
TEXT AMENDMENT FOR NONCONFORMING SIGNAGE

APPLICATION #: **M-9-26**
APPLICANT: Staff of the Toledo City Plan Commission
REPORT DATE: May 29, 2026
HEARING DATE: June 11, 2026
STAFF REVIEWER: Schultz

Background & History

The current sign code was adopted in April 2024. This ‘new sign code’ is in many ways simpler to understand than the ‘old sign code’ and has enacted positive change in the City’s signage landscape. However, now that Staff has had two (2) years of experience with the ‘new sign code’, it has become clear that the nonconforming sections are overburdensome. This text amendment aims to ease these nonconforming sections to a more reasonable level.

Details of Text Amendment

The text amendment makes three key changes. The first is to permit conversion of Electronic Message Signs (EMCs) to non-EMC signage provided the non-EMC sign is no more nonconforming in size, height, location, design, or illumination than the original EMC. This would allow sign owners to improve their signage by converting difficult-to-maintain EMCs to easier-to-maintain static signs. Conversion of legally nonconforming non-EMC signage to EMC signage would still be prohibited unless the signs came into full compliance with the code. This change is shown in Exhibit “A”.

The second key change is to remove the requirement that all signage come into full compliance with the code whenever the premises undergoes a site plan review (SPR) or special use permit (SUP) review. This section would instead require signage to come into full compliance only when a principal building on the site is demolished, removed, or expanded by more than fifty percent (50%) of its total square footage. This will allow small additions or existing building occupations requiring an SPR or SUP review to go forward without requiring expensive sign removal and replacement. This change is also shown in Exhibit “A”.

The last key change is changing the time period for a sign to lose its nonconforming status and become abandoned from six (6) months to one (1) year. When a sign is considered abandoned, it must either be removed or refaced with a blank white face. This will remove confusion by making the timeline consistent with Chapter 1114 *Nonconformities*, which governs the nonconforming statuses of uses, structures, and lots. This change is shown in Exhibits “B” and “C”.

Staff is recommending **approval** of the text amendment.

Forward Toledo Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The proposed text amendment supports the Business Creation and Building Preservation goals in the Forward Toledo Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The text amendment supports Business Creation by permitting small businesses to open or expand without always requiring costly signage removal or replacement. The text amendment also supports the Building Preservation goal by tying signage conformity to building expansion or demolition, lowering costs to occupy existing structures.

Development Approval Criteria

- (1) The proposed text amendment is consistent with the comprehensive plan and the stated purpose of the zoning code (TMC§1111.0506(B)).

Recommendation:

1111.0500 Text Amendment – APPROVE – Text Amendment for Nonconforming Signage

Findings:

- (1) The proposed text amendment will ease overburdensome nonconforming regulations to a more reasonable level.

EXHIBIT "A"**1113.0702 Requirements for Legal Nonconforming Signs.**

A legal nonconforming sign is permitted to remain in operation, subject to the following requirements:

A. No legal nonconforming sign or part of a nonconforming sign shall be structurally altered, constructed, converted from non-EMC to EMC ~~or vice-versa~~, re-erected, additionally illuminated, changed in size, or moved unless the entire sign and structure are brought into conformity with this Sign Code or removed by the owner of the premises. Poster panel replacements, cabinet re-faces, copy changes, same-size EMC replacements, conversions from EMC to non-EMC provided the non-EMC sign is no more non-conforming in size, height, location, design, or illumination than the original EMC, and complete demolitions are permitted. Structural changes including changes to the pole, foundation, sign frame, or building materials on existing nonconforming signs are not permitted unless the sign is brought fully into compliance with this Chapter.

B. If a principal building on the premises on which the sign is located is demolished, removed, or expanded by more than 50% of its total square footage undergoes Plan Commission review, including but not limited to a Site Plan Review or Special Use Permit, any nonconforming signage on the premises shall be brought fully into compliance with this Sign Code ~~as a part of the review and approval process~~.

C. Prior to receipt of a sign permit to install a new Electronic Message Center (EMC), all legal nonconforming signage on the subject premises shall be brought fully into compliance with this Sign Code. This does not include the replacement of an existing EMC.

EXHIBIT "B"

1113.0703 Loss of Nonconforming Status.

A. A sign loses its legal nonconforming status if the site that the sign advertises is vacant for more than ~~6 months~~ 1 year. The subject site must be in operation for a minimum of 30 consecutive days during the ~~6-month~~ 1 year period to maintain legal nonconforming status.

B. At the point that a sign loses its legal nonconforming status, the sign shall be considered an Unlawful Sign and shall be immediately improved to meet the requirements of this Sign Code or removed by the owner of the premises.

EXHIBIT "C"**1113.0802 Abandoned Sign.**

Except as otherwise provided in this Chapter, any sign which is located on property that becomes vacant and unoccupied for a period of ~~6 months~~ 1 year or more, or any sign which fails to meet the requirements of Sec. 1113.0109 Maintenance for a period of ~~6 months~~ 1 year or more; or any sign which pertains to a time, event, or purpose which no longer applies; or any sign which no longer contains copy or advertises goods, products, services, or facilities, shall be deemed an abandoned sign. The following requirements apply to abandoned signs:

A. Any sign which is deemed an abandoned sign and fully conforms with all requirements of this chapter may remain as a conforming sign, but shall have any copy removed. Any area which housed copy shall be refaced with a blank white face. The owner of the property may also use this area to advertise that the property is for lease, for rent, or for sale, if he or she desires, via a permitted sign type.

B. Any sign which is deemed an abandoned sign and does not fully conform with all requirements of this chapter shall be considered an Unlawful Sign and shall be removed by the owner or operator of the premises and/or the owner of the sign, or brought fully into compliance with this Chapter. Failure by the owner or operator of the premises to remove the abandoned sign may result in removal of the sign by the City of Toledo as described in Sec. 1113.0805 Disposal of Signs; Fees and Sec. 1113.0806 Assessment Procedures as well as penalties as described in Sec. 1113.0906 Penalty.