

Administrative Interpretation

Sign Regulations – Blade Signs

Issue: Business owners within the City’s Community Business zone districts have requested to place what are known as “blade signs” at or near the entrance to their business to provide visibility of the business to pedestrians walking within the commercial center. Blade signs are relatively small signs which hang from the canopy, arcade or are suspended from the building front perpendicular to the building directed toward pedestrians already within the commercial center, not toward the street or parking lot areas. The Town Center Design Guidelines already permit blade signs and the City has previously approved blade signs on an administrative interpretation basis at other commercial centers, including Mill Creek Square, as part of a Design Review Board-approved planned sign program.

The sign regulations in MCMC Chapter 17.26 (signs), which apply to the properties outside the Town Center, do not specifically allow blade signs, so clear direction on this issue is needed.

Findings:

1. The intent of the sign regulations is to prevent excessive visual clutter in the City, primarily within what is considered the public realm.
2. To meet the stated intent, the Town Center Design Guidelines include restrictions on the number of blade signs permitted and the maximum area of a sign.
3. The intent of the Town Center Design Guidelines is to allow one blade sign per business, scaled for and oriented toward pedestrians on the sidewalk.
4. Blade signs have been installed within the Town Center and other commercial centers without creating harm to the public or excessive visual clutter. To formalize past administrative practice and provide equity of signage throughout the commercial zone districts of the City, the Town Center Design Guidelines for blade signage should be applied to all commercial zones in the City.

Determination:

1. Blade signs, which hang from the canopy, arcade or from a mast attached to the building front, may be utilized to increase visibility of the business to pedestrians in all commercial zone districts within the City. Blade signs shall:
 - a. Be hung perpendicular to the building front;
 - b. not have an area of more than three square feet; and
 - c. not exceed two inches in thickness.
2. Blade sign area shall not be counted toward the maximum wall signage area for the business. The bottom of the blade sign shall have a minimum clearance height of eight feet above the ground.
3. A building permit shall be required prior to the installation of a blade sign.

4. A code amendment to clearly articulate this determination will be prepared for consideration by the City Council.

Stephen C. Butler

Stephen C. Butler, FAICP
Director of Community Development

4/4/11

Dated