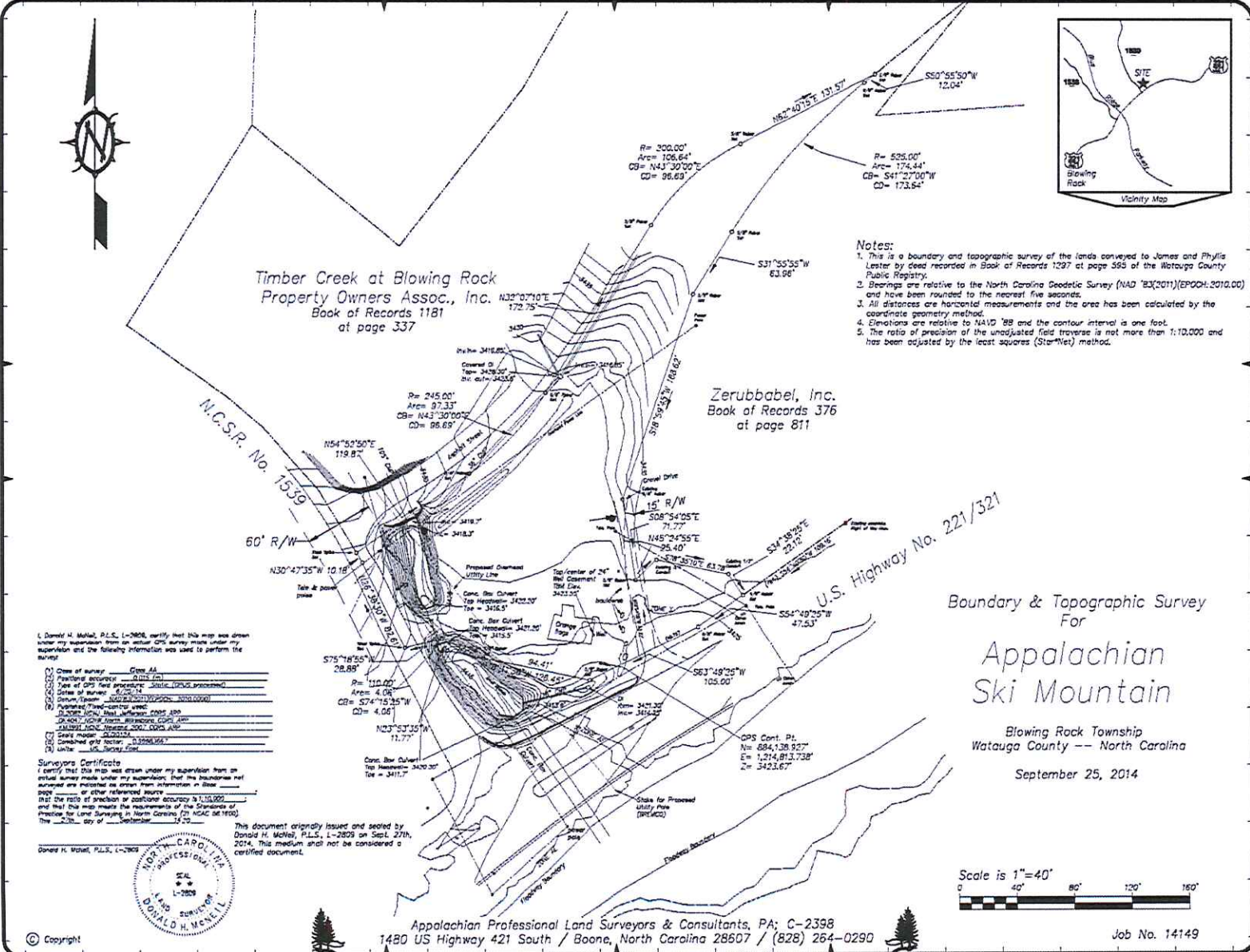
Regards,

Tracy Brown  
Executive Director  
Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority

Cc: Kent Tarbutton  
Brad Moretz

# Northeast Corner of Edmisten Road and Highway 321





Timber Creek at Blowing Rock  
Property Owners Assoc., Inc.  
Book of Records 1181  
at page 337

Zerubbabel, Inc.  
Book of Records 376  
at page 811

- Notes:
1. This is a boundary and topographic survey of the lands conveyed to James and Phyllis Lester by deed recorded in Book of Records 1297 at page 363 of the Watauga County Public Registry.
  2. Bearings are relative to the North Carolina Geodetic Survey (NAD '83(2011))(EPOCH:2010.00) and have been rounded to the nearest five seconds.
  3. All distances are horizontal measurements and the area has been calculated by the coordinate geometry method.
  4. Elevations are relative to NAVD '88 and the contour interval is one foot.
  5. The ratio of precision of the unadjusted field traverse is not more than 1:10,000 and has been adjusted by the least squares (Star-Net) method.

- I, Donald H. McNeil, P.L.S., L-2809, certify that this map was drawn under my supervision from an actual GPS survey made under my supervision and the following information was used to perform the survey:
- (1) Class of survey: Site Map
  - (2) Fractional accuracy: 0.0100 (in)
  - (3) Type of GPS field processing: Static (GNSS processing)
  - (4) Date of survey: 8/25/14
  - (5) Datum/Elevation: NAD 83(2011)/EPOCH: 2010.0000
  - (6) Registered Professional Surveyor: DONALD H. MCNEIL, P.L.S., L-2809
  - (7) State of North Carolina: Blowing Rock, NC
  - (8) Project Name: Appalachian Ski Mountain
  - (9) Scale: As Shown
  - (10) Date of Issue: 9/25/14
  - (11) State of North Carolina: Blowing Rock, NC
  - (12) Registered Professional Surveyor: DONALD H. MCNEIL, P.L.S., L-2809
  - (13) Title: Professional Land Surveyor

**Surveyors Certificate**  
I certify that this map was drawn under my supervision from an actual survey made under my supervision, that the boundaries not surveyed are indicated as shown, and that the map meets the requirements of the Standards of Practice for Land Surveying in North Carolina (21 NCAC 06.1000).  
This is the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2014.

Donald H. McNeil, P.L.S., L-2809



This document originally issued and sealed by Donald H. McNeil, P.L.S., L-2809 on Sept. 27th, 2014. This medium shall not be considered a certified document.

Appalachian Professional Land Surveyors & Consultants, PA; C-2398  
1480 US Highway 421 South / Boone, North Carolina 28607 / (828) 264-0290

Boundary & Topographic Survey  
For

Appalachian  
Ski Mountain

Blowing Rock Township  
Watauga County -- North Carolina

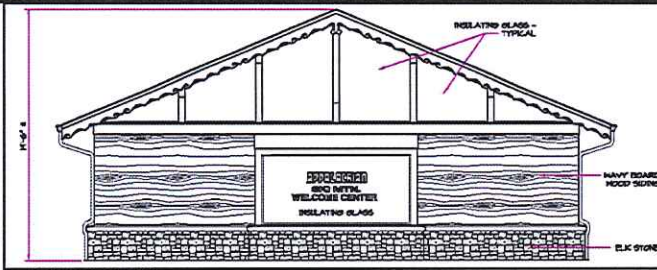
September 25, 2014



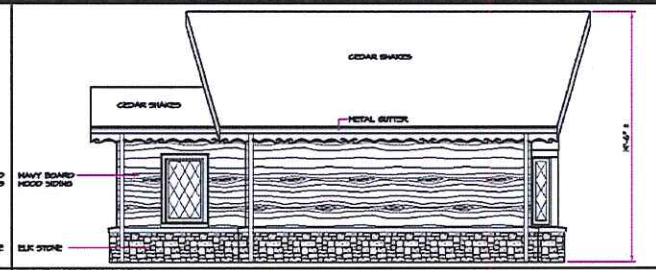
Copyright

Job No. 14149

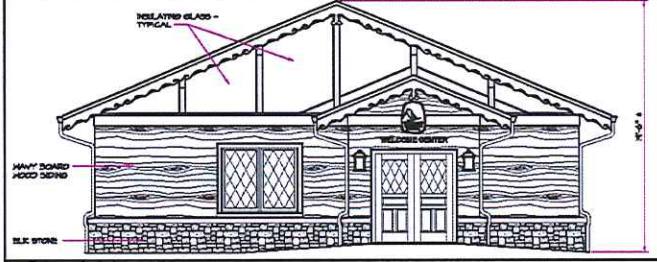




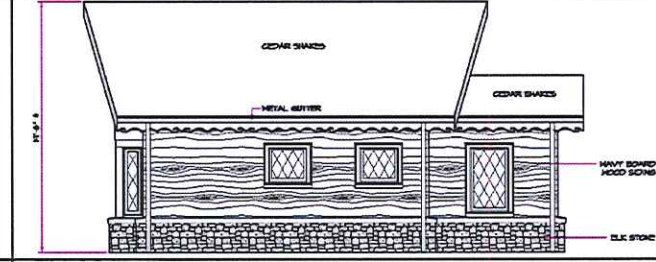
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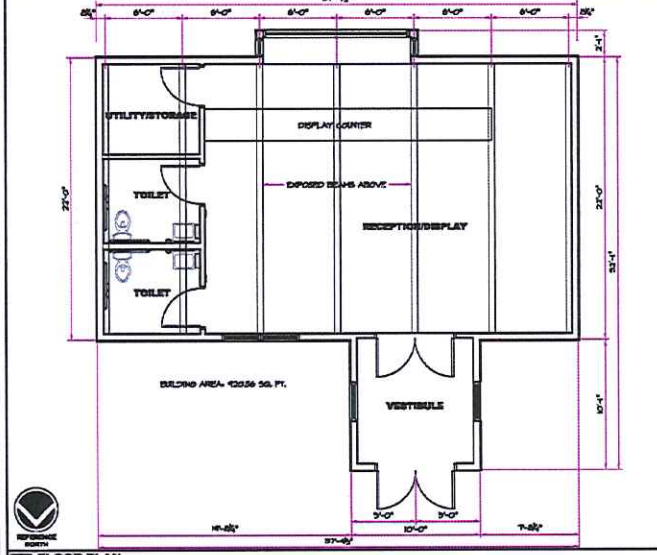
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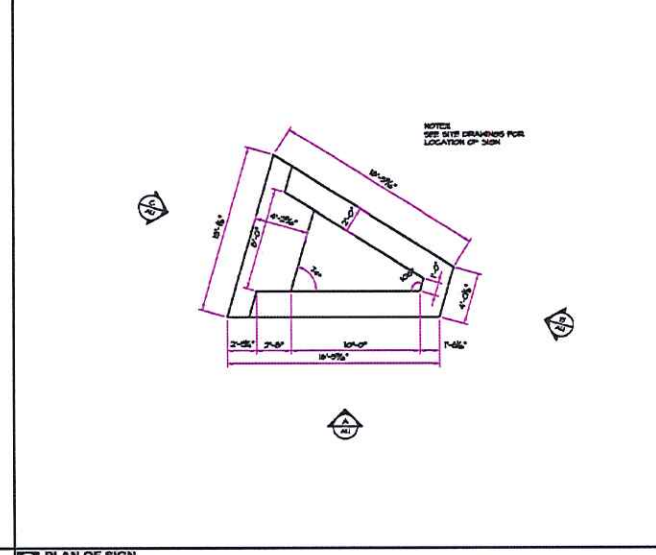
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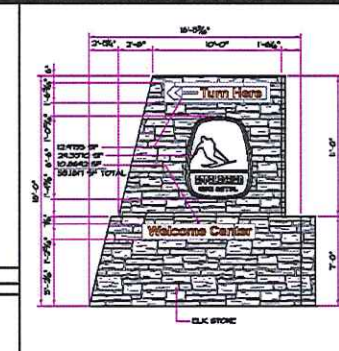
4 WEST ELEVATION  
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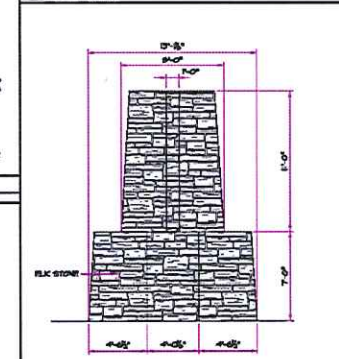
5 FLOOR PLAN  
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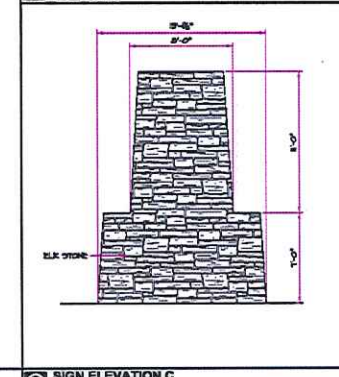
6 PLAN OF SIGN  
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



7 SIGN ELEVATION A  
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



8 SIGN ELEVATION B  
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



9 SIGN ELEVATION C  
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

**GREENE ARCHITECTURE**  
 1000 W. HICKORY STREET  
 FLORENCE, NC 28534  
 PHONE: 919-487-1111  
 FAX: 919-487-1112

**APPALACHIAN SKI MTN.**  
 SIGN / WELCOME CENTER  
 U.S. HIGHWAY NO. 261 / 261  
 BLOWING ROCK, NORTH CAROLINA

NO.	1002.2014
DATE	10/21/2014
1	10/21/2014
2	10/21/2014

**A1.1**

1 of 1

Project No: 000005

# New Signage and Welcome Center

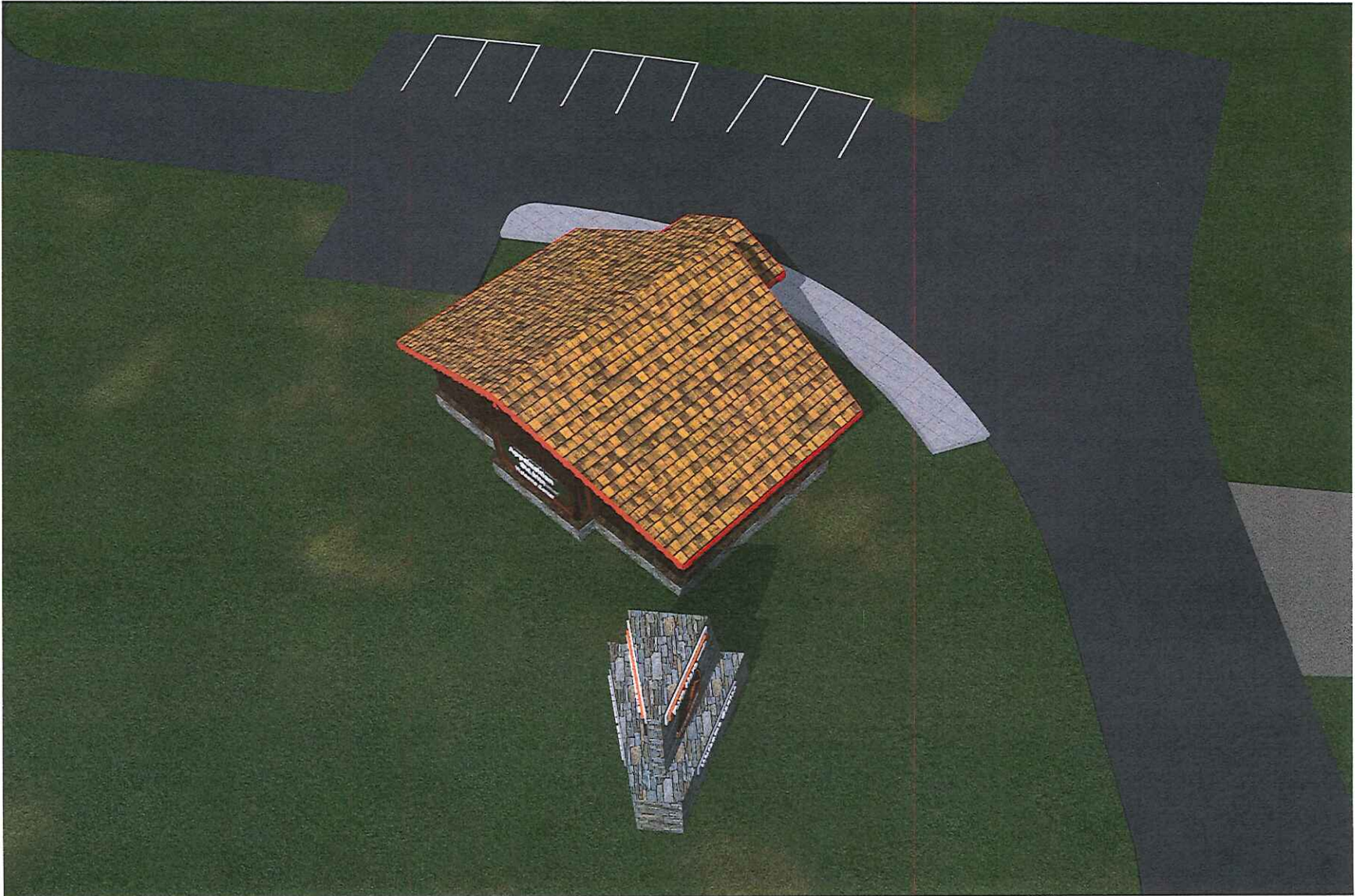


# New Signage and Welcome Center

12sf on Welcome Center  
53.2sf on New Signage



View from above



# View from the Edmisten / 321 Intesection coming from Blowing Rock



View on 321 coming from Boone



# Welcome center entrance



# Appalachian Ski Mtn. Entrance Signage Size Comparison

Current

28'

Proposed

18'



0'



# Comparison of Area Attraction Signage

28' Current

18' Proposed

