

Proposed New City of Lawrence Sign Code



Background and Summary of Key Changes from Current Sign Code



Sign Code Review Background

- **May 2016:** City Commission reauthorizes staff to review City sign code with Chamber/other stakeholders, focusing on several priority items
- **May - Sept 2016:** Staff begins review with Chamber/other stakeholders
- **Sept 2016:** Based on landmark Reed v. Gilbert, AZ Supreme Court case on sign regulation, City determines sign code must be totally rewritten
- **Oct 2016 - May 2017:** New sign code drafted by City with input from stakeholders (ongoing)



Reed v. Gilbert, AZ

U.S. Supreme Court Case

- Regulation must be based on zoning & land use – **Not on message content** (no special rules for real estate, political, fuel price, development name, time/temp, etc. signs)
- Some message content exceptions
- Particularly challenging for temporary signs
- Ongoing court challenges to clarify Reed



Major Format Changes

- New section added with narrative & graphics to explain and show how dimensional standards are determined and measured (none in current code)
- Sign allowances by sign type are set forth in 3 broad zoning district “groups” (based on intensity of land uses) for each sign type in a single code section and table rather than across 18 separate code sections



New & Clarified Definitions

- Many clarified and expanded definitions, some in response to Reed case
- Many new definitions for undefined terms in current code and new sign types seen over past 10-20 yrs.
- 15 new definitions relate to Electronic Message Center (EMC) signs

Nonconforming Signs



- Like current code, proposed code prohibits new billboards and on-premise pole signs
- Unlike current code, proposed code does not allow existing billboards or pole signs to be rebuilt at same location or “structurally altered” (newly defined) unless they conform to current code
- Proposed code clarifies when other non-conforming signs must conform (structural alteration, major site redevelopment)



Changeable Electronic Message Center (EMC) Signs



- EMCs generally allowed in office, commercial, & industrial zoning (except in CN₁, Inner Neighborhood Commercial & CD, Downtown Commercial)
- EMCs allowed for certain permitted primary NON-residential land uses in residential/less intense zoning districts (Office, Community Facilities, Religious Assembly & Medical Facilities land uses)



EMC Sign Permit Requirements

- Mfg. specs on maximum sign brightness
- Automated dimming controls for specified (measurable) maximum brightness at night, and relative to ambient light conditions
- Acknowledgement from sign owner and/or business owner/operator about EMC restrictions & operating requirements

EMC Signs - Night Time Images

Too Bright – No Automatic Dimming Controls



Dimmed with Automatic Dimming Controls



Other EMC Sign Standards



- One EMC per lot street frontage
- EMC area: 50% of total allowed permanent monument sign area; 20% of allowed permanent wall sign area
- Allowed on internal ground signs for drive-thru facilities, with min. setback requirements
- Min. 200' from adjacent residential zoning measured perpendicular to sign face
- Controls to automatically limit illumination relative to ambient light (0.3 foot-candle)

Other Permanent Sign Changes

- **Least intense zoning districts (residential & office)**
 - Slightly larger permanent monument & wall signs allowed for multifamily & non-residential uses; multiple small wall signs allowed for multi-tenant office uses
 - Slightly larger permanent freestanding monument sign allowed at each public road access to a residential subdivision development of 2 acres or more, not to exceed 2 signs





Other Permanent Sign Changes

- **Moderately intense use zoning districts**
(Hospital, less intense commercial & industrial, planned commercial and planned industrial)
 - Wall signs allowed on 3 bldg walls instead of 2, in many cases
 - Internally illuminated window signs >12 sq. ft. regulated as wall signs



Other Permanent Sign Changes

- **Most intense use zoning districts**
(Community & Regional Commercial,
Medium & General Industrial)
 - Wall signs allowed on 3 bldg walls instead of 2, in many cases
 - Monument signs up to 4' taller and 12 sq. ft. larger than current code (with setbacks)
 - Internally illuminated window signs >12 sq. ft. regulated as wall signs

Temporary Signs - General

- Regulates based on zoning/land use, lot size, lot frontage and/or other lot conditions – **NOT on sign message content** (e.g., real estate, political, gas/fuel price, time & temp or development name signs)
- **Some permit exemptions and display time exceptions included** based on land use and/or certain lot conditions (for sale or for lease, building/lot under development), or placed during a political election season – **NOT based on sign message content**

Temporary Signs - Resid. & Office

- **Exempt from permitting & max display time**
- **Freestanding** (no “feather signs” allowed)
 - ***Residential uses:*** No sign > 8 sq ft; max 4' tall; 3 signs max per lot street frontage, 4 signs max for lots with 2 street frontages; total area of all signs not > 16 sq ft
 - ***Non-residential uses:*** No sign > 32 sq ft; max 6' tall; 3 signs max per lot street frontage, 4 signs for lots with 2 street frontages; total area of all signs not > 32 sq ft
- **On building walls** (for permitted non-residential & multifamily land uses)
 - 1 per bldg; 2 per street frontage; 12 sq ft max per sign



Temporary Signs – Office, Commercial & Industrial Districts

- Maximum display time increased from 30 to 60 days (90 days for multi-tenant lots) per calendar year
- Multiple permits may be issued during calendar year (e.g., 4 different 15-day periods)
- Multiple signs may be included on a single display period permit

Temporary Signs – Office, Commercial, Industrial

- **Freestanding**

- Total area of all signs not to exceed 64 sq. ft.
- No individual sign to exceed 32 sq. ft.
- Max 9' sign height
- Max of 3 signs per street frontage, or 4 on lots with 2 street frontages; may include 1 “feather sign” per street frontage



Temporary Signs – Office, Commercial and Industrial Districts

- **Attached to building walls**
 - 2 signs per bldg wall facing a street
 - 32 sq ft max per sign
 - Total sign area per wall not to exceed 5% of wall area
- **Exempt from permit:** Signs on lots for sale or lease, signs for building/lot under development, or signs placed during a political election season



Other Proposed Changes



- Revised Works of Art definition with review/approval process thru Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission
- Monument Sign Design Review Committee to review unique monument base designs
- Unsafe or abandoned signs more clearly defined and regulated
- Enforcement remedies for illegal signs on City property or ROW clarified and expanded





Projected Public Hearing & Adoption Schedule

- 6/1/17 - Sign Code Board of Appeals Review (for recommendations to City Commission)
- 7/11 or 7/18/17 – City Commission presentation, public hearing and adoption on 1st reading (2nd reading on 7/18 or 7/25/17)
- On or about 8/1/17 – New Sign Code becomes effective, if adopted in July