

Sign Regulation Committee – Summary of Meeting

Monday, September 22, 2008

Conference Room 1, Urban Government Center

Present:

Jo Bishop, Donnie Blake, Bonnie Betz Loeb, Keith Eiken, April Robbins, Debbie Brent, Steven Ward, Bob Rueff.

Staff:

Ken Baker, Christopher French, and Chris Cestaro (notes)

Summary of the Meeting:

Items for discussion were handed out by staff prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Christopher French introduced the subjects of today's meeting, which are attached sign regulations. He also showed a Power Point presentation that showed examples of some of the variances that have been approved for attached signs (area of the signs.) He explained that the mounted height of attached signage was currently determined by the form district.

He reviewed the handout, which provided information about the current regulations for attached signage.

He said that one issue that had been brought up at previous meetings was the idea of regulating signage based on form district and land use, not by zoning regulations, because the form district would better reflect the character of the area. He reminded the Committee that communities can regulate signage by size, place, time, and manner. Definitions of land use can be as broad as "residential" versus "non-residential", or it can be more specific, such as "single-family residential" versus "multi-family residential", etc.

Two issues that can arise when removing zoning as a regulator is how to regulate size of attached signs and determining the mounting height.

A Committee member asked how many categories there will be for land use. Mr. French said staff wanted to discuss that with this Committee. That would mean going through the regulations and determining what criteria to use. He said using the form district criteria can be more useful, because it takes the character of an area into account as well as the land uses.

Mr. French reviewed the current regulations; some examples from other cities about how they regulate attached signage; and discussed some exceptions that he had found that BOZA had approved variances for.

He mentioned some detailed options and questions to consider - how would form districts be used to alter the allowable attached signage?

Mr. French mentioned that, for club signs, one thing the Committee may want to consider is that the regulations could leave this up to the Board of Zoning Adjustment to determine the size of the signs because it is a Conditional Use Permit under discretionary review.

Some questions for the Committee to consider: Should office signs in OR zones be allowed to use the non-residential attached sign table that is based on façade signs? How would this impact compatibility in residential areas? How can form districts be used to resolve this potential issue?

He discussed how to use tables to regulate attached signage by form district. In response to a Committee member's question, Mr. French said it had been decided at the last Sign Regulation Committee meeting to take out zoning out of the sign regulations and regulate in a different way (form and land use were the two most likely criteria.)

He detailed different ways that various cities determine their sign criteria (including lane speed.) In response to a question from a Committee member, he explained that Nashville (which does not have form districts) divides the city into neighborhoods/areas, does individual neighborhood plans, and then goes back and does overlay districts to regulate specific design issues. He reviewed ways that these cities calculate façade area, maximum heights, sign area, etc.

Mr. French reviewed the advantages of using land use as opposed to zoning when determining what kind of signage is appropriate. Form districts and uses were discussed, especially regarding compatibility issues.

Mr. French asked the Committee to consider how should the permitted area and the maximum mounting height of attached signage be regulated by a combination of form district and land use?

He showed examples of variance requests submitted to the Louisville Planning Commission for attached signage that had been requested since 2004. The mounting height issue was approved most often of all the requests. The Committee members discussed specific cases that they were familiar with. One concern was a regulation that determines mounting height by the inside ceiling height.

A Committee member said that Louisville Metro seemed to have the most restrictive square footage allowances of all the other cities that Mr. French studied. Square footage for signs for various institutions and uses were discussed. Criteria for variances and waivers were also discussed.

Mr. French asked the Committee if they wanted to stay with the current attached signage criteria that involves the façade area of the building. A Committee member asked about projecting signs (signs that project out over the sidewalk, doorway, etc. He said it does not enhance the buildings or the neighborhoods (one example mentioned was Frankfort Avenue/Clifton neighborhood.) It was pointed out that, in his neighborhood, the buildings are right up against the street and a façade sign would not be seen by pedestrians or drivers.

Judy Francis discussed form districts and asked that they be “split out” and their differences detailed in any table used in the LDC. She wants to evaluate where regulation could be lost by using form district criteria only. Non-residential uses that are allowed in residential areas – is that a zoning issue?

Near the close of the meeting, Mr. French said that it had been determined by the Committee to use façade area and some type of percentage – he said he could come up with some potential options for how to deal with attached signage for the Committee to examine. Ms. Francis asked if the Committee had decided that it wants to change the percentages now being used. Some Committee members who are small business owners said that obtaining a variance can be very time-consuming and can take months to complete. Mr. French said the regulations could still set criteria/restrictions by land use. He said that, before the next meeting, he would come up with three examples to show the Committee members about how to deal with attached signage, whether it is multi-family, institutional, or non-residential/commercial.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:30 p.m.