



CITY OF CONCORD
New Hampshire's Main Street™
Community Development Department

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REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: City Planning Board
DATE: April 26, 2018
SUBJECT: Ordinance Amending the CODE OF ORDINANCES, Title IV, Zoning Code, Chapter 28, Zoning Ordinance, Article 28-6, Sign Regulations

Recommendation

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the distance of sign projection permitted into the right of way to five (5) feet; reduce the square footage permitted for projecting signs to 12 square feet; and allow internal illumination of signs in the Central Business Performance District (CBP) when the sign background is opaque or a darker color than the message on the sign.

Background

Following a meeting with Planning staff, the Architectural Design Review (ADR) Committee made recommendations to the Planning Board with regard to internally illuminated signs, and signs that project into the right of way on Main Street. The Board requested that staff draft an ordinance amendment to implement the recommendations.

Discussion

Since the completion of the Main Street reconstruction, there have been several new sign permits granted for internally illuminated signs in the Central Business Performance (CBP) District. The ADR Committee and Planning Board are concerned that the proliferation of internally illuminated signs is adversely impacting the character of Main Street. The brightness from the internally illuminated signs projects out in all directions, increases nighttime light pollution and sky glow, and distracts from other features in the streetscape. In contrast, building mounted lighting is focused on the building and storefront, minimizes light pollution and creates a more subtle impact on the streetscape.

Internally illuminated signs are currently prohibited in the Civic Performance (CVP), Institutional (IS), Urban Transitional (UT), and all residential districts. Rather than outright

prohibit internally illuminated signs in the CBP District, the amendment proposes to reduce the impact of internal illumination by requiring that the sign background be opaque or a darker color than the sign message, and encouraging backlit or internally illuminated channel letters. Internally illuminated signs would continue to be permitted in all other non-residential districts.

The amendment also proposes to reduce the distance that projecting signs may extend into the right of way, and reduce the maximum square footage permitted for projecting signs. During their review of sign permit applications, the ADR Committee has reviewed applications that comply with the current ordinance, but that nonetheless seemed too large for the pedestrian scale of the newly constructed Main Street, and inconsistent with the character of the streetscape. During discussion about sign guidelines, the Committee and Board suggested that the ordinance be amended to ensure more appropriate sign dimensions. Staff subsequently took photos of various signs along Main Street and researched the distance they protrude into the right of way and their overall area. The sign survey was used as a basis for the proposal to reduce the distance that signs are permitted to protrude into the right of way from 6 feet 7 inches to 5 feet, and to reduce the overall permitted square footage from 24 feet to 12 feet.

A draft ordinance that implements the proposed amendments is attached. Also attached are examples of the internally illuminated sign types proposed by the amendment, and a Survey of Various Sized Signs in the CBP.