



SIGN CODE UPDATE*
2019
City of Topeka
Planning & Development



*Title 18, TMC

CURRENT ISSUES

- **OUTDATED**

- No comprehensive update for at least 50 years (only “band aids”)
- Has not kept pace with best practices of other cities
- Is not user-friendly for sign companies, city staff, and the lay public
- Not consistent with the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling (*Reed v. Town of Gilbert, AZ*) which mandates **content-neutrality** (i.e., time/place/manner)

- **AESTHETICS/COMMUNITY SURVEYS**

- Aesthetics drives community attachment (i.e., pride) leading to more local spending/investment (*Momentum 2022*)
- Only **15%** feel Topeka has “**above average/excellent**” appearance (*Momentum 2022*)
- A whopping **96%** feel signs are “**very important/somewhat important**” to the visual quality of the community (CoT Planning & Development Department’s *Visual Appeal Survey*)

PROCESS

VISUAL APPEAL SURVEY

- Early 2018
- **964** respondents + **386** written comments

SIGN CODE COMMITTEE

- Sign industry professionals + legal consultants
- Met 9 times
- Benchmark other cities

PUBLIC REVIEW

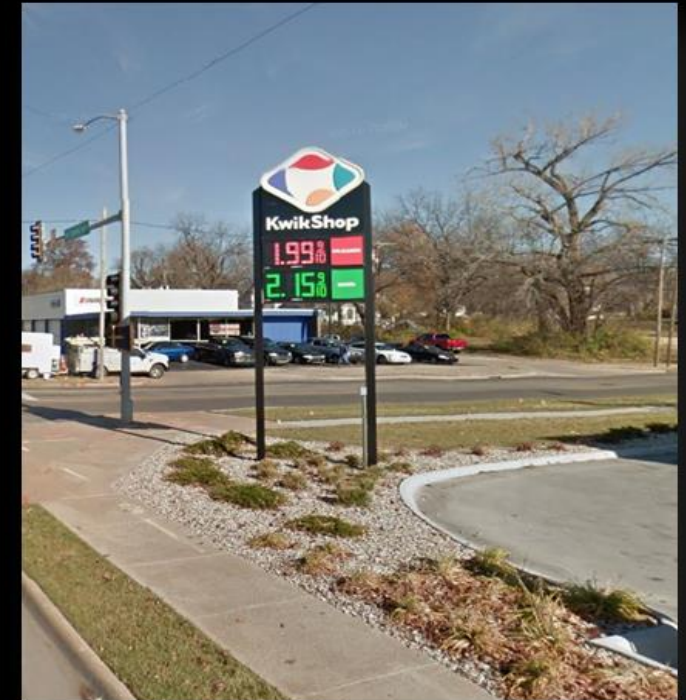
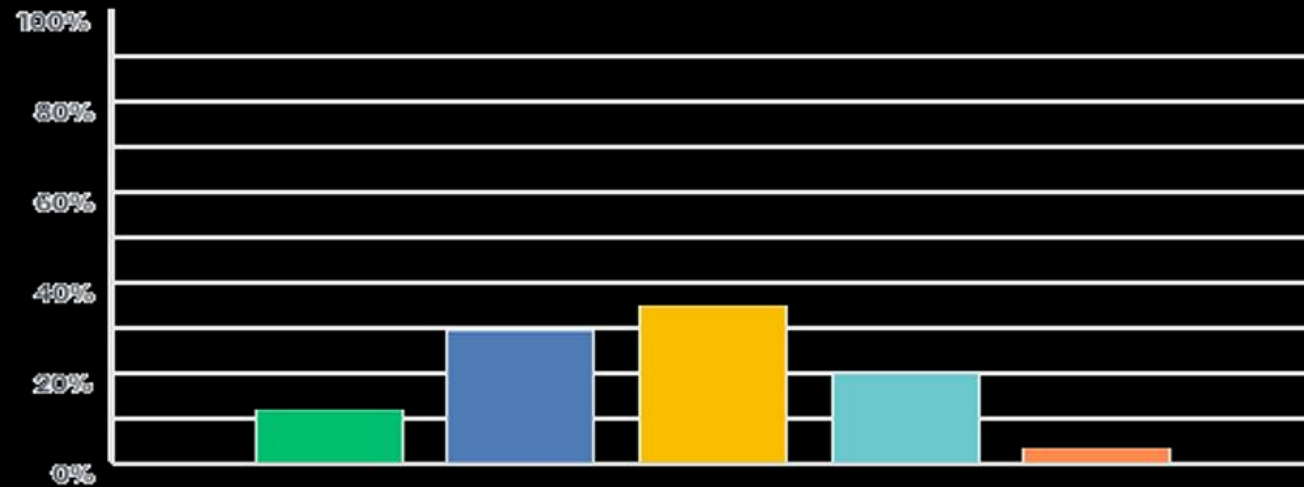
- 2 public meetings (Feb. 26, 2019)
- 10 Planning Commission meetings including public hearing May 20, 2019 (9-0 approval)
- Direct mailings/emails to impacted organizations and businesses

Answered: 964

VISUAL APPEAL SURVEY



VERY UNAPPEALING	SOMEWHAT UNAPPEALING	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT APPEALING	VERY APPEALING
11.83%	29.46%	34.85%	20.12%	3.73%
114	284	336	194	36

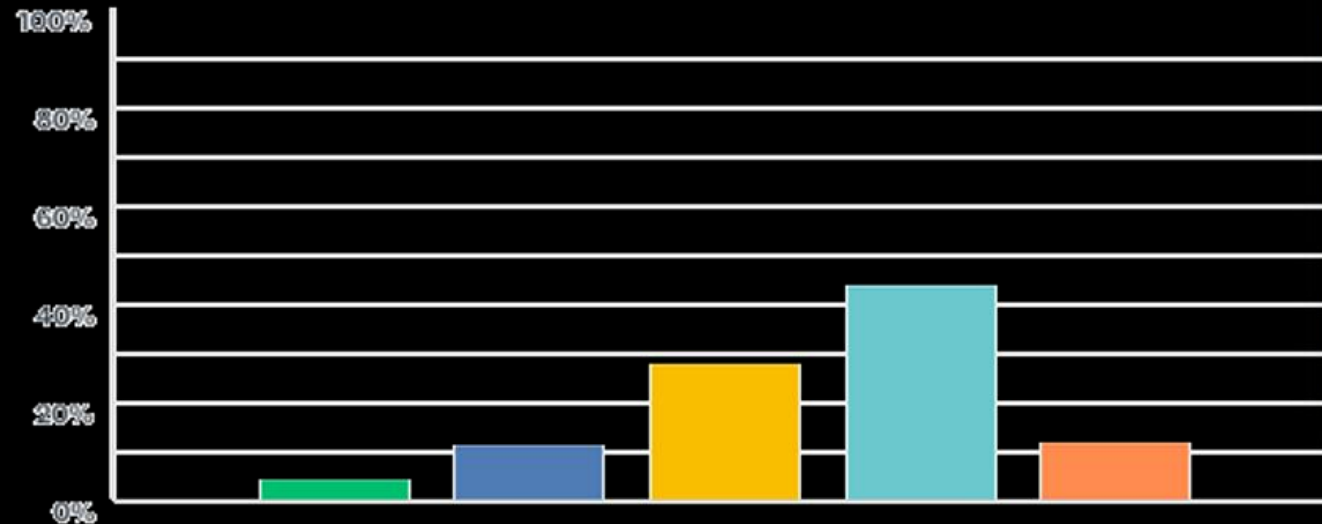


Answered: 964

VISUAL APPEAL SURVEY



VERY UNAPPEALING	SOMEWHAT UNAPPEALING	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT APPEALING	VERY APPEALING
4.56%	11.31%	27.90%	43.98%	12.24%
44	109	269	424	118

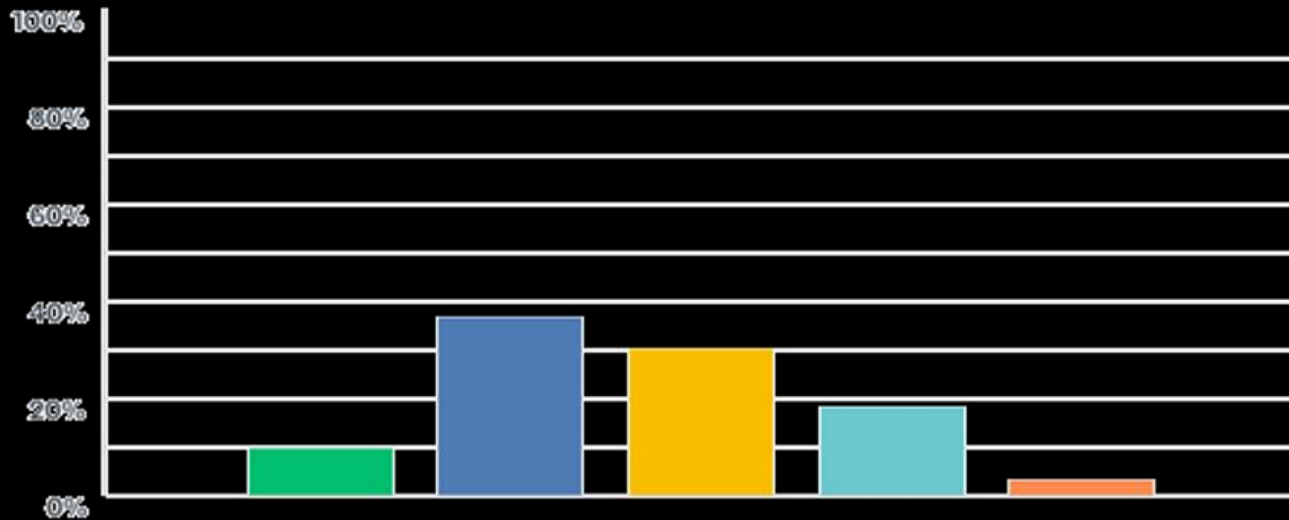


Answered: 964

VISUAL APPEAL SURVEY



VERY UNAPPEALING	SOMEWHAT UNAPPEALING	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT APPEALING	VERY APPEALING
10.06%	37.14%	30.71%	18.36%	3.73%
97	358	296	177	36

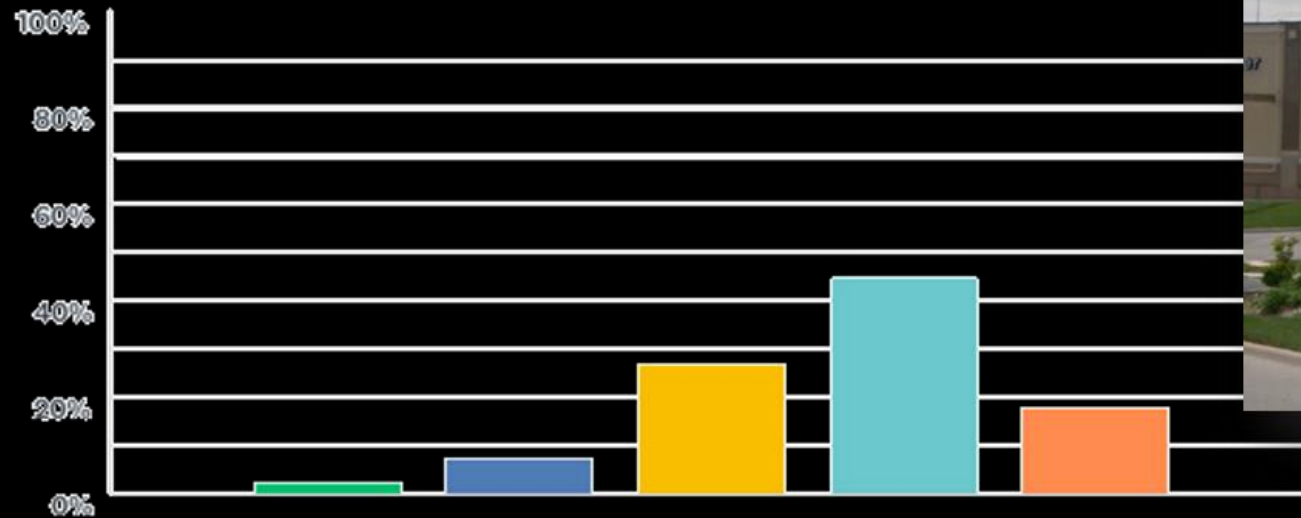


Answered: 964

VISUAL APPEAL SURVEY



VERY UNAPPEALING	SOMEWHAT UNAPPEALING	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT APPEALING	VERY APPEALING
2.28%	7.68%	26.97%	44.92%	18.15%
22	74	260	433	175



RECOMMENDATIONS



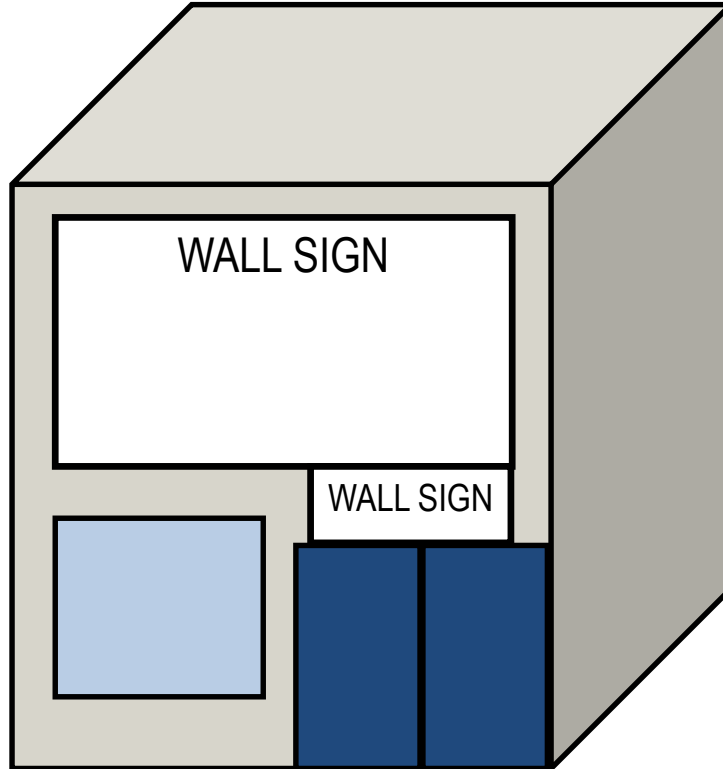
THE BIG RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Size/number of signs will be proportional to size of building/property – not a “1 size fits all”
- ❖ Monument signs in; pole signs phased out
- ❖ More relaxed standards for office/institutional uses; more restrictive standards for commercial
- ❖ Phase out “abandoned signs” and “portable message center signs” (1-2 years)
- ❖ 20-year “grandfather” period for non-conforming signs

WALL SIGNS

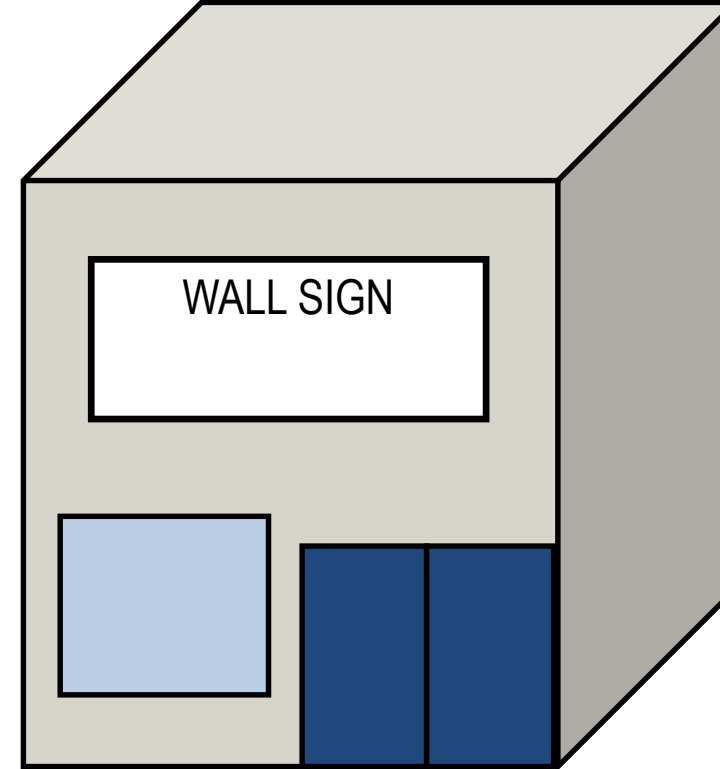
COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

CURRENT



- Max size per sign is 300 sq ft
- No limit on quantity of signs

PROPOSED

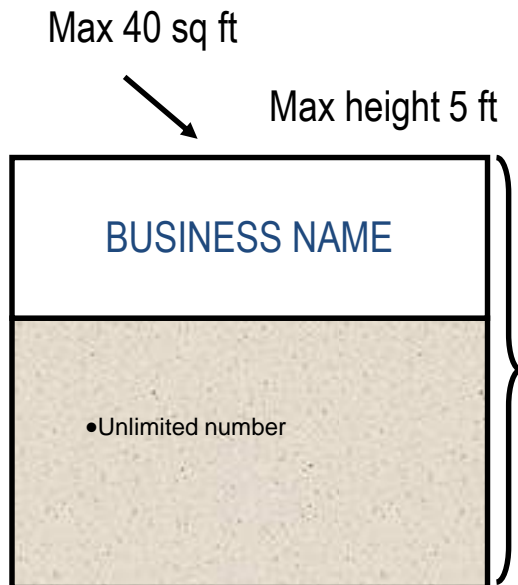


- Size and number based on building façade size
- Max 250 sf per single sign with exceptions based on distance from street

FREE-STANDING SIGNS

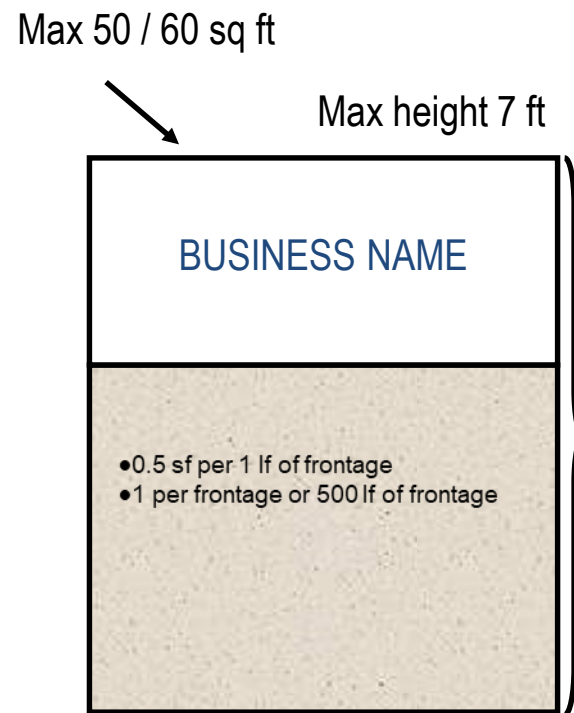
OFFICE & INSTITUTIONAL *

CURRENT



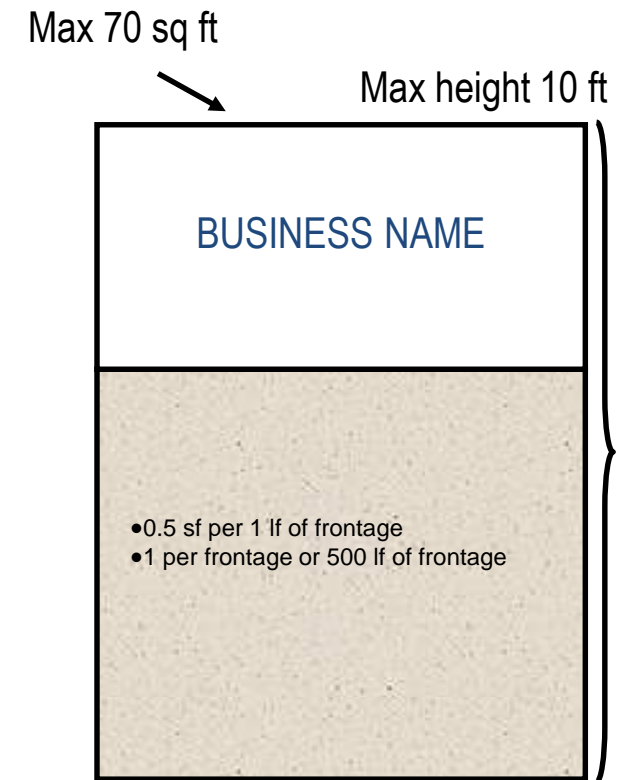
PROPOSED

Local / Collector Streets



PROPOSED

Arterial Streets



*O&I-2, O&I-3

FREE-STANDING SIGNS

COMMERCIAL - General *

CURRENT



← 55' max. height

← 300 sf maximum area

Unlimited number

PROPOSED

- 1 per street frontage/500 lf of frontage
- 0.5 sf per linear foot street frontage
- max 120 sf (168 sf w/ setbacks)
- Monument style



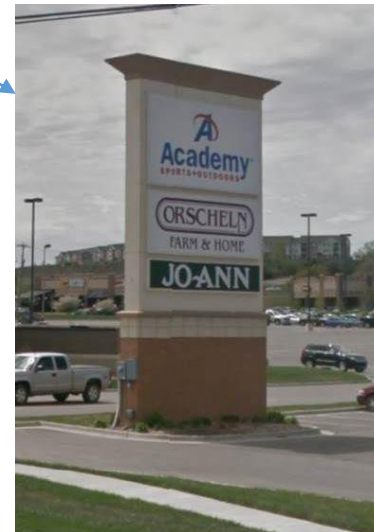
Max height 25 ft
(30 ft w/ setback)

*C-3, C-4, I-1, I-2

EXCEPTIONS

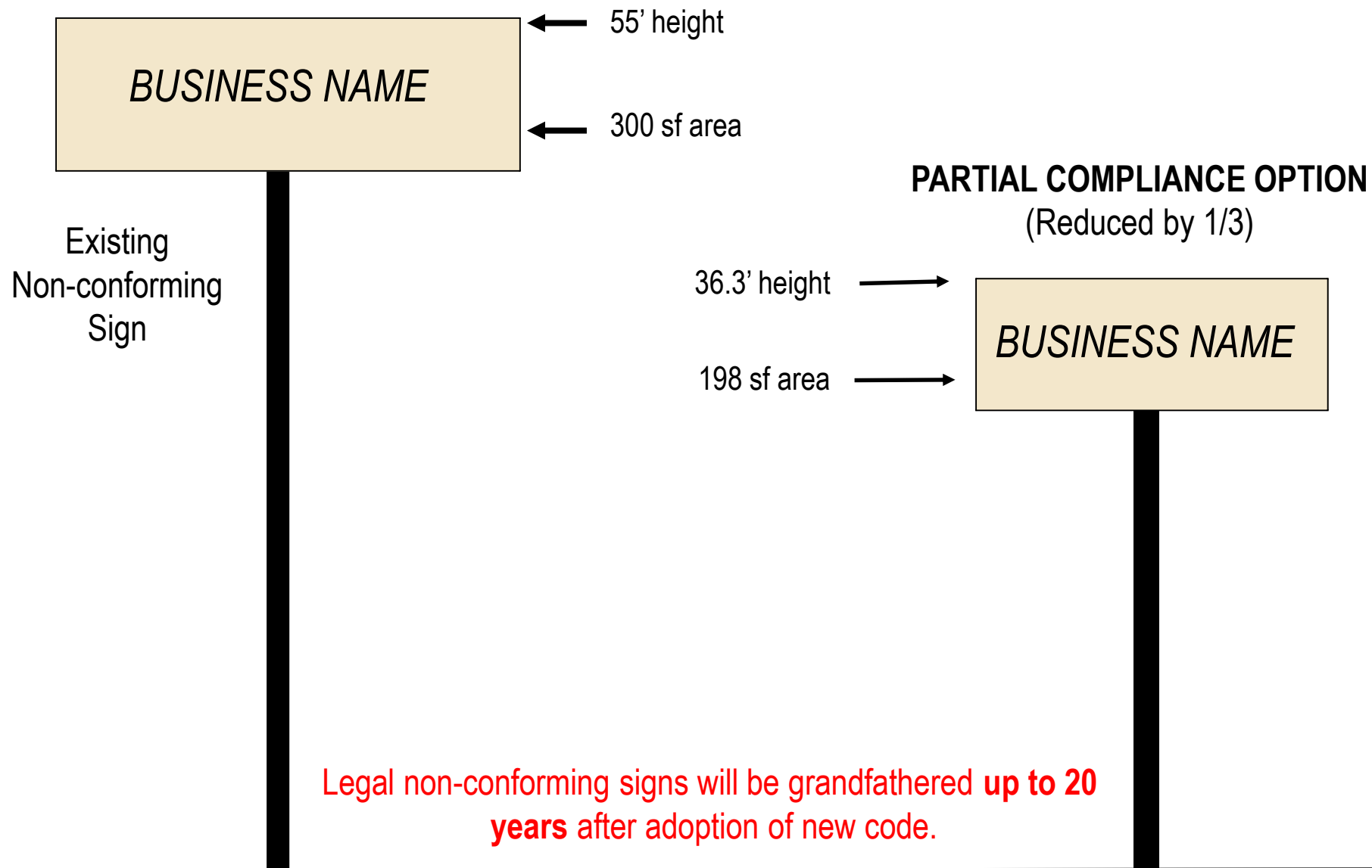


- Setback from street
- Corner Lots
- Historic Signs
- Highway Signs
- Shopping Center Signs



BUSINESS NAME

LEGAL NON-CONFORMING SIGNS



ABANDONED SIGNS

“any sign on a property for which the use to which it had applied has changed or the property containing the use has become vacant”



Current Code:

- Paint

Proposed Code:

- Remove any non-conforming signs immediately after building is demolished
- 1 year grace period

OTHER SIGNS

Temporary Signs

- Limited to four 30-day periods (2 periods for residential districts)
- Replaces vague “event” time limit



YARD SIGNS

Incidental

- Of durable construction and secondary to primary sign
- Accommodated



FREE-STANDING BANNERS



FEATHER FLAGS



PORTABLE MESSAGE CENTER SIGNS



Currently:

- Requires an annual permit
- No limit on number or time allowed
- 79% rated it “Very Unappealing”



Proposed:

- Treat as a “temporary” sign...
 - Restrict to commercial areas, churches, and schools
 - Restrict time, location, and number
 - Require permit
- Phase out entirely after 24 months

NEW FORMAT

- ❖ Dimensional standards in user friendly tabular format by zoning district
- ❖ Each sign type on single page
- ❖ “Notes” for exceptions

Wall Signs

Definitions

Wall Sign

A sign (other than Projecting Sign, Roof Sign, or Window Sign) that uses a building wall as its primary source of support, and that:

1. Is placed directly on and contained totally within the dimensions of the outside wall;
2. Does not extend more than 18 inches from a building surface



Standards

Wall Signs	Zoning Districts											
	R, M-1, M-1a, RR-1	M-2, M-3, + Non-residential uses in R, M-1, M-1a, OS-1	O&I-1, O&I-2, O&I-3	C-1	C-2	C-3, C-4	I-1, I-2	U-1, MS-1	X-1, X-3	X-2	D-1, D-3	D-2
Permitted?	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Number per 50 linear feet of building frontage <i>Note #1</i>	n/a	1	1	1	no limit	no limit	no limit	1	no limit	no limit	no limit	no limit
Sign Area Allocation square feet per linear foot of building frontage <i>Note #2</i>	n/a	1.5	1.5	2	3	3.2	3.2	1.5	3	3	3	2
Sign Area Allocation – All Attached Signs square feet per linear foot of building front	n/a	2	2	2.5	2.5	3	3.2	2	3	3	3.2	2.5
Sign Area Maximum square feet per sign	n/a	100	100	100	200	250	250	100	200	200	200	100
Electronic Message Centers % of allowed sign	n/a	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%

Notes/Exceptions:

1. Regardless of the width of the building façade, each single tenant building is allowed a minimum of 1 wall sign per façade, and each multi-tenant or multi-use building is allowed 1 sign per tenant or use per façade.
2. Wall signs on facades located 300 ft or more from the street ROW to which they face are permitted up to 200 sf in O&I, C-1, U-1, MS-1, and D-2 district, and up to 300 sf in all other zoning districts.
3. Wall signs shall not cover or obstruct any architectural features deemed integral to the historic appearance or character of the building. Such features shall include, but are not limited to, transom windows, detailed brick, tile, or shingles



? QUESTIONS ?

