



It's Not What You Say – But How You Sign It *Sign Code Update Inks Revised Policies for Signage Across City*

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO-June 2, 2020-The City of Steamboat Springs is in the final stages of a Sign Code Update which will establish revised standards around many aspects of signage and visual communication to identify businesses, services and activities within the city.

“This is the final draft after many months’ of work,” commented Senior Planner and Project Manager Toby Stauffer. “We’re in the home stretch after incorporating input from the community and making changes required by a Supreme Court ruling, but we want folks to have one last chance for discussion on the proposed code.”

Steamboat Springs has been regulating signs since 1975, and the sign code hasn’t been substantially updated since the early 1990s. At the time, sign regulations were in response to growth and a trend toward increased signage and commercial marketing that was not managed. While Steamboat Springs’ Sign Code has needed updating for a while, this issue has gained urgency due to the changed legal environment.

The update comes as a result of the 2015 Supreme Court decision of *Reed v Town of Gilbert, AZ* which prohibits content-based regulations. The objective of the project is to ensure that the code complies with the court’s decision and that the updated code is fair, clear, easy to understand, and content neutral.

This means that sign regulations cannot be based on the message of the sign (e.g. “political sign” or “for sale sign”) but can be based on size, location, or duration. Many existing sign code regulations are based on the type of sign as defined by its message or content; for example, the sign code includes standards for election signs. This sign code update is also an opportunity to reconfirm that the sign standards achieve the city’s values and goals.

Sign regulations are typically separate from other land use regulations due to First Amendment protection and the level of specificity required for many aspects of signs including size, materials, lighting, location, technology and other unique issues.

The community can learn more about the Sign Code Update at engagesteamboat.net/signcode. The site provides the complete draft code, outlines various aspects of the proposed regulations, and seeks input on what is proposed through digital Q&A Sessions and public hearings including Planning Commission and City Council later this summer and into early fall.

-WeServeTheCity-

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