

4.10 Signage

The Oshkosh regulations are aimed at preventing certain undesired results but lack any “positive” guidance for signage. The current regulations are confusing and could be improved to further the goal of enhanced downtown development. Regarding billboards, it seems that new billboards are not allowed in any district. “Billboard” is not defined but “roof signs” are not allowed nor are “off premise” signs except for hotels/motels. Existing, non-conforming signs can remain with normal maintenance. This issue needs further clarification before recommendations can be provided.

Recommendation: Oshkosh should consult sign control ordinances from other communities with historic districts. These “comparables” would give examples of how to control sign proliferation and implement guidelines that match signs with architectural standards. Establish clear purposes and definitions for each element of the code. Draw on other examples and graphic illustrations.

4.11 Cell Towers in Downtown

Cell towers are permitted as a conditional use in C-1, C-2, and C-3 and a use by right in M-1, M-2, M-3. Zoning preference is to use existing structures to mount antennas and applicants must demonstrate that all alternatives to a tower are not feasible. Towers are also permitted on any city-owned property in any district.

Section 30-35.J cites all the regulations pertaining to towers. All jurisdictions are faced with the federal requirements that limit ability of a jurisdiction to regulate towers if such regulations would impair the efficiency of telecommunications or impair competition. This usually is not a problem unless a community resists towers in residential or rural areas.

4.12 Review Process

The site plan approval process is not described in the Zoning Ordinance. This approval process, for concept plans and high-intensity redevelopment projects is the most critical for the type of downtown development included in this Plan.

The review of subdivisions is typical for an established urban jurisdiction. The Common Council has 90 days to approve preliminary plat and 60 days to approve final plat. Having the Council approve subdivision plans may add a “political” dimension to the process. An administrative decision could be made at the department/staff level to avoid this problem.