Submittal Requirements for Administrative Design Review of Signage

Design Review is the process by which the City evaluates developments within the City that meet the definition of “regulated improvements” in Mercer Island City Code (MICC) 19.16.010. Regulated improvements are defined as:

Any development of any property within the city, except:
1. Property owned or controlled by the city; or
2. Single-family dwellings and the buildings, structures and uses accessory thereto; or
3. Wireless communications structures, including associated support structures and equipment cabinets.

Design review ensures a proposal’s consistency with MICC 19.11 Town Center Development and Design Standards or MICC 19.12 Design Standards for Zones outside Town Center and is intended to promote and enhance environmental and aesthetic design. Single family development is not a regulated improvement, and is therefore excluded from design review.

Regulated improvements are classified as either a major new construction, which is defined by MICC 19.16.010 as “construction from bare ground or an enlargement or alteration that changes the exterior of an existing structure that costs in excess of 50 percent of the structure’s assessed value” or a minor new construction. Minor new construction is “exterior modification to an existing development or site that does not constitute major new construction.”

The Design Commission is the decision authority for review of major new construction as well as minor exterior modifications in the Town Center with a construction valuation (as defined by MICC 17.14.010) of $100,000 or greater. All minor exterior modifications outside of the Town Center as well as minor exterior modifications in the Town Center with a construction valuation (as defined by MICC 17.14.010) less than $100,000 are reviewed by the Code Official. The Code Official may choose to send any application to the Design Commission for review.

PRE-APPLICATION: Applicants are encouraged to participate in informal meetings with City staff prior to application submittal. Call Development Services Staff to schedule a pre-application meeting. Meetings with the staff provide an opportunity to discuss the proposal in conceptual terms, identify the applicable City requirements, and delineate the proposal review process.

APPLICATION: All applications for permits or actions by the City shall be submitted on forms provided by the Development Services Group. An application shall contain all information required by the applicable development regulations. The city cannot accept an application that does not have all of the required items. In order to accept your application, each of the required items shall be submitted to permit counter staff at the same time.
FILING REQUIREMENTS: Please fold all plans and attachments to a size not exceeding 8½” x 14” for storage in a legal-size folder. Plans not folded to the proper size will not be accepted. Please submit two (2) copies each of the following:

☐ Development Application Coversheet
☐ Signage Design Review Filing Fee: see Development Application

Ground Signs:
☐ A Site Plan showing:
  ☐ Locations of all existing and proposed signs
  ☐ Property lines
  ☐ Setbacks of ground signs from all rights-of-way
  ☐ Existing and proposed building(s).
  ☐ Elevation drawings of all existing and proposed ground signs showing:
    ☐ Height of sign(s) measured from the average finished grade.
    ☐ Sign Dimensions
    ☐ Letter Dimensions
    ☐ Materials, colors and finishes
    ☐ Structural components of the sign
☐ Location and size of landscaping around the sign

Wall Signs:
☐ A Site Plan showing:
  ☐ The location of all existing and proposed wall signs
  ☐ The building facade on which the sign will be mounted with:
    ☐ The proposed sign location(s)
    ☐ Sign Dimensions
    ☐ Letter Dimensions
    ☐ Materials, colors and finishes
    ☐ Structural components of the sign

Projecting Signs:
☐ A Site Plan showing:
  ☐ The location of all existing and proposed projecting signs
  ☐ The building facade on which the sign will be mounted with:
    ☐ The proposed sign location(s)
    ☐ Sign Dimensions
    ☐ Letter Dimensions
    ☐ Materials, colors and finishes
    ☐ Structural components of the sign

Window Signs:
☐ A Site Plan showing:
  ☐ The location of all existing and proposed window signs
  ☐ The windows within which the sign(s) will be located with:
    ☐ The proposed sign location(s)
    ☐ Sign Dimensions
    ☐ Letter Dimensions
    ☐ Materials, colors and finishes
    ☐ Structural components of the sign
STANDARDS AND DESIGN CRITERIA FOR SIGNS WITHIN THE TOWN CENTER

FREESTANDING GROUND SIGNS:
A. No more than one ground sign is allowed on each street frontage
B. The sign shall be architecturally compatible with the style, materials, colors and details of the building. The sign content should be integrated in one design (in contrast to displaying two or more separate elements). Use of symbols is encouraged.
C. All signs shall be:
   1. Proportionate to the street frontage of the businesses they identify
   2. In no case larger than:
      a. A maximum of 25 square feet for individual business ground signs, shopping complex identification ground signs, and signs within a 10-foot setback from any property line on a street.
      b. A maximum of 50 square feet for joint ground signs (identifying more than one business) and six square feet for each business included in the complex.
         i. When more than five businesses are included in the complex, one additional ground sign may be placed on the street front, if signs are located at least 100 feet apart.
D. The maximum height of any sign within 10 feet from any property line on a street shall be 42 inches. All other ground signs shall be a maximum of six feet in height.
E. Exposed areas of backs of signs should be finished to present an attractive appearance.

WALL SIGNS:
A. A wall sign shall be granted to commercial uses occupying buildings facing the streets and are limited to one sign per business on each street frontage. Commercial uses occupying a building adjacent to a driveway shall not qualify for a second wall sign. However, a commercial use occupying a building whose only exposure is from a driveway or parking lot shall be allowed one wall sign. Businesses that demonstrate that the entry off a driveway or parking lot is used by customers shall be eligible for a wall sign.
B. All signs shall be:
   1. Proportionate to the street frontage of the businesses they identify
   2. In no case larger than:
      a. Twenty-five square feet for individual business signs.
      b. Fifty square feet for joint business directory signs identifying the occupants of a commercial building and located next to the entrance.
   3. The sign size is measured as follows:
      a. "Boxed" display – total area of display including the background and borders.
      b. Individual letters and symbols – total combined area of a rectangle drawn around the outer perimeter of each word and each symbol.
   4. Wall signs may not extend above the building parapet, soffit, the eave line or the roof of the building, or the windowsill of the second story.
   5. When a commercial complex provides spaces for signs above window displays, these signs should be compatible in shape, scale of letters, size, color, lighting, materials and style.
   6. If an applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the design commission that a wall sign is creative, artistic and an integral part of the architecture, the commission may waive the above restrictions.
   7. When multiple signs for individual businesses are contemplated for a major construction project, a master sign plan stipulating the location and size of future signs will be required.
PROJECTING SIGNS:
A. Projecting signs should clear the sidewalk by a minimum of eight feet.
B. Projecting signs shall not be larger than six square feet.
C. Signs should not project over four feet from the building unless the sign is a part of a permanent marquee or awning over the sidewalk.
D. Awnings that incorporate a business sign shall be fabricated of opaque material and shall use reverse channel lettering. The design commission may require that an awning sign be less than the maximum area for wall signs to assure that the awning is in scale with the structure. Back-lit or internally lit awnings are prohibited.

WINDOW SIGNS:
A. Permanent and temporary window signs are limited to maximum 25 percent of the window area.
B. Every effort should be made to integrate window signs with window display.

PARKING LOT SIGNS:
A. Signs within parking lots should be limited to those necessary for safety and identification.
B. Any required signs for individual stalls should be marked on the pavement.
C. Freestanding or wall-mounted signs are not permitted, with the exception of disabled parking signs.

DIRECTIONAL SIGNS:
A. Only those directional signs necessary to protect the safety of pedestrians and passengers in vehicles will be allowed.
B. These signs shall be no higher than 36 inches and no wider than four square feet.

TEMPORARY SIGNS:
A. Unless prohibited by this chapter, use of temporary signs in the Town Center shall be governed by MICC 19.06.020.

PROHIBITED SIGNS:
A. Signs mounted on the roof are not permitted.
B. Animated, moving, flashing, blinking, reflecting, revolving, or other similar signs or signs that incorporate these elements are prohibited.
C. Pennants or inflated signs, balloons and figures are prohibited.
D. Signs attached to or painted on vehicles parked and visible from the public right-of-way are prohibited if, based on the relative amount of time the vehicle is parked rather than being used as a means for actual transportation, the vehicle’s primary purpose is as a stationary sign rather than a means for actual transportation.
E. Phone numbers are prohibited from permanent, exterior signs.

LIGHTED SIGNS:
A. Lighted signs shall be of high quality and durable materials, distinctive in shape, designed to enhance the architectural character of the building and use the minimum wattage necessary to identify the facility or establishment. Channel or punch-through letters are preferred over a sign that contains text and/or logo symbols within a single, enclosed cabinet.

STREET NUMBERS:
A. City-assigned street numbers should be installed on all buildings.
B. Street numbers will not be counted towards permitted sign area.
STANDARDS AND DESIGN CRITERIA FOR SIGNS OUTSIDE OF THE TOWN CENTER

FREESTANDING GROUND SIGNS:
A. An individual building or a building complex outside residential zones may display one ground sign on each street frontage.
B. The sign shall be architecturally compatible with the style, materials, colors and details of the building or complex. Use of symbols is encouraged.
C. All signs shall be:
   1. Proportionate to the street frontage of the use they identify
   2. In no case shall a freestanding ground sign be larger than:
      a. Twenty-five square feet for single-tenant building ground signs and complex identification ground signs. Such signs may be allowed in front or side yard setbacks; or
      b. Forty square feet for joint tenant ground signs (identifying more than one facility or establishment within a building or building complex) with six square feet maximum for any one establishment included in a building or building complex; provided, joint tenant ground signs shall be restricted to a maximum of 25 square feet if located within front or side yard setbacks.
D. The maximum height of any sign within 10 feet from any property line facing a street shall be 42 inches. All other ground signs shall be no higher than six feet.
E. Exposed areas of backs of signs should be finished with appropriate color, material or texture to present an attractive appearance relative to the building material, color and texture

WALL SIGNS:
A. An individual building or a building complex outside residential zones may display one wall sign on each street frontage. A business or other use occupying a building whose only entrance is from a driveway or parking lot shall be allowed one wall sign facing that driveway or parking lot.
B. All signs shall be:
   1. Proportionate to the street frontage of the use they identify; and
   2. In no case shall a wall sign be larger than:
      a. Twenty-five square feet for any individual business or other use; or
      b. Forty square feet for joint tenant directory signs identifying the occupants of a building or a building complex and located next to the entrance.
C. The sign size shall be measured as follows:
   1. Boxed Sign Displays: Total area of a boxed sign display, including the background and borders.
   2. Individual Letters and Symbols: Total combined area of a rectangle drawn around the outer perimeter of each word and each symbol.
D. Placement. Wall signs may not extend above the building parapet, soffit, the eave line or the roof of the building, or the windowsill of the second story. Wall signs shall be integrated with the overall building and site design.
E. Master Signage Plan. When multiple signs for individual businesses in one building or multiple buildings in a complex are contemplated, a master signage plan stipulating the location and size of allowed signs shall be required.

SIGNS FOR NON-SINGLE-FAMILY-DWELLING USES IN RESIDENTIAL ZONES:
A. One wall sign and one freestanding ground sign are permitted on each separate public street frontage for non-single-family-dwelling uses in residential zones. A wall sign may be unlighted or exterior lighted, not to exceed 12 square feet. A free-standing ground sign shall be no larger than 18 square feet and shall not exceed a maximum height of 42 inches above grade. The location of any freestanding ground sign shall be subject to all setback requirements for the zone in which the sign is located.
SIGNS FOR LICENSED PRACTITIONERS OR SERVICE OPERATORS IN RESIDENTIAL ZONES:
A. Licensed practitioners or service operators in residential zones shall be permitted one unlighted window or wall sign for identification purposes only, bearing only the occupant’s name and occupation, not to exceed 72 square inches.

PARKING LOT SIGNS:
A. Signs within parking lots should be limited to those necessary for safety and identification. Any required signs for individual stalls should be marked on the pavement. Freestanding or wall-mounted signs should not be permitted, with the exception of ADA handicapped accessible parking signs.

DIRECTIONAL SIGNS:
A. To address safety concerns and avoid a cluttered appearance, only those directional signs necessary to protect the safety of pedestrians and vehicle occupants shall be allowed.
B. Directional signs shall be no larger than three square feet and no higher than 36 inches above grade.

TEMPORARY SIGNS:
A. Unless prohibited by this chapter, use of temporary signs shall be governed by MICC 19.06.020, Temporary Signs.

STREET NUMBERS:
A. City-assigned street numbers should be installed on all buildings.
B. Street numbers will not be counted towards permitted sign area.
C. Size. Street numbers for any building or building complex shall be no smaller than six inches in height.

PROHIBITED SIGNS:
A. Signs mounted on the roof are prohibited.
B. Projecting signs are prohibited.
C. Window signs are prohibited.
D. Inflated signs, balloons and figures are prohibited.
E. Internally lit signs are prohibited.
F. Neon signs are prohibited.
G. Portable signs, such as signs on trailers, are prohibited. This standard is not intended to prohibit A-frame signs as allowed pursuant to MICC 19.06.020, Temporary Signs.
H. Flashing, moving, animated, blinking, reflecting, revolving, or other similar signs or signs that incorporate these elements are prohibited.
I. Off-premises signs (signs related to a building, business, tenant or establishment not located on the same premises as the sign) are prohibited.
J. Signs attached to or painted on vehicles parked and visible from the public right-of-way are prohibited if, based on the relative amount of time the vehicle is parked rather than being used as a means for actual transportation, the vehicle’s primary purpose is as a stationary sign rather than a means for actual transportation.
K. Vending machines, such as soft drink or snack machines, shall not be placed where they are visible from the public right-of-way.