

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-022

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING VERNAL CITY MUNICIPAL CODE §16.28.050 REGARDING OFF-PREMISES SIGN REGULATIONS

WHEREAS the Vernal City Council has reviewed the recommendations of the Planning Commission regarding the regulation of off-premises signs, including the prohibition of new permanent billboard-type structures; and

WHEREAS the City Council finds it necessary to maintain the aesthetic quality, roadway safety, and community character of Vernal City while accommodating limited and reasonable allowances for temporary event signage and small off-premises business signs when justified; and

WHEREAS Utah Code §10-9a-512 grants municipalities the authority to regulate the location, construction, and use of off-premises signs, provided such regulation is content-neutral and consistent with municipal planning objectives; and

WHEREAS the City Council finds that the adoption of updated off-premises sign regulations promotes public safety, protects private property rights, supports local businesses and community events, and ensures orderly development within Vernal City;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of Vernal City, Utah:

Vernal City Municipal Code §16.28.050 is hereby amended to read as follows:

Vernal City Municipal Code §16.28.050 – Off-Premises Sign Regulations

Purpose:

The purpose of this section is to regulate off-premises signs in order to protect public safety, maintain the visual character of Vernal City, prevent billboard-type structures, and provide limited allowances for temporary event signs and small off-premises business signs through a Conditional Use Permit when no reasonable on-premise visibility exists. All signs must comply with applicable standards in Titles 15 and 16 of the Vernal City Municipal Code and Utah Code §10-9a-512.

A. Prohibition of New Off-Premises Signs

1. Off-premises signs are prohibited in all zones within Vernal City.
2. No new off-premises sign, including billboard-type structures, is allowed as a permitted or conditional use, except as provided under Subsections F (Temporary Event Off-Premises Signs) and G (Off-Premises Business Signs – Conditional Use Permit).

B. Legal Nonconforming Off-Premises Signs

Off-premises signs that legally existed as of the effective date of this ordinance are legal nonconforming signs and may continue under the following conditions:

1. A legal nonconforming off-premises sign may not be expanded, relocated, altered, or changed in a way that increases its nonconformity, except as allowed in this section.
2. Routine maintenance, repair, or structural replacement of the same size and height is permitted if:

- a. There is no increase in height, sign face area, or number of faces; and
- b. A permit is obtained before any work begins.

C. Loss of Legal Nonconforming Status

A legal nonconforming off-premises sign loses its legal status and must be removed if:

1. It is abandoned or unused for advertising for more than twelve (12) consecutive months.
2. It is structurally damaged or destroyed and cannot be restored in compliance with subsection B.
3. It is sold or transferred to a new owner, except when relocated under an approved relocation agreement pursuant to Title 72, Chapter 7, Part 5 of Utah State Code.
4. It becomes a public safety hazard or is in unreasonable disrepair as determined by the Building Official.

D. Removal of Off-Premises Signs

1. When the City determines that a legal nonconforming off-premises sign must be removed, written notice shall be provided to both the sign owner and the property owner.
2. The sign must be removed within sixty (60) days of the notice.
3. If the sign is not removed, the City may remove it and recover the cost from the sign or property owner.

E. Permits Required for Maintenance

A permit from the City is required before performing any maintenance on a legal nonconforming off-premises sign. Maintenance includes repainting, refacing, structural replacement, or similar work.

F. Severability

~~If any portion of this section is found invalid by a court, the remaining portions shall remain in effect.~~

F. Temporary Event Off-Premises Signs

1. **Purpose.** Allows temporary off-premises signs for short-term community events while maintaining the City's prohibition of permanent off-premises advertising structures.
2. **Permit Required.** A temporary sign permit from the City is required before installation.
3. **Time Limits.**
 - a. Signs may be displayed no more than twenty-one (21) days before the event.
 - b. Signs must be removed within seventy-two (72) hours after the event.
4. **Size Limits.**
 - a. Freestanding board signs may be up to six feet by six feet (6' x 6').
 - b. Banner signs may be up to ten feet by three feet (10' x 3').
5. **Mounting.**
 - a. Signs may be placed on small trailers or lightweight frameworks.
 - b. Semi-truck trailers, freight trailers, shipping containers, or oversized mobile platforms are prohibited.
6. **Placement Requirements.**
 - a. Signs must be entirely on private property with written consent from the property owner.
 - b. Signs may not be placed in public rights-of-way or clear vision areas.
 - c. Signs must not obstruct visibility for drivers, cyclists, or pedestrians.
7. **Prohibited Features.**
 - a. Digital or electronic displays are prohibited.
 - b. Signs may not be illuminated, flashing, or animated.

8. **Code Compliance.** All temporary event signs must comply with applicable safety and placement provisions of Titles 15 and 16 of the Vernal City Municipal Code, unless modified by this subsection.

G. Off-Premises Business Signs – Conditional Use Permit

1. **Purpose.** Provides a limited case-by-case process for approving small-scale off-premises business signs when no reasonable on-premise visibility exists, while preventing billboard-type signs.
2. **Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Required.** No permanent off-premises business sign is allowed unless approved through a CUP under Chapter 16.14.
3. **Approval Criteria.** In addition to the CUP findings required by Chapter 16.14, the Planning Commission must find that:
 - a. The sign is needed due to inadequate on-premise visibility;
 - b. The sign does not resemble or function as a billboard;
 - c. The sign is compatible with surrounding uses and does not negatively affect residential areas;
 - d. The sign does not create traffic hazards, visual clutter, or visibility obstructions;
 - e. The sign identifies only the name and location of the business and does not serve as general advertising.
4. **Dimensional and Structural Requirements.**
 - a. Signs approved under this subsection must comply with the size, height, structure, design, and setback requirements for on-premise pole signs, monument signs, or freestanding signs in the underlying zone, as required in Titles 15 and 16.
 - b. Digital, electronic, flashing, illuminated, or animated signs are prohibited.
 - c. Signs must be permanently installed and may not be mounted on trailers, shipping containers, or other mobile structures.
5. **Location and Separation.**
 - a. Signs may not be located in clear-vision areas or public rights-of-way.
 - b. The Planning Commission may require spacing between off-premises business signs to prevent clustering.
6. **Proximity to Advertised Business.** The advertised business must be within a reasonable distance of the sign location, determined by the Planning Commission.
7. **Property Owner Consent.** Written consent from the property owner of the sign location is required.
8. **Expiration and Revocation.**
 - a. CUP approvals may include expiration dates or conditions requiring removal if the business relocates or closes.
 - b. Failure to comply with CUP conditions or Titles 15 and 16 is grounds for revocation.
 - c. Once revoked, continued display of the sign is unlawful.

H. Severability

If any portion of this section is found invalid by a court, the remaining portions shall remain in effect.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 19 day of November, 2025.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE VERNAL CITY COUNCIL

Councilmember	AYE	NAY	ABSENT	ABSTAIN
Councilmember Robin O'Driscoll	☒	☐	☐	☐
Councilmember Corey Foley	☒	☐	☐	☐
Councilmember Ted Munford	☒	☐	☐	☐
Councilmember Edward Long	☐	☐	☒	☐
Councilmember Randel Mills	☒	☐	☐	☐

Presiding Officer


Doug Hammond, Mayor, Vernal

Attest 
Sara Bell, City Recorder, Vernal

