

Chair:
TBD

Commissioners:
Rob Williams
Ted Brausen
Frank Cupery
Julie Gronquist
Jud Murchie
Sreya
Subramanian
Katherine
Schneider

Council Liaison:
Emily Rousseau



**Economic Development
Commission
October 25, 2023
7:30 am
City Hall**

Address:
1245 W Highway 96
Arden Hills MN 55112

Phone:
651 - 792 - 7800

Website:
www.cityofardenhills.org

City Vision

Arden Hills is a strong community that values its unique environmental setting, strong residential neighborhoods, vital business community, well-maintained infrastructure, fiscal soundness, and our long-standing tradition as a desirable City in which to live, work, and play.

Agenda

CALL TO ORDER

1. Approval Of The Agenda

2. Approval Of Minutes

2.A. August 23, 2023 EDC Minutes

Documents:

[DRAFT 08-23-23 EDC MINUTES.PDF](#)

3. Presentations

3.A. Twin Cities North Chamber Of Commerce Manufacturing Cohort - John LeTourneau

Documents:

[TCN MANUFACTURING COHORT PRESENTATION.PDF](#)

4. Unfinished And New Business

4.A. December Meeting In 2023, Commission Chair, And Packets Discussion

Documents:

[10-25-23 EDC BUSINESS ITEMS.PDF](#)

4.B. Sign Code Review Update - Wall Signs

Documents:

[SIGN CODE REVIEW - WALL SIGNS UPDATE.PDF](#)

4.C. Economic Development Commission Work Plan

Documents:

[10-25-23 EDC WORK PLAN.PDF](#)

5. Comments And Reports

5.A. Report From The City Council

5.B. Economic Development Commission Comments

6. Adjourn

ADJOURN

A quorum of the City Council may be present at this meeting.



**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
AUGUST 23, 2023 7:30 AM
CITY HALL -- 1245 WEST HIGHWAY 96**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Rob Williams, Julie Gronquist, Jud Murchie, Ted Brausen, Frank Cupery, Sreya Subramanian, and Katherine Schneider

Also Present: Community Development Director Jessica Jagoe, Senior Planner Elena Fransen, Customer Service Specialist Amy LaMere, City Administrator Dave Perrault (introductions only), and Council Liaison Emily Rousseau.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

2. OATH OF OFFICE

Commissioners Williams, Gronquist, Murchie, Brausen, Cupery, Subramanian and Schneider took the Oath of Office.

3. ORIENTATION

Senior Planner Fransen provided a quick overview of the Ordinances, Duties and Functions, Structure, Rules of Order and relation to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Economic Development Committee (EDC).

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved (7-0).

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.A. 02-05-20 EDC Minutes

The minutes were unanimously approved (7-0).

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.A. Calendar for Meeting in 2023 (Verbal Update)

Senior Planner Fransen presented that the EDC meetings are outlined to be every other month. The Committee can decide to increase the number of meetings to monthly. Next meeting is scheduled for October 25, 2023 at 7:30 AM. Probable complication with following meeting on December 27, 2023 was discussed.

- Three options were arrived at: Meet in November and skip December, Move December meeting to Dec 6th or 13th, or Move meeting to very early January.

It was decided that Committee members would come to the October meeting with schedules and then vote on December meeting change.

6.B. Sign Ordinance Review

Senior Planner Fransen presented the Requested Action from the EDC to consider Chapter 12 – Sign Code of the City’s Code of Ordinances and make recommendations for potential form and content revisions to the chapter.

Senior Planner Fransen presented the Background on potential ordinance amendments such as Setbacks, EV Charging Stations and Signage.

Senior Planner Fransen presented the full Chapter 12 – Sign Code document. The Sign Code Districts were listed, noting that some districts are zoning specific and others are based on location and street frontage.

The Arden Hills Sign Code table was presented with an explanation of Sign Types. The Signs Types are Wall, Freestanding, Graphic, Window or Auxiliary. Signs may be permanent or temporary and the type of lighting (Internal, External or Backlit) were discussed. A unique sign category, Dynamic Signs (signs that change information, allowed only at a restaurant drive-thru menu board) was defined.

Commissioner Gronquist asked what “I-Flex” was on the Sign Table.

Senior Planner Fransen said it was a Zoning District that is characterized by industrial uses with some additional flexibility.

Commissioner Brausen said that we should look to other cities and see what their ordinances say. Personally having experience in several cities, he expressed that Arden Hills’ is the most confusing. He referenced Shoreview or Blaine as potential communities with which to compare sign codes.

Commissioner Cupery said he works as an Inspector for Shoreview and they just redid their Sign Code. He presented a printed copy to **Senior Planner Fransen**.

Commissioner Williams asked what the trigger was to bring this to the EDC.

Councilmember Rousseau stated that the Planning Commission and City Council have recently reviewed multiple requests from businesses seeking flexibility from the sign code. It was a recommendation from the Council that the Economic Development Commission review the code.

Commissioner Brausen said at the last City Council meeting specifically there has been push back on the ban on LED's, as the technology has moved past the current ordinances that do not allow LED's.

Commissioner Brausen said he also feels that it is very difficult to change the type/design of a sign after the initial sign is complete.

Community Development Director Jagoe said there is some flexibility granted, based on the Master Plan from the original development. But this definitely is something that should be discussed further.

Senior Planner Fransen presented possible Next Steps: Commission to review Arden Hills Sign Codes and identify points for discussion. What do you like, not like, find confusing? Staff will follow-up with Sign Codes from neighboring, similar communities, Commission to bring comments to next EDC meeting.

Commissioner Williams said as the only Commissioner who was on the previous EDC he felt that in the past EDC recommendations were ignored and there was little communication with the Council. He asked if the EDC's recommendations would be respected and considered.

Commissioner Brausen said that after attending Council meetings since the election in 2022 this new Council is more open to businesses and growing economic opportunities.

Councilmember Rousseau said that there has been a real shift and the Planning Commission does have businesses in mind. The hope is that EDC and PC will work together to modernize some of our ordinances. There are a lot of opportunities to increase quality communication between the City and Businesses.

Commissioner Williams said that the perception of Arden Hills is one of exclusion and slow to change. He stated that there will need to be an effort to overcome that image.

Commissioner Gronquist said in order to move things along quickly, it would be helpful to know the common themes of the requests for sign flexibility. She agreed there should be rules/parameters in place to keep a uniformity and avoid overcrowding and excessive signage that is distracting. However, the current ordinances do not make sense, when the limits on signs result in confusion and something that is not aesthetically pleasing. Simplifying the ordinances will result in more compliance. For example, the Pop Culture Frozen Yogurt store is allowed two wall signs as it has two frontages. The City's sign code requires that if there are two wall signs that the total square footage of both signs shall not exceed the maximum square footage for a wall sign.

Commissioner Gronquist said it would be a good practice to provide signage information in the information sent out for business licenses.

Commissioner Williams stated it is interesting that the more pleasing Backlit sign is not allowed in some districts though it was agreed that this may be a factor of technology moving faster than the ordinances.

Councilmember Rousseau asked when we should discuss other Economic Development Commission priorities as the Commission works through the sign code review.

Senior Planner Fransen said yes there will be opportunities to work on other items at the same time as the Sign Code review. It was agreed that Commissioners will bring their priorities to the next meeting to discuss and staff will compile suggestions that came up during interviews with commission members.

Discussion ensued about creating more meaningful communication with business leaders. Networking events and surveys were discussed.

7. COMMENTS AND REPORTS

7.A. Report From The City Council

Councilmember Rousseau said that as the liaison with the Council she will provide information to and from the Council and other Committees. The State of the City will be January 20th at City Hall. Open House notifications will be shared with the Commissioners so they will be able to provide a Commission presence at local business events.

7.B. Economic Development Commission Comments

Commissioner Cupery asked if the city has a business directory.

Commissioner Gronquist responded that there a list is on the website, but it should be more dynamic with links to businesses and perhaps put into logical groups instead of alphabetically.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 25, 2023

TO: Economic Development Commission Members

FROM: Elena Fransen, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce Manufacturing Cohort Presentation

John LaTourneau from the Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce will present on the Chamber's Manufacturing Cohort. He will share an overview of the cohort as well as its goals and current initiatives.



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 25, 2023

TO: Economic Development Commission Members

FROM: Elena Fransen, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Discussion on next EDC meeting date, Chair and Vice-Chair roles and Meeting Packets

Requested Action

Staff is asking the Economic Development Commission to consider the date for the next EDC meeting, the process of appointing the Commission Chair and Vice Chair, and preferred access to EDC packets.

Background

Next EDC meeting

Commission members were asked to review their availability for the month of December and early January to determine a date when a quorum of members (currently 4) can be in attendance. Possible Wednesday meeting dates to discuss:

- December 27 (currently scheduled date)
- January 3
- January 10
- January 17

EDC Chair and Vice Chair

The roles of Chair and Vice Chair for the Economic Development are currently unfilled. The Chair facilitates the EDC meeting by working through the agenda and guiding Commission meetings. The Vice Chair is available to fill in if the Chair is absent. The Chair role is appointed by the City Council and the Vice Chair is selected by members of the Commission. The term length for both roles is one year. Staff is asking the Economic Development Commission members to consider if they are interested in either of the roles and would like to be appointed for the 2024 term. EDC members can take time between now and the next meeting and communicate at that time if they would like to be considered.

EDC Packets

For the August and October meetings, City staff printed and mailed packets to the members of the EDC. Prior to the 2023 EDC meetings, the packets were uploaded to the City's website and the link was shared with the EDC to review. Staff is asking the EDC if there is a preference for printed copies of the packets to be sent to Commission members or for the digital option to be the established norm for the group.



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 25, 2023
TO: Economic Development Commission Members
FROM: Elena Fransen, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Sign Code Review – Recent Requests for Flexibility and Wall Signage

Requested Action

The City is asking the Economic Development Commission to review and consider the regulations in Chapter 12 – Sign Code of the City’s Code of Ordinances and their application for wall signage.

Background

At the August 23 meeting of the Economic Development Commission, staff presented an overview of Chapter 12 – Sign Code of the City’s Code of Ordinances and shared the direction of the City Council for the Commission to consider the Chapter’s form and content to provide recommendations. The Commission was given a copy of the Arden Hills Sign Code for their review in the meeting packet. On September 25, staff shared the sign codes for the City of New Brighton and the City of Shoreview as points of comparison for the Arden Hills sign code.

Requests for Flexibility from the Sign Code

At the August 23 meeting, members of the EDC asked staff to prepare information about recent requests for flexibility from the sign code regulations. Staff researched and found 16 land use cases between 2002 and 2023 that ranged from site plan reviews specifically for a sign standard adjustment to Planned Unit Developments for which an applicant can include requests for additional signage beyond the amount permitted in the Sign Code. For a sign standard adjustment and sign flexibility to be approved, the applicant must satisfy Subdivision 1 or Subdivision 2 in the below criteria and must satisfy Subdivision 3:

- Subd. 1 There are site conditions which require a sign adjustment to allow the sign to be reasonably visible from a street immediately adjacent to the site;
- Subd. 2 The sign adjustment will allow a sign of exceptional design or a style that will enhance the area or that is more consistent with the architecture and design of the site;
- Subd. 3 The sign adjustment will not result in a sign that is inconsistent with the purpose of the zoning district in which the property is located or the current land use.

In the 16 cases, there were 13 requests for flexibility from wall signage requirements and the most common wall sign flexibility request was for an increase in square feet permitted. The 13 cases represent 11 applicants as one applicant had three separate cases with requests for wall signage flexibility.

Amount of Wall Signage Requested

Adjusting for an outlier, the average amount of additional signage requested was 2.15 times the permitted maximum square footage. With the outlier, the average is 3.71 times the permitted maximum square footage. The average amount of additional signage granted by the City Council was 1.96 times greater than the permitted square footage, without the outlier, and 2.7 times greater with the outlier. For context, the outlier is a grocer use in Sign District 5 where the maximum amount of wall signage permitted is 80 square feet. The applicant was permitted a maximum wall sign square footage of 800 square feet total after initially proposing 1,440 square feet. The next greatest amount of wall signage permitted was 360 square feet for a grocer use also in Sign District 5.

Types of Uses

Of the 11 applicants that requested wall sign flexibility, land uses included commercial, office, grocer, service station, and industrial. This indicates that a variety of uses within various zoning districts have sought flexibility from the sign code. Two grocer uses located in Commercial zoning districts requested the greatest amount of signage in excess of the maximum permitted wall signage area while non-grocer uses requested under 1.66 times the permitted sign square footage on average.

Frontage

Most of the requests for sign flexibility were for properties with frontage on Lexington Avenue, County Road E, and Interstate 35 W. Four of the 11 applicants had frontage on Lexington Avenue and these applicants received between 1.74 and 10 times the permitted maximum sign area. Of the 3 applicants with frontage on County Road E, the flexibility granted by the City Council was a lower percentage over the permitted sign area than what the applicants requested compared to what was requested by and granted to properties with frontage on Lexington Avenue.

Wall Sign Regulations

Amount of Wall Signage Permitted

The quantity of permitted wall signage in the Arden Hills Sign Code is established as a maximum total sign copy area in square feet. The total area is established for each Sign District with the maximum being 80 square feet in Sign District 5 – Lexington South of 694 and the minimum being 8 square feet in Sign District 1 – Residential R-1 and R-2. The permitted square footage for wall signs varies across frontages and sign districts. A property is allowed a wall sign at the maximum total sign copy area per frontage elevation.

| Table 1 | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| 1240.02 - Table 1: Sign Standards by Sign District | | | | | | | | | |
| Sign Type | District 1 Residential R1/R2 | District 2 Non- Residential Uses R1-R4 | District 3 Residential R3/R4 | District 4 County E Frontage <small>Revised December 3, 2008</small> | District 5 Lexington S of 694 | District 6 Lexington N of 694, 96 & B1 | District 7 FLEX & Gateway, Non-Frontage Commercial | District 8 Neighborhood Business | District 9 TCAAP without frontage on Highway 96 |
| WALL | | | | | | | | | |
| Total sign copy area | 8 sf | 20 sf | 20 sf | 50 sf | 80 sf | 60 sf | 45 sf | 30 sf | 30 sf |
| Max Height | none | none | none | none | none | none | none | 14 ft | 14 ft |
| Lighting (a) | Not permitted | external | Not permitted | E/I/B | E/I/B | E/I | E/I | Not permitted | Not permitted |

The cities of Shoreview and New Brighton approach the sizing of wall signs differently though both sign codes permit a wall sign per frontage as the Arden Hills sign code does. In New Brighton, each sign district has an established percentage of signable area per property as well as 200 square feet as a set maximum. Signable area is defined as any area of the wall of a building, free of windows or doors upon which wall signs are permitted. Permitted signs can have a total copy area of the established percentage or 200 square feet per frontage, whichever is less.

In Shoreview, two sign districts have a maximum total sign copy area while for the remaining districts, there is a calculation based on the square footage of the building and a percentage of the area of the building elevation. For buildings under 50,000 square feet there is a minimum sign copy area of 20 square feet per frontage and buildings with greater than 50,000 square feet in area have a maximum sign copy area of 500 square feet per frontage.

Wall Sign Regulations by Sign Districts

The Arden Hills Sign Code regulates signage by sign district. Some districts are applicable to multiple zoning districts while others are specific to one zoning district. Sign Districts 1 through 3 as well as 6,7, and 8 call out specific zoning districts that relate to different land uses. Sign Districts 4, 5, and 9 are frontage specific and are applicable to multiple zoning districts so long as they are not called out in other sign districts. For example, a property zoned B-2 General Business District could be regulated by Sign District 4 or 5, depending on the property’s frontage.

1240.01 Regulation by Sign District.

| District | Description |
|----------|---|
| 1 | All residential properties zoned R-1 or R-2. |
| 2 | All non-residential uses in the R-1 through R-4 zoning districts. |
| 3 | All residential properties zoned R-3 and R-4. |
| 4 | All properties fronting on County Road E east of Highway 51 except for those properties with frontage on Lexington Avenue. |
| 5 | All properties fronting on Lexington Avenue South of Interstate 694. |
| 6 | All properties zoned for commercial or industrial use fronting on Lexington Avenue north of Interstate 694, properties along Highway 96, and properties located in the B-1 zoning district. |
| 7 | All properties in the I-Flex, Gateway Business, or other commercial or industrial district without frontage on a roadway designated above. |
| 8 | All properties zoned Neighborhood Business. |
| 9 | The parts of the TCAAP area not fronting on Highway 96. |

The Shoreview and New Brighton sign districts are more generally applicable to zoning districts than the Arden Hills sign code. In New Brighton, permitted sign copy area is allotted based on zoning district. The zoning districts within the sign districts are explicitly stated along with the permitted sign copy area. In Shoreview, the sign code is even more general as the same parameters for sign copy area apply to the City’s sign districts for its Commercial, Office, Business Park, and Industrial zoning districts. Shoreview’s sign copy area calculation is generally more specific to the size of the building and the building’s frontage elevations than it is to zoning districts.

Wall Sign Regulations by Location and Frontage

Location and frontage are used in the Arden Hills sign code to regulate wall sign total sign copy area. For example, properties with frontage on Lexington Avenue south of 694 are allotted 80 square feet of sign copy area. This is greater than the 60 square feet allotted for properties on Lexington north of 694 and the 50 square feet permitted for properties with frontage on County Road E. Non-frontage commercial properties are included in Sign District 7 which has a maximum area of 45 square feet and are distinguished from commercial properties with frontage.

The Shoreview and New Brighton sign codes do not include additional regulations based on frontage or location. Similar to the Arden Hills sign code, building street frontage in Shoreview and New Brighton is used to determine the quantity of wall signs permitted for a property.

Comparisons with Shoreview and New Brighton

Staff has analyzed several land use cases to illustrate how the Arden Hills sign code has been applied compared to the sign codes for Shoreview and New Brighton. The EDC can consider and discuss how the application of the sign codes vary.

Example 1 – Outlier Grocer Use (91,600 square feet building, two elevations with frontage – 9,000 and 5,250 square feet, signable area – 8,800 and 5,125) located in Sign District 5

| Permitted – Arden Hills | Requested | Granted | Permitted - Shoreview | Permitted – New Brighton |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| 80 square feet | 1,440 square feet | 800 square feet total | Based on 5% of 9,000 sf – 450 sf 5,250 sf – 262.5 sf Total – 712.5 | Based on 40% of 8,800 and 5,125 or 200 sf per frontage, 200 per, 400 sf total |

Example 2 – Commercial (4,500 square feet building, one elevation with frontage – 716 square feet, signable area – 530 square feet) located in Sign District 4

| Permitted – Arden Hills | Requested | Granted | Permitted - Shoreview | Permitted – New Brighton |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 50 square feet total | 134 square feet total | 70 square feet total | Based on 10% of 716 sf – 71.6 sf total | Based on 30% of 530 sf – 159 sf total |

Example 3 – Industrial (104,532 square feet building, one elevation with frontage - ~5,766, signable area – 5,316 square feet) located in Sign District 7

| Permitted – Arden Hills | Requested | Granted | Permitted – Shoreview | Permitted – New Brighton |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| 45 square feet total | 60 square feet total | 60 square feet total | Based on 5% of 5,766 sf – 288.3 sf total | Based on 20% of 5,316 or 200 sf, 200 total |

Next Steps

The EDC should discuss and provide comments on the application of the Arden Hills sign code wall signage regulations. Some considerations include –

- How the total sign copy area for wall signs is calculated.
- How wall sign regulations may vary across and within zoning districts.
- How frontage factors into the application of wall sign regulations.

Staff will use feedback from EDC members to draft a summary of potential amendments to the wall signage regulations in sign code. Staff will share the summary at a future EDC meeting. At the next meeting, EDC members will be asked to consider regulations for freestanding signage.



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 25, 2023
TO: Economic Development Commission Members
FROM: Elena Fransen, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Economic Development Commission Work Plan Discussion

Requested Action

Staff is asking the Economic Development Commission to discuss what ideas the group would like to be considered as part of the creation of an EDC work plan for the next several years. Members of the Commission can think about both long term and short-term projects and initiatives, objectives and goals, strategies and actions, and measurement tools.

Background

During the orientation presentation at the August 23, 2023 meeting, staff shared tasks that the City Council has identified for the EDC. These tasks will be incorporated into the EDC’s work plan. The City Council identified tasks include -

- Sign Code Review
- Involvement with the Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce Manufacturing Cohort
- Involvement with the Twin Cities Gateway
- Establishing action items based on Chapter 8 – Economic Development from the City’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Staff also included ongoing items for Business Outreach and tasks as determined by members of the Commission. Staff shared the plan to review the past summer’s round of commission member interviews for task and initiative suggestions that came up and could be incorporated into the EDC’s workplan. Findings were to be shared with the EDC at the next scheduled meeting.

Review of Interview Comments

During the summer round of interviews, EDC candidates mentioned the following tasks–

- Newsletters

- Events/Quarterly Meeting/Open House
- Welcome packets for new businesses
- Links to businesses/Business directory on City website
- Engagement emails/Listserve
- Conduct a survey of existing businesses

Members of the EDC can review these ideas and think about what other tasks should be added to an EDC work plan.

Work plan Discussion

At the October meeting, members of the EDC should discuss existing ideas and provide new ideas for the group to consider.

Questions for discussion –

- What other tasks should be added to the list?
- How would you organize these tasks in order of priority?

Wrap-up

Staff will consolidate the information shared at the October EDC meeting and draft a preliminary work plan.