



Sign Code Modifications

City Council Work Session
February 17, 2026

Reason for update

The existing code language is not worded as clear as it could be which has caused confusion for the public, for sign manufactures, and for City staff administering the sign code.

When leadership changes occurred at the beginning of 2017 it was quickly identified that the sign code had overly bureaucratic processes and constitutional violations.

- The City Manager and Mayor at the time both agreed that processing A-frame signs and sign variance requests through two separate committees was overly burdensome for City staff to administer and made for lengthier processing timelines for applicants.



Reason for update

- The City Manager in 2017, Yamashita, instructed the Development Services Director to start working on modifications to Chapter 15.32.
- Staff and attorneys started review in 2017, but code amendments were shelved by City Manager Wheeler due to the pandemic and other projects with a higher priority.
- Staff have worked with attorneys at Beery, Elsner, and Hammond (BEH) to identify constitutional issues and modify the code based on past court decisions.
- The Planning Commission held a work session on April 22, 2024. Staff made modifications based on that feedback.



Reason for update

- Staff met with the Planning Commission on January 13, 2025, to discuss goals for this biennium. One of the goals identified was to update the sign code.
- The Development Services Director listed updating the sign code as a department goal in several biennium retreat documents. With the adoption of the 2025-27 goals, it dovetails into goals 6.9 and 6.10:

6.9: Ensure compliance with state legislative and regulatory mandates through code amendments that are responsible and reflect the community's values.

6.10: Continue to improve and refine code language, policies, and practices related to code enforcement.



Reason for update

Reminder: Chapter 15.32 was last updated in 2011.

Staff's goals with these proposed amendments include:

- ensuring compliance with constitutional requirements (e.g. first amendment issues)
- making code enforcement processes clearer
- removing burdensome code provisions
- modifying the code for easier comprehension and implementation

Process after work session

- Staff recommend the City Council review the proposed code modifications and provide direction prior to holding a public hearing.
- Included in the meeting packet is a draft ordinance, Ordinance No. 2026-02.

Note on process: Since this chapter is outside Title 17 of the Sandy Municipal Code, the Planning Commission will not hold a public hearing.



Note on murals

- Remove murals as an exemption in the sign code because of constitutional concerns relating to regulating the content of murals through the sign code.
- This change will have the effect of prohibiting murals in the City as that term is generally understood for the time being.
- If the City Council would like to allow additional murals in the City, the City could consider adopting a separate mural program similar to what has been done in other Oregon cities.
 - Bend
 - Milwaukie
 - Sherwood



Proposed Code Amendments

- Some of the proposed code amendments are mandatory.
- Most of the changes are policy neutral, but staff and the City Attorney have proposed some policy changes to make the code easier to comprehend, to make enforcement clearer, and to remove burdensome code provisions.
- The following slides include policy changes where the City Council has the most discretion.

The next six slides of the presentation will be interactive.

Sign height

- Section 15.32.020.D.3.: Staff propose the maximum height of a freestanding sign in the C-3 zoning district increase from 8 feet to 10 feet.
Does allowing this additional two feet in sign height in the C-3 zoning district make sense?
- Section 15.32.030.E.6.: Staff propose the maximum height of a freestanding sign for a commercial or institutional use within a residential zone increase from 5 feet to 6 feet.
Is Council okay with this additional foot in sign height?

Sign design

- Section 15.32.020.D.7.b.: Staff propose the frame on a rectangular shaped sign in all commercial and industrial districts decrease from three inches wide to two inches wide.

Does this change to increase code flexibility seem okay?

- Section 15.32.020.G.: Staff propose to allow signs to occupy two wall surfaces of a food cart. (There are currently no regulations.)

Does this proposed regulation seem fair?
(existing carts would be exempt)

Community event signage

A “community event” is an event which has been designated in writing as a community event by the City Manager based on meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- a. The City has contributed funding to the event either directly or indirectly; or
- b. The event:
 - i. Is expected to significantly promote tourism in the city of Sandy; and
 - ii. Will help achieve one or more established City Council goals.

Note: Staff believes that in the past, Winterfest and the Mount Hood Farmers Market have both been designated as ‘community events’.

Does the Council like the draft criteria?



Time limits

- Section 15.32.020.H.: Staff propose reducing what is considered a temporary sign from 180 days total in a calendar year to 120 days in a calendar year.
Note: This is also reflected in Section 15.32.032.A.5.
Is Council okay with this reduction in days?
- Section 15.32.020.F.: Staff propose allowing electronic messages to change every 10 seconds, instead of once per hour as currently written.
Is Council okay with this added flexibility?



Sign review

- Section 15.32.020.E.: Staff propose that A-frame signs are reviewed by Planning Division staff instead of an A-Frame Sign Review Committee.
- Section 15.32.150.B.: Staff propose that sign variance requests are reviewed by the Director instead of a Sign Review Committee, and that appeals of the Director's decision are reviewed by the City Council.

Note: Since March 2017, staff have approved A-frame signs, and the City Council has reviewed sign variance requests.

- Section 15.32.140: Staff propose increasing the deadline to file an appeal of a sign application decision from 10 calendar days to 12 calendar days to match the appeal filing deadline in Title 17 of the Municipal Code.

Does Council have any concerns?



Code enforcement policies

- Section 15.32.170.A.: Staff and the City Attorney propose that temporary signs have to come into compliance within 10 days of notice by code enforcement, not 30 days.
Is Council comfortable with this proposed change?
- Section 15.32.190.: Staff propose that violations of Chapter 15.32 are a Class B infraction (\$500 fine), instead of a \$100.00 fine.
Does Council find that a Class B infraction is appropriate?