



Legislation Text

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**PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: 3/11/2019

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Community Development Department

APPLICATION REQUEST:

ZTA2019-0001: Zone text amendment to Title 17 of the Corona Municipal Code amending Chapter 17.74 (Signs) to revise the regulations for parcel identification signs for commercial properties. (Applicant: City of Corona).

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Planning and Housing Commission recommend **APPROVAL OF ZTA2019-0001** to the City Council, based on the findings contained in the staff report.

PROJECT SITE SUMMARY

City wide for commercial properties not governed by specific plans.

BACKGROUND

At the request of Councilmember Wes Speake, the city's sign ordinance was set for discussion at the Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on January 9, 2019. The discussion centered on the city's regulations for commercial center pylon signs that are not located within specific plans and governed by the city's municipal code under Chapter 17.74. The purpose of the discussion was to provide more opportunity for tenant identification signage on the freestanding pylon signs located along street frontages. Currently, regardless of the size of the commercial center, pylon signs are limited to three tenant spaces. This restriction has resulted in a hardship for owners of larger commercial centers in leasing tenant space because of the inability to provide signage along a centers frontage. Specifically, the commercial center located at the northwest corner of Magnolia Avenue and Rimpau Avenue has engaged with staff on more than one occasion to obtain additional signage space on their existing pylon sign facing Magnolia Avenue. The pylon sign currently contains three tenants and based on the city's sign ordinance, no additional signage space for tenants are permitted. The owner currently remodeled the center and has attracted interest from potential tenants to occupy the vacant in-line tenant spaces. However, before certain tenants will commit to a Letter of Intent to lease the space they are requesting that signage be guaranteed to their business along the center's street frontage.

Staff provided information at the Infrastructure Committee regarding the regulations of signs throughout the city because properties located in a specific plan will be allowed signage different from the city's sign ordinance under CMC Chapter 17.74. There are locations in the city where a specific plan allows more than three tenants on a commercial pylon sign. For informational purposes the following is a list of the specific plans that allow more than three tenants on a commercial pylon sign for neighborhood commercial centers. Regional shopping centers such as the McKinley Centers on McKinley Avenue north of State Route 91 and The Crossings on the east side of Interstate 15 at Cajalco Road were excluded because of their large size and regional draw from patrons outside the city. The signage for a neighborhood commercial center is less than a regional center because the neighborhood center serves most of the city's service population (residents and those working in the city).

Pylon Signs.

- North Main Street Specific Plan. Commercial centers 15 acres and greater allowed 500 square feet of sign area and 6 tenant spaces; 60-foot height limit. Commercial centers less than 15 acres allowed 220 square feet of sign area and number of tenant spaces allowed per approved sign program; 30-foot height limit.
- El Cerrito Specific Plan. Commercial centers allowed 250 square feet of signage and 4 tenant spaces; 60-foot height limit.
- Eagle Glen Specific Plan. Commercial centers allowed 230 square feet of signage and 4 tenant spaces; 40-foot height limit.
- Corona Vista Specific Plan. Commercial centers within 300 feet of Interstate 15 allowed a pylon sign up to 250 square feet of signage and 4 tenant spaces.

Staff also researched the signage requirements in the municipal codes of other cities. The research however does not include specific plans within those cities because of the volume of research required. Based on the standards in the municipal code, the following cities allow pylon signs in the following manner.

- Norco. 150 square feet for centers over 15 acres and no tenant limit; 25-foot height limit. Properties with freeway frontage are allowed 600 square feet of signage for centers over 5 acres and up to 6 tenants and centers less than 5 acres are allowed 250 square feet of signage. Sign height determined by Planning Commission.
- Riverside. 110 square feet for centers 10 acres, but no more than 25 acres with no tenant space limit; 25-foot height limit. Properties with freeway frontage are allowed 225 square feet of signage for centers 9 acres, but no more than 25 acres and no tenant space limit, and centers greater than 25 acres are allowed 500 square feet of signage and no tenant space limit. Sign heights are 40 feet and 60 feet, respectively.
- Murrieta. Properties with freeway frontage are allowed 225 square feet of signage for sites 25 acres or less and no tenant space limit and centers over 25 acres are allowed 500 square feet of signage and no tenant limit. Sign heights are 40 feet and 60 feet, respectively.

Staff decided to use signage regulations already adopted by various specific plans in the city to propose the amendment being presented for ZTA2019-0001. The proposed amendment was discussed at a subsequent Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on February 6, 2019. The

following table was provided to the Committee and shows the proposed amendment compared to the existing requirement in the municipal code. The Committee expressed a 50/50 split on the proposed changes with Councilmember Speake in support of the changes and Mayor Scott being neutral. The Mayor indicated he needed to understand visually how much bigger the pylon sign would look with the proposed changes. Exhibit B has been provided to show the visual comparison of a parcel identification sign with three tenants and six tenants. The summary minutes of the Infrastructure Committee meetings on January 9, 2019 and February 6, 2019 are provided as Exhibits C and D.

Current Pylon Sign Regulations (CMC Chapter 17.74)	Proposed Pylon Sign Regulations
Pylon signs allowed in the CP, C2 and C3 zones	No change
Pylon signs within building setback limited to a 1:1 ratio (1 square foot sign per lineal foot of property frontage) not to exceed 50 square feet.	Eliminate limit of 50 square feet and allow the sign area to be determined the same as signs located outside the setback and based on the 1:1 ratio.
Sign height: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 feet. • 40 feet for properties contiguous to a freeway. 	No change.
Commercial centers allowed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 pylon sign per street frontage. • Maximum of 3 tenants allowed on sign. • Size: 1:1 ratio but shall not exceed 200 square feet. 	Commercial or office centers <u>10 acres and greater</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 pylon sign per street frontage. • Centers with more than one street frontage may have 2 pylon signs provided the other street frontage has no pylon sign. The size of both signs shall not exceed the 1:1 of the property frontage. • Size: 1:1 ratio but shall not exceed 240 square feet. • Name of the center excluded from the maximum size of the sign if it does not exceed 32 square feet. • Maximum of 6 tenants allowed on sign. Commercial or office centers <u>less than 10 acres</u> : Same as above except as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: 1:1 ratio but shall not exceed 200 square feet. • Maximum of 4 tenants on sign.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

ZTA2019-0001 is an application by the City of Corona to amend the city’s Sign Ordinance governed by Chapter 17.74 of the Corona Municipal Code (CMC). The amendment is intended to provide more signage opportunity for tenants within commercial centers that are 10 acres and greater in addition to centers that are less than 10 acres. The amendment proposes changes to Section 17.74.130 (l) of the CMC which describes the regulations for parcel identification signs in the commercial zones, specifically the C-2 (Restricted Commercial), C-3 (General Commercial) and C-P

(Professional Office) zones. Exhibits A1-A3 shows the redlined changes to the ordinance. In summary the amendment would make the following changes.

- Increase the number of tenants allowed on a parcel identification sign from 3 tenants to 6 tenants if the center is 10 acres and greater and to 4 tenants if the center is less than 10 acres.
- Continue to allow one parcel identification sign per street frontage but allow a second parcel identification on the same street frontage provided the other street frontage has no parcel identification sign. The total sign area for both signs combined on one street frontage shall not exceed the maximum sign area allowed.
- Increase the maximum allowed sign area from 200 square feet to 240 square feet for centers that are 10 acres and greater.
- Allow 32 square feet of sign area to be exempt from the maximum sign area to allow the name of the center to be advertised on the parcel identification sign.
- Increase the number of tenants from 2 to 3 on monument signs for multi-tenant office professional business or industrial centers.

The amendment would not change how the size of the sign is determined for a property. The city would still use a 1:1 ratio meaning one square foot of sign per lineal foot of property street frontage. The only change to the size is the maximum allowed sign area increases to 240 square feet from 200 square feet for centers 10 acres and greater. All other commercial properties would still be limited to the 200 square foot maximum sign area. The amendment does not change the height of parcel identification signs which is 15 feet but can go up to 40 feet for properties contiguous to a freeway.

Section 17.74.150 also shows the applicable changes reflected in Table 1 *Parcel Identification*.

The language in Section 17.74.170, Non-conforming and Abandoned Signs, is also being amended to protect signs that were permitted (or grandfathered) under previously adopted regulations that may no longer exist. An existing sign that was permitted under previous regulations would be allowed to continue and altered provided that the location of the sign is protected in place. However, if the sign is relocated the current signage provisions at the time of relocation would apply.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Per Section 15061 of the State Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Section 3.07 of the City's Local CEQA Guidelines, ZTA2019-0001 is exempt from CEQA because the text changes to the CMC will not cause a significant effect on the environment and it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, a Notice of Exemption has been prepared for the project.

FISCAL IMPACT

The amendment was initiated by the city. Therefore, no application fees are associated with this amendment.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A 10-day public notice was advertised in the Sentinel Weekly News.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The proposed amendment considers changes occurring in the market with respect to commercial retail enterprises. The amendment continues to support the investment in storefront commercial shopping centers to ensure their sustainability in a changing economy and provides an opportunity for businesses to be visible from a street frontage. Additionally, the amendment allows a property owner more flexibility in providing signage for their tenants along certain street frontages that may have a higher volume of pass-by traffic. The amendment continues to cap the overall size of signs on a property and maintains the city's use of the 1:1 ratio to ensure the size of the sign is proportional to the size of the property. Therefore, the additional square footage being allowed for the larger commercial centers that are 10 acres and greater is still controlled by the 1:1 ratio so that signage does not overwhelm the frontage of the property. Therefore, based on the following findings, ZTA2019-0001 is recommended for approval.

FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL OF ZTA2019-0001

1. A preliminary exemption assessment has been conducted by the City of Corona and it has shown that this project does not require further environmental assessment because the text changes to the CMC will not cause a significant effect on the environment and it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment.
2. The proposed amendment is consistent with the General Plan for the following reasons:
 - a. *The amendment allows property owners of commercial centers the opportunity to attract tenants and new businesses that may not otherwise locate within certain centers due to lack of signage, which is consistent with General Plan Policy 1.11.4 to periodically monitor the market for retail commercial and office development, assessing the adequacy of existing sites to accommodate and capability of existing buildings to be adaptively re-used for community-desired commercial uses and adjust applicable codes and ordinances as necessary.*
 - b. *The amendment would encourage property owners of commercial centers to invest in updated parcel identification signage if the opportunity exists to allow more tenant advertisement along a street frontage, which is consistent with General Plan Policy 1.11.5 to promote reinvestment in declining shopping centers and districts, with an emphasis on new retail uses that serve adjacent neighborhoods and contribute to the overall vitality of the centers.*
3. The proposed amendment is consistent with intent of Title 17 of the Corona Municipal Code for the following reason:
 - a. *Title 17 of the CMC describes design and construction parameters for commercial properties based on the zoning of the property including the placement and size of signage and the proposed amendment continues to provide regulations on the development of commercial parcel identification signage to ensure orderly development of property.*

4. The proposed amendment will provide for the public health, safety, and welfare for the following reasons:

- a. *The commercial parcel identification signage regulations being proposed by this zone text amendment ensure orderly development of commercial properties to provide for public health, safety and welfare.*

PREPARED & SUBMITTED BY: JOANNE COLETTA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

EXHIBITS

1. Exhibit A1 - A3 - Redlined version of Sign Ordinance (CMC Sections 17.74.130, 17.74.150 and 17.74.170)
2. Exhibit B - Parcel Identification Sign Visual Example
3. Exhibit C - Infrastructure Committee Minutes (January 9, 2019).
4. Exhibit D - Infrastructure Committee Minutes (February 6, 2019).
5. Exhibit E - Notice of Environmental Exemption.