

*Consider: Who benefits? Who is burdened?
Who does not have a voice at the table?
How can policymakers mitigate unintended consequences?*

Sign Code 2024 Update

Purpose: Madison last updated its sign ordinance in 2009. There have been many changes in the legal and local landscape since then. This project seeks to update the sign code so that it better meets best practices, community needs, and industry standards.

Objectives:

Simplification and Updates

- Streamline sign application, review, and permitting process
- Simplify the sign code so it can be more easily understood and used by customers (sign contractors, business owners, and property owners) and staff
- Allow signs that promote effective identification of establishments within the community
- Identify any outdated regulations
- Evaluate policies and procedures for Comprehensive Design Review (CDRs) to reduce the need for CDRs
- Create process to allow administrative approvals with specific criteria without Urban Design Commission (UDC) approval
- Make legal updates and maintain constitutionality
- Align sign code with Urban Design District (UDD) and Landmarks requirements

Aesthetics and Best Practices

- Preserve high standards for design
- Consider sustainability
- Reduce sign clutter
- Require more human-scaled signage
- Protect and maintain safety

Scope:

The project will likely involve reordering some sections or moving portions of the code, but we will not be starting from scratch, writing a sign code with no regard for what we have today. Some portions of the code may be removed or consolidated.

This project will not include updates to the Urban Design Districts because that will be part of UDD code updates. However, staff will work together to coordinate schedules between the two projects.

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Project Team:

Matt Tucker, Building Inspection Division Director
Katie Bannon, Zoning Administrator
Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Section Sign Code Lead
Jessica Vaughn, Urban Design Commission Secretary
Lisa McNabola, Planning Section Sign Code Lead
Lara Mainella, Assistant City Attorney

Stakeholders:

- Sign contractors
- Business owners
- Property owners
- Residents
- Urban Design Commission
- Alders
- Mayor

Anticipated Workplan:

Meeting with UDC Chair, Cliff Goodhart – November 22, 2023

Presentation and Discussion with UDC – January 24, 2024

Equity analysis of existing code – Winter 2024

Urban Design Commission sign photo survey and discussion – March 2024

Stakeholder survey – Spring 2024

Community engagement (some in-person, some Zoom) – Spring 2024

- Sign contractors
- Business community – Chamber, Downtown Madison Inc.
- Internal staff – UDC, Zoning, Landmarks, Economic Development

List of changes for approval by UDC – Summer 2024

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Drafting – Summer 2024

Equity analysis of draft – Fall 2024

UDC recommendation – Fall 2024

Council approval – Fall to Winter 2024-2025

Communications:

Dedicated webpage on City's website

Legislative ID on Legistar with all associated documents

Involvement of City and Department PIOs