



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: City Council
Meeting Date: April 20, 2026
From: Kelly O'Neill Jr., Development Services Director
Subject: PUBLIC HEARING: Ordinance 2026-02 - Sign Code Modifications

DECISION TO BE MADE:

Hold a public hearing and consider adoption of Ordinance No. 2026-02 to modify Chapter 15.32, Sign Code.

APPLICABLE COUNCIL GOAL:

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

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT:

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, and modifying the code for easier comprehension and implementation. Staff worked with attorneys at Beery, Elsner, and Hammond (BEH) to identify potential constitutional issues and modify the code based on past court decisions.

The Planning Commission held a work session on April 22, 2024, and provided staff with some recommendations which were incorporated into the draft code. Based on the input and direction from the City Council at work sessions on February 17, 2026, and March 16, 2026, staff and the City Attorney made the following amendments to Chapter 15.32:

- Section 15.32.020.G.: **Staff modified the code provisions to allow signs to occupy all four wall surfaces of a food cart.**
- Section 15.32.030.E.6.: **Staff modified the code provisions for freestanding signs for a commercial or institutional use within a residential zone to require a 24-inch-high stone/rock base.**
- Section 15.32.170.A.: **The City Attorney modified the code provision that temporary signs have to come into compliance within 10 days of the written notice being received or refused.**
- Section 15.32.190.: **Staff modified the code provisions to state that a violation of Chapter 15.32 is a Class C infraction (\$250).**
- Section 15.32.020.H. and Section 15.32.032.A.5.: **Staff kept temporary signs at 180 days.**

Since the work session on March 16, staff sent a notice of the public hearing to all registered businesses that have a location in city limits. Staff received a few inquiries on perimeter fencing signage (i.e., such as no trespassing signs) and menu boards/clearance signs for drive-through uses. Staff worked with the City Attorney to add additional code language to address such signage, as well as language for signage related to parking garages, in Sections 15.32.020., 15.32.050., and 15.32.210. as highlighted in this staff report and in Exhibit A.

As a reminder, the City of Sandy sign code regulations were last revised in 2011. When leadership changes occurred at the beginning of 2017 it was quickly identified that the sign code had overly bureaucratic processes and constitutional violations. Staff started review in 2017, but code amendments were shelved by City Manager Wheeler due to the pandemic and other projects with a higher priority.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS / ANALYSIS:

In order to make the code easier to comprehend, to make enforcement clearer, and to remove burdensome code provisions, staff has proposed some policy changes to Chapter 15.32. The following information further outlines the primary proposed code modifications:

Section 15.32.015. Director – This new section was added to define the Development Services Director and the use of the word ‘Director’ throughout Chapter 15.32.

Section 15.32.020. Signs permitted only in commercial and industrial zones.

- A. Sign Lighting** – Code language associated with sign lighting was moved from Section 15.32.070. to Section 15.32.020., so it is easier to find for the reader.
- B. Wall Signs** – This section was modified to make it clear on how to complete measurements and unnecessary language was also removed. The proposed modifications also allow for each tenant to have a wall sign area without dividing their signage with other tenants. The existing language was overly burdensome as it required tenants in a multi-tenant building to calculate sign area for all existing wall signs.
- C. Projecting Signs** – This section was modified to make it clear to the reader how to calculate height, clearance, and projection distance. Code language was also added to identify a maximum height for a marquee sign based on the League of Oregon Cities Model Sign Code.
- D. Freestanding Signs** – The existing code language has led to frustration from applicants and staff for many years. Staff combined freestanding signs and integrated business center signs (used to be Subsection E. of Section 15.32.020.) into a more readable and understandable code section. The proposed modifications also establish sign code provisions for clearance signs and menu board signs for drive-through uses, and clearance signs and kiosk signs for parking garages.

NOTE: This was updated by staff and the City Attorney after the March 16 work session.

- E. A-frame Signs** – In 2017, this code section was determined to be overly restrictive and bureaucratic. The A-frame Sign Committee (this committee has not met since early 2017) is being removed with these code amendments, which allow staff to work directly with applicants. Since March 2017, staff have approved A-frame signs and staff have not noticed many issues. The proposal also includes expanding the permitted A-frame sign material.

- F. Electronic Message Signs** – Allowing electronic message signs to change more often than every 1 hour is prudent which is why the proposed code language would allow electronic message signs to change every 10 seconds.
- G. Food Cart Signs** – This is a new section that applies to food carts. This section states that food cart signage is permitted on all four sides of a food cart. This proposed section prohibits food cart roof signs, temporary signs, and signs that drape or project.
- H. Temporary Sign** –The proposed code changes provide more clarity on anchoring requirements and not obstructing sight clearances. Search lights were also moved to this section of Chapter 15.32 as they are temporary signs.

Section 15.32.030. Permanent signs allowed in residential zones – The proposed modifications in this code section require additional design requirements for multifamily (i.e. apartment) signage, subdivision gateway signage, and commercial institutional uses within residential zones. Staff finds that the design requirements for multifamily signs, subdivision signs, and commercial and institutional uses within residential zones should be similar to signage in commercial and industrial zoning districts.

Section 15.32.032. Signs allowed in residential zones exempt from permits but subject to regulations. – This section has been amended to make the existing code provisions clearer.

Section 15.32.035. Temporary signs for community events. – The City Attorney’s office and staff worked closely on modifying this code section to comply with constitutional requirements, to define criteria for what constitutes a community event, and to create a process whereas the City Manager approves an event as a community event.

Section 15.32.040. Signs allowed in all zones exempt from permits but subject to regulation. – The proposed modifications add clarity that exempt signs shall not be located in the right-of-way. The modifications also add clarification on regulations for signs held by people.

Section 15.32.050. Signs permitted in all districts, exempt from permits.

- B.** The proposed modifications make flag regulations content-neutral.
- D.** The proposed modifications address restroom, entryway, and walkway signage. These modifications also address signage along property lines for things such as ‘no trespassing’.

NOTE: *This was updated by staff and the City Attorney after the March 16 work session.*

Formally G. This exemption was deleted as it is covered by F. in this section.

Formally H. This exemption was deleted as it is covered by E. in this section.

Formally I. Murals have been removed from the sign code because of constitutional concerns relating to regulating the content of murals. 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 such as Bend, Milwaukie, or Sherwood.

Formally J. (now G.) The proposed modifications add clarity that window signage may not exceed 33 percent of a window so that window signage doesn’t violate Chapter 17.90 that states that windows are required to “contain clear glass to allow views to interior activity or display areas.”

H. This code provision was added to allow seasonal decorations for October through January (i.e., to primarily address Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years).

Section 15.32.060. Nonconforming signs. – The modifications in this section remove unnecessary language, ensure constitutional compliance, and make it easier to understand for the reader. Most of the deletions in this code section were recommended by the City Attorney. Also, this section was modified to only apply to permanent signs, because staff do not believe it is necessary to provide 30 days to bring a temporary sign into compliance with the Municipal Code.

Section 15.32.070. General construction and maintenance requirements. – The modifications in this section remove unnecessary language and make it easier to understand for the reader.

Section 15.32.080. Prohibited signs. – The proposed modifications address constitutional and enforcement concerns relating to regulating the content of signs on benches by eliminating signs on benches altogether. The proposed changes also add clarity that roof signs are not allowed on food carts.

Section 15.32.110. Permit application. – Modified this section to be consistent with how staff currently processes sign permit applications and building permit applications related to signs.

Section 15.32.120. Permit approval. – The proposed modifications remove the requirement that the permit fee be doubled if a sign installation starts prior to obtaining a sign permit. Staff found this requirement unnecessarily punitive. This section has also been modified to remove redundancies that are in the Oregon Building Codes and enforced by the Building Division.

Section 15.32.140. Permit appeal. – The proposed modification to twelve (12) days for an appeal is consistent with the appeal period set forth in Title 17.

Section 15.32.150. Variances to standards. – Similar to A-frame sign review, this code section was determined to be overly bureaucratic in 2017. References to the Sign Review Committee (this committee has not met since 2017) were removed which allows staff (i.e. the Director) to work directly with applicants on sign variance requests. The proposed code modifications include variance criteria. Appeals of the Director's decision will be reviewed by the City Council.

Section 15.32.180. Periodic review. – This section is proposed for removal as it's unnecessary.

Section 15.32.190. Violations. – The proposed modifications reference Class C infractions in Chapter 1.18 of the Sandy Municipal Code.

Section 15.32.200. Limitation of liability. – The City Attorney recommends removal of this section as it's unnecessary due to limitations on liability associated with issuance of city permits generally.

Section 15.32.210. Definitions. – Staff and the attorney's office have defined the terms that are actually necessary in this section. Also, examples of signs have been removed as it has caused confusion for the public looking at the code.

NOTE: *Definitions for 'menu board', 'clearance sign', and 'kiosk sign' were added by staff and the City Attorney after the March 16 work session.*

BUDGET IMPACT:

Staff and City Attorney expenses that have already been incurred.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommend the City Council hold a public hearing and adopt Ordinance No. 2026-02.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS / EXHIBITS:

- Ordinance 2026-02
 - Exhibit A. Sign Code markup
- Presentation Slides