

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: ENTRANCE SIGNS FOR MULTIPLE FAMILY DEVELOPMENTS**

**BACKGROUND:**

On January 23, 2014 the Inspection Division received a Sign Permit application for the Copper Beech project on South 16<sup>th</sup> Street. The applicant, Copper Beech at Ames II, LLC, was proposing an 18.8 square foot monument sign, approximately three and a half feet tall, located near the entrance to their property. The purpose of the sign was to identify Copper Beech as a residential housing development. City staff was unable to approve the permit application because Chapter 21, Signs, of the Ames *Municipal Code* does not allow this type of signage on residentially zoned property. The Copper Beech property is zoned High Density Residential (RH).

The signage allowed in residential zones does not provide the ability to construct an entrance sign unless the developer subdivides the property and only then if the subdivision is named consistently with the proposed sign.

At the May 27, 2014 City Council meeting, the City Council directed the City Attorney to draft an appropriate amendment to the Municipal Code that would allow entrance signs for multiple-family developments in compliance with the existing standards for subdivision entrance signs reflected in Section 21.121(10); and would allow staff to create a scale caveat if it is felt appropriate.

Staff believes that the granting of these types of entrance signs should be based upon the number of units or sleeping rooms. The Ames *Municipal Code*, Chapter 29, Zoning, does identify apartments based upon the number of units in the lower density zones. The Residential Low Density (RL) zone, does not allow apartments. The Residential Medium Density (RM) and the Urban Core Residential Medium Density (UCRM) zones allow 12 or fewer apartments subject to approval of a Minor Site Development Plan. The Residential High Density (RH) zone allows apartments outright without a limit to the number of units, also subject to the approval of a Minor Site Development Plan. The zones that allow less density, RL, RM and UCRM either do not allow apartments or only allow 12 dwelling units or less. It is only the highest density zone, RH, that does not place a number restriction on apartments.

Staff considers entrance signage that denotes the name of the development and the address to be important for those apartment complexes that are dense and that draw significant traffic and visitors to the site. Therefore, staff is recommending that entrance signs be allowed for multiple-family developments of 13 dwelling units or more.

As apartments were being reviewed for entrance sign consideration, staff found that group living facilities, such as assisted living and nursing homes that are allowed in residential zones, should also be considered for entrance signage. Unlike apartments

that use dwelling units, group living typically utilizes number of bedrooms or sleeping rooms. Staff believes that the number of sleeping rooms in a group living facility should mirror the number of dwelling units in apartments. Therefore, the proposed text amendment includes group living as 13 or more sleeping rooms.

The On Premises Signage section of the *Municipal Code* is shown below, and the recommended addition of entrance signage for apartments and group living in residential zones is shown in **bold face**.

**Sec. 21.121. ON PREMISES SIGNAGE.**

For all signs subject to the sign regulations, in agricultural, commercial and industrial zoning districts in the City of Ames except in the S-HM District, there may be three (3) square feet of signage for each foot of street frontage. Signs in the Planned Zoning districts are as permitted on the approved site plan. Where any side of a building abuts on an alley, only painted on wall signs shall be permitted on the side abutting the alley. Such sign shall be calculated as part of total permissible signage. For all signs subject to the sign regulations in residential zoning districts in the City of Ames, only the following signs are permitted:

- (1) Real estate signs not exceeding six (6) square feet in area, which advertise the sale, rental, or lease of the premises upon which said signs are located only.
- (2) Signs, including bulletin boards, which are not over sixteen (16) square feet in area for public, educational, charitable, fraternal or religious institutions when the same are located on the premises of such institution.
- (3) Signs denoting only the name and profession/business of an occupant in a commercial building, public institutional building, or dwelling house and not exceeding two (2) square feet in area.
- (4) Single sign denoting the architect, engineer or contractor when placed upon work under construction and not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in area.
- (5) Memorial signs or tablets, names of buildings, and date of erection when cut into any masonry surface or when constructed of bronze or other noncombustible materials.
- (6) Publicly owned street name signs, traffic control signs, legal notices, railroad crossing signs, danger and temporary warning or emergency signs; and emblems, names, logos, and symbols on motor vehicles and equipment being used for purposes other than the display of signs or advertising devices.
- (7) Public service signs which give only directions "in and out" or signs which provide only information about directing people to ancillary facilities such as parking, entrance, etc.
- (8) Temporary or portable sign.
- (9) Subdivision Development Signs. One subdivision development sign may be permitted per preliminary plat or Conceptual Development Plan for subdivisions of 2 acres or more in area. This sign shall not exceed 96 sq. ft. in area and 12 ft. in height. It shall be located in the subdivision it identifies and no closer than 25 ft. from any property line, no closer than 100' from any pre-existing residence and only on lots abutting collector or arterial streets. The sign shall be the sole use of the property on which it is located. The sign shall identify the name of the subdivision exactly as it is set out on the preliminary plat or conceptual development plan approved by the City and may include the names of the subdivision developers, a

map of the area covered by the subdivision and a description of amenities in it. The sign shall not be installed until utility construction has begun in the subdivision and the sign shall be removed once building permits have been issued for 50% of the lots in the subdivision.

(10) Residential Subdivision Entrance Signs. The regulations described in this section apply to subdivision entrance signs in residential subdivisions. The location, number, size, height, materials, maintenance, and message regulations for subdivision identification signs are as follows:

(a) Signs located on private property shall be no closer to the traveled part of a street than the right-of-way line. Signs shall not be allowed in the street visibility triangle, as such is described by Section 29.408(5).

(b) It shall be unlawful to erect a subdivision entrance sign on public property, and the Council shall grant no encroachment permits for such signs.

(c) Subdivision entrance signs shall not be permitted off-premise.

(d) Two signs shall be permitted at each subdivision entrance. Double-faced signs shall be counted as two signs.

(e) The size of the message area (subdivision name and address) of the sign shall not exceed 20 square feet. The size of the sign structure in comparison to the size of the message area shall not exceed a ratio of 7 to 1, unless approved as part of a Planned Unit Development.

(f) Signs shall not exceed six (6) feet in height.

(g) Materials used in the construction of subdivision entrance signs shall be low maintenance materials and may include: metal, wood, brick, stone, and concrete.

(h) Maintenance of signs, illumination devices, and landscaping shall be the responsibility of the property owner. Signs which, by reason of deterioration, may become unsafe or unsightly shall be repaired or removed by the property owner upon written notice of the City. Signs which by reason of deterioration become unsafe or unsightly may be removed by the City upon written notice of the City.

(i) The message on a subdivision entrance sign shall include only the name and address of the subdivision.

(j) Signs may be illuminated internally or by reflected light subject to the following:

(i) The light source shall not be directly visible and shall be arranged to reflect away from adjoining premises;

(ii) The light source shall not be placed so to cause confusion or hazard to traffic, or to conflict with traffic control signs of lights;

(iii) No illumination involving movement, by reason of the lighting arrangement, the lighting source, or other devices shall be permitted. This includes blinking, flashing rotating, and message changing; and

(iv) The Property Owner's Association shall be responsible for the costs associated with providing electricity to the light source.

(k) Landscaping shall be incorporated at the base of each subdivision entrance sign which enhances the site and the surrounding area. Plant materials shall not obstruct the visibility of moving vehicles or interfere with the maintenance of adjacent public property. Approval of a landscape plan for each residential subdivision entrance sign by the Director of Planning and Housing is required.

**(11) Multiple-Family Development Entrance Signs. The regulations described in this section apply to entrance signs in multiple-family residential developments. Multiple-family developments include apartments with 13 or**

more dwelling units and group living facilities with 13 or more sleeping rooms. The location, number, size, height, materials, maintenance, and message regulations for multiple-family development entrance signs are as follows:

(a) Signs located on private property shall be no closer to the traveled part of a street than the right-of-way line. Signs shall not be allowed in the street visibility triangle, as such is described by Section 29.408(5).

(b) It shall be unlawful to erect a multiple-family residential entrance sign on public property, and the Council shall grant no encroachment permits for such signs.

(c) Multiple-family development entrance signs shall not be permitted off-premise.

(d) One sign shall be permitted per driveway entrance from a public street.

(e) The size of the message area (development name and address) of the sign shall not exceed 20 square feet.

(f) Signs shall not exceed six (6) feet in height.

(g) Materials used in the construction of multiple-family development entrance signs shall be low maintenance materials and may include: metal, wood, brick, stone, and concrete.

(h) Maintenance of signs, illumination devices, and landscaping shall be the responsibility of the property owner. Signs which, by reason of deterioration, may become unsafe or unsightly shall be repaired or removed by the property owner upon written notice of the City. Signs which by reason of deterioration become unsafe or unsightly may be removed by the City upon written notice of the City.

(i) The message on a multiple-family development entrance sign shall include only the name and address of the development.

(j) Signs may be illuminated internally or by reflected light subject to the following:

(i) The light source shall not be directly visible and shall be arranged to reflect away from adjoining premises;

(ii) The light source shall not be placed so as to cause confusion or hazard to traffic, or to conflict with traffic control signs of lights;

(iii) No illumination involving movement, by reason of the lighting arrangement, the lighting source, or other devices shall be permitted. This includes blinking, flashing rotating, and message changing; and

(iv) The Property Owner(s) shall be responsible for the costs associated with providing electricity to the light source.

(k) Landscaping shall be incorporated at the base of each subdivision entrance sign which enhances the site and the surrounding area. Plant materials shall not obstruct the visibility of moving vehicles or interfere with the maintenance of adjacent public property. Approval of a landscape plan for each residential subdivision entrance sign by the Director of Planning and Housing is required.

This code amendment language was prepared by staff based upon Council's direction at the May 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. Staff has also been in contact with Scott Renaud, FOX Engineering, who represents the Copper Beech project. Mr. Renaud had an opportunity

to review this language and did not express any concerns. These signs follow current regulations related to subdivision entrance signs.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve the attached ordinance modifying Ames *Municipal Code* Section 21.121 by adding language allowing Multiple-family Development Entrance Signs.
2. Retain Ames *Municipal Code* Section 21.121 as it is currently written, thereby not allowing entrance signs for apartments and group living facilities in residential zones.
3. Direct staff to prepare an ordinance that allows entrance signs for apartments but not for group living facilities.

**MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Entrance signs for multiple family developments that clearly state the name of the development, similar to a subdivision sign, are typical in most communities. City staff foresees current and future needs for this type of signage. However, Ames *Municipal Code* Chapter 21 does not currently address signage for multiple family projects.

**Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1, thereby approving the attached ordinance modifying the Ames *Municipal Code* Section 21.121 by adding language that allows Multiple-family Development Entrance Signs.**

**ORDINANCE NO.**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF AMES, IOWA, BY ENACTING A NEW SECTION 21.121(11) THEREOF, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ALLOWING MULTIPLE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT ENTRANCE SIGNS; REPEALING ANY AND ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT TO THE EXTENT OF SUCH CONFLICT; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**BE IT ENACTED**, by the City Council for the City of Ames, Iowa, that:

Section One. The Municipal Code of the City of Ames, Iowa shall be and the same is hereby amended by enacting a new Section as follows:

**“Sec. 21.121. ON PREMISE SIGNAGE.**

...

(11) Multiple-Family Development Entrance Signs. The regulations described in this section apply to entrance signs in multiple-family residential developments. Multiple-family developments include apartments with 13 or more dwelling units and group living facilities with 13 or more sleeping rooms. The location, number, size, height, materials, maintenance, and message regulations for multiple-family development entrance signs are as follows:

(a) Signs located on private property shall be no closer to the traveled part of a street than the right-of-way line. Signs shall not be allowed in the street visibility triangle, as such is described by Section 29.408(5).

(b) It shall be unlawful to erect a multiple-family residential entrance sign on public property, and the Council shall grant no encroachment permits for such signs.

(c) Multiple-family development entrance signs shall not be permitted off-premise.

(d) One sign shall be permitted per driveway entrance from a public street.

(e) The size of the message area (development name and address) of the sign shall not exceed 20 square feet.

(f) Signs shall not exceed six (6) feet in height.

(g) Materials used in the construction of multiple-family development entrance signs shall be low maintenance materials and may include: metal, wood, brick, stone, and concrete.

(h) Maintenance of signs, illumination devices, and landscaping shall be the responsibility of the property owner. Signs which, by reason of deterioration, may become unsafe or unsightly shall be repaired or removed by the property owner upon written notice of the City. Signs which by reason of deterioration become unsafe or unsightly may be removed by the City upon written notice of the City.

(i) The message on a multiple-family development entrance sign shall include only the name and address of the development.

(j) Signs may be illuminated internally or by reflected light subject to the following:

(i) The light source shall not be directly visible and shall be arranged to reflect away from adjoining premises;

(ii) The light source shall not be placed so as to cause confusion or hazard to traffic, or to conflict with traffic control signs of lights;

(iii) No illumination involving movement, by reason of the lighting arrangement, the lighting source, or other devices shall be permitted. This includes blinking, flashing rotating, and message changing; and

(iv) The Property Owner(s) shall be responsible for the costs associated with providing electricity to the light source.

(k) Landscaping shall be incorporated at the base of each subdivision entrance sign which enhances the site and the surrounding area. Plant materials shall not obstruct the visibility of moving vehicles or interfere with the maintenance of adjacent public property. Approval of a landscape plan for each residential subdivision entrance sign by the Director of Planning and Housing is required.”

Section Two. All ordinances, or parts of ordinances, in conflict herewith are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict, if any.

Section Three. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and publication as required by law.

Passed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

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Ann H. Campbell, Mayor