



City of Sebastopol Design Review Board/Tree Board Staff Report

Meeting Date: November 25, 2025
Agenda Item: 6A
To: Design Review Board
From: Sign Ordinance Subcommittee (Members Deedler and Level), Staff

Subject: Sign Ordinance Update
Recommendation: Hear report along with update and direct subcommittee with next steps

Introduction:

As part of a discussion at the Design Review Board meeting of September 24, 2024, the members discussed the need to have a deeper review of the Sign Ordinance as there haven't been any modifications or changes for well over 10 years. With that, the board appointed Members Level and Deedler to form a subcommittee to take on this effort with support from staff. Since the creation of that subcommittee staff has met with the subcommittee members twice the first time on September 15th, 2025, and the second time on November 17th, 2025. As part of those discussions staff and the subcommittee talked about issues related to design, allowances, internal illumination, and murals/graphics.

The main issue that was raised by the subcommittee was how to handle the newer style of signs that are becoming more prevalent, internally illuminated monument/free standing signs. In 2024, the board approved a replacement monument sign for the Hopmonk that replaced the old marque sign, which was slightly illuminated but also included removable block lettering. The Hopmonk proposed a new digital sign that would have LED illumination of upcoming shows and events at the Hopmonk. The board discussed this for quite some time, raising concerns about lighting, glare, and a few other things, but ultimately approved the sign with a list of conditions. A few members indicated that this sign would set a precedent for allowing these types of signs in the future, but staff indicated that if the ordinance was to be worked on and included standards for these types of signs that any future sign would be held to those standards or discretion of the board. Also, the subcommittee talked about how these newer digital signs should be classified under the "free standing" signs, which the code already establishes standards for, but is asking the board to further comment on the intensity of lighting that should be allowed.

On top of those discussions, the subcommittee is also requesting feedback on the following modifications to the current ordinance as follows:

Section 17.120.050.A1

1. "Sign area" is defined as the smallest geometric rectangle that encompasses the individual words, letters, figures, and emblems comprising the message. For wall-mounted signs, the calculation shall exclude any background area, architectural trim, or structural borders, counting only the actual surface area of the text and graphics against the total square footage

~~allowance the area of a rectangle drawn around the outermost area of sign copy, graphics, background materials, and borders or frame, and any similar display area which is capable of receiving copy at a future time. The structure supporting a sign is not included in determining the sign area, unless the structure contains advertising copy or business logo.~~

Section 17.120.020.A.3.c

c. Projecting (hanging) signs which do not exceed six ~~square feet~~ to twenty square feet in area, are installed with a minimum clearance of seven and one-half feet above the ground surface and no more than ten feet, project not more than three feet from the wall of a building into the public right of way, and which do not require an exception to any provision of this chapter.

17.120.070.C.1

1. Wherein all, or any part, of any mural or graphic may be considered signing, by reason of the depiction of specific words ~~, symbols, merchandise or services, such mural or graphic, or part thereof,~~ shall be subject to the regulations described in this chapter.

Lastly, the subcommittee is also requesting any further direction the board for additional areas of the Ordinance to focus on.

As it relates to procedure and next steps, if the board directs the subcommittee to come back with further changes they should do so by motion at this meeting. Once the subcommittee comes back at a future meeting with a final recommendation the board would then vote on that recommendation to send to the Planning Commission to review. Once the Planning Commission has reviewed the recommendation, they would then pass this along to the City Council who would hold a first reading of the ordinance and schedule a second reading for the final adoption of the ordinance. When the final adoption has been heard the ordinance would not go into effect until 30 days after the final adoption hearing.

Recommendation:

With that, staff and the subcommittee are requesting feedback and further direction on the items discussed above.

Attachments:

Sign Ordinance Guidelines