

November 11, 2015

Update to Article IX Sign Regulations Project Summary and Schedule

The recent US Supreme Court ruling in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* (July 2015) has created the need for the City of Alexandria to revise its sign ordinance in order to approach the regulations from a purely content neutral standpoint. At the same time, the Ad Hoc Committee for Digital and A-frame signs has been working on revisions to the City's regulations regarding certain types of signs in the City. Therefore, staff is currently working on a revision to the entire sign ordinance to address this range of issues. The goals of the revised ordinance include:

1. Implementation of a proposed governmental corner wayfinding program that will replace the existing A-frame sign program, as suggested by the Ad Hoc Committee. The new program would be included in the City's existing wayfinding program and would be administered outside of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. Amendments to the language of the regulations, based on a model ordinance prepared by the Local Government Attorneys of Virginia (LGA), to approach the regulations from a location, size and number standpoint, rather than a content standpoint.
3. Taking this opportunity to address any other areas of the sign ordinance that have been difficult to enforce or administer including the additional suggestions made by the Ad Hoc Group regarding A-frame signs on private property, digital and marquis signs.

Due to the nature of the changes, Staff proposes bringing these amendments to Planning Commission and City Council in phases in order to focus the discussion on the different parts of the regulations. The first phase would include removing the regulations of signs in the right of way from the zoning ordinance, adding regulations prohibiting signs in the right of way to the City Code and implementing the new governmental corner wayfinding program as part of the City's existing wayfinding program. The second phase would consist of revising the regulation of signs on private property in Article IX of the Zoning Ordinance to focus the regulations on location, size and number and to strengthen certain sections. The last phase would be to review the regulations for signs in the Historic Districts to determine whether any updates are necessary to address the unique requirements in these districts.

Schedule:

November/December: Meeting with the Ad Hoc Committee regarding the proposed changes

January: Phase I Right of Way Signs Text Amendment and introduction of overall changes

February/March: Phase II Private Property Sign Text Amendment

March/April: Phase III Historic District Regulations Signs Text Amendment, if necessary.