



Legislation Text

File #: 21-0965, Version: 1

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:

Provide feedback on staff's interpretation of Municipal Code Section 6-16-5 pertaining to commercial wall signage

DEPARTMENT: Transportation, Engineering and Development

SUBMITTED BY: Gabrielle Mattingly, Community Planner

BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:

Per Section 6-3-2:2.5 (Planning and Zoning Commission: Jurisdiction) and (Section 6-3-4:2 (Appeals: Decision of the Planning and Zoning Commission, staff seeks feedback from the Planning and Zoning Commission as to whether painted facades or accent materials applied to facades which are representative of a commercial business should be included in the calculation of wall signage allowances.

BACKGROUND:

Sign permits are required for permanent wall, awning and canopy signage for commercial and institutional properties. The total square footage permitted for all wall, awning and canopy signage on a street facing façade is 1.5 square feet of signage for each linear foot of façade (up to a maximum of 300 sq.ft. of signage per qualifying façade). For example, if a tenant space has a 30' wide façade, the maximum signage allowance would be 45 square feet total for all wall, awning and canopy signage. The code provides flexibility on the way this signage may be installed and allows wall signage to be painted on, attached, or erected against a wall of a building or structure.

Per Section 6-16-2 (Signs: Definitions), the following definitions are provided for reference:

AWNING/CANOPY SIGN:	A sign permanently mounted, painted, or attached to an awning, canopy, or marquee.
SIGN, COMMERCIAL:	Display of speech on behalf of a company or individual for the intent of making a profit. Commercial Speech is economic in nature intended to identify, advertise, or direct attention to a business service or product.
WALL SIGN:	A sign attached or erected against a wall of a building or structure with the exposed face of the sign parallel to the plane of the wall designed to be visible from the property frontage.

SIGN:	Any object, device, display or structure, or part thereof, which is used to advertise, identify, display, direct or attract attention by any means including words, printed text, letters, figures, designs, symbols, pictures, fixtures, colors, motion, illumination or projected images for the purpose of delivering a message.
-------	---

DISCUSSION:

Staff has received an increased volume of sign permit requests which are associated with façade updates to refresh and modernize the exterior of the business. These façade updates have included painting the exterior façade or adding new accent materials to areas of the façade to help identify the business.

The City of Naperville Building Design Guidelines (2007) and the Downtown Design Standards (2011) discourage painting of natural masonry materials. In the instances where a façade is currently painted or where alternative building materials exist, staff permits painting and recommends the paint color follow the recommendations provided in the Design Guidelines. These recommendations include use of an earth tone color as the primary base color and use of accent colors that complement the selected primary base color. The Guidelines note that bright colors, which are described as colors that have an intense hue, are discouraged as they detract from the overall building design and context and should be used sparingly as accents that visually activate pedestrian areas or convey information as part of a sign (City of Naperville Building Design Guidelines, p. 26).

In recent sign permit submittals, the proposed painted portions and accent materials added to areas of the façade are often associated with the business branding and are used to help identify the business. For example, a business whose logo is black, white and red may install their proposed wall signage on a red band painted across the building façade. Per the guidance provided in the Design Guidelines and the sign code, staff has interpreted that when the color of the painted or accented portions of the façade identify the business, they should be included in the calculation of the maximum signage allowance (note: awnings which do not include text or logos are reviewed through a building permit only and are not included in the signage calculation).

Signage Example - “Naperville” business

In the example provided in the attachments, the existing commercial business is “Naperville”. The business façade is 50’ wide. Per code, 75 square feet of wall, awning and canopy signage is permitted. The existing wall and awning signage is well below the maximum allowance at a total of 70 square feet (reference ‘Existing Signage’ attachment).

The “Naperville” business wishes to update the exterior façade of the building with new signage and has submitted sign permits to the City for review (reference ‘Proposed Signage’ attachment). As part of this update, the business proposes to repaint an architectural feature from a neutral color to the same color as the branding for the business. Staff’s interpretation of the code for signage allowances and the guidance which is provided in the Design Guidelines indicates the painted portion of the façade is part of the business signage and should be included in the calculation of maximum signage allowance. When the painted feature is included in the calculation, the business exceeds the maximum permitted signage by 425 square feet (total of 500 sf square feet of signage proposed). Staff would reject the sign permit application and notify the business they will either need to reduce the proposed signage to comply with the code or seek approval of a variance.

Feedback on Staff's Interpretation

Requests similar to the example noted above are being submitted more and more frequently. Staff believes that these requests are being driven by an industry change with respect to building design and marketing, i.e., whereas neutral colors were prominent in the early 2000s, bolder building designs and the establishment of identifiable and unique logos appear to be in trend today. Because staff's approach is based on an interpretation of the existing code regulations, staff is seeking feedback from the Planning and Zoning Commission as to whether this interpretation is accurate and should continue to be enforced (with requests to exceed maximum signage considered on a variance basis) or if the wall color should no longer be counted towards signage allowances. Please note: staff will continue to count any graphics, logos or text attached/added to the façade of a commercial businesses towards the maximum permitted signage allowable by code.

Per Section 6-3-2:2.5 (Planning and Zoning Commission: Jurisdiction), the PZC reviews all appeals for any determinations made by the Zoning Administrator under the Zoning Title. Decisions made by the Planning and Zoning Commission on the interpretation of the Zoning Administrator related to the building design guidelines are final. Staff will share the findings of the PZC with the City Council for their information.