
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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PLANNING COMMISSION

To: Planning Commission
From: Alison Van Gorp, CPD Deputy Director
Date: June 9, 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 May 19 meeting, Daniel Kenny provided an overview of the *Reed v. Gilbert* case and the areas of the code where he is recommending amendments. The Commission provided initial feedback to staff on the proposed code amendment. Staff have integrated this initial guidance into the attached draft code amendment. The draft includes proposed amendments intended to do the following:

- Comprehensive changes
 - Exempt signs required by local state or federal law or regulations from code requirements – this could include temporary signs like land use notifications and required safety signs such as “caution” signs on utility poles or equipment.
 - Replace the term “code official” with “Director”.
- Temporary signs
 - Shift to define temporary signs based on type and materials rather than duration of placement.
 - Add clarity to the term “non-commercial messages”.
 - Remove exception to prohibition on banners and pennants for “community-wide civic activities” as it is content-based.
 - Reorganize and clarify provisions for real estate signs.
 - Remove provisions related to political signs as they are content-based (political signs will be covered by the general temporary sign provisions).
 - Remove requirement for signs to be “professionally produced by a person skilled in the art of graphic design”.
- Town Center Signs
 - Add allowance for signs along alleyways and through-block connections
 - Add provisions for lighted signs to respond to the tenants of the Dark Skies Initiative

- Signs Outside Town Center
 - Clarify how sign size should be measured for all sign types.
 - Add an allowance for externally lighted signs in all zones (code is currently silent on whether lighting is allowed). Add provisions that respond to the Dark Skies Initiative.
 - Add an allowance for signs at neighborhood entrances and driveway entrances for identification and navigation purposes.
 - Add an allowance for the replacement of existing non-conforming signs.

In addition, please review the Comment bubbles included along the right margin of the draft code amendment, as they include a few additional policy questions for the commission, mostly related to areas of the code that could benefit from additional clarity of the intent or application of a code provision.

At the June 16 meeting, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the draft code amendment and begin deliberations on the amendment. The Commission may choose to keep the public hearing open to receive additional public input at the July meeting. After the public hearing, staff will provide an overview of the draft code amendment and review policy questions for further discussion and input from the Commission. Staff will also address any questions from the Commission. The Commission should begin discussion of the draft code amendment and provide feedback to staff, including any revisions the Commission would like to make.

NEXT STEPS

The Commission will hold a public hearing and review the draft code amendment at the June 16 meeting. The Commission may choose to continue the public hearing to the July 21 meeting if additional time for public input is desired. Staff will incorporate the Commission's feedback at the June 16 meeting into an updated draft code amendment. Final deliberation on this amendment and a recommendation are planned for the July 21 meeting. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission's recommendation will be transmitted to City Council for review in the September-October timeframe.

ATTACHMENTS

1. ZTR19-003 Draft Sign Code Amendment