



TOWN OF CARRBORO

NORTH CAROLINA

TRANSMITTAL

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

DELIVERED VIA: ☐ HAND ☐ MAIL ☐ FAX ☐ EMAIL ☒ MEETING AGENDA

To: David Andrews, Town Manager
Mayor and Board of Aldermen

From: Patricia J. McGuire, Planning Director

Date: February 6, 2015

Subject: Off-Premises Signage and Wayfinding

The topics of off-premises signage and wayfinding were noted in the Capstone report based on information gathered during the exploration of an Arts and Creativity District in town. While more extensive exploration of these topics in relation to arts and creativity districting will likely be needed, this memo seeks to provide a bit more information in support of the Board of Aldermen discussion on the report scheduled for the annual retreat on February 15th.

Off-Premises Signage. Section 15-270 of the Land Use Ordinance includes a definition:

(3) A sign that draws attention to or communicates information about a business, service, commodity, accommodation, attraction, or other activity that is conducted, sold, or offered at a location other than the premises on which the sign is located.

Off-Premises Signs are included as use classification 31.000 of Section 15-146, Table of Permissible Uses. The use is allowed with a zoning permit in the M-2 zoning district. Section 15-282, Miscellaneous Requirements, was amended in 2013 to allow “off-premises signs directing motorists to the location of Carrboro hotel parking may be approved” in the B-1(c) and B-1(g) zoning districts in association with commercial developments that

- 1) Are intended to be occupied by multiple commercial enterprises, and
- 2) Will contain one or more buildings that are at least three stories in height.

In approving a master signage plan for such a project, the Board of Aldermen may allow deviations from the requirements pertaining to number and type of signs, as well as other dimensional

standards if the Board concludes that such deviations are warranted due to the specifics of the project, its business occupants and its customer/client/occupant needs.

The regulation of signs is considered to be one of the most difficult areas of land use law due to the limitations on regulating sign content in association with the constitutional protection of the freedom of speech. In light of those difficulties and the opportunities to provide information about the location and types of businesses in other ways, staff does not recommend changes to regulations on off-premises signage.

Wayfinding. The Capstone report also discusses wayfinding signage as a way for the town to help creative businesses interested in seeing changes to street sign requirements or the regulation of off-premises signs. The benefits and strategies for establishing wayfinding signs for the Town has come up on several occasions. Though not directly referenced, the recommendations for uniformity of downtown landscaping and lighting, and the management of parking included in Downtown Carrboro: New Vision (2001) were made in response to observations that the downtown identity, and access to parking could be improved. Wayfinding signs were installed in 2011 as part of the Carrboro Impacts Project. The Economic Sustainability Commission (ESC) and Carrboro Tourism Development Authority have been discussing the topic as well, with the ESC discussing the benefits of the development of a more comprehensive wayfinding system. Such systems are considered to be part of the process of community image building/branding as they ideally consist of a unified communication package that can direct residents, visitors, and through travelers to major destinations. The system can include a typology of signs, maps and applications. A comprehensive report on planning and implementing a wayfinding system is available at

<http://www.thesignagefoundation.org/Portals/0/UrbanWayfindingPlanningImplementationManualWebsite.pdf>

A report on the wayfinding signs installed as part of the IMPACTs project may be found at http://www01.townofcarrboro.org/BoA/Agendas/2011/06_07_2011_D2.pdf.