
ZONING CODE TEXT AMENDMENT

Initiator: Council Member Warsame
Introduction Date: August 3, 2018
Prepared By: Andrew Liska, Sr. City Planner, (612) 673-2264
Specific Site: Not applicable
Ward: 6
Neighborhood: Elliot Park
Intent: Amending regulations for off-premise signs and billboards.

APPLICABLE SECTION(S) OF THE ZONING CODE

- Chapter 544, Off-Premise Advertising Signs and Billboards

The following chapter was also introduced: Chapter 525, Administration and Enforcement; However, staff is not recommending changes to this chapter as part of this amendment and is therefore recommends returning them to the author.

BACKGROUND

An ordinance amendment was introduced by CM Warsame to amend the regulations related to off-premise advertising. The proposed amendment would expand the boundary of the Downtown Entertainment Billboard District near US Bank Stadium. The proposed ordinance limits expansions and digital conversions to existing off-premise signs and billboards and requires sign credits to be used for any expansion or digital conversion. Sign credits are earned through the removal of non-conforming off-premise signs and billboards. The amendment also proposes to remove language regulating city financing of billboard advertising added in 2010. This provision has had no effect on City operations or contracts. The elimination of this provision would streamline the ordinance and remove unnecessary regulations.

ANALYSIS

What is the reason for the amendment and what public purpose will be served?

The purpose of the amendment is to expand the Downtown Entertainment Billboard District around the US Bank Stadium. When the US Bank Stadium was constructed, the structure and site were not subject to zoning code standards, and this included the sign on the Viking ship sail. There is some sentiment that the City should allow electronic conversion of billboards directly across the street from the electronic advertising on the ship sail.

A byproduct of the proposed expanded Downtown Entertainment Billboard District that serves a public purpose is that requiring sign credits for conversions could eliminate non-conforming billboards that are currently in neighborhoods.

Finally, the amendment would also eliminate the prohibition on the City financing of billboard advertising, which was added to Chapter 544 in 2010. The elimination of this provision would streamline the ordinance and remove unnecessary regulations.

How is the amendment consistent with the purpose of the zoning district(s) or ordinance chapter(s) being amended?

The Downtown Entertainment Billboard District is a defined area where larger signs are permitted and often exist and contribute to the vibrant energy of an area. The current district around US Bank Stadium is just the regional sports facility site; the proposed amendment would expand the district beyond the US Bank Stadium much like the district around Target Center exists today.

Are there consequences in denying this amendment?

Denying this amendment may slow down the removal of non-conforming billboards that may otherwise be removed to gain necessary sign credits for conversions.

What adverse effects may result with the adoption of this amendment?

The expanded Downtown Entertainment Billboard District will likely lead to the conversion of the existing off-premise signs in this area to larger, digital signs and this could negatively impact adjacent housing, although staff does not anticipate significant adverse effects if the district is expanded.

How does the amendment relate to other City ordinances?

CPED staff has not identified any other City ordinances that are affected by the proposed change.

What factors are influencing the timing of the proposed amendment? Why?

The recent construction of the US Bank Stadium is influencing the timing of the proposed ordinance amendment. When the US Bank Stadium was constructed, the structure and site were not subject to zoning code standards, and this includes the sign on the Viking ship sail. After talking to the parties who felt there was an equity here associated with the new signage, the council member of the ward is sponsoring this new zoning code text amendment. Previous amendments with larger district boundaries have gone before the City Planning Commission and have not been viewed favorably by the Commission. The updated amendment has scaled back the size and scope of the proposed district expansion.

How does the amendment compare to practices in other cities?

Minneapolis has two Downtown Entertainment Billboard Districts. The one district around the Target Center expands well beyond the perimeter of the regional sports facility; the other district is strictly the perimeter of the US Bank Stadium. This amendment aims to expand the boundaries beyond the regional sports facility much like the district around Target Center. No peer city research has been done given the small nature of the proposed expansion and because the proposed amendment aligns with one of the districts within the City.

How will this amendment implement the comprehensive plan?

The amendment will implement the following applicable policies of *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* and Minneapolis 2040.

Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth

Economic Development Policy 4.16

Economic Development Policy 4.16 Strengthen Downtown’s position as a regional cultural, entertainment and commercial center that serves Downtown employees, visitors, and residents.

- 4.16.3 Support an Entertainment District in Downtown with primarily entertainment uses at the street level.
- 4.16.5 Support development of Downtown Minneapolis as a unique retail, arts, and cultural destination.
- 4.16.6 Preserve and build upon Downtown’s cultural, entertainment and hospitality amenities, such as the convention center, professional sports venues and the Central Riverfront.

Minneapolis 2040

Policy 5

Visual Quality of New Development: Ensure a high-quality and distinctive physical environment in all parts of the city through building and site design requirements for both large and small projects.

h. Promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion caused by a proliferation of signage; ensuring that signage is appropriately scaled to the pedestrian experience.

This amendment will be consistent with the policies of the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth and Minneapolis 2040. Although CPED staff is concerned about the potential impacts of the district expansion, these concerns are mitigated by the requirement that the sign owners utilize sign credits, resulting in a net loss of billboard clutter in the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the City Planning Commission and City Council adopt staff findings to amend Title 20 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, as follows, and further recommends that Chapter 525 be returned to the author:

A. Text amendment to revise regulations for off-premise advertising sign and billboards.

Recommended motion: **Approve** the text amendment regarding the regulation of off-premise advertising signs and billboards.

Chapter 544 related to the Zoning Code: *Off-Premise Advertising Signs and Billboards*

ATTACHMENTS

1. Ordinance amending Chapter 544 related to the Zoning Code: Off-Premise Advertising Signs and Billboards
2. Map of existing Downtown Entertainment Billboard District
3. Map of proposed Downtown Entertainment Billboard District