



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

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City Planner

TO: Planning Board Members
FROM: Heather Shank, City Planner
DATE: January 10, 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 prohibited internally illuminated signs in the Civic Performance (CVP) District, reduce the distance of sign projection permitted into the right of way to five (5) feet, and reduce the square footage permitted for projecting signs to 15 square feet.

Background

In the summer of 2017, Planning staff was asked to develop guidance for the City with regard to features permitted within the reconstructed Main Street right of way, and the public and private use of the sidewalk areas. Planning staff met with the Architectural Design Review (ADR) Committee and the Planning Board to develop guidelines in response to this request. Several zoning regulations pertaining to signs were evaluated as a result of discussions about sign guidelines. The ADR Committee made recommendations to the Planning Board with regard to internally illuminated signs, and signs that project into the right of way. 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. The amendment proposes to also prohibit internally illuminated signs in the CBP District. 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 15 feet.

Recommendation

Recommend that City Council amend the Zoning Ordinance to prohibited internally illuminated signs in the Civic Performance (CVP) District, reduce the projection permitted into the right of way to five (5) feet, and reduce the square footage permitted for projecting signs to 15 square feet.

A draft ordinance that implements the proposed amendment is attached.