



September 11, 2020

Re: Glendale Zoning Code Update
Sign Ordinance

Attn: Adam Pruett – Michael Baker
Lisa Collins - City of Glendale

Good Afternoon Mr. Pruett,

WeSERV Association of REALTORS® appreciates the opportunity to provide input regarding signage in Glendale. We look forward to working with the City of Glendale on this issue over the next several months.

Signs are still one of the most cost effective and least expensive methods to advertise a business or identify a property. Signs are used to identify home addresses, City property and amenities, emergency services, hospitals, roadways and special events. Property owners wishing to sell personal or real property depend on signs to advertise the sale and guide those interested to the property, which is why A.R.S. §33-441 already protects a homeowner's right to display real estate signage on their own property. Because of their universal use, WeSERV suggests the City use a signage standard based on the principles of adequate, visible and legible.

A sign that is not visible or legible is of no use. Inadequate signage brings frustration to those attempting to find the location and brings individual solutions to solve that lack of adequate signage that frequently result in sign clutter.

Signs are a form of communication and, as such, a form of free speech. Because of that fact and the 2015 United States Supreme Court decision in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* decision, we caution the City to be aware of times when overlapping state law, federal law or court interpretation may potentially make it difficult to limit some signs. An example would be the inability of the City to differentiate between commercial speech and political speech when signs are posted in public rights-of-way.



More specifically, A.R.S. §16-1-19 mandates that political signs be allowed in public rights-of-way and given *Reed's* prohibition on content-based distinctions in regulations of expression, local governments must treat all other signs in the same manner as political signs. This means that the same permission given to political signs must be given to all other signs.

WeSERV is against sign permits since signs are a form of speech and the United States Supreme Court has been clear that restricting speech based on its content is unconstitutional. We do understand there will be a need for permitting of sign structures due to safety concerns.

Individuals who start a business place their finances, savings, homes, assets and their family's future at stake. These individuals believe they can provide a product or service the market is interested in and willing to pay for. These businesses will fail if no one knows what they do, where they are, or who they are. This makes signage an economic development issue and a free speech issue.

Studies from USD (University of San Diego) and the University of Cincinnati have shown adequate signage is a significant component of business success, no matter how big the business. They found a strong correlation between number of signs and sales increases, as well as transaction amount increases.

These studies found a small A-frame directional sign contributes 10% to weekly sales. The addition of one building sign contributed an increase of 4.75% to sales. For \$500,000 of income, that translates to about a \$23,750.00 increase. Increased income adds to the amount of sales tax the city receives. The USD study found 68% of customers used signs to find the business and were frustrated when they could not find a business because of inadequate signage.

Property owners attempting to sell or lease their property will experience difficulty and time delays if they are limited to inadequate signage. Some properties will require very few signs to guide potential customers, other properties will require several signs. Inadequate signage frustrates real estate agents, property owners, neighbors and potential buyers or tenants.

We suggest adequate signage for the task be the guide. For residents attempting garage sales, open houses or estate sales, inadequate signage will mean they are unable to conduct a successful sale.

On the topic of temporary directional signage, Justice Alito suggested limiting the number of signs displayed by defining a particular number of signs allowed within a particular number of miles or feet. These limitations would need to be appropriate to the location of the property and street access. For example, a two-lane rural street may find adequate sign age at a particular number of signs per $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. A busy suburban street may find adequate signage at a particular number of signs per feet of roadway or front footage.

In commercial areas, A-Frame signs are frequently used and needed in order for patrons to find the business location. Glendale, like other Valley cities, has shopping, industrial and office complexes in which not every store front is readily visible. These businesses need additional signage during business hours to be found. If a monument sign is not large enough to provide signage to each tenant, then A-frame signage may be necessary to adequately identify businesses and their location.

In residential areas, we suggest allowing an open house sign at each location a turn is required to efficiently locate the property. Not only does this allow potential buyers to quickly and easily find the property they are looking for, but it aids real estate agents and homeowners selling their own properties to accomplish the task efficiently with little disruption to the neighbors.

In commercial areas, WeSERV suggests adequate building signage include signage on each face of the building facing a roadway, pedestrian travel corridor or parking lot. In addition, we suggest allowing signage in the parking lot areas of larger complexes indicating the direction of buildings in the complex so patrons may easily identify the building they are looking for and travel efficiently to it.

We suggest there may be a need to establish a minimum commercial sign size based on the science of the visual arc, legibility, and visibility. Busy streets with several lanes will need larger signs than small streets with little traffic.

WeSERV is concerned that businesses with more than one business under one roof have adequate, visible and legible signage. Examples of these types of businesses would be a grocery store with a Starbucks or a real estate brokerage with a title company or lender.

Real Estate brokerages, fast food, small retail, bakeries, jewelry stores, spas, car dealers, and other businesses use window signs as an integral part of their successful business model. WeSERV supports window signage that is legible and visible to passersby.

Vacant land offered for sale also needs adequate signage in order to properly identify it as on the market. On large parcels WeSERV supports signage of a size that is legible and visible on each side of the parcel. Depending on the size of the parcel, more than one sign per side may be an adequate amount.

In residential areas, personal signage should be allowed. Signage such as "It's a Boy/Girl", "Welcome Home", "Happy Birthday" or some other personal message for a short time period is reasonable as a free speech and property right.

With the increase of people working from home, some occupations may be required to display small signs on their property. An example would be a real estate broker who has a home office.

Under Arizona Revised Statutes, the broker is required to display a small sign near the entrance of the home with their brokerage name and the broker's name.

Glendale has areas in which a business owner's home and business are under one roof or on the same property. An example would be Catlin Court. WeSERV suggests signage for these areas include the name of the business, parking locations, and other helpful information such as business days and hours, menus, etc. as well as restricted area signs.

Larger signage such as monument and billboard signage may seem larger than it actually is on paper. WeSERV suggests the City of Glendale consult regularly with a sign designer, sign maker and the Arizona Sign Association. We have found they are very helpful placing into context what a sign will look like once a designer has completed the design. Also of interest, the Sign Association has provided information on new sign materials that can be allowed within the sign ordinance providing more variety with environmentally friendly qualities to the sign choices businesses have.

WeSERV would be happy to provide sign industry contacts.

WeSERV looks forward to working with the City of Glendale on the updated sign ordinance.

Sincerely,



Liz Recchia

Government Affairs Director

West Valley, Pinal and Cochise County Chapters