



Oregon City Sign Code Update Public Process Final Report February 2014

Prepared by



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After nearly 20 years without a significant change, Oregon City is updating sign regulations to better meet the needs of Oregon City residents and businesses now and into the future. Oregon City has partnered with the community to review and rewrite our local sign regulations. The goal of the sign code update has been to review and rewrite the Oregon City sign code so that the standards that are safe, clear, fair and are broadly supported by the community. A comprehensive public process has resulted in a community discussion and recommendations to city staff for revisions to the sign code. The results of the community engagement process will be used the guide Oregon City Planning Division staff in developing draft code for adoption through the legislative processes of the Planning Commission and City Commission. The City's sign regulations include standards such as size, number, location and duration of signs allowed. This final report describes the process by which members of the public were informed and engaged in the code update process and a summary of the public comments received, as well as positions expressed and recommendations agreed to by the Community Advisory Team (CAT).

The current sign code, under Oregon City Municipal Code Chapter 15.28, serves to balance the vital functions of businesses, civic organizations and residents. Although the City has changed significantly over the past 20 years, the current sign regulations have essentially remained unchanged during that time period. The existing sign standards are largely clear and objective, however, the code can be at times conflicting, limiting or unclear. Examples where the need for updates is evident include temporary signage, addressing emerging sign technologies, and providing more nuanced standards for specific areas and uses. Active enforcement of the existing sign code also remains a challenge. Revising the sign code offers the opportunity for citizens and stakeholders to advise how the sign code should change to best meet the needs of Oregon City.

Project team members include Oregon City Planning Division staff, with consultant support from EnviroIssues and Urbsworks. The sign code update process utilized a variety of public information materials, meetings and opportunities to comment. Available informational materials included a project website (www.OC SignCode.org), factsheet, press release and periodic email updates. Community briefings were held for neighborhood associations and other civic groups. A community open house was held which allowed continued involvement by interested citizens as the CAT worked to develop the recommendations to Planning Division staff. Written comments were accepted throughout the process through a variety of means and shared online and with CAT members.

SECTION 1: PUBLIC PROCESS

The goal of the community engagement process has been to create community-backed recommendations, well informed by current conditions and best practices. The community process includes three phases: early engagement, recommendations and adoption.

Goals for the early engagement phase, from July to October 2013, included obtaining early feedback from key stakeholders to understand their interests and use that information to refine engagement plans, outreach techniques and decision-making processes. During this stage the project team informed stakeholders and the public about the sign code update process, including its purpose, goals, schedule, opportunities to provide comment and how public input would fit into the City's overall public and legislative process. The project team informed Oregon City residents and stakeholders about the sign code update process and gathered initial feedback with the project website www.OC SignCode.org and at a series of seventeen community briefings. Early feedback was used to design the subsequent public process.

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The recommendations phase, from September to December 2013, included the establishment of a Community Advisory Team (CAT) to discuss priority topics identified in the first phase of the project and form recommendations for updating the sign code. CAT members were recruited through early engagement activities to represent a diversity of Oregon City community interests and positions were appointed by the mayor. The CAT met four times to discuss the issues and preferences for an updated sign code, which were refined through an iterative process and distilled into a series of recommendations, positions and additional comments on relevant issues. A community open house was held during this phase to share interim CAT results and gather additional public input. These comments were compiled within this report to act as a recommendation for the sign code update. A community open house was held in conjunction with the third CAT meeting to share interim work and gather additional public input.

The adoption phase of the project, beginning in February 2014 and projected to run through June 2014, will involve the creation and consideration of staff recommendations by the Planning Division staff, based on public comments and recommendations developed through the CAT process. Staff will submit their draft code recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Commission for consideration through the Legislative process. The legislative adoption schedule includes public work sessions and hearings of the Planning Commission and City Commission, which includes additional public input opportunities.

Public information materials, meetings and opportunities to comment

A variety of tools were used to inform and welcome constructive and well-informed involvement in the project on the part of citizens, businesses and civic organizations.

The **project website** (www.OCSignCode.org) incorporated the project purpose and background information, current sign regulations, project schedule, a survey of policy options, project news, information and documents for upcoming and past meetings, a web comment form, a sign up sheet to receive project emails, and contact information for the project team. The project website was continually updated throughout the project.

The **project fact sheet** described the project purpose, schedule, types of signs regulated under the code and how to learn more, provide comments or ask questions of the project team. The fact sheet was distributed via the project website, community briefings, and the open house.

A **press release** which described the project purpose, highlighted the project website and announced the community open house, was published on the City's website and distributed to media contacts.

Community briefings were given by Planning Division staff and consultants during the early engagement phase of the project to inform community groups about the project and opportunities for their involvement and to gather initial feedback and suggestions. Seventeen (17) community briefings were

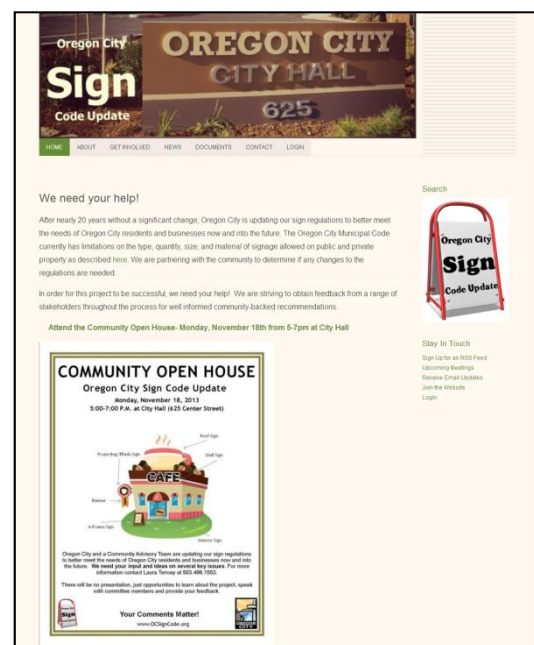


Figure 1: Project website: wwwOCSignCode.org

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held between July and October 2013 at Oregon City neighborhood associations, other organizations and committees.

Community briefings

| Organization | Briefing date |
|--|--------------------|
| Hillendale Neighborhood Association | July 2, 2013 |
| Barclay Hills Neighborhood Association | July 9, 2013 |
| Chamber of Commerce, Government and Economic Affairs Committee | July 9, 2013 |
| Hazel Grove/Westling Farms Neighborhood Association | July 18, 2013 |
| Planning Commission | July 22, 2013 |
| Caufield Neighborhood Association | July 23, 2013 |
| Two Rivers Neighborhood Association | July 24, 2013 |
| Gaffney Lane Neighborhood Association | August 1, 2013 |
| Citizen Involvement Council | August 5, 2013 |
| Natural Resources Committee | August 14, 2013 |
| Main Street Oregon City Downtown Discussions | August 15, 2013 |
| South End Neighborhood Association | August 15, 2013 |
| Park Place Neighborhood Association Steering Committee | August 19, 2013 |
| Historic Review Board | August 27, 2013 |
| McLoughlin Neighborhood Association | September 5, 2013 |
| Traffic Advisory Committee | September 17, 2013 |
| Park Place Neighborhood Association | October 21, 2013 |

An **email contact list** was compiled and is used to communicate project updates and events. Interested people were able to provide an email address on the project website to receive opportunities to comment on the project and information about the CAT meetings and the community open house. The email list will be used to send additional updates through the adoption phase of the project.

A **community open house** has held in conjunction with CAT meeting #3 on November 18, 2013. It provided an opportunity for the public to gather information and provide input to the public process. Goals of the open house were to inform members of the public not previously aware of the purpose and need for the sign code update, to provide updates to previously engaged members of the public, and to provide opportunity for the public to interact with CAT members and receive public comments. Meeting displays included information on the sign code update process and schedule, a summary of the existing sign code and highlights of potential changes under consideration by the CAT. Additionally, a number of policy questions were presented in the format of a voting exercise where participants were asked to indicate their position and to provide additional written feedback.



Figure 2: Attendees participated in a policy question exercise at the community open house

A variety of opportunities for members of the public to provide **written comments** have been available and will continue throughout the duration of the project. Staff email addresses were provided through

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all outreach methods and the project website included a form for capturing comments. CAT members were invited to provide additional written comments which were compiled by staff and posted on the project website. Comment forms were available at the community open house. All comments received were compiled by staff, posted periodically on the project website and shared with participants at CAT meetings. Comments received by the City are included in Appendix B.

Community Advisory Team process

A Community Advisory Team (CAT) was convened by the Mayor and charged with advising City Planning Division staff on sign code revisions and related policies and procedures. The CAT was comprised of 11 positions to represent the following stakeholder categories:

- (2 position) City Residents, at large
- (2 positions) Development / Business, at large
- (1 position) Chamber of Commerce
- (1 position) Sign Company / Manufacturer / Advocate
- (1 position) Main Street Oregon City
- (1 position) Institution (Faith-based organization / School)
- (2 positions) Neighborhood Association/ Citizen Involvement Council
- (1 position) Planning Commission

CAT members were recruited through a variety of avenues. Planning staff recruited for the CAT membership at organizational briefings during the early engagement phase, directly contacted community organizations, such as all neighborhood associations and all city groups. A notice was sent through the Oregon City Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Oregon City email lists to engage local businesses. Staff also provided an invitation to serve on the CAT to sign companies that submitted sign permits in the previous year. General notification was provided through the City newsletter, Oregon City and project websites, social media accounts and the project website.

A charter and work plan to guide the CAT process were developed by staff and agreed to by CAT members at their first meeting. The charter was designed to provide a clear and mutually agreeable statement of the roles and responsibilities of CAT members and Oregon City staff to guide the work and conduct of the team in an open and transparent process. It identified the way in which the team was to operate, including decision-making processes, meeting conduct and communication. The CAT work plan outlined the expected outcomes of the CAT process as well as objectives and anticipated discussion topics for each of the CAT meetings. Four CAT meetings were held between September and December, 2013 and involved the following general agenda items:

- Meeting #1 (September 16, 2013): project introduction and background, legal framework, existing sign code and conditions, early community engagement
- Meeting #2 (October 14, 2013): sign code revision scenarios by zone group, review of draft code concept
- Meeting #3 (November 18, 2013): education and enforcement, review of revised draft code concept, draft CAT recommendation
- Meeting #4 (December 9, 2013): review of revised draft code concept and CAT recommendations to staff

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Agenda topics and exercises were selected to meet the purpose of each session as the CAT moved from gathering information to sharing ideas and making recommendations. At the first CAT meeting, the group approved a charter, was updated on the key issues which staff identified through early community engagement and provided additional comments on the range of issues members thought the sign code update should address. Each subsequent meetings included a report of the comments received since the previous meeting.

A draft concept of changes to the existing code, organized by zone groups, was developed by staff based on earlier feedback. This draft code concept served as an ongoing aid to discussing and refining suggestions and CAT recommendations.

Draft meeting minutes were provided for CAT members' review. Final meeting minutes, materials and other related products were posted to the project website throughout the process for review by interested parties. At the final CAT meeting, members were provided an overview of the legislative approval process and invited to make public testimony at Planning Commission and City Commission hearings. CAT members were also invited to provide any additional comments for inclusion in development of the draft code recommendation by planning staff.

CAT meeting materials and meeting minutes are included in Appendix A.

SECTION 2: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CAT RECOMMENDATIONS

A diversity of comments were captured throughout the early engagement and recommendation phases of the project. Deliberation by the CAT resulted in additional comments and a series of recommendations.

Comments are summarized by topic, led by topics for which the CAT developed recommendations. Recommendations are categorized as follows:

- **Consensus recommendations** are those which the CAT supported unanimously.
- **Majority recommendations** are those for which there was not unanimous support, but where a majority of CAT members agreed. Minority opinions are noted for the record.
- **Split positions** are those for which there was no clear recommendation from the CAT. These issues are marked by an even-split of opinion, a split of opinion across more than two positions, or a slight majority in-favor from the CAT, but an opposing majority from the public.

Review of existing code standards by the CAT also yielded specific suggestions that were explored through several refinements of a draft code concept. CAT suggestions and public comments related to these standards are organized against the major sections of this evolving document. Sections include three zone groupings, consistent with the existing sign code reflecting similar characteristics and current and allowed land uses: 1) residential zones, 2) conditional uses in residential zones and 3) office,

Figure 3: Community Advisory Team (CAT) meeting



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commercial and industrial zones. Additional sections of the code concept explored prohibited signage and definitions.

The collective feedback gathered by the public process to-date is summarized below. All recommendations and comments were made with the expectation that legal and procedural considerations will be integrated into the staff recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Commission, to the extent practicable.

Consensus recommendations

CAT members were unanimous in their support for code recommendations for enforcement of the sign code, murals and signs owned and operated by the government. A summary these recommendations and related comments are below.

Enforcement of the sign code

Enforcement of the sign code was commented on by participants in early outreach and by CAT members. The City does not currently enforce the sign code unless there is a public danger, due to resource constraints. This issue was explored in a focused discussion with CAT members at their Nov. 18 meeting, supported by a background briefing paper on enforcement issues.

Community comments:

- Community resources including trained volunteers should be used to aid enforcement of the sign code.
- An inventory of signs should be taken to aid enforcement.
- Fines and/or fees should help fund enforcement activities.

CAT member comments included positions similar to those heard from the community and had **consensus support** for the code recommendation for the City to take a number of steps to improve future sign code enforcement, including:

- increase sign code education through print and online guidance and other technical assistance
- increase funding to allow for additional staff with specific enforcement responsibilities
- identify opportunities to leverage partnerships, expertise and other resources that improve the cost-effectiveness of these measures
- consider a more focused education campaign and a high level of enforcement to coincide with the rollout of a new sign code

Murals

Murals are not separately defined and considered wall signs under the current sign code. Community members commented that murals should be considered separately from wall signs. Other jurisdictions within the region have code that supports murals as public art, with subjective review by an arts commission or murals are exempted from the sign code if they meet the public art standard. In other cases, murals are allowed as a large painted wall sign with additional standards that include restrictions on the exchange of compensation to better align with their intended application.

CAT member comments included:

- The duration for murals should be tied to the expected life-span of materials used.
- The city should permit murals apart from wall signs.

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- The need for content neutral standards should be considered when developing review criteria for murals.

The CAT **unanimously recommended** the City should permit murals everywhere a business is allowed.

Signs owned and operated by the government

CAT members provided the following comments concerning signs owned and operated by the government:

- Signs owned and operated by the government should be subject to the same size and height limits as other signs.
- There should be a clear definition of what is a government sign to distinguish sign uses funded by government grants through other organizations and signs directly owned by the government.
- There are government signs needed for public safety needs along roadways. These signs are exempt from the sign code.
- CAT members expressed differing positions on whether government agencies should be subject to fees.
- A definition of signs owned and operated by the government should be included in the code.

The CAT **unanimously recommended** that signs owned and operated by the government should be subject to the code.

Majority Recommendations

A majority of CAT members approved of recommendations for the sign code in regard to signs in the right-of-way, banners, non-conforming signs, existing billboards and the definition of a sign. CAT members and other community comments are summarized below along with the majority recommendation and any minority opinions.

Signs in the right-of-way

Signs in the right-of-way are not allowed under the current sign code. CAT members considered concept code language that would permit A-frame signs placed on the sidewalk or parking strip.

Community comments:

- A-frame signs should be allowed in the sign code.
- A permit sticker should be required for A-frames to aid enforcement.
- The number of A-frames allowed should be limited to reduce clutter.
- A-frame signs may be a liability issue.

CAT members provided additional comments on signs in the right-of-way, including:

- A-frames serve a legitimate purpose for advertising businesses and events.
- Regulations should ensure signs in the right-of-way do not block the space near the curb where people enter and leave parked vehicles and placement should allow for the passage of pedestrians.
- Signs should be located adjacent to the buildings.

A **majority of CAT members agreed** signs of limited quantity and size should be allowed in the right-of-way in all zones around the City, provided they do not block access or present a hazard.

Minority opinions:

- Additional signs in the right-of way should be allowed in residential and mixed-use zones to allow for advertising real estate open houses without permit in addition to home occupations.

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- Signs in the right-of-way should be allocated by tenant space or entrance rather than frontage so each business may have at least one sign.
- Regulation of dimensions for signs in the right-of-way should be consistent with commercially available A-frame signs.

Banners

Banners are not permitted under the existing sign code. Community members provided the following comments:

- There are too many banners, creating a cluttered effect.
- The number of banners should be limited in total along with ancillary signs to reduce clutter.
- Some banners should be allowed, but their use should be limited.
- Banners deteriorate over time and become unattractive.
- Banners which cross the street and on street lights should be allowed.
- Banners should not be allowed in historic districts.

CAT members provided the following, additional comments on banners:

- A limit to the duration and frequency for which banners may be up should be set as those which are left up for too long begin deteriorating and are unattractive.
- Too many banners create a cluttered effect.
- Banners serve as an important means for advertising groups and events.
- Banners should be limited to a display period of 30 days, twice per year.
- Display for 30 days, twice per year is too restrictive.

A **majority of CAT members agreed** banners should be allowed on non-residential zoned property or for approved conditional uses within a residential zoning designation, with a permit.

Non-conforming signs

The current code requires that non-conforming signs be removed, however the City does not currently take action against non-conforming signs unless there is a public danger, due to resource constraints. Community members expressed a range of opinions about requirements for non-conforming signs under an updated sign code including both the grandfathering of existing non-conforming signs (provided they were legally erected) and advocating for their removal.

CAT members provided additional comments including:

- Sign owners should be allowed to maintain existing, non-conforming signs.
- A threshold should be set on the amount of money which may be used to maintain existing, non-conforming signs.
- Non-conforming signs should not be allowed when a property changes hands.
- Signs which were not legal under the code at their time of construction should be required to be taken down by the property owner.
- Owners of existing signs which are no longer permitted under an updated sign code could bring a legal suit against the city for lost value if they were forced to take them down.
- The code should require that non-conforming signs are removed or brought into compliance within a certain timeframe.

A **slight majority of CAT members agreed** signs that were legally constructed but no longer comply with the new sign code should be allowed to remain until removed by owner.

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Existing billboards

Oregon City has a limited number of billboards (16), which are currently prohibited in the sign code. All of the billboards are owned by a single entity. Community members provided a comment during the early engagement phase of the project that billboards should be removed.

A majority of CAT members agreed existing billboards should be allowed to remain until they are removed by their owner. CAT members expressed additional minority positions including:

- Existing billboards which are not along major roadways should not be allowed if new billboards will also be allowed.
- Billboard permits should be reviewed when they change hands.
- Billboards should remain prohibited.

Definition of a sign

A majority of CAT members agreed the sign definition included in the sign code should be updated to support all allowed and/or prohibited sign types determined through the update, as follows:

Any sign, display message, emblem, device, figure, painting, photograph, drawing, placard, poster, billboard or other thing that is designed, used or intended for advertising purposes or to inform or attract the attention of the public, and the term includes the sign structure, display surface and all other component parts of a sign; when dimensions of a sign are specified, the term includes panels and frames; and the term includes both sides of a sign of specified dimensions or display surface area.

CAT members provided the following additional comments regarding the definition of a sign:

- The method for determining the extent of various signs and calculation of sign area, including discussion of when architectural features are considered a sign or part of a sign, should be included in the code.
- The definition should include wall carvings.
- A description of the term, “device” should be included in the code.

Split Issues

CAT members continued to hold split perspectives on several key topics including new billboards, ancillary signs and electronic message centers. Differing positions taken by CAT members as well as additional comments for these topics are summarized below.

New billboards

The idea of permitting new billboards was considered by CAT members and the public. Comments were received during the early engagement phase suggesting that no additional billboards should be permitted.

CAT members were split on the recommendation for new billboards. Some comments from CAT members suggested additional billboards should be permitted:

- State law sufficiently regulates billboards on state highways.
- Additional billboards might allow a greater diversity of parties to own billboard(s) in Oregon City.
- Billboards serve a legitimate public purpose of disseminating information and can be used for public service announcements.
- Evidence that billboards lower property values is not complete.

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Two different positions were held, which are noted below along with additional comments.

- A limited number of new billboards should be allowed, only on properties with frontage along major roadways (properties adjacent to Interstate 205, Highway 213 and Highway 99E) except in residential zones. At the public open house, most participants in the voting exercise of policy options indicated that billboards should be permitted only along major roadways.
- Additional billboards should not be allowed. Additional comments from CAT members included:
 - Additional billboards may be too distracting for drivers.
 - Billboards have been shown to lower property values.

CAT members also shared comments related to Electronic Message Centers (EMCs), stating both that they should not be permitted along highways and that billboard-sized EMCs should be addressed separately from smaller EMCs. EMCs are discussed in greater detail separately in this report.

Ancillary signs

Ancillary signs include all signs, with or without a permit, other than freestanding, wall, roof, or projecting signs. They include temporary signs, banners, A-frames, flags and small signs. Through early engagement, some community members commented that the number of ancillary signs should continue to be limited. Others were interested in allowing greater numbers of political signs during elections. Additional comments stated that directional signage is helpful to businesses and should be allowed with permission from adjacent property owners.

CAT and community members indicated a desire to reduce clutter by limiting the number of signs allowed, but also recognized the utility of allowing for limited ancillary signs. Two different positions were held, which are noted below along with additional comments.

- Allow 1 or 2 ancillary signs on business properties, 1 or 2 ancillary sign on residential properties.
- A greater number and larger ancillary signs should be allowed.
 - Only allowing two signs is too limiting, especially for the needs of temporary real estate sales, political, and contractor advertisement signs. These signs tend to be self-regulating in nature.

Addition CAT comments included:

- The desire for political signs should be considered when determining how many ancillary signs to allow.
- Additional signs should be allowed in consideration of real estate sales where additional ancillary signs are still in use.
- Colonial Post real estate signs, which are typically 6 sq. ft. and utilized during the sale of property and should be allowed as one of the ancillary signage options on residential properties.
- The number of ancillary signs is self-enforcing as property owners will take down signs which are no longer needed.
- Additional signs should be allowed with a time-limit.
- Ancillary signs should be allocated by frontage rather than by property.

Electronic message centers

Electronic message centers, or EMCs, are LED-lit signs, typically supporting text, that allow owners to change information and messages. This type of sign is not allowed under the current sign code but may be permitted through a zoning variance. A comment received during early engagement was that signs which include flashing and motion should not be allowed. Participants in the community open house

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most commonly indicated that EMCs should be required to go through a conditional use review to receive a permit.

Three different positions were held, which are noted below along with additional comments.

- EMCs should be allowed with conditional use approval in all zoning designations.
- EMCs should be allowed without conditional use approval in all zones, except for residential zones or the historic downtown district, where EMCs should not be allowed.
- EMCs should be allowed without conditional use approval in all zones, except for residential zones or the historic downtown district, where EMCs should be allowed with conditional use approval.

Additional CAT member comments included:

- Schools often want to communicate with parents and other community members with an electronic message center which is easy to change.
- Conditional use review may be too expensive for some potential sign applicants, like schools and churches, in residential zones.

Additional Topics

A number of topics were identified by the community through early engagement and by CAT members as needing to be addressed by an updated sign code, but were not discussed in enough detail to develop a consensus or majority recommendation. These topics included signs on fencing, signs on parked vehicles, signs carried by or attached to people and signs inside of windows. A brief description of each of these issues and the general direction received through the early engagement and recommendation phases are included below.

Signs on fencing

Signs on fencing was identified as a relevant topic for the sign code update. Both CAT members and open house attendees were closely split on preferences for signs co-located on fencing, with the CAT slightly in favor of allowing this use and public leaning toward a continued prohibition.

Community comments:

- Some small signs are appropriate, such as no smoking, private parking notices.

CAT members submitted comments regarding signs on fencing including:

- Signs on fences should be limited to a small size and generally temporary only.
- Banners on fences are a common occurrence and unsightly due to the durability of materials and poor mounting methods.
- Temporary signs on fences are useful for organizations wishing to communicate about events and other temporary uses.
- Signs on fences can relay important and helpful information. If regulated, signs on fences will need a clear definition.

Parked vehicles

Signs on parked vehicles, which have been perceived to sometimes circumvent sign regulations, was identified as a topic of interest for the updated sign code. Relevant community comments include:

- Signs attached to vehicles should be exempt if tied to normal operation of business.
- If regulated, code should differentiate between passenger vehicles and trucks and vans.
- In all cases, vehicles with signage should be operable.
- Sign on vehicles should be subject to square foot limitations for temporary signs.

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A majority of participants in the policy options exercise at the community open house indicated parked vehicles should be prohibited from being used as signs and a minority indicated they should be allowed.

CAT members made comments including:

- The code would have to distinguish having a sticker on your car as opposed to making a car permanent signage.
- A vehicle with signage should not be allowed to park in the public right of way for more than 12 hours and three consecutive days.

Signs carried by/attached to people

Signs which are carried or attached to people was identified as a topic for the sign code update. These signs are not regulated under the current code and a legal review of potential prohibition of signs attached to or carried by a person determined that it would violate federal and state free speech protections.

Public and CAT comments included:

- Signs should be limited to no more than four square feet per face.
- Signs held by people should not be allowed because they are distracting to drivers.

Signs inside of windows

Signs inside of windows are primarily exempt from the current sign code. Public comments suggest divergent views on the topic of regulating these signs. A majority of participants in the policy question exercise at the community open house indicated that signs inside of windows should continue to be unregulated.

CAT members commented that signs inside of windows should be allowed to take up only 30% or 50% of the total window space; any larger window coverage is unsightly.

SECTION 3: REVIEW OF EXISTING SIGN CODE STANDARDS

Input on the existing sign code informed the development of a draft code concept by project staff, shared and refined with CAT input over the course of three of its four meetings. While the CAT did not recommend the draft code concept in whole, there was general agreement on its form and contents. The following summary will be used to inform Oregon City staff when the draft sign code is written. Topics are generally organized into categories following the framework of the document: signs in residential zones, signs for conditional uses in residential zones, and signs in office, commercial, and industrial zones; prohibited signage; and definitions.

Signs in residential zones

Signage in residential zones is limited in quantity, scale and location and primarily seasonal and temporary. Public comments and feedback from CAT members in regard to these areas directed proposed changes to the existing code which generally allow more flexibility in the placement of signs while balancing residential character, limiting the size of signs and avoiding a cluttered or commercial appearance. Allowing temporary signage for sales, events and political signage was also suggested by the CAT and differentiating standards for multi-family properties from non multi-family properties.

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Wall signs

The current sign code regulates the size of wall signs in residential zones. In residential zones, CAT members and community members generally commented that more flexibility should be allowed for where wall signs may be placed on the exterior of buildings as well as differentiating signage size for multi-family and non multi-family properties.

Freestanding signs

Freestanding signs are permanent signs not attached to a structure. The allowed area of freestanding signs depends on property frontage in the current sign code. Comments received generally suggested limiting the size of free standing signs in residential zones, but allowing an additional number of signs.

Ancillary Signs

CAT and community members expressed a desire for a number of specific sign types in residential zones, allowed without a permit to allow for decoration, political expression and to advertise sales and other events. The CAT had a split decision on the number of ancillary signs allowed per property, but suggested increasing the size of temporary signage (which does not require a sign permit) from 4 square feet to 6.

Proposed changes to the exiting code for signs in residential zones.

- Delete OCMC 15.28.070.B.6 requiring that wall and freestanding signs will “be set back from the street as determined by the sign official, but not more than ten feet from the street right-of-way”.
- Reduce the size of wall signs from 20 square feet to 12 square feet for properties in zones other than in the “R-2” Multifamily dwelling district.
- Allow portable signs, A-frame signs, sandwich boards, tent signs up to 5 square feet per sign face and 32 inches in height.
- Reduce maximum wall sign length from 10 to 5 feet.
- Remove the maximum height requirement for wall signs.
- The maximum length for freestanding signs was reduced from 10 to 5 feet for residential zones other than the “R-2” Multi-family dwelling district.
- For residential zones other than the “R-2” Multi-family dwelling district, the number of freestanding signs was changed from one freestanding or wall sign for each property frontage (with a maximum of 3) to a maximum of one freestanding sign.
- For properties within the “R-2” Multi-family dwelling district, the number of freestanding signs was changed from one freestanding or wall sign for each property frontage (with a maximum of 3) to allow one wall and freestanding sign for each property frontage (with a maximum of 6).

Signs for conditional uses in residential zones

Conditional uses in residential zones are most commonly schools and churches, often with larger frontages. Community comments and comments from CAT members expressed a desire to allow signage needed to provide information concerning these uses in residential zones while limiting unwanted clutter from signs which are too large, numerous or out of character with residential use.

Wall signs

No significant changes to the wall signage for conditional use were proposed.

Freestanding signs

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Proposed changes to the code follow a suggestion from CAT members to increase the height of freestanding signs to aid visibility.

Ancillary Signs

Some signs allowed without a permit for conditional uses in residential zones while respecting the predominate land use desired by the community. These include temporary signs, a single small sign and portable sign of limited size, among other examples which aid wayfinding and other information needs of conditional uses. Temporary banners were supported by a majority of the group. The CAT had a split decision on the number of ancillary signs allowed per property.

Proposed changes to the exiting code

- Increase the height of freestanding signs from 8-feet to 15-feet.
- Remove the maximum height requirement for wall signs.
- Allowing portable signs, A-frame signs, sandwich boards, tent signs up to 5 square feet per sign face and 32 inches in height.

Signs in office, commercial and industrial zones

Office, commercial and industrial zones generally have greater need for communicating information through signage and less sensitivity to use of various materials and sign sizes compared to residential zones. CAT and community comments generally directed proposed changes to the existing code which allowed individual businesses advertise using a variety of signage while seeking to limit unsightly sign types and the number of signs, in some cases, to reduce visual clutter. Signs should generally be allowed in proportion to the property frontage, wall size, or tenant space and where multiple sign types are permitted, a total limit is used to allow for flexibility while preventing clutter.

Wall signs

CAT and community comments concerning wall signs in office, commercial and industrial zones generally reflected that signs should be allocated by tenant space (including a minimum amount guaranteed), and though the size of individual wall signs dimensions are not concerning if the total size of wall signs should be reduced and in proportion to the wall. The combined display surface area of wall signs and projecting signs to no larger than one square foot for each linear foot of the wall length of the tenant space on which the sign is erected.

Freestanding signs

Comments from the CAT and community members supported the continued use of freestanding signs in proportion to property frontage. CAT members commented that for some large frontages, additional freestanding signs are appropriate.

Incidental freestanding signs

The existing code allows for an additional “incidental sign,” either a wall sign or freestanding type, but is not easily visible within the code. The creation of an incidental freestanding sign replaces the incidental sign standards and provides an opportunity for menu boards and other information needs for commercial uses and wayfinding and directional signage for industrial uses. The CAT also suggested the ability to install a wall sign of the same size rather than install a incidental freestanding sign.

Roof signs

CAT members suggested that roof signs should be skirted so the supporting structure was not visible. The suggested code allows roof signs as an option, but in balance with other sign types (not allowed in

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conjunction with a freestanding sign) to prevent a cluttered appearance and maintains standards that tie roof sign area to the size of property frontage.

Projecting signs

CAT members expressed a desire that projecting signs are permitted in the code and that in some cases, more be allowed. The CAT removed the minimum 20-foot spacing between projecting signs and suggested that projecting signs can be larger and of greater height. They created flexibility for businesses, by tying the total combined display surface area of wall signs and projecting signs to no larger than one square foot for each linear foot of the wall length of the tenant space on which the sign is erected.

Ancillary Signs

The CAT had a split decision on the number of ancillary signs allowed per property. The CAT suggested allowing banners outside of historic districts when placed on a wall.

Proposed changes to the existing code

- Wall signs are measured using the tenant space, and not using the entire building wall.
- The size of wall signs is unlimited so long as the total combined display surface area of wall signs and projecting signs is no larger than one square foot for each lineal foot of the wall length of the tenant space on which the sign is erected.
- Signs on other project structures such as awnings, canopies, false fronts and wall extensions which do not extend more than a foot are considered wall signs.
- Increase the number of freestanding signs from one per frontage to one per frontage or two for frontages with 600 lineal feet or more on arterial streets.
- Free-standing signs on the same premises but on different frontages shall be separated by 50 feet because some frontages may be long enough to allow more than one freestanding sign.
- Clarify that freestanding and roof signs may not project over public or public right-of-way.
- Change the number of roof signs from one per premises (if there is no projecting sign or free-standing sign along the frontage) to one per frontage (if there is no projecting sign or free-standing sign along the frontage).
- Remove the requirements for civil and structural engineers and fire marshal approvals.
- Change the height for roof signs was changed from a maximum of twenty-five feet above grade, plus five feet for each two hundred feet, or portion thereof, frontage in excess of two hundred feet frontage (in no event shall any sign exceed thirty feet in height) to a vertical maximum of 10 feet.
- Skirting is required around the base of roof signs.
- Remove the 20 foot minimum distance between projecting signs.
- Increase the dimensions for projecting signs from a maximum size of 16 square feet per sign face, with total area of all faces not to exceed 32 square feet to a maximum of 24 square feet per sign face, with total area of all faces not to exceed 48 square feet. The maximum projection from a building wall was increased from 4 feet to 6 feet. Eliminate the maximum vertical dimension of a projecting sign.
- Clarify standards for signs on structures including clearance requirements of 8 feet.
- Clarify standards for incidental (wall or freestanding) signs. Reduce the size limitations from a maximum 16 square feet with a maximum sign face size of 8 square feet. Remove the maximum horizontal dimension of 20 feet. Reduce the maximum height from 25 feet above grade, plus 5 feet for each 200 feet, or portion thereof, frontage in excess of 200 feet (not to exceed 30 feet) to 15 feet.

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- Allowing portable signs, A-frame signs, sandwich boards, tent signs up to 5 square feet per sign face and 32 inches in height.
- Allowing temporary banners to be attached to building walls outside of historic districts.

Prohibited signs

In response to CAT and community comments, the continued prohibition of certain sign types is suggested for the code update:

- A sign that interferes in any way with a traffic control sign or device or prevents clear and unobstructed views of official traffic control signs or devices or approaching or merging traffic
- A sign that contains, includes or is illuminated by any flashing or revolving, rotating or moving light or moves or has any animated or moving parts, except as otherwise allowed within this code. This subsection does not apply to traffic control signs or devices
- A sign with lighting that is not effectively shielded as to prevent beams or rays of light from being directed at any portion of the main traveled right-of-way of a state highway, unless the lighting is of such low intensity or brilliance as not to cause glare or to impair the vision of the driver of a motor vehicle or otherwise to interfere with the operations thereof
- A sign located upon a tree, or painted or drawn upon a natural feature
- A sign that obstructs free ingress to or egress from any door, window or fire escape, alley, drive or fire lane, or is attached to a fire escape
- A sign erected or maintained on public property or within the public right-of-way without permission of the public body having jurisdiction over the right of way
- Any sign larger than four square feet on an undeveloped lot or parcel of property
- A sign not otherwise in compliance with any provision of this code, Oregon law or the terms and conditions of any valid sign permit issued under this chapter

Proposed changes to the existing code

- Allow A-frame signs but continue to prohibit A-frame signs larger than 5 square feet per sign face or no taller than 32 inches.
- Prohibit attention flags
- Clarify air blown signs are not allowed.

Definitions

Through the recommendation phase of the sign code update project, CAT members and project staff identified a number of definitions in the current code which are recommended for update. Changes include removing definitions which are not applicable to current sign practices and zoning, adding definitions to compliment recommendations for specific sign types and modifying definitions where needed for clarity or to reflect legal considerations or community comments. The definition for “banner,” for example, should be modified at the request of CAT members to distinguish banners from certain projecting signs. The definition for “obsolete sign” should be removed to maintain content-neutral review. A complete list of recommended changes to definitions is included in the code concept.

Other Items

The community and the CAT also suggested the following:

- Active education of the sign code regulations through various avenues including harnessing community partnerships.
- Active and sustaining enforcement of the sign regulations would not be exempt from the sign regulations on private property.
- Allow murals

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- The government should be subject to the same sign regulations on private property as all other entities.
- Allowing signs within the public right-of-way in all zoning designations.
- Signs that were legally constructed but no longer comply with the new sign code (including billboards) should be allowed to remain until removed by owner.

Direction was not provided on a variety of items either because there was a split decision from the CAT or the CAT did not have sufficient time to address an issue.

CONCLUSION

The Oregon City Commission identified a process to consider sign code updates as a priority for 2014. Formal code updates will be proposed by city staff, considerate of the public process to-date, to be discussed by Planning and City Commissions, and the wider community, prior to adoption. The feedback and recommendations summarized in this report are meant to serve as a reference as the City proceeds through the code adoption process.

The Planning division conducted a comprehensive public process beginning in the summer to engage a wide range of interested community members. The process was informed by early outreach efforts, including several community briefings with neighbors and businesses, to gather feedback that could help shape the subsequent phases of the public process.

Ongoing public input shaped the focus of the update process through its recommendations phase. A Community Advisory Team was recruited to share their diverse perspectives and identify critical sign code updates. Thirteen members represented varied interests, including Oregon City neighborhoods, businesses, institutions and sign manufacturers. The group convened over four meetings to consider background information, options for updated standards and additional public input on topics of interest. The CAT deliberations resulted in several consensus and majority recommendations members felt would improve the city's current sign code. In the cases where CAT discussions did not result in strong recommendations, the dimensions of these topics and options considered in pursuit of agreement are well documented.

APPENDIX:

- A. CAT meeting materials and meeting minutes
- B. Comments received by the City