

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS FOR TEMPORARY BUSINESS SIGNS

Recommendation:

To receive and file this report.

Background:

At the meeting of May 13 2003, the City Council directed staff to provide information regarding temporary sign and grand opening sign permits. A new sign ordinance was adopted in 1993 and subsequently revised in 1998 and 2001. In 2002, sign code enforcement procedures were amended.

Analysis:

Definitions:

“Temporary signs” are defined in Chapter 17.50 of the Sign Code as:

“Any sign, banner, valance or identification display constructed of cloth, canvas, fabric, cardboard, wallboard or other materials with or without a frame intended to be displayed for a limited time only”.

“Banner signs are defined as:

“A temporary sign constructed of cloth, canvas or light fabric.”

“Grand opening signs” are referred to in the temporary sign code section as temporary signs promoting a one time promotional event opening of a business.

Regulations for Temporary Signs and Grand Opening Signs:

Pursuant to Section 17.50.210 of the Zoning Ordinance, temporary signs can be displayed for a period not exceeding 90 days in the calendar year. The area allowed for temporary signs is 40% of that allowed for permanent signage (minimum of 20 square feet maximum allowable area of 100 square feet). Grand opening signs are not held to this limitation and may be any size and may include flags, pennants and balloons (inflatables) which are otherwise prohibited in the sign code. In addition, certain temporary signs are exempt from sign regulations.¹

Cost of Temporary Sign Permit:

A temporary sign permit may be obtained by filing a sign permit application and remitting the application fee of \$38.00. A temporary sign permit is also required for grand opening signs. The fee is based solely on the recovery of applicable costs.

Process for Obtaining A Temporary Sign Permit:

A temporary sign or grand opening sign permit is obtained by visiting the Community Development Department, filing an application and remitting the permit fee. A staff planner reviews the application, calculates the allowable area for the banner and issues the permit. Information pertaining to the design, installation and permitting process of commercial signs is available in a free Sign Handbook containing illustrations and simple, non-technical language for the business. Planning staff provide all of the assistance necessary to obtain the permit. Typically, a business owner calls to make an appointment to ensure planning staff is available to provide assistance.

Chronology of Changes to the Temporary Sign Regulations:

In recent years, the City has relaxed the regulations for temporary signs relating to the duration and exceptions for grand openings and special sales events. On December 9, 1998, the City Council adopted an ordinance extending the duration for display of temporary signs including grand opening signs from 60 to 90 days and allowing temporary sign displays in smaller time increments to accommodate seasonal sales, special events, and/or grand openings. Formerly, the ordinance allowed sign displays of not less than 30 day increments.

On March 14, 2002, the City Council rejected a Sign Code amendment to allow sidewalk or A-Frame signs on public property as they were deemed to be a trip hazard to pedestrians and further clutter of the commercial areas.

Code Enforcement of Temporary and Grand Opening Signs:

On December 10, 2002, the City Council approved a proposed a code enforcement citation program that includes illegal temporary signs. Under the citation program, a citation is issued after two warnings to the violator. Illegal banners or other temporary signs may also be removed when they are put in the right of way or when they are determined to be a hazard. The sign code also provides for right of entry to a property whenever there is “reasonable cause to believe that there exists any sign or any condition which makes such signs unsafe”. The fee is based solely on the recovery of applicable costs. In most cases, however, property owners voluntarily come into compliance after the first notification of a sign violation.

The attached correspondence requests that the City Council reconsider the temporary business sign regulations of the Sign Ordinance and further relax some of the code requirements that were changed in 1998. The proposed changes include; eliminating the \$38.00 fee for grand openings permits; increasing the temporary sign area to 70% of the allowable permanent sign area; increasing the duration for display of temporary signs to 120 days during the calendar year and prohibiting entry by the code official to property in order to enforce the provisions of the sign code.

Staff recommends that the current regulations for grand openings and banners be retained as they fairly permit advertising for up to one quarter of the year, while avoiding over proliferation of signs. The objective of the sign ordinance is “ to preserve property values and to protect the welfare of citizens through the regulation of signs without impairing the ability of its citizens and businesses to carry out their normal functions”. The current ordinance as fulfills this objective.

Sol Blumenfeld, Director
Community Development Department

Concur:

Stephen R. Burrell,
City Manager

Attachments:

1. Correspondence
2. Temporary Sign Ordinance Survey in Other Cities

Notes:

¹ The maximum permitted permanent sign area is 2 or 3 feet of sign area (depending on the commercial zone) per linear foot of building frontage. For example in the C-2 zone, 30 feet of building frontage permits 60 feet of sign area. 40% of this permanent sign area may be used for temporary signs or a maximum of 24 square feet. Some temporary signs are allowed without permits including:

Changing copy on theater marquees, construction signs of 25 square feet per site with a 6 feet height maximum, one real estate sign per site with 6 square feet maximum in residential zone and 25 square feet maximum in a commercial zone, political signs, building identification signs of 2 square feet or less and temporary window signs of 10 square feet or less.