



PLANNING DIVISION
“SERVING BILLINGS, BROADVIEW AND YELLOWSTONE COUNTY”
PLANNING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
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MEETING NOTES
Project Re:Code
Sign Code Working Group Meeting

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

3:00 pm to 5:00 pm

2825 3rd Avenue North, 1st Floor Conference Room

1. Welcome and Introductions – Chair Paul Cox

Chairman Paul Cox called the meeting to order. Member Jeff Bollman was absent. Members of the public included Paul Whiting, Kelly Strobel (Lamar), Denise Joy (Council member Ward III), Penny Ronning (Council member Ward IV), Theresa Schneder, and Tyler Thelen (Epcor).

2. Public Comment – Any member of the public may be heard on any subject that is or is not on the agenda. Public comment is limited to 3 minutes or less at the discretion of the Chair. Public comment on agenda items may also be accepted at the time those agenda items are under discussion.

Mr. Paul Whiting stated he hoped the working group would pay special attention to the entryways of the city especially the I-90 corridor. He stated some of the entryways to Billings have nice treatment and well designed and placed signs and others do not. He stated the entryways to Billings should not be dominated by billboards and oversized commercial signs. Mr. Whiting stated he hoped there would be visual preference surveys as part of the zoning re-write.

3. Review of the Draft Context Matrix and Supporting Documents:

a. Staff memo – Building a Context Matrix

b. Backgrounder – Context Matrix Considerations

c. Lacey, WA – Context Sign Code and MRSC article on code development

d. The Draft Billings/Yellowstone County Context Matrix

Staff reviewed the provided materials on how a context based sign code could be built for Billings and Yellowstone County. Staff explained the need for legibility and conspicuity of signs so they are easily read by people in traffic for traffic-oriented places or scaled for pedestrians in places where walking is pre-dominant. Staff suggested a hierarchy of streets for a basis of context, with a designation as either vehicle oriented or pedestrian oriented signage. Also, each street or location designation would have sign types allowed or not allowed. For example, the downtown area is more pedestrian oriented with slower traffic speeds, so certain types of signs are more appropriate.

WG members asked if this could possibly create a lot of non-conforming signs. Staff stated it would not be the intent of a context code to create non-conforming signs so it would be a part of any code update to ensure the new code was not having too large of an effect on existing signs. Staff also suggested there may be a way to create a code section to allow “legacy signs” to continue although nonconforming to the new code. Staff also

pointed out the sections in the current code about existing signs and nonconformity are deficient and will need to be re-written.

Penny Ronning commented the WG needs to keep moving forward and should take care when devising new rules. She stated any new code should be ‘tested’ first. The WG agreed.

Kelly Strobel commented that Grand Avenue is not a good area to test a new code. He stated these lots were not well designed to accommodate the type of commercial businesses developed. He also stated the road is too compact for the amount of traffic that needs to go through the area.

Denise Joy commented people driving on Grand cannot see all the signs currently posted. She stated it is not good advertising to post a sign too small to be read from a car you know is travelling 35 mph or faster. She stated the businesses on Grand also need to respect the neighborhoods close by and the small businesses in the area. Ms. Joy stated there should be good design standards to deal with these issues.

Staff stated perhaps a good place to start would be in the Shiloh Corridor area since the overlay district was meant to be a context-driven regulation just for this area of town.

The WG group members agreed and determined a “test area” should run from Rimrock Road to Grand Avenue centered on Shiloh Road. From east to west it should encompass from 38th St West to 43rd St West. This area will contain a good mix of street types including arterials, collectors and local streets.

Staff stated they could create a 1st test of a context-type sign code for this area for the next meeting in May.

4. Set Next Meeting Date and Time

The WG designated Wednesday May 16 at 3 pm the next meeting date and time. Staff indicated the meeting would be held in the 1st Floor Conference Room

5. Adjourn – at 4:47 pm