



Planning Commission

Sign Code Update - Public Hearing

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Title

Sign Code Update - Public Hearing

Recommended Action

Move to recommend approval of the draft sign code, including repealing the existing sign code and amendments to definitions and design review chapters of the Olympia Municipal Code.

Report

Issue:

Whether to recommend approval of a new sign code, repealing the existing sign code, revising definitions related to signs, and amending design review standards related to signs.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Joyce Phillips, Senior Planner, Community Planning and Development

Background and Analysis:

Work to update the sign code began in late 2016, primarily in response to the US Supreme Court case known as Reed v. Town of Gilbert, AZ, which addressed sign content and standards for temporary signs. The City also wanted to update the sign code in order to increase clarity, provide more consistency across standards and zoning districts, and to streamline and simplify the code.

An advisory committee was used to consider policy changes to how the city addresses signs, changes in the sign industry and new sign types, and options to provide more clarity in the code. The committee was made up of businesses, neighborhood representatives, the sign industry, and community members. The committee met seven times with its final meeting devoted to review of a draft sign code. Comments on that draft led to the first public draft, which was issued in July of 2018.

The City held an Open House on the draft sign code in August of 2018. Additionally, newsletters and email announcements were sent to subscribers, committee members, and interested parties. Comments received since the issuance of the first draft were considered and revisions were made. The second public draft was issued and posted to the Sign Code Update webpage on Friday, September 21, 2018.

A third and final draft was released on October 25, 2018, in response to comments and questions received on the second draft. This third draft is the public hearing draft.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Comments received have varied and have generally addressed the following issues:

- The amount of time needed before an electronic message can change
- Limit the size of political signs in neighborhoods
- Consider a minimum sign size for small tenant spaces in multiple tenant buildings
- Consider how to address changes in sign technology, for example some signs can now change colors
- Preservation of historic signs
- Do not allow new billboards in the City of Olympia
- Code Enforcement
- Addressing unique situations, such as when one building is setback substantially farther from the sidewalk than all other businesses on the same street
- Reducing sign clutter in public rights of way, keeping signs out of accessibility routes, bike lanes, roundabouts and medians, keeping signs off of trees and utility poles
- Similar uses should be treated similarly but certain areas of the city are different from each other and should be treated differently

Options:

1. Recommend approval of the proposed revisions to amend Chapter 18.02, repeal Chapter 18.42, adopt 18.43, amend Chapters 18.120, 18.145, and 18.150.
2. Recommend approval of the proposed revisions to amend Chapter 18.02, repeal Chapter 18.42, adopt 18.43, amend Chapters 18.120, 18.145, and 18.150, with amendments proposed by the Planning Commission.
3. Do not recommend approval of the proposed revisions to amend Chapter 18.02, repeal Chapter 18.42, adopt 18.43, amend Chapters 18.120, 18.145, and 18.150.

Financial Impact:

The sign code work is covered in the department's base budget and additional funding is not needed. Early work on the draft sign code included assistance from a consulting team through a previously funded and now closed contract.

Attachments:

Sign Code Webpage
Draft Sign Code
Draft Sign Definitions
Design Review Sections to Repeal
Public Comments