

COMMUNITY-WIDE SANDWICH BOARD SIGNAGE

DC 14-078 | October 14, 2014

REPORT

- A. Background
- B. Possible Options
- C. Conclusions
- D. Recommendations

ATTACHMENTS

Proposed Chapter 30 Text Amendments, dated October 14, 2014
Sandwich Board Signage Community Wide Survey, dated June 24, 2014
Staff Research of Other Communities, dated August 26, 2014

COMMUNITY-WIDE SANDWICH BOARD SIGNAGE

DC 14-078 | October 14, 2014

A. BACKGROUND:

On April 22, 2014, the Design Commission recommended approval to the Village Board to allow Sandwich Board Signage in the Downtown (B-5) zoning district. On May 19, 2014, the Village Board approved Ordinance 14-022, thereby officially amending Chapter 30 to allow Sandwich Board Signage in the Downtown. At that time, the Village Board requested that Staff begin a study to evaluate the possibility of allowing sandwich board signage for businesses throughout Arlington Heights. On June 24, 2014, Staff led a preliminary discussion with the Design Commission and determined that this is an issue that they would like to explore further. Since the June 24 meeting, the Design Commission has continued discussion of this matter on August 26 and September 9 in order to allow all Design Commission members to be present for the discussion.

Staff presented the following information for discussion:

ISSUES: When evaluating this proposal, the Design Commission should consider the following issues:

- Arlington Heights' Image:
 - Would Sandwich Board signs throughout the Village create the type of image desired for Arlington Heights?
 - Arlington Heights' primary competitors for retail business are:
 - Deer Park. Sandwich Board Signs are **not allowed**.
 - Mount Prospect. Sandwich Board signs are allowed in **Downtown only**.
 - Schaumburg. Sandwich Board signs are allowed in **Downtown only**.
- Sign Blight:
 - Would allowing Sandwich Board signs throughout Arlington Heights create an overabundance of signage? How much signage is too much?
 - As determined by a Visual Preference Survey conducted in 2012, respondents prefer a limited amount of tastefully designed signage in lieu of an overabundance of signage.
 - Businesses are currently allowed: ground signs, wall signs, canopy/awning/marquee signage, and temporary "event" signage. Temporary signs are typically ground mounted signs or wall mounted banners.

RESEARCH: Staff reviewed nine select communities' sign codes for comparison.

Of the nine (9) communities surveyed:

- Two (2) of the communities do not allow sandwich board signs at all.
- Three (3) of the communities allow sandwich board signs in the Downtown area only.
- Four (4) of the communities allow sandwich board signs throughout all Business Districts, but require signs to be located adjacent to the building or within a short distance from the building entrance.

Staff also conducted a survey of Arlington Heights for sandwich board signs currently being used illegally outside of the Downtown. Many examples were found, and photos of existing signs were presented to the Design Commission. Some were nicely designed and tastefully located along business storefronts, but many others were poor in appearance and located along roadways. Keeping the positive image of Arlington Heights as a priority, Staff does not recommend allowing sandwich board signs (outside of the Downtown) to be in the public way along streets or in parking lots and landscape islands. If sandwich board signs are to be considered in zoning districts outside of the Downtown, then it is recommended that they be required to be adjacent to the building entrance. It is cautioned that code enforcement of sandwich board signs throughout Arlington Heights will be difficult if regulations are complex. In regards to Removable Hanging Signs, it is Staff's opinion that the character of this type of signage is unique to the Downtown pedestrian environment, and they are not recommended community wide.

As a result of the preliminary discussion, the Design Commission reported general support of allowing sandwich board signs for businesses outside of the Downtown, but with guidelines to control them. The Design Commission requested that Staff prepare code language for review.

On August 26, 2014, Staff presented proposed Chapter 30 Text Amendments to the Design Commission for sandwich board signs in the B-1, B-2, B-3, and B-4 zoning districts. The Design Commission decided to continue the discussion to the September 9, 2014 Design Commission meeting. However, one item of concern was raised regarding the use of pre-engineered plastic sandwich board signs. The Design Commission expressed that they would prefer that pre-engineered plastic sandwich board signs be “prohibited” instead of just “discouraging” them. Staff explained that “discouraging” plastic sandwich board signs is a requirement that was directed by the Design Commission during the previous Design Commission review of the Downtown sandwich board signs. At that time, Staff recommended that plastic sandwich board signs be prohibited, but the Design Commission decided to simply “discourage” plastic sandwich board signs in response to comments from local businesses that preferred to use the pre-engineered plastic signs.

In the Downtown, Staff had previously recommended prohibiting plastic sandwich board signs due to their appearance, location on public sidewalks, permits required, and the Downtown being a relatively small area to enforce. However, outside of Downtown, Staff recommended allowing plastic sandwich board signs because they will be very difficult to enforce due to their location on private property and permits will not be required. Enforcement efforts of sandwich board signs outside of the Downtown will likely be limited to the location of sandwich board signs only.

On September 9, 2014, the Design Commission directed Staff to revise the proposed Chapter 30 Text Amendments to “prohibit” sandwich board signs that are made of plastic, in lieu of “discouraging” them. The Design Commission also directed Staff to amend the recently adopted Downtown (B-5) Sandwich Board Sign requirements to “prohibit” sandwich board signs made of plastic.

B. POSSIBLE OPTIONS:

Based on feedback from the Design Commission and staff research, we offer the following options for possible revisions to the Sign Code.

OPTION 1: Make no change to current code.

Sandwich board signs would continue to not be allowed outside of the Downtown, and sandwich board signs made of plastic would remain “discouraged” in the Downtown (B-5).

OPTION 2: Modify the Sign Code to allow Sandwich Board Signs outside of the Downtown, and to prohibit Sandwich Board Signs made of plastic in the Downtown.

Modify the sign code to allow sandwich board signs in all Business zoning districts (B-1, B-2, B-3, & B-4), as well as continuing to allow them in the Downtown (B-5) zoning district. Sign permits will not be required for sandwich board signs in the B-1, B-2, B-3, & B-4 zoning districts.

Also, the Design Commission recommends modifying the sign code to prohibit sandwich board signs made of plastic in the Downtown (B-5).

See attached proposed Chapter 30 Text Amendments dated 10-14-14.

C. CONCLUSIONS:

As with any code amendment, the Village will need to monitor the outcome for any unforeseen issues. If undesirable issues were to arise, then recommendations will be made to correct the issues.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Design Commission recommend approval to the Village Board for sign code revisions as follows:

1. Modify the current code as outlined in Option 2.
2. Prohibit sandwich board signs made of plastic in the Downtown (B-5), per Design Commission recommendations.