



Betty Jo Mahan <bettyjo.mahan@knoxmpc.org>

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## [MPC Comment] Signs

1 message

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**Mike Cohen** <mike@cohencommunicationsgroup.com>

Tue, Sep 9, 2014 at 8:07 PM

Reply-To: mike@cohencommunicationsgroup.com

To: commission@knoxmpc.org, Mark Donaldson <Mark.Donaldson@knoxmpc.org>

The attached sheet represents the official position of the Chamber of Commerce. We would like to have this shared with each MPC Commissioner.

We are glad that there is widespread agreement on the biggest issues: size and height. Both are significantly reduced, which was true compromise by the businesses involved...businesses who depend on signs as a critical part of their success.

We believe size and height is what most people care about and is what most needs to be addressed.

Thanks. Feel free to call or e-mail me at anytime.

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Mike Cohen  
Cohen Communications Group  
[865-659-4750](tel:865-659-4750)



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This message was directed to [commission@knoxmpc.org](mailto:commission@knoxmpc.org)



**Info sheet for MPC.docx**  
18K



## City of Knoxville

# Sign Ordinance and Task Force Update

Signs are one of the most important tool businesses have for public outreach and sales. Without a sign, people might never find you. Consider this advice from the Small Business Administration:

<http://www.sba.gov/content/why-do-i-need-sign-my-business>

The City of Knoxville decided almost two years ago that it wanted to address the height and size of signs. That led to the appointment of a Task Force, chaired by Councilman Duane Grieve, that included businesses as well as some who are, frankly, anti-sign and would rather see them all banned or made so small they are far less effective.

When the Task Force began meeting the mission shifted from focusing on just size and height to a variety of issues, including what percentage of a business's windows can be covered with signs.

Mr. Bill Weigel, CEO of Weigel Stores, Inc. has taken point for the business community because his business leans heavily on signs and because even among opponents he is highly respected. The Chamber and its representatives have been heavily involved in the process.

Here are some key points that articulate where things currently stand and what we support and hope to change.

**SIGN SIZE AND HEIGHT:** In the spirit of compromise, the business community has accepted a reduction of size and height. There are particular allowances for areas next to interstates as opposed to other types of streets. *WE SUPPORT THE AGREED- ON COMPROMISE.*

**ABANDONED SIGNS:** At least one version of the proposal calls for signs that have been unused for a set period of time (usually a year) to be considered abandoned and to be removed. We believe that is wrong. A vacant building is already a problem for the owner; compelling the owner to spend money to make the property less valuable is a mistake. *WE SUPPORT REQUIRING THAT SIGNS BE PROPERLY MAINTAINED*

AND ALTERED (for example, TO SAY "FOR SALE OR RENT") BUT IF MAINTAINED, THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE TO BE REMOVED.

**WINDOW SIGNS:** The proposed ordinance would restrict the percentage of a window that could be covered with a sign to 25 percent of the total window. This not only addresses a problem that does not exist; it also is unenforceable. It would, in effect, ban "wrap signs" such as those on the windows of new and successful downtown businesses like The Casual Pint and Patricia Nash, which you can see here: [http://knoxyintheknow.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/IMG\\_0766.jpg](http://knoxyintheknow.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/IMG_0766.jpg) The windows of a business belong to the business and the owner/operator should be free to do as they please. WE OPPOSE ANY REGULATION OF WINDOW SIGNAGE.

There is also a question of cost. No one has yet addressed what it would cost the city to enforce these regulations and whether they have the resources to hire the people needed to do so. If the city enacts regulations without resources, those laws are only enforced when someone complains-- not a good way to operate.



Betty Jo Mahan &lt;bettyjo.mahan@knoxmpc.org&gt;

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**[MPC Comment] Amendments to the City of Knoxville Zoning Ordinance definitions and sign regulations. 10-B-13-OA**

1 message

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joyce feld <jlfeld@gmail.com>  
Reply-To: jlfeld@gmail.com  
To: commission@knoxmpc.org

Tue, Sep 9, 2014 at 3:32 PM

Dear Commissioners:

I appreciate the opportunity to have served on the City Council Sign Task Force. The Task Force is recommending many positive changes to the sign ordinance that will benefit our city. However, the process has not been without its problems and unfortunately, the product as it stands now is not what the majority of the community is expecting from a two and a half-year process during which they have weighed in heavily.

To begin with, the composition of the task force is not balanced as originally promised, and as a result it does not fairly represent the community it serves. Aside from the Chair and Co-Chair, who are members of City Council, there were at first five - and now four - members who represent the interests of the Chamber. In contrast, there are only two members who represent a community that desperately wants a reduction in sign clutter and a significant improvement in the appearance of our city. If the task force membership was more representative, many of its recommendations today would be different.

In spite of detailed feedback from me (and others) as a Task Force member, numerous community speakers at four public forums and dozens of emails, little of this feedback provided by Scenic Knoxville and the community has been incorporated into the proposal. In contrast, several items in the proposal are clearly designed to cater to special interests, although a clear justification is lacking. For example, convenience stores will be allowed larger Wall Signs (Attached Signs) than all other businesses of a similar size by adjusting the formula by which sign size is computed (See Section G, #5). Allowable sign sizes for real estate signs were doubled and in some cases quadrupled after a single private meeting with representatives of the Board of Realtors - a change that was not discussed or approved by the Task Force (See Section F, #1-4 & 6). And the maximum allowable face size of pole signs was increased from 165 sq. ft. to 195 sq. ft based on a personal request of one task force member outside the purview of the Task Force.

Two and a half years ago City Council recognized that Knoxville has been saddled with an outdated sign ordinance that has wrecked visual havoc on our interstates and urban streetscapes. They passed new maximum allowable sign heights on first reading that are far smaller than those before you now, asked that the issue receive further study and formed the Sign Task Force. The **primary** mission of the Task Force derived from Council's intent to decrease sign clutter and improve the appearance of our City. Unfortunately, Scenic Knoxville and its supporters does not believe this proposal will adequately accomplish this goal.

Research shows us there is a strong correlation between sign control, community attractiveness, and economic vitality. Attractive streetscapes have been shown to be good for business as well as surrounding property values. An attractive city is a business friendly city and one where people want to live, work, recreate and visit.

I have attached two documents for your consideration that describe the changes that Scenic Knoxville would like to see in this proposal.

Thank you,

Joyce Feld  
President, Scenic Knoxville  
Member, City Council Sign Task Force

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This message was directed to [commission@knoxmpc.org](mailto:commission@knoxmpc.org)

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**2 attachments**



**Sign Task Force FB for STF 7-23-14.doc**  
44K



**Sign Task Force Master Signs 7-23-14.doc**  
55K

## SIGN TASK FORCE FEEDBACK

Joyce Feld

July 23, 2014

I have reviewed Document #1 and one section of Document #4. I am confused by the fact that several changes in the new proposal pertain to issues that were not raised during either of the two City Council workshops. It was my understanding that revisions were to be based on comments made by City Counselors and speakers during these two public meetings. In addition, the revisions that have been made do not seem to reflect equally the different viewpoints and suggestions discussed in the two workshops. Although Scenic Knoxville and its supporters made many suggestions, I am aware of only two (one very minor) changes in the new proposal that took these suggestions into account. I am also unclear why the Chamber has been given a unique opportunity to provide feedback on these documents, especially considering that the Chamber's interests are already over-represented on the Task Force. **It is important that this proposal be the outcome of an equitable and transparent process.**

Here are my comments to date.

### Document 1

#### Section E

P. 9

#22. Decorative flags and bunting..... This should specify how long before an event these can be put up.

#24 Temporary signs for political purposes should have a size limit. Some have become ridiculously large.

#### Section F

P. 10

#1-6 Why were the maximum sizes in this section increased? I don't recall this being discussed since the last draft.

#1. Nine sq. ft. should be restored to 6 sq ft.  
Wall signs should have a maximum size specified.

#2. Thirty-two sq ft should be restored to 16 sq ft.  
Wall signs should have a maximum size specified.

#3. Nine sq. ft. should be restored to 6 sq ft.

#4 Sixty-four sq ft should be restored to 32 sq ft.  
Detached signs should have a maximum height of 8 ft.

#6 31 days should be restored to 17 days.  
24 sq ft with a maximum height of 6 ft in a residential district  
32 sq ft with a maximum height of 8 ft in all other districts.

P. 11

#7 Farmers Markets should be allowed 2 signs per entrance. Some markets have entrances off of two different streets.

#9 20 sq ft should be restored to 10 sq ft.  
Language should be added which would allow a maximum of one illuminated "OPEN" sign which must remain static and not be allowed to flash or scroll. Other digital signs, televisions or other monitors, videos, etc. should be prohibited. No sign should obscure the view of the interior of the building.

## Section G

P. 11

(c) Please explain and provide rationale to task force.

P. 12

#5 Delete this section

The size of attached (wall) signs should be calculated based on the sq. footage of the building facade in the same manner as it is for all other commercial buildings. **There is no logical justification for this provision.**

## Section I

P. 13

#1. Why was the last sentence deleted?

#2. (c) It should be made clear that attached and detached signs (if both are used) must be displayed simultaneously for a 15 day period rather than sequentially each with a 15 day period.

(e) What does this mean? It sounds like a temporary sign is allowed in addition to those specified in (c).

P. 18

#6. Delete this section. New technology is available which allows price signs to be changed remotely without using digital technology. When City Council allowed digital changeable price signs in 2009 the primary argument in favor of allowing

them was that it was too difficult to manually change signs which require frequent changing (e.g. gas stations). With new technology available this argument is no longer relevant. (See the non-digital changeable price sign for the Kroger gas station in Bearden)

#7 Delete this section which allows a digital sign on certain large developments (e.g. Turkey Creek). Electronic Message Centers were banned in Knoxville in 2009 and **this policy should be consistent throughout the city.**

## **Section K**

P. 20

#6. Ground sign advertising the sale of property in an approved subdivision This should be limited to 64 sq feet (vs. 100 sq feet) and a maximum height of 8 feet (vs. 12 feet) in commercial zones and 36 sq. feet and a maximum height of 6 feet in residential zones.

## **Section L**

P. 21

#4. (a) The existing ordinance requires that the ground (detached) sign for a home occupation in a residential zone be 20 feet back from the street right-of-way line. This requirement should be maintained.

P. 22.

#5. (2) (a) and (c) There should be no pole signs in an office zone district. The current ordinance does not allow pole signs in office districts and this restriction should be maintained.

#6. (a) Attached (wall) signs should be limited to 7% of the wall area of the primary building elevation instead of the 10% of wall area allowed here. The task force reviewed data for new attached signs over the previous 5 years and found that the vast majority of new requests were for 5-7% of wall area. When considering the wall area of large buildings such as big box stores, an additional 3% is significant.



#6 (c) & (d)

These sections should be replaced with the following table:

### Maximum Sign Height and Sign Area

Maximum Height and Sign Area for <b>Primary</b> Detached Signs by Type of Detached Sign				
Street Classification of the lot front to which the detached sign is oriented	Monument or Column		Ground or Pole	
	Maximum Height	Maximum Sign Area	Maximum Height	Maximum Sign Area
Within 500 feet of an Interstate Interchange	12 ft	96 sq ft	25 ft	120 sq ft
*Adjacent to an Interstate	10 ft	64 sq ft	20 ft	64 sq ft
**Adjacent to a Federally designated highway (see below)	8 ft	48 sq ft	Not Allowed	
All other roadways	6 ft	28 sq ft	Not Allowed	

\*It should be noted that businesses adjacent to an interstate will also have a second sign on the roadway from which the business is accessed (e.g. I-40 and Kingston Pike)

\*\*Federally designated highways include Chapman Highway, Henley St., Broadway, Kingston Pike, Asheville Highway, Rutledge Pike, Clinton Highway, and Alcoa Highway

### Section M

P. 24

**Creation of Special Sign Districts** Language should be added which would prohibit the ability to exceed the sign standards already specified for that zone.

### Document 4

#### **Alteration, Expansion or Moving of Legal Nonconforming Signs**

The optional proposed amendment should be adopted. The first line should be amended to read "Alteration, Expansion or Moving. No off premise sign or **legal non-conforming on-premise sign** shall be changed or altered in any way;....

### **Other Issues**

**Moving People Signs** These are highly distracting to passing motorists and should be regulated or banned.

**Mobile Sign Trucks** Some thought should be given to the regulation of mobile sign trucks, particularly those that use digital technology and whose sole purpose is advertising. While not common in Knoxville at this time they are used in other cities.

**Off-Premise Advertising Signs (Billboards)** There should be specific language in the proposal which bans any new and converted digital billboards. The language should be written to take into account any new technologies that might develop so that the billboard industry can't circumvent the intent of the ordinance in the future.

## J. MASTER SIGN PLANS

### CURRENT LANGUAGE

#### 1. Purpose.

For the purpose of providing flexibility and incentives for coordinated, well designed sign systems for shopping centers, commercial subdivisions, office parks and other large scale commercial and mixed uses development, a master sign plan is required for certain signs identified within Article 5, Section 10, and sign systems within the TC-1 and TND-1 zone districts. A master sign plan will promote the use of signs which are aesthetically pleasing, of appropriate scale, and integrated with surrounding buildings and landscape in order to meet the community's expressed desire for quality development consistent with the property's land use designation.

### ALTER NATE LANGUAGE

#### 1. Purpose.

For the purpose of providing flexibility and incentives for coordinated, well designed sign systems for shopping centers, commercial subdivisions, office parks and other large scale commercial and mixed uses development, a master sign plan is required to allow the use of development directory and project directional signs and is required for all sign systems within the TC-1 and TND-1 zone districts. A master sign plan will promote the use of signs which are aesthetically pleasing, of appropriate scale, and integrated with surrounding buildings and landscape in order

to meet the community's expressed desire for quality development consistent with the property's land use designation. In addition, a master sign plan provides incentives to reduce the overall number and size of detached signs throughout the unified development described by the master sign plan **in exchange for an increase in the dimensional standards for an approved development directory sign.**

4.  
*Development  
Directory Sign.*

To encourage coordinated, well designed sign systems that allow sufficient identification of businesses within unified developments in a manner which promotes traffic safety and avoids visual blight, development directory signs may be approved by the metropolitan planning commission as a part of a master sign plan (see subsection 3, above) subject to meeting the following:

a. The development directory sign shall meet the requirements of subsection L of these regulations for a detached sign in a commercial or industrial zone district.

4. *Development Directory Sign.*

To encourage coordinated, well designed sign systems that allow sufficient identification of businesses in a manner which promotes traffic safety and to reduce the overall number and size of detached signs within unified developments, development directory signs may be approved by the metropolitan planning commission as a part of a master sign plan subject to meeting the following:

a. One (1) development directory signs shall be allowed per street frontage or entrance to the unified development via a public street.

**Interstate frontage is considered a street frontage .**

b. A development directory sign may be approved with a maximum sign height of thirty (30) feet and sign area of one hundred ninety-five (195) square feet.

**c. As an incentive to reduce sign clutter within the unified development , the planning commission may approve additional height and sign area for a development directory sign as follows:**

**(1) If all other signs within the unified development are specified on the master sign plan as monument or column signs in accordance with the height and sign area permitted by these regulations an additional twenty (20) percent increase from the base maximum sign height and sign area may be permitted.**

**(2) For each detached sign eliminated from the right of a parcel to erect a detached sign along the major street frontage, as established by the platted lot configuration of the project, an additional five (5) percent increase in maximum allowed height and sign area, up to a maximum**

b. The development directory sign shall count as one of the detached signs permitted pursuant to these regulations for the lot on which the sign will be located.

If the maximum number of business ground or monument signs and/or the maximum surface area is already met or exceeded on a lot proposed for a development directory sign, the number of signs and/or surface area must be reduced so that the addition of the development directory sign would put the signs on the lot in conformance with the maximum limitations.

**addition of thirty (30) percent, may be approved by the planning commission.** Such details and calculations shall be shown on the master sign plan as approved by the planning commission.

**(3) The multiplier factors shown in (1) and (2) above are cumulative, so that the ultimate maximum sign height and sign area may be fifty (50) percent greater than the base sign height and area.**

**d. A development directory sign approved as part of a master sign plan for a unified development of one hundred (100) acres or more fronting on an interstate highway with a 500-foot minimum may incorporate one Electronic Message Center as an integral part of a business ground or monument sign and shall have a minimum matrix area of twenty (20) square feet and a maximum matrix area of two hundred fifty (250) square feet. Such sign shall be identified on and constructed in accordance with an approved master sign plan.**

**e. A development directory sign may be approved on a lot in addition to other permitted detached signs on the lot.**

**NOTE: This is what a directory sign and separate detached sign on the same lot looks like:**

c. Only the name and/or logo for the unified development and the names and/or logos of individual establishments within the unified development shall be permitted on the sign face(s). The name of the unified development shall be located at the top of the sign and shall be designed to stand out from the listing of tenants within the unified development.

d. Only one development directory sign shall be allowed per street frontage (per side of the street) for the unified development.

**Interstate frontage is considered a street frontage.**

e. Approved

f. Only the name and/or logo for the unified development and the names and/or logos of individual establishments within the unified development shall be allowed on the sign face(s). The name of the unified development shall be located at the top of the sign and shall be designed to stand out from the listing of tenants within the unified development.

development directory signs shall not be converted to any other type of off-premise sign.

g. Development directory signs shall be designed so as to integrate the sign into the overall design of the unified development through the use of compatible colors, materials and landscaping. Any support structure shall be finished to complement the design of buildings within the project.

**f. A development directory sign approved as part of a master sign plan for a unified development of one hundred (100) acres or more fronting on an interstate highway with a 500-foot minimum may incorporate one Electronic Message Center as an integral part of a business ground or monument sign and shall have a minimum matrix area of twenty (20) square feet and a maximum matrix area of two hundred fifty (250) square feet. Such sign shall be identified on and constructed**

h. Approved development directory signs shall not be converted to any other type of off-premise sign.

**in accordance  
with an  
approved  
master sign  
plan.**

*6. Administrative Changes.*

**After approval of a master sign plan by the Planning Commission, the MPC director, or designee, may approve a change to the signs described within the master sign plan up to an increase in the size of any sign by up to ten (10) percent; provided this does not exceed the maximum standards permitted.**

Items highlighted in amber are new. Items highlighted in blue are positive guidelines currently in existence that have been removed.

Items in red are new things that are actually WORSE than before. Most of the items in red were introduced without any known public input and without Sign Task Force vote.



Items in pink should be removed whether new or old!