

## CITY COUNCIL MEMORANDUM

**FROM:** The Office of the City Manager    **DATE:** January 27, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** TR25-01, Ordinance No. 3886, Consideration of amendments to Chapter 106, Signs, of the North Richland Hills Code of Ordinances to revise standards for electronic message boards and wall signs.  
**PRESENTER:** Clayton Comstock, Managing Director of Development Services

### **SUMMARY:**

Revisions are proposed to the sign regulations to update standards for electronic message signs, allow wall signs on three faces of the building, and revise the area calculation and location standards for wall signs.

### **GENERAL DESCRIPTION:**

At the January 13, 2025, work session, City Council discussed possible revisions to the sign regulations regarding electronic message signs and wall signs. Following the discussion, City Council directed staff to place the proposed sign regulations amendment on the January 27, 2025, agenda for consideration.

A summary of the proposed revisions included in the attached ordinance is described below. In addition, the attached Summary of Sign Regulations Revisions summarizes the section of the regulations where these revisions are proposed.

### ***Electronic message signs***

Section 106-12(a) of the sign regulations provide standards for electronic message signs. The standards were originally adopted in May 1999 (Ordinance 2374), with the current standards adopted in November 2007 (Ordinance 2962).



**EXAMPLE ELECTRONIC MESSAGE SIGN MEETING CURRENT STANDARDS**



Under the current standards, there are two circumstances in which electronic message signs may be permitted:

1. As part of a pole sign in the Freeway Corridor Overlay District along Loop 820 and SH 183; and
2. In the U (School, Church, and Institutional) zoning district as part of a monument sign, and the display cannot exceed two-thirds of the sign message area. A standard monument sign structure is allowed to be 75 square feet in size, with a message area of 50 square feet. The electronic sign may not exceed 33 square feet. Most importantly, the electronic display is restricted to low intensity amber or red color lighting with a black background.

The standards have been in place for over 17 years. An update to the standards is proposed to address some of the common issues faced by staff and those institutions seeking approval of electronic message signs. These include:

- Current standards apply to a zoning district rather than a property or land use. This has become problematic when a public school or church—which is allowed in any zoning district—is located on property in a zoning district other than U (School, Church, and Institutional).
- Current standards do not address residential adjacency or provide a process for measuring illumination.
- Industry technology surpasses the limitations in the current standards.
- Monochrome (red and amber) signs are uncommon and difficult to source.
- The update would align standards with relevant digital billboard requirements found elsewhere in the sign regulations.
- Updated standards would allow for enhanced communication of community events.

One of the original intents of the standards was to permit electronic message signs for schools and houses of worship. However, since the current standards permit the signs based on zoning rather than land use, some Birdville ISD schools have requested zoning changes to the U (School, Church, and Institutional) district for the sole purpose of allowing the sign to be installed on the property. The proposed update would base the allowance for the signs on land use rather than zoning and include land uses such as public and private schools, universities or colleges, houses of worship, outdoor amusement parks or outdoor theme parks, public parks, and governmental buildings.

The current standards lack relevant design and operational criteria. The proposed update includes modest standards like those required for digital billboards, such as message transitions; automatic dimming technology; and prohibitions on animation, flashing, and moving images. Additionally, residential adjacency standards are included for signs located within or next to single-family residential areas to protect residential property owners from light pollution and nighttime nuisances.

### ***Wall signs***

Section 106-13(b)(1) of the sign regulations limit wall signage to two facades on a commercial structure. The proposed amendment would revise this section to allow wall signs on three facades of a commercial building. The table below notes examples in the past five years where wall signage was approved on three or four facades of a building.

BUSINESS	LOCATION	APPROVAL NOTES
Raising Canes	5036 Rufe Snow Dr	Wall signs permitted on three (3) facades (SRB 2021-01 – June 14, 2021)
Chick-fil-A	6645 NE Loop 820	Walls signs permitted on four (4) facades (ZC22-0047 – May 8, 2023)
Starbucks	6251 Davis Blvd	Walls signs permitted on four (4) facades (ZC23-0048 – May 8, 2023)
Braum's	8364 Davis Blvd	Wall signs permitted on three (3) facades (ZC 2019-17 – November 12, 2019)
Brakes Plus	8612 Precinct Line Rd	Wall signs permitted on three (3) facades (ZC 2019-21 – August 24, 2020)
Jasons Deli	5131 Rufe Snow Dr	Wall signs permitted on four (4) facades (SRB24-0009 – April 22, 2024)
Strickland Bros	6450 Rufe Snow Dr	Wall signs permitted on three (3) facades (SRB24-0012 – June 24, 2024)
Chicken Express	5100 Davis Blvd	Wall signs permitted on three (3) facades (ZC23-0075 – October 9, 2023)
U-Haul	8225 Boulevard 26	Wall signs permitted on three (3) facades for new building (ZC24-0115 – December 9, 2024)

Section 106-13(b)(1)(b) of the sign regulations provides for the calculation of the maximum area of a wall sign. Currently, the maximum area of wall signs must not exceed fifteen percent (15%) of the habitable wall area, which is calculated as the width of the exterior wall and the interior ceiling height of the building or lease space. Interior ceiling heights can vary between buildings of similar design and can be different in adjacent lease spaces in the same building. This can lead to an imbalanced application of the standard. After surveying multiple municipalities' sign codes, it is also evident that NRH's definition of "habitable wall area" including interior ceiling height is unique. The standard often creates delays in permit reviews because sign contractors are more used to using exterior wall surface.

The proposed amendment would revise this calculation to use the width of the exterior wall and the height of the exterior wall from the finished floor elevation or top of foundation to the top of the parapet wall or the bottom of the eave, whichever is tallest. This would



result in slightly larger wall signs but provide a sign area proportional to the exterior size of the building.

Section 106-13(b)(1)(e) of the sign regulations provides for the placement of wall signs on the building or tenant space. Currently, this section requires wall signs to be placed flat against the wall of the building and prohibits the sign from projecting above the cornice line, parapet wall, apparent flat roofline, eaves line of the building or extending beyond the side wall of the building.

With the slight increase in sign area noted above, clarifications for the placement of wall signs are recommended. The proposed amendment would stipulate that wall signs be located at least twelve (12) inches horizontally from the edge of a wall or tenant space, and at least twelve (12) inches vertically from a cornice line, parapet wall, the apparent flat roofline, or eaves line of the building. This standard provides sufficient space between signs on a building to improve visibility of signs and reduce potential visual clutter.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve Ordinance No. 3886.