



**Legislative Department  
Seattle City Council  
Memorandum**

Date: February 1, 2010

To: Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, Chair  
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, Vice Chair  
Councilmember Bruce Harrell, Member  
Parks and Seattle Center Committee (P and SC)

From: Michael Jenkins, Council Central Staff

Subject: Council Bill (CB) 116985, changes to the sign code for uses permitted within the Sand Point Overlay District

At the January 20, 2011 P and SC committee meeting, a briefing on CB 116985 was provided by Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) staff, followed by a public hearing. Testimony was provided during the hearing by citizens, representatives of community groups and businesses within the Overlay. In addition, written comments in support of the sign code amendments were provided from the City's Historic Preservation Officer and the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer. Copies of CB 116985 were provided to these two offices, to ensure that the legislation would not detract from the Overlay's current designation as a National Historic Landmark District or its potential designation as a City of Seattle historic district. I also provided a memorandum to the committee, with recommendations on both substantive and technical amendments to the CB.

Following this meeting, and on the chair's direction, I have prepared a substitute bill for committee review and approval. While there are only four substantive amendments to CB 116985, the number of minor or technical amendments requires a substitute bill.

I have included the substitute bill as well as the "track changes" version of the original bill on blue paper.

## **Substantive amendments**

### **1. Limiting the number and size of signs for business establishments**

As introduced, CB 116985 allowed a business establishment with more than 300 linear feet along a right of way one additional 48 square foot sign, for a total of two signs. The proposed amendment also allowed the two signs to be combined into one 100 square foot sign. If a business establishment had over 600 linear feet along a right of way, additional signs were permitted at the same ratio of one additional sign per 300 linear feet of street frontage.

Following direction by PS and C, the substitute version retains the two sign provision but caps the number of signs for a business establishment to two 48 square foot signs, even if the tenant space exceeds 600 linear feet on a right of way. In addition, the maximum area for combined signs cannot exceed 96 square feet, which is the sum area of the two permitted signs.

The rationale for capping the number of signs is that: 1) a 96 square foot maximum<sup>1</sup> combined sign area would allow a sufficient message area to display the name of a business and any other identifying symbols associated with the business establishment; 2) the business establishment would still be eligible for off-premises signage to list the name of the business with directional information; and, 3) the cap helps to ensure that appropriate sign regulations are provided within the Overlay.

### **2. Limit signs facing Sand Point Way**

At the public hearing, concerns were raised by members of the public that signs facing Sand Point Way would detract from the Overlay's historic character and negatively impact the residential areas to the west. However, representatives from businesses located in the north end of the Overlay voiced concern about limiting signage facing Sand Point Way, as it would be problematic for their clients to find their business establishments within the Overlay.

To balance these interests, the substitute bill (SMC Section 23.55.032E) now only allows non-illuminated signs to be oriented to Sand Point Way. This provision allows for a business to have signage while ensuring that spillover lighting from an illuminated sign does not detract from residential uses to the west. Any qualifying business that is issued a sign permit will also have to meet the 1998 historic reuse plan sign guidelines for the Overlay. This provision does not limit the ability of a tenant to have a presence on off-premises signs allowed in the Overlay, or to develop any marketing or web-based mapping to help orient clients to the location of their business.

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<sup>1</sup> Such a sign could have a variety of dimensions – 6 feet in height x 16 feet in length; 4 feet in height x 24 feet in length, etc.

### 3. Allow government agencies to have flags

As introduced, CB 116985 (SMC 23.55.032F) allows national and state flags, as well as flags for institutions in the Overlay. However, this provision would not allow either a county or city flag, or any flags of any non-profit or similar organization that does not meet the definition of an Institution. The substitute bill corrects this oversight.

### 4. Sign height

As introduced, CB 116985 included a 50 foot height limit for a projecting sign, or 20 feet for a wall mounted sign, as long as the sign does not project above the top of the wall. However, no height limit was established for pedestrian oriented pedestrian signs permitted under 23.55.032.F.2. The substitute bill (SMC 23.55.032F.2.d) now provides a 10 foot height limit for these signs.

### Technical amendments

There are a variety of minor amendments that are appropriate for the substitute bill, including:

- Clarification to wording in the recital section;
- Correct references to previous ordinances;
- A new reference to “a successor agency decision maker” in SMC 23.55.032B, concerning the review of signs for compliance with the Sand Point Historic Properties Reuse and Protection Plan;
- Refined wording of sign illumination standards in SMC 23.55.032E; and
- Correcting existing map citations in SMC 23.72.004.

I recommend that you adopt the substitute bill.