



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BOARD STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: November 20, 2018
AGENDA ITEM: G.1.
CASE: TA2018-04002
ORDINANCE NO.: 9217-19
REQUEST: Review and recommendation to the City Council, of amendments to Appendix C, Downtown Zoning District and Design Standards of the Community Development Code, to establish new sign regulations for the Downtown District.
INITIATED BY: City of Clearwater, Planning and Development Department

BACKGROUND:

On March 1, 2018 City Council reaffirmed the vision of Downtown as a thriving urban core revitalized through the creation of a dense, livable development pattern, quality urban design and a high quality public realm. On August 2, 2018 a new form-based Downtown District and Development Standards was adopted by Council to implement the vision of the Plan which supports the creation of a mixed use, pedestrian-oriented environment that preserves and celebrates the unique features of Downtown and creates attractive places for shopping and living.

Signage plays an important role in making an impression and attracting customers to an area. Well-designed signs not only build a business' brand awareness but also an area's brand. Attractive signage makes an area more memorable and enticing to customers and is an integral component of a vibrant and interesting streetscape. Proposed Ordinance No. 9217-19 establishes new sign regulations for the Downtown District to aid in the creation of a dynamic urban environment.

ANALYSIS:

At present, all sign requirements are located in Article 3, Division 18 Signs. Ordinance No. 9217-19 proposes to revise and relocate regulations applicable to the Downtown District to Appendix C, Division 7, which was reserved for sign standards when the District was adopted. Existing sign regulations allow businesses in the Downtown District to erect the following signage:

- 1 attached sign 24 square feet in area (wall, awning, projecting, etc.); or 1 attached sign 3% of façade area if certain design standards are met.
- Window signage - 25% of window area on façade (no more than 50 square feet).
- Awning graphic (in addition to attached signage) - 25% of awning surface area not to exceed 16 square feet.
- 1 attached sign on rear entrance facing parking lots - 6 square feet in area.
- 1 menu sign per restaurant - 6 square feet in area.
- 1 monument sign six feet in height - 3% of the building façade or 1 square feet for every 3 linear feet of lot frontage (minimum of 24 square feet).

Additionally, the sign code allows for temporary signage including sidewalk signs for retail, restaurants, valet stands and parking garages, as well as four 16 square foot temporary signs per parcel, two of which may be commercial signs. In the event a property or business owner is not satisfied with the signage allowed above, additional signage and/or larger signage could be requested through the Comprehensive Sign Program.

Proposed Amendments to Community Development Code Section 3-1807 and 4-1001

Because sign standards for Downtown are being moved to Appendix C of the Community Development Code it is necessary to delete regulations specific to the Downtown District in Article 3, Division 18 Signs. Deletions are proposed to the monument and attached sign provisions in 3-1807, as well as references to the Clearwater Downtown Redevelopment Plan area. In their place, new language is provided to direct users to the Downtown Sign Standards in Appendix C, Division 7. Article 4, Division 10 Sign Permit is also being amended to reference Appendix C to ensure that sign permit provisions are applicable in the Downtown District.

Proposed Amendments to Community Development Code Section 8-102

Based on the regulations proposed in Ordinance No. 9217-19, new definitions are being added to Section 8-102 for awning sign, sign band, building sign, canopy sign, projecting sign, shingle sign, skyline sign, and under canopy sign. While these sign types are allowed as attached signage under the current code, it is helpful to further define them.

Proposed Amendments to Community Development Code Appendix C Division 7.

When the new Downtown District was adopted, Division 7 of Appendix C was reserved for Sign Standards in anticipation of the creation of new regulations. Locating the sign regulations in Appendix C ensures all regulations pertaining to Downtown are found in one place, which provides for a much more user-friendly experience to Downtown business and property owners.

The new Downtown District sign standards are organized as follows.

- Section C-701 Intent and Purpose
- Section C-702 Applicability
- Section C-703 General Standards
- Section C-704 General Principles for Sign Planning and Design Standards

- Section C-705 Allowable Sign Area, Number and Types of Signs.

Below is an overview of the contents of each section.

Section C-701. Intent and Purpose

While Article 3, Division 18 Signs establishes the intent and purpose of sign regulations throughout the City, this section provides the rationale for establishing standards unique to Downtown. The intent and purpose of these new regulations are to establish improved sign standards that support the use of good design principles for locating signs in an urban environment, complementing Downtown architecture, appropriately scaling signs for pedestrians and drivers and facilitating creative and unique signs consistent with the intent and purpose of the Downtown District.

Section C-702. Applicability

This section requires signage in Downtown to be consistent with the new requirements. If something is not addressed in Division 7 this section clarifies that any relevant provisions of Article 3, Division 18 Signs and Article 4, Division 10, Sign Permits should apply. It also clarifies if there is a conflict between regulations in Article 3, Division 18 and Appendix C, Division 7, the new requirements of Division 7 will govern.

Section C-703. General Standards

The section clarifies that exempt signs, prohibited, and temporary sign requirements found in Sections 3-1803 – 3-1806 apply in the Downtown District. It also specifies that properties in the Downtown District are eligible for the Comprehensive Sign Program.

Section C-704 General Principles for Sign Planning and Design Standards

In an urban environment it is important to have signage that effectively delivers messages to those walking, biking and driving. Section C-704 establishes the concept of a sign hierarchy which is a design principle that supports using different sized signs for different purposes and/or messages. Specifically, the most important information should be placed on the most prominent sign and additional or more defining information should be located on smaller signs. Different sized signs can also provide information to different viewers. Proposed Ordinance No. 9217-19 includes photographs to illustrate how businesses have executed this concept and to help guide business owners develop their signage plan. See the photographs below for two examples. Section C-704 also provides best practices for sign location and alignment, the use of quality materials and appropriate illumination.

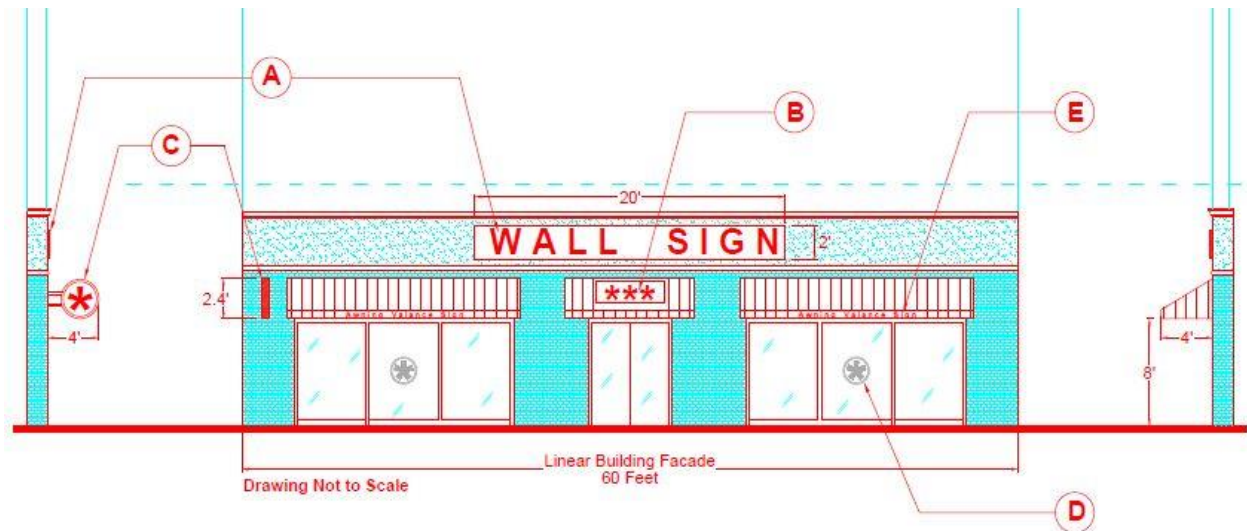


Section C-705 Allowable Sign Area, Number and Types of Signs

The most significant changes to the Downtown sign regulations are included in this section. Because the Downtown District is creating a multi-modal urban environment, new formulas for calculating allowable sign area are proposed. As indicated above, the current sign ordinance allows one attached sign 24 square feet in area per establishment or 3% of the front façade area provided certain design criteria are met. The proposed new formula for building signage is one square foot of signage for each linear foot of building frontage along a street, or a minimum of 24 square feet and a maximum of 100 square feet. If a storefront is 50 feet in length along the street, the business will be entitled to 50 square feet of signage in compliance with certain dimensional requirements and standards based on the sign type(s) proposed. The formula was derived from reviewing numerous Comprehensive Sign Program approvals and developing a formula that was generally consistent with many of those approvals.

Because a variety of signs can create visual interest and an exciting streetscape when the principles of a signage hierarchy are employed, the proposed ordinance allows multiple signs to be erected. Using the proposed formula for building signage outlined above, a business owner could erect up to three of the following building sign types - wall sign, awning sign, canopy sign, projecting sign or shingle sign. It should be noted that there are some limitations on the number of sign types that may be erected on a storefront and those are specified in the Sign Types subsection (C-705.D).

In addition to the three allowable building signs, there are opportunities for more signage in the way of certain awning signs, window signs and under canopy signs. The proposed code excludes signage on awning valances no more than 10 inches in height from any number or area standards. Due to the small size and location of under canopy signs, they are also excluded from the building sign limitations but are limited to three square feet. Many ordinances require window signage to be subject to the building sign formula, however, the proposed ordinance allows for a separate allocation equal to 10% of each window (and glass door) opening on the ground floor along a street frontage. Below is a graphic which illustrates how the new proposed regulations, based on the principles of a sign hierarchy, could be applied.



Sign Calculation Illustration:	
Total Allowable Building Sign Area:	One (1) square foot of sign area per one (1) linear foot of building facade facing the street frontage, or 24 square feet, whichever is greater.
Maximum Buildings Signs Allowed:	3
Linear Feet of Building Facade:	60 feet
Total Building Signage Area Allowed:	60 Square Feet.
A. Wall Sign:	40 Sf. (2'x20')
B. Awning Sign:	9 Sf. (3'x3')
C. Shingle Sign:	6 Sf. (2.4'x2.4')
Total Building Sign Area:	55 Sf.
Number of Building Signs:	3
Additional Allowable Signage	
D. Proposed Window Sign:	24 Sf. (Two signs -12 Sf. Each). 10% of Total Window area.
E. Proposed Awning Valance Sign:	10 Sf. (Two signs - 5 Sf. Each - 160"x0.75=120"x6"= 5 Sf.). Up to 75% of Valance Width.
Total Additional Sign Area:	34 Sf.
Number of Additional Signs:	4
TOTAL SIGN AREA:	89 Sf.
TOTAL NUMBER OF SIGNS:	7

While the use of freestanding signs will be very limited in Downtown due to the lack of significant front setbacks, a new formula is proposed to determine allowable freestanding sign area. The current code limits such signage to one square foot of sign area for every three feet of linear lot frontage or 3% of the building façade facing the street whichever is less but in no case less than 24 square feet and no greater than 36 square feet. The proposed ordinance would change this to one square foot of signage for each linear foot of building frontage no less than 24 square feet and no greater than 64 square feet. The current code only calls for monument style signs which has limited design options whereas the proposed ordinance provides more flexibility by allowing a freestanding sign. No changes are proposed to the maximum six-foot height limitation or to the requirement that a building have a 20-foot front setback to be eligible for a freestanding sign.

The proposed ordinance also provides for a skyline sign, which is a sign located at the top of a high-rise building. One sign is allowed per façade facing a street frontage, however, the property owner can choose on which façade to locate the sign. Skyline signs are proposed for buildings 100 feet and higher and the formula for calculating the permitted sign area is 1 square foot of sign

area for each foot of building height. For example, a building that is 150 feet in height is entitled to a sign 150 square feet in area. While you can find these types of signs in Clearwater, they have been approved through the Comprehensive Sign Program.

There are two sign types which are currently allowed by the existing sign code that will continue to be allowed in Downtown with no changes. One is a building sign located on a rear entry facing a parking lot or Clearwater Harbor and the other is a sidewalk sign.

As mentioned above, Section C-705 includes specific standards related to the allowable sign types/designs, many of which are based on current code requirements. These standards are important as quality signage will contribute to the brand of Downtown and will ensure the use of multiple signs will not negatively impact the streetscape. Lastly, for each sign type allowed (awning signs, canopy signs, freestanding signs, projecting signs, shingle signs, sidewalk signs, skyline signs, under canopy signs, wall signs and window signs), Section C-705 provides a description of the sign type, the number of signs allowed per establishment, building or parcel, and dimensional requirements and standards.

CRITERIA FOR TEXT AMENDMENTS:

Community Development Code Section 4-601 sets forth the procedures and criteria for reviewing text amendments. All text amendments must comply with the following:

1. The proposed amendment is consistent with and furthers the goals, policies and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

A review of the Clearwater Comprehensive Plan identified the following Goals, Objectives and Policies which will be furthered by the proposed Code amendments:

Goal A.3 The City of Clearwater shall ensure that all development or redevelopment initiatives meet the safety, environmental, and aesthetic needs of the City through consistent implementation of the Community Development Code.

The intent and purpose established for Downtown signage in Ordinance No 9217-19 is to implement the vision established in the Clearwater Downtown Redevelopment Plan. The proposed sign regulations for Downtown are specifically created to implement good design principles that result in signage that is geared to different viewers and ones that are appropriately located and sized and made with quality materials to create an attractive urban environment.

Objective A.3.1 All signage within the City of Clearwater shall be consistent with the Clearwater sign code, as found within the Community Development Code, and all proposed signs shall be evaluated to determine their effectiveness in reducing visual clutter and in enhancing the safety and attractiveness of the streetscape.

Proposed Ordinance No. 9217-19 includes amendments which balance business needs to have effective signage with the City's objective to have an uncluttered, safe and attractive environment. Allowable sign area and numbers of signs are proposed to be increased in a reasonable manner to create a vibrant environment in the City's urban core. Establishing limits on illumination, instituting dimensional requirements and standards coupled with the use of design principles based on creating a signage hierarchy will minimize and prevent visual clutter, enhance safety and aid in the creation of a vibrant streetscape.

Policy A.3.1.1 Commercial signs in Clearwater shall be restricted to discourage the proliferation of visual clutter, promote community aesthetics, provide for highway safety, and to allow the identification of business locations.

Proposed Ordinance No. 9217-19 allows multiple signs to be erected by right, however, it also establishes reasonable design standards and size parameters, and promotes the use of a hierarchy of signage. These requirements will work together to promote a visually attractive environment and provide businesses with reasonable opportunities to reach a variety of viewers.

2. The proposed amendment furthers the purposes of the Community Development Code and other City ordinances and actions designed to implement the Plan.

The proposed text amendments will further the purposes of the CDC in that it will be consistent with the following purposes set forth in Section 1-103.

- It is the purpose of this Development Code to implement the Comprehensive Plan of the city; to promote the health, safety, general welfare and quality of life in the city; to guide the orderly growth and development of the city; to establish rules of procedure for land development approvals; to enhance the character of the city and the preservation of neighborhoods; and to enhance the quality of life of all residents and property owners of the city. (*Section 1-103.A., CDC*)
- It is the further purpose of this Development Code to make beautification of the city a matter of the highest priority and to require that existing and future uses and structures in the city are attractive and well-maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law. (*Section 1-103.D, CDC*)
- Protect the character and the social and economic stability of all parts of the city through the establishment of reasonable standards which encourage the orderly and beneficial development of land within the city. (*Section 1-103.E.2, CDC*)
- Preserve the natural resources and aesthetic character of the community for both the resident and tourist population consistent with the city's economic underpinnings. (*Section 1-103.E.5, CDC*)

- Coordinate the provisions of this Development code with corollary provisions related to parking, fences and walls, signs, minimum habitable area and like supplementary requirements designed to establish an integrated and complete regulatory framework for the use of land and water within the city. (*Section 1-103.E.12, CDC*)

The amendments proposed in Ordinance No. 9217-19 will further the above referenced purposes by implementing the Comprehensive Plan policies related to signage and Downtown, establishing a regulatory framework that allows additional sign area and the use of multiple signs based on the principles of a signage hierarchy in order to support a vibrant and attractive urban environment and result in signage that is geared to those walking, biking and driving. These regulations will ensure signage that promotes vehicular and pedestrian safety and will enhance the Downtown character and aid in the creation of an attractive built environment while also contributing to the economic stability of Downtown.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed amendments to the Community Development Code relocate the sign regulations for Downtown from Article 3, Division 18 to Appendix C. They provide new formulas for determining allowable sign area and allow flexibility in the number of signs allowed by right and provide appropriate design requirements to ensure such signage does not create clutter and result in an unattractive environment. The proposed ordinance is consistent with and will further the goals of the Clearwater Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Redevelopment Plan and the purposes of the Community Development Code. Based upon the above, the Planning and Development Department recommends:

APPROVAL of Ordinance No. 9217-19 that amends the Community Development Code.

Prepared by Planning and Development Department Staff: _____

Gina L. Clayton
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ATTACHMENT: Ordinance No. 9217-19