

**Community Planning and Economic Development Planning Division Report  
Zoning Code Text Amendment**

**Date:** November 1, 2010

**Initiator of Amendment:** Council Member Elizabeth Glidden

**Date of Introduction at City Council:** February 26, 2010

**Ward:** City wide.

**Neighborhood Organization:** City wide

**Planning Staff and Phone:** Steve Poor (612) 673-5837

**Intent of the Ordinance:** The intent of the proposed amendment is to expand the boundaries of the Limited Access Roadway Opportunity District of Chapter - 544 Off-Premise Advertising Signs and Billboards that allow flashing off-premise advertising signs and billboards.

**Affected Section(s) of the Zoning Code:**

Chapter 544. Off-Premise Advertising Signs and Billboards; 544.20 13 (d).

**Background:** The City has had a policy of removing off-premise advertising signs and billboards from residential neighborhoods and commercial nodes since 1994, when the regulatory tool of nonconforming sign credits was enacted. As part of the City's comprehensive revision of the zoning code that was adopted in 1999, Chapter 539 was re-titled Chapter 544 Off-Premise Advertising Signs and Billboards. It was essentially a re-codification of the previously existing off-premise advertising regulations enumerated in Chapter 539. The current ordinances were established to regulate advertising signs and billboards so as to minimize their visual blighting effects by regulating their location, spacing between off-premise advertising signs, height, size, illumination and to encourage their removal from locations that are nonconforming to Chapter 544.

Under Chapter 544, nonconforming signs located within and adjacent to residential neighborhoods could be removed and receive a partial credit for the amount of the square footage of the sign face removed. The sign credits could then be utilized to erect billboards in Downtown and along portions of the limited access roadways at a rate of 1 square foot of sign credit for every 2 square feet of sign face removed.

In 2007, the first digital light emitting diode (LED) off-premise advertising billboards were installed in Minneapolis. The zoning administrator had previously determined that the converting of the billboard sign face from the more conventional signs faces comprised of painted panels or large vinyl banners to static image LED digital sign faces

had been determined to be permitted under the existing ordinance. On March 9, 2007 the City Council enacted a moratorium on any new such faces being erected in the city. The study of LED digital billboards conducted during the moratorium resulted in amendments to Chapter 544 that allowed flashing off-premise advertising signs and billboards along a limited portion of Interstate Highway 94 (I-94) and Interstate Highway 35W (I-35W) and within the Chapter 544 Limited Access Roadway Opportunity Billboard District. The amendment also had a requirement that for four (4) square feet of nonconforming sign face area that was removed (sign credits), one (1) square foot of sign face may be replaced with a flashing sign face (i.e.: LED digital technology) on a sign located along I-94, north of West Broadway and I-35W north of East Hennepin Avenue. To date there have been two (2) billboards that have been converted to LED digital technology since the amendment was adopted on April 4, 2008.

**Recommendation of the Community Planning and Economic Development--Planning Division:**

The Community Planning and Economic Development Department - Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission continue the zoning code text amendment to the meeting of November 15, 2010 to allow for further public comment.