

New Tools for Sharing the Importance of Signage



ISA's government relations team has received several new tools in its arsenal when it comes to working with communities around the country on sign code issues. Research presented during last month's National Signage Research and Education Conference (NSREC) and hosted by the Signage Foundation Inc. will be used by ISA to help better inform communities, planners and regulators about the importance of signs to local businesses and to their communities.

Among the tools:

A Guide for the Regulation of Temporary Signs...

created by prominent planner Wendy Moeller, will be used to help communities develop reasonable codes in one of the most hot-button and heavily-regulated areas: temporary signage. Moeller's presentation explores the issues related to temporary signs—and the complications that come because they are constantly evolving. She has developed a new guide that will include best practices and items for communities to consider when updating sign codes to address temporary signs. The best practices include overall temporary signage regulations and those that apply to individual sign types. The guide also includes tips for enforcing temporary sign codes.

Moeller advises communities to look at temporary signage regulation as part of an overall review of sign codes and to engage all stakeholders in the process. She also suggests they avoid treating all temporary signs the same and consider the context of the sign location. And she urges communities to consider that the same visibility issues that apply to permanent signs carry over to temporary signs.

Economic Impact of Illumination...

by Charles R. Taylor, Villanova University. Taylor tackled another off-regulated area: illuminated signs. He offered several extreme examples, like Hilton Head, S.C., which bans all internally illuminated signs, and Pima County, Ariz., which mandates a shut-off time of 10 p.m. or at closing time for businesses open after 10 p.m.

Taylor asked survey respondents why they purchased and use their illuminated signs. Identifying the location, internal marketing, branding the site and enhancing the image of the store were the most frequent responses. Most of those surveyed had more than one illuminated sign on the premises. Those responding to the survey had an average of 1.71 illuminated on-premise signs. Their businesses were open 10.8 hours per day while their signs were illuminated 13.9 hours.

There's a good reason: 58 percent felt they would lose sales if they could not light their signs at any hour—and the loss would be significant, an estimated 21 percent. This research will demonstrate to communities that are considering "Dark Sky" regulations that local retailers consider their illuminated signs to be very important to their businesses.

ISA's government relations team has received several new tools in its arsenal when it comes to working with communities around the country on sign code issues.

MUST-HAVE Resources

Economics, Behavior and On-Premise Signs...

by Craig Berger, Fashion Institute of Technology. Berger explored how communities respond to signage. Given that community aesthetics often is cited as a reason for regulation, the findings were eye-opening. Berger found that reviewers have grown accustomed to digital signage. They also appreciate signs that integrate into the surrounding environment and convey something about the identity of the venue. Still, legibility and information are considered the primary roles of signage, outweighing the aesthetic appeal of integration into the environment. He found the same results in urban and suburban settings.

Viewing Signs Through the Eyes of the Beholders: Perceptual Evidence from the American Grocery Shopper Survey...

by James Kellaris, University of Cincinnati. Kellaris presents new evidence in his longitudinal study on how shoppers perceive signage. Like Berger's research above, Kellaris continues to find that shoppers appreciate clear signage. Over the four-year study, he found an average of 53.8 percent of shoppers say they have driven by and failed to find a business because the signage was too small or unclear.

The full reports will be available on the NSREC website in the coming weeks. ISA's government relations team already is using these materials in their work in conveying the importance of signage to local officials and communities. | 

The 2014 NSREC event only builds upon the body of research being used to fight codes at the state and local levels. Here are a number of reports that ISA currently uses in working in communities around the country. These resources are available on the ISA website (www.signs.org/signcodes), as well as through the Signage Foundation Inc. website (thesignagefoundation.org) under "Research."

1.

A Framework for Sign Code Regulations and An Evidence-Based Sign Code

These two model sign codes can help communities develop new guidelines.

2.

Finding Common Ground and EMC Nighttime Brightness Recommendations

EMCs are one of the most heavily-regulated types of signs. The first document offers a guide for the development of reasonable codes while the second is peer-reviewed research that can help communities understand proper EMC brightness levels and how to measure them.

3.

Relationship Analysis: Digital Signs and Traffic Safety

Driver distraction often is cited as a cause for restricting EMCs or digital signs. A scientific study by Texas A&M University and published by the Signage Foundation Inc., shows there is no statistical relationship between the two.

4.

Economic Value of On-Premise Signs

The Signage Foundation Inc. has funded academic studies detailing how signs contribute to business success. Original research was launched in 1997 and conducted by the University of San Diego and updated in 2012 by the University of Cincinnati.

5.

The Economic Impact of the Sign and Visual Communications Industry

Earlier this year, ISA released research that shows how many jobs the sign industry contributes to local communities. (Find it at www.signs.org/economicimpact). | 

