



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CITY COUNCIL APPROVED SECOND PHASE OF REFORMS TO SIGN
PROVISIONS**

*Second Phase Reforms Will Strengthen Enforcement Capabilities, Increase Sign Owner
Accountability; First Phase Reforms Passed in April 2012 Led to a Near Doubling of Sign
Violation Citations Compared to 2011*

City Council today passed an ordinance that will further reform and modernize the City's municipal code provisions related to signs and make the enforcement of those regulations more efficient.

"By continuing to modernize the City's sign regulations, increasing enforcement and accountability, we can ensure that we protect the high-quality of life in neighborhoods across the city while protecting those business owners who do follow the law," said Mayor Emanuel.

The items brought before City Council today affect large and small businesses in the City. These amendments remove multiple terms for "signs;" assure that permit requirements, and the process to obtain them, are appropriate and clear and efficient as possible; codify the lifetime of new permits; and increase the flexibility of small businesses posting temporary paper signage.

Overall, the Municipal Code amendments proposed today include:



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- Setting a five year permit expiration date, subject to renewal, for all new signs. This important reform not only makes business sense but also will assist in the identification and removal of future signs whose permits have not been renewed.
- Clarifying existing law that a new permit is required when an owner wishes to convert an on-premise (ex: business identification) sign to an off-premise (ex: advertising) sign.
- Allowing business owners, especially small business owners, to have 25 percent of temporary paper signs in windows or painted on the window glass, to promote the business and advertise sales without the need and expense of obtaining a City sign permit.
- Requiring that any change in the ownership or lease holder of a sign shall be reported to the building commissioner within 10 days.
- Requiring a 50 percent deposit of the sign permit fee at the time of application to cover the City's costs of reviewing the application, including structural and electrical plans.

In April, the Emanuel Administration proposed and City Council passed the first phase in a series of sign provisions to address and improve enforcement and accountability against businesses who fail to comply with municipal sign code, including possible increased penalties against repeat violators, requiring the sign owner or lessee to be a co-signer on a sign permit application in addition to the sign erector company, additional penalty options for off-premise signs, a major quality of life issue for many neighborhoods and requiring a new permit to replace static billboards with a dynamic image billboard. The reforms passed in April led to an overall increase in sign enforcement. According to year end reports, the Department nearly doubled the number of sign violation citations it issued in 2012, compared to 2011, preparing over 1,300 violation citations on 775 properties compared to 704 sign citations issued in 2011. As of mid-December 2012, 700 sign enforcement cases had gone to Administrative Hearings with \$400,000 in fines imposed



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this year. Alderman Moreno, Alderman Beale, Alderman Lane, Alderman O'Shea, Alderman Solis, Alderman Mell, Alderman Austin, Alderman Mitts and Alderman Tunney serve as co-sponsors to the ordinance introduced.

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