

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2009

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GREG RAMIREZ, CITY MANAGER

BY: MIKE KAMINO, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF TEMPORARY ENHANCEMENT MEASURES FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

The purpose of this agenda item is to seek direction from the City Council on whether to provide for temporary enhancement measures for local businesses.

The City is well aware of the negative impact of the national economy on local businesses. Last October, in recognition of this impact and to stimulate retail sales during the holiday season, the City Council allowed each retail business in the City to display one temporary, 20-square-foot banner for a three month period. This allowance was extended by the City Council on January 29, 2009, for an additional two-month period, expiring on March 28, 2009.

Feedback from the retailers who obtained sign permits for their temporary banner has been positive. However, the City Council has received additional requests from the business community for temporary relief of other code restrictions to stimulate business. These issues are summarized below for the City Council's consideration for discussion purposes.

Portable Sign Display

The Sign Ordinance currently prohibits the display of portable signs. However, the City has received a request from a restaurant owner to display portable, sandwich-board style signs to attract customers. The requests stem from the desire of the restaurant owner to advertise his business location which is within a particular area of a retail center that is not highly visible from the public street.

In considering whether to allow such signage to be displayed on a temporary basis, the City Council is asked to provide direction on: 1) the types of businesses that would be allowed to display portable signs; 2) the number of signs allowed to be displayed; and 3) the allowable locations of the sign displays on private property. Staff would note that staff takes a proactive approach in abating such signs, if placed on the public right-of-way, by removing them immediately.

Lease Advertising

In 2005, the City Council adopted new standards for commercial lease signage, allowing for one ground-mounted, 9-square-foot lease or “for sale” sign on commercial property, subject to the issuance of a sign permit. The sign ordinance also provides for a 4-square-foot window sign to be used on commercial property for lease or sale purposes.

Commercial property owners and real estate brokers have inquired about the possibility of allowing lease advertising on banners. Staff has shared the current code allowances with the interested parties; however they are seeking greater exposure during the down-turn in the real estate market.

If the City Council desires to accommodate the request on a temporary basis, one option may be to allow every business in the City the opportunity to temporarily display a 20 square foot banner on their building for real estate or retail advertising purposes. This approach would eliminate the need to regulate content of the signs. Such temporary displays could be limited within a time-frame approved by the City Council.

Outdoor Display

In 1996, the City Council adopted a commercial outdoor display ordinance that allows for merchandise to be displayed outdoors on the first weekend of each month (first consecutive Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) where retail goods are sold. Outdoor displays are also allowed on the second weekend in December. Standards were also adopted to reduce obstructions, the size of the displays and potential noise impacts.

Through code enforcement discussions, staff is aware of a desire of retail merchants to allow outdoor displays beyond the days currently allowed by Code. Most products that have been displayed by merchants are those which one would typically use outdoors. As such, one option would be for the City Council to consider allowing outdoor displays for businesses that sell outdoor products. Such merchandise typically includes recreational equipment, patio furniture, and landscape/hardscape products. If the City Council supports this option on a temporary basis, staff is seeking clarification on the days in which such displays should be allowed.

The City Council is not limited to the three issues noted above as possible means of addressing business enhancement. If directed by the City Council, staff will prepare a resolution for any temporary business measures desired by a majority of the City Council. The resolution would be subject to review and approval by the City Council at a subsequent public meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council give direction to staff on whether to provide for temporary enhancement measures for local businesses.