



Case Study on Signage in City of Denver

Beginning in 1988, the City of Denver developed and implemented a substantial and collective city-wide urban redevelopment and improvement initiative called the *Plan 2000* and *Blueprint Denver*. It is within this initiative that on-premise sign code changes took place in the City of Denver in 2003 and 2005. Denver's signage priorities and policy positions are divided into three "on-premise" categories related to: citywide signage requirements, sign restrictions in enumerated districts and signage specifics in mixed-use districts.

1. Citywide: Signs not subject to a permit:

- Election signs are limited to posting on private property not more than 90 days prior to an election; with only one allowed on private property per street frontage and limited to no larger than 8 square feet.
- Temporary Commercial Signs, which identify, advertise or promote a temporary activity and/or sale of merchandise or service of a business use located on the property are limited in placement to 45 days and cannot exceed 50% of the maximum permitted sign area for the permitted use on the property.
- Real Estate signs cannot be placed on the public right of way and are limited to one per street frontage. They can be no larger than 5 square feet, and may be located no more than 6 feet above grade.

2. Citywide: Signs subject to a permit:

- Comprehensive Sign Plans - Certain large facilities may have signs according to an approved comprehensive sign plan for the facility. As defined, the facility must have a minimum ground floor area of fifty thousand square feet (50,000), or a minimum zone lot area of one hundred thousand (100,000) square feet.

3. Signs permitted in Enumerated Districts:

| | <u>No. Per Lot</u> | <u>Height</u> | <u>Size</u> |
|---|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| • For Residential (commercial signage) | 2 | 6 feet | 12 sq. ft. |
| • For Mixed Use & Low Density Business (most retail centers) | 2 | 12 feet | 50 sq. ft. |
| • For High Density Office & Institutional | 5 (2/front) | 25 feet | 100 sq. ft. |
| • For Shopping Centers & Industrial (multi-acreage malls, etc.) | 5 (2/front) | 32 feet | 200 sq. ft. |
| • For Central & Historical Business District | 1 (projecting – maximum 1 foot from building wall) | | |
| • For "Joint identification signs" (3 or more businesses) | 1 | 25 feet | |

4. On-Premise Amortization

Denver has a 5-year amortization for on-premise signs. Methods used by the City of Denver for decreasing "grandfathered" on-premise signs during this 5-year period include: a) whenever an old sign is removed, it can only be replaced with one that conforms to the sign control regulations for that district, b) the installation of any new signs on a property is prohibited until any nonconforming sign is replaced, c) modification or maintenance of a nonconforming sign is prohibited, and d) the right to maintain a sign is terminated if it is "abandoned."

Results

Most of the on-premise sign changes enacted in 2003 related to the reduction in height, size and number of signs per lot and related "grand-fathering" provisions have worked well in reducing signage throughout the city and the changes are easier to enforce because a level playing field has been created through strong enforcement under the direction of Neighborhood Inspection Services and zoning administrators for sign control. The Denver business community generally feels that the sign code compliance and enforcement problems that existed before 2003 have been overcome.