

# Planned Sign Program



The purpose of a Planned Sign Program (Zoning Ordinance Section 5.15.08.) is to allow a greater degree of flexibility in sign design and display where strict compliance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance may not be feasible. A Planned Sign Program is intended to be used for multiple signs for large project development areas and integrated complexes to ensure that the requested signs work in a coordinated fashion to meet the general intent for signs in the Zone District in which they are located.

In lieu of the specific sign requirements of a particular Zone District, the Planning Commission may review and approve a Planned Sign Program for integrated complexes, such as shopping centers and campuses, and for project sites larger than two (2) acres in size. The Planning Commission has the authority to approve alternative requirements for sign design, number, type, size, height, location, and lighting.

A Planned Sign Program may not be used to circumvent the sign variance process or to simply permit larger, more visible, or additional signs than may otherwise be permitted.



Application

# Planned Sign Program

## A. PROPERTY AND PROJECT INFORMATION

Property Address(es) \_\_\_\_\_

Parcel Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Zone District \_\_\_\_\_

Lot Size Frontage: \_\_\_\_\_ ft Depth: \_\_\_\_\_ ft Area: \_\_\_\_\_ Acres/Sq Ft ☐ Rectangle ☐ Irregular

Intended Use of property: \_\_\_\_\_

**This application is requesting:**

- ☐ New Planned Sign Program (Section 5.15.08. of the Zoning Ordinance)
- ☐ Amendment to an Existing Planned Sign Program (Section 5.15.08.F.2. of the Zoning Ordinance)
- ☐ Major Amendment (Planning Commission Review)
- ☐ Minor Amendment (Director Review). This staff review applies to modifications maintaining the general sign design, number, and dimensional requirements, including location changes of not more than five feet, changes to sign faces, and changes to landscaping and lighting.

## B. APPLICANT INFORMATION

### 1. Applicant

Identify the person or organization requesting the Director Review:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Applicant Interest

The applicant must have a legal interest in the subject property:

- ☐ Property Owner ☐ Purchaser by Option or Purchase Agreement
- ☐ Purchaser by Land Contract ☐ Lessee/Tenant

### 3. Property Owner ☐ Check here if Applicant is also Property Owner

Identify the person or organization that owns the subject property:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Agent

Identify any person representing the property owner or applicant in this matter:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_



## Application

# Planned Sign Program

## C. REQUIRED APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS

- ☐ **1. Description** (Use letterhead if possible)  
Submit a written a narrative of the general purpose of the proposed Planned Sign Program, including the number of tenants or buildings on the site, an inventory of existing and proposed signs, and waivers requested from Zoning Ordinance regulations.
- ☐ **2. Site Plan, Building Elevations, and Sign Plans**  
Enclose the plans as required on the Application Checklist.

## D. REQUEST AND AFFIDAVIT

**The applicant must read the following statement carefully and sign below:**

- ☐ The undersigned requests that the City of Grand Rapids review this application and related required documents and site plans as provided in Section 5.12.14. of the Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance. The applicant further affirms and acknowledges the following:
  - ☐ That the applicant has a legal interest in the property described in this application.
  - ☐ That the answers and statements contained in this application and enclosures are in all respects true and correct to the best of his, her or their knowledge.
  - ☐ That the approval of this application does not relieve the undersigned from compliance with all other provisions of the Zoning Ordinance or other codes or statutes, and does not constitute the granting of a variance.
  - ☐ That the applicant will comply with any and all conditions imposed in granting an approval of this application.
  - ☐ If also the owner, the applicant grants the City of Grand Rapids staff and the Planning Commission the right to access the subject property for the sole purpose of evaluating the application.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**If the applicant is not the property owner, the property owner must read and sign below:**

The undersigned affirms and acknowledges that he, she or they are the owner(s) of the property described in this application, and:

- ☐ Is/are aware of the contents of this application and related enclosures.
- ☐ Authorizes the applicant to submit this application and represent the undersigned in the matter being reviewed by the City of Grand Rapids.
- ☐ Grants the City of Grand Rapids staff and the Planning Commission the right to access the subject property for the sole purpose of evaluating the application.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Review Standards

# Planned Sign Program

The application shall have the obligation to demonstrate, and the Planning Commission shall find, that all of the following are met before a Planned Sign Program may be approved:

### Standard #1. Purpose of Deviation.

Describe how the Planned Sign Program would result in a more attractive aesthetic setting, improved safety, provide more convenient identification for planned users, or other similar purposes that would not be achievable without deviations from the specific sign requirements of the Zone District.

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### Standard #2. Uniqueness of Property.

Describe how the location and/or physical characteristics of the subject property or the needs for identification are unique when compared to other similarly situated parcels in the same Zone District and in the same vicinity.

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### Standard #3. Purpose and Intent of Sign Regulations.

Describe how the proposed Planned Sign Program substantially furthers the Purposes and Intent of Section 5.15.01., including, but not limited to the following:

#### b.7. Neighborhood Character.

How the Planned Sign Program reinforces and supports the desired character of the Neighborhood Classification and Zone District in a manner that takes into consideration building scale and massing, lot size, building setbacks, transparency, street dimensions, travel speed and pedestrian presence so that signs contribute to the streetscape and aid in creating a sense of place.

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### Standard #4. No Adverse Effects.

Describe how approval of the Planned Sign Program would not create any adverse effects on one or more properties in the vicinity.

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## Application Procedures

# Planned Sign Program

### 1. General Information

Planned Sign Programs are approved by Optional Plan Review (OPR), a process by which the Planning Commission may evaluate and approve a development project that cannot otherwise meet the requirements of the Zone District. The intent is to permit flexibility, encourage innovation and variety, and successfully integrate the development with the surrounding neighborhood. Conditions of approval may be attached to a decision.

A Planned Sign Program may be approved only for integrated complexes, such as a campus or shopping center, and project sites larger than two (2) acres in size.

### 2. Pre-Application Consultation

A pre-application meeting with Planning Department staff is recommended prior to the submission of the application. Such a meeting helps ensure a smooth application process.

### 3. Neighborhood Outreach

The purpose of neighborhood outreach is to inform nearby stakeholders of the proposed project, receive comments and address concerns about the proposal, and whenever possible resolve conflicts in advance of Planning Commission review. Failure to conduct outreach activities may result in a tabling of the request. Recommended procedures are found in Section 5.12.06. of the Zoning Ordinance.

### 4. Application

An application packet for a Planned Sign Program is available from the Grand Rapids Planning Department, located on the third floor of 1120 Monroe Avenue NW or at the Planning Department's website [www.grandrapidsmi.gov/planning](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/planning) under Forms and Applications. You may also call 616-456-4100.

A complete application must be received at least five weeks prior to the Planning Commission meeting. The project description is a very important part of the application. See [www.grandrapidsmi.gov/planning](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/planning) for the schedule of Planning Commission meetings and application deadlines.

### 5. Staff Review

The application will be reviewed by Planning staff prior to submission to the Planning Commission. A Planner may contact the applicant with questions or

with a request for additional information, or may advise the applicant on recommended changes or revisions to the application and submittals for the purpose of clarity.

### 6. Notice of Public Hearing (for new Planned Sign Programs)

Following the staff review, an application for a new Planned Sign Program is scheduled for a public hearing at the Planning Commission. Notice of the public hearing is published in the Grand Rapids Press 15 days prior to Planning Commission meeting, and property owners and residents within a 300 ft radius of the subject property are notified by post card. Interested persons may submit a letter or speak at the public hearing.

### 7. Planning Commission Meeting

Each public hearing item on the agenda is assigned an approximate start time. Planning staff introduces and explains the request to the Planning Commission. The applicant is then asked to present information on his or her proposal. The Planning Commission may ask questions of the staff and/or applicant. The Planning Commission then allows public comment on the new Planned Sign Programs, and a chance for the applicant to respond to any concerns or questions. The public comment period is then closed and the Planning Commission deliberates on the request in open session. The Planning Commission may approve, approve with conditions, deny, or table the request.

Major Amendments to existing Planned Sign Programs generally do not require a public hearing and are generally scheduled toward the end of the meeting. Minor Amendments do not require Planning Commission review.

### 8. Written Notice

The applicant will be provided with a letter and resolution that documents the decision of the Planning Commission, including any conditions of approval.

### 9. Appeal of Denial

The decision of the Planning Commission shall be final and may not be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals. However, the applicant may elect to submit a sign variance application to the Board of Zoning Appeals.



## Application Checklist

# Planned Sign Program

The following items are required for a complete Planned Sign Program application. Incomplete applications will be returned.

☐ **Signed Application Form**

Complete pages 2 - 3 of the application form.

The application must be signed by the applicant and the property owner (if different).

☐ **Response to Review Standards**

Complete pages 4 of the application form.

☐ **Description** (Use letterhead if possible)

☐ Provide a narrative of the general purpose of the proposed Planned Sign Program.

☐ Indicate the number of tenants or buildings on the site

☐ Provide an inventory of existing signs and proposed signs

☐ Identify waivers requested from Zoning Ordinance regulations

☐ **Site Plan**

Show the location of all signage proposed, both existing and new.

☐ **Building Elevations**

Show the location of all signage proposed, both existing and new.

☐ **Sign plans**

Provide detailed and dimensioned specifications of all signs proposed.

☐ **Neighborhood Outreach**

For a new Planned Sign Program, include a summary of activities conducted, any correspondence distributed, meeting sign-in sheets, meeting notes, letters of support, etc.

☐ **Fee (FY2026)**

Either by check made payable to the City of Grand Rapids, by credit card in person, or by credit card over the phone by calling (616) 456-4100

☐ New Planned Sign Program \$2,570

☐ New Planned Sign Program in combination with other PC application \$1,440

☐ Major Amendment to existing Planned Sign Program (PC approval) \$1,770

☐ Minor Amendment to existing Planned Sign Program (Director Review) \$1,220

Payment options:

- Check (payable to City of Grand Rapids)
- Credit card in person at Development Center
- Credit card by phone by calling (616) 456-4100

☐ **Plan Submittal**

One (1) digital copy in PDF format (CD, flash drive, cloud storage, or email to [planning@grcity.us](mailto:planning@grcity.us))