
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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PLANNING COMMISSION

To: Planning Commission
From: Alison Van Gorp, CPD Deputy Director
Date: July 28, 2021
RE: ZTR19-003 Sign Code Update

SUMMARY

The proposed code amendment amends MICC 19.06.020, 19.11.140 and 19.12.080 updating the code sections related to temporary signs, signs in Town Center and signs outside Town Center, respectively.

BACKGROUND

At the June 16 meeting, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and began discussion of the draft code amendment. The Commission continued the public hearing to receive additional public input at the July meeting. The Commission requested several additional revisions to the draft. Staff have prepared a revised draft code amendment for the commission's review and consideration at the July 28 meeting. The additional revisions include the following:

- General Provisions
 - Exemption for government signs for the purpose of promoting health, safety and welfare
 - Added a definition of "Public Art" and revised the definition of "Sign" to clarify that public art, including murals, is not regulated as signs.
- Temporary Signs
 - Defines temporary signs to include: A-frame signs, banners, pennants and signs staked into the ground, including wire frame or H-frame signs. Any of these sign types are allowed on private property in all zones. Subsection (A)(13) includes the provisions for placing signs in the Right Of Way.
 - Prohibits signs in parks, except as permitted in the parks code (MICC 9.30.040)
 - Additional provisions added related to placement of signs – clarifying signs cannot obstruct sidewalks, sight lines, bicycle facilities, bus stops, etc. Setback distances from driveways, roads, sidewalks, etc are specified. It also prohibits signs in medians, roundabouts and traffic circles.
 - Specifies that the City may remove signs that are in violation of these requirements
 - Allows temporary non-commercial banners and pennants in the ROW in Town Center subject to a permit. Note: the banners currently hanging on light poles in the Town Center are an art installation and are not regulated as a sign/banner.

- Added the Commercial Office (C-O) zone to the list of zones that allow temporary commercial signs (including TC, B and PBZ). The provisions and allowed uses in the C-O zone are very similar to the B zone. I don't know why these signs were allowed in one and not the other.
- Town Center Signs
 - Removed "proportionate" requirement as it is too subjective. The Objectives section already includes the intent that signs should be proportionate.
 - Added allowance for a secondary wall sign on the primary frontage of a business to identify a secondary or affiliated use. This is intended to provide for signs for things like ATMs and coffee stands inside grocery stores.
 - Clarify that the 25% limit on window signs applies to each tenant/business window area that faces the street or through-block connection. Allowance for lighting of window signs during business hours.
 - Further revisions of the lighted sign provisions. Staff chose not to include a quantitative limit on brightness and instead focused on objective standards around the design of the sign and lighting to limit glare and reflection of light.
- Signs Outside Town Center
 - Similar update to sign lighting standards as in the Town Center.
 - Clarification on Portable signs and Vehicles provisions. Note: since government signs are exempt from these regulations, things like readerboard signs that are used for emergencies or road construction would not be prohibited.

The draft code amendment includes staff comment bubbles related to a few of the revisions. The following policy questions/considerations are included in comment bubbles and highlighted in yellow in the document:

- Confirm the addition of Commercial-Office to the zones where temporary commercial signs are allowed.
- Confirm removal of "proportionate" requirement for town center freestanding and wall signs
- Confirm addition of secondary sign allowance for wall signs. Is 5 square feet an appropriate size limit?
- Consider removing the Design Commission Discretion provision, or add specific criteria for Design Commission approval
- Does the revised Lighted Sign standard provide an appropriate balance of objective standards without being overly complicated or technical?

The July 28 meeting will begin with a continuation of the public hearing. After the public hearing, staff will provide an overview of the revisions to the draft code amendment and address any questions from the Commission. The Commission should then begin deliberations, including proposing any additional revisions to the code amendment.

NEXT STEPS

At the July 28 meeting, the Commission will continue the public hearing. The hearing will be followed by deliberations and a recommendation. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission's recommendation will be transmitted to City Council for review in September and October.

ATTACHMENTS

1. ZTR19-003 Draft Sign Code Amendment