

Memorandum



To: Chair Hansen and Members of the Planning Commission
From: Daniel R. Buchholtz, ICMA-CM, Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer
Date: September 22, 2026
Subject: Ordinance 512 – Secondary School Stadium Video Displays

Requested Action

The Planning Commission is asked to conduct a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council regarding Ordinance 512. The ordinance would amend the City Code to establish specific standards for video displays located within secondary school stadiums.

Background

In July 2026, Spring Lake Park Independent School District 16 contacted the City regarding permit requirements for a replacement scoreboard at the Spring Lake Park High School stadium. Staff advised the School District that a sign/building permit application, project plans, lighting information and City Council approval would be required before installation.

On September 1, staff learned that the scoreboard and video display had already been installed without the required permits or City Council approval. The School District subsequently submitted an application and supporting information for City review.

The new display is substantially different from a conventional scoreboard. It includes a large digital screen capable of displaying live video, instant replay, animation, sponsor acknowledgments and other changing content. Its size, brightness, hours of operation and proximity to residential property raise issues that are not fully addressed by the City's current sign regulations.



The existing code contains general standards for illuminated and luminous signs but does not specifically address large stadium video displays. For example, it does not establish event-based operating hours, separate daytime and nighttime brightness limits, and automatic dimming requirements. The current ordinance limits video and animation, which would not be workable for this type of sign.

Ordinance 512 was prepared to fill that regulatory gap.

Adoption of the ordinance would not approve or legalize the display that has already been installed. The School District would still be required to obtain all applicable permits and demonstrate that the display complies with the ordinance before its dynamic or luminous portion could be placed into regular operation.

Purpose of Ordinance

A stadium video display serves a different purpose than an electronic message sign intended to attract motorists on a public street. Its primary audience is inside the stadium, where it may provide scoring information, event information, live video and replay.

At the same time, a large luminous display may affect nearby homes through illumination, glare, reflected light, changing images and late-evening operation. Depending on its orientation and use, it may also distract motorists or function as a general outdoor advertising sign.

The ordinance attempts to balance these interests by allowing modern video-display technology within a qualifying school stadium while establishing clear limits to protect surrounding property and public safety.

Major Provisions

The proposed ordinance would:

- Allow no more than one stadium video display on a secondary school campus;
- Require the display to be located within a permanent secondary school stadium and oriented primarily toward the field and spectator seating;
- Require at least 150 feet between the illuminated face and residential property located in front of or beside the display;
- Require the rear and sides of the display to be opaque and nonilluminated;
- Limit the overall structure to 45 feet in height and 35 feet in width;
- Limit the dynamic video area to 650 square feet and the total message-bearing area to 900 square feet;
- Limit daytime brightness to 5,000 nits and nighttime brightness to 1,000 nits;
- Require an ambient-light sensor and automatic dimming controls;
- Limit illumination attributable to the stadium video display, stadium lighting and other exterior lighting operated in connection with a stadium event to five-tenths (0.5) foot-candle, as measured both horizontally and vertically.
- Prohibit concentrated light or glare that materially interferes with sleep, residential use or visibility;
- Limit operation to authorized school stadium events and related pre-event and post-event periods;

- Generally require the display to be turned off by 10:00 p.m., with limited operation until no later than 10:30 p.m. when an event runs late. After 10:30 p.m., only static, non-advertising scoring and event-status information may remain illuminated, and it must be turned off within 15 minutes after the event concludes.;
- Prohibit strobing, blinking, scrolling, rapid flashing and displays resembling emergency or traffic-control signals;
- Prevent the display from being leased or operated as a general outdoor advertising platform; and
- Limit the hours, duration and frequency of illuminated testing outside scheduled events.

The size and brightness limits are maximum ceilings, not guaranteed entitlements. Based on the location and technical information submitted with an application, the City Council could approve a smaller display, require a lower brightness setting or impose additional shielding or other reasonable conditions.

Technical Review and Continuing Compliance

An applicant would be required to provide detailed plans, manufacturer specifications, an operating plan and a photometric analysis prepared by an independent qualified lighting professional. The City could require an additional professional review at the applicant's expense.

Before regular operation begins, the owner would be required to provide documentation confirming that the approved brightness settings, ambient-light sensor, automatic dimming controls, password protection and malfunction controls have been programmed and are operational. The maximum authorized nighttime setting would be approved by the City, password protected and inaccessible to routine event operators.

The City could investigate a supported complaint or other credible evidence of noncompliance through observations, review of operating records or field measurements. If professional testing is warranted, the owner would be responsible for all testing, professional-review, documentation and corrective-work costs. Operating records would be retained for at least two years and provided to the City upon request.

The City could order the dynamic or luminous portion of the display shut off in response to a malfunction, excessive brightness, prohibited operating hours or an immediate lighting or safety concern. Two or more substantiated violations within a 12-month period could result in the City Council temporarily limiting the display to static scoring functions.

Property owners within 350 feet of the stadium would receive mailed notice before the City Council considers a new or materially amended stadium-display permit.

Staff Analysis

Staff believes a separate set of standards is preferable to regulating a stadium video display as an ordinary sign or relying only on general lighting and nuisance provisions. The proposed ordinance addresses these characteristics through permit-review requirements, operating controls and measurable performance standards. Continuing compliance would be investigated when the City receives a supported complaint or obtains other credible evidence of noncompliance.

The ordinance combines measurable limits with a general glare standard. Objective measurements provide a clear starting point for determining compliance, while the glare standard addresses concentrated or reflected light that may cause a material impact even when a property-line reading is within the numerical limit.

The proposed regulations also recognize the legitimate use of video technology within a school stadium while preventing the display from becoming an unrestricted advertising sign. The operating-hour restrictions, automatic dimming, complaint-based testing, owner-funded compliance verification, recordkeeping and enforcement provisions provide meaningful protections for surrounding residential property.

Staff finds that:

1. Stadium video displays differ from conventional and street-oriented electronic signs in their purpose and operation.
2. The existing City Code does not adequately address the operating characteristics and potential impacts of these displays.
3. The proposed standards are reasonably related to neighborhood compatibility, traffic safety and protection of the public welfare.
4. The ordinance provides objective standards and a process for verifying continuing compliance.
5. Adoption of the ordinance would not approve any particular display or excuse an owner from obtaining required permits.
6. The ordinance is consistent with the purposes of the City's zoning and performance standards.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the following motion:

“Motion to recommend that the City Council approve Ordinance 512, amending Chapters 16.24 and 16.28 of the Spring Lake Park City Code relating to secondary school stadium video displays, based upon the findings contained in the staff memorandum.”

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 763-784-6491.