

Planning Commission Staff Report

February 19, 2026



Case No:	25-LDC-0006
Project Name:	Digital Display Off-Premises Signs (Billboards) Text Amendment to the Land Development Code
Applicant:	Louisville Metro
Jurisdiction:	Louisville Metro
Council District:	All Council Districts
Case Manager:	Joseph Haberman, AICP, Planning Manager

REQUEST

Text Amendments to the Land Development Code (LDC) concerning Digital Display Off-Premises Signs (also known as billboards or outdoor advertising signs).

SUMMARY

Louisville Metro Council adopted Resolution No. 030, Series 2025 directing the Planning Commission and Office of Planning to review the Land Development Code (LDC) and return recommendations related to digital display off-premises signs (also referred to as changing image or electronic). Currently in the LDC, static off-premises signs are permitted in certain zoning districts if they meet specified standards. However, digital display off-premises signs are prohibited.

In summary, the amendment:

- Defines “Digital Display Off-Premises Sign” and “Static Off-Premises Sign”.
- Continues to allow a static off-premises sign in a CN, C1, C2, CM, M1, M2, or M3 zoning district and creates a new allowance for such a sign in a EZ1, PRO, or PEC zoning district (with more restricted size limitations in CN and C1).
- Allows a digital display off-premises sign in a C2, C3, CM, EZ1, PRO, PEC, M1, M2, or M3 zoning district.
- Continues to allow a static off-premises sign in a VC, SMC, RC, SW, C, or V form district.
- Allows a digital display off-premises sign in a DT, UCN, TMC, TC, TW, VC, SMC, RC, SW, C, or V form district.
- Maintains the existing separation requirements for static off-premises signs and applies the same separation requirements to digital display off-premises signs (with an exception to adjustments to the separation standards related to parks and historic properties to provide better consistency).
- Establishes special standards for digital display off-premises signs to ensure safety and minimize adverse impacts.

- Requires that a nonconforming static off-premises sign be removed for each new digital display off-premises sign constructed in the C3 zoning district.
- Alters terms to reflect defined terms where possible.

The full text of this amendment is included as Attachment 1 at the end of this report.

TECHNICAL REVIEW

A digital display off-premises sign is a billboard that is unassociated with a business on the property in which it is located. These signs use technologies like LEDs to display dynamic content, such as video/animation or static images that change every few seconds. When permitted, such signs are typically subject to specific regulations like automatic dimming and brightness limits to ensure safety to motorists and limit impact on adjacent properties.

Off-premises signs are referred to under different names in other statutes, codes, and regulations. The term is generally interchangeable with billboard, outdoor advertising sign, and outdoor advertising device. In KRS and several of the suburban cities' LDCs, such signs are referred to as outdoor advertising signs. In the context of the zoning ordinance, the term off-premises sign is considered the most appropriate description, as it best captures how such a sign is regulated as an independent, principal use. In addition, an on-premises sign is regulated differently and may be inadvertently confused with the term outdoor advertising sign.

The description for the technological feature of digital display is also referred to differently in other statutes, codes, and regulations. Such signs with this technology can also be referred to as having an electronic display, changing image display, video display, LED display, and similar variants. The suggested term of digital display describes the type of a sign but does not link it to any specific technology. It also sets such a sign apart from a changing image sign, which is a type of sign already permitted and regulated in the LDC (but only in relation to on-premises signs).

The amendments included in this report address the zoning regulations in the LDC. Off-premises signs are also regulated by state law and other municipal ordinances. In order to be lawful, an off-premises sign must also meet these other requirements.

Local Zoning Requirements:

Louisville Metro and all the suburban cities with zoning authority address off-premises signs in their regulations. Jeffersontown and Middletown have regulations that prohibit such signs. Louisville Metro and the other cities generally have the same requirements, allowing static off-premises signs if certain standards are met, but not allowing digital display off-premises signs.

The following is a summary of the existing Metro LDC provisions:

- An off-premises sign is regulated differently than an on-premises sign that supports a use on the same site.
- An off-premises sign is considered an independent principal use, regardless of the presence of another unrelated principal use on site.
- An off-premises sign can be on a vacant site and does not need to be on a site with a building.

- The content on an off-premises sign is not subject to any zoning regulation and refacing with new content does not require a sign permit or other zoning approval.
- New off-premises signs are permitted in CN, C1, C2, CM, M1, M2, and M3. By exclusion, they are prohibited in other zoning districts.
- New off-premises signs are prohibited in the N, TN, TMC, TW, TC, and DT form districts.
- There are three categories of regulations for off-premises signs, based on the size of the sign.
- Off-premises signs greater than 750 SF are prohibited.
- An off-premises sign is permitted by right with a registration. If it meets the standards, a registration cannot be denied.
- The special standards cannot be waived or adjusted by the variance or waiver processes.
- Separation requirements, ranging from 75' to 1,500', apply from other existing off-premises signs, intersecting roadways, residential areas, roadway edges and centerlines, parkways, parks, and historic sites.
- Standards, including separation requirements, apply to all permitted zoning categories and, as a result, a rezoning cannot provide relief unless the only issue is that the current zoning and/or form district prohibits.
- On a case-by-case basis, binding elements or conditions of approval associated with other land use decisions, such as rezonings, conditional use permits, or variances, may restrict the installations, sizes, or locations.
- Since it is not expressly permitted, a digital display off-premises sign is prohibited. This interpretation has been affirmed by the Board of Zoning Adjustment following an appeal.
- Several existing off-premises signs were installed before the current requirements and are nonconforming, such as those located in and around downtown.

Federal Requirements:

- Federal law requires State transportation agencies to control the installation and maintenance of off-premises signs (outdoor advertising devices).
- Under the Highway Beautification Act (HBA), States can be penalized up to 10% of their Federal-aid highway funds if they do not exercise effective control of outdoor advertising devices.
- The HBA requires each state to enter into an agreement with the Federal Highway Administration to control the installation and maintenance of outdoor advertising devices.
- While the HBA provides some specifics on how to control such devices, States have significant latitude when establishing regulations.

State Requirements:

- State requirements for off-premises signs (outdoor advertising devices) are administered and enforced by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC).
- KYTC does not regulate all off-premises signs in the State, only those located within a “protected area”. This includes locations within 660' of the right of way of interstates, parkways, National Highway System routes, and Federal-Aid Primary Highways. In non-

urban areas, the protected area extends beyond 660' if the sign: 1) is visible from the route's main traveled way and 2) was built with the purpose of its message being read from the main traveled way. Within the protected area, signs must comply with restrictions on size, lighting, and proximity to other off-premises signs.

- Off-premises signs may not be installed on a scenic highway or byway after it receives its scenic designation.
- Off-premises signs are categorized as static or electronic.
 - A static advertising device consists of a simple message board whose content does not change by the use of electronic or mechanical technology. Devices are still considered static even if they include a numerical display changed by an electronic or mechanical process if the size of the changeable display does not exceed half the area of the face.
 - An electronic advertising device has its message changed by programmable electronic or mechanical processes. Electronic advertising devices must adhere to additional regulations governing their brightness, frequency of messages, and proximity to other electronic devices. Their messages cannot blink, scroll, or contain animation or video. They must be programmed to freeze in a static display if a malfunction occurs.
- An applicant that wants to install a new electronic advertising device must document the removal of six existing nonconforming static devices. Converting a legal static advertising device in an urban area or urbanized protected area to an off-premises electronic advertising device requires an exchange of five off-premises advertising devices.
- Off-premises signs may be installed on state used property without local zoning approval (i.e., Kentucky International Convention Center and Kentucky Exposition Center).

Metro Code Requirements:

- Several sections of Metro Code apply to off-premises signs, including those pertaining to signs, overlay districts, and historic preservation.
- An annual registration/fee is required for each off-premises sign (Ch. 155).
 - \$75 for each sign greater than 330 SF, \$50 for each sign between 72 SF and 330 SF, and \$25 for each sign less than 72 SF (due on July 1 of each year).
- There are regulations related to upkeep and safety (Ch. 155).
- There is an exemption for national and international events (Ch. 155).
- An off-premises sign cannot be located within 2,000' of the nearest edge of the ROW line of the Snyder Freeway (Ch. 155)
- An off-premises sign is discouraged or prohibited by the design guidelines for the three design overlay districts - Downtown, NuLu, and Baxter Ave/Bardstown Rd (Ch. 162).
- Except for special events, off-premises signs are considered "not appropriate" in the Waterfront Review Overlay District (Ch. 162).

Peer City/County Review:

Regulations for off-premises signs are often established at the state and local levels, and the specific rules widely vary.

Staff reviewed zoning codes for cities across the country. Many cities have adopted regulations that specifically address digital display off-premises signs. Other cities have opted to prohibit all off-premises signs or only disallow, or otherwise severely limit, digital display off-premises signs. The following cities expressly allow for and regulate digital display off-premises signs in their zoning codes (note: this is not a conclusive list of all cities that allow):

City	What are Signs Called?	Special Notes
Albuquerque, NM	Off-premise electronic sign	Allows only if another sign is removed (1:1)
Atlanta, GA	Billboard, electronically changed sign	Created the Atlanta Arts and Entertainment District that allows for larger, dynamic, and digital signs
Baltimore, MD	Digital billboard	Allows only if other signs are removed (3:1)
Charlotte, NC	Outdoor advertising sign, electronic changeable face	Adopted a Billboard Free Overlay District
Chicago, IL	Off-premise sign, dynamic image display sign; city digital sign	Only allows video display on a sports stadium or convention center
Columbus, OH	Automatic changeable copy billboard	Requires all signs lawfully in existence prior to the effective date of the ordinance to conform to the requirements within one year of the effective date
Dallas, TX	Non-premise sign, digital display	For every one square foot of sign face modified to use digital display technology, three square feet of detached non-premise sign face area must be removed from within the city; a maximum of 50 non-premise locations with digital displays are permitted in the city
Denver, CO	Off-premise sign using digital illumination	Created a Billboard Use Overlay Zone
El Paso, TX	CEVM billboard	For every square foot of display area converted from a static billboard, at least five square feet of static display area must be permanently removed
Indianapolis, IN	Off-premises sign, video, LED (light emitting diode), LCD (liquid crystal display) or electrically powered	Restricts to freeways and expressways
Lexington, KY	Billboard, with electronic message display system	As part of a billboard for a stadium or arena having a permanent seating capacity in excess of 5,000 persons for athletic and cultural events, an electronic message display system may be permitted; not exceeding 50% of the total sign area of the permitted sign
Los Angeles, CA	Off-site sign, digital display	Generally only permits pursuant to a relocation agreement or legally adopted plan
Memphis, TN	Off-premise sign, changeable copy	
Nashville, TN	Digital display billboard	
Philadelphia, PA	Non-accessory digital sign	
Phoenix, AZ	Off-premise sign, digital	Requires network time to be available on the digital sign for emergency messaging - messages override all copy for one hour, then display for eight seconds in every minute as long as needed

San Antonio, TX	Off-premises digital sign	Allows only if other signs are removed (2:1)
Tampa, FL	Electronic billboard sign	

While permitted location, separation, and removal credit regulations significantly vary by city, there is some consistency in the codes in relation to technical aspects of the digital display, such as requirements related to maximum size, rate of change, transitions, video and sound prohibitions, movement and flashing light limitations, and automatic dimming.

Current Number of Off-Premises Signs in Jefferson County

Metro Code requires that each off-premises sign in the county to be annually registered with the Department of Codes and Regulations. As of July 11, 2025, there were 759 active licenses. However, this total is not representative of all off-premises signs as not all off-premises signs are registered (and subject to enforcement penalties). According to a Google AI Overview, there may be up to 1,700 off-premises signs in the county at this time.

Recommendation Analysis:

Static off-premises signs are currently permitted. The issues to be considered are whether to allow off-premises signs to have digital displays and, if permitted, the appropriate locations and design standards. Interpreting that digital displays are permitted under the existing off-premises sign allowances is not an option given the standing interpretation that such signs are not permitted, which has been upheld under appeal by the Board of Zoning Adjustment. Further, if digital display off-premises signs are to be permitted, at a minimum, special design standards should be applied, as has been done by most other cities that allow such signage. Such standards do not exist in the existing provisions, as they were drafted without the intent or expectation to allow such signage.

The attached draft regulations maintain the current practice of only permitting an off-premises sign, whether static or digital display, if all special standards are met. Standards, including separation requirements, apply to all permitted zoning categories and as a result, a rezoning cannot provide relief unless the only issue is that the current zoning and/or form district prohibits. If there is interest in providing an option to obtain relief to the separation requirements, or any other special standard, the amendments can be adjusted to provide a waiver allowance (approved in accordance with the waiver standards) or require a conditional use permit for a sign that does not meet a standard (other than the zoning or form district requirements, which would require a map amendment).

Requirements for digital display signs can differ from those applied to static signs, such as the appropriate zoning and form districts, as well as separation standards. With their varying impacts, special consideration should be given to where each type of off-premises sign, static and digital display, are permitted. While maintaining a large amount of consistency between the rules for static and digital display off-premises signs to alleviate confusion, there are some instances in which the two types of signs should be regulated differently.

An example of such a distinction is related to off-premises signs in the downtown area. The proposed amendments only allow digital display off-premises signs in and around downtown, as there is already an abundance of nonconforming static off-premises signs. To further address this issue, to install a new digital display off-premises sign, a nonconforming static off-premises sign must be removed. The downtown area is largely zoned C3. Digital display off-premises

signs are consistent with the C3 zoning district's purpose and with, and in many cases less intense, many other C3 uses that are permitted by right.

In comparing Louisville Metro's zoning regulations to that of peer cities/counties that allow off-premises signs, Louisville Metro generally permits static off-premises signs in similar manner, although the precise separation requirements vary from city to city. Like Louisville Metro, most cities tend to restrict such signs to mixed use and nonresidential zones. However, unlike many other large cities, Louisville Metro does not permit digital display off-premises signs. Most of the cities that allow have specific standards that address the safety and lighting impacts related to the changing images.

Potential Metro Code Changes (not subject to Planning Commission recommendation):

- Revamp the registration/licensing requirements to increase annual application fees for off-premises signs and enact improvements to the review process.
- For digital display off-premises signs, establish a pilot program allowing up to a set number of signs to allow for an analysis of impact. Alternatively, place a cap on the number of off-premises signs in certain areas, such as the downtown or NuLu design overlay districts to avoid a concentration.
- Under the pilot program, require a one-time initial registration fee.
- Require a percentage of content to be government-requested public art or PSA content.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Comprehensive Plan

The proposed amendment advances the following Goals, Objectives, and Policies of Plan 2040:

- **Community Form Goal 1:** Guide the form and design of development to respond to distinctive physical, historic and cultural qualities.
- **Community Form Goal 1, Objective b:** The pattern and design of development is shaped by a preferred neighborhood character.
- **Community Form Goal 1, Objective d:** Innovative development policies promote resilience and are responsive to existing and future trends.
- **Community Form Goal 1, Policy 6:** Discourage non-residential expansion into existing residential areas unless applicant can demonstrate that any adverse impact on residential uses will be mitigated. Evaluation of impacts may include, but not be limited to, displacement of residents, loss of affordable housing units, traffic, parking, signs, lighting, noise, odor, and stormwater. Appropriate transitions from non-residential to residential uses should depend on the pattern of development of the Form District and may include natural vegetative buffers, landscaping or the use of higher density residential between lower density residential and/or non-residential.
- **Community Form Goal 1, Policy 10:** Mitigate the impacts caused when incompatible developments unavoidably occur adjacent to one another. Buffers should be used between uses that are substantially different in intensity or density. Buffers should be variable in design and may include landscaping, vegetative berms and/or walls and should address issues such as outdoor lighting, lights from automobiles, illuminated signs, loud noise, odors, smoke, automobile exhaust or other noxious smells, dust and dirt, litter, junk, outdoor storage, and visual nuisances. Residential uses that develop adjacent to agricultural land uses may be required to provide screening and buffering to protect both the farmer and homeowners.

- **Community Form Goal 1, Policy 14:** Ensure that signs are compatible with the Form District pattern and contribute to the visual quality of their surroundings. Promote signs of a size and height adequate for effective communication and conducive to motor vehicle safety. Encourage signs that are integrated with or attached to structures wherever feasible; limit freestanding signs to monument style signs unless such design would unreasonably compromise sign effectiveness. Give careful attention to signs in historic districts, parkways, scenic corridors, design review districts and other areas of special concern. For freestanding signs in multi-lot developments, minimize the number of signs by including signage for each establishment on the same support structure and encourage consistent design (size, style, and materials).

NOTIFICATION

Notification of the Planning Commission public hearing was conducted in accordance with KRS 100 requirements. In addition, staff provided notice to those registered neighborhood groups and individuals on the list for electronic notification for development proposals in all Metro Council Districts (GovDelivery).

STAFF FINDING

The text amendments advance goals, objectives, and policies of Plan 2040, as well as its CHASE principles by allowing digital display off-premises signs in appropriate areas with standards that address compatibility, safety, and overconcentration.

REQUIRED ACTIONS

RECOMMEND to the Louisville Metro Council and legislative bodies of cities with zoning authority that the proposed text amendments be **APPROVED, APPROVED WITH MODIFICATIONS, OR DENIED**.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Text Amendments
2. Proposed Findings for the Planning Commission

1. Proposed Text Amendment

The Planning Commission must make a recommendation to Metro Council and the legislative bodies of cities with zoning authority to approve, approve with modifications, or deny the LDC text amendments. The proposed changes are presented as specific amendments to the Louisville Metro version of the LDC. The cities with zoning authority in Louisville Metro have different versions. If any of the cities consider incorporating the amendments into its LDC, staff will assist the city in preparing specific amendments that reflect the nature of the changes recommended below.

Louisville Metro Land Development Code

Chapter 1, Part 2 Definitions

Abandonment - The cessation of the use of real property under circumstances which do not manifest an intent to continue said use or to resume said use within a reasonable time. The cessation of a use of real property for less than one year shall be rebuttably presumed to not constitute abandonment and the cessation of a use of real property for a year or more shall be rebuttably presumed to be unreasonable and an abandonment of use.

Abandonment, Off-Premises Sign – An off-premises sign is deemed abandoned if for a period of one (1) year or more, the sign has: (a) Not displayed advertising; (b) Displayed obsolete advertising; or (c) Needed substantial repairs due to lack of maintenance.

Area of sign - The total area of the sign face, which is used to display a message or attract attention, not including its supporting structures.

Billboard - ~~Billboard—(See off-premises sign definition.)~~ See “Off-Premises Sign.”

Changeable copy sign/Reader board - A sign or portion thereof with characters, letters, or illustrations that can be changed or rearranged without altering the face or the surface of the sign. ~~These signs do not include signs considered as changing image signs.~~ As used in this Land Development Code, this term does not include changing image signs or digital display off-premises signs.

Changing Image Sign - A sign, including a sign using a video display method, which changes its message or background by means of electrical, kinetic, solar or mechanical energy.

Commercial Message - Any sign wording, logo or other representation that, directly or indirectly, names, advertises or calls attention to a business, industry, product, service or other similar activity.

Expressway - A highway for through traffic, with full control of access and grade separations at intersections; includes routes known as "freeway."

Illuminated Sign - A sign with an artificial light source, either internally or externally, for the purpose of lighting the sign.

Metropolitan Area - An area within Jefferson County, Kentucky as shown on the attached map which is incorporated herein and said area being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at a point in the centerline of Dixie Highway, said point being 2,000 feet Northeast of the centerline of the Snyder Freeway; thence with a line parallel to the centerline of the Snyder Freeway, if extended, North 64 degrees 32 minutes 19 seconds West crossing the Ohio River to the Kentucky State Line; thence Northeast with said state line to a point, said point being 2,000 feet South of the centerline of the Snyder Freeway if extended from its terminus at US Highway 42; thence with a line crossing the Ohio River and parallel to the centerline of the Snyder Freeway South 64 degrees 16 minutes 47 seconds East to a point in the east line of US 42, said point being 2,000 feet Southwest of the centerline of the Snyder Freeway; thence with a line 2,000 feet from the centerline of the Snyder Freeway, and parallel to same, southeast, south, southwest, west, southwest and west to the point of beginning.



Off-Premises Sign (also referred to as an outdoor advertising sign or and commonly known as a billboard): - A sign that is considered a principal use on a lot by this Land Development Code and is unassociated with other principal uses on the lot upon which the sign is located. Such a sign typically provides a commercial message, directing attention to a business commodity, service, or establishment conducted, sold, or offered at a location other than the premises on which the sign is erected.

NOTE: Regulations moved to Chapter 4 Part 3.

Off-Premises Sign, Digital Display - A type of off-premises sign, with a sign face, or portion thereof, which electronically changes a fixed display screen composed of a series of lights, including light emitting diodes (LED's), fiber optics, or other similar new technology where the message change sequence is accomplished immediately. Digital display off-premises signs include computer programmable, microprocessor controlled electronic or digital displays that display electronic, static images, static graphics, or static pictures, with or without textual

information. As used in this Land Development Code, this term does not include *changing image signs* that are permitted as on-premises signs.

Off-Premises Sign, Static - A type of *off-premises sign*, generally, but not limited to, a rigidly assembled sign, display, or devise, that is free-standing and affixed to the ground, the primary purpose of which is to display advertising messages or information that can be changed manually in the field. Such signs are generally designed so that the copy or poster on the sign can be changed frequently and the advertising space is for lease.

On-premises sign - A sign that serves as an accessory use to a principal use on a development site.

Outdoor Advertising Sign - See "*Off-Premises Sign*."

Outdoor Lighting - the night-time illumination of an outside area or object by any man-made device located outdoors that produces light by any means. This includes luminaires used to illuminate **advertising** signs, landscaping, architectural features, walkways, driveways and parking areas.

Parkway, Designated – Any roadway designated as a parkway or scenic corridor pursuant to Chapter 10, Part 3 of this Land Development Code.

Shared On-Premises Sign - A permanent on-premises sign used by two or more principal uses in separate premises, which utilize common off-street parking and/or shared access. As used in this Land Development Code, a **A** shared on-premises sign is not considered an *off-premises/outdoor advertising sign* by these regulations.

Sign - Any display to public view of letters, devices, structures, fixtures, displays, emblems, pictures, placards, or any parts or combinations thereof designed to direct, announce or inform. See exemptions listed in Section 8.1.3.

Chapter 1 Part 3 Nonconformance

1.3.5 Signs (August 2010)

Any sign legally in existence on the effective date of any zoning regulation that does not permit such signs may continue in existence as a matter of right. Such nonconforming sign may be maintained and repaired on the same property so long as the size, including the area and height, is not increased beyond the existing size. A nonconforming sign cannot be altered in any way so as to make it less in compliance with existing regulations, such as by adding moving parts or illumination. See chapter 8 of ~~the~~ this Land Development Code for additional provisions related to nonconforming on-premises signs and chapter 4 of this Land Development Code for additional provisions related to off-premises signs.

Chapter 2 Part 6 Special Purpose Zoning Districts

2.6.4 W- 1 Waterfront District

B. Prohibited Uses:

All uses other than those listed as permitted or similar to those permitted are prohibited. Specifically prohibited are adult entertainment uses and ~~advertising signs/billboards (off-premises advertising) signs.~~

2.6.5 W-2 Waterfront District

B. Prohibited Uses:

All uses other than those listed as permitted or similar to those permitted are prohibited. Specifically prohibited are adult entertainment uses and ~~advertising signs/billboards (off-premises advertising) signs.~~

2.6.6 W-3 Waterfront District

B. Prohibited Uses:

All uses other than those listed in paragraph A. above are prohibited. Specifically prohibited are all residential uses, adult entertainment, ~~advertising signs/billboards (off-premises advertising) signs~~, excavation, filling, and refuse disposal operations, slaughterhouses, stock yards, fertilizer plants, and the reduction of dead animals, fish, garbage, or offal.

Chapter 2 Part 7 Planned Village Development

2.7.1 Planned Village Development (PVD) District

Table 2.7.1

	Village Edge	Village General	Village Center

OTHER			

outdoor advertising <u>off-premises</u> sign	X	X	X

8. Signs.

Signs shall be consistent and compatible with the village pattern as defined in C.2. of this Section. In order to allow maximum flexibility, sign restrictions contained in Chapter 8 shall not apply within a village. Instead, sign standards shall be provided by the applicant and approved by the Planning Commission at the time of approval of the Master Plan. ~~Outdoor advertising~~ Off-premises signs shall not be permitted within the PVD District.

2.7.5 Traditional Neighborhood Zoning District – Old Louisville/Limerick

E. Signs

1. ~~Outdoor advertising Off-premises signs (off-premises signs), as defined in the Land Development Code,~~ are not permitted within the TNZD.

Chapter 4 Part 3 Permitted Uses with Special Standards

4.3.12 Off-Premises Signage Signs (also referred to as Billboards and Outdoor Advertising Signs)

The design criteria below are the only design standards within the Land Development Code that apply to off-premises signage.

- A. ~~Unilluminated Outdoor Advertising Signs~~ Static Off-Premises Sign (Less than 72 square feet) - ~~An unilluminated outdoor advertising sign of~~ in which the area of the sign is less than seventy-two (72) square feet shall be allowed if:
1. Located in a C-N, C-1, C-2, C-M, EZ-1, PRO, PEC, M-1, M-2 or M-3 District;
 2. Set back at least ~~fifteen (15)~~ feet from the front and/or street-side property lines if in a C-N, C-1, C-2 or C-M Districts;

~~NOTE: Outdoor advertising signs are prohibited in the city of Middletown~~

3. Located not less than ~~four hundred fifty (450)~~ feet from any existing billboard off-premises sign of any size on the same side of the same street, and not less than ~~nine hundred (900)~~ feet from any existing billboard off-premises sign of any size on the same side of ~~a controlled access highway an expressway or designated parkway~~;

~~NOTE: *"Designated parkways" as referenced in the section of Chapter 10 Part 3.~~

4. Located not less than ~~two hundred twenty five (225)~~ feet from any existing billboard off-premises sign of any size on the opposite side of the same street (measured from the point of intersection on the same side of the street with the line from the existing sign perpendicular to the roadway), and not less than ~~four hundred fifty (450)~~ feet from any existing billboard off-premises sign of any size on the opposite side of the same ~~controlled access highway expressway or designated parkway~~ (as so measured);
5. Located not less than ~~seventy five (75)~~ feet from the centerline of an intersecting roadway;
6. In a C-N District, located not less than ~~two hundred (200)~~ feet measured radially from the nearest edge of a residentially zoned or residentially developed lot in the *metropolitan area*;
7. ~~In~~ in a C-1 C-2, C-M, EZ-1, PRO, PEC, M-1, M-2, or ~~through~~ M-3 ~~district~~ District, located not less than ~~one hundred fifty (150)~~ feet measured radially from the nearest edge of a residentially zoned or residentially developed lot in the *metropolitan area*, ~~and~~;
8. ~~Located~~ located not less than ~~six hundred (600)~~ feet measured radially between the sign and the nearest edge of a residentially zoned or residentially developed lot in the non-metropolitan area;
79. Located not less than ~~seventy five (75)~~ feet from the nearest edge of the right-of-way of ~~a controlled access highway an expressway or designated parkway passing through on a lot in~~ the *metropolitan area* and not less than ~~six hundred sixty (660)~~ feet from the nearest edge of ~~a controlled access highway an expressway or designated parkway passing through on a lot in~~ the non-metropolitan area;
810. Placed so that the highest point of ~~the advertising any freestanding~~ sign does not exceed ~~sixteen (16)~~ feet above ground and so that the highest point of any attached sign does not extend above the building's roofline;
911. Located not within or less than ~~two hundred fifty (250)~~ feet measured radially from any public ~~park or any designated parkway~~ or any individual landmark property or

- historic district* designated as such by the Louisville ~~Landmark's~~ Metro Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission ~~or the Jefferson County Preservation Commission~~ or from any property listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
12. Not including any digital display or automated changing image component; and
 13. Not illuminated with an artificial light source, either internal or external.

For a back-to-back freestanding sign, or a structure with two parallel and directly opposite sign faces oriented in opposite directions and a common set of supports, the applicable area of the sign area is of one sign face only. For a back-to-back sign without a common set of support or a V-shaped sign, the applicable area of the sign is the sum of the areas of the two sign faces.

- B. ~~Illuminated Outdoor Advertising Signs~~ Static or Digital Display Off-Premises Sign (Less than 330 square feet) - ~~An illuminated or non-illuminated outdoor advertising~~ A sign of in which the area of the sign is less than three hundred thirty (330) square feet, if not otherwise permitted subsection in A., shall be allowed if:
1. a) a static off-premises sign and located in a C-1 District; b) a static or digital display off-premises sign and located ~~Located~~ in a C-1, C-2, C-M, EZ-1, PRO, PEC, M-1, M-2 or M-3 District; or b) a digital display off-premises sign and located in a C-3 District;
 2. Set back at least ~~thirty (30)~~ feet from the front and/or street side property lines if located in a C-1, C-2 or C-M District;
 3. Located along a ~~major or minor arterial highway as~~ street designated ~~on Comprehensive Plan Core Graphic 11, Roadway Classification, or~~ as a minor or major arterial by the Director of Works;
 4. Located not less than ~~six hundred (600)~~ feet from any existing ~~billboard off-premises sign~~ sign of any size on the same side of the same major or minor arterial ~~highway street~~ highway street and not less than ~~twelve hundred (1,200)~~ feet from any existing ~~billboard off-premises sign~~ sign of any size on the same side of ~~a controlled access highway~~ an expressway or designated parkway;
 5. Located not less than ~~three hundred (300)~~ feet from any existing ~~billboard off-premises sign~~ sign of any size on the opposite side of the same major or minor arterial ~~highway street~~ highway street (measured from the point of intersection on the same side of the major or minor arterial ~~highway street~~ highway street with the line from the existing sign perpendicular to the roadway), and not less than ~~six hundred (600)~~ feet from any existing ~~billboard off-premises sign~~ sign of any size on the opposite side of the same ~~controlled access highway~~ expressway or designated parkway (as so measured);
 6. Located not less than ~~seventy five (75)~~ feet from the centerline of an intersecting roadway;
 7. Located not less than ~~three hundred (300)~~ feet (measured radially) between the sign and the nearest edge of a residentially zoned or residentially developed lot in the *metropolitan area* and not less than ~~six hundred (600)~~ feet measured radially between the sign and the nearest edge of a residentially zoned or residentially developed lot in the non-metropolitan area;
 8. Located not less than ~~one hundred fifty (150)~~ feet from the nearest edge of the right-of-way of ~~a controlled access highway~~ an expressway or designated parkway ~~passing through on a lot in~~ the metropolitan area and not less than ~~six hundred sixty (660)~~ feet from the nearest edge of the right-of-way of ~~a controlled access highway~~ an expressway or designated parkway ~~passing through on a lot in~~ the non-metropolitan area;
 9. Constructed so the highest point of the sign (including embellishments shall not exceed ~~forty (40)~~ feet above the ground, ~~except that for signs located in the C-1 District the~~

~~highest point of the sign (including embellishments) shall not exceed thirty-five (35) feet above the ground;~~

10. Located not ~~within or~~ less than ~~five hundred (500)~~ 250 feet measured radially from any public ~~park or any designated parkway~~ or any individual landmark property or ~~historic district~~ designated as such by the ~~Landmark's Metro Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts~~ Commission ~~or the Jefferson County Preservation Commission~~ or from any property listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
11. Notwithstanding the provisions of subparagraph ~~I. hereof~~ 9. or E.1., the highest point of ~~an outdoor advertising~~ a sign (including embellishments) located along an elevated section of ~~a controlled access highway~~ an expressway may be ~~fifty (50)~~ feet above the ground, provided that the lowest point of the sign shall be not less than ~~ten (10)~~ feet above the grade of the elevated ~~controlled access highway;~~ expressway; and;
12. Illumination for a static sign only illuminates the sign face and does not cause glare.

For a back-to-back freestanding sign, or a structure with two parallel and directly opposite sign faces oriented in opposite directions and a common set of supports, the applicable area of the sign area is of one sign face only. For a back-to-back sign without a common set of support or a V-shaped sign, the applicable area of the sign is the sum of the areas of the two sign faces.

- C. ~~Illuminated/Non-Illuminated Outdoor Advertising~~ Static or Digital Display Off-Premises Sign (330-750 Square Feet) - ~~An illuminated or non-illuminated outdoor advertising sign of in which the area of the sign is~~ greater than or equal to three hundred thirty (330) square feet but less than seven hundred fifty (750) square feet shall be allowed if:
 1. ~~a) A static or digital display off-premises sign and located~~ Located in a C-2, C-M, EZ-1, PRO, PEC, M-1, M-2 or M-3 Districts; ~~or b) a digital display off-premises sign and located in a C-3 District;~~
 2. Set back at least ~~sixty (60)~~ feet from the front or street side property lines if in a C-2 or C-M District;
 3. Located along a ~~major or minor arterial highway as~~ street designated ~~on Comprehensive Plan Core Graphic 11, Roadway Classification, or~~ as a minor or major arterial by the Director of Works;
 4. Located not less than ~~twelve hundred (1,200)~~ feet from any existing ~~billboard off-premises sign~~ of any size on the same side of the same major or minor arterial ~~highway street~~ and not less than ~~fifteen hundred (1,500)~~ feet from any existing ~~billboard off-premises sign~~ of any size on the same side of ~~a controlled access highway an expressway or designated parkway;~~
 5. Located not less than ~~six hundred (600)~~ feet from any existing ~~billboard off-premises sign~~ of any size on the opposite side of the same major or minor arterial ~~highway street~~ (measured from the point of intersection on the same side of the major or minor arterial ~~highway street~~ with the line from the existing sign perpendicular to the roadway), and not less than ~~nine hundred (900)~~ feet from any existing ~~billboard off-premises sign~~ of any size on the opposite side of the same ~~controlled access highway expressway or designated parkway~~ (as so measured);
 6. Located not less than ~~seventy-five (75)~~ feet from the centerline of an intersecting roadway;
 7. Located not less than ~~four hundred (400)~~ feet (measured radially) between the sign and the nearest edge of a residentially zoned or residentially developed lot in the ~~metropolitan area~~ and not less than ~~six hundred (600)~~ feet measured radially between

the sign and the nearest edge of a residentially zoned or residentially developed lot in the non-metropolitan area;

8. Located not less than ~~one hundred fifty (150)~~ feet from the nearest edge of the right-of-way of ~~a controlled access highway~~ an expressway or *designated parkway* passing through the *metropolitan area* and not less than ~~six hundred sixty (660)~~ feet from the nearest edge of the right-of-way of ~~a controlled access highway~~ an expressway or *designated parkway* ~~passing through~~ on a lot in the non-metropolitan area;
9. Constructed so the highest point of the sign (including embellishments) does not exceed ~~forty (40)~~ feet above the ground: at the base of the sign;
10. Located not within or less than ~~five hundred (500)~~ 250 feet measured radially from any public *park* ~~or any designated parkway~~ or any individual landmark property or *historic district* designated as such by the Landmark's Metro Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission ~~or the Jefferson County Preservation Commission~~ or from any property listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
11. Notwithstanding the provisions of subparagraph ~~I. hereof 9. and 9. or E.1.,~~ the highest point of ~~an outdoor advertising~~ a sign (including embellishments) located along an elevated section of ~~a controlled access highway~~ an expressway may be ~~fifty (50)~~ feet above the ground, provided that the lowest point of the sign shall be not less than ~~ten (10)~~ feet above the grade of the elevated ~~controlled access highway; expressway; and;~~
12. Any illumination for a static sign only illuminates the sign face and does not cause glare.

For a back-to-back freestanding sign, or a structure with two parallel and directly opposite sign faces oriented in opposite directions and a common set of supports, the applicable area of the sign area is of one sign face only. For a back-to-back sign without a common set of support or a V-shaped sign, the applicable area of the sign is the sum of the areas of the two sign faces.

- D. ~~Outdoor Advertising Off-Premises~~ Signs (Greater Than 750 Square Feet): No ~~outdoor advertising~~ sign greater than seven hundred fifty (750) square feet shall be allowed in any district.

E. Extensions and Embellishments for ~~Outdoor Advertising Off-Premises~~ Signs

1. ~~Allowable Shapes for Outdoor Advertising Signs~~

~~Outdoor advertising signs~~ Signs of all sizes shall be rectangular in shape except that extensions are allowed if such extensions are not greater than five (5) feet at the top, two (2) feet at the sides and/or eighteen (18) inches at the bottom of the sign and comprise in the aggregate an area not more than 12.5 percent as great as the basic rectangular shape to which such extensions are attached. Such embellishments are included in the calculation of the sign area restrictions.

2. ~~Extension of Outdoor Advertising Signs~~ No attached ~~outdoor advertising~~ sign shall extend past the exterior wall of the building to which it is affixed. The highest point of any attached sign shall not extend above the roofline of the building in which it is attached.

3. ~~Double-Faced/V-Type/Back to Back Outdoor Advertising Signs~~ Double-faced, V-type or back-to-back ~~outdoor advertising~~ signs shall be considered as one sign for spacing purposes.

F. Form District ~~Specific Outdoor Advertising Sign~~ Restrictions

New ~~outdoor advertising~~ *off-premises signs* shall not be permitted within the Conservation, Neighborhood, Traditional Neighborhood, Traditional Marketplace Corridor, Traditional Workplace, Town Center, Urban Center Neighborhood, and Downtown Form Districts with the following exceptions:

1. A digital display off-premises sign may be located in a Downtown; Urban Center Neighborhood; Traditional Marketplace Corridor; Town Center; or Traditional Workplace form district provided it meets all other standards.

G. Digital Display Off-Premises Sign Requirements

A digital display off-premises sign shall only be permitted if it meets the following requirements:

1. The sign shall be equipped with an ambient light monitor that automatically adjust the brightness level of the display based on ambient light conditions.
2. Digital animation, streaming video, or images that move or give the appearance of movement are prohibited.
3. A sign utilizing a copy change procedure shall display each individual message a minimum of eight (8) seconds.
4. The images and messages displayed must be static, and the transition from one static display to another must be instantaneous without any transition effects. Transition effects include wipes, fades, or other special effects.
5. The sign shall not have audio speakers or any audio component.
6. Each sign shall be operated with monitoring and methods in place that shall either turn off the display, or show a full black image on the display, in the event of a malfunction that affects more than 50 percent of the sign face.
7. No sign shall exceed a brightness level of 0.3 foot-candles above ambient light as measured using a foot-candle meter at a pre-set distance in accordance with the following procedure:
 - a. At least 30 minutes past sunset, record the ambient light while the sign is off or displaying all black copy, or with the sign's illumination blocked.
 - b. The light meter shall be held five (5) feet above the finished grade in front of the sign.
 - c. The meter shall be aimed toward the center of the sign face.
 - d. From the same location, a second reading shall be recorded while the display is on and not blocked.
7. A revolving or rotating sign is prohibited, except that elements forming a sign face may rotate as part of a copy change procedure.
8. In the C-3 district, no person shall erect a digital off-premises sign without first removing an off-premises sign or signs equal in face area. Any digital off-premises sign erected in the C-3 district shall comply with the removal requirements provided in section H.

H. Off-Premises Sign Removal Exchange Credit

In the C-3 district, no person shall construct a digital display off-premises sign without first removing an off-premises sign or signs equal in face area.

1. The Office of Planning shall maintain an account of exchange credits of existing off-premises signs in the C-3 district and shall credit the account of the owner of an off-premises sign for each off-premises sign that is removed.
2. In order to document the removal of an off-premises sign, the owner shall submit to the Office of Planning a copy of any permit for the removal of an off-premises sign and photographs documenting the removal.
3. In order to qualify for an exchange credit, the off-premises sign to be removed must have been lawfully erected and not abandoned in a manner that jeopardized its legal nonconforming status.

4. Prior to approving any exchange credit, the Office of Planning shall confirm that the off-premises sign that was removed or is being removed was or will be lawfully nonconforming at the time of its removal.
5. An exchange credit may be reserved and used by the original owner of the exchange credit within 5 years after the removal. An exchange credit may be transferred to another owner only with approval of the Planning Director.

I. Off-Premises Signs erected by Louisville Metro Government

Signs erected by Louisville Metro Government may be approved on any property, notwithstanding the restrictions in this section, pursuant to the Community Facility review process in Chapter 4, Part 10 of this Land Development Code.

~~NOTE: The prohibition of new billboards in certain form districts (Section 8.4.6 A) is not subject to the LDC waiver process.~~ The provisions provided in this section must be met in full and requirements are not eligible for relief with a variance, waiver, or sign authorization.

NOTE: Terms in this section that are italicized are defined in Section 1.2.2 of this Land Development Code.

8.1.6 General Requirements

C. Off-premises/~~Outdoor Advertising~~ signs are prohibited except as specifically allowed under Chapter 4, Part 3.

8.3.3 Permanent On-premises Signs for Non-residential Uses

B. Freestanding On-premises Signs: In addition to the attached signs allowed above, illuminated or non-illuminated freestanding business signs are allowed subject to the following restrictions:

5. An off-premises/~~outdoor advertising~~ sign shall not be counted in determining compliance with items 3 and 4 above.

D. Shared On-premises Signs shall not be considered off-premises/~~outdoor advertising~~ signs by this regulation.

Appendix 11A

Requirements that are not eligible for waiver or variance (requirements that are expressly prohibited by the LDC, are alternative designs/procedures to specific requirements, etc.)

Section 8.4.6 <u>4.3.12</u>	Billboards <u>Off-premises signs</u>	<u>Any required standard related to an off-premises sign in Section 4.3.12</u> Restriction on new billboards in certain form districts (e.g. NFD and TNFD)

Section 8.6.2	Parkway and Scenic Corridor	No billboards, temporary, portable or

		outdoor advertising signs on any property adjacent to a designated parkway or scenic corridor.
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2. Proposed Findings for the Planning Commission

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the Louisville Metro Council passed Resolution No. 030, Series 2025 on May 15, 2025, requesting that staff review the Land Development Code (LDC) and develop recommended changes related to digital display off-premises signs; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the proposed amendment advances the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of Plan 2040, as well as its CHASE principles; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the proposed amendment meets Community Form Goal 1 by guiding the form and design of development including digital display off-premises signs; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the proposed amendment meets Community Form Goal 1, Objective b by providing specific location and design standards for off-premises signs; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the proposed amendment meets Community Form Goal 1, Objective d by addressing the emerging trend of digital display off-premises signs; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the proposed amendment meets Community Form Goal 1, Policy 6 by continuing to limit and control off-premises signs near residential areas; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the proposed amendment meets Community Form Goal 1, Policy 10 by mitigating impacts created by off-premises signs with specific design standards; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the proposed amendment meets Community Form Goal 1, Policy 14 by utilizing form districts and additional design standards to ensure that off-premises signs are compatible in given locations.