



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: Urbana Plan Commission

FROM: Matt Wempe, Planner II

DATE: June 29, 2006

SUBJECT: Plan Case 1991-T-06: Text Amendment to amend Article IX of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance with regard to signs allowed without a permit

Introduction

The Zoning Administrator is requesting a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance regarding signs allowed without a permit. This includes such changes as adding/revising definitions for signs that will require permits, revising the types and definitions of signs allowed without permits, revising standards for subdivision signs, and creating a new table of standards for multiple family residential identification signs. The purpose of the proposed standards is to create signage that is more consistent with community desires while minimizing resulting legal non-conformities of existing signs.

Background

The proposed amendment was requested during public meetings for the recently approved omnibus text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. Both the Plan Commission and the City Council felt additional research was required to adequately set standards for these types of signs. Commissioners and Council members expressed particular concerns regarding residential identification signs, and felt that the standards proposed in the omnibus text amendment would permit signage that would have been inconsistent with surrounding neighborhoods. Planning staff has since completed extensive fieldwork, including photographing and measuring various signs. The proposed amendment is generally consistent with the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan, as it intends to better integrate signage to preserve and enhance the character of residential neighborhoods as called for by several goals and objectives.

The types of signs currently allowed without a permit are defined in Section IX-5 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance (see Exhibit A).

Discussion

The proposed changes use a strikethrough and underline notation system. A strikethrough is used to ~~delete~~ language, while an underline is used to add language. In addition, explanations of minor changes are included in notes in the margins. The proposed changes are discussed below:

Section IX-2. General Prohibition and Definitions

Add the following text:

- ~~Rental Property~~ Multi-Family Residential Identification Signs: Signs which identify the owner, manager, address and/or phone number of a multi-family residential building ~~or structure or complex, boarding or rooming house, or dormitory,~~ in accordance with Table V-1. Such signs shall be subject to the standards specified in Table IX-10. There may be no more than two such signs per premise. The total area of both signs shall not exceed 20 square feet, and the total height of such a sign, if freestanding, shall not exceed five feet.
- Institutional Signs: Any sign and/or ~~bulletin-message~~ board setting forth and denoting the name of and/or simple announcement for any public, charitable, educational, or religious institution, when located on the premises of such institution. ~~Such sign and/or bulletin board shall not exceed a total of 20 square feet in display surface. If building mounted, these signs shall be flat wall signs, and shall not project above the roofline or front façade of the building. If freestanding, the total height shall not exceed six feet.~~

Commentary: Both types of signs are currently allowed without a permit subject to certain standards. Staff is proposing moving the definitions of these signs to Section IX-2. General Prohibition and Definitions and requiring sign permits under revised standards. Sign standards for Institutional Signs are proposed will be located in Section IX-4.H (see below), and standards for Multi-Family Residential Identification Signs will be located in Table IX-10 (see Exhibit D).

Rental Property Identification Signs are proposed to be renamed since the standards now only apply to specific uses in multi-family zoning districts (see Table IX-10). The types of multi-family uses that are permitted to have signs reflect an attempt by staff to minimize the creation of large numbers of legally non-conforming signs as a result of the proposed amendment. As stated in Table IX-10, multi-family uses in lower residential zoning districts (R-1, R-2, R-3) would not be permitted to install such signs, and any existing signs would become legally non-conforming. Under this status, signs would not be allowed to be changed to another type of non-conforming sign, altered to prolong the sign's life, expanded, re-established after the sign has been removed for 90 days, re-established after damage in excess of 50% of the appraised replacement cost, or relocated. Per Section X-9, all non-conforming signs must be removed or brought into compliance within five years of the approval of this text amendment, but no sooner than 10 years from the date the original sign permit was issued.

The definition for Institutional Signs has been reworded so that regulations are not contained in the

definition. Standards for Institutional Signs are addressed in Section IX-4.H.

Section IX-4.H. General Sign Provisions

Add the following text:

- ~~*Institutional Signs: Any sign and/or bulletin board setting forth and denoting the name of or simple announcement for any public, charitable, educational, or religious institution, when located on the premises of such institution.*~~ Such signs and/or bulletin message boards shall not exceed a total of ~~20~~ 25 square feet in display area surface. If building mounted, these signs shall be flat wall signs, and shall not project above the roofline or front façade of the building. If freestanding, the total height shall not exceed ~~six~~ five feet. There may be one sign per frontage.

Commentary: The standards for Institutional Signs are the same for any zoning district. The proposed amendment would require a permit for such signs. The proposed standards are based on the average sign area and height of existing signs as observed by staff. Approximately 10 signs were measured, with an average display area of 25 square feet and an average height of 5 feet.

Section IX-5. Signs Allowed Without a Permit

Amend the text to read as follows:

A. *Signs Allowed in Certain Districts Subject to Regulation.* The signs specified in the following subsections are allowed in all zoning districts, unless otherwise specified, without a building permit but are subject to the conditions and limitations set forth herein. ~~Application to the City is still necessary to ensure zoning compliance for items 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 below.~~

1. *Official Signs:* Signs of a public, noncommercial nature erected by or on order of a public officer in the performance of a public duty. Such signs shall include but not be limited to safety signs, danger signs, traffic signs, memorial plaques, or signs indicating a scenic or historical point of interest.
2. *Flag, Public:* Flags bearing the official design of a nation, state, municipality, or noncommercial organization or institution. ~~There may be two of each type of flag per premise.~~
3. ~~*Rental Property Identification Signs:* Signs which identify the owner, manager, address and/or phone number of a multi-family residential building or structure. There may be no more than two such signs per premise. The total area of both signs shall not exceed 20 square feet, and the total height of such a sign, if freestanding, shall not exceed five feet.~~
4. *Integral Signs:* The name of a building, dates of construction, commemorative tablet, and the like, when carved into stone, concrete, or similar material or made of bronze,

aluminum, or other permanent type of construction and made an integral part of the building or structure.

5. ~~*Institutional Signs:* Any sign and/or bulletin board setting forth and denoting the name of or simple announcement for any public, charitable, educational, or religious institution, when located on the premises of such institution. Such sign and/or bulletin board shall not exceed a total of 20 square feet in display surface. If building mounted, these signs shall be flat wall signs, and shall not project above the roofline or front façade of the building. If freestanding, the total height shall not exceed six feet.~~
6. *Private Traffic Direction Signs and Related Signs:* Signs directing traffic movement onto a premise or within a premise. The total area shall not exceed five square feet, and the total height shall not exceed five feet. The area of such signs shall consist of not less than 50% words and/or symbols that indicate the desired traffic movement instruction. Such signs are considered to include parking directions, exit or entrance signs, drive-up window signs, restroom signs, and the like. Horizontal directional signs flush with paved areas are exempt from these standards.
7. *Property Sale or Rental Signs:* Any sign announcing the name of the owner, manager, realtor, or other person directly involved in the sale or rental of the property, or announcing the purpose for which it is being offered. Such signs may be freestanding or wall-mounted only. Signs may not emit direct illumination, and must be removed within 14 days after the sale or rental of the property. Property sale or rental signs shall not be placed in the public right-of-way. Property sale or rental signs shall be subject to the standards and provisions specified in Table IX-7.
8. *Home Occupation Signs:* Home occupation signs shall be wall-mounted, not internally illuminated and not to exceed ~~two~~ one square foot in area. There shall be only one such sign per building or structure for a home occupation permitted under Section V-13.B.

Commentary: The proposed changes would be consistent with the home occupation regulations in Section V-13.

9. *Subdivision Sign:* Any sign announcing the name of a residential, commercial, office or industrial subdivision or neighborhood. Such signs shall be subject to the standards specified in Table IX-8.
 - a) ~~These signs shall be confined to the major road accessing a subdivision or neighborhood.~~
 - b) ~~Subdivision signs shall not be placed in the public right of way.~~
 - c) ~~Subdivision signs shall be subject to the provisions and standards specified in Table IX-8.~~

Commentary: The standards for subdivision signs have been expanded to apply to all types of subdivisions to reflect their presence in Urbana. The three footnotes have been added to the text of Table IX-8.

10. *Development Signs:* Any sign announcing the names of architects, engineers, contractors, or other individuals or firms involved with the construction, alteration, or repair of a building or subdivision of property (but not including any product) or announcing the character of the building enterprise or the purpose for which the building is intended.
 - a) Such signs shall be confined to the site of the construction, alteration, or repair, and shall be removed within 21 days after completion of the work.
 - b) Signs shall conform to the standards provided in Table IX-7.
11. *Underground Public Utility Warning Signs:* Standard types of warning signs marking the routes of underground public utility pipes, conduits, and cables.
12. *Sandwich Boards:* Any portable sign primarily oriented towards pedestrian traffic. ~~that advertises daily specials or sales for a business.~~ Such signs shall not be located in the traveled roadway or block pedestrian traffic, and shall be moved indoors at the end of business hours. Such signs shall be permitted in the B-1, B-2, B-3U, B-4, B-4E, or MOR Zoning Districts, and shall not exceed eight square feet in area and four feet in height

Commentary: The definition of a sandwich board was changed to make it more content neutral.

13. House or Building Address: Any sign that sets forth the house or building address, provided that the individual characters of the signs do not exceed six inches in height.

Commentary: This definition was unintentionally deleted as part of the omnibus text amendment and needs to be reinstated.

Table IX-8. Standards for Subdivision Signs

Amend the table to read as depicted in Exhibit C.

Commentary: Several small changes are proposed to the table: The three footnotes from the subdivision sign definition in Section IX-5 have been moved to the table to reduce the amount of regulation contained in definitions. The maximum sign area and height have been reduced to reflect good examples of existing subdivision signs. The wording for the maximum number of signs permitted has been clarified.

Table IX-10. Standards for Multi-Family Residential Identification Signs

Add the table as depicted in Exhibit D.

Commentary: The proposed amendment will require permits for these types of signs, and the table is intended to provide signage standards. Since the signs are for multi-family residential only, zoning districts which do not permit multi-family have not been included in the table. Standards are split to reflect the less intensive nature of most mfr in residential zones. The proposed standards will create a number of legal non-conformities, as the average sign size is 18 square feet in display area and five feet in height. A handful of signs are internally illuminated. Despite the nonconformities, the proposed standards will help integrate signage and create a more residential feel. There is minimal multi-family residential in the business zoning districts, with most concentrated in the B-2 district along Main Street, west of Race.

Summary of Staff Findings

1. The proposed amendment was requested by both the City Council and Plan Commission, who felt that the proposed standards from the omnibus text amendment would permit signage that would have been inconsistent with surrounding neighborhoods
2. The proposed amendment is the result of extensive staff fieldwork that including photographing and measuring signs from throughout Urbana.
3. The proposed amendment will improve the appearance of residential areas by regulating the size and placement of signage to be more consistent with the residential character of the neighborhood.
4. The proposed text amendment will require sign permits for certain sign types that have not previously been reviewed to ensure consistency with sign standards.
5. The proposed amendment will assist in the daily administration and enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance by reducing inconsistencies and updating regulations to meet current professional practices.
6. The proposed amendment is consistent with the goals and objectives of the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan regarding ensuring the Zoning Ordinance fosters the goals for each unique area of the City.
7. The proposed amendment will update the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that the regulatory environment more closely matches the goals and policies of the City.

Options

The Plan Commission has the following options for recommendation to the Urbana City Council. In Plan Case 1991-T-06, the Plan Commission may:

- a. Forward this case to the City Council with a recommendation for approval of the proposed text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, as presented herein;
- b. Forward this case to the City Council with a recommendation for approval of the proposed text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, as modified by specific suggested changes; or
- c. Forward this case to the City Council with a recommendation for denial of the proposed text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the evidence presented in the discussion above, and without the benefit of considering additional evidence that may be presented at the public hearing, staff recommends that the Commission recommend **APPROVAL** of the proposed text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance in its entirety, as presented herein.

Prepared by:

Matt Wempe, Planner II

Attachments: Exhibit A: Section IX-5 (Current Version)
 Exhibit B: Section IX-5 Proposed Changes (Clean Version)
 Exhibit C: Proposed Table IX-8 Changes
 Exhibit D: Proposed Table IX-10 Addition
 Exhibit E: Select Sign Photos and Measurements

Exhibit A: Section IX-5 (Current Version)

Section IX-5. Signs Allowed Without a Permit Subject to Certain Regulations

- A. *Signs Allowed in Certain Districts Subject to Regulations.* The signs specified in the following subsections are allowed in all zoning districts, unless specified, without a building permit but are subject to the conditions and limitations set forth herein. Application to the City is still necessary to ensure zoning compliance for items 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 below.
1. *Official Signs:* Signs of a public, noncommercial nature erected by or on order of a public officer in the performance of a public duty. Such signs shall include but not be limited to safety signs, danger signs, traffic signs, memorial plaques, or signs indicating a scenic or historical point of interest.
 2. *Flags:* Flags bearing the official design of a nation, state, municipality, or noncommercial organization or institution. There may be two of each type of flag per premise.
 3. *Rental Property Identification Signs:* Signs which identify the owner, manager, address and/or phone number of a multi-family residential building or structure. There may be no more than two such signs per premise. The total area of both signs shall not exceed 20 square feet, and the total height of such a sign, if freestanding, shall not exceed five feet.
 4. *Integral Signs:* Names of buildings, dates of construction, commemorative tablets, and the like, when carved into stone, concrete, or similar material or made of bronze, aluminum, or other permanent type of construction and made an integral part of the building or structure.
 5. *Institutional Signs:* Any sign or bulletin board setting forth and denoting the name of or simple announcement for any public, charitable, educational, or religious institution, when located on the premises of such institution, provided such sign or bulletin board or both shall not exceed a total of 20 square feet in display surface. If building mounted, these signs shall be flat wall signs, and shall not project above the roofline or front façade of the building. If freestanding, the total height shall not exceed six feet.
 6. *Private Traffic Direction Signs and Related Signs:* Signs directing traffic movement onto a premise or within a premise. The total area shall not exceed five square feet, and the total height shall not exceed five feet. The area of such signs shall consist of not less than 50% words and/or symbols that indicate the desired traffic movement instruction. Such signs are considered to include parking directions, exit or entrance signs, drive-up window signs, restroom signs, and the like. Horizontal directional signs flush with paved areas are exempt from these standards.
 7. *Property Sale or Rental Signs:* Any sign announcing the name of the owner, manager, realtor, or other person directly involved in the sale or rental of the property, or announcing the purpose for which it is being offered. Such signs may be freestanding or wall-mounted only. Signs may not emit direct illumination, and must be removed within 14 days after the sale or rental of the property. Property sale or rental signs shall not be placed in the public right-of-way. Property sale or rental signs shall be subject to the standards and provisions specified in Table IX-7.
 8. *Home Occupation Signs:* Home occupation signs shall be wall-mounted and not to exceed two square foot in area. There shall be only one such sign per building or structure.
 9. *Subdivision Sign:* Any sign announcing the names of a residential subdivision or neighborhood.
 - a) These signs shall be confined to the major road accessing a subdivision or neighborhood.

- b) Subdivision signs shall not be placed in the public right-of-way.
 - c) Subdivision signs shall be subject to the provisions and standards specified in Table IX-8.
10. *Development Signs*: Any sign announcing the names of architects, engineers, contractors, or other individuals or firms involved with the construction, alteration, or repair of a building or subdivision of property (but not including any product) or announcing the character of the building enterprise or the purpose for which the building is intended.
- a) Such signs shall be confined to the site of the construction, alteration, or repair, and shall be removed within 21 days after completion of the work.
 - b) Signs shall conform to the standards provided in Table IX-7.
11. *Underground Public Utility Warning Signs*: Standard types of warning signs marking the routes of underground public utility pipes, conduits, and cables.
12. *Sandwich Boards*: Any portable sign that advertises daily specials or sales for a business. Such signs shall not be located in the traveled roadway or block pedestrian traffic, and shall be moved indoors at the end of business hours. Such signs shall be permitted in the B-1, B-2, B-3U, B-4, B-4E, or MOR Zoning Districts, and shall not exceed eight square feet in area and four feet in height.

Exhibit B: Section IX-5 Proposed Changes (Clean Version)

Section IX-2.B is hereby amended to **add** the following sentences:

Multi-Family Residential Identification Signs: Signs which identify the owner, manager, address and/or phone number of a multi-family residential building or complex, boarding or rooming house, or dormitory, in accordance with Table V-1. Such signs shall be subject to the standards specified in Table IX-10.

Institutional Signs: Any sign and/or message board setting forth and denoting the name or and/or simple announcement for any public, charitable, educational, or religious institution, when located on the premises of such institution.

Add Section IX-4.H to read as follows:

Institutional Signs. Such signs and/or message boards shall not exceed a total of 25 square feet in display area. If building mounted, these signs shall be flat wall signs, and shall not project above the roofline or front façade of the building. If freestanding, the total height shall not exceed five feet. There may be one sign per frontage.

Section IX-5 is hereby amended to read as follows:

- A. *Signs Allowed in Certain Districts Subject to Regulation.* The signs specified in the following subsections are allowed in all zoning districts, unless specified, without a building permit but are subject to the conditions and limitations set forth herein.
1. *Official Signs:* Signs of a public, noncommercial nature erected by or on order of a public officer in the performance of a public duty. Such signs shall include but not be limited to safety signs, danger signs, traffic signs, memorial plaques, or signs indicating a scenic or historical point of interest.
 2. *Flag, Decorative:* Flags that do not contain any commercial language. There may be no more than two such flags per premise.
 3. *Flag, Public:* Flags bearing the official design of a nation, state, municipality, or noncommercial organization or institution.
 4. *Integral Signs:* The name of a building, dates of construction, commemorative tablet, and the like, when carved into stone, concrete, or similar material or made of bronze, aluminum, or other permanent type of construction and made an integral part of the building or structure.
 5. *Private Traffic Direction Signs and Related Signs:* Signs directing traffic movement onto a premise or within a premise. The total area shall not exceed five square feet, and the total height shall not exceed five feet. The area of such

signs shall consist of not less than 50% words and/or symbols that indicate the desired traffic movement instruction. Such signs are considered to include parking directions, exit or entrance signs, drive-up window signs, restroom signs, and the like. Horizontal directional signs flush with paved areas are exempt from these standards.

6. *Property Sale or Rental Signs:* Any sign announcing the name of the owner, manager, realtor, or other person directly involved in the sale or rental of the property, or announcing the purpose for which it is being offered. Such signs may be freestanding or wall-mounted only. Signs may not emit direct illumination, and must be removed within 14 days after the sale or rental of the property. Property sale or rental signs shall not be placed in the public right-of-way. Property sale or rental signs shall be subject to the standards and provisions specified in Table IX-7.
7. *Home Occupation Signs:* Home occupation signs shall be wall-mounted, not internally illuminated and not exceed one square foot in area. There shall be only one such sign per building or structure for a home occupation permitted under Section V-13.B.
8. *Subdivision Sign:* Any sign announcing the name of a residential, commercial, office or industrial subdivision or neighborhood. Such signs shall be subject to the standards specified in Table IX-8.
9. *Development Signs:* Any sign announcing the names of architects, engineers, contractors, or other individuals or firms involved with the construction, alteration, or repair of a building or subdivision of property (but not including any product) or announcing the character of the building enterprise or the purpose for which the building is intended.
 - a) Such signs shall be confined to the site of the construction, alteration, or repair, and shall be removed within 21 days after completion of the work.
 - b) Signs shall conform to the standards provided in Table IX-7.
10. *Underground Public Utility Warning Signs:* Standard types of warning signs marking the routes of underground public utility pipes, conduits, and cables.
11. *Sandwich Boards:* Any portable sign primarily oriented towards pedestrian traffic. Such signs shall not be located in the traveled roadway or block pedestrian traffic, and shall be moved indoors at the end of business hours. Such signs shall be permitted in the B-1, B-2, B-3U, B-4, B-4E, or MOR Zoning Districts, and shall not exceed eight square feet in area and four feet in height

12. *House or Building Address*: Any sign that sets forth the house or building address, provided that the individual characters of the signs do not exceed six inches in height.

TABLE IX-8. STANDARDS FOR SUBDIVISION SIGNS

Districts Permitted	Maximum Number Permitted	Maximum Area of Sign	Maximum Height of Sign	Location of Sign
R-1 & R-2 Single-Family & R-3 Single- & Two-Family Residential	One sign per street providing direct access to the subdivision	25 square feet	10 feet	10-foot minimum setback wholly upon the premises.
R-4, R-5, R-6 Multiple Family Residential R-6B, Restricted Business & R-7, University Residential				
<p style="text-align: center;">AG Agriculture</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B-1 Neighborhood Business</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B-2 Neighborhood Business Arterial</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B-3 General Business</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B-3U General Business University</p>				Signs shall conform to the setback requirements for structures in applicable district.
MOR Mixed Office Residential				
<p style="text-align: center;">B-4 Central Business</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B-4E Central Business Expansion</p>		25 square feet	15 feet	
IN Industrial		25 square feet	15 feet	

TABLE IX-10. STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL RENTAL PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

Districts Permitted	Maximum Number Permitted	Maximum Area of Sign	Maximum Height of Freestanding Sign	Location of Sign
<p>R-4, R-5, & R-6 Multiple Family Residential</p> <p>R-6B Restricted Business</p> <p>MOR Mixed Office Residential</p>	<p>One per property</p>	<p>15 square feet</p> <p>Internal sign illumination shall be prohibited</p>	<p>5 feet</p>	<p>10-foot minimum setback wholly upon the premises.</p>
<p>B-1 Neighborhood Business</p> <p>B-2 Neighborhood Business Arterial</p> <p>B-3 General Business</p> <p>B-3U General Business University</p> <p>CCD Campus Commercial District</p> <p>B-4 Central Business</p> <p>B-4E Central Business Expansion</p>	<p>One per frontage</p>	<p>20 square feet</p>	<p>5 feet</p>	<p>10-foot minimum setback wholly upon the premises.</p>

Boarding/Rooming House Sign Examples



Europa House (Busey and Oregon)

Area: 27.5 square feet

Height: 5 feet

Located in the R-7, University Residential Zoning District



Lincoln Green House (Michigan and Busey)

Area: 8 square feet

Height: 3.5 feet

Miscellaneous Fraternity/Sorority Examples along Ohio Street



Institutional Sign Examples



First Wesleyan Church (Maple and Illinois)

Area: 17.4 square feet
Height: 4 feet
Multiple signs on property



St. Patrick Church (Main and Busey)

Area: 14 square feet
Height: 5 feet
Reader board part of sign



St. Matthews Church (Philo and McHenry)

Area: 43 square feet
Height: 5.5 feet
Two signs join at an angle



Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center (Broadway and Michigan)

Area: 21 square feet
Height: 4.5 feet
Same specifications as other USD #116 and UPD signs

Multi-Family Residential Property Identification Sign Examples



New Yorker (Cedar and Green)
Area: 12 square feet
Height: 2 feet
Multiple signs on property



706 W. Elm Street (Elm and Coler)



502 and 504 W. Elm (Elm and McCullough)

Area: 18 square feet
Height: 5 feet
Internally illuminated



201 S. Grove (Grove and High)

Area: 18 square feet
Height: 4.75 feet

Multi-Family Residential Property Identification Sign Examples



Campus Oaks Condos (McCullough and Green)

Area: 18 square feet

Height: 5.5 feet

Located in MOR, Mixed Office Residential Zoning District



709 W. Green Street (Green and Busey)



Colorado Trace Apartments (Cottage Grove and Colorado)

Area: 23 square feet

Height: 3 feet



Glenwood Oaks Apartments (Cottage Grove and Colorado)

Area: 10 square feet

Height: 5.75 feet

Multiple Signs on Property