



MEMORANDUM

PLANNING DIVISION
DEPARTMENT of COMMUNITY and NEIGHBORHOODS

To: Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Cc: Lisa Shaffer, Chief Administrative Officer; Blake Thomas, Department of Community and Neighborhoods Director; Michaela Oktay, Deputy Planning Director

From: Nick Norris, Planning Director

Date: October 5, 2022

Re: Amendments related to nonconforming signs in Chapter 21.46 of the Zoning Ordinance

The Planning Division is requesting that you initiate a zoning text amendment to modify the standards related to nonconforming signs. Nonconforming signs are existing signs that were permitted under previous versions of city code and that do not conform to current standards. These signs are allowed to continue to exist; however, the zoning ordinance is very restrictive when it comes to alterations and changes in ownership of such signs. The zoning ordinance prohibits any type of alteration of nonconforming signs, including modifications to the structure, the design, or the message. The zoning ordinance also requires the removal of a sign within 30 days after a use is discontinued. The limitations on nonconforming signs discourage updating the signs, including the method of illumination to more energy efficient systems, prevent property owners from making signs more complying to existing standards, encourage the keeping of poorly maintained structures, and create an unnecessary burden on business owners who are not allowed to reuse or update an existing nonconforming sign.

The standards for alterations of nonconforming signs have not been evenly applied for sign face changes that maintain the overall sign structure. Several sign permits have been issued since the adoption of the ordinance for the change of the text and message of signs as routine maintenance. While this is contrary to the language of the code, these permits were issued in good faith and to the benefit of property/business owners. The Planning Division believes that alterations to the face, sign cabinet, type of illumination, or the design, and even the replacement to a more complying sign, will not create an adverse impact to the surrounding properties and the city in general and supports small businesses because of an increase in flexibility regarding modifications to existing signs.

This zoning amendment would focus on aligning the sign standards with city goals, supporting businesses, and addressing any applicable state law. The intent of the change will be to allow more flexibility for reusing, modifying, and updating existing signs. A public process will be conducted to gauge public input on the proposed changes and the proposal will follow the same required steps of any other text amendment, including notification to recognized community organizations, a public hearing with the Planning Commission and a decision from City Council.

This memo includes a signature block to initiate the petition if that is the decided course of action. If the decided course of action is to not initiate the application, the signature block can remain blank. Please notify the Planning Division when the memo is signed or if the decision is made to not initiate the petition.