

SIGN/ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #19-04

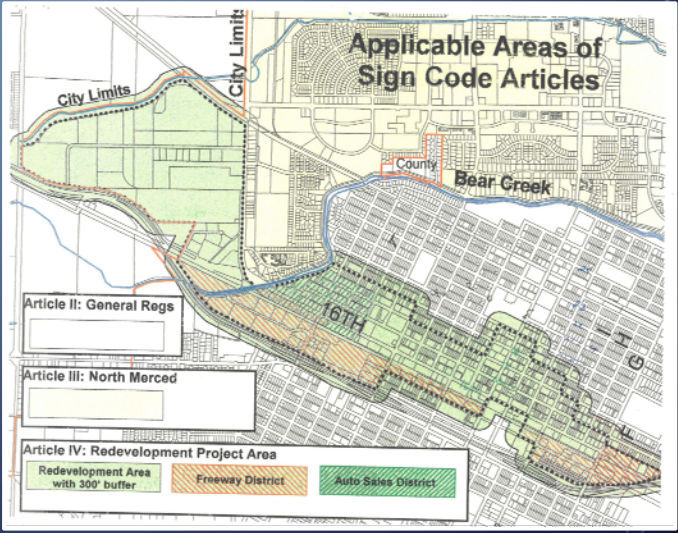
CITY COUNCIL MEETING—NOVEMBER 18, 2019
KIM ESPINOSA, PLANNING MANAGER



A graphic of a blue signpost with a yellow arrow pointing up to a yellow building icon. The signpost lists the following locations: DOWNTOWN, VISITOR CENTER, UC MERCED, MERCED COLLEGE, and APPLGATE PARK. The word 'MERCED' is at the top in a yellow box.

BACKGROUND—SIGN REGULATIONS

- Two locations:
 - Section 17.36 (Signs)—Municipal Code
 - Article I—Definitions;
 - Article II—General Regs;
 - Article III—North Merced;
 - Article IV—Downtown.
 - Chapter 20.62 (Signs)—Zoning.



A map titled 'Applicable Areas of Sign Code Articles' showing the city limits of Merced. The map is divided into several colored regions: Article II: General Regs (yellow), Article III: North Merced (green), and Article IV: Redevelopment Project Area (orange). The Redevelopment Project Area is further divided into a 'Redevelopment Area with 500' buffer' (light orange), a 'Freeway District' (dark orange), and an 'Auto Sales District' (green). The map also shows the 'City Limits' and 'Bear Creek'.

BACKGROUND (CONT.)

- Both the **North Merced and Downtown Sign Regulations** were established in early **1980's** in an effort to achieve **higher standards** for signage than the rest of the City.
- **Current Sign Ordinance** does **not** adequately address:
 - Many Modern Sign Designs (i.e. LED/Digital, Inflatables, Feather Signs, etc.),
 - Reed vs. Gilbert Supreme Court Case (requires content neutral sign regulations)
- **Comprehensive Sign Ordinance Update:**
 - **Interviews** held **Oct 16**; Council to Consider Contract on **Dec. 2, 2019**
 - Timeframe is approx. **12 months** because of **Extensive Public and Business Outreach**
 - In the meantime, staff is currently proposing **Minor Amendments** to address some **Immediate Needs** raised by prospective and existing businesses in the City.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED CHANGES

Definitions/General Regulations/Downtown (Articles I, II, & IV)

- **References Updated**
- **Definitions** Updated/Added to Allow **Changeable Copy** for Certain Uses
- **Modifications to Marquee & Directional Signs**
- Shopping Centers in **All Zones & Areas of City** Eligible for **Comprehensive Sign Programs/Bonus Signage**
- **Modifications to Blade Sign Requirements**
- Allowing changes to **Non-Conforming** signs
- **Allowing Reproductions of Historic Signs**
- Allowing **Historic or Multi-Story Buildings Downtown** to qualify for a **Comprehensive Sign Program**;



CHANGES FOR NORTH MERCED

Section 17.36—Article III—Regulations for North Merced

- Increasing the **Percentage** allowed on 1 Building Frontage
- Increasing the Size of **Directory Signs**
- In **Commercial Office (C-O)** zones, Removing the Requirement for **Conditional Use Permits (CUP's)** & Increasing Size of Plaque Signs
- For **Monument Signs** and **Decorative Wall Signs**:
 - Allowing Signage to **NOT** count against Maximum Allowed for Each Tenant
 - Removing the Requirement for Various CUP's,
 - Increasing the **Maximum Percentage** of the Sign Structure that Signage Can Cover



NORTH MERCED (CONT.)

- For **Free-standing and Wall-Mounted Shopping Center Signs**:
 - Reducing the **Minimum** Size of the Center to Qualify for a Sign
 - Allowing **Office complexes with a mix of retail and professional office tenants** (i.e. Plaza at El Portal) to Qualify;
 - **Tenant advertising** on the Sign will **NOT** count toward the Maximum Allowable Signage for Each Tenant;
 - Can be **illuminated unless adjacent to residential** uses in which case the **Planning Commission may allow** with Conditions
 - **Background area/Trademark Colors** would **NOT** be counted
 - Increasing **Maximum Number** of signs on **Each Arterial Street & Reducing the Amount of Street Frontage** to Qualify
 - Centers in **Thoroughfare Commercial (C-T)** zones would Qualify
 - Increasing **Percentage of Coverage** of Sign Structure



SHOPPING CENTER “BONUS SIGNS”

- **Shopping Centers or Office Complexes with a Mix of Retail and Office Tenants** may be allowed with a **CUP** approved by the Planning Commission to adopt a **Comprehensive Sign Program**
- **Eligible for “Bonus” Signage if 1 of the following are met (Total Bonus cannot exceed 70 percent):**
 - a) Up to **30 percent** for “City of Merced,” “Welcome to Merced,” or equivalent language.
 - b) Up to **60 percent** for **enhanced design features** (such as additional landscaping, water features, decorative artwork, seating areas, etc.)
 - c) “**Changeable Copy Sign**” if Owner agrees to allow the City to Advertise the City or Community/City Sponsored Events
 - d) Up to **50 percent of Maximum Allowable Sign Height** may be granted if the criteria for either “a” or “b” above are met.



PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On October 9, 2019, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the Draft Ordinance by a 5-0 vote (2 vacancies).

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

After the public hearing, the City Council should adopt a motion to approve/disapprove/modify:

- A. **Categorical Exemption** (Environmental Review #19-21)
- B. **Introduce Ordinance** ____ **regarding Sign/Zoning Ordinance Amendment #19-04**