

Headlines



December 20, 2004

Council Approves New Sign Ordinance

After several months of discussions between the [City Council](#) and local business owners, a new [Sign Ordinance](#) was approved. The primary objectives of revising the Sign Ordinance were:

- Eliminate confusing or contradictory language
- Streamline administration
- Consistent fees structure
- Enhance the City's visual appeal
- Support thriving business areas

The revised ordinance achieves these goals and also is an improvement over the old version for the following reasons:

- First, the size, height and placement of signs are regulated by the zoning district where the use is located. For example, taller and bigger signs are allowed along Blackhawk Road, zoned for highway business, versus smaller signs on 14th Avenue and other Hilltop neighborhood business areas.
- Second, the maximum area of signs are linked to the property's size. The new ordinance allows one square foot of sign area for every foot the property touches a street or avenue. This compares to the existing ordinance where two square feet of sign area was allowed.
- Third, the maximum height of freestanding signs was reduced to 15, 20 or 25 feet, depending on the zoning district. Neighborhood business areas such as 38th Street and 14th Avenue are limited to 15 feet in height. The previous ordinance allowed signs up to 40 feet tall in any business or industrial zoning district.
- Fourth, freestanding signs cannot be larger than 120 or 160 square feet in business areas. The old ordinance allowed signs up to 900 square feet if the property was big enough.
- Fifth, the maximum total area of all signs is now limited to 64 square feet in an office district, 250 square feet in a neighborhood business district and 500 square feet in the downtown, community and highway business areas and all industrial districts. Once again this is less than that allowed by the old ordinance. It was possible to have as much as 1,400 square feet of signs previously.

- Sixth, the Council approved an amendment that would allow existing signs to be maintained if they were damaged up to 50% of their replacement cost. This compares to 25% in the old ordinance.

Items that were debated at some length but **not** approved by Council included requiring all existing signs to be changed to meet the new standards within the next 10 years, to limit signs to six or 12 feet in height and to be of a “monument” style.

The approved ordinance is now in effect. It will affect signs for new uses or new signs for existing businesses. Over time, there will be a reduction in sign heights and size.

Another major issue that was resolved is the need to more stringently enforce the ordinance so that illegal signs are removed more quickly and penalties imposed on habitual offenders. Examples of illegal signs include temporary banners attached to poles or posts, signs on public property (such as major intersections) or portable signs.

Anyone with questions about the Sign Ordinance should call the [Planning and Redevelopment Division](#) at 732-2900.