

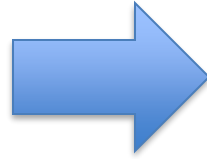
Temporary Sign Code Revisions

County Council Presentation

05.05.2026

Purpose:

This is a presentation of identified issues with the County's temporary sign regulations and get Council feedback and direction before staff drafts code amendments.



Current Temporary Sign Regulations :

Table 48 establishes sign area allowances by zone district for temporary signs on private property — ranging from 8 sq ft in open space zones to 30 sq ft per linear foot of building frontage in commercial and mixed-use zones.

Current Temporary Sign Regulations :

Section 16-65(f) establishes additional standards:

- 8 sq ft max area, 8 ft max height
- 60 consecutive days max duration
- No illumination
- ROW signs shall not block sidewalks, ADA access, or extend into streets
- ROW signs shall not be posted on streetlights, stop signs, utility poles, or other utility structures
- ROW signs may only be placed in designated temporary signage zones as shown on the official zoning map — **but the map was never adopted**

Issues with the Current Code :

Staff is receiving complaints about signs in the ROW and lacks the tools to address them.

- **No enforceable placement standard.** Section (f)(6) references a designated signage zones map that doesn't exist. Staff cannot direct where signs can or cannot go in the ROW.
- **Duration is unenforceable.** The 60-day limit has no start-date mechanism — no permit, registration, or date-marking requirement.
- **Ambiguous scope.** (f)(1) caps all temporary signs at 8 sq ft without distinguishing between private property and ROW, conflicting with Table 48's larger allowances for private commercial property.
- **No removal requirement.** Signs can remain for weeks after any practical purpose has passed and still be compliant.

Legal Framework- Content Neutrality:

In *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* (2015), the U.S. Supreme Court held that sign regulations distinguishing between sign types based on the message displayed are content-based restrictions subject to strict scrutiny.

The County's previous temporary sign code included content-based categories. The current code was adopted to address that.

What this means for any amendments:

- Rules must apply equally to all temporary signs regardless of message
- No separate categories for political signs, real estate signs, event signs, etc.
- Duration, size, placement, and removal standards must be content-neutral

Staff Recommendations:

Code structure:

Restructure Section 16-65(f) to clearly distinguish standards applying to temporary signs on private property (duration, illumination, etc) from standards applying specifically to ROW signs (size, height, placement)

Staff Recommendations:

Size and height (ROW signs):

- 8 sq ft max area (no change)
- 48-inch max dimension in any direction (new)
- 48-inch max height from finished grade to top of sign face, inclusive of stakes/ground supports (new)

Duration and removal:

- 60 consecutive days (no change)
- All temporary signs must be removed within 2 days after the 60-day period expires (new)
- Signs in violation are subject to removal by the County (codify)
- Exemption for signs placed for 24 - 48hrs (new)

Where Should Temporary Signs be Allowed?

Option 1: Status Quo

- Staff does not recommend this approach for the reasons given

Option 2: “Santa Fe” Approach

- Disallow all temporary signs in the ROW
- Staff does not recommend this approach
- Significant departure from past practice

Where Should Temporary Signs be Allowed?

Option 3: adopting the designated temporary signage zones, such as areas contemplated by (f)(6) but never mapped and adopted.

- Specific locations in the County ROW are identified where temporary signs are permitted all year round
- The map is adopted as part of the ordinance
- Signs placed outside designated zones in the ROW are in violation and subject to removal
- All existing ROW restrictions remain — no signs on utility poles, no blocking sidewalks/ADA access, no sight triangle obstructions
- Short duration exemption would apply

How This Works in Practice:

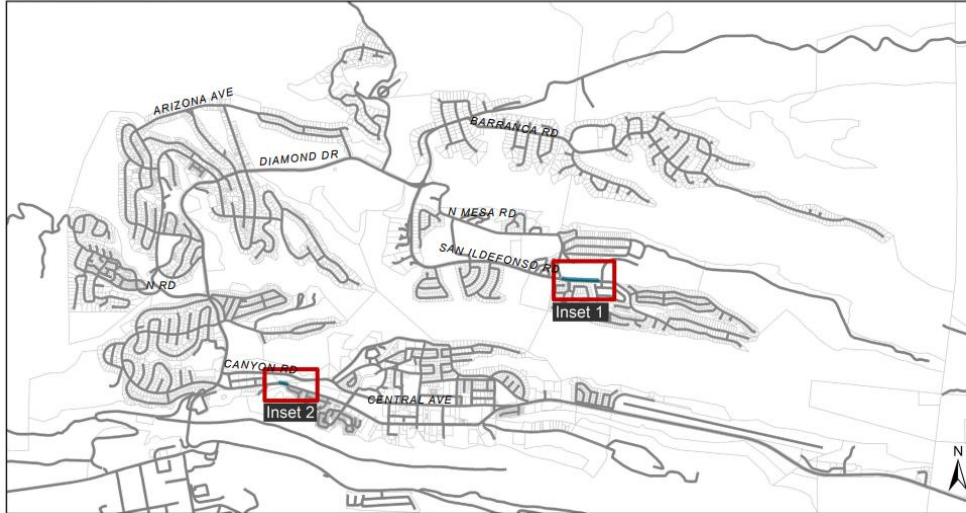
Election cycle: All temporary signs follow the same rules. During periods of high sign activity, the designated zones and 60-day duration apply equally to every sign regardless of message. Signs are permitted in designated ROW zones and on private property with owner permission.

Local Businesses, Community Events and Youth Sports: Same rules apply. Organizations can place signs in designated zones for up to 60 days. Signs must come down on time.

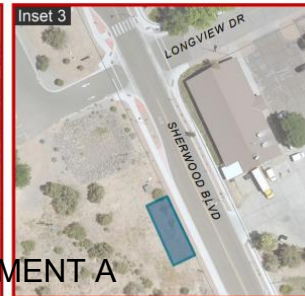
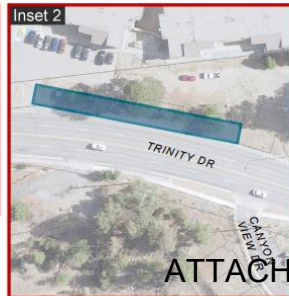
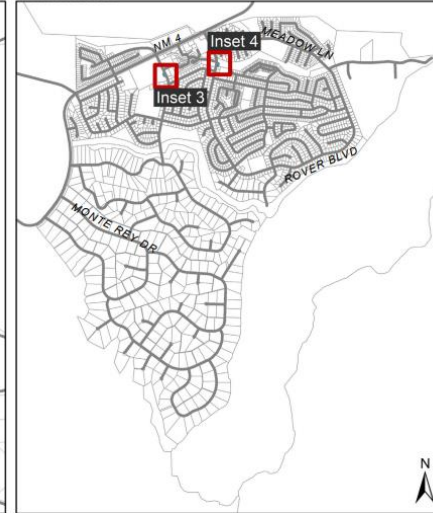
The rules are simple because they don't depend on reading the sign.

Designated Temporary Signage Zones Map:

Los Alamos Townsite



White Rock



ATTACHMENT A

Where Should Temporary Signs be Allowed?

Option 4: adopting designated temporary signage zones for year-round use, and additional areas to be used around local elections.

- Specific locations in the County ROW are identified where temporary signs are permitted all year long
- An additional set of locations would be allowed around elections
 - These would be the areas traditionally used for political signs
- Signs placed outside designated zones in the ROW are in violation and subject to removal, and all existing ROW restrictions remain
- Short duration exemption would apply

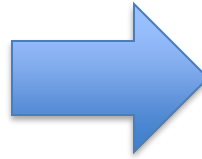
How This Works in Practice:

Election cycle: During periods around County Elections, the areas traditionally used for election signage can be used for temporary signage. The areas designated for year-round use are also active.

Local Businesses, Community Events and Youth Sports: Same rules apply. Organizations can place signs in any designated zone for up to 60 days. Signs must come down on time.

The rules are less simple, but still enforceable because they don't depend on reading the sign, and staff can prepare for elections.

Modified Designated Temporary Signage Zones:



Feedback From Planning & Zoning Commission:

- Recognition of the aesthetic and visual impact, but one Commissioner questioned if anything needed to be done
- Support for Option 4, but questioned if the North Mesa location should be moved closer to roundabout
- Support for a short-duration exemption, but differing opinions around length of time
- Questioned how the new changes would be implemented and enforced

Next Steps:

- Based on input from Council, Staff will draft code language prepared in coordination with the County Attorney
- Return to P&Z for formal review and recommendation to County Council
- Target timeline: Completed by Fall, 2026

Discussion:

Questions for the Council:

- Which approach does the support?
- Are the proposed size and height standards for ROW! signs workable?
- Are the proposed zone locations appropriate?
- Should additional areas be allowed during elections?
- Should there be an exemption for signs placed for short! durations (Farmer's Market, Open House, etc.)? How! long of a timeframe?