

**Columbia Special Business District
Sign Ordinance Meeting
February 12, 2007, 11:30 a.m.
Top of the Tiger**

Present:

Blake Danuser, Bingham's, SBD	Phebe LaMar, Smith Lewis
John Ott, The Tiger, SBD Chair	Paul Land, Plaza Real Estate
Skip Walther, Walther, Antel et al, SBD	Larry Schuester, Pioneer Sign
Mark Timberlake, Timberlake Engineering, SBD	Arnie Fagan, Cool Stuff ARG!
Deb Sheals, Historic Preservation Consulting	Greg Wolff, Property Owner
Richard King, The Blue Note, CCA	Kimberly Griffin, Root Cellar
Jennifer Perlow, PS: Gallery, CCA President	Robert Smith, property owner
Tom Brinker, CycleExtreme, CCA	John John, ReMax Realty
Kurt Mirtsching, Shakespeare's Pizza, CCA	Mike Grellner, Plaza Real Estate
Carrie Gartner, Director	Dick Walls, Boone Tavern
Leslie Gale, Assistant Director	Dewayne Haslag, Columbia Sign
John Sudduth, City of Columbia	Mark Stevenson, Real Estate Management
Tim Teddy, City of Columbia	Brittany Darwell, Columbia Missourian

Call to Order

Danuser, as moderator, called the meeting to order, reminding everyone of the Council's request to reach a joint compromise. He suggested that topics of discussion be broken down into two categories: technical problems and general problems. He also emphasized that all would have the chance to speak and to allow others the opportunity to do so.

Discussion of Technical Problems/Changes

Mark Stevenson stated that he had a problem with the fact that some places which overlook, but may not be actually on, Providence are not exempt from the ordinance. He believes that because their main traffic is not pedestrian, those businesses need larger signs that the ordinance allows. Gartner stated that Tim Teddy, who is working on the legal language of the ordinance, at the suggestion of the SBD Board, needs suggestions on how to correctly state that in the ordinance. LaMar suggested that perhaps the phrase "adjacent to" could be used to clarify. Gartner assured Stevenson that the businesses that are set back from Providence will be taken into account.

Arnie Fagan stated that a problem of his with the technical issues occurs on point eight. He wanted to clarify if a business changes its name, but didn't drastically alter the sign, would the "new" sign still have to conform? Walther stated that as he understands the ordinance, if the only thing that changes is the name, the sign will still be allowed. John Sudduth, of the Public Works Department, stated that a new sign would be forced to conform unless the only thing that was changed was the face of the sign. He explained that if a sign was completely taken down, the new one would have to conform. Gartner asked if the language of the ordinance currently allows the kind of changes Fagan is asking for. Teddy replied that it does.

Discussion of General Problems

LaMar stated that her group has four main problems with the proposed ordinance. Danuser suggested that the group discuss each one in turn.

1. They want upper and lower-level businesses to be allowed a wall sign.

Deb Sheals started off by stating that when the SBD sign committee began the process of creating a sign ordinance for downtown, they saw that multiple upper-level signs are the biggest contributor to making a downtown look cluttered. They wanted to create a standard that would increase the value of the space to people who would like to purchase lofts downtown. They decided to not allow upper-level wall signs because awnings and window signs are a much cleaner look that works with the historic architecture of downtown buildings.

Gartner reminded the group that there is an exception for larger, single-use buildings.

Ott stated that the ordinance also allows out-door directory signs for business located on upper levels, which he believes to be more effective than a high-up wall sign.

Jennifer Perlow gave the example of her building, where the upper-level windows are small, and asked if there was some way to allow wall signs that are smaller for someone who might want to have a business up there.

Danuser introduced a compromise to LaMar and her group: would they be interested in a wall sign for upper and lower-level businesses that is mounted on the first floor?

Paul Land asked if the SBD Board would be okay with the allowance of signs on the second story but not above that.

Walther stated that this is meant to be a preservation ordinance, one that would keep what we have but prevent the proliferation of large signs.

Larry Schuester stated that because of the possibility of a conference center or hotel that would be mixed-use and would need different rules. He also stated that it should be "single-tenant" instead of "single-use" in the ordinance to prevent confusion, and that because of the way the board of adjustments works, there should be a list of criteria for any suggested variances.

Gartner asked if perhaps hotels, like theatres, should have a different set of guidelines as in the current city sign ordinance.

Schuester stated that an exemption of hotels is not the right course, but rather that the ordinance should allow wall signs for upper-level businesses.

Ott suggested that one extension sign be allowed as a directory for all stores.

Land restated his belief that not allowing second story wall signs is unfair to upper-level businesses such as KOPN, therefore they should be allowed.

Kimberly Griffin made the point that having all wall signs on the first level would not work for a space like the one she is located in (where there are a possible 7 tenants) because there is simply not enough space for that many signs.

Sheals asked what about the fairness to 3rd story businesses or higher if fairness is the issue? She asked if projecting signs for upper-level businesses, which would save space, would be a good alternative.

Bob Smith, who owns the building that houses Formosa, an upstairs restaurant, stated that he thinks that it is possible to still have an attractive downtown with upper-level wall signs.

2. They want upper and lower-level signs to not be so limited in size.

Ott stated that he has leased a lot of 2nd story property over the years, and has had no 2nd floor leasers who needed a wall sign. He believes that a directory sign is the most effective for the professional offices and residents that typically live on the upper levels. He also stated that what the SBD Board does not want is for buildings and signs that look like Fred DeMarco's new building to be on Broadway or elsewhere in The District.

Walther stated that the SBD Board ultimately wants an attractive downtown, and that this ordinance is a part of a larger effort of beautification.

Fagan stated that he has had the opposite experience of Ott, and that he believes a chance for upper-level wall signs will open doors for more leasing opportunities.

Smith stated that he thinks there is a need for clearer standards for the Board of Adjustments.

3. They would like businesses that have 48 or more lineal feet in a multi-use building to also be allowed a larger sign.

Walther asked if they were asking for tenants instead of just buildings to be allowed.

LaMar gave the examples of Panera Bread and Village Wine & Cheese that would benefit from this.

Ott stated that with the Panera building it would be okay, but that with other buildings that allowance might get funny because it will be too much signage on most buildings.

Gartner clarified the details of the original compromise that was made for the Alpine Shop and other similar buildings.

LaMar stated that the Board of Adjustments can not judge which buildings should have exceptions and which should not.

Ott stated that it is not possible to make an ordinance for just one building.

LaMar replied that they are not asking for this exception because of one building.

Schuester stated that a major problem is the way the ordinance measures signs. For example, Lakota's sign is very nice but would not be allowed under the new ordinance because the rule is to create a geometric shape around the letters and measure that – it takes the largest letters and measures from there, which is not the most effective way to measure signs.

Walther offered a compromise of 48sf wall signs for the businesses they are talking about.

4. They want awning size to be the same for upper and lower-level and instead of over one window, they should be allowed to go over more than one, and that the percentage for the letters should be 50%.

Ott stated that he thinks 30% is plenty of space for an awning sign. He believes that an awning is not a billboard.

Walther suggested that perhaps there should also be a new way to measure the sign on an awning, similar to what Schuester suggested for signs.

Sheals stated that using square footage for awnings would naturally limit the size of an awning sign, so it would make sense to measure it that way. She also agreed that spreading awnings over more than one window is acceptable.

Fagan stated that the four suggestions made by LaMar would bring more signs into compliance. Ott challenged Fagan's numbers, stating that Fagan only counted signs and not businesses, so there are actually a higher percentage of businesses that are in compliance.

Sheals stated that so far, she has seen the SBD Board give opponents a lot, but is unsure if the opponents will ever support the ordinance. She suggested a compromise where the 30% limit on awning signs would be removed, for businesses with 48 ft of storefront to be allowed a 48sf sign, and for upper and lower level businesses to be allowed a 24sf sign that was placed on the first floor. She asked if LaMar's group would be willing to give up upper-level wall signs in return.

Ott stated that he would not like to see the SBD Board give in like that.

Timberlake brought up his concerns with the way signs are measured again.

Dwayne Haslag gave the example of a city that calculates the square footage of signs by the number of lines.

At this time, the allotted meeting hour had ended.

Danuser reminded the group that they should keep their eyes on the middle ground that seemed to be appearing, because that is what the City Council had asked of those testifying to Council. He suggested that a few people from each side meet again.

Sheals stated that she felt that the group was very close to a compromise.

Danuser then asked if everyone would be okay with staying an extra 15 minutes to keep working on a compromise and everyone agreed to do so.

Walther asked if removing the 30% limitation on awning signs and keeping the square footage limit would satisfy Larry Schuester.

Schuester replied that yes, it would.

Walther then laid out a compromise that consisted of:

1. Removing the 30% limit on awning signs
2. Allowing first-floor tenants in multi-use buildings with 48 feet or more of store frontage the choice of a 48sf sign
3. Allow upper and lower level businesses 24sf wall signs or 8sf projecting signs mounted on the first floor
4. Create a set of standards for the Board of Adjustment

Walther asked if this compromise would satisfy LaMar's clients.

LaMar replied that she would need to check with them and would get back to the SBD Board.