

# MEMO

DATE: September 9, 2014  
TO: Chairman Eckhardt and Members of the Design Commission  
FROM: Steve Hautzinger, Design Planner  
RE: **Plastic Sandwich Board Signs**

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At the August 26, 2014 Design Commission meeting, Staff presented DC#14-078 regarding Community Wide Sandwich Board Signs. At that time, the Design Commission decided to continue the discussion of this topic 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 proposed code requirements for community wide sandwich board signs are based on the approved requirements for Downtown sandwich board signs which states, "Pre-engineered plastic sandwich board signs are discouraged". During the recent August 26 meeting, 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 is a relatively small area to enforce. However, outside of Downtown, Staff does not recommend prohibiting 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.

Copies of the Design Commission Meeting Minutes from April 8, 2014 and April 22, 2014 are attached for your reference.

# APPROVED

MINUTES OF  
THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS  
DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.  
APRIL 8, 2014

Chair Bombick called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Alan Bombick, Chair  
John Fitzgerald  
Ted Eckhardt  
Anthony Fasolo

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Peter McGovern, T.P. Carpentry for *1726 N. Mitchell Ave.*  
Steve Gawlik, S.G. Architects for *1726 N. Mitchell Ave.*  
Marc Ciaglia, Owner of *401 N. Gibbons Ave.*  
Todd Schmidt, ICON Building Group for *1025 S. Vail Ave.*  
Michael Mertes, Business Development Coordinator  
Steve Hautzinger, Staff Liaison

## REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MARCH 11, 2014

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 11, 2014. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

**ITEM 4. SIGN CODE MODIFICATIONS****DC#14-017 – Downtown Signage**

Mr. Steve Hautzinger and Mr. Michael Mertes were present on behalf of the proposed text amendments to Chapter 30. Downtown signage including sandwich board signs, removable hanging signs, and revisions to blade signs will be reviewed.

Chair Bombick noted there were members of the audience present for the presentation and directed them to fill out a card if they wanted to speak during the public comment portion of the meeting.

Mr. Hautzinger presented background on the Downtown signage issue, which began with a code enforcement event conducted by the Village in August 2013. As a result of that event, a follow-up meeting was held in September with Downtown businesses, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Village Staff, to discuss the code enforcement event and non-compliant signage in the Downtown. Feedback was received and as a result, Village Staff created and issued "Guidelines for Downtown Sidewalk Displays" in October 2013. These guidelines for Downtown Sidewalk Displays allow businesses the ability to create appealing outdoor displays with items such as merchandise, landscape planters, decorative items, sculptures and art. On February 13, 2014, the Village hosted a follow-up meeting with Downtown businesses, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and the Design Commission, and Village Staff to present the Villages' assessment of sandwich board signs and hanging signs, and to gain additional feedback from the businesses. In general, businesses agreed with Staff's assessment of good and bad sign options.

Conclusions from the February 2014 meeting are as follows:

1. Businesses want signage options that are perpendicular to the storefront to capture attention of pedestrians and cars passing by.
2. Businesses unanimously support allowing tastefully designed sandwich board signs in the Downtown.
3. Some businesses expressed the need for removable hanging signs, such as colorful "OPEN" flags in lieu of a sandwich board sign.

Mr. Hautzinger gave a power point presentation of the Downtown Signage Discussion held on February 13, 2014. Points of discussion included: Downtown Sidewalk Display Guidelines and Examples, Sandwich Board sign considerations, and a review of Sandwich Board and Hanging Signs currently in use in the downtown. Photos of existing sandwich board signs in the Downtown were presented. Bad examples of existing sandwich board signs include: poor location, cheap material/poor design, unstable, potential trip hazard, too much text/clutter, and poor appearance. Good examples of existing sandwich board signs include: good location, out of way/not a trip hazard, professionally branded message, neatly hand written messages, nice materials, and unique designs. Photos of existing hanging signs in the Downtown were also presented. The examples include: poor attachment method (clothes hangers), sloppy appearance, cheap material, and message about a specific product/brand. Examples of good hanging signs in other communities include signs hung from awning frames, canopies, and building overhangs.

Currently, sandwich board and hanging signs are not allowed by code. Signs that are allowed by code in the Downtown include having up to two of the following four signage options: awning sign, blade sign, plaque sign, and wall sign. Additionally, ground signs, menu board signs, and window signs are permitted signage options.

Possible options to be considered tonight include:

- Option 1: Make no changes to the current sign code.
- Option 2: Modify the sign code to allow sandwich board and removable hanging signs in the Downtown. Also increase the size of blade signs currently allowed and clarify the attachment of blade signs to allow hanging from building overhangs and awnings. **Mr. Hautzinger** reviewed the specific language modifications proposed to the Chapter 30 text amendments for Blade Signs, Sandwich Board Signs, and Removable Hanging Signs.
- Option 3: Additional Considerations for discussion tonight:
  - Number of sandwich board signs:
    - Some businesses indicated a desire for more than one sandwich board sign. Should one additional sandwich board sign be allowed for businesses with additional street frontages, or would that create too much sign blight? In particular, Bath & Body Works and Yankee Candle have expressed the desire for two sandwich board signs due to having two street frontages. It is Staff's recommendation to allow just one sandwich board per business.
  - Sculptural sandwich board signs:
    - Should sculptural sandwich board signs which exceed the allowable size limitations be allowed? Options could include allowing them, but with the requirement for a formal Design Commission approval. The message on a sculptural sandwich board sign should not exceed that of a standard sandwich board sign, and the overall height is recommended to be restricted to a maximum of 5 feet.
  - Location of sandwich board signs:
    - Should sandwich board signs be allowed beyond 3 feet from the face of the building as long as they are located out of the five foot clear sidewalk and are adjacent to benches, trees, or light poles? This raises more liability and enforcement concerns.

**Chair Bombick** asked the commissioners for any items for clarification at this time. **Commissioner Eckhardt** asked if any discussions were had about digital/electronic signs in a sandwich board format, and human displays of sandwich boards. **Mr. Hautzinger** replied that Staff is proposing that illumination not be allowed for sandwich board signs, in addition to the current sign code that does not allow electronic displays in the Village, and human displays of sandwich board signs was not discussed. **Chair Bombick** asked Staff if research was done on similar communities with regards to downtown signage. **Mr. Hautzinger** replied that research was done, and a summary is included in the commissioners' packets. **Mr. Mertes** added that Staff conducted research that included reaching out to other communities to determine whether sandwich board signs were allowed, as well as a survey that was conducted by the Northwest Municipal Conference for the Village. Research found that multiple communities including Naperville, Northbrook and Oak Park do currently allow sandwich board signs.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**James Mitchell**, representing Mitchell Jewelers at 10 N. Dunton Avenue. He said that his building has 13' x 14' banners on it since 1969, which have done well promoting his business and various events. He asked what the requirements are for these and whether they need to be removed. **Mr. Hautzinger** replied that banners are currently allowed by code and fall under temporary signage, which require a sign permit and are temporary for the promotion of special events such as a sale. **Mr. Mitchell** also expressed concerns about bicycle safety on downtown sidewalks.

**Jim Thompson**, representing Allstate Insurance at 9 N. Vail Avenue. He said that although he has window

signage, he has continuous problems with customers not being able to find his business. He felt the blade sign was a good option for his business and he endorsed the expansion of the square footage allowed for these signs. He asked the commissioners to consider illumination around the inside perimeter of these signs. It was clarified that blade signs can be lit but not internally lit.

**Jim Platt**, representing the Arlington Heights Chamber of Commerce. He supports the endorsement of sandwich board signs in the Downtown because it will create more of a Downtown ambience than currently exists, as well as a better balance between retail businesses trying to survive in a very fragmented Downtown district and more consistency for a shopper to move their way down the sidewalk between businesses. He asked the commissioners to consider changing the proposed background color on sandwich board signs to a 'dark color', and not to restrict it to just 'black'. He also asked that the outside of the sidewalk perimeter also be allowed for the placement of sandwich board signs because of the inconsistent sidewalk system in the Downtown. **Chair Bombick** felt this was a good point and **Commissioner Eckhardt** agreed that all sidewalks are not the same.

**Jim Bertucci**, Board President for the Arlington Heights Chamber of Commerce. He introduced Jim Ridler, and various restaurant owners that were present, and added that other business owners were not able to attend. He thanked Staff and the commissioners for opening up discussion and feedback regarding Downtown signage, which is a great start for being able to allow businesses to promote their businesses in a tasteful way.

**Chair Bombick** suggested some type of signage or directory of downtown businesses, or some type of downloadable app or QR code to help guide people through the various Downtown businesses. **Mr. Hautzinger** referenced a recently published brochure by the Village that included an updated map and directory of businesses in the Downtown, as well as the Discover Arlington website. **Mr. Mertes** added that the Village is on the verge of a mobile version of Discover Arlington.

**Commissioner Eckhardt** stated that he was in favor of allowing more than one sandwich board sign for businesses with a storefront on two streets (corner). He also encouraged discussion about lineal footage; how many sandwich board signs should be allowed for businesses with more than 25' of frontage, and for those with more than 50' of frontage? He attended the meeting in February 2014 and could say without question that Downtown business owners really want and need sandwich board signs, and are not concerned about the clutter of these signs. He encouraged allowing the Downtown to be lively and tasteful, he supports the Mexican waiter statue/sign at the Salsa 17 restaurant, and he was ready to vote for the suggestions made by Staff regarding sandwich board signs in the Downtown, which he felt provided adequate control.

**Commissioner Fasolo** agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Eckhardt, and added a suggestion that businesses be allowed one sandwich board sign per entrance, or per street frontage. He felt that the sandwich board sign should be located out toward the curb where there is sufficient space to avoid crowding at the entrance. He also suggested a provision to allow internal illumination of a blade sign for improved visibility at night. **Mr. Hautzinger** commented that clearance from car doors parked parallel to the curb is a concern regarding the placement of sandwich board signs. **Chair Bombick** was in favor of allowing a sandwich board sign to be located up against the storefront for any business with a recess; otherwise the sign should be located in the same zone that street furniture and trees are already located in because it reinforces the sidewalk.

**Commissioner Eckhardt** asked whether every sandwich board sign would require Staff review. **Mr.**

**Hautzinger** replied that all signs in the Downtown currently require a Design Commission application to be reviewed and approved by Staff, and this process will apply to sandwich board signs. However, these signs would only come before the Design Commission if they required a variation or had design concerns.

**Chair Bombick** felt there were already so many restrictions on businesses with regards to signage, and he was not in favor of adding more restrictions than necessary with sandwich board signs; the more richness added to the Downtown environment the better, as long as it is done tastefully and done well. He reiterated that window signage is already allowed by code, with minimum restrictions. He also felt that an ADA review should be done regarding the location of banners to ensure safety for pedestrians. **Mr. Hautzinger** replied that the removable hanging signs are required to be fabric and that the rigid pole or bracket attachment is required to be a minimum of seven feet above the sidewalk.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed the language being proposed by Staff for Sandwich Board Signs in the Downtown, and recommended the following changes:

Definition: Omit the inverted 'T' shape option with a weighted bottom.

- a. Number: Each business shall be permitted one sandwich board sign per street frontage or per entry.
- b. Size :
  - iii. A sculptural sandwich board sign shall not exceed 6' in overall height, the signage area shall comply with the standard sandwich board requirements, and Design Commission review shall be required.
- c. Location:
  - ii. Omit this item.
- d. Message:
  - iii. Revise "black" background to be "dark color" background.
- e. Construction:
  - i. Sandwich board signs must be free standing and constructed of wood or metal, or similar appropriate material as approved by Staff.
  - ii. Pre-engineered plastic sandwich board signs are discouraged.

**Derek Hanley**, representing Peggy Kinnane's. He stated that he has used wood sandwich board signs in the past at the corner of his business, which have been blown over by the wind. He asked the commissioners to consider the option of allowing plastic signs because they could be weighed down to avoid wind issues. The commissioners felt that plastic was not an appropriate material for the quality of some of the downtown buildings.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed the language being proposed by Staff for Removable Hanging Signs in the Downtown. A business owner suggested allowing both a sandwich board sign and a removable hanging sign if the business locates their sandwich board sign away from the storefront and near the curb. The commissioners were concerned about information overload as a result of allowing both types of signs. **Mr. Hautzinger** explained that sandwich board signs and removable hanging signs are two new options of a removable type of sign, which is a separate category from wall signs, blade signs, plaque signs and awnings,

which are permanent signs. He stated that none of the businesses expressed a desire to have both types of signs, and maintained Staff's recommendation to allow either a sandwich board sign or a removable hanging sign, not both. The commissioners agreed.

The commissioners recommended no changes to the language being proposed for Removable Hanging Signs in the Downtown.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed the revised language being proposed for Blade Signs in the Downtown. **Commissioner Fasolo** asked for commissioner feedback about his suggestion to allow internal illumination of blade signs. **Chair Bombick** and **Commissioner Fitzgerald** felt this issue should be discussed under a separate review because of the aesthetic factor of illuminating these signs. **Commissioner Eckhardt** said that although he is sympathetic to improving night visibility of blade signs, he was more concerned about the aesthetics of illuminated blade signs.

**Commissioner Fitzgerald** pointed out that the commissioners welcome sign variations and encourage unusual and creative signs in the Downtown. **Chair Bombick** reiterated his opposition to sanitized and conventional signs that limit character, and is in support of allowing variety by allowing sandwich board signs and removable hanging signs in the Downtown. **Commissioner Eckhardt** agreed with these comments.

**Tom Mannetti**, Owner of Metropolis Ballroom. He said that his business occupies the entire second-floor of the building on both Campbell Avenue and Vail Street, which is unique. He is considering adding signage to both sides of the building, similar to what the Metropolis Theater has on their building. The commissioners explained that the theater signs are banners and required variations. **Mr. Hautzinger** added that banner signage is different than the types of signage being proposed tonight.

Fees for Downtown signage were also discussed. **Mr. Hautzinger** explained that permit fees for signage are handled through the Building Department. A separate fee of \$50 applies to the Design Commission Application for Downtown Signage, which is handled directly through the Planning & Community Development Department. The commissioners were concerned about the amount of fees associated with sandwich board signs and removable hanging signs. It was suggested that permits for these types of signs could also be a candidate for the new 'Same Day Permit' process recently developed by the Village. **Mr. Hautzinger** explained that the 'Same Day Permit' process only applies to small residential remodeling and maintenance type work. **Chair Bombick** stated that he would rather see money spent on a better quality sign than on a permit review.

The commissioners were not comfortable making a motion tonight and directed Staff to revise the language being proposed for Downtown Signage based on the changes they discussed tonight and return as soon as possible for final review and approval by the Design Commission.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, TO DIRECT STAFF TO REVISE THE LANGUAGE BEING PROPOSED FOR DOWNTOWN SIGNAGE BASED ON THE CHANGES MADE BY COMMISSIONERS, AND RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR FINAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL BY THE DESIGN COMMISSION.**

**Mr. Hautzinger** noted that the only revisions to be made by Staff are regarding sandwich board signs, as the commissioners made no changes to the language being proposed for the other signs discussed tonight.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, TO AMEND THE MOTION AND ADD THE FOLLOWING:

1. THESE REVISIONS WOULD ONLY APPLY TO THE LANGUAGE BEING PROPOSED FOR THE SANDWICH BOARD SIGNS.

Chair Bombick strongly recommended the motion include that any fees for these types of signs be nominal.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, TO AMEND THE MOTION AND ADD THE FOLLOWING:

2. A STRONG COMMENT THAT ANY FEE FOR THESE TYPES OF SIGNS BE NOMINAL.

FITZGERALD, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; FASOLO, AYE; BOMBICK, AYE.



# APPROVED

MINUTES OF  
THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS  
DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.  
APRIL 22, 2014

Acting Chair Eckhardt called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Ted Eckhardt, Acting Chair  
Alan Bombick  
John Fitzgerald  
Anthony Fasolo

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Keith Neumann, Greenscape Homes for *913 N. Beverly Ln.*  
Gina Lenzo, 909 N. Beverly Ln. for *913 N. Beverly Ln.*  
Nick Prager, Landmark Visibility Solutions for *Windsor Woods Condos*  
Jim Platt, Arlington Heights Chamber of Commerce for Downtown Signage  
John Ridler, Arlington Heights Chamber of Commerce for Downtown Signage  
Michael Mertes, Business Development Coordinator  
Steve Hautzinger, Staff Liaison

## REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 8, 2014

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 8, 2014. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

**ITEM 3. SIGN CODE MODIFICATIONS RE-REVIEW****DC#14-017 – Downtown Signage**

Mr. Steve Hautzinger and Mr. Michael Mertes were present on behalf of the revisions to the text amendments to Chapter 30, Downtown signage.

Mr. Hautzinger stated that the motion from the last review on April 8<sup>th</sup> directed Staff to make revisions to the sandwich board guidelines based on feedback from the Design Commission. No comments were made regarding revisions for the blade signs or removable hanging signs.

Mr. Hautzinger reviewed the revisions for Downtown Sandwich Board Signs as follows:

**Section 30-101 - Definitions:**

- Omit 'or of an inverted 'T' shape weighted bottom'.
- Add the following: Sandwich Board Sign Sculptural. A sign set on the ground (without attachment to the ground) that is sculptural in form, such as a human figure, sculpture art, or other object, and contains an integral sign panel on one or two sides. Sculptural sandwich board signs are permitted in the B-5 zoning district only.

**Section 30-201.h.12 – Sandwich Board Signs / Sculptural Sandwich Board Signs.**

- a. **Number:** Each business shall be permitted one sandwich board sign per street frontage or per entry.
- b. **Size:**
  - iii. Sculptural sandwich board signs shall not exceed 6-feet in height or 3-feet in width. The signage area shall not exceed 27" wide, 42" tall, and 6 square feet on each face of the sign. Design Commission review is required for all sculptural sandwich board signs.
- c. **Location:**
  - ii. Omit this item.
- d. **Message:**
  - iii. Handwritten messages are allowed if in a neat and legible manner on a dark color background.
- e. **Construction:**
  - i. Sandwich board signs must be free standing and constructed of wood or metal or similar appropriate material as approved by Village Staff.
  - ii. Pre-engineered plastic sandwich board signs are discouraged.

Staff is recommending the Design Commission recommend approval to the Village Board of the proposed text amendments.

**Acting Chair Eckhardt** asked if there was any public comment on the project and someone in the audience stated that the proposed revisions read well and will be a good amendment.

**Commissioner Bombick** asked for clarification about a sculptural sandwich board sign; if it is a sculptural figure or image only with no sign on it. When is it a brand identity sign and when is it a piece of art. **Mr. Hautzinger** replied that a sculpture without signage would not be considered a sculptural sandwich board sign and would fall under the 'Guidelines for Downtown Sidewalk Displays' that were recently issued by the Village. Once a sculptural includes printed matter, it would be considered a sculptural sandwich board sign that must be approved by the Design Commission. He added that 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. The commissioners did not want to discourage businesses from putting up a sculptural type sign. The commissioners had no further comments. They thanked Staff for the research and work done to create the revisions to the text amendments for Downtown signage.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER BOMBICK, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO THE VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR SIGN CODE REVISIONS TO CHAPTER 30 TEXT AMENDMENTS, PER THE STAFF REPORT DATED 4/08/14 AND 4/22/14.**

**FITZGERALD, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; FASOLO, AYE; BOMBICK, AYE.  
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.**