



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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Long Beach, CA 90802

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May 2, 2013

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the proposed zoning amendments regarding updates to the City's regulation of on-premises signs, and recommend that City Council adopt said amendments into Ordinance. (Citywide)

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach Department of Development Services
333 West Ocean Boulevard, 5th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802
(Application No. 1008-18)

DISCUSSION

Planning staff has worked over several years to prepare an amendment to the Zoning Regulations pertaining to on-premises signs, regulated in Chapter 21.44 of the Zoning Ordinance (Title 21). This effort is now complete, and staff is pleased to present a draft version of the new text to the Planning Commission (Exhibit A – Draft Text of Ordinance), that the Commission might recommend it to City Council for adoption.

The term “on-premises signs” refers to those types of signs that identify a business, product, service, building, or other article that is located on the same site as the sign itself. This differentiates on-premises signs from what the code considers to be billboards, which convey a message related to an activity, service, or commodity located somewhere other than where the sign is located. The most common example of the signs regulated by this new code amendment would be a sign located at the site of a business.

The current regulations for on-premises signs contained in Chapter 21.44 date as far back as the 1970s. While considered obsolete, the current sign code is not wholly inadequate, as it has provided a stable framework for sign development over the last 30 or so years. However, these regulations have failed to evolve with the changing landscape of Long Beach over the intervening years, as well as the changing environment of business practices and needs. The City's policies on design and aesthetics have changed considerably as well, a point which has been a major force in driving this code amendment effort. The proposed Ordinance intends to solve numerous problems in these areas. A large amount of new text with new zoning standards has been written for this update, and

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while a significant amount of original text is retained, the entire chapter is restated and completely reorganized on top of a new framework. The new framework, in particular, is designed to be reader-friendly and sensibly-organized, with much of the most important and commonly-used material up front, rather than scattered throughout the Ordinance like in the current code.

The proposed Ordinance implements several new processes and removes outdated ones, as follows:

- The Creative Sign Permit process is implemented. This replaces the old Sign Standards Waiver process, and allows for a more expedited review of creative sign designs, while at the same time using clear language to encourage and guide design of imaginative, bold signs that will add positive character to Long Beach.
- Historic Sign Process: Staff added a process exempting designated historic signs, from most of the regulations of the Chapter, while guiding the maintenance and safekeeping of these important historic resources under the auspices of the Site Plan Review Committee and Cultural Heritage Commission.

The new Ordinance sets new design standards and criteria for many major sign types, with the goal of obtaining higher-quality sign designs, and elimination of unwanted sign types, as follows:

- Ban on new “cabinet” signs, which consist of plastic facing on an internally-illuminated box. These signs have a negative visual impact on the aesthetic environment of Long Beach, and will be phased out in favor of individual channel letter signs and other, more visually appealing designs.
- Stricter regulations on foam letter signs – unfaced foam letter signs will no longer be allowed, as they have negative visual qualities. Any foam letters will be required to be faced with plastic or metal to increase design quality.
- Prohibition of “pole”-type freestanding signs in primarily pedestrian-oriented zoning districts, as well as increased design quality requirements for freestanding signs in the remaining zoning districts where they are allowed.
- New regulations on temporary banners, to make the permit process more understandable and reasonable, while at the same time reducing banner nuisance and implementing tighter regulations on banner violations.
- Language will be strengthened and made more specific on numerous types of nuisance signs that already are prohibited by current code, such as portable signs, advertising flags, air-blown signs, and balloons. Planning staff is working with Code Enforcement staff to discuss implementation of the new regulations and prioritization of enforcement efforts on signs as well.
- Electronic message center sign regulations will be tightened considerably (these signs commonly are mistaken for or referred to as “electronic billboards,” but they are instead a type of on-premises sign. There are no electronic billboards in Long Beach). New regulations in this area will close a number of loopholes previously

exploited in the existing code language, and limit the sites and user types where these electronic message center signs are allowed.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission take action to recommend that the City Council adopt these proposed changes into Ordinance.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

A public hearing notice was published in the Long Beach Press-Telegram on April 13 and 14, 2013, (a Saturday and Sunday) as required by the Long Beach Municipal Code. Staff will provide any comments received to the Commission before the commencement of the public hearing.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, a Categorical Exemption (CE) was prepared for the proposed project (Exhibit B – CE 13-041).

Respectfully submitted,



DEREK BURNHAM
PLANNING ADMINISTRATOR



AMY J. BODEK, AICP
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

AB:DB:sk

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Attachments Exhibit A – Draft Text of Ordinance
 Exhibit B – Categorical Exemption CE 13-041



NOTICE of EXEMPTION from CEQA

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
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TO: Office of Planning & Research
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 Sacramento, CA 95814

FROM: Department of Development Services
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 Long Beach, CA 90802

L.A. County Clerk
 Environmental Fillings
 12400 E. Imperial Hwy. 2nd Floor, Room 2001
 Norwalk, CA 90650

Categorical Exemption CE- 13-041

Project Location/Address: Citywide
 Project/Activity Description: Updates (zoning amendment) to Chapter 21.44 of Zoning Regulations, pertaining to on-premises signs.

Public Agency Approving Project: **City of Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California**
 Applicant Name: City of Long Beach, Dept. of Development Services
 Mailing Address: 333 W. Ocean Blvd, 5th Floor, Long Beach, CA 90802
 Phone Number: (562) 570-6194 Applicant Signature: [Signature]

BELOW THIS LINE FOR STAFF USE ONLY

Application Number: 1008-18 Planner's Initials: SK
 Required Permits: Zoning Amendment

THE ABOVE PROJECT HAS BEEN FOUND TO BE EXEMPT FROM CEQA IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE GUIDELINES SECTION 15301 Class 1 Existing Facilities

Statement of support for this finding: This zoning amendment changes the regulatory provisions and processes for on-premises signs, but not the locations where on-premises signs will be placed in any substantial fashion. Also, on-premises signs are and continue to be regulated as an accessory rather than principal use.

Contact Person: Scott Kinsey Contact Phone: (562) 570-6194
 Signature: [Signature] Date: 4/22/13