



## Legislation Text

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### **CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

#### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

Receive feedback from the Planning and Zoning Commission on Downtown Design Standards and direct staff accordingly

**DEPARTMENT:** Transportation, Engineering and Development

**SUBMITTED BY:** Gabrielle Mattingly, Community Planner

#### **BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:**

At their January 19, 2022 meeting, the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) recommended the addition of a new design guideline for downtown buildings. Staff is seeking City Council direction regarding the PZC's recommendation.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

##### ***July 21, 2021 PZC Meeting***

At the July 21 meeting, staff sought PZC input regarding the current Code interpretation with respect to determining which design elements on a building façade should be included in the calculation of signage.

Staff had been interpreting the Code such that any painted façade area and/or the new accent material would be included in the calculation of maximum allowable wall signage if those features help to identify, or are associated with, the business brand. This interpretation was applicable to buildings in the Downtown and citywide. However, because staff had noticed a shift in business branding and façade design proposals which could not meet this standard, staff sought PZC input to determine if the current interpretation was still appropriate.

On July 21, the PZC discussed staff's interpretation and the applicability of both the Downtown and Citywide Design Guidelines and raised concern that a change to the interpretation may lead to a myriad of bright colors throughout the City, particularly within the Downtown, and requested bright colors continue to be limited in application. The Commission further explained that façade updates of individual tenants within shopping centers should be cohesive in terms of style and color with the entire center. Staff responded that the Downtown Design Standards and Citywide Design Guidelines will continue to be enforced and noted these guidelines limit the use of bright colors as accents (defined as being 10-25% of the building façade) and require neutral colors to be used as the primary base color.

The PZC unanimously agreed that staff's interpretation of the Code can be broadened to exclude wall colors/accent materials associated with the business from the calculation of allowable wall signage.

**November 3, 2021 PZC Meeting**

At its meeting on November 3, 2021, the PZC expressed concerns regarding recent façade changes made to Jojo’s Shake Bar in the Downtown. The Commission requested staff bring an agenda item to a future meeting to reexamine the allowable accents permitted and recommended the following changes be considered:

1. creation of a color palette,
2. creation of a uniform shape for accents, and
3. height restrictions for the location of the accent colors placed on building facades.

The PZC requested that staff seek input from the Downtown Advisory Commission (DAC) to determine if any changes were needed to the Downtown Design Standards (summary of DAC feedback is below).

**December 6, 2021 Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC) Meeting**

Staff gave a presentation regarding the Downtown Design Standards to the Downtown Advisory Committee. DAC includes a variety of members, including representatives from the Naperville Development Partnership, Downtown Naperville Alliance, and Chamber of Commerce. The minutes from this meeting are attached for reference.

Overall, DAC unanimously voted that the City maintain the design standards and the current application (including the revised interpretation issued on July 21, 2021). DAC further suggested that staff pursue or investigate an additional provision to encourage businesses to use accent colors/materials as way to highlight historical architectural features within their design.

Below is a summary table of the design standards and DAC’s feedback:

| <b>Design Standard</b>  | <b>DAC Feedback</b>  |
|---|--|
| <i>Do not apply paint to masonry surfaces where none previously existed</i>   | Agreed with the current code application noting it provides protection to buildings that have not been painted   |
| <i>Staining natural masonry is acceptable</i>   | Concurred that staining is a good alternative option to painting natural masonry   |
| <i>Primary Building Colors (75-90% of the façade) must complement hues of nearby buildings. Typical colors include natural brick and stone shades of red, buff, white, cream and gray</i> | Agreed with requiring the primary building color to be neutral   |
| <i>Accent Colors (10-25% of the façade) can be brighter or darker hues</i>  | Supported the use of accent colors and noted that property owners and tenants should be encouraged to use accent colors to highlight a building’s architectural features |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Accent colors are/are not considered signage</i> | Agreed that accent colors should not be counted towards the allowable signage; agreed that logos/branding that are clearly identifiable with a brand should be counted towards the allowable signage |
| <i>Awnings</i>                                      | Raised no concerns with the current design recommendations for awnings, recommended creating a standard for when damaged awnings need to be fixed  |

**DISCUSSION:**

**January 19, 2022 PZC Meeting**

Staff provided an overview of the feedback received from DAC and requested the PZC provide direction on any recommended changes to the Downtown Design Standards.

The Planning and Zoning Commission concurred with DAC’s recommendation that property owners and tenants should be encouraged to use accent colors to highlight a building’s architectural features. However, the Commission raised concern with proposed accent colors that include a creative design noting that if there is a broad interpretation of accents which allow for creative designs and, depending on the interpretation, the entire feel and appearance of the Downtown landscape may change.

Accordingly, PZC recommended the creation of a *new* guideline that would require accent colors which include a design element, but are not clearly identifiable with a brand or logo (and therefore not counted as signage), be reviewed and approved by prior to their allowance in the Downtown. Examples of design elements which would be subject to PZC review may include geometric shapes or artwork proposed on a facade.

Per Section 6-3-2:2.4, the PZC is the designated commission to receive and consider appeals from the adopted design guidelines taking into account factors such as contextual appropriateness, consistency with the City's general policies, and community benefit. Per Section 6-3-4:2.1, the Planning and Zoning Commission’s determination on the Design Guidelines request shall be final, unless this decision is appealed by the Petitioner to the City Council.

If the new guideline is approved, PZC review and approval would *only be required when a design element is proposed on a downtown façade*. Façade changes that include new logos/branding would continue to be reviewed by staff through the sign permit process and façade changes that include accent colors that do not have a design element would also continue to be reviewed by staff through the building permit process.

Attachment 1 provides examples of façade changes that would/would not require PZC review.

**Requested City Council Direction**

Staff is seeking direction from the City Council regarding the proposed creation of a new Downtown Design guideline requiring accent colors which include a design element (but are not counted

towards the permitted signage) to be reviewed and approved by the PZC prior to their allowance within the Downtown.

If the Council concurs with the recommended guideline, staff will begin requiring PZC review and approval for any downtown façade change that proposes a design element immediately.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

N/A