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Reno City Council - 12.4.24 Meeting - D.1

From Eric Lerude <ewlerude@gmail.com>

Date Tue 12/3/2024 11:11 AM

To Public Comment - CC <PublicComment@reno.gov>

Dear Reno City Council,

Please reject the proposal to allow unlimited signage in the downtown entertainment district.

If anyone applies to install any unlimited or excessive signage, it should have to go through a process where public input is requested and provided.

Having more signage in this area will be more detrimental than positive. Downtown Reno is already known for being tacky to a large degree. Adding more signage will bolster this reputation. It will not beautify the area. In addition, this is not the downtown Reno of generations ago when no one lived in downtown Reno. The City of Reno wants more residents to live in downtown Reno. Having more signage may discourage more people from wanting to live in downtown Reno. Especially if those signs adversely impact the quality of life of those residents. Who wants a giant digital sign flashing all day and all night in the window of people's homes?

Thank you for your time and consideration, and your service to our community.

Eric Lerude

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December 3, 2024

Re: Reno City Council Agenda Item D.1, Dec. 4, 2024

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

Scenic Nevada is opposed to allowing non-casino businesses in the downtown Mixed-Use Entertainment District (MD-ED) the almost unlimited signage allowed normally only for casinos.

Our request is to reject staff's proposal for the MD-ED and to leave intact the more reasonable and practical sign regulations that exist today for all non-casino businesses in the mixed-use districts, including the MD-ED.

Attached is the current sign code chart that shows how the MD-ED, as one of the mixed-use districts, is limited to mostly eight-foot signs (highlighted). The next attachment is the proposed, red-lined draft to be discussed Dec. 4 that shows the text changes to the sign code chart granting unlimited signage to all businesses in the downtown district.

The MD-ED Is Limited to Eight-Foot Signs Today

The current sign code chart (attached) has been in place since 2021. It says a sign in mixed-use districts, like the MD-ED, is limited to eight feet tall on parcels under an acre and from 25 to 35 feet on over an acre. The size can be from 125 to 250 square feet, depending on the street it faces. Digital signs are only allowed under limited circumstances. Only casinos in the mixed-use districts get the largest signs - with unlimited numbers, size and lighting, including digitals - and that's what it says today at Footnote 11 (highlighted) on the sign code chart.

But according to Assistant Director of Planning Services Angela Fuss, all businesses in the downtown entertainment district have unlimited signage now and for the past 20 years. We don't agree.

When you ask her about this, Ms. Fuss says from 2005 to 2021 the downtown district got big signs and then after 2021, when the sign code changed, the wording of the Gaming Overlay category in the sign code chart (highlighted) provided the authority for unlimited signage for all businesses within the gaming overlay districts, including the MD-ED, making it 20 years of big signs there. The MD-ED, as with some other mixed-use districts in the city, is also within a Gaming Overlay.

This argument is disingenuous at best. As you can see from her comments in her staff report, the Gaming Overlay regulations were never intended to grant larger signs to all

businesses in the gaming overlay. She says in her report, “The larger Gaming Overlay sign standards were applied to all parcels within the overlay, unintentionally allowing much more area than before.”

In other words, staff made a mistake when it did not limit gaming overlay regulations to casinos. Clearly, no one would grant practically unlimited signage to every business in the 2000 acres covered by the Gaming Overlay districts.

During the Title 18 Code Clean-up presentation at the Planning Commission in April, Ms. Fuss stated emphatically and without exception that only casinos get unlimited signs in the Gaming Overlay districts. She made no mention of an exception for the MD-ED. Ms. Fuss explained, “What we inadvertently did in our - gaming overlay also includes some different buildings that are not casinos and so we don’t want the average pawn shop owner or Burger King to have a 10-foot-tall sign. So again inadvertently, we didn’t mean to do that, so we just provided some clarification that if you are in the gaming overlay and you want to use those sign allowances you also have to be a legally established gaming facility. Pretty simple.”

To Scenic Nevada, that means big signs for non-casino businesses were not really allowed anywhere in the city after 2021 and therefore the MD-ED has not had continuous large signs for 20 years. The downtown district may have had larger signs prior to 2021 but after that the MD-ED became one of the mixed-use districts limited to eight-foot signs.

The Proposal Doesn’t Reduce Signage

In the staff report, Ms. Fuss asserts that the proposed changes to the Gaming Overlay will net a reduction in signs. We disagree. Ms. Fuss has already explained that the city never intended to allow unlimited signage for all parcels in the Gaming Overlay in the first place.

The staff report also understates the feedback from the community. Ms. Fuss says, “Feedback garnered through the technical advisory, public stakeholder meetings, and emailed correspondence indicate concern regarding the allowance of the large signage standards found in the Gaming Overlay.” More precisely, most of the feedback included in your packet was in opposition to the proposal that allows non-casino businesses in the MD-ED unlimited signage.

Reaching into the Past to Grant More Big signs

The only reason staff gives to allow unlimited signage in the MD-ED is because that’s the way it was prior to 2021. We don’t think bringing back old, outdated code to allow unlimited signage to non-casino businesses in the MD-ED is good planning. And it certainly does not reflect the desires of the stakeholders, many in the community at large, or even the downtown businesses. Ms. Fuss said that only 11 people attended the downtown business stakeholder meetings. More than 100 people have written in opposition. Who has asked for more signs downtown? No one except staff as far as we can tell.

The downtown MD-ED has not continuously had the right to large signs. We don’t think this proposal represents a real reduction in signs. And we are opposed to changing the sign code to allow unlimited signage for non-casino businesses in the MD-ED just because it was allowed before. Scenic Nevada and Reno citizens don’t want the downtown ruined further by sign clutter and large digital signs. Too many big bright signs:

- Create a tacky vibe that will repel instead of attract people to downtown
- Use far too much energy, in an era of climate change, because they often run 24/7
- Lead to clutter and blight and could reduce property values
- Won’t attract new residents and businesses
- Distract drivers



- Bombard us with unwanted advertising
- Are a detriment to Reno's scenic qualities
- Ruins our sense of place and community pride
- Reduces the ability to have a livable walkable community
- Encourages "sign wars" where businesses try to compete with the huge electronic signs of neighboring businesses by erecting their own larger and brighter signs
- Provides an incentive for non-casino businesses to apply for zone change requests to extend the boundaries of the MD-ED so that they can have unlimited signage

Almost 25 years ago, Reno citizens voted to ban new billboards. People that live here don't like big, bright signs. And in 2017 the city council agreed, when it enacted the people's billboard ban and prohibited digital billboards. Digital signs at casinos can be thousands of square feet and multiple stories tall. Even billboards are limited to 35 feet tall and 672 square feet and cannot convert to digital displays. There is no reason to allow this proposal to move forward. Please ask planning staff to remove the text that allows non-casino businesses in the MD-ED to have the same practically unlimited signage as casinos.

Sincerely,

Lori

Lori Wray, Director
Scenic Nevada
608 Lander Street
Reno, NV 89509

18.05.113 Permanent On-Premises Sign Regulations by Zoning District

Sign regulations for each zoning district are established in Table 5-1, below:

Table 5-1 Sign Regulations by Zoning District					
District	Height, freestanding (max.)	Area, freestanding (max.)	Area, Wall (max.)	Illumination	Flashing/ Animation
Residential					
All	6' monument only	50 sq. ft. per access up to 150 sq. ft. max w/site plan review	20 sq. ft. [1][2]	Indirect [8]	Not allowed
Mixed-Use					
All districts not listed below [6][11]	8' maximum OR, if the parcel is ≥ one acre, freestanding sign maximum height is 25' (35' if parcel fronts street posted at 35 mph or greater)	125 sq. ft. maximum [5][7]	1 sq. ft. of sign area per lineal foot of business frontage Sign length shall not exceed 75% of business frontage All wall sign area shall not exceed 400 sq. ft. per parcel 5' maximum letter height Notwithstanding above, each business shall be allowed a minimum 40 sq. ft.	All types	Not allowed [12]
GC [6][9]	1' per 4' of linear street frontage Not to exceed 35' for signs adjacent to a major arterial; over 35' adjacent to a major arterial	60 sq. ft. up to 100 lineal street ft. frontage 125 sq. ft. for parcel between 100-400 lineal ft. frontage 250 sq. ft. for parcels with	1 sq. ft. of sign area per lineal foot of business frontage 6' maximum letter height for anchor tenants, 4' maximum letter height for line shops and	All types	Allowed up to 35' in height if not facing residential zones

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(Supp. No. 2)

	with a conditional use permit	more than 400 lineal ft. [5][7] artistic embellishment, no limit	pad sites Notwithstanding above, each business shall be allowed a minimum 40 sq. ft.		
NC [6]	Monument only 8' if < 100' street frontage (12' if 100'+)	60 sq. ft. monument	1 sq. ft./100 GFA (all signs combined not to exceed 400 sq. ft. per parcel, 3' maximum letter height) [4]	Indirect	Not allowed [13]
PO	8' monument only [3]	1 sq. ft./100 sq. ft. of GFA, max 25% of business frontage on a building	20 sq. ft./parcel	Indirect [8]	Not allowed
Nonresidential					
I	25'	80 sq. ft. per frontage; For properties with 2 or more street frontages, maximum combined area of 160 sq. ft. per sign.	1/business/ street frontage 1 sq. ft./lineal foot of building frontage	All types	Not allowed [13]
IC					
ME	25' or bldg. height 1/ street frontage	3 sq. ft./100 GFA combined [10]	3 sq. ft./100 GFA combined [10]	All types; indirect facing residential zones [8]	Allowed up to 25' if not facing residential zones
Special					
PF	6' monument established by conditional use permit	15% of allowed wall sign area	10 sq. ft/acre	All types; none facing residential	Not allowed
Overlay					
Gaming	100' Conditional use permit required to exceed 100'	No limit	No limit	All types	No limit
Notes: [1] Established by conditional use permit for nonresidential use in residential zone. [2] Either a wall or monument sign is allowed per street frontage. [3] On multi-tenant building, may have one 12 feet center identification sign/frontage.					

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- [4] Gross floor area (GFA).
- [5] The allowable square footage may be doubled on arterial roadways with a posted speed limited of 35 mph or greater.
- [6] Number of freestanding allowed: one per frontage, 2nd or one additional sign allowed if over 10 acres. Gas stations may have one additional 16 sq. ft. sign.
- [7] Copy area only.
- [8] Signs of light copy and dark backgrounds with internal illumination are permitted, provided the copy makes up less than 50 percent of the sign area.
- [9] As an alternative to specific square footage allowances for wall and freestanding signs in the GC zone, two square feet/lineal foot of building frontage may be utilized for all sign types combined.
- [10] Three sf/100 GFA is the maximum total sign area and may be provided on wall and/or freestanding signs.
- [11] Legally established Nonrestricted Gaming Operation, land uses may use Gaming Overlay district sign requirements.
- [12] Permitted on parcels fronting North Virginia Street, South Virginia Street, West 4th Street, East 4th Street, and Mill Street and shall not exceed 125 sq. ft. Any other street shall require a site plan review for flashing/animated signs.
- [13] Permitted subject to standards outlined in Section 18.05.114(b)(6)

18.05.113 Permanent On-Premises Sign Regulations by Zoning District

Sign regulations for each zoning district are established in Table 5-1, below:

Table 5-1 Sign Regulations by Zoning District ^[1]					
District	Height, freestanding (max.)	Area, freestanding (max.)	Area, Wall (max.)	Illumination	Flashing/ Animation ^[2] ⁴
Residential Districts					
LLR-2.5, LLR-1, LLR-0.5, SF-3, SF-5, SF-8, SF-11, MF-14, MF-21, MF-30 All ⁵	6' maximum monument only ⁶	50 sq. ft. per access ⁷ up to 150 sq. ft. max w/site plan review One per street frontage ⁷	20 sq. ft. maximum. One per street frontage. ^[1] ^[2]	Indirect {8} or internal with opaque background ⁸	Not allowed
Mixed-Use Urban Area Districts					
All districts not listed below {6} ^[11] MD-UD, MD-ID, MD-RD, MD-NWQ, MD-PD, MU, -MS, MU-MC, MU-RES ⁹	8' maximum OR, if the parcel is ≥ one acre, freestanding sign maximum height is 25' {35' if parcel fronts street posted at 35 mph or	125 sq. ft. maximum {5} ^[7] ^[3] ¹¹	1 sq. ft. of sign area per lineal foot of business frontage not to exceed 400 sq. ft. per business. ¹² Notwithstanding above, at a minimum, each business shall be allowed 40 sq.	All types	Permitted on parcels fronting North Virginia Street, South Virginia Street, West 4th Street, East 4th Street, and Mill Street and shall not exceed 125 sq. ft. Any other street shall require a major site plan

⁴ NRS Sections 590.160 — 590.330 requires that Advertisement of Motor Vehicle Fuel and Petroleum Products be allowed with certain limitations, found in 18.05.114(b)(5). Moving the footnote will allow this to be applicable to all districts.

⁵ Clarification added to the table to identify which specific zoning districts are being referenced in the applicable row.

⁶ Clarification added.

⁷ Difficult to administer as it was unclear how many signs were allowed and whether a site plan review was required for every sign. Amended to allow one 50 sq. ft. sign per access and removed the site plan review requirement. Overall, more square footage may be allowed compared to current code, however, the sign size per access is limited, which was unclear before.

⁸ Simplified language from previous code and attempted to still meet the intent.

⁹ Section existed in other parts of code that were more obscure to find. Since it was related to signs, it was included in the table for clarity.

¹¹ New footnote ^[4] still limits the number of freestanding signs allowed. Reference to previous footnote ^[5] to allow for doubling of square footage on arterial roadways with a posted speed limit of 35 mph or higher removed. Previous footnote ^[7] which specified copy area only was removed.

¹² Previous code limited this standard to 400 square feet per parcel, however, that was difficult to administer, as the sign square footage for existing businesses or future potential was difficult to accurately review and account for. The square footage is still limited based on length of business frontage.

	greater). ¹⁰		ft. of sign area. ¹³ Sign length shall not exceed 75% of business frontage All wall sign area shall not exceed 400 sq. ft. per parcel 5' maximum letter height Notwithstanding above, each business shall be allowed a minimum 40 sq. ft.		review for flashing/animated signs. ¹⁴ Not allowed [12]
MD-ED ¹⁵ [4]	Maximum sign height of 100' Major site plan review required to exceed 100'.	No limit	No limit	All types	No limit
GC [6] ¹⁶ [9] ¹⁷	8' maximum 1' per 4' of lineal street frontage Not to exceed 35' for signs adjacent to a major arterial; over 35' adjacent to a major arterial	60 sq. ft. up to 100 lineal street ft. frontage 125 sq. ft. for parcel between 100-400 lineal ft. frontage 250 sq. ft. for parcels with more than 400 lineal ft.	1 sq. ft. of sign area per lineal foot of business frontage not to exceed 400 sq. ft. per business. Notwithstanding above, at a minimum, each business shall be allowed 40	All types	Allowed up to 35' in height if not facing residential zoning districts.

¹⁰ Previous language was difficult to administer as speed limits on roadways can change. Removed ambiguity to allow for 35' height maximum in all cases where the parcel is larger than one acre.

¹³ Verbiage clarified and simplified by removing maximum letter height and sign length standards.

¹⁴ Previous footnote was included in the appropriate cell in the Table for clarity.

¹⁵ See annotation 1.

¹⁶ Reference to the number of freestanding signs allowed was moved to the freestanding sign column.

¹⁷ Removed footnote in an attempt to simplify standards.

	with a conditional use permit IOR, if the parcel is \geq one acre, freestanding sign maximum height is 35' ¹⁸	[5][7] artistic embellishment, no limit 150 sq. ft. if street frontage \leq 400 ft. 250 sq. ft. if street frontage > 400 ft. [3] ¹⁹	sq. ft. of sign area. 6' maximum letter height for anchor tenants, 4' maximum letter height for line shops and pad sites Notwithstanding above, each business shall be allowed a minimum 40 sq. ft. ²⁰		
NC, PO [6] ²¹	8' maximum Monument only. May be increased to 12' if more than 100' of street frontage. 8 ft' if < 100' street frontage (12' if 100'+)	60 sq. ft. maximum monument ²² [3]	1 sq. ft. of sign area per lineal foot of business frontage not to exceed 400 sq. ft. per business. Notwithstanding above, at a minimum, each business shall be allowed 40 sq. ft. of sign area. 1 sq. ft./100 GFA (all signs combined not to exceed 400 sq. ft. per parcel, 3' maximum letter height) [4]	Indirect or internal with opaque background. ²³	Not allowed [13]
PO	8' monument only [3]	1 sq. ft./100 sq. ft. of GFA, max 25% of	20 sq. ft./parcel	Indirect [8]	Not allowed

¹⁸ Attempted to simplify standards.

¹⁹ Attempted to simplify standards.

²⁰ Attempted to simplify standards by removing letter height requirements. Limited area to 400 sq. ft. per business.

²¹ Make NC and PO zones consistent and further simplified standards.

²² Monument only requirement still maintained in the freestanding sign height column, consistent with other districts.

²³ Unclear if the original footnote [8] was mistakenly not included, as it was in all other districts. Made to be consistent with other districts in the table and previous allowance in PO.

		business frontage on a building			
Nonresidential Employment Area Districts					
I, IC, ME, MA ²⁴	25' maximum	80 sq. ft. per frontage; For properties with 2 or more street frontages, maximum combined area of 160 sq. ft. per sign; 150 sq. ft. maximum	1 sq. ft. of sign area per lineal foot of business frontage not to exceed 400 sq. ft. per business. Notwithstanding above, at a minimum, each business shall be allowed 40 sq. ft. of sign area. 1/business/ street frontage 1 sq. ft./lineal foot of building frontage	All types	Not allowed [13]
IC					
ME	25' or bldg. height 1/ street frontage	3 sq. ft./100 GFA combined [10]	3 sq. ft./100 GFA combined [10]	All types; indirect facing residential zones [8]	Allowed up to 25' if not facing residential zones
Special Purpose Districts					
PF ²⁵	8' maximum monument only. May be increased to 12' if more than 100' of street frontage. 6' monument established by conditional use permit	15% of allowed wall sign area 60 sq. ft. maximum	1 sq. ft. of sign area per lineal foot of business frontage not to exceed 400 sq. ft. per business. Notwithstanding above, at a minimum, each business shall be allowed 40 sq. ft. of sign area. 10 sq. ft./acre	All types; none facing residential	Not allowed

²⁴ Combined employment districts and included MA, which was inadvertently left out in current code. Attempted to simplify standards.

²⁵ Attempted to simplify standards and make them consistent with other standards in the table.

<u>PGOS²⁶</u>	<u>6' maximum monument only.²⁷</u>	<u>60 sq. ft. maximum</u>	<u>1 sq. ft. of sign area per lineal foot of building frontage not to exceed 400 sq. ft.</u> <u>Notwithstanding above, at a minimum, each building shall be allowed 40 sq. ft. of sign area.</u>	<u>All types; none facing residential zoning district.</u>	<u>Not allowed</u>
<u>UT-5, UT-10, UT-40²⁷</u>	<u>6' maximum monument only.</u>	<u>50 sq. ft. per access. One per street frontage.</u>	<u>20 sq. ft. maximum. One per street frontage.</u>	<u>Indirect or internal with opaque background</u>	<u>Not allowed</u>
<u>Overlay</u>					
<u>Gaming²⁸</u>	<u>100'¹</u> <u>Major site plan review</u> <u>Conditional use permit required to exceed 100'.²</u>	<u>No limit</u>	<u>No limit</u>	<u>All types</u>	<u>No limit</u>
<p>Notes:</p> <p>{1} Established by conditional use permit for nonresidential use in residential zone.</p> <p>{1} Signs in all zoning districts that are larger than 150 sq. ft. and proposed within 150 feet of the center line of the Truckee River require approval of a major site plan review.</p> <p>{2} In all zoning districts, sign copy regulated by NRS Sections 590.160 — 590.330, Advertisement of Motor Vehicle Fuel and Petroleum Products, permitted subject to standards outlined in Section 18.05.114(b)(5)</p> <p>{2} Either a wall or monument sign is allowed per street frontage.</p> <p>{3} On multi-tenant building, may have one 12-foot center identification sign/frontage.</p> <p>{4} Gross floor area (GFA).</p> <p>{5} The allowable square footage may be doubled on arterial roadways with a posted speed limited of 35 mph or greater.</p> <p>{63} Number of freestanding allowed: one per frontage, 2nd or one additional sign allowed if over 10 acres. Gas stations may have one additional 16 sq. ft. sign.</p> <p>{7} Copy area only.</p> <p>{8} Signs of light copy and dark backgrounds with internal illumination are permitted, provided the copy makes up less than 50 percent of the sign area.</p> <p>{9} As an alternative to specific square footage allowances for wall and freestanding signs in the GC zone, two square feet/lineal foot of building frontage may be utilized for all sign types combined.</p> <p>{10} Three sf/100 GFA is the maximum total sign area and may be provided on wall and/or freestanding signs.</p> <p>{114} Legally established Nonrestricted Gaming Operation, land uses may use Gaming Overlay MD-ED district sign requirements.</p> <p>{12} Permitted on parcels fronting North Virginia Street, South Virginia Street, West 4th Street, East 4th Street, and Mill Street and shall not exceed 125 sq. ft. Any other street shall require a site plan review for flashing/animated signs.</p> <p>{13} Permitted subject to standards outlined in Section 18.05.114(b)(6).</p>					

²⁶ Was inadvertently left out of current code. Created standards similar to other standards found within the table.

²⁷ Was inadvertently left out of current code. Created standards similar to residential district standards.

²⁸ See annotation 1 above.