

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: August 26, 2025

To: Village President and Board of Trustees

Through: Napoleon Haney, Village Manager

From: Angela Mesaros, Director of Economic and Community Development

Topic: Zoning Text Amendment - Village Sign Code Update

PURPOSE

The Village Sign Code, Section 30 of the Code of Ordinances, contains the Village's regulations for any property owner or applicant seeking to install signage within Village limits. The regulations dictate sign form and construction requirements. The regulations also define Village procedures related to the approval of signs.

The Village initiated a process to overhaul the Village Sign Code in late 2023. The last major amendment to the Village Sign Code was completed in 1997, with another set of minor amendments completed in 2004. The Appearance Commission reviews and approves sign variances and the Appearance Plan (established in 1998). The Appearance Plan provides additional design guidelines for signage in the Village. The current Sign Code predates the Appearance Commission (also established in 1998).

The Sign Code also predates the recently adopted new zoning ordinance by 26 years. Since the adoption of the current Sign Code, there have been broad changes to how signs are designed and reviewed, including changes in signage and lighting technology and the rising popularity of new sign types. Over the past three (3) decades, there have also been major shifts in legal precedent surrounding sign regulation and its role in protecting constitutional rights of free speech and expression through signage. The built environment of Homewood has seen significant changes since the adoption of the current Village Sign Code, including new development in the downtown area and changing development demands in the Village's other commercial corridors. A new Sign Code is necessary to modernize the Sign Code to respond to changes in the legal, technological, and aesthetic surrounding signage.

The proposed Sign Code is designed to achieve the following goals for the Village:

1. Improve the organization of the sign code for easier use and administration by Village staff, officials, developers/applicants, and members of the public.
2. Address current federal and state legal requirements, including content neutrality and other freedom of speech protections.

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3. Add new permitted sign types and provide more specific regulations for permitted sign types.
4. Integrate new sign technologies and materials into Village sign regulations, including LED signs and electronic changeable message signs.
5. Create new sign review procedures which clarify sign allowances and ensure cohesive signage for multi-tenant centers/sites with multiple buildings.
6. Add review procedures for murals and public art installations.
7. Create guidelines designed to improve the aesthetic quality of signage based on community feedback and previous sign review history.
8. Clarify the authority and procedural requirements of the Appearance Commission, and add Appearance Commission powers and duties into the Zoning Ordinance.
9. Design sign requirements and new sign procedures to reduce the number of sign variances applied for within the Village, particularly related to the number and placement of business signage.
10. Modernize sign regulations with the use of visuals, modern code organization practices, and administration guides.
11. Align Village sign regulations with best practices in community planning, as well as regulations found in peer and aspirational communities in suburban Chicagoland.

PROCESS

Village staff worked throughout 2024 to draft the new Sign Code. Village staff gathered feedback from members of the Appearance Commission on priorities for new sign regulations. Staff also completed outreach to numerous other communities in the Chicagoland region who had recently updated sign ordinances to learn best practices and other lessons learned. Staff hosted several public input sessions to inform the public about potential changes to the Sign Code and offer opportunities for Homewood residents to provide comments on sign regulation in the Village.

In December 2024, staff finalized a draft of the Sign Code. After completing the draft, Village staff held three public workshops with the Appearance Commission to present different sections of the proposed Code and gather public feedback. Following the workshops, staff prepared a final draft of the proposed Sign Code. The proposed code language was thoroughly reviewed by Village Attorney Chris Cummings.

OUTCOME

On May 1, 2025, the Appearance Commission held a public meeting to consider approval of the proposed Sign Code. The Appearance Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend approval of the proposed Sign Code.

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On May 22, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing to consider a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to add the proposed Sign Code. The Planning and Zoning Commission voted unanimously (6 to 0) to recommend approval of the addition of the Sign Code to the Zoning Ordinance.

The Planning and Zoning Commission entered the following Findings of Fact into the record:

1. The current Village Sign Code is located in Section 30 of the Village Code of Ordinances.
2. The current Village Sign Code was adopted in 1997.
3. Upon completion of research and assessment of current signage conditions, signage best practices, and future land use plans, the Village has initiated a text amendment to update and reorganize the Village Sign Code.
4. The Village proposes the creation of a new section (Section 44-10) within the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 44 of the Code of Ordinances) to unify all development regulations, formalize sign review and design review procedures, and simplify development regulations in the Village.
5. The Village also proposes the addition of subsections in Zoning Procedures (Section 44-07) to allow for the creation of formal procedures for sign reviews, sign variances, appearance reviews, and other reviews conducted by the Appearance Commission.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- **Funding Source:** N/A
- **Budgeted Amount:** N/A
- **Cost:** N/A

LEGAL REVIEW

Completed

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

Pass an ordinance approving a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to add Section 44-10, the Village Sign Code; amend Subsection 44-04-14 to classify murals and public art installations as accessory structures subject to accessory use and structure requirements; and amend Section 44-07 to establish development review procedures for sign permits, sign variances, comprehensive sign plans, appearance reviews, and public art and mural reviews.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- Ordinance
- Proposed Sign Code (dated June 26, 2025)