

Open House and Sign Social
November 29, 2007
Summary of Comments and Questions

Notes from Station 1: Murals, Painted and Projecting Signs

- Are there restrictions on materials that can be used? *Yes, the ordinance specifies that a permanent sign must be constructed of permanent materials, such as wood, glass, plastics or other man-made materials. We currently lack standards that define acceptable paints, which may be something we need to add to the code.*
- The consensus seem to be that people are in favor of having more murals in Woodland Park because they add to the overall beauty of the town and emphasize the town's historic feel. However, there is a concern about controlling the quality of murals. Will the painters be required to have some sort of fine art qualifications or credentials? *We don't think we'll require a resume of credentials, but we will require sketches of the proposed mural to ensure the content is appropriate and to verify that the artist is capable. We may also consider asking for a portfolio of previous work.*
- Most people also support the idea of allowing projecting signs. They can be easier to read, especially downtown, and they add to the character of the downtown area.
- The ordinance should be modified to create a "Downtown" feel that is different and unique compared to the outer areas of town.

Notes from Station 2: Sidewalk and Sandwich Signs

- There should be better definitions overall. *Agreed.*
- Spinners, Twisting Signs – Is this addressed in the ordinance? *Yes, fluttering and spinning signs are currently regulated in Section 18.48.050-Prohibited Signs. This is also where banners are prohibited; however banners and other fluttering signs, including pennants and balloons can be allowed on a temporary basis.*
- People holding signs – What is acceptable? It is allowed on a temporary or permanent basis? What are the safety concerns? There should be a section of code that clarifies what is allowable for this type of advertising. *We agree. There is not currently any section of code that specifically addresses hand-held signs along the road. We would probably like to ban this type of advertising due to safety concerns for both the sign holder and for drivers. Or perhaps they would be treated like temporary signs and given a permit for a specific period of time that is limited over the course of a month or year.*
- What constitutes Central Business District? *The CBD is a zoning classification. Generally, this zoning hugs Highway 24 from where South Boundary Street intersects the highway west to Park State Bank. We would like to consider limiting sidewalk and sandwich signs, which are typically oriented toward pedestrian traffic, to the area of Woodland Park that is most walkable – the Central Business District, the Neighborhood Commercial zones, which is north and west of the CBD, and the interior sidewalks of PUD shopping centers. The Zoning map is online at the City's website under "Forms and Documents." The CBD is light blue, and the NC zoning is lavender.*
- What is a nuisance? *A nuisance is an activity, an object or a condition present on one property that has a negative impact on another property. That negative impact includes smells, sounds, pollution, and hazards. There are public nuisances – a person or corporation's activities that negatively impact the health, safety or welfare of the public –*

and there are private nuisances, which occur among private property owners. Minimizing both public and private nuisances is one of the reasons cities enact zoning ordinances.

- *What is the permit fee for a sandwich sign? It is currently \$27 plus use tax, which is usually \$5, for a total of \$32. The fee will automatically increase by 5% at the first of the year.*
- *Suppose a sandwich sign has an electronic message center or an LED panel. Would it be regulated as a sandwich sign or an electronic sign? If the Planning Commission and City Council decide to allow electronic signs, we would probably suggest that electronic signs be permanent signs only. Since sandwich signs are moved on a regular basis, they do not classify as permanent signs, and thus we would probably not allow an electronic sandwich sign.*
- *What is the turn-around time for permit applications? It depends on how complete and accurate the application is. If the application has all the required information, and complies with the code, then the permit can be approved and issued in 2 or 3 days. If there are missing signatures or some other missing information, we will have to spend time tracking down all the pieces we need, which can make the approval process take a week or even two. The Zoning Development Permit (ZDP) process timelines were established by the 1995 Resolution 322, which calls for the review and approval of a complete ZDP application within 7 working days.*
- *There should be limits on where sandwich signs can be located so they don't restrict pedestrian travel on the sidewalks. We agree. We ask businesses to put these signs on the road side of the sidewalk so that pedestrians can walk closer to the building rather than closer to the road.*
- *Realtors should be allowed to place directional signs in Woodland Park advertising a "Home for Sale." We will consider this, but will likely put the same limitations on these directional signs that we place on Open House signs, meaning they would only be on the weekend and no individual property would be allowed more than 3 signs regardless of whether they are directional or open house signs.*

Notes from Station 3: Window Signs

- *Is one-way mirrored glass allowed? Could they be? Nothing in the code seems to prohibit this type of reflective glass window, but it is important to make sure the mirror would not create a safety hazard for passersby and motorists. For the safety of the business, it might be better to have the interior visible from the outside in case there is a break-in somebody would be more likely to see the intruder and call the police.*
- *The code on the website needs to be updated to include the definitions. The code covering signs is 18.48; the definitions for the entire code are contained in 18.06 Please contact the Planning Department if you have a specific question or concern.*
- *How will 25% of the window area be defined? We will determine the total area of window and door area, and 25% of that area would be allowed to have signs. If they have sufficient total area, businesses could choose to completely cover one or two of their windows, or they could cover 25% of each window.*
- *Consider allowing flashing or LED signs in windows. We are not entirely sure how we would treat these small electronic signs. Because this sort of electronic sign is not*

- temporary (like window signs generally are), we would probably classify them as electronic signs that are required to go through the permit application process.*
- *How are large real estate signs treated in the code? All real estate signs are currently covered under section 18.48.030 - Signs Not Requiring a Permit. Commercial properties are allowed to have signs up to 32 square feet in size. If the length of the street frontage is greater than 200 feet, a second 32 square feet sign may be displayed. We do not intend to make very many changes to this section of code. However we are considering requiring real estate signs to comply with the new section on sign maintenance so that once a real estate banner is torn, faded or the message is not clearly visible, it would have to be replaced with a fresh sign.*
 - *What if somebody makes a homemade sign and puts it in their window? Can there be any kind of quality control on window signs? The code views the signs in a business' windows as being subject to frequent change so we do not require a permit for these signs and have no way of controlling their quality. However, this is a valid concern. Perhaps there is some way to find a balance between maintaining professional signage in store windows and not overburdening small businesses.*
 - *Is the white horse on The Cowhand a sign? Since the horse does not contain any written advertising, we consider it a decorative sculpture, not a sign.*
 - *Is there a maximum number of signs for community events held by non-profit organizations? Currently, no, but our policy is not to allow more than three. We will probably make the policy official as part of this amendment process.*

Notes from Station 4: Banners

- *Banners should be allowed for 120 days per year, and the business could choose to divide their allotted days in periods of 5, 10, 20, and 30 days. We will consider this idea, although we think 30 days may be too long for any one sign to be displayed. We want to maintain the classification of banners as temporary signs.*
- *The banner permit is too high. The fee should be a once yearly fee of \$15, instead of once every time a permit is obtained. Currently, the permit fee for a temporary sign is \$13, and it lasts 20 days. The permit fee will increase to \$14 in 2008. The permit fee helps offset the cost of the staff time it takes to process, review, issue, and file permits. If a business applies for 3 permits in a year, staff has to process and review 3 permits, thus we think the fee should be paid each time. We may consider capping the amount that we collect in banner fees from any one individual business, for example, at \$90 per year. We just want to make sure that the taxpayers are not subsidizing private businesses by paying for the staff resources that are being used primarily for the businesses' benefit.*
- *How will non-profits be treated? We currently waive the banner permit fee for non-profit organizations pursuant to code section 18.48.040 B4. We also want to allow non-profits to have banners off-premise of their special event site, with the property owners' permission. For special events run by non-profits, we may allow up to 3 banners per event.*
- *The proposed fines are too steep and go into effect too soon. The idea behind having these steep fines that go into effect immediately once the violation occurs is that it will discourage businesses and other organizations from violating the code in the first place. The other cities we have talked to who have immediate fines that are high*

enough to get people's attention do not have many violations. The administrative activities that accompany the process of code enforcement are highly time-consuming, and again, we feel the violators should help offset that cost rather than place the entire burden on the public.

- *The size of banners should be regulated. Currently the ordinance allows a maximum of 36 square feet of temporary signage, including banners, in all commercial zones. Perhaps instead saying a business may only have one banner, we will continue to use the maximum square footage, thus giving businesses the option to have several smaller banners or one large one.*
- *Banners should be professionally made and installed. We agree! We will look into the legal issues of requiring all signs, including banners, to be made by licensed sign contractors.*
- *Get rid of ground banners. Banners should be affixed to a building. We like this idea and think it will help keep banners looking professional.*

Notes from Station 5: Electronic Signs

- *Almost everybody is in favor of allowing electronic signs, and most people agree that some limits are necessary.*
- *Most people think that electronic signs should only be prohibited in the historic area of town (Fairview to West Street along Midland Avenue). The reason we suggested the entire CBD is that we would like to create a sign ordinance that will give visitors some indication that they are approaching the historic downtown corridor before they actually drive through it. We think that having the signs on the edges of the Central Business District look similar to those downtown will help passersby realize that they are approaching a destination area.*
- *Nearly everybody supports the following ideas that control the programming of electronic signs: each display should be monochromatic, messages should only change once every 10 seconds, and there should not be any blinking, scrolling, or other moving text effects or graphics.*
- *Will the intensity of the lighting be controlled? How will these signs affect dark skies? We need to do more research to determine whether the light intensity can be controlled. It may depend on the sign type and the sign maker. Some of the sign makers present at the meeting said the intensity can be controlled; others said it cannot. We want to preserve the night skies in Woodland Park and intend to control the light intensity of electronic signs if possible.*
- *A few people think small electronic signs should be allowed on walls, since they are not as expensive as freestanding electronic signs and some businesses may not have enough land area to erect a freestanding electronic sign. Most people seemed to think small electronic signs on walls are more difficult to read and would be a safety hazard since drivers would be more distracted trying to read a small sign than they would be a large one near the road. We have not made up our minds on this issue, but we probably lean towards thinking that the small signs might present a greater safety hazard to motorists than large signs. We will need to do more research on this subject.*
- *How will the 4 existing electronic signs be treated by the new ordinance? Can the ordinance be written so that they are conforming signs? The portion of a sign that is electronic may need to be expanded to 75% of the total sign. We would like to make these*

signs conform to the new ordinance, but this issue needs careful thought. We are not sure we want all the future electronic signs to be similar in design to the existing ones, which is what would have to happen if we write the code to allow these existing signs to conform. If we adopt a section of code allowing electronic signs, we will likely adopt programming standards, such as those suggested above, and we will require the existing signs to be re-programmed to conform to the new standards.

- The Woodland Station Overlay District prohibits electronic signs, as does Colorado Springs, Cripple Creek, and numerous other cities in both the state and the nation. *This is true. Many communities do not allow these signs because their appearance can be detrimental to the character of the area. Before we decide to allow electronic signs, we must try to envision what Woodland Park would look like if every business in town had an electronic sign. Would that image make us proud of our town? Would it attract tourists to our town? Will allowing electronic signs make Woodland Place a better place to live?*

Notes from Station 6: Changeable Copy signs

- 1) Include Changeable Copy signs in the General regulations instead of the Temporary Sign regulations.
 - Most people support this idea. They want to be allowed both a changeable copy sign and a banner.
 - If a business has a banner and a changeable copy sign, they should be on separate street frontages. *This is a good idea for preventing excessive sign clutter.*
 - Some people think changeable copy signs should not be allowed at all because they are not particularly attractive. Other people agree that they can be ugly, but maybe there could be design standards that require them to look better and maintenance standards that require the message to current and readable. *We currently require a landscaping plan to accompany an application for a changeable copy sign, but we like the idea of having design standards that would ensure a good appearance. We are considering implementing broad design standards for all signs, and maybe even banners, so that all the signage in Woodland Park is consistent with the character of the area.*
- 2) Expand size allowance from a maximum of 16 square feet to a maximum of 32 square feet.
 - Most people disagree with having a flat-rate maximum size for this type of sign. There should be a formula that relates the size of the sign to the size of the wall it is on. Other ideas for determining the size of a changeable copy sign could be a formula relating the size of the sign to the square footage of the building, the acreage of the lot, or the length of street frontage of the lot. *For wall signs, the ordinance currently allows a sign on a wall to be 1 square foot for every linear foot of wall length of the wall the sign will be attached to. We would likely maintain this standard, but instead of allowing a maximum of 16 square feet for changeable copy, we would allow a maximum of 32 square feet. These signs are generic sizes established by the sign industry. The rest of the allowable signage on the wall could be used for advertising the business's name. As for freestanding signs, both on a pole and on the ground, the length of street frontage determines the size of the sign. Businesses with longer lots*

- are allowed larger signs up to a maximum of 64 square feet, thus half the total sign could be changeable copy.*
- Strip centers should have different formulas for calculating sign area. The entire building frontage of the strip center should be calculated then divided equally among the tenants for their wall signs, instead of calculating the allowable area by the store frontage of each business. For multi-tenant freestanding signs, the tenants should receive a portion of that sign based on the square footages of their shops. *Many localities use a building's square footage to determine the size sign the business is allowed. While we are not likely to change our general regulations to use this type of formula instead of the current formula that uses lot frontage for individual signs, this is a good idea for dividing signage among strip centers and multi-tenant buildings, and we will definitely look at other cities who have developed this kind of formula.*
- 3) Allow changeable copy signs to account for between 25% and 50% of the total signage.
 - Allow the changeable copy sign to account for up to 75% of total permanent signage. *We are reluctant to allow them to be this big. We are not sure that it would be wise to leave only 25% of the sign area to advertise the business' name and other information, and there are concerns that these signs do not provide a visual benefit to the community.*
 - 4) Allow only one changeable copy sign per business.
 - Some people think this is an acceptable limit, and others think a business should be allowed one per street frontage or one per wall. *The ordinance is intended to prevent excessive signage and sign clutter. We think that more than one changeable copy sign per business is excessive.*
 - 5) Restrict the geographical area of where these signs are allowed to outside the Central Business District.
 - This idea is not very popular. Some people think that it makes sense but that it's not fair. *Generally downtown areas have a significantly denser pattern of development than the other areas of a town, and this is true in Woodland Park. With more buildings and less open space and visibility, signage is almost always more restricted in Central Business Districts. While it may seem unfair that the sign regulations vary by district, numerous aspects of development, such as building heights and setbacks, also vary by district. Buildings in the Central Business District may not be able to have as much signage, but they are allowed to be much closer to the road.*
 - Some suggested that it might be more appropriate to prohibit these signs in the historic area of downtown, from Fairview to West Street on Midland Avenue. *We may consider making the historic area the geographic limits for these signs, but the comment above regarding the geographic limits for electronic signs is relevant to this type of sign also.*
 - 6) Eliminate requirement to have City Council approval for a changeable copy sign.
 - Nearly everybody agrees with this idea.

Comment Cards and Spoken Comments:

- “Never try to enforce any law that has not been in force for years without notice. Have the informational meeting before the enforcement goes into effect.” *We sincerely apologize for what must have been a major shock to people who had no idea that the City even had a sign ordinance. Our intent was not to make people feel targeted. We did not*

have the informational meeting prior to beginning enforcement primarily because we had no idea that so many businesses and other organizations were in violation of the ordinance. We didn't realize how many people would be affected or the extent to which we would receive negative reactions about enforcement. City Council decided to make the code enforcement of signs a priority. Instead of a large group meeting, we chose what we thought was a more personal, individualized approach of meeting face-to-face with each nonconforming business to explain specific violations and what could be done to remedy the problem.

- *“We would like a second sign for the businesses in the Safeway Shopping Center.” We will definitely be expanding the amount of signage that is allowed for shopping centers. We feel that the current regulations do not allow adequate signage for all the businesses that can be located in a shopping center.*
- *“As small businesses we do not need to be charged excessive permit fees.” The fees we charge are intended to offset our costs. Both small and large businesses charge their customers for their services, and local and state governments either must do the same or must raise taxes for the entire population. We think the first option is more fair for everyone.*
- *“Allow ‘For Sale by Owner’ directional signs to be displayed on the weekends in addition to ‘Open House’ directional signs.” This change seems reasonable. We will consider it.*
- *“I would like a variety of signs at my business, such as a mural, a banner, and a changeable copy sign.” The ordinance does allow a variety of signage on each property. There is a maximum allowed size for each sign type, but a business can have several sign types. For example, a business could have a freestanding sign that is part changeable copy and part illuminated sign, an awning sign, and a sign on each wall. As we amend the ordinance, we may suggest that each street frontage have a maximum square footage for signs or that redundant signage (like changeable copy signs and banners) be located on different walls or street frontages.*
- *“Keep in mind that Woodland Park is not a destination town yet, and until we are, we, the businesses, need to be able to pull people off the highway.” We recognize that Woodland Park is not a destination like Breckenridge or Telluride are, but if we don't try to make our town look like a destination community, we will never become one. Once we – the people who live, work, shop and own businesses in this town – start to think and act like we are a destination town, the people who would normally pass us by will stop. The transformation from a thru-town to a destination town must start with us. The drivers on the highway will not make us a destination town. Only we can do that.*