



## MEMORANDUM

### City of Angels City Council

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**Date:** August 19, 2025

**To:** City of Angels City Council

**From:** Amy Augustine, AICP – City Planner

**Re:** **Ordinance 552 – SIGN ORDINANCE UPDATE – INTRODUCE, WAIVE THE FIRST READING BY SUBSTITUTION OF TITLE, HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING AND SET SEPTEMBER 2, 2025, FOR A SECOND READING AND HEARING AND TO CONSIDER ADOPTION.**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Ordinance 552 – Sign Ordinance Update – Introduce, waive the first reading by substitution of title, hold a public hearing and set September 2, 2025, for a second reading and hearing and to consider adoption.

The City council may propose changes at this time.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Planning Commission considered this item at its August 14, 2025, meeting and unanimously recommended approval to the City Council pursuant to Resolution 25-13.

In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court, on a 9-0 vote, found a local sign ordinance to be in violation of the Constitution's first Amendment Freedom of Speech clause (*Reed v. Town of Gilbert*, 576 U.S. 155 (2015)). In response, many local jurisdictions have been updating their sign codes to ensure that none of the provisions of the codes are content based (i.e., sign regulations cannot address the content or message in the sign).

In response, many jurisdictions have opted to regulate signs by "type" and/or location. These sign code amendments are intended to meet the legal requirements established by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In addition to the preceding:

1. The public have asked the City Council to allow temporary signs, including those known as "feather flags." The existing sign code already allows temporary signs, but requires that a sign permit first be obtained before allowing installation. The attached revisions address provisions allowing temporary signs.
2. The City Council requested regulations addressing political signs be clarified. Because "political" sign is content-based, the attached revisions address temporary signage in all zoning districts (residential, non-residential, and historical commercial) in a manner that would allow this and other types of temporary signs. Because Caltrans allows temporary (political) signs to be installed 90 days before an election and remain in place 10 days after an election; code revisions included herein allow for temporary signage for 100 days in a calendar year for ease of implementation, consistency, and to avoid sign regulations that would introduce "content" based regulatory requirements (e.g., regulate signs based on whether they are political/campaign signs, or grand opening signs).

3. Council asked that the City Planner be allowed to issue sign permits within the Historical Commercial district without Planning Commission review.

A summary of sign code changes in the attached revisions includes:

- Clarifying the purposes of sign regulations in the City
- Comprehensive revision to achieve consistency with legal requirements established by the U.S. Supreme Court (i.e., amending the code to avoid content-based regulatory requirements)
- Update definitions to add new sign types (e.g., feather flags)
- As per the General Plan Implementation Program 1Eb, 4Ce and 11Cd: Revisions to remove pole signs, requiring master sign plans for shopping centers; encouraging master sign plans for multiple businesses in a single structure, establishing criteria for announcement signs (e.g., signs with scrolling text or changing copy), and eliminating flashing or glaring signs.
- Addressing temporary signs to allow their limited use in non-residential, residential, and in the Historical Commercial zoning district. As previously noted, the draft includes a 100 day/year provision consistent with Caltrans regulations for political signs.
- Comprehensive update of list of signs that are permitted without a sign permit and those signs that are prohibited.
- Clarify those signs requiring a conditional use permit
- Clarifying sign standards inside and outside of the Historical Commercial Zoning District
- Allowing the City Planner to apply the adopted Historical Commercial Zone Sign Design Guidelines and issue sign permits within the HC district without planning commission review; but retaining the option to refer signs to the Planning Commission sign subcommittee or the full Planning Commission.
- Continuing to require Planning Commission review of signage when signage is part of an overall entitlement (e.g., conditional use permit, site development permit) being reviewed by the Planning Commission.
- Updating requirements for nonconforming signs, abandoned signs, sign removal and enforcement.
- Adding Planning Commission proposed revisions related to "Open" signs.
- Adding Planning Commission proposed revisions related to neon signs.
- Updating provisions to allow for requests for exceptions to sign regulations and removing all former references to variance approval for signage (due to the low likelihood of making findings to approve a variance for signage).
- Clarifying that fees for sign permits are not required when a sign is approved in conjunction with another entitlement.

## **ANALYSIS**

Pursuant to Angels Municipal Code Section 17.90.040, decisions pertaining to code amendments shall be made upon the following findings of fact:

- A. The proposed change or amendment is consistent with the city of Angels Municipal Code; and
- B. The proposed change or amendment is consistent with the city of Angels general plan; and
- C. The proposed change or amendment will not be substantially detrimental to the health, safety, or general welfare of the city.

**Findings A & B – Consistency with the Angels Municipal Code and General Plan**

Adopting the proposed code amendment in the Angels Municipal Code will allow for implementation of the following General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs:

***1.E.b, 4.C.e and 11Cd Revise the City’s Sign Ordinance***

*Amend the city’s sign ordinance to eliminate inconsistencies, emphasize cohesive design for commercial centers with multiple buildings, and to include design standards reflective of the city’s three distinct commercial districts [i.e., Historic Commercial District (HC), Community Commercial District (CC) and Shopping Center Commercial District (SC)... Specific changes include, but are not limited to: eliminating pole signs; requiring master sign plans for shopping centers; requiring master sign plans for multiple businesses in a single structure, establishing criteria for announcement signs (e.g., signs with scrolling text or changing copy), and eliminating flashing or glaring signs.*

Adoption of the code amendments brings the Angels Municipal Code into compliance with this General Plan 2020 implementation program. Consistency between the General Plan and the Angels Municipal Code necessarily means the proposal is consistent with the Angels Municipal Code. Therefore, based on the preceding, findings A and B may be made.

**Finding C. The proposed change or amendment will not be substantially detrimental to the health, safety, or general welfare of the city.**

The proposed code amendments include measures to protect the health and safety of the city against signs that could obstruct the public’s ability to safely travel along public roadways.

The proposed code amendments clearly state the intent of the City in adopting the code changes as:

- 1. Ensure that signs are designed, constructed, installed, located and maintained according to minimum standards to safeguard life, health, property and public welfare;*
- 2. To protect and enhance the City’s unique character minimizing visual distractions and sign proliferation that can detract from the unique character of the City and its built environment;*
- 3. Provide reasonable sign standards:*
  - a. To encourage their effective and attractive use as a means of identification, rather than for advertising, businesses, services, events, and uses enhancing economic values while minimizing unnecessary sign competition;*
  - b. Attract and direct the public to available activities, goods, and services;*
  - c. For consistency with community goals and policies expressed in the general plan and adopted Specific Plans;*
  - d. Consistent with state and federal laws, including outdoor advertising regulations applicable to state highways;*

4. *Ensure that the designs of signs are architecturally compatible with affected structures and the character of surrounding development in order to maintain the overall quality of a neighborhood or commercial district.*
5. *Protect public safety by ensuring that official traffic regulation devices are easily visible and free from nearby visual obstructions and distractions (e.g., attention-getting signs, excessive numbers of signs, signs resembling official signs);*
6. *Protecting the right of free speech by enacting regulations to regulate the time, place and manner under which signs are permitted, and not the content of signs. Although examples of content may be provided in these regulations, content will not be used as a basis for determining whether or not a proposed sign may be permitted.*

These purposes are consistent with protecting the general welfare of the City. Based on the preceding, Finding C can be made.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The proposed changes update the existing municipal code for compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Adoption and implementation are not expected to alter the costs to the City of implementing the City's sign code.

**ENVIRONMENTAL FINDING:**

Pursuant to the state guidelines for implementing the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed code amendments are exempt from further review, because the proposed amendments implement a program or programs identified within the scope of the 2020 General Plan Environmental Impact Report adopted for the 2020 General Plan. The proposed project is Categorically Exempt from state and city guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15311, Class 11 (Accessory Structures) which states that signs are exempt from CEQA.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. PowerPoint Presentation
- B. Planning Commission Resolution of Intent 25-13 with redlined changes to current code
- C. Ordinance 552 with clean draft of proposed code changes