

PLANNING & REDEVELOPMENT STAFF REPORT DESIGN COMMITTEE MEETING March 15, 2007

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ITEM III-B: SIGN ORDINANCE UPDATE WORKSHOP

<u>REQUEST</u>

The Planning & Redevelopment Department requests that the Design Committee hold a workshop to discuss potential revisions to the Sign Ordinance.

Applicant – Roseville Planning & Redevelopment Department

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Redevelopment Department recommends that the Design Committee discuss the suggested revisions to the Sign Ordinance, accept public comment, and provide direction to staff. Depending on the discussion at the workshop, staff has provided three options on how to proceed:

- 1) If warranted, direct staff to schedule a follow-up workshop to complete the discussion;
- 2) Direct staff to bring back more information on a particular issue or issues; and/or,
- 3) Direct staff to bring back a Draft Sign Ordinance based on the Committee's direction.

BACKGROUND

At the beginning of the year, staff initiated an administrative "clean-up" of the City's Sign Ordinance. The existing Ordinance has been in place since 1986, and has been amended over time to address various situations. These previous amendments have caused various sections of the Ordinance to be modified, removed, or added, which impacts the "readability" and user-friendliness of the Ordinance.

With the administrative clean-up, Planning staff is also taking the opportunity to examine other minor changes to sign standards, such as the addition of wall sign standards for corporate center buildings and large floor plate ("big box") users adjacent to Highways 65 and 80. The goals for the proposed update are as follows:

- Implement administrative updates (re-formatting, correcting typographical errors, etc.)
- Clarify, expand, and add definitions
- Add pictures and graphics to clarify standards and to enhance "user friendliness"
- Establish criteria for wall signs for buildings exceeding three stories (such as corporate center buildings)
- Establish standards for large footprint users adjacent to Interstate 80 and Highway 65
- Simplify the permit process for signs in building complexes
- Update to reflect recent legislation and case law
- Create a color and graphic intensive "sign manual" consistent with the City's marketing and branding efforts.

The purpose of this workshop is to share information with the Committee and the public, and to provide a forum to discuss any issues or concerns related to the Sign Ordinance update. Before beginning the discussion of the specific areas that staff is working on updating, staff would like to provide some additional background to establish a framework for the discussion that follows.

THE SIGN ORDINANCE

The Sign Ordinance was originally adopted in 1969, and was overhauled in 1986. There have been various amendments since the 1986 overhaul to address different or unique situations. Most notably, these amendments included provisions for the Roseville Automall signs, Historic District signs, temporary banners, the inflatable Snoopy balloon at the grand opening of the Roseville Galleria, and most recently, programmable electric signs.

In its current form, the Sign Ordinance has been working well for the City and business community. Roseville's retail economy is strong and continues to grow. According to the City's Economic Development and Demographic profile for 2005-2006, retail sales grew from the previous year by 15%, with a total of \$3.5 billion in total retail sales. Roseville ranks 9th in the state for total retail sales, following only larger metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Jose.

The goal of this Sign Ordinance update is to make minor changes to the document. Given Roseville's successful economic climate, staff believes that a major overhaul of the Ordinance is not necessary or warranted. The following discussion provides a brief overview of each topic area proposed for modification.

Increased Wall Sign Area for Freeway-Fronting Large Floor Plate Commercial and Office Users

The City has processed a number of Sign Variance requests for large floor plate users with freeway frontage, including Wal-Mart, Target, Lowe's, Sam's Club, Home Depot, Fry's, Toy's R Us/Costco, and the Highland Pointe (AKA Panatonni buildings). In approving these Variance requests, the Design Committee has concluded that additional wall sign area was reasonable and appropriate based on the location of the users (adjacent to Highways 65 and 80) and the size of the structures involved (100,000 s.f. and larger).

Rather than continue to process Sign Variances, staff is recommending that the Ordinance be modified to include



wall sign standards for these uses. Based on precedent established through past Variance approvals by the Design Committee, staff recommends that the wall sign area allowed for these large floor plate users be increased to 300 square feet. The increased sign area would only be permitted for buildings that directly front onto Highways 65 or 80, and have a floor area exceeding 100,000 square feet.

Corporate Center Office Buildings (4+ Stories)

A component of the City's recently adopted Economic Development Strategy is to designate corporate center locations in Roseville along Interstate 80, State Route 65 and major arterials for future multi-story development. In response to this strategy, the City Council formed the Blue Ribbon Corporate Center Committee (BRCC), consisting of eight members comprised of two councilmembers, representatives from Transportation, Planning and Public Utilities Commissions, and three at-large appointees. One of the recommendations of the BRCC was to establish sign standards that allow increased wall sign area for taller corporate center buildings. The Committee did not specify an appropriate amount of wall sign area.



The Design Committee has taken action on Sign Variance requests for the four-story Panattoni office buildings, and more recently, the five story Stone Point office towers. Based on the precedent established with these approvals, staff recommends the following standards for office and/or corporate center buildings:

- Up to 3 floors would be allowed 200 square feet (no change from current standard),
- Four stories would be allowed 300 square feet, and
- Five stories or greater would be allowed 500 square feet.

Staff believes that an increase in wall sign area commensurate to number of floors is an appropriate standard, as taller buildings require larger signs to be legible from the street and parking lot level.

Simplify Process for Building Complexes

The existing Sign Ordinance contains standards for "individual uses" and "building complexes." A building complex is defined as a "development of four or more buildings, tenants, or uses intended to function in a joint manner, regardless of sequence of buildout" (RMC 17.04.060). In order to ensure consistency of signage within building complexes, the Sign Ordinance requires review and approval by the City of a Planned Sign Permit Program (PSPP). The PSPP identifies acceptable materials, colors, font style, maximum letter height and other pertinent criteria established by the landowner that is intended to ensure consistency and architectural compatibility of signage within a complex.

While PSPPs are necessary to ensure orderly and attractive sign development, the process for approval can often be cumbersome for applicants and requires a significant commitment of staff resources. Staff has found that the majority of staff time spent on PSPPs is devoted to modifications of existing sign programs. These modifications are typically minor in nature, yet require preparation of public notices and staff reports.

A goal of the Sign Ordinance update is to simplify the PSPP permitting process, but not eliminate it in its entirety. One direction that staff will be exploring is to continue requiring approvals for initial PSPP submittals, but to permit over-the-counter approvals of "minor" modifications to PSPPs. Minor modifications could include changes in copy type, return and face color, method of illumination, and minor increases or decreases (e.g., $\pm 10\%$) in permitted area or height (provided the change complies with underlying Sign Ordinance standards). The design standards established in PSPPs are determined by the landlord in an effort to enhance the visual appearance of a center, and are often more restrictive than Sign Ordinance requirements.

Additional Prohibited Signs

Searchlights

For the past several years, Planning Department and Code Enforcement staff have received numerous complaints regarding "grand opening" searchlights, particularly in commercial centers adjacent to residential neighborhoods. Searchlights have proliferated in the City in recent years. Staff has observed on any given weekend night three to four searchlights operating simultaneously within the City. The searchlights result in off-site glare, which is contrary to the objectives of the Community Design Guidelines, disrupts the night sky, and often results in lighting impacts to residents. Note that enforcing a prohibition of searchlights presents administrative difficulties for the City, since searchlights operate at night after normal City business hours. The intent of the prohibition is to curb the



proliferation of searchlights; enforcement would continue to be initiated on a complaint basis.

Another common complaint concerns "mobile billboards," or vehicles that are designed with static or rotating message boards that drive throughout the City with the sole purpose of advertising products and services of paying customers. The common complaint is that the mobile billboards present a traffic safety hazard, as drivers focus on the advertisement displayed, rather than the road. Another concern is the aesthetic impacts of these signs, which are similar to the traditional billboards that the City has chosen in the past not to allow.



In response to the number of complaints received, staff is recommending that searchlights and mobile billboards be considered for prohibition and requests that the Design Committee provide direction on how to proceed with the draft Ordinance.

The Committee should note that similar to searchlights, mobile billboards also present administrative enforcement difficulties, as these signs are constantly mobile and Code Enforcement staff are not authorized to make vehicle stops. Should the Committee direct staff to continue to pursue this item, staff will explore the feasibility of enforcement and will provide additional information when a draft ordinance is presented for the Committee's consideration.

Clarify and Expand Definitions / Add Graphics

Another goal of the Ordinance update is to make the Ordinance easier to read and administer. A critical component of ease of use is how terms and standards are applied. Staff has identified at least three new definitions that should be added to the ordinance, including "searchlights," "mobile billboards," and "flag." Staff will be reviewing the document further and additional definitions may be added as needed, or existing definitions expanded to clarify meaning.

In addition to new and expanded definitions, staff intends to include graphics and/or pictures that will help clarify particular definitions and standards. The use of graphics in the current Sign Ordinance is limited, and the graphics that are incorporated are antiquated. By increasing the use of graphics, staff hopes to create a more user-friendly ordinance for the community to understand, and staff to administer.

Consistency With Current Law and Case Law

As part of the Sign Ordinance update, the City Attorney's Office will be reviewing recent legislation and case law regarding signs and making recommendations for updates as necessary. Topic areas currently being researched by the Attorney's Office include off-site signs, political signs, and the inclusion of a severability clause. More details of these changes will be provided when a draft ordinance is brought back to the Committee for consideration.

CONCLUSION

As previously noted, staff believes that the current Sign Ordinance has served the City and business community well over the last 20 years. Based on our review, staff believes that a comprehensive overhaul of the Sign Ordinance is not needed or warranted. Rather, specific areas have been targeted for improvement to respond to changing conditions (e.g., corporate centers) and to bring the appearance of the document into the 21st century.

Staff recommends that the Design Committee accept public comment, provide direction to staff on the issues discussed in this report and at the workshop, and direct staff to:

- A. Schedule another workshop to discuss issues further, if warranted;
- B. Provide additional information on a particular issue; and/or,
- C. Bring back a Draft Sign Ordinance that reflects the Committee's direction.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Current Sign Ordinance