



Town of Vienna

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Meeting Minutes

Board of Architectural Review Work Session

Tuesday, April 22, 2025

8:00 AM

Charles Robinson Jr. Town Hall, 127 Center
St. South

Work Session

[BARWS25-09](#) Lighting Design Guide and Sign Design Guide - Board of Architectural Review Work
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Members Present: Patty Hanley, Sarah Couchman, Nate Penati.

Absent Members: Ellen Shelly & John O'Keefe.

Staff present: David Levy, Director of Planning and Zoning, Lindsey Clouatre, Principal Planner, Yaska Camacho Castillo, Clerk to the Board, and Sharmaine Abaied, Planner.

Applicants: Dane Sanders, President & CEO of Clanton & Associates & Kate McBride, Lead Planner.

The work session focused on refining guidelines for lighting and signage, with a particular emphasis on the need for dimmable lights for compliance and better control over brightness levels. The goal was to ensure lighting is adjustable to meet both aesthetic and functional standards for commercial and residential sites.

The following comments were made:

Lighting

- **String lights:** The concern is that such lighting is often used to draw attention but lacks consistency and architectural value. While it could be acceptable under certain guidelines, outlining entire buildings is discouraged. A proposed ordinance may include a curfew requiring lights to be off an hour after business closure to make enforcement easier. Ultimately, the group seems to lean toward not outright banning the string lights as long as it is done intentionally and thoughtfully. It will be helpful to provide the business with visual examples of effective design practices and different options, like umbrella lighting.
- **Simplifying compliance:** particularly for lighting, by offering clear visual guides and examples (e.g., from Home Depot packaging) to help business owners easily identify acceptable products. Including standardized labels, spec sheet references, and visual cues would help non-experts ensure compliance without professional assistance.
- **Lighting regulations:** There should be flexibility in the rules to accommodate specific needs, such as increased, focused lighting at entrances or for emergency access (e.g., ambulances) as long as it doesn't contribute to light trespass.
- **Ambient, low-level lighting:** Examples like under-bench or railing lights (e.g., at the police station) are effective, though potentially costly.
- **Dimmable Lighting:** It was suggested that all lighting be dimmable to provide flexibility in meeting brightness regulations. This would allow adjustments to ensure compliance with site standards, particularly for commercial spaces. The ordinance language should remain technology-neutral.
- **Inspection Process:** A suggestion was made to have the new compliance officer conduct inspections regularly, especially in the evening, to ensure lighting levels meet the established standards.

Signs

- **Digital signage:** There's interest in low-impact, static digital displays—similar to e-readers like the Nook—that are clear, non-offensive, and change infrequently. The goal is to explore if such technology can be used as a less intrusive alternative to traditional or brightly lit signs.

- **Signage Style:** There is a preference for more modern and aesthetically pleasing signage styles, such as individual channel or halo-lit letters, rather than older box or cabinet signs.
- **Kelvin Level:** The board is seeking a justification for the proposed shift to 4000K in order to evaluate it against the current 3000K standard they have been following.
- **Outdoor TV:** Information on the brightness allowed for outdoor TV. This information would be helpful for businesses with outdoor dining.
- **Lumens:** Guidance on calculating lumens.
- **Collaborate with Economic Development:** The idea was raised to involve the Economic Development Department in finalizing recommendations to ensure practical and well-informed decisions about signage and lighting.

Conclusion: The meeting emphasized simplifying processes for businesses, ensuring compliance, and addressing technological challenges in updating signage and lighting systems. The next steps include refining the draft guidelines and continuing discussions in upcoming sessions.

Board Clerk
Yaska Camacho Castillo

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