

Information Item

Date: June 12, 2023

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Aaron King, Assistant City Manager
Chris Murphy, Director of Planning and Development Services

Subject:

Info - Update on the Winston-Salem Sign Ordinance Amortization Progress at the June 12 Community Development, Housing, and General Government Committee meeting.

Strategic Focus Area: Livable Neighborhoods

Strategic Objective: N/A

Strategic Plan Action Item: N/A

Key Work Item: N/A



Summary of Information:

In 2007, City Council adopted new rules for on-premise signs. Central to these rules were reduced height and area limits for freestanding signs. The objective of these standards was to create an environment that encourages business growth and development while protecting commercial districts and surrounding neighborhoods from visual clutter. The 2007 standards included different size limits for signs in various zoning districts and a 15-year amortization period. At the end of their 15-year period, all signs in the City would be required to meet the new sign standards.

In 2017, staff conducted an inventory of signs to see what percentage had come into compliance with the 2007 standards. Of 3,087 total freestanding signs, 37% were found to be non-compliant (1,118 signs). Staff mailed owners of non-compliant signs notices in 2018 that they would have until June 30, 2022, to bring their signs into compliance with the UDO. However, due to the economic impacts of the COVID pandemic, Council extended the amortization period to June 30, 2024. A second letter was sent to non-compliant sign owners in 2022, notifying them of this deadline extension.

As we are slightly more than one year away from the end of the amortization period, staff has completed another analysis of sign ordinance compliance. Currently, 3,308 freestanding signs are located in the City, 684 of which are non-compliant, equaling a compliance rate of 79%. In order to further encourage compliance, a third letter has been sent to property owners to remind them they have approximately 12 months to comply with the ordinance.

We will also send a six (6) month letter in December of 2023. After July 1, 2024, a final sign inventory will be completed to identify signs which are still non-compliant. Following completion of the inventory, Planning staff will send notices of violation (NOVs) to non-compliant property owners and provide assistance to help them meet ordinance requirements.