

DC BID Council Comments on Proposed DC Signage Regulations

(released August 17, 2012)

December 17, 2012

The DC BID Council has the following comments and recommendations on the proposed sign regulation released on August 17, 2012:

- 1) Wherever possible, standardize the requirements for permit applications. Even better would be to develop one standard application that could work for all review bodies. Currently, each review body requires a different type of application. Applications for CFA and HPO require 3 copies, Chinatown requires 8 copies, and Chapter 7 applications require 4 copies. 11" x 17" paper is required applications for signs covered Chapter 7, while the others require "scalable drawings." For signs covered in Chapter 7, "construction documents indicating the size..., location..., height..., materials and electrical and structural details" are required. CFA requires "drawings showing the details of construction, dimensions, lettering and method of attachment" are required. While these are asking for essentially the same thing, it would be easier for applicants if the language were standardized, or if there was one standard application that would fit for all agencies. All processes should allow for electronic submission.
- 2) Under section 201.2, where the permit number and date of issuance must be listed, consider creating a 1" square QR code to go on signs instead. This would have less visual impact and could contain more information.
- 3) In section 406.3, the prohibition on signs on canopies facing the direction of pedestrian travel is arbitrary and makes for less interesting streetscapes. This prohibition should be deleted.
- 4) Change the requirement for banner installation in Section 607.5 from a "licensed rigger" to a "trained and insured installer." Several BIDs maintain banners and hardware using hydraulic lifts and staff that are trained for such work. We insure the staff and equipment. Requiring a licensed rigger would increase our maintenance costs, as none of the BIDs have licensed riggers on staff. Section 603.3 (g) already requires "proof of insurance to indemnify the District for property damage and personal injury resulting from the installation or removal of the banners."
- 5) Allow temporary event signs without a permit. Change Section 606.7 to read: "Freestanding sidewalk signs indicating the location of a public market or a free public event are allowed to be displayed on public space without a permit, during the time of the operation of the public market or event, subject to the restrictions of this section"

- 6) Add a new section, 606.8 to allow BIDs to use sandwich board signs to announce work in public space. Suggested language: "Freestanding signs indicating public space maintenance conducted by business improvement districts, such as powerwashing sidewalks or painting lightpoles, shall be permitted on public space without a permit during the time of the maintenance and up to four hours after completion of the work, subject to the restrictions of this section."
- 7) Identify a process for the removal of damaged temporary signs. Because temporary signs can be up for 180 days but are not designed for long-term outdoor installation, they are frequently damaged by the weather or general wear. We recommend adding a section 605.10: "Temporary signs that are damaged may be removed by maintenance crews serving the public space."
- 8) The minimum banner height should be 8'6" on the sidewalk side. Banners have a positive impact on the neighborhood and should be encouraged. Banners have traditionally been hung as low as 8'6" above the sidewalk with no ill effects on the environment, pedestrian or banner. This would allow larger banners, consistent with what is currently up in some of the BIDs.
- 9) Sections 607.09 – 607.11 list types of poles and the banner requirements for those poles. However, there are several other light pole types that are not listed: 5A, 13, 14, 716, PP, 17M, 19M. If banners are not allowed on certain types of poles, that should be spelled out in the regulations.
- 10) Clarify Section 607.12 regarding fiberglass poles. Some of the BIDs use fiberglass banner hardware. Change the section to read: "Banners shall not be attached to fiberglass **light** poles."
- 11) Add a section 607.15 to read: "A banner that is torn, damaged or badly faded must be removed by the permittee" and specify a time limit for removal.

Thank you for considering our comments. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Anne-Marie Bairstow at abairstow@dcbidcouncil.org or 202-441-9576.