CDD 11-07 Amend Sign Code to Address Business Identification (Comprehensive Sign Code Revisions)

Lead Department Community Development

History **1 year ago** None **2 years ago** None

1. What are the key elements of the issue? What precipitated it?

There are shopping centers in the City for which some tenant spaces are not readily visible from the street due to building configuration and distance from the street. These tenant spaces are allowed a tenant sign on their wall, but these signs are not always easily seen from the street, and ground sign options may be limited by the number allowed by code, or by landlord decisions. As a result, some tenants feel they do not have the exposure they need for their business.

A few years ago, the sign code was amended to allow more sign opportunities on ground signs, including allowing an additional sign and/or center name. Not all tenants of larger centers can have their name on ground signs, and the sign code is intended that the center name is the identifier in order to help locate a business within a multi-tenant center. This option will not work, however, if a business relies on the business wall sign to draw people into the space.

The intent of the Council in sponsoring this study is to determine how the sign code could be amended to allow businesses with low visibility from the street to use signage to gain visibility. The study is intended to define situations where limited visibility exists, what type of businesses fall into this category, and what options there may be to address these issues and provide alternatives.

In reviewing recent study issues, at least four study issues regarding signs have been completed in the past few years, and several more considered. Many small and large changes to the sign code of several years has resulted in a code that is less cohesive because of the piecemeal changes. It is difficult to make small changes to the code without creating inconsistencies or less-clear guidelines.

As a result, staff recommends taking this opportunity to do a comprehensive sign code revision as a part of this study. Although this seems like a relatively small issue, the possible fixes would impact the entire city. A comprehensive sign code update would: 1) provide good public outreach to the entire community, including businesses and residents, 2) update all aspects of the code, including permanent and temporary signs, 3) ensure consistency throughout the code, 4) addresses a wide range of issues to minimize future sign code changes, and 5) creates clearer and more streamlined code.

2. How does this relate to the General Plan or existing City Policy?

COMMUNITY DESIGN SUB-ELEMENT
GOAL B: CREATE AN ATTRACTIVE STREET ENVIROMENT WHICH WILL COMPLEMENT PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PROPERTIES AND BE COMFORTABLE FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.
Policy B.3 Minimize elements which clutter the roadway and look unattractive
Action Statement B.3e. Maintain a sign ordinance to assure that signage is attractive, compatible with the district and not distracting to motorists.

3. Origin of issue

Council Member(s) Griffith, Moylan, Spitaleri, Whittum

4. Staff effort required to conduct study Major

5. Multiple Year Project? Yes **Planned Completion Year** 2012

6. **Expected participation involved in the study issue process?**

Does Council need to approve a work plan?	Yes
Does this issue require review by a Board/Commission?	Yes
If so, which? Planning Commission	
Is a Council Study Session anticipated?	Yes

7. **Briefly explain cost of study, including consultant hours, impacted budget program, required budget modifications, etc. and amounts if known.**

A comprehensive revision of the sign code is likely to take up to 18 months to complete, which will require significant staff time and outreach, but no consultant hours are expected to complete the study. If Council chooses to only study ways to address signs that are less visible from the street, the staff effort to conduct the study would estimated to be "moderate."

8. **Briefly explain potential fiscal impact of implementing study results (consider capital and operating costs, as well as potential revenue).**

9. **Staff Recommendation**

Staff Recommendation For Study

If 'For Study' or 'Against Study', explain
The issue of business identification in larger multi-tenant shopping centers is a difficult one to answer. It is not always possible for all tenants to have business identification on ground signs, and some centers are built in a way that prohibits all tenant spaces from having visibility to the street. Possible solutions include reviewing the temporary and permanent sign code requirements, which would be extensive.

Staff is concerned that there have been many sign code revisions in the past few years, which have caused the sign code to be changed in a piecemeal fashion, which can be difficult to administer. Given the interest nearly every year in reviewing aspects of the sign code, staff recommends expanding this study issue to include a comprehensive sign code revision. Although the effort to rewrite the sign code is substantial, it would ensure the specific issue of low visibility for businesses is considered in the larger, city-wide context. It would also ensure that fewer changes to the sign code are made in the future, which reduces the number of non-conformities that can result from numerous revisions to a code. A comprehensive revision would result in a code that is consistent and easy for all parties to understand.

Reviewed by		**Approved by**	
Department Director	1/10/11 **Date**	**City Manager**	1/12/11 **Date**