

CITY PLAN COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

CD-CPC-2025-00128



KANSAS CITY
Planning & Dev

Text Amendments, Digital Signs in Residential Districts

August 20, 2025

Docket #12

Request

Zoning Text Amendment

Applicant

City Planning & Development
City of Kansas City

Approval Process



Overview

The proposed text amendments to Section 88-445-06-A modify the standards for monument signs in residential zoning districts to allow digital signs for Institutional and Office uses subject to approval of a Special Use Permit.

Existing Conditions

Section 88-445-06 of the Zoning and Development Code regulates signs permitted in residential districts.

Required Public Engagement

Section 88-505-12, Public Engagement does not apply to this request. Standard protocol for Chapter 88 amendments is to post drafts to the City's website prior to the City Plan Commission hearing.

Related Cases

140396 - Amending Chapter 88 by amending subsection 88-445-06-D, Signs in Residential Districts, Institutional Uses, to allow public schools and churches to install digital signs. Released.

Professional Staff Recommendation

Docket #12 Approval

AMENDMENT OVERVIEW

The purpose of the proposed text amendment is to address increasing trends toward modern sign technologies, specifically regarding monument signs. City staff is advancing this sign amendment at the request of Councilmember Nathan Willett. The City's sign code, Section 88-445, restricts digital signage in all districts. For signs in residential districts, the current ordinance prohibits both digital or electronic displays, such as electronic message centers. Changeable copy features are permitted, but must use "direct human intervention" for changes to the sign message or display.

Signage in residential districts is generally associated with uses that the ordinance groups together as "Institutional and Office uses" - churches, schools, police or fire stations, community centers, public parks, and office buildings. Neighborhood-serving retail and Office uses are permitted by special use permit in a number of residential districts.

The City has previously considered text amendments to permit digital signs for churches and schools, particularly in 2014-15. At that time, the City, in consultation with neighborhood groups, considered a variety of regulations, including permitting digital signs through both the Special Use Permit process or the Council Approved Sign Plan process, varying minimum lot area requirements, and other sign standards. Ultimately, there was not sufficient consensus and the proposed ordinances were not adopted.

The City does occasionally field inquiries regarding digital signage in residential districts. For example, the Police Athletic League of Kansas City requested a variance to allow a digital sign at 1801 White Ave, within the R-2.5 zoning district. The BZA did not grant the request.

The proposed text amendment would permit Institutional and Office uses in residential districts that are located on a lot that is at least 6 acres in size, or a lot of at least 3 acres adjacent to a major arterial, to erect one digital monument sign, pursuant to approval of a Special Use Permit by the Board of Zoning Adjustment. The digital monument sign would remain subject to the existing area and height limits in 88-445-06-A, 4. that limit monument signs to 32 square feet in area and 6 feet in height.

The additional standards include:

- Setback requirements of 100 feet from any other residentially zoned and occupied property and 100 feet from any public right-of-way.
- Restrictions from locations within 150 feet of a public park, parkway, or boulevard and designated historic districts or landmarks.
- Limitations on the digital display to prevent animated visual effects and require use of automatic brightness controls.
- Requirement to turn digital signs off at night, between the hours of 10pm and 7am.

SPECIFIC REVIEW CRITERIA

Zoning and Development Code Text Amendments (88-510-07)

In reviewing and making decisions on zoning and development code text amendments, the City Planning and Development Director, City Plan Commission, and City Council must consider at least the following factors:

A. Whether the proposed zoning and development Code text amendment corrects an error or inconsistency in the Zoning and Development Code or meets the challenge of a changing condition.

The proposed amendments address changing conditions in signage technology and widespread adoption of digital signs.

B. Whether the proposed zoning and development code text amendment is consistent with adopted plans and the stated purpose of this Zoning and Development Code.

The purpose of the City's sign regulations is to provide an orderly, effective, and reasonable control of signs, enhancing the visual environment of the city. The proposed amendments advance regulations intended to prevent unsightly signage by establishing reasonable restrictions on the location and operation of such signs.

C. Whether the proposed zoning and development code text amendment is in the best interests of the City as a whole.

The proposed amendment seeks to find a balance between the communication needs of institutional uses with the interests of residential neighborhoods in the quiet enjoyment of their environment.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Redline version of proposed amendments

PROFESSIONAL STAFF RECOMMENDATION

City staff recommends approval.

Respectfully submitted,



Sara Copeland, FAICP

Planning Manager

88-445-06 SIGNS IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

88-445-06-A. RESIDENTIAL SIGNS

Only the following signs are allowed in residential zoning districts (including AG-R):

1. GENERAL RULES

a. LIGHTING.

Except where otherwise specified, signs in residential districts may be externally illuminated only, unless otherwise specified.

b. FLASHING, MOVING AND SIMILAR SIGNS

Flashing, moving, animated, wind-blown, or other signs that move or simulate movement are prohibited.

c. TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNS

In addition to other signs permitted under this section, any lot or parcel containing more than 4 dwelling units, a permitted institutional use, or a permitted commercial use, may contain signs conforming with the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices and not containing any commercial message.

d. MESSAGES

Any sign allowed under this section may bear a noncommercial message. Limited commercial messages are allowed, in accordance with express provisions of this section, but such commercial messages may not advertise or direct attention to a business or commercial activity other than one lawfully conducted on the premises, as expressly allowed under this section.

e. SETBACK

Signs placed on a corner lot shall not extend forward of a diagonal line which intersects the front and side property lines of the lot at points 20 feet distant from the common intersection of the front and side property lines or, if the corner of the lot is platted on a radius, the extension of the front and side property lines to a point of common intersection. Signs placed on an interior lot shall be set back a minimum of 5 feet from the right-of-way line.

2. DETACHED HOUSE AND SEMI-ATTACHED HOUSE

A lot with a principal use of a detached house or semi-attached house may have:

- a. For each entrance (excluding garage entrances) to a dwelling unit, one wall sign, not to exceed 80 square inches in area.
- b. One interim sign bearing a noncommercial message or a message related to the sale, lease, rental, or construction of the home. Such sign may not exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.
- c. Additional interim signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height. A maximum of 16 square feet of sign area is allowed per lot.
- d. During the period from 6 weeks prior to a public election to be held in Kansas City to 2 weeks after such election, each lot may display additional signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.

3. **MULTI-UNIT BUILDINGS**

A lot with a principal use of a multi-unit building may have:

a. **WALL SIGNS**

1. One wall sign per building not to exceed 12 square feet in area. The message on such sign may include a commercial message related to the sale, lease, or rental of units in the building or complex.
2. For each building entrance providing access to multiple dwelling units, an additional sign to identify the dwelling units in that building, not to exceed 4 square feet in area, provided that no message on such sign other than a word such as "directory" or similar identifying word may be legible from a location on the public right-of-way or on private property other than that which is part of the same complex.
3. For each entrance (excluding garage entrances) to an individual dwelling unit, one wall sign, not to exceed 80 square inches in area.
4. For any multi-unit residential building containing one or more offices, as permitted under the zoning for the district, one additional wall sign is permitted, which sign may not exceed 16 square feet in area. The wall sign may bear a commercial message related to activities lawfully conducted on the premises or a noncommercial message.

b. **INCIDENTAL SIGNS**

One additional sign per driveway is permitted, which sign may not exceed 36 inches in height and 2 square feet in area. Such sign may not contain a commercial message.

c. **INTERIM SIGNS**

- (1) One interim sign bearing a noncommercial message or a message related to the sale, lease, rental, or construction of the units. Such sign may not exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.
- (2) Additional interim signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height. A maximum of 16 square feet of sign area is allowed per lot.
- (3) During the period from 6 weeks prior to a public election to be held in Kansas City to 2 weeks after such election, each lot may display additional signs displaying noncommercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.

4. **INSTITUTIONAL AND OFFICE USES**

A lot with an institutional use as its principal use, such as a church, school, police or fire station, community center, public park, an office building, or other permitted principal uses not described herein, may have:

(a) **MONUMENT SIGNS**

One monument sign per street frontage which may not exceed 32 square feet in area or 6 feet in height. One sign per lot may include changeable copy, but the changeable copy feature must use direct human intervention for changes and may not include any form of digital or electronic display. Such sign may be internally or externally illuminated.

(b) **WALL SIGNS**

One wall sign per public entrance, which may not exceed 20 square feet in area. Such sign may not include any form of digital or electronic display. Such sign may be internally or externally illuminated.

(c) **INCIDENTAL SIGNS**

1. One sign per driveway is permitted, which may not exceed 42 inches in height and 6 square feet in area.
2. Incidental signs must be set back a minimum of 10 feet from all property lines.
3. Such sign may not contain a commercial message but may include the logo of the institutional use.

(d) **INTERIM SIGNS**

1. One interim sign bearing a noncommercial message or a message related to the sale, lease, rental, or construction of the property. Such sign may not exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.
2. Additional interim signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height. A maximum of 16 square feet of sign area is allowed per lot.
3. During the period from 6 weeks prior to a public election to be held in Kansas City to 2 weeks after such election, each lot may display additional signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.

(e) **DIGITAL SIGNS**

The Board of Zoning Adjustment may grant a special use permit to allow a principal use which is located on a lot that is at least six (6) acres in size, or located on a lot that is at least three (3) acres in size and is adjacent to a major arterial street, to install a digital sign face on one otherwise allowable monument sign, subject to the approval criteria in 88-525-09 and subject to the following additional requirements:

1. The sign must be located at least 100 feet from any other residentially zoned and occupied property and must be setback at least 100 feet from any public right-of-way.
2. The sign must not be located within 150 feet of a public park or a parkway or boulevard.
3. The sign must not be located on a lot that is within a designated historic district or on a lot where there exists a designated historic landmark.
4. The message or image may not change more than once every hour.
5. Changes of image must be instantaneous as seen by the human eye and may not use facing, rolling, window shading, dissolving, or similar visual effects as part of the change.
6. Digital signs must use automatic level controls to reduce lights levels at night and under cloudy and other darkened conditions. All digital signs must have installed ambient light monitors and must at all times allow such monitors to automatically adjust the brightness level of the electronic sign based on ambient light conditions. Maximum brightness levels for electronic and digital signs may not exceed 5000 nits when measured from the sign's face at its

maximum brightness, during daylight hours, and 500 nits when measured from the signs face at its maximum brightness between sunset and sunrise, as those times are determined by the National Weather Service.

7. The sign may not be illuminated between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

8. The background color of the sign may not be white.

9. The digital display must be turned off if the display is not properly functioning.

10. Neither the proposed message to be displayed nor the character of the use on the property may be a factor in the BZA's decision.

5. HOSPITAL SIGNS

A signage plan portraying signs necessary for the proper identification of the facilities within a hospital may be approved by special use permit. Such signs shall be on-premises signs and limited to proper identification of the facilities. Such signs may be internally or externally illuminated.

6. RESIDENTIAL ENTRANCE SIGNS

One monument sign is allowed at each street entrance, identifying the name of the residential neighborhood or multi-unit complex or building. The area of the sign face shall not exceed 32 square feet in area or 6 feet in height; however, the monument structure on which the sign is located may be approved for up to 25 feet in height through the project plan process.

7. INTERIM SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT SIGNS

As an interim use accessory to the permitted activity of lawful subdivision development in a development which will contain at least 20 dwelling units, interim identification signs are permitted, provided that such signs may not exceed 100 square feet in sign area nor more than 15 feet in height; if there is more than one such sign, such signs must be at least 1,000 feet apart. Each such sign may remain in place until 90 percent of the lots in the sector are sold, but no longer than 18 months from the date of erection. All such signs must be located at least 15 feet from the pavement edge or edge of the street or thoroughfare to which it is directed, but not within the sight triangle. All such signs must be within the development or within 2000 feet of the development. These signs may not be illuminated.

8. GROUP HOMES

A lot with a principal use of a group home may have:

- (a) For each entrance (excluding garage entrances) one wall sign, not to exceed 80 square inches in area.
- (b) One interim sign bearing a noncommercial message or a message related to the sale, lease, rental, or construction of the home. Such sign may not exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.
- (c) Additional interim signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height. A total of 16 square feet of sign area is allowed per lot.
- (d) During the period from six weeks prior to a public election to be held in the city to two weeks after such election, each lot may display additional signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.

9. **OTHER PRINCIPAL USES AND VACANT LOTS**

A lot with a principal use not described in this section, or a vacant lot may have:

- (a) One interim sign bearing a noncommercial message or a message related to the sale, lease, rental, or construction of the property. Such sign may not exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.
- (b) Additional interim signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height. A total of 16 square feet of sign area is allowed per lot.
- (c) During the period from six weeks prior to a public election to be held in the city to two weeks after such election, each lot may display additional signs not bearing commercial messages. No such sign may exceed 8 square feet in area or 4 feet in height.

10. **AUXILIARY PARKING**

Signs to identify parking areas allowed by special use permit shall be approved in conjunction with such special use permit, although no sign may exceed 12 square feet in area or 6 feet in height. Such signs may show only the hours in which the parking lot is open and the persons authorized to use the parking area.

(Ord. No. 120783, § 1, 10-4-2012; Ord. No. 150600, § A, 7-23-2015; Ord. No. 170365, § A, 5-25-2017; Ord. No. 200909, § 1, 11-12-2020; Ord. No. 220398, § 1, 5-19-2022)

Copeland, Sara

From: Center Planning Development Council <centerplanningkc@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 18, 2025 8:33 AM
To: Copeland, Sara; Public Engagement; Parks-Shaw, Ryana; Bunch, Eric; nathan.willet@kcmo.org; Melissa Patterson Hazley
Cc: Carol Winterowd; Joe Nastasi; Stacey Johnson-Cosby; Sharron Hill; Dr. Sharon Nibbelink; Cecelia Ball; Kevin Fallon; Wanda Shipman; Peggy Calhoun; CarolCutlerEF@gmail.com
Subject: Case # CD-CPC-2025-00128 - Signage Issues - Digital Signs

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The Board of Center Planning and Development Council, an umbrella group of neighborhoods and homes associations in South Kansas City, is opposed to the new proposal for digital signs in residential areas

This letter is in response to Case # CD-CPC-2025-00128. Digital signs have a commercial effect on neighborhoods. This ordinance has unintended consequences such as pitting neighbors against each other.

We recommend no changes to the current sign ordinance.

Joe Nastasi, Co-President
Carol Winterowd, Co-President
Center Planning and Development Council