

City of Westminster
Summary of Proposed Sign Code Revisions
May 5, 2016

For the first time since 1995, comprehensive revisions to update the City’s sign regulations are being proposed. The proposed sign code revisions resulted from a collaborate process that included revisions suggested by the City’s staff, Planning Commission and the community. There have been two major objectives driving the proposed update. They include:

- **Clarity** – Creating clear and easy to read provisions, resulting in a sign code that is “user friendly.”
- **Flexibility** – Creating flexible standards, resulting in a more “business friendly” sign code, while also ensuring that new signs are of the highest quality.

This document summarizes the major changes included in the proposed sign code. Specifically, the following topics are addressed:

Building Signs

Freestanding Signs

Temporary Signs

Creative Sign Permit

Electronic Message Center Signs

Nonconforming Signs

Prohibited Signs

All of the proposed new sign code provisions are shaded grey in the proposed sign code. If you have questions and/or comments regarding the proposed sign code, please contact the City of Westminster Planning Division.

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Building Signs

- The current sign code allows for one wall sign and one awning sign per principal use or building. Businesses facing two streets are allowed a second wall sign. The proposed sign code would eliminate this requirement and would establish a more flexible standard of 1.5 square-feet of sign area for each one linear foot of tenant or building frontage up to a maximum of 200 square-feet. Therefore, a business could have multiple awning, canopy and/or wall signs, provided that the total area of such signs did not exceed the allowed area based upon the building frontage.
- Foam letters signs would be prohibited.
- **New cabinet (can type) signs would be prohibited.**
- Changes to existing cabinet signs, such as replacing the sign face would require the installation of a new cabinet with “push/through letters.”
- A 25-percent increase in allowed wall sign area would be granted when the portion of the building where the wall sign is located is setback at least 200-feet from the public right-of-way. An additional 25-percent increase would be allowed for each additional setback of 200-feet, up to a maximum of 75-percent.

Freestanding Signs

- Freestanding signs up to 150 square-feet of area, with a height up to 40-feet, would be permitted on a parcel with a minimum lot size of 55,000 square-feet adjoining a state highway, such as Beach Blvd. Freestanding signs up to 300 square-feet of area, with a height up to 80-feet, would be permitted on a parcel with a minimum lot size of 65,000 square-feet adjoining a freeway, such as the 405 (San Diego) freeway.
- All tenant faceplates on a freestanding sign would be required to have the same background color.
- Push-through/through-the-face” type signs would be required when a plastic sign face on a cabinet is replaced.
- Monument sign height would be increased from 6-feet to 10-feet in the Civic Center. In all other commercial and industrial districts, no distinction is made between a monument sign and a pylon sign, as either type of sign would be permitted up to a height of 25-feet.
- A minimum 100-foot separation between freestanding signs would be required when two or more freestanding signs are located on the same property.

- Businesses lacking street frontage or a wall sign would be able to utilize a portion of a freestanding sign located on an adjacent property.

Temporary Signs

- Temporary sign provisions available to automobile dealerships (e.g. balloons) would be available to other uses based upon a minimum lot size of 15,000 square-feet. This proposed change avoids giving special treatment to only one use (e.g. automobile dealerships) not afforded to other types of businesses.
- New Standards are proposed for garage sale signs, portable signs, and seasonal holiday displays.
- The current sign code allows one political sign up to 40 square-feet in area. The draft sign code includes new provisions for “noncommercial temporary signs,” which would include signs endorsing a candidate or political cause. The proposed standards provide greater flexibility than the current standard as it allows for an unlimited number of “noncommercial temporary signs”, provided that the cumulative area of all signs does not exceed 80-square-feet and no individual sign exceeds 40 square-feet for each lot or parcel. “Noncommercial temporary signs” associated with a one-time event, such as an election, would need to be removed within five days of such event. Additional proposed standards are shown in the draft.
- Banner signs would be prohibited, except when placed on parking lot light standards and when used as interim identification sign for a new business. The current sign code allows a banner to be placed on a building for a maximum of 90 days per calendar year.
- Pennants and pennant strings would be prohibited. The current sign code allows for pennants and pennant strings as part of a temporary sign permit.
- The maximum area of a flag would be reduced from 216 square-feet to 108 square-feet.

Creative Sign Permit

Section 17.330.017 (Creative Sign Permit) would replace the provisions of Chapter 17.330.055 (Special Advertising Permit) and allow for significant waivers from the sign code standards (i.e. maximum sign height, maximum sign area, maximum number of signs, etc.). A creative sign permit would be subject to public hearing (Planning Commission).

Electronic Message Center Signs

The draft code would permit the use of electronic message center (EMC) signs to be used as part of a property's allowed building or freestanding signs. A conditional use permit is required if an EMC sign is located within 500 feet of a residential use.

Non-Conforming Signs

A non-conforming sign is a sign that was lawfully constructed but is no longer in compliance with one or more current standard (i.e. height, sign area, etc.). The proposed Section 17.330.013 (Non-Conforming Signs) would require the removal of a non-conforming sign that has been abandoned for more than 90 days. Otherwise, a non-conforming sign would be required to be removed 15 years following the adoption of the proposed sign code update. The City can consider an extension that would grant additional time for compliance.

Prohibited Signs

Section 17.330.019 (Prohibited Signs) list the type of signs that would be prohibited within the City. The following types of signs would be added to the current list of prohibited signs:

- “Super Graphic Signs” (unless permitted by a creative sign permit). See also the Definitions Section (17.330.022).
- “Advertising Vehicle” pertains to a vehicle used as a mobile billboard.
- “Flag Signs”
- “ Human Signs” See See also the Definitions Section (17.330.022).