

Meeting

May 27, 2015 - City Commission Meeting

Category

6:00 P.M. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Subject

First and Only Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 15-O-07--Amending the Sign Code in the Tallahassee Land Development Code related to signage for multi-family housing and within the Multi-Modal Transportation District -- Karen Jumonville

Type

Public Hearing

For more information, please contact: Glenn Dodson, Building Official, (850)891-7019.

Statement of Issue

The City's Sign Code establishes standards to protect and promote the health and safety of persons within the City as well as avoid an environment that encourages visual blight. The City regulates signage per Chapter 7 of the Land Development Code. The City has continually received requests for variances from business entities related to signage for multifamily housing projects and areas within the Multimodal Transportation District (MMTD). City staff from the City Manager's office, Planning Department, Growth Management Department, and the City Attorney's office have met and discussed specific requirements in the sign code that have been problematic for developers and business entities. The following changes to the sign code would provide clarity and be beneficial to the development community without compromising the quality of our sign code regulations;

- 1) Maintain the existing code provisions related to the square footage of allowable signage, but for development within the MMTD, allow each establishment in a multiple-occupancy building to add an additional wall sign of 24 square feet on the rear of the building, not to exceed 50 percent of the allowable sign area on the front of the building so that signs may be better seen from the parking lot. Currently, a sign is allowed behind the building but it is limited to six square feet. This change is proposed for the MMTD area only.
- 2) Amend the sign code to specify that the current eight-foot maximum sign height applies only to ground signs and allow wall signs to be placed anywhere on the building, provided the sign doesn't exceed the height of the building.
- 3) Remove the sign band limitation that currently applies to the All Saints ASN-C and ASN-D zoning districts and University Village Design Review District. This provision requires that wall-mounted signs be located within a band three feet high beginning at 12 feet 6 inches above the sidewalk.
- 4) Amend the sign code to clarify that ground signs in the MMTD on an arterial roadway are allowed to be pole-mounted signs and are limited to a maximum height of 25 feet. Ground signs on other streets are required to be monument type signs and shall not exceed ten feet in height.

Recommended Action

1. Hold the first and only public hearing on Ordinance 15-O-07 amending the sign code, and adopt the ordinance.

Fiscal Impact

The business and development community applying for a variance with the Board of Adjustments and Appeals incurs the cost of an application fee of \$833.00 and any related cost of hiring a consultant, and City staff time is needed to facilitate the review of variance requests by the Board of Adjustment and Appeals. The proposed changes would reduce the number of variances needed by the business and development community.

Supplemental Material/Issue Analysis

History/Facts & Issues

The City Commission introduced Ordinance 15-O-07 (Attachment #1) at its May 13, 2015 meeting. The Sign Code changes will address issues experienced by developers and businesses in the MMTD. The City's Sign Code provides standards to allow businesses the opportunity to advertise their locations and promote patronage by citizens. The Code, however, prohibits the placement of an additional advertising sign on the rear of the building when the building has only one street frontage. The MMTD requires buildings to be located in close proximity to the street frontage which means that off-street parking for the building is typically placed in the rear of the building. Business entities seeking to provide signs visible to patrons in rear parking areas are required to obtain a variance to the sign code for such additional signs.

The City's Sign Code provides standards to restrict the size and height of signs in multifamily residential developments. The multifamily developments have changed over the last several years with more vertical construction resulting in four and five story buildings. The requirement in the sign code limiting the height of wall or ground signs to eight feet does not allow the utilization of the full facade of these multistory buildings.

The City's Sign Code incorporates design standards in the All Saints and University Village Design Review Districts by limiting the placement of signs within a three-foot sign band. The recent developments along Gaines Street have retail, parking, and residential uses within the same buildings. The design of most of these buildings includes awnings and canopies along the pedestrian friendly sidewalks. Generally the wall signs for the establishments have to be placed outside the three-foot sign band to avoid conflict with the canopies or other uses of the building. The removal of this requirement from the Code will also provide flexibility to developers as to where they place their signs on buildings.

The sign code provisions in the MMTD section of the zoning code were relocated to the City's Sign Code. In the transfer of the Code section a scrivener's error was made when separating the ground sign provisions and the phrase "all other" was left out of the section. The Code section allowed ground signs on arterial streets to be pole-mounted and up to 25 feet in height. All other ground signs are required to be monument-type and a maximum of ten feet in height.

Options

1. Hold the first and only public hearing on Ordinance 15-O-07 amending the sign code, and adopt the ordinance.

Pros:

- Provides for improved visibility of signage in the MMTD and reduces the need for sign variances

Cons:

- Increases signage on the rear of buildings in the MMTD and allows signage flexibility in the All Saints and University Village Design Review Districts

2. Do not hold the first and only public hearing and do not adopt Ordinance 15-O-07 amending the sign code.

Pros:

- Does not increase signage on the rear of buildings in the MMTD and allow signage flexibility in the All Saints and University Village Design Review Districts

Cons:

- Would not provide for improved visibility of signage in the MMTD and reduce the need for sign variances

3. Provide alternative direction.