

Memorandum  
City of Lawrence  
Planning and Development Services Department

**TO:** David L. Corliss, City Manager

**FROM:** Planning Staff

**CC:** Diane Stoddard, Assistant City Manager  
Cynthia Wagner, Assistant City Manager

**DATE:** November 13, 2012

**RE:** Temporary A-Frame Signs

**Agenda item:** Consider revisions to Chapter 5, Article 18 of the City Code to revise sign standards to exempt temporary, double-sided freestanding and A-Frame signs from the sign code under certain circumstances.

**Discussion**

Staff has observed a proliferation of temporary business signs in the Downtown and other commercial areas. These are typically temporary freestanding signs or A-frame signs small in nature meant to draw a pedestrian to the business. They often advertise a special for the day or part of a menu. In the Downtown area, they are typically, but not always, located in the right-of-way, but are located on private property when in other commercial areas.

These types of signs are currently not allowed, yet exist in large quantities. A recent survey of Massachusetts Street between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Street yielded 35 such signs on the sidewalk. In meetings with business members of the community, Planning and Development Services learned that most are interested in allowing such signs. However, many also agree that reasonable standards should exist if they are to be allowed. Staff has prepared the following language for consideration to allow the signs. Photos of the types of signs being discussed are included below.

5-1805 **SAME; EXEMPTIONS.**

(J) Temporary double-sided and A-Frame type freestanding signs advertising for an adjacent business. The size of the sign shall not exceed 32 inches wide and 48 inches tall above the adjacent sidewalk. The sign shall be located within 12 inches of the building where the advertised

business exists and shall be on private property except in the CD zoning district where said sign may be located in the right-of-way. A minimum of six (6) feet of unobstructed sidewalk clearance for pedestrian walkway shall be maintained. One sign shall be permitted per public entrance and shall be located within close proximity of the public entrance. Signs shall not be illuminated or contain any digital display and shall not be displayed during non-business hours. Signs shall be constructed of hard, sturdy material (no banners, flags, streamers, balloons, or other moving parts) and shall be maintained in good repair.

Staff has considered the impact these signs have on Downtown in particular. Staff finds that if the proposed standards are adopted, the signs will not create visual clutter or otherwise harm the character of Downtown or any other commercial district. Further, requiring them to be located within 12 inches of the building maintains the sidewalk for pedestrian use and also reduces visual clutter. While A-frame type signs are currently not permitted, they are anticipated and addressed in the Downtown Design Guidelines:

Section 18.4: "Temporary (i.e., sidewalk, easel-mounted or freestanding) signage is permitted as long as it is in compliance with other City codes, and does not obscure significant streetscape vistas or architectural features."

Note that there currently exist non-compliant banner type signs and non-banner type signs Downtown that would not meet the standards proposed. In those instances, the signs would be required to be removed or replaced with code compliant signs.

Staff has had limited discussion with Downtown Lawrence Inc. members regarding this issue, but no discussion with commercial property owners outside of Downtown, though the Planning Office has had requests in the past to permit such within commercial strip developments.

### **Options**

1. Adopt, deny or revise the proposed draft code language, as appropriate.

Note: An ordinance will be drafted after receiving Commission direction.











