

**CITY OF REDMOND  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
March 21, 2013**

**Name:** Microsoft Redmond Master Sign Program

**Application #:** LAND-2013-00446

**Location:** One Microsoft Way  
Redmond, Washington

**Zoning:** OBAT – Overlake Business and Advanced Technology

**Applicants:** Merrill Leonard                      Nick Lenington  
Gensler                                      Microsoft  
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**Staff Representative:** Carl D McArthy, Code Compliance Officer

**Applicants Request:** Approval

**Staff Recommendation:** Approval, with one minor condition

**Exhibits**

**Exhibit A:** Staff Report

**Exhibit B:** Relevant Code Sections  
RZC 21.44.010 (G) (11) – Multiple Building Complexes and Multiple Tenant Buildings (attached)  
RZC 21.44.010 (I) – Sign Programs  
RZC 21.44.020(A) – Sign Design Standards Purpose and Intent  
RZC.21.44.020(B) – Sign Design Standards Applicability  
RZC.21.44.020(C) - Sign Design Standards Compliance  
RZC.21.44.020(D) – Sign Design Standards Administrative Design Flexibility  
RZC.21.44.020(E) – General Sign Design Standards  
RZC.21.44.020(F) – Design Standards For Specific Sign Types

**Exhibit C:****Microsoft Redmond Master Sign Program**

Pages 1	Microsoft Sign Program Title Page
Page 2	Microsoft Sign Program Written Criteria
Page 3	Microsoft Sign Program Sign Family
Page 4	Redmond Campus Site Plan
Page 5	Redmond Campus Gateway Signs
Page 6	Millennium/RTC Site Plans
Page 7	Primary Gateway Sign 40 <sup>th</sup> /156 <sup>th</sup> (SE)
Page 8	Primary Gateway Sign 40 <sup>th</sup> /156 <sup>th</sup> (NW)
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Page 12	Typical Vehicular Directional Signs
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**Background**

In the Redmond Zoning Code (RZC) Section 21.44.010 (G) (11) (Sign Requirements for Multiple Building and Multiple Tenant Complexes - attached), it states that: "Signs shall be based on a uniform sign concept approved by the Design Review Board which shall be known as the approved 'Sign Program.' All subsequent tenant signs must conform to the approved sign program, unless a modification from the sign program has been requested by the property owners."

**Sign Program Proposal:**

Attached to this staff report are plans reflecting the property owner's desire to adopt a new coordinated master sign program for the several Microsoft campuses located within the City limits of Redmond, Washington.

**Issues/Comments**

The City has worked in conjunction with the applicant/design professionals regarding signage at the Microsoft properties. The City believes that this proposal is appropriate for the current building architecture and site conditions, and meets the signage needs to the site.

## Recommendation

Based upon Redmond Zoning Code (RZC) Section 21.44.010 (G) (11) staff recommends that the Design Review Board approve the Elan Sign Program # LAND201300358 as presented, with one minor condition:

1. That the final design of the Primary Design Plus Sign be redesigned to meet the requirements of the Redmond Sign Code. Final design will be determined in coordination with City of Redmond staff and Microsoft design professionals.

Carl D. McCarthy, Code Compliance Officer 425.556.2412 [cmcarthy@redmond.gov](mailto:cmcarthy@redmond.gov)

## **Sign Program Relevant Code Sections**

RZC 21.44.010 (G) (11) - Multiple Building Complexes and Multiple Tenant Buildings.

Each multiple building complex is permitted one freestanding sign on each street on which it adjoins and has access. However, the Technical Committee may permit one additional sign per street frontage when the respective frontage is at least 300 lineal feet in length. Individual businesses and buildings in such a complex are not permitted individual freestanding or monument signs.

Each multiple tenant building, unless it is a part of a multiple building complex, is permitted one freestanding sign on each street on which it adjoins and has access. Individual businesses in such a building are not permitted individual freestanding or monument signs.

Signs shall be based on a uniform sign concept approved by the Design Review Board that shall be known as the approved "Sign Program." All subsequent tenant signs must conform to the approved sign program in addition to the sign review criteria defined in the Sign Program section of this chapter, unless a modification from the sign program has been requested by the property owners.

RZC 21.44.010 (I) - Sign Programs

(1) Purpose and Intent. A Sign Program is intended to integrate the design and placement of signs proposed within a multi-tenant or multi-building development project.

A Sign Program provides a means for defining common sign regulations for multi-tenant projects to encourage maximum incentive and latitude in the design and display of multiple signs and to achieve, not circumvent, the intent of this Chapter.

(2) Applicability. The approval of a Sign Program shall be required whenever any of the following circumstances exist, or whenever an applicant requests the approval of a Sign Program:

- (a) Two or more separate tenant spaces are to be created on the same parcel;
- (b) Two or more separate tenant spaces are to be created within the same building;
- (c) Two or more buildings are designed to be created on the same parcel.

(3) Approval authority. A Sign Program shall be reviewed and approved, modified, or denied by the Design Review Board using the Type I process set forth in the Zoning Code.

(4) Application Requirements. An application for a Sign Program shall include all information and materials required by the Administrator. At minimum, the following shall be required:

(a) A vicinity map/site plan

(b) Sign Program Text:

(i) Types of signs permitted (wall, canopy/awning, window, freestanding, sandwich board, etc.).

(ii) Sign area, letter/sign size, and logo size standards.

(iii) Types of illumination permitted.

(iv) Landlord and City approval language (including need for permits).

(v) Prohibited signs.

(c) Sign Program Elevation Drawings:

(i) Each building elevation showing where signage is proposed to be placed.

(ii) Each monument sign proposed.

(5) Standards. A Comprehensive Sign Program shall comply with the following standards:

(a) The program shall comply with the purpose of this chapter, the Sign Design Standards (RZC 21.44.020, Sign Design Standards of this chapter) and the overall intent of this section;

(b) Signs shall enhance the overall development/project, by being designed and placed with the architecture of the building(s) in mind, as well as creating an attractive and consistent appearance of all the tenant signage in the development/project.

(c) The Sign Program shall accommodate future revisions that may be required because of changes in use or tenants.

(6) Revisions to comprehensive sign programs. Revisions to a Sign Program may be approved by the Administrator if the intent of the original approval is not affected. Revisions that would substantially deviate from the original approval shall require the review and approval of a new Sign Program.

### **21.44.020 Sign Design Standards**

(A) Purpose and Intent. The purpose and intent of this section is to:

(1) Establish design standards for sign design to guide preparation and review of all applicable development applications;

(2) Ensure that sign design proposals adhere to the intent and purpose of the RZC in relation to signs;

(3) Ensure that building and site signs are of a character and scale that is appropriate to their use and to the site;

(4) Ensure that sign scale, orientation and lighting do not adversely impact the natural and aesthetic qualities of adjacent critical areas, shorelines, or other natural open space.

(5) Assist business owners and sign designers to better understand the City's expectations for well-designed, high- quality signs;

(6) Assist those with the responsibility of reviewing sign permit applications to have established criteria with which to judge the appropriateness of a sign's design;

(7) Assist decision making by the decision makers in the review of **sign** and Sign Program applications.

(B) Applicability.

(1) The Sign Design Standards are applicable to all new signs and Sign Programs and the modification or reconstruction of existing signs throughout

the City. The Sign Design Standards will be utilized during the City's review of Sign Permit applications or through the review of other permit applications or Sign Programs, when signs are part of a larger multiple tenant and/or multiple building project. Signs will be reviewed for their consistency with the Design Standards and the other requirements contained in the Sign Code.

(2) The Sign Design Standards are intended to supplement the other provisions of this chapter. The Standards establish criteria for the creation of well-designed signs and further clarify and support the intent of the City's sign regulations.

(3) Signs not consistent with the Standards stated herein may be subject to Design Review Board review.

(4) Signs may not be changed, or installed until the Administrator or his or her designee has approved the design and a sign permit (or other approval) has been issued and/or approved.

#### (C) Compliance.

(1) Compliance with Sign Design Standards. Decisions on Sign Permit and/or Sign Program applications requiring design review shall be made as provided in this section:

(2) To achieve the Standard's purpose and intent, the Sign Design Standards are divided into the following sections:

(a) General Sign Design Standards. This section will describe basic sign design standards that are applicable to all signs, regardless of type.

(b) Design Standards for Specific Sign Types. This section describes design standards specific to sign types.

(3) Each criterion included is meant to indicate the preferred condition, and the criteria together provide a common theme that illustrates the purpose and intent of the Sign Design Standards. Graphics are also provided to clarify the concepts behind the purpose and intent and design criteria. If there is a discrepancy between the text and the illustrations, the text shall prevail.

(4) All applications that require design review shall comply with the purpose and intent of the Sign Design Standards.

(5) If "shall" is used in the design criterion all applications shall comply with that specific design criterion if it applies to the application unless the applicant demonstrates that an alternate design solution provides an equal or greater

level of achieving the intent of the section and the purpose of the design category.

(6) If “should” is used in the design criterion there is a general expectation that utilizing the criterion will assist in achieving the purpose and intent statement; however, there is recognition that other solutions may be proposed that are equally effective in meeting the purpose and intent of the Sign Design Standards.

(7) The applicant has the burden of proof and persuasion to demonstrate that the application complies with the purpose and intent statement.

(8) Where the decision maker concludes that the application does not comply with the purpose and intent statement or the design criteria that use the word “shall,” the decision maker may condition approval based on compliance with some or all of the design criteria, or the decision maker may deny the application.

(D) Administrative Design Flexibility. If the Administrator or Design Review Board makes a recommendation to allow a Sign Permit or Sign Program to deviate from the Sign Design purpose and intent requirements, the recommendation shall be based on the following:

(1) The application of certain provisions of the RZC would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the underlying zone and of the design standards.

(2) Permitting a minor variation will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the area.

(3) Permitting a minor variation will not be contrary to the objectives of the design standards.

(4) The minor variation protects the integrity of a historic landmark or the historic design subarea.

(E) General Sign Design Standards

(1) Purpose. This section provides basic design guidance for all signs, regardless of specific type or location within the community. The guidelines address issues related sign legibility, placement on the facade, color and materials, and effective illumination.

## (2) Sign Compatibility.

- (a) In a multi-tenant complex, no sign shall dominate the façade, unless the business it advertises is designated a major or anchor tenant by the property owner due to the size of the tenant space as compared with the other tenant spaces.
- (b) Signs shall be designed to be consistent with the building design in terms of relative scale and overall size.
- (c) Signs should complement and not detract from the materials, and colors of the building to which they will be attached.
- (d) All signs should enhance and not detract from the building's architectural design. Signs should reflect the character of the building.
- (e) Signs shall not obscure or cover architectural features of the building.
- (f) For historic landmarks and the Old Town zone, signs should be consistent with the historic character of the landmark and/or zone. Preferred signage in the Old Town zone includes window signage, painted signage on wooden facades, wood signs, signs on awnings, signs lit by sources other than the sign itself, or decorative signs hung perpendicular to the building façade are encouraged. Wood facsimile products may be an acceptable substitute. Use of backlit plastic wall signs, extruded aluminum, changing message, or other newer technology signs should not be allowed. Use of neon signs should be limited to window signs or art deco styled buildings.
- (g) Home businesses shall not have any signage in order to maintain the residential character of the neighborhood in which it is located.
- (h) Sign Programs shall be required for all new multiple tenant buildings and/or multiple building complexes. Sign Programs serve to create a coordinated project theme of uniform design elements such as lettering style and placement.
- (i) Creative design is encouraged. Imaginative and innovative signs will be allowed as long as the applicant considers the scale proportions and character of signage on the building/site in question. Applicants are also encouraged to consider the scale proportions and character of signage in the surrounding vicinity as well.

### (3) Sign Legibility.

(a) Use a brief message. Signs should use the fewest words possible. A sign with a brief, succinct message is simpler and faster to read, looks cleaner, and is more attractive. Signs should be used primarily for the purpose of identification or conveying recognition of a particular development or business. The primary sign message shall contain only the business name. If secondary signage is needed to describe the business use, it should be the same size or smaller than the primary business message. Other information, such as product listing, services, slogans, phone numbers, internet information, third-party advertising, etc. shall be placed inside the windows or on permitted temporary signs for communication purposes, rather than on the exterior building façade or on a freestanding or monument sign.

(b) Ensure legibility. An effective sign should do more than attract attention; it should communicate its message clearly, and ensure that signs are easy to read.

(c) Use easy-to-read lettering styles. Avoid hard-to-read, intricate typefaces. Typefaces that are difficult to read reduce the sign's ability to communicate.

(d) Avoid spacing letters and words too close together. Crowding of letters, words, or lines will make any sign more difficult to read.

(e) Use significant contrast. If there is little contrast between the brightness or hue of the message of a sign and its background, it will be difficult to read.

(f) Use symbols and logos. Pictographic images will usually register more quickly in the viewer's mind than just a written message. Logos and graphics are encouraged if they meet the purpose and intent of the Sign Design Standards and the sign area allowed under the Sign Code. 426

### (4) Sign Placement/Location/Size.

(a) The architecture of a building often identifies specific locations for signs, and these locations should be used. Signs shall be designed to relate to the architectural features of the building on which they are located and create visual continuity with other storefronts on the same building or on adjacent buildings within the same complex.

(b) A well-designed building façade or storefront is created by careful coordination of sign and architectural design and an overall color scheme.

(c) On multi-story buildings, ground floor tenants shall place signs at the storefront level.

(d) On multi-tenant buildings, tenants shall place their signs on exterior building walls where their business is located internally.

(e) Signs on multi-tenant buildings shall be designed and aligned to achieve a consistent and unified appearance with the other signs on the building.

(f) Signs should be placed at or near the public entrance of the business in order to indicate the most direct access to the business.

(g) Signs should be placed consistent with the proportions of the building's façade.

(h) The overall size of a wall-mounted sign and the height of its lettering should consider the distance the sign is from the street and its ability to be seen clearly. Signs close to the street are more visible and therefore should use a smaller letter size than signs that are set back from the street. Signs facing SR 520 shall comply with the SR 520 Corridor Signage Policy adopted by the City Council.

(i) The size of the letters, as well as the overall size of the sign should be proportional to the building's façade. Sign users should not overwhelm the reader with sheer size but should convey a message efficiently while at the same time design signs to fit with the overall scale of the building and its relationship to the street.

(j) Signs shall not project above the edge of the rooflines and shall not obstruct windows and/or doorways. 427

(k) Signs shall be designed and located so that they have minimal impact on adjacent residential neighborhoods.

(l) The shape of a sign should strive for simplicity with all elements constituting an integrated design.

#### (5) Sign Color.

(a) Use of colors is one of the primary means of visual communication. Excessive and uncoordinated use of colors may confuse and negate

the message of the sign. Sign applicants and designers should choose colors that are complementary yet provide good contrast with each other.

(b) Bright day-glo (fluorescent) colors should be avoided as they are distracting and do not blend well with other background colors. Excessively bright colors should not be used as a means to attract attention.

(c) Sign colors should relate to, complement, and not detract from the materials or color scheme of the buildings, including accent and trim colors.

#### (6) Sign Materials.

(a) Sign materials should be selected with consideration for the architectural design of the building's façade. Sign materials should complement the materials on the façade and should contribute to the legibility of the sign.

(b) Sign materials should be very durable. When wood is used, it should be properly sealed to keep moisture from soaking into the wood and causing the sign's lettering to deteriorate quickly.

(c) Signs should be professionally constructed using high-quality materials.

#### (7) Sign Illumination.

(a) Signs that are illuminated by a direct source of light are encouraged (but not required) over internally illuminated cabinet signs.

(b) Individually illuminated letters, either internally illuminated or backlit solid letters (reverse channel), are a preferred alternative and should be considered over internally illuminated plastic-faced cabinet signs.

(c) Backlit, halo-lit illumination or individually cut reverse channel letter signs with halo illumination are highly encouraged for lighting purposes and should be considered. Such signs convey a subtle and attractive appearance and are very legible under moderate ambient lighting conditions.

(d) If internally illuminated cabinet signs are used, it is strongly encouraged that the sign panel should be opaque so that when illuminated only the lettering, not the background, is illuminated. It is

also encouraged that the background or field should have a non-gloss, non-reflective finish.

(e) Signs that use blinking, rotating, flashing, or reflecting lights are not permitted.

(f) Whenever indirect lighting fixtures are used, care shall be taken to properly shield the light source, especially to prevent glare from spilling over into residential areas and public rights of way.

(g) Signs on building elevations facing or across from public trails, parks, critical areas, or residential developments should not be illuminated. Other building elevations facing parking lots or other buildings may be illuminated.

(h) Any wall-mounted or ground-mounted external spotlight should be pointed away from passersby. The light source shall be directed solely at the sign and not towards residential properties, motorists, or pedestrians.

(i) If a raceway cannot be mounted internally behind the finished exterior wall, the exposed metal surfaces of the raceway should be finished or painted to match the background wall, or integrated into the overall design of the sign.

(j) If raceways are necessary, they should be as thin and narrow as possible.

(k) All exposed conduit, wiring, and junction boxes shall be concealed from public view.

(i) Use of energy-efficient, high-intensity discharge lamps should be used over non-energy-efficient lighting.

#### (F) Design Standards for Specific Sign Types.

(1) Introduction. Each of the various sign types present particular issues that need to be considered. The guidelines in this section address issues of good design, placement, and compatibility for each of the following sign types:

Wall Signs  
Projecting Signs  
Blade Signs (Hanging Signs)  
Awning Signs  
Window Signs  
Monument Signs (Freestanding Signs)

## (2) Wall Signs.

(a) A wall sign should be located where the architectural features or details of the building suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign. The best location for a wall sign is generally a band or blank area between the first and second floors of a building if the building architecture allows for it.

(b) New wall signs in a multi-tenant building and/or multi-building complex shall be part of an approved Sign Program before being installed. Sign Programs establish visual continuity among storefronts and create a unified appearance for the center.

(c) Wall signs should not project from the surface upon which they are attached more than that required for construction purposes.

(d) Although internally illuminated cabinet-type signs with opaque backgrounds are allowed by the Sign Code, they are strongly discouraged. If signs are to be illuminated, individually cut channel letters or solid backlit letters or the use of external, direct illumination are the preferred methods.

(e) Signs should be designed to create a clearly defined edge, provide shadow relief, and an attractive appearance. This effect is generally difficult to achieve by painting a sign directly on a building façade. For this reason, painted signs are generally discouraged.

(f) Multiple wall signs along the same façade (for the same tenant) are not permitted. In lieu of this, a perpendicular, pedestrian-oriented sign, such as a bracket sign and/or a blade (hanging sign) may be allowed on the same façade, in addition to the permitted wall sign.

## (3) Projecting Signs.

(a) Wall signs are preferred over projecting signs and should be considered in lieu of a projecting sign.

(b) The scale of projecting signs should be consistent with the architectural character of the building.

(c) Sign supports and brackets should be consistent with the design and scale of the sign and the architectural design of the building.

(d) Projecting signs that identify the occupant business through the use of graphic or crafted symbols, such as shoes, keys, glasses, bicycles,

fish, coffee cups, or books are encouraged. A projecting sign meeting the requirements of this section is considered a bracket sign if it is six square feet or smaller.

(e) External illumination of projecting signs is encouraged.

#### (4) Blade Signs (Hanging Signs).

(a) Where overhangs or covered walkways exist, pedestrian-oriented blade signs (hanging signs) are encouraged. Signs should be hung over the pedestrian right-of-way consistent with all applicable Codes.

(b) Blade signs (hanging signs) should be simple in design and should be considered secondary with any other allowed signage on-site, such as wall signs.

(c) Blade signs (hanging signs) that identify the occupant business through the use of graphic or crafted symbols, such as shoes, keys, glasses, bicycles, fish, coffee cups, or books are encouraged.

(d) Supporting brackets and braces should be simple in design and in proportion with the size of the sign they support.

(e) External illumination of blade signs (hanging signs) is encouraged.

#### (5) Awning Signs.

(a) Signs on awnings should generally be limited to ground floor and second floor uses only.

(b) The text of the sign should be located only on the valance/edge portion of the awning. Letter color should be complementary to the awning and the building color scheme.

(c) The shape, design, and color of the awnings should be carefully designed to coordinate with, and not dominate, the architectural style of the building. Where multiple awnings are used on the building, the design and color of the sign awnings should be consistent with all other awnings.

(d) Backlit, internally illuminated awnings are strongly discouraged. If an awning is internally illuminated, only the sign message area shall be illuminated, not the entire awning. Lighting directed downward that does not illuminate the awning is allowed for pedestrian lighting and security purposes.

(e) Awnings with a solid color are preferred. Striped awnings may be appropriate for some buildings without ornamental facades. Striped awnings with highly contrasting, bright colors are strongly discouraged.

(f) Multiple signs on awnings on a single façade are not permitted.

(i) Awnings and signs on awnings should be regularly cleaned and kept free of dust and visible defects.

#### (6) Window Signs.

(a) Window signs (permanent or temporary) are strongly encouraged not to completely block all views into the business. This is not only good for business, but it also increases visibility for security and safety purposes.

(b) Window graphics, with no copy or lettering, may be used, with City approval, to cover or completely cover windows. The City would encourage that there be other windows that have no window signage in them for security and safety purposes.

(c) Window sign decals should be primarily individual letters placed on the interior surface of the window and intended to be viewed from outside. Glass-mounted graphics may be applied by painting, silk screening, or vinyl die-cut forms.

#### (7) Monument (Freestanding) Signs.

(a) Freestanding monument-type signs (on the ground) are strongly encouraged and should be considered over signs mounted on poles (pole signs).

(b) Monument signs may be internally illuminated; however, it is encouraged that the sign copy should be the only portion of the sign face that is illuminated. The sign background or field is encouraged to be opaque with a non-gloss, non-reflective finish, wherever possible.

(c) The sign area and height of the sign should be in proportion to the site and surrounding buildings. Signs should not be so large as to be a dominant feature of the site.

(d) Monument signs shall be placed so that sight lines at entry driveways and circulation aisles are not blocked.

(e) Monument signs that are externally illuminated, either with light cast directly on to the sign or with individually backlit letters, or stenciled

panels with three-dimensional push-through graphics should be considered as an alternative.

(f) Monument signs should be designed to create visual interest and complement their surroundings. Monument signs should incorporate architectural elements, details, and articulation when possible.

(g) Monument signs should incorporate landscaping at their base.

(h) Berming shall not be used to exceed the maximum allowable height of signs.

(i) Freestanding signs should be sited so that they integrate with the location of street trees and other site landscaping, and to avoid obscuring the view of adjacent freestanding signs.