
MEMORANDUM

TO: Metropolitan Planning Commission **AGENDA ITEM# 8:**
FROM: Mike Reynolds, Planner II
Mark Donaldson, Executive Director
DATE: March 3, 2010
SUBJECT: Amendment to the City of Knoxville Zoning Ordinance, Article V. Sec. 10.
Signs, billboards, and other advertising structures – 3-B-10-OA

Request:

The Downtown Design Review Board (the Board) has made a recommendation to amend the Knoxville Zoning Ordinance, Article V. Sec. 10. (Sign Regulations), to allow signs that project from a building to have a minimum clearance with a sidewalk of seven (7) feet within the H-1 (historic overlay) district and the D-1 (downtown design overlay) district.

Authority for the Downtown Design Review Board Action:

Article IV, Sec. 26.E.3 of the Knoxville Zoning Ordinance states a responsibility of the Board is to “advise the mayor, city council, metropolitan planning commission and historic zoning commission on means to improve downtown design, incentives that could be used to foster good design, and programs that should be pursued to foster beautification, safety and related public purposes downtown.”

Background:

Since the Board’s inception, a majority of the applications they review are for signs. Through this they have found that the current requirement of a sidewalk clearance of ten (10) feet for signs that project from a building to be excessive. The Board requested that staff review the current regulations and make recommendations for amending the sign regulations.

Staff from MPC and the City (Policy and Communications, and Engineering) met and created recommended options for the Board. These included:

1. Reducing the sidewalk clearance height to nine (9) feet (which is the same as for awnings),
2. Reducing the sidewalk clearance height to seven (7) feet and requiring requests below either eight (8) or nine (9) feet to be approved by the Board, or
3. Reducing the sidewalk clearance height to seven feet (7).

Findings:

The Board, through its discussion, determined that the option to reduce the sidewalk clearance to seven (7) feet for signs that project from a building was appropriate and made the recommendation to MPC and City Council to consider this action.

The Board acknowledged that not all signs should be allowed to have a clear height of seven (7) feet above a sidewalk but they, or staff, can make that determination on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the size of the sign and the surrounding development.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the recommended changes to Article V. Sec. 10.A.11 & 19.

SIGN SIDEWALK CLEARANCE AMENDMENTS – 3-B-10-OA

Text that is crossed out is to be deleted.

Text that is in bold is to be added.

Zoning Ord., Article V. Section 10 - Signs, billboards, and other advertising structures.

A.

General regulations. In any zoning district, the following general regulations shall apply:

11. All sign shall be located not closer than ten feet to a street right-of-way line or fifteen feet from the edge of pavement, whichever is greater, unless such sign is at least ten feet above the ground and vision under the sign is only incidentally obstructed by supporting members. Projecting, shingle, and awning signs shall be a minimum of 8 feet above sidewalks in the commercial portion of a TND-1 (Traditional Neighborhood Development) District **and shall be a minimum of 7 feet above sidewalks in the H-1 (historic overlay) district and the D-1 (downtown design overlay) district.**

19. Signs shall not project from a building a greater distance than ten (10) feet and shall maintain a clear height of ten (10) feet, except in a TND-1 (traditional neighborhood development) district where a clear height of eight (8) feet shall be maintained, **and in the H-1 (historic overlay) district and the D-1 (downtown design overlay) district where a clear height of seven (7) feet shall be maintained.** Where such signs project over public property, they shall not extend closer than twenty (20) inches to the curblin.