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# Current Sign Ordinances

Angie Wiese, DSI Director  
City Council Policy Committee  
April 1, 2026



## Sec. 64.101. – Intent and purpose.

- The purpose of this chapter is as follows:
  - (a) To regulate the time, place, and manner in which signs may be exhibited;
  - (b) To protect the right of information transmittal;
  - (c) To promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the community;
  - (d) To encourage a concern for the visual environment which makes the city a more desirable place to live;
  - (e) To identify and promote business and industry in the city;
  - (f) To reduce hazards which may be caused by signs projecting over public rights-of-way;
  - (g) To protect open space and areas characterized by unique environmental, historical and architectural resources;
  - (h) Along advanced speed arteries, to promote the safety, convenience and enjoyment of public travel, to protect the public investment in highway beautification, and to preserve and enhance the natural scenic beauty or the aesthetic features and roadways in scenic and adjacent areas;
  - (i) To reduce the number of nonconforming signs in the city, particularly billboards;
  - (j) To control the quality of materials, construction, electrification and maintenances of all signs;
  - (k) To promote traffic safety by reducing the distracting effect of signage on motorists and cyclists; and
  - (l) To deter crime by improving visibility from a business into the street and from the street into a business; and
  - (m) To provide for the administration of this chapter.



# DSI- Proactive, Reactive Enforcement

- ~13 sign-related complaints in 2025 before cyberattack
- ~15% of BZA cases are for signs
- ~44 licensed sign contractors (Ch 64.202)
  - \$8,000 surety bond
- ~250 building permits per year
  - Zoning review
  - Footings, structural attachment
  - Historical review, if applicable (Ch 74)
  - Electrical inspection, additional permit
  - Obstruction of sidewalk/street, additional permit (Ch134)
- 17 special sign districts (Ch 64)
- Skyway requirements, as an extension of ROW (Ch 140)
- Interior window coverage limitations for cashiers
- Advertising signs prohibited (Ch 64.420)
- Real estate signs regulated on parkways (Ch 170)
- Courtesy bench, news rack signs regulated (Ch 127, 131)
- Some signage required for public information/welfare
  - Such as signage notifying parkers where to call if their vehicle is towed
- Election signs regulated (Ch 30)

About 50 people in DSI have some responsibilities for sign enforcement, including one FTE for sign licenses and zoning review



# DSI Goals of Sign Reform

Reduce administrative burden on applicants and staff

- Incorporate plain language regulations
- Allow most common use cases by-right
- Allow other licensed contractors to pull sign permits



Focus on safety

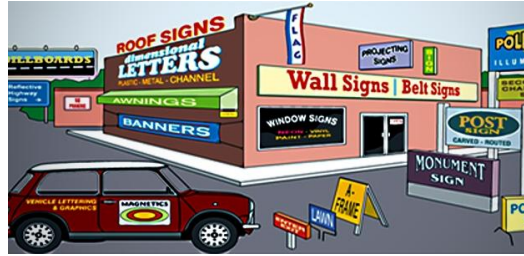
- Structural stability
- Enforcement for abandoned signs
- Line of sight for traffic and ped safety
- Crime prevention through environmental design





# DSI Goals of Sign Reform

- Recognize vibrancy signs achieve in our community
- Recognize importance of branding for business





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# Signs Zoning Study Initiation

Tony Johnson,  
Principal City Planner



# Sign Zoning Study Initiation Overview

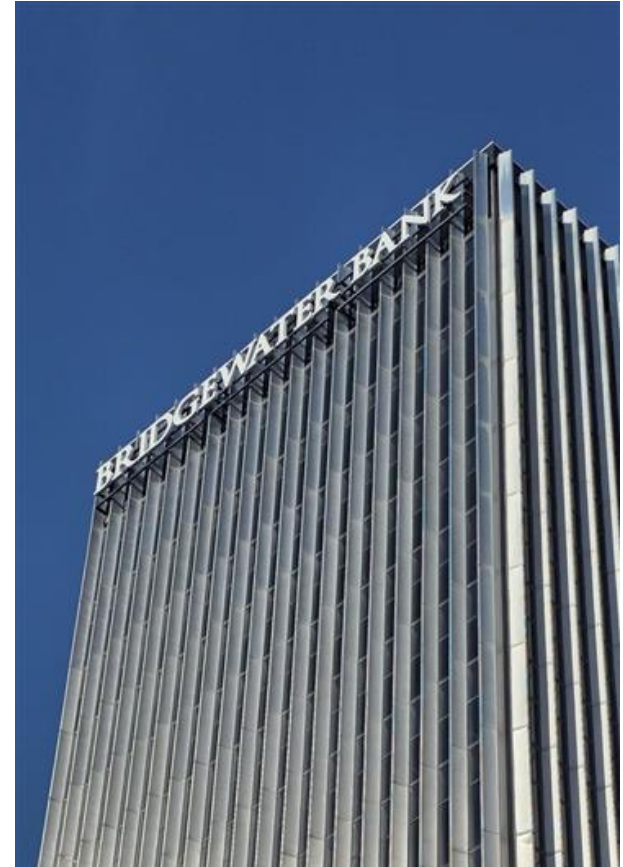
- Presentation Outline
  1. Background
  2. Downtown Alliance and St. Paul Area Chamber Letter Summary
  3. Additional Staff Recommendations
  4. Process and Timeline





# Background – Sign Zoning Study Initiation

- Downtown Alliance and the Chamber of Commerce sent letters requesting changes to sign regulations.
- City Council and Mayor's Office asked staff to identify additional issues and the processes to address a broader package of sign regulation changes.
- Periodic updates have been made to the sign chapter over the years, but there has not been a comprehensive chapter update.
- Many of the provisions may be out of date or more restrictive than our peer cities, particularly in our downtown districts.





# Asks from The Downtown Alliance and St. Paul Area Chamber

## Zoning code changes requested in letters

- Changes to projecting sign regulations
- Changes to sign allotments
- More permit exemptions added to code
- Changes to off-premise advertising restriction
- Less subjective language

## Non-zoning code related issues identified

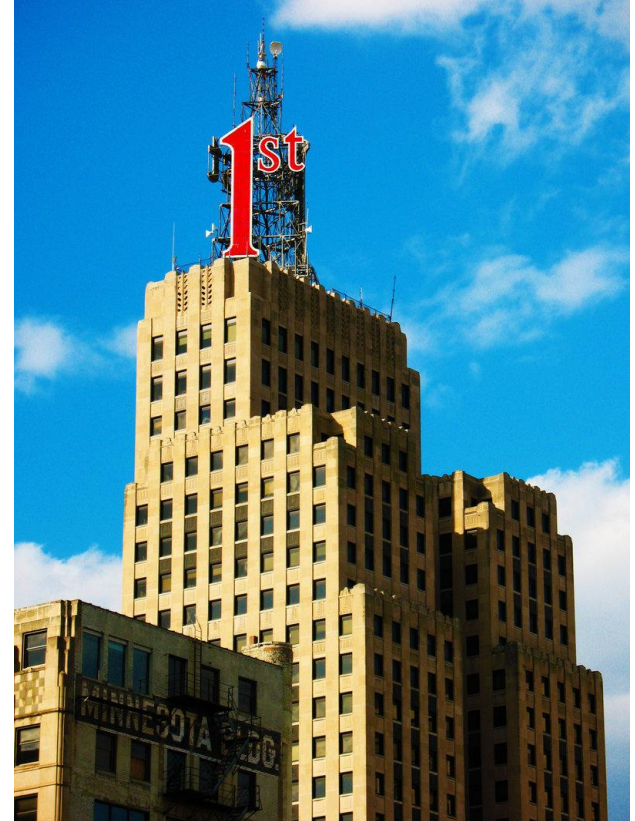
- Historic preservation standards and review
- Skyway signage restrictions (sandwich boards)
- Process improvements (will be addressed somewhat through code changes)





# Additional Scope Recommended by PED

- Simplification of district and overlay district standards.
  - Deletion of “Special Sign District” overlays.
  - Consolidation of specific regulations by district standards.
  - More uniform temporary signage regulations (timeframes, etc.).
- Removing standards from definitions
- Fixing contradictory language
- Providing more flexibility in residential districts.
- Reducing the amount of prohibited sign types. (e.g. roof signs)





# General Process and Schedule

## City Council

- Initiate a Zoning Study of the sign code at the **April 8th** City Council Meeting.

## Planning Commission

- Staff presentation with recommended edits in May
- Public Hearing
- Recommendation **this Summer**

## City Council

- Review, Public Hearing and adoption **this fall**

