



To: Sandy Harriger
From: Gina L. Clayton, Assistant Planning and Development Director
Date: November 13, 2014
RE: Summary Recommendations of the Downtown Subcommittee

Sent Via E-Mail

Changes to the Clearwater sign ordinance and Downtown Design Guidelines to implement recommendations of the Downtown Subcommittee can be included in the Downtown Design Guidelines/sign code updates project identified as a priority project of the ULI report. While the Planning and Development Department believes the sign code and design guidelines fully support and require quality design and materials as recommended by the draft Streetsense Cleveland Street District Storefront and Signage Design Guidelines, it also recognizes that perceptions may not be consistent with that. The Planning and Development Department offers the following to address the subcommittee's recommendations.

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#2 Awning Lighting: An amendment to the sign regulations (Section 3-1805.C.5) can be prepared to allow for the exterior illumination of awnings as advocated by Streetsense. The revisions would be drafted in way that clarifies lighting installed under the awning (back-lit) is not permitted.

#4 Sandwich Board Signs: An amendment can be made to the Downtown Design Guidelines to encourage unique sidewalk signs. It should be noted that the sidewalk sign provisions of the Community Development Code already allows flexibility to the design criteria to achieve creatively designed signs but this can be reinforced through the Design Guidelines. It should be noted that the actual design guidelines in the draft Streetsense report does not mention anything about creativity. In fact they just state that sidewalk signage shall be made of certain material, that they cannot be illuminated, cannot exceed six square feet and must be taken in at the close of business. The language does not state anything about requiring creativite, unique or interesting signs. The photographs used in the section are either chalkboard signs or creative/unique sidewalk signs.

To ensure only the use of creative/unique sidewalk signs as shown in the Streetsense draft report, an amendment to the sidewalk sign regulations in the Code would need to be prepared to

preclude the use of the wind signs and plastic sign frames which the Code currently allows. Also amendments to the Design Guidelines could include photographs of interesting sidewalk signs.

A total of nine sidewalk signs permits have been issued for properties in the Community Redevelopment District. Five are the maximum size permitted and four are slightly smaller.

#5 Attached Signs Definition of Maximum Sq. Footage Allowance: It is challenging to accomplish the recommendation based on the organization of the sign regulations. The Planning and Development Department created a Sign Guide for Downtown Businesses several months ago to assist business owners in understanding what signs they could erect. That brochure could be updated and include the menu sign information and the awning graphic provision. Additionally the Downtown Design Guidelines could be revised to specify the use of multiple permitted signs is appropriate.

If the subcommittee's recommendation is broader than what is understood above, multiple signs are allowed through the Comprehensive Sign Program (CSP). Community Development Code Section 3- 1808.A.1 states that "The intent of the comprehensive sign program is to provide private property owners and businesses with flexibility to develop innovative, creative and effective signage . . ." Section 3-1808.B.1 states that signage proposed in the CSP "may deviate from the minimum sign standards in terms of number of signs per business or parcel of land, maximum area of a sign face . . ."

The draft Streetsense report specifies that the height of capital letters shall be at least 10" in height but not more than 30' tall. This recommendation would create a new regulation just for capital letters within a small geographic area of the City. If City Council desires to add this new regulation, the Planning and Development Department would recommend adding this to the Downtown Design Guidelines where there is already a provision which states that "Letter size, letter and wording spacing, font and style and other design elements of a sign that create an overall high quality aesthetic appearance" is appropriate.

#7 Attached Signs – Recommends No Common Sign Theme for Multiple Tenants in One Building: While the Department believes a common theme can be achieved through a variety of means without sacrificing diversity, creativity and uniqueness, the Department understands some may not be comfortable relying on the "or other characteristics" provision of Section 3-1807.B.c.3 when determining if a common theme exists. It should pointed out that the second bullet of the signs section of the Downtown Design Guidelines finds signs to be appropriate if their design, colors, materials, size shape and methods of illumination reinforce the overall design of the façade. This is consistent with the Streetsense idea that signage be designed as an integral part of the retailer's storefront. If the verbiage in the Streetsense draft report is clearer than the language in the Design Guidelines, then the Guidelines can certainly be revised accordingly.

#8 Recommends Designs Using Multiple Signage Types: It is unclear if this is the same recommendation as in #5. If it is not and the recommendation is to allow multiple signs without design review, Staff is concerned about the ability to create and maintain a quality and vibrant environment compared to one of visual clutter/unattractive signage competing for attention. The

Planning and Development Department believes the subcommittee's recommendation could be achieved by through a no-fee CSP for properties located in the CRA. This process could also potentially allow for additional sign area if appropriate. The Department's recommendation could be accomplished through an amendment to the fee schedule in Appendix A of the Community Development Code.

#9 Recommends Comprehensive Sign Program Shift to Encourage Diversity with Quality: As indicated in #5 above, the CSP is a design based program that supports and incentivizes flexibility and creativity, as well as requires the use of quality materials and sign design. The Planning and Development Department believes that the recommendations of the draft Streetsense report can be achieved through the use of the existing program with some additional appropriate statements added to the Downtown Design Guidelines.

#10 – We would be happy to meet to discuss any aspect of the draft *Streetsense Cleveland Street District Storefront and Design Guidelines*.

Upon reviewing the sign provisions of the draft Streetsense report and the *Downtown Design Guidelines*, there are similarities in the concepts contained in both. The Guidelines support signage that is designed to reinforce the overall design of the façade and the Streetsense draft report states that successful storefront signs should be carefully integrated into the overall storefront design. Both documents support quality design and materials. While there are similarities in the concepts of each document, the graphics in the draft Streetsense document convey a very vibrant and interesting environment that is more effective than some of the local examples used in the *Downtown Plan*. The Department plans to incorporate some of those photographs into the Plan as part of the ULI implementation project.