



To: Plan Commission

From: Atefa Ghaznawi, AICP, LEED AP, City Planner
Daniel Ritter, AICP, Community Development Director

Date: August 13, 2026

Re: Case # TXT-26-1-8-1: Text Amendments to Chapter 15.12 Sign Code of the Crest Hill Code of Ordinances

Application Background

City Staff periodically review the Zoning Ordinance and the City Code of Ordinances to ensure they remain effective in advancing the City's goals pertaining to economic development, land use compatibility, community appearance, and quality of life. Through ongoing administration of the Code, Staff have identified concerns regarding the effectiveness of the City's current sign regulations. Staff have also received feedback from residents, businesses, and elected officials regarding the visual impact of permanent and temporary signage throughout the community. Based on this feedback and Staff's experience administering the Sign Code, Staff are proposing text amendments to the City's Sign Code outlined in more details in this Staff Report. A preliminary discussion of the proposed Sign Code updates took place at the Plan Commission meeting on July 9, 2026, and Staff received preliminary feedback and direction from the Plan Commission regarding the proposed text amendments.

Application documents submitted by Applicant include:

- Exhibit B – Application for Development 2026-08-05
- Exhibit C – Current Chapter 15.12 Sign Code of the Crest Hill Code of Ordinances
- Exhibit D – Draft Amended Chapter 15.12 Crest Hill Sign Code_Redlined 2026-08-05

Summary of Proposed Text Amendments

Through the administration, interpretation, and enforcement of the City's Sign Code (Chapter 15.12 of the Code of Ordinances), staff have identified several provisions that are outdated, difficult to interpret, or unnecessarily burdensome to administer. In addition, the current regulations do not adequately address evolving sign technologies, changing legal standards, or contemporary development practices. These shortcomings have contributed to inconsistent sign quality, visual clutter, and enforcement challenges along the City's commercial corridors.

Staff propose a comprehensive review and update of the current Sign Code to modernize the regulations and ensure they remain effective, enforceable, and aligned with the City's planning and economic development objectives. Proposed text amendments include:

- Improve overall layout and structure of the Sign Code, by reorganizing relevant provisions under more condensed sub-topics. The current Sign Code has a total of 35 sub-sections. The revised sub-sections will be grouped under 9 main sub-sections so that the City Staff and the public can better navigate the Sign Code and find relevant regulations under the same main sub-section. For example, all general provisions applicable to all sign types will be grouped under *General Sign Provisions*, and all regulations pertaining to permits,

enforcement of the code, variation and appeal requests, and non-conforming signs will be grouped under sub-section *Administration and Enforcement*.

- Establish updated standards for sign design, size, placement, maintenance, and landscaping to improve community aesthetics. New ground signs in all zoning districts will be required to have a decorative sign base (minimum 75% of sign width) and landscaping around the sign base (2 sq-ft of landscaping for every 1 sq-ft of sign area but not less than 50 sq-ft in area).
- Wall Sign Regulations: Based on the feedback from the Plan Commission, proposed wall sign area was increased from 1.5 sq-ft per 1 ft store frontage to 2 sq-ft per 1 ft store frontage.
- Expand the list of prohibited signs: attention-getting devices such as feather flags, pennants, balloons, etc. will be prohibited as temporary signs; pole and pylon signs will be prohibited in all zoning districts; and digital signs will be prohibited in residential districts.
- Expand Definitions Section to add definitions for more sign typologies, and better define zoning terms, and sign requirements.
- Ensure compliance with current legal requirements and standards, including having content-neutral sign regulations.
- Clarify nonconforming sign provisions that create administrative and enforcement challenges while allowing ongoing maintenance and panel changes to occur as to not create undue costs onto businesses.
- Provide clear standards for specific sign types, including window signs, awning and canopy signs, fuel station signage, and other commonly used sign formats.
- Improve consistency and cohesion between the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and economic development goals.
- Enhance public safety by addressing visibility, traffic safety, wayfinding, illumination, and maintenance concerns.
- Streamline the review procedures and administrative processes for businesses/property owners.
- Create fair and predictable standards that balance business identification needs with neighborhood compatibility and community character.

Overall, the proposed amendments will modernize the City's Sign Code, improve its clarity and enforceability, and support the City's vision for attractive commercial corridors, high-quality development, and a well-maintained built environment.

Text Amendment Approval Standards and Findings

Section 12.8-4 of the Zoning Ordinance states the Plan Commission shall recommend, and the City Council shall grant text amendments only when it shall have been determined, and recorded in writing, that all of the following standards are complied with. Staff has drafted the following findings of fact identified in bold italic font. These drafted findings can be modified or changed as the Plan Commission deems fit and based on the specific findings from the public hearing.

1. The effect the text amendment would have on comprehensive planning in the community and the extent to which the proposed amendment would be consistent with Crest Hill's planning objectives.

The proposed text amendment to the Crest Hill Sign Code supports the goals and objectives of the Crest Hill Comprehensive Plan by modernizing regulations that are outdated and no longer reflect current development patterns, business needs, or industry standards. Updating the Sign Code will provide clearer, more consistent regulations that improve the quality, appearance, and functionality of signage throughout the community while maintaining compatibility with surrounding land uses. The proposed text amendments advances the City's planning objectives by promoting high-quality development, enhancing the visual character of commercial corridors, reducing regulatory ambiguities, and establishing standards that are easier for property owners, businesses, and staff to understand and administer. The proposed revisions are intended to balance the needs of businesses for effective identification and communication with the City's interest in protecting public safety, minimizing visual clutter, and preserving community aesthetics.

In addition, the amendment aligns the Crest Hill's sign regulations with current planning and zoning practices while reflecting changes in technology, sign design, and applicable legal standards. By creating a more predictable and flexible regulatory framework, the proposed text amendments will encourage economic investment while ensuring that signage remains compatible with the City's long-term land use and redevelopment goals. Overall, the proposed text amendment is consistent with the objectives of the Crest Hill Comprehensive Plan and will enhance the City's ability to effectively regulate signage in a manner that supports economic development, community character, and the public health, safety, and general welfare.

2. The consistency of the proposed text amendment with other provisions in this Ordinance.

The proposed text amendments to the Crest Hill Sign Code are consistent with the overall purpose and intent of the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance. The revisions are designed to complement existing zoning regulations by providing updated, clear, and enforceable standards for the placement, size, height, illumination, design, and maintenance of signs across all zoning districts. The proposed text amendments do not alter the underlying zoning classifications or permitted land uses established by the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance. Instead, they provide modernized development standards that work in conjunction with the existing zoning districts' regulations to ensure signage is compatible with surrounding land uses and development patterns. The updated provisions also improve consistency with other sections of the Zoning Ordinance related to site development, nonconforming structures, enforcement, permitting procedures, and administrative reviews.

Where necessary, the text amendments clarify definitions, eliminate outdated or conflicting provisions, and establish uniform standards that reduce ambiguity and improve the administration and enforcement of the Ordinance. The revisions are intended to create a cohesive regulatory framework that is easier for property owners, businesses, developers, and the City staff to understand and enforce. Overall, the proposed text amendments are consistent with the purpose, structure, and administration of the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance and strengthens the City's ability to regulate signage in a fair, predictable, and legally defensible manner while supporting the public health, safety, and general welfare.

3. The degree to which all property owners in the community, zoned in similar classifications, would be benefited or affected by the zoning text amendment; and the extent to which the proposed amendment would or would not benefit or affect one (1) or a selected and small group of property owners only.

The proposed text amendment to the Crest Hill Sign Code is intended to provide community-wide benefits rather than advantages to any individual property owner or a limited group of property owners. The updated regulations will apply uniformly to all properties within the applicable zoning districts and will establish consistent standards for signage throughout the City. Property owners, businesses, developers, and residents are expected to benefit from clearer, more organized, and modern regulations that improve predictability during the permitting and development processes. The proposed text amendments will reduce ambiguity, improve administrative efficiency, and establish sign standards that better reflect current business practices, technological advancements, and contemporary planning principles. By creating a more consistent regulatory framework, the text amendments will also promote equitable treatment of similarly situated properties while preserving community character, enhancing public safety, and reducing visual clutter.

Although some property owners may be required to comply with updated design, size, location, or permitting standards for future signs, those requirements will apply consistently across all similarly zoned properties and are intended to achieve legitimate public purposes. The existing legal nonconforming signs will continue to be addressed in accordance with the Ordinance's provisions governing legal nonconforming signs, thereby minimizing unnecessary impacts on the existing properties. Overall, the proposed text amendments do not confer a special benefit upon, nor impose a unique burden on, any one property owner or a small, selected group of property owners. Instead, the text amendments provide a comprehensive update that benefits the community as a whole by establishing fair, consistent, and modern sign regulations applicable throughout the City.

4. The extent to which the text amendment will ameliorate a condition in this Ordinance which is, from a legal or administrative standpoint, deficient.

The proposed text amendments to the Crest Hill Sign Code address several legal and administrative deficiencies within the City's existing Sign Code by replacing outdated regulations with modern, clear, and enforceable standards. The current Sign Code contains provisions that have become outdated due to changes in sign technology, business practices, planning principles, and evolving legal standards governing the regulation of signs. From an administrative standpoint, the proposed text amendments improve the organization, clarity, and consistency of the Sign Code by updating definitions, eliminating obsolete or conflicting provisions, clarifying permitting requirements, and establishing objective standards that are easier for property owners, applicants, and the City staff to interpret and administer. These revisions are expected to improve the efficiency and consistency of the permit review and enforcement processes while reducing uncertainty and the potential for inconsistent application. From a legal standpoint, the text amendments strengthen the City's ability to regulate signage in a manner that is consistent with the current constitutional requirements and applicable federal and state laws. The updated regulations emphasize objective, content-neutral standards that focus on the physical characteristics of signs, such as size, height, location, illumination, and design, rather than the message displayed. This

approach enhances the legal defensibility of the Sign Code and reduces the potential for legal challenges. Overall, the proposed text amendments remedy outdated and deficient provisions within the existing Sign Code, improve the administration and enforcement of the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance, and provide a modern regulatory framework that better protects the public health, safety, and welfare while supporting the City's long-term planning and economic development objectives.

5. The need for the zoning text amendment.

The proposed text amendments to the Crest Hill Sign Code are necessary to modernize the City's Sign Code and ensure that it effectively addresses current development trends, business needs, sign technologies, and legal requirements. The existing Sign Code has become outdated over time and contains provisions that are no longer consistent with contemporary planning practices or the City's long-term development objectives. The text amendments are intended to provide a clear, comprehensive, and user-friendly regulatory framework that simplifies the administration of sign permits, reduces ambiguity, and promotes consistent interpretation and enforcement of the Ordinance. Updated regulations will provide more flexibility and predictability for property owners, businesses, developers, and the City staff while ensuring that signage remains compatible with surrounding land uses and the character of the community.

The proposed revisions also respond to changes in sign design and technology, including electronic message centers and other modern sign types, by establishing standards that protect public safety, minimize visual clutter, and maintain community aesthetics. In addition, the amendment incorporates objective and legally defensible regulations that are consistent with the current constitutional principles and best practices for municipal sign regulations. Updating the Crest Hill Sign Code will also help maintain Crest Hill's competitiveness with neighboring communities by providing modern sign standards that support economic development while preserving the City's visual character. The revised regulations strike an appropriate balance between allowing businesses to effectively communicate with the public and protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of the community. For these reasons, there is a clear public need for the proposed text amendments, and their adoption will improve the effectiveness, clarity, consistency, and long-term administration of the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance.

6. Whether or not the proposed text amendment, if adopted, will require other provisions of this Ordinance to be changed or modified and, if so, the way in which the Ordinance will have to be further modified and amended.

The proposed text amendments have been prepared as a comprehensive update to the Crest Hill Sign Code and have been reviewed by the City Staff and the City Attorney for consistency with the remaining provisions of the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance. The text amendments are intended to integrate with the existing regulatory framework and, as proposed, do not require substantial amendments to other sections of the Zoning Ordinance. As part of the update, cross-references, definitions, terminology, permitting procedures, and administrative provisions have been reviewed and revised where necessary to ensure consistency throughout the Ordinance. Any minor editorial revisions, renumbering, or conforming amendments necessary to maintain internal consistency have been incorporated into the proposed text amendments.

The proposed text amendments do not modify the City's zoning districts, permitted land uses, bulk standards, or development regulations outside of those directly related to signage. Instead, they modernize and clarify the regulations governing signs while maintaining consistency with the overall purpose and intent of the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance. Accordingly, adoption of the proposed text amendments are not expected to necessitate additional substantive amendments to other provisions of the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance. The text amendments are intended to function as a self-contained modernization of the Crest Hill Sign Code while remaining fully compatible with the Ordinance's existing administrative and development regulations. Should future changes in state or federal laws, sign technology, or planning practices occur, the City may consider additional text amendments as part of its ongoing review and maintenance of the Crest Hill Sign Code.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the drafted findings reflected in this staff report, Staff recommends the following motion to provide a recommendation to City Council. This motion may be amended by any Plan Commission member making the motion based upon the findings of the public hearing. Staff recommend any motion be made in the positive form to correspond with the applicant's request to avoid confusion.

The Plan Commission recommends City Council approval of the proposed text amendments to Chapter 15.12 Sign Code of the Crest Hill Code of Ordinances, subject to the proposed text amendments being implemented in substantial conformance with the application documents referenced in the August 13, 2026, Plan Commission Staff Report for Case # TXT-26-1-8-1.

EXHIBIT A

Supplemental Text Amendment Approval Facts to Consider Per Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance Section 12.8-4

1. *The effect the text amendment would have on comprehensive planning in the community and the extent to which the proposed amendment would be consistent with Crest Hill's planning objectives.*
2. *The consistency of the proposed text amendment with other provisions in this Ordinance.*
3. *The degree to which all property owners in the community, zoned in similar classifications, would be benefited or affected by the zoning text amendment; and the extent to which the proposed amendment would or would not benefit or affect one (1) or a selected and small group of property owners only.*
4. *The extent to which the text amendment will ameliorate a condition in this Ordinance which is, from a legal or administrative standpoint, deficient.*
5. *The need for the zoning text amendment.*
6. *Whether or not the proposed text amendment, if adopted, will require other provisions of this Ordinance to be changed or modified and, if so, the way in which the Ordinance will have to be further modified and amended.*