

Administrative Request

15-040ADM

Bridge Street District Sign Guidelines

This is a proposal to create a guide to help applicants understand and apply the sign requirements in the Bridge Street District. The proposed guidelines are also intended to provide direction for sign design and placement in a pedestrian-oriented environment.

Date of ART Recommendation

Thursday, August 27, 2015

Case Manager

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PART I: APPLICATION OVERVIEW

<i>Proposal</i>	This is a proposal to create a guide to help applicants understand and apply the sign requirements in the Bridge Street District. The proposed guidelines are also intended to provide direction for sign design and placement in a pedestrian-oriented environment.
<i>Request</i>	Administrative request for review and recommendation of approval to City Council for Bridge Street District Sign Guidelines.
<i>Applicant</i>	Dana McDaniel, City Manager, City of Dublin
<i>Case Manager</i>	Rachel S. Ray, AICP, Economic Development Administrator (614) 410-4630, rray@dublin.oh.us

Application Review Procedure

The Administrative Review Team is asked to review the proposed sign guidelines and provide a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission, who in turn will make a recommendation to City Council. The proposed sign guidelines will be forwarded to City Council for final review and adoption by resolution.

Proposal Overview

In addition to explaining the zoning review process for signs and assisting applicants with using and applying the Bridge Street District sign requirements, the BSD Sign Guidelines are intended to:

- Maintain the City's standards of quality and character.
- Encourage excellence in sign design, both as a communication tool and as an art form.
- Allow and encourage creative and unique sign designs while preventing cluttered and unattractive streetscapes.
- Provide basic parameters for creative signs that may be as varied and unique as the businesses they represent.
- Provide guidance for designing signs in the Historic District, as well as signs associated with buildings that were constructed prior to the enactment of the Bridge Street District zoning regulations.
- Outline the contents of Master Sign Plans, which are intended to allow greater flexibility and creativity in sign design and display where signs are used as a placemaking tool.

The intended audience for the BSD Sign Guidelines is primarily sign designers and contractors who prepare and submit applications for new signs in the Bridge Street District. But the Guidelines are also intended for business owners/building tenants that commission signs. Finally, the Guidelines are to be used by reviewing bodies such as the Architectural Review Board, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Administrative Review Team.

Specific sign provisions apply to the Bridge Street zoning districts that result in a wider variety of available sign options than elsewhere in the City of Dublin. The intent of these sign provisions is to balance the need for the

vehicular use of signs, but also to be clearly related to the pedestrian-oriented nature of the Bridge Street District. Within the Bridge Street District (BSD), special sign provisions apply to properties within the Historic District boundaries due to the intent to preserve and enhance the historic village character of this area.

Signs in walkable, urban environments are meant to be visible to pedestrians from all directions – across the street, the same side of the street, or from parking areas behind the building. While visibility to passing vehicles is also a consideration, it is secondary to the pedestrian emphasis. Accordingly, in this environment, two smaller signs can be more effective and more attractive than one larger sign directed toward vehicles. When carefully integrated into the architectural design of a building, signs can help create a pleasurable, comfortable strolling and window-shopping experience while still providing adequate identification for the business.

BSD Sign Guidelines Overview

The BSD Sign Guidelines include the following sections, which have been reordered slightly since the June 2015 draft to improve user-friendliness:

1. **Purpose & Intent:** Explains intent for signs in the Bridge Street District, intent for signs in the Historic District, and how the guidelines should be used.
2. **Applicability:** Illustrates the Bridge Street District and Historic District boundaries, as well as the neighborhood zoning districts, to demonstrate to applicants which requirements apply to their site.
3. **Process:** Describes the zoning review and sign permitting process.
4. **Master Sign Plans:** Outlines the purpose of Master Sign Plans, as well as required information.
5. **Requirements Summary:** Explains how to determine the number of permitted signs and summarizes the sign types.
6. **Quality & Character:** Reiterates the BSD Code requirements for high quality materials and construction, and the preference that signs are designed by professional graphic designers and installed by professional sign fabricators. This section also includes descriptions and images illustrating the six principles for desirable sign character: Architectural Integration, Illumination, Colors & Secondary Images, Graphic Design & Composition, Dimensionality, and Context.
7. **Sign Type Requirements:** Illustrates the dimensional requirements for each of the main types of signs, including ground, wall, projecting, awning, window, building identification, and sandwich board signs. Also includes precedent images demonstrating good examples of each type of sign, as well as “what to avoid.” These pages are intended to function in a two-page layout, similar to the building type tables in the Bridge Street District zoning regulations.

Case Background

The Bridge Street District zoning regulations were adopted by City Council on March 25, 2012 after more than a year of drafting, public input, redrafting, and review by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Architectural Review Board.

One of the sections of the BSD zoning regulations that received extensive discussion at all levels of review were the sign provisions (refer to “Intent for Signs in the Bridge Street District,” above, for more information).

City Council members as well as Board and Commission members discussed at length appropriate numbers and types of signs permitted, both for the Historic District and throughout the BSD.

Soon after the adoption of the BSD zoning regulations, City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission began to discuss regulatory approaches to require quality sign construction and strategies to encourage creative design. While the BSD Code provisions state, "All signs shall be designed with the maximum of creativity and the highest quality of materials and fabrication," (Section 153.065(H)(4)), the signs that had been approved in the Bridge Street District, in the opinion of some members of the Commission and City Council, had not always achieved the intent of this requirement.

To address this, Planning contracted with design review consultants specializing in sign design to review and make recommendations on sign proposals reviewed through the BSD Minor Project Review process to verify that they were in keeping with the intent for signs in the Bridge Street District.

As part of the 2013-2014 update to the BSD zoning regulations, the City engaged one of these consultants, Studio Graphique, to assist with drafting amendments to the BSD sign provisions related to sign quality. Based on their review of sign regulations in communities throughout the country, Studio Graphique recommended the amendments that were ultimately incorporated into the Code as Zoning Code Section 153.065(H)(4)(e), Sign Materials, with provisions for minimum construction standards.

With regard to sign character and design creativity, Studio Graphique recommended that, in lieu of more regulations intended to require more imaginative signs, the City explore the possibility of sign design guidelines to illustrate the intent. Studio Graphique indicated that many other communities use sign guidelines, particularly in areas similar to the Bridge Street District to demonstrate desirable sign qualities.

In their recommendation to City Council in November 2014 for the amendments to the Bridge Street District zoning regulations, the Planning and Zoning Commission also recommended that sign design guidelines be prepared after the adoption of the revised Code provisions.

Since the amendment adoption by City Council on December 8, 2014, Planning has worked with Studio Graphique and Kolar Design to prepare the draft Bridge Street District Sign Guidelines.

Intent for Signs in the Bridge Street District

Specific sign provisions apply to the Bridge Street zoning districts that result in a wider variety of available sign options than elsewhere in the City of Dublin. The intent of these sign provisions is to balance the need for the vehicular use of signs, but also to be clearly related to the pedestrian-oriented nature of the Bridge Street District. Within the Bridge Street District (BSD), special sign provisions apply to properties within the Historic District boundaries due to the intent to preserve and enhance the historic village character of this area.

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Images

The graphics and photos in the draft BSD Sign Guidelines illustrate design concepts, and should not be viewed as an exclusive inventory of acceptable signs. Further, some of the illustrations of signs included in the document may not meet all of the dimensional or specific design requirements for signs in the Bridge Street District. There are a number of references throughout the draft Guidelines intended to direct applicants to verify specific sign requirements for specific sites and sign proposals.

PART II: ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW TEAM COMMENTS

Planning

The proposed Bridge Street District Sign Guidelines explain the zoning review process for signs and assist applicants with using and applying the Bridge Street District sign requirements. Most importantly, the Guidelines allow and encourage creative and unique sign designs while preventing cluttered and unattractive streetscapes and reinforce the vision for the Bridge Street District.

Building Standards, Parks & Open Space, Fire, Engineering, Police, Economic Development

No comments.

PART III: PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW TEAM RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation of approval to the Planning and Zoning Commission for the BSD Sign Guidelines.