

City of Venice Planning and Zoning Department

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 29, 2013

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Scott Pickett, AICP, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Sign Code Update
LDC Text Amendment (No. 13-5AM)

I. PETITION REQUEST

A. Request Overview

Staff requests consideration of a text amendment to amend and update various sections of the Land Development Code (LDC) that regulate signs. The text amendment is part of the City's effort to update the entire Land Development Code.

B. Background

The sign code update began with proposed revisions to the temporary sign regulations, in response to City Council's direction to address issues related to the enforcement of temporary signs. A community stakeholder group was formed to assist staff with the review of existing temporary sign regulations. Stakeholders included business owners, real estate agents, a representative of Venice MainStreet and a special event program manager. The stakeholder group met during January and February, 2013. Shortly thereafter, the City retained the services of Wade Trim to prepare an update to the entire sign code. Staff's review and proposed text amendments for temporary signs was in process while Wade Trim performed its review of the entire sign code.

Upon positive recommendation from the stakeholder group, on May 7, 2013 and May 21, 2012 the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the temporary sign regulations. At the close of the public hearing on May 21, 2013, the Planning Commission provided City Council a recommendation to approve the updated temporary sign regulations. On July 23, 2013, during first reading of the temporary signs ordinance, City Council provided direction on revisions to draft standards on vehicle identification signs and portable signs and expressed concerns over the scope of the proposed text amendment. The City Council public hearing on the first reading of the temporary signs ordinance was continued to September 24, 2013 during which City Council decided to table the temporary signs ordinance and incorporate the draft temporary sign regulations into the larger sign code update.

Considerable opportunities for public comment on the sign code update have been provided. Three public input meetings were held to identify issues and concerns over both the existing sign regulations as well as the proposed draft regulations. In addition, a Sign Code Update Policy Task Force, comprised of two members of City Council, two members of the Planning Commission and one member of the Architectural Review Board, was formed to provide policy direction on the sign code update. The Policy Task Force met on three occasions and provided policy direction on numerous aspects of sign regulation.

On October 15, 2013, the Planning Commission held a workshop to review several outstanding sign regulation issues. The direction provided by the Planning Commission at its workshop enabled staff to finalize the draft sign code update regulations and schedule the same for public hearing before the Planning Commission on November 5, 2013.

C. Procedural Requirements for LDC Text Amendment

A public hearing is scheduled for November 5, 2013. The order and action of the required public hearing will first be review and recommendation by Planning Commission. The Planning Commission's recommendation, including findings of fact, will be forwarded to City Council for final action. The proposed text amendment shall be approved by ordinance and requires two City Council public hearings for adoption.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THE SIGN CODE UPDATE

As noted by the Policy Task Force and Planning Commission, the central challenge of the sign code update has been to achieve an appropriate balance between the goal of maintaining and enhancing the aesthetic and physical qualities of the community and the goal of promoting economic development.

Many of the successful district-based sign regulations have been retained in their entirety or amended for improved clarity and internal consistency. Examples include the sign regulations for the Central Business District, and the VG and VUD overlay districts.

Concerning ground signs, the sign code update retains the prohibition of pole or pylon ground signs and the required architectural standards for monument signs (base, cap and column design components) have been retained and enhanced.

A primary objective of the sign code update was to consolidate existing sign regulations found throughout the Land Development Code into a consolidated section. Another objective was to create user-friendly regulations that are logically organized and enhanced with graphic illustrations. Both objectives have been achieved.

The following are the areas of sign regulation that underwent significant revision as part of the sign code effort.

- Portable Signs – Portable signs are currently prohibited outside the CBD District. The sign code update permits businesses to display one portable sign subject to public safety standards.
- Temporary Signs – The maximum duration of grand opening signs was extended to 30 consecutive days and new temporary permits for opening soon signs were established.

- Window Signs – Window signs are currently permitted. The sign code update exempts window signs from permitting in all districts but the CBD District. In addition, the maximum window/door sign coverage has increased to 50% in all districts but the CBD.
- Exempt Signs – The number of type of signs exempt from permitting more than doubles under the sign code update.
- Changeable Copy Signs – Currently, schools, churches and gas stations are the only uses allowed to have changeable copy signs. The sign code update enables all commercial properties to have one of the following type of changeable copy signs: monument ground sign, building sign or window sign.
- Placement of Building Signs – Restrictions on the placement of signs on a building has been significantly reduced. In addition, mansard roof signs and marquee signs have been added as new types of building signs.
- Reduced Setbacks – Minimum setbacks for ground signs have been reduced to facilitate the placement of monument signs on commercial properties.
- Maximum Area and Height of Monument Signs – For most of the commercial districts the maximum area and height of monument signs is based on the posted speed and number of lanes on roadway fronting a property. In some zoning districts and for certain types of signs, the maximum area and height of monument signs have increased modestly.
- Administrative Relief – Administrative relief has been introduced in the sign code update. The scope of administrative relief is limited to the design standards for monument signs and the requirement to bring a nonconforming ground sign into compliance when a face change is sought.

It is staff belief that the sign code update successfully achieves an appropriate balance between the goal of maintaining and enhancing the aesthetic and visual qualities of the community and the goal of promoting economic development.

III. ACTION REQUIRED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION

A. Planning Commission Determination

The Venice Code of Ordinances establishes the procedures and approval criteria for processing of amendments to the land development code. Section 86-47 provides the review standards to be used by Planning Commission and City Council in the development of findings, recommendations and a final decision concerning the amendment. Based on the standards included below, the following determination alternatives are available for Planning Commission consideration:

1. Amendment approval.
2. Amendment approval with modifications.
3. Amendment denial.

Sec. 86-47. Contents of Planning Commission Report

- (2) *Other amendments. When pertaining to other proposed amendments of this chapter, the planning commission shall consider and study:*

- a. *The need and justification for the change.*
- b. *The relationship of the proposed amendment to the purposes and objectives of the city's comprehensive planning program and to the comprehensive plan, with appropriate consideration as to whether the proposed change will further the purposes of this chapter and other city ordinances, regulations and actions designed to implement the comprehensive plan.*

IV. CONSISTENCY WITH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan established the goals, objectives, and policies that drive the City of Venice's planning practices. The proposed text amendment does not conflict with, any goals, objectives or policies within the Comprehensive Plan.

V. PROPOSED CODE AMENDMENT

The draft sign code update regulations are attached for Planning Commission review.