



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Melvin Carter, Mayor

25 West Fourth Street, Ste. 1400
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Telephone: 651-266-6700
Facsimile: 651-266-6549

Date: June 29, 2018

To: Planning Commission

From: Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee

Re: Zoning Code Chapter 64 Signs Text Amendments

Background

The Planning Commission is charged with periodically reviewing and reevaluating the Zoning Code and can initiate amendments to the code as needed. This study addresses advertising signs and temporary signs. Each sign type is discussed separately below and the recommended amendments follow. In addition, this study addresses several corrections and minor amendments suggested by the Zoning Administrator to clarify code language.

Advertising signs

Section 64.103 of the Zoning Code defines an advertising sign as:

A sign which directs attention to a business, profession, commodity, service or entertainment which is conducted, sold or manufactured elsewhere than on the premises upon which the sign is placed. It shall be considered as a nonaccessory sign except that an advertising sign on a professional sports facility with permanent seating for more than ten thousand (10,000) spectators shall be considered as accessory. Billboards are a form of advertising sign. Advertising signs located on transit stop stations, courtesy benches and newsracks are regulated under other chapters and are not subject to the requirements of this chapter. Sports facility sponsorship signs are a special type of off-premise sign and are subject to different regulations from advertising signs.

Section 64.420 of the Zoning Code prohibits advertising signs in the city, though there are exceptions for professional sports facilities, sports facility sponsorship signs, and bicycle sharing facility sponsorship signs. This study discusses the exceptions for professional sports facilities and sports facility sponsorship signs.

1. Professional sports facility

Treasure Island Center in downtown Saint Paul is a new professional sports facility in the former Macy's department store building. The facility is located in a B4 central business district zone. The new professional sports facility is home to the practice facility for the Minnesota Wild, a National Hockey League team. The facility is also the home ice for the Hamline University men's and women's ice hockey teams. The building's other tenants include office, retail, medical clinic, restaurant, and brewery uses. Two dynamic signs are proposed to advertise activities taking place on site as well as to promote

activities happening in downtown Saint Paul such as performances at area theaters. Some advertising for off premises products and services is also anticipated.

Existing regulations do not permit advertising signs at professional sports facilities with permanent seating for less than 10,000 spectators. Permanent seating at the professional sports practice facility accommodates 1,000 spectators. Existing regulations do not permit advertising signs on facilities fronting on collector streets, but require frontage on arterial streets. Treasure Island Center has frontage on Wabasha, Cedar, and Sixth streets. Wabasha is a minor arterial while Cedar and Sixth streets are collector streets. Cedar Street accommodates both Green Line trains and vehicle traffic. Downtown Saint Paul is an active vibrant space on both collector and arterial streets, making the distinction for purposes of advertising signage unnecessary.

Existing regulations also prohibit advertising signs within 300 feet of a residential use, house of worship, or school. Treasure Island Center may include a school as a tenant. A school tenant would prohibit advertising signs at the professional sports facility. Existing regulations grant the Zoning Administrator the authority to limit illumination of signs overnight when the Zoning Administrator determines that sign lighting affects neighboring properties. Downtown Saint Paul is an active vibrant space with a mix of uses where dynamic signage is appropriate.

The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends the following amendments to Zoning Code §64.103 and §64.420:

NOTE: Existing language to be deleted is shown by ~~strikeout~~. New language to be added is shown by underlining.

Sec. 64.103 A.

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Advertising Sign. A sign which directs attention to a business, profession, commodity, service or entertainment which is conducted, sold or manufactured elsewhere than on the premises upon which the sign is placed. It shall be considered as a nonaccessory sign except that an advertising sign on a professional sports facility with permanent seating for more than ~~ten~~ one thousand (10,000) spectators shall be considered as accessory. Billboards are a form of advertising sign. Advertising signs located on transit stop stations, courtesy benches and newsracks are regulated under other chapters and are not subject to the requirements of this chapter. Sports facility sponsorship signs are a special type of off-premise sign and are subject to different regulations from advertising signs.

Sec. 64.420. Advertising signs.

(a) *Advertising signs prohibited.* No advertising signs are permitted in any zoning district in the city. The purposes of this prohibition are to enhance views of the natural and built environments of the city, to improve aesthetically the fusion of residential and commercial areas, to promote community pride on the part of property owners, to encourage beautification and investment in the city, to protect property values, and to reduce cluttered and chaotic signage, which draws attention away from the identification signs of businesses and institutions located in the city. Existing legal nonconforming advertising signs that are not electrified, or illuminated by any means, as of October 26, 2005, may not be wired for electrification or illumination.

(b) *Professional sports facility.* At a professional sports facility with permanent seating for more than ~~ten~~ one thousand 10,000 spectators and located in a B4-B5 Business zone, one (1) or two (2) advertising signs are permitted as an accessory use subject to the following standards:

~~(1) Advertising signs shall face and be designed to be read by traffic on arterial streets as designated in the comprehensive plan.~~ A facility fronting on one (1) arterial street is permitted to have one (1) advertising sign; a facility fronting on two (2) or more arterial streets is permitted to have two (2) advertising signs.

~~(2) No advertising sign shall be located within three hundred (300) feet of a residential zoning use, house of worship, or school offering general education courses at the elementary, junior high or high school level.~~

~~(3) No advertising sign shall exceed seven hundred (700) square feet in size.~~

~~(4) Advertising signs shall be attached to exterior walls of the sports facility structure and shall not project above the wall.~~

~~(5) If the zoning administrator determines that the sign lighting affects neighboring properties, advertising signs shall not be illuminated overnight, either from midnight or from one (1) hour after the end of any facility event, whichever is later, until 6:00 a.m.~~

~~(6) For signs with dynamic display, the modes of display of messages shall conform to the requirements in section 64.405.~~

2. Sports facility sponsorship signs

Section 64.421 of the Zoning Code defines sports facility sponsorship signs as follows:

Sports facility sponsorship sign. An accessory sign that is located at a ballfield, hockey rink, or golf course used by the public for athletic activities, and that identifies a sponsor in recognition of the sponsor's financial support for the sports facility and sports programs at the facility.

The new professional soccer team proposes to have sponsorship signs at main spectator gate entrances to the stadium and on wayfinding kiosks on the stadium site. These are considered advertising signs and not allowed under existing regulations. Amendments to the code are proposed to allow the sponsorship signs at the professional soccer stadium just as sponsorships signs are allowed at other sports facilities in the city. Like the other sports venues referenced in the definition, the professional soccer stadium will be owned by the city and the city will lease the stadium to the professional soccer team. In addition, because sports facility sponsorship signs are already allowed at golf courses and certain hockey rinks and ballfields in the city it is appropriate to extend the permission to city-owned soccer fields as well.

The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends the following amendments to the Zoning Code §§ 64.121 and 64.421:

Sec. 64.121. S.

...

Sports facility sponsorship sign. An accessory sign that is located at a ballfield, soccer field, hockey rink, ~~or~~ golf course, or professional soccer stadium used by the public for athletic activities, and that identifies a sponsor in recognition of the sponsor's financial support for the sports facility and sports programs at the facility.

Sec. 64.421. Sports facility sponsorship signs.

Sports facility sponsorship signs are permitted in all zoning districts as accessory uses at the following places: golf courses; hockey rinks at McMurray Field; city-owned soccer fields, the municipal ballpark; baseball fields owned or operated under a long-term agreement by an established youth baseball organization such as the Little League, Babe Ruth, VFW, or American Legion Baseball; and baseball and softball fields at Dunning Field, Rice-Arlington Field, ~~and~~ Arlington-Arkwright Field, and the professional soccer stadium. Sports facility sponsorship signs are subject to the following required standards:

(a) Signs at golf courses shall be integrated with the hole identification signs located at tee boxes and the sponsorship component of such signs shall not exceed two (2) square feet.

(b) Signs at hockey rinks shall be on the interior sides of the hockey boards.

(c) Signs at baseball, ~~and~~ softball, and soccer fields shall be oriented toward the field of play. Such signs shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet per sign face, except at the municipal ballpark where larger signs are permitted because it is an enclosed facility.

(d) Signs at the professional soccer stadium shall be at the main spectator gate entrances, the premium gate entry and on wayfinding kiosks. Northeast and northwest gate entrance signs shall not exceed ninety (90) square feet per sign face; southeast and southwest gate entrance signs shall not exceed one hundred thirty (130) square feet per sign face; premium gate entrance signs shall not exceed twenty-five (25) square feet per sign face. Signs on wayfinding kiosks shall not exceed five (5) square feet per sign face on each side of two-sided kiosks.

~~(d)~~ Each sign shall primarily provide identifying information for a sponsor such as name, address, telephone number, or logo; any product advertising shall be incidental and secondary to sponsor identification. However, at the municipal ballpark, product advertising signs are permitted.

~~(e)~~ Signs shall not be illuminated except by the regular sports facility lighting during hours of use, except that sponsorship signs at the professional soccer stadium may be illuminated.

~~(f)~~ Signs shall be maintained in good condition.

~~(g)~~ Signs at facilities owned and managed by Saint Paul Parks and Recreation shall also be subject to general standards for regulating sports facility sponsorship signs.

3. Temporary signs

Temporary signs in all zoning districts permit one sign not exceeding 50 square feet to identify engineers, architects, or contractors during construction of a building. It has come to the attention of staff that recipients of STAR grants are required to post a temporary sign during construction, thereby prohibiting another temporary sign. Staff suggests that as long as the total amount of signage allowed is not exceeded (50 square feet) then two temporary signs should be allowed.

The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends the following amendments to the Zoning Code §§ 64.502 and 64.503:

Sec. 64.502. RL—RM3 residential and entirely residential uses in T1—T4 traditional neighborhood districts.

...

(b) Temporary signs:

(1) For new subdivisions or new multiple-family developments, one (1) real estate development sign not exceeding a total of fifty (50) square feet in area within the subdivision or on the multiple-family lot, per three hundred (300) feet or less of lot frontage. No such sign shall be located in any required yard.

(2) For all uses, one (1) real estate sign not exceeding a total of six (6) square feet in area.

(3) For all uses, ~~one (1)~~ two (2) signs not exceeding a total of fifty (50) square feet in area identifying an engineer, architect or contractor engaged in, or product used in, the construction of a building.

Sec. 64.503. T1—T4 traditional neighborhood and OS—BC business districts.

...

(b) Temporary signs:

(1) For new developments, one (1) real estate development sign not exceeding a total of fifty (50) square feet in area on the lot of the new development, per three hundred (300) feet or less of lot frontage of the development. Such sign shall not be located within any required yard.

(2) For all uses, one (1) real estate sign not exceeding a total of six (6) square feet in area.

(3) For all uses, ~~one (1)~~ two (2) signs not exceeding a total of fifty (50) square feet in area identifying an engineer, architect or contractor engaged in, or product used in, the construction of a building.

4. Corrections and clarifications from the Zoning Administrator

In March 2017 the Zoning Administrator recommended a number of corrections and minor amendments to clarify zoning code language to bring it up-to-date, including two amendments to Zoning Code Chapter 64, Signs. The first amendment simply corrects a wrong citation in the Zoning Code. The second amendment relates to the White Bear Avenue special sign district plan and updates the language to reflect that roof signs are no longer permitted and that references to ground and pole signs have been replaced with references to freestanding signs in the sign ordinance. Since the commercial area around White Bear Avenue and Old Hudson Road has been rezoned to T2 and T3 districts, and commercial uses in traditional districts allow a maximum of a 10' front setback, the required front setback would no longer allow a freestanding sign.

The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends the following amendments to the Zoning Code §§ 64.505 and 64.625:

Sec. 64.505. - B4—B5 business districts.

(a) Business and identification signs:

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(3) The height of signs shall be subject to the conditions specified in section ~~64.503(a)(3)~~ 64.503(a)(4).

Sec. 64.625. - White Bear Avenue special district sign plan.

(e) *Business signs.* Business signs are necessary for the viability of the commercial areas on White Bear Avenue. They inform customers about the type of business and its location. The name of the business should be highlighted. In general, words and symbols should take no more than 40 percent of the total area of a sign. Signs with light letters on a dark background are easier to spot on a busy street. Sign colors and materials should be compatible with the building and surrounding environment. To maximize the effect of the graphics, the number of colors should be minimal. Lighting of signs should be carefully considered; internally lit electric signs are discouraged.

(1) Business signs shall be used to identify the business, not to advertise products. Signs that advertise a product and include the name of the business on the premises where the sign is placed are prohibited. These signs, which are often provided by product suppliers, fail to highlight the important information (the business name) and clutter the appearance of the street.

~~(2) Roof signs shall be parallel to the wall of the building and used to match rooflines and unify sign bands on adjacent buildings. Roof signs shall not be used for advertising.~~

~~(3)~~ Wall signs shall cover neither windows nor architectural trim and detail. Wall signs should be located on the bands of building facades: over the entry, over windows, or between windows. Because wall signs are almost always seen from an angle, extended typefaces should be used. Viewing from an angle diminishes the apparent width and spacing of the letters.

Signs painted directly on the wall of a building shall not be permitted. Signs painted directly on the wall of a building defaces the building. Tenants may move and the painted wall sign may be left to mis-identify a new tenant or to peel and become unsightly.

~~(4)~~ (3) ~~Ground Freestanding~~ signs are recommended for institutional, professional and industrial buildings. Ground Freestanding signs for individual establishments should be used only when a building is set back fifteen (15) feet or more from the street right-of-way. Ground Freestanding signs for individual establishments shall be placed parallel to the street and shall be no higher than twenty (20) feet above grade at the highest point. Structural elements of the sign should be painted black or another dark color.

~~(5)~~ (4) Grouped signs are used to identify multiple businesses in a larger building or adjacent buildings. They are recommended when individual projecting signs would block each other. Grouped signs may be used for businesses that are not directly accessible from the public sidewalk. They shall be placed within a common framework and may be placed perpendicular to the street.

~~(6)~~ (5) Projecting signs are effective for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic, but they also tend to obstruct the view of other signs and are a major source of sign clutter. Projecting signs that display a symbolic or business name are permitted. No more than one (1) projecting sign per forty (40) feet shall be permitted. Multiple businesses closer to one (1) another than forty (40) feet shall not use projecting signs.

~~(7)~~ ~~Pole signs can bring a business with a setback up to the street. Like projecting signs, pole signs are effective for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic, but they also can be a source of sign clutter. Pole~~

~~signs are permitted for individual buildings that are occupied by a single business and that have a setback from the street right of way of thirty five (35) feet or more. Pole signs shall use as little structure as possible, shall be stationary, and shall be no higher than twenty (20) feet above grade at the highest point. Structural elements of the sign should be painted black or another dark color.~~

~~(8)~~ (6) Permanent window signs are permitted and shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the store window glass area.

~~(9)~~ (7) Portable signs shall not be permitted in the White Bear Avenue sign district.

~~(10)~~ (8) Banners identifying White Bear Avenue business districts attached to street lights are permitted. They shall be designed with a common shape within the sign district, while patterns may reflect the neighborhood designation.

Summary of Public Hearing Testimony

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on June 1, 2018. Two people spoke in support on behalf of their respective organizations, Treasure Island Center and the Minnesota United Major League Soccer Team. No letters were received by the closing of the comment period on Monday June 4, 2018.

Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee Recommendation: The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends the Planning Commission adopt the resolution recommending approval of the proposed amendments to Zoning Code §§ 64.103, 64.420, 64.121, 64.421, 64.502, 64.503, 64.505, and 64.625 and forward the study recommending zoning code amendments to the Mayor and City Council.