



MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 23, 2023
TO: Economic Development Commission Commissioners
FROM: Elena Fransen, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Sign Code Review

Requested Action

The City is asking the Economic Development Commission 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.

Background

At their February 21st work session, the City Council asked city staff to assemble a list of previously identified code amendments to allow for further Council discussion to occur on the prioritization of amendment reviews.

City staff brought back the requested information to the City Council on April 17th for further discussion. Staff provided a list of ordinance amendments to be brought back to the City Council for further discussion and direction at a future work session once a Senior Planner was onboard and as staff time allowed. Below is the list of ordinance amendments that were part of the City Council discussion:

City Council Work Session

- Infill Development (i.e. Land Disturbance and Fill, Height of Buildings, Tree Clearing, Sight Lines, Character of Neighborhood)
- Rental Properties (i.e. Rental Registration/Licensing, Rental Cap, Short Term Rentals)
- Signage
 - Council has indicated this could be a task for the Economic Development Commission.
- Corner Lot Setbacks
- Accessory Structures (i.e. residential maximum size allowed)
- EV Charging Stations

The City Council consensus and direction given during the meeting was to proceed with the above amendments as outlined.

Sign Code

The City Council has asked for the Economic Development Commission to consider the current sign code to ensure the standards are consistent with current technology and community needs. The sign code applies to both permanent and temporary signs though the initial conversation will focus on permanent signs with temporary signs being addressed later. The recommendations of the EDC will be shared with the City Council at a future work session in order to seek further direction on the proposed revisions. Upon direction of the City Council to proceed with the amendments, a draft ordinance would be brought to the Planning Commission for review and to hold a public hearing and then to the City Council for final approval and adoption.

The City's sign code (Attachment A) outlines the process for the issuance of sign permits, which are required for commercial message signs. The sign code includes sections that establish the intent of the regulations and processes, describe how the regulations shall be applied in the City, and define the relevant terms that appear in the regulations. The code identifies signs that are prohibited and the regulations for the different types of signs and City sign districts as well as the processes sign permit applicants can take to seek flexibility from the sign code.

In Section 1240.01, nine sign districts are adopted for the purpose of regulating signs.

District 1 – All residential properties zoning R-1 or R-2

District 2 – All non-residential uses in the R-1 through R-4 zoning districts

District 3 – All residential properties zoned R-3 and R-4

District 4 – All properties fronting on County Road E east of Highway 51 except for those properties with frontage on Lexington Avenue.

District 5 – All properties fronting on Lexington Avenue South of Interstate 694.

District 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.

District 7 – All properties in the I-Flex, Gateway Business, or other commercial or industrial district without frontage on a roadway designated above.

District 8 – All properties zoned Neighborhood Business.

District 9 – The parts of the TCAAP area not fronting on Highway 96.

Section 1240.02 includes Table 1: Sign Standards by Sign District (Attachment B). Standards are established for each district by sign type i.e. wall, freestanding, graphic, window and auxiliary signs. The sign standard information is organized in a table format, making it possible to compare across sign types and sign districts. Provisions that are unique to a particular sign type or district are also stated in the same section.

Table 1 provides the permitted total sign copy area, subtype, maximum height, and lighting for the various sign types by sign district. Total sign copy area is established as a fixed number of square feet for each sign type and district. Subtypes are described for freestanding signs and include monument and pole. Temporary off-premise sign is also listed though this subtype will be addressed in the temporary sign conversation. Maximum height is also a set number of feet. Lighting standards include external, internal, and backlit.

Wall and freestanding signs are very common permanent signs in the City. Wall signs are those attached to or erected against an exterior wall surface of a building or structure and freestanding signs are self-supporting signs that are anchored to the ground. Freestanding signs include pole or monument signs which are distinguished by the supporting base of the sign.

The Commission may also consider the current standards for dynamic signs. Dynamic Display signs are those that appear to have movement or change in any component of the sign which can be in the form of rotating, revolving, moving, flashing, blinking, projecting, or animated display. This type of sign incorporates technology to allow the sign face to change. Currently, dynamic display signs are prohibited except drive-through menu board signs for fast food restaurants that meet the requirements of section 1240.04.

The Commission is asked to review Chapter 12 in its format and content. In preparation for our upcoming meeting, please review the sign code and be prepared to discuss your initial thoughts and ideas on some of the following:

- Did you find the ordinance easily understandable?
- What elements of the sign code did you like best?
- What elements of the sign code are you most interested in reviewing?
- Do you think the standards and regulations are consistent with current technologies?
- Do you think the standards can be reasonably applied to all community members?

The review of the sign code will be an ongoing agenda item for the Economic Development Commission. After the initial review of the sign code, the Commission will consider the standards for wall, freestanding, and dynamic display signs at subsequent meetings.

Attachments

- A. City of Arden Hills Code of Ordinances Chapter 12 Sign Code
- B. Sign Code Introduction Presentation