



STAFF REPORT

City of Dripping Springs

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Submitted By: Aniz Alani, City Attorney

Council Meeting Date: September 15, 2026

Agenda Item Wording: **Public hearing and consideration of approval of an ordinance repealing and replacing Chapter 26 (Signs) of the City of Dripping Springs Code of Ordinances; adopting revised sign regulations, procedures, and appendices; preserving and recodifying existing project-specific master sign plans under Article 26.11; and providing findings, repealer, severability, codification, and an effective date.**

Agenda Item Sponsor: TBD

A. Recommendation

Conduct the public hearing and consider approval of the proposed ordinance repealing and replacing Chapter 26 of the City of Dripping Springs Code of Ordinances.

B. Summary

The proposed ordinance is a comprehensive rewrite of Chapter 26 intended to make the City's sign regulations easier to understand, easier to administer, and more consistent with current policy goals relating to traffic safety, community character, business visibility, dark-sky protection, and constitutional sign regulation.

The draft reorganizes the sign regulations by property type, adds clearer permit and variance procedures, expands applicant guidance, updates lighting and electronic-sign standards, addresses existing and nonconforming signs in a more complete manner, preserves existing project-specific master sign plans through a new Article 26.11, and clarifies how murals, public art, and decorative treatment of structures such as rainwater tanks and cisterns are distinguished from regulated signage.

C. Background

The existing sign ordinance has been amended over time and contains a mix of district-based sign standards, permit requirements, existing-sign rules, and project-specific sign provisions. City staff prepared the proposed rewrite to improve internal organization, provide clearer applicant guidance, and incorporate feedback received from the business community, residents, and Council review.

The rewritten chapter preserves the City's core policy objectives while restructuring the ordinance into a more user-facing format. Instead of relying primarily on district-based standards and cross-references, the proposed chapter includes a step-by-step roadmap for applicants, sign standards by property type, practical appendices, a dedicated article addressing preserved and future project-specific master sign plans, and final clarifications explaining when murals, public art, and decorative treatment are outside Chapter 26 unless they function as advertising or site identification.

D. Key Features of the Proposed Ordinance

1. Reorganization and usability improvements

The draft reorganizes Chapter 26 into a clearer structure with:

- general provisions and definitions;
- sign standards by property type;
- permit, variance, appeal, and master sign plan procedures;
- existing, nonconforming, abandoned, and damaged sign provisions;
- enforcement provisions; and
- appendices intended to help applicants understand how the ordinance applies to a proposed sign.

The draft also adds a "How to use this Chapter" section, a revised Appendix A quick-reference table, and applicant-facing appendix guidance addressing murals, public art, and decorated functional features.

2. Updated sign standards

The proposed ordinance revises and clarifies standards for residential, multifamily, manufactured home, commercial, industrial, institutional, public, agricultural, and multi-unit properties. It also adds or refines standards for corridor and gateway areas, historic districts, real estate signs, daily display signs, flags, banners, and directional signs.

3. Permit, variance, and appeal procedures

The draft provides more detailed application requirements, review deadlines, administrative variance standards, City Council variance standards, and appeal procedures. It is intended to make the process more predictable for applicants and to provide clearer decision-making standards for staff and Council.

4. Existing and nonconforming signs

The draft includes a more complete article addressing maintenance of existing signs, lawful nonconforming signs, newly annexed or newly regulated signs, damaged signs, abandoned signs, redevelopment-related sign compliance plans, and voluntary compliance incentives.

5. Preservation of project-specific master sign plans

The draft creates a new Article 26.11 to preserve previously approved project-specific master sign plans and to provide a clearer codification system for future project-specific master sign plans.

E. Public Feedback and Review

City staff circulated the draft for review and received comments from business owners, community stakeholders, and Council review. The draft was revised in response to that feedback.

Major feedback themes included:

- improving readability and applicant usability;
- clarifying wall-sign and monument-sign standards;
- improving treatment of ETJ properties and state-law exceptions;
- adding more objective standards where feasible;
- clarifying banner duration and daily display sign limits;
- strengthening the explanation of lawful existing and nonconforming signs;
- refining variance and appeal procedures; and
- reviewing content-neutrality issues and other legal-risk questions in the prohibited-sign and electronic-sign provisions.

The current final draft reflects many of those comments through revised wall-sign standards, revised monument-sign standards, accessory digital display language, revised flag language, expanded appendices, stronger applicant guidance, revised appeal timelines, clearer nonconforming-sign provisions, and a final clarification package addressing murals, public art, and decorated structures such as rainwater tanks and cisterns.

F. Considerations

In considering the ordinance, Council may wish to focus on the following:

- whether the revised chapter appropriately balances business visibility with traffic safety, aesthetics, dark-sky protection, and community character;
- whether the sign standards are sufficiently objective and predictable for ordinary applicants;
- whether the revised appendices and applicant guidance materials provide enough practical direction;
- whether the City is comfortable with the treatment of electronic signs, accessory digital displays, daily display signs, and corridor visibility issues;
- whether the final ordinance provides the desired distinction between murals, public art, decorative treatment, and regulated signage, including treatment of decorated rainwater tanks and cisterns; and
- whether the preservation and recodification framework for project-specific master sign plans is sufficient for current and future administration.

G. Fiscal/Administrative Impact

The ordinance is expected to have an administrative implementation impact rather than a direct fiscal impact. If adopted, staff will need to:

- update public-facing application materials and guidance documents;
- confirm that Appendix A, Appendix B, and related presentation materials match the final adopted ordinance;
- maintain or update web-based materials, maps, forms, and related references;
- continue maintaining official and convenience copies of preserved master sign plans; and
- implement the revised permit, variance, and enforcement procedures.

H. Suggested Motion

Move to approve the ordinance repealing and replacing Chapter 26 (Signs) of the City of Dripping Springs Code of Ordinances, adopting revised sign regulations, procedures, and appendices, preserving and recodifying existing project-specific master sign plans under Article 26.11, and providing findings, repealer, severability, codification, and an effective date.

I. Attachments

- Proposed Sign Ordinance
- Table of Concordance showing changes relative to existing ordinance
- Table of changes between July 2026 public consultation draft and final draft
- Existing Chapter 26 ordinance