



# OKC Development Codes Update

Proposed new sign code: presentation to residents

9.28.21



**Project Purpose & Background**



**Signs – Why now?**



**Proposed new sign code: overview**



**Proposed new sign code: specific issues**



**Schedule and next steps**

# Project Purpose

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- Implement **planokc**
- Improve development efficiency and outcomes
- Make the development process easier to navigate and administer
- Areas of focus:
  - Chapter 59 Planning and Zoning Code
  - Subdivision Regulations
  - **Sign Code**
  - Coordination with Drainage Code and Nuisance Codes



# Sign code: why update?



Specific planokc policies



Phase 1 recommendations



Recent rezoning applications and moratorium



Recent court cases



Industry/business/resident concerns





## Policy ST-17

- Adopt new citywide **site design and building** regulations that ensure new developments meet basic **functional** and **aesthetic** minimums related to:
  - Walkability and bike-ability
  - Internal and external street connectivity
  - Integration of uses
  - **Signage**
  - Building location
  - Building appearance
  - Open space (passive and active)

## Policy E-14

- Initiate new efforts to **reduce sign clutter and improve the aesthetics of signs**, while allowing for adequate and visible business identification by the following potential measures:
  - **Restrict new billboards and eliminate or reduce the number of existing billboards.**
  - Require non-conforming signs to be removed or be brought into compliance with existing regulations within a specific timeframe.
  - **Consider new standards in the Sign Ordinance to improve limits on the size, height, and number of signs.**
  - Improve proactive enforcement of the City's sign regulations to curtail the placement of illegal signs and ensure adequate maintenance of signs.

# Phase 1: Recommendations

Highly Graphic and User-Friendly Layout

Unified Development Code

- Form-Based Zoning
- Updated Conventional Zoning
- Subdivision Regulations

Context-sensitive Civic and Open Spaces

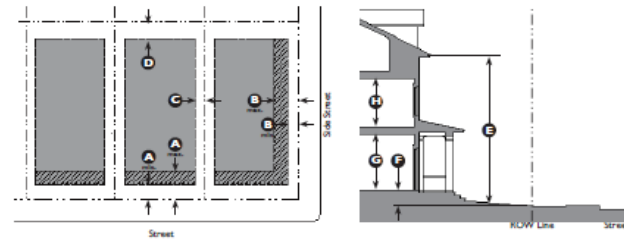
Consolidated Nuisance Standards

Content-neutral Sign Standards

Clear procedures for administration and review

10-40.40.080

T4 Neighborhood 2 (T4N.2) Standards



Key

- ROW/Property Line
- Building Setback Line
- Building Area
- ▨ Facade Area

#### D. Building Placement

##### Setback (Distance from ROW/Property Line)

| Principal Building       |                    |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Front <sup>1</sup>       | 5' min.; 12' max.  | A |
| Front facade within area | 50% min.           |   |
| Side Street/Civic Space  | 10' min.; 15' max. | B |
| Side <sup>2</sup>        | 3' min.            | C |
| Rear                     | 3' min.            | D |

| Outbuilding |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| Front       | 20' min.         |
| Side        | 0' min.; 3' max. |
| Rear        | 3' min.          |

<sup>1</sup> Setback may match an existing adjacent building as follows. The building may be set to align with the facade of the frontmost immediately adjacent property, for a width no greater than that of the adjacent property's facade that encroaches into the minimum setback.

<sup>2</sup> No side setback required between townhouse and/or live/work building types.

#### Miscellaneous

Upper-floor units must have a primary entrance along a street or courtyard façade.

Ground-floor residential units along a street must have individual entries.

#### E. Building Form<sup>3</sup>

##### Height

| Principal Building |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Stories            | 4 Stories max. |
| To Eave/Parapet    | 40' max. E     |
| Overall            | 52' max.       |
| Outbuilding        | 2 Stories max. |
| To Eave/Parapet    | 18' max.       |
| Overall            | 28' max.       |

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ground Floor Finish Level | 18" min. above sidewalk F |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|

|                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Ground Floor Ceiling | 9' min. clear G |
|----------------------|-----------------|

|                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Upper Floor(s) Ceiling | 8' min. clear H |
|------------------------|-----------------|

<sup>3</sup> See Division 10-50.100 (Specific to Building Types) for additional building form regulations.

#### Footprint

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Depth, ground-floor residential | 30' min. space along primary street frontage |
|---------------------------------|--|

|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| Lot Coverage | 80% max. |
|--------------|----------|

#### Miscellaneous

Mansard roof forms are not allowed.

# Why “content neutral”?

## Accessory Signs



## Non-Accessory



# Why “content neutral”?

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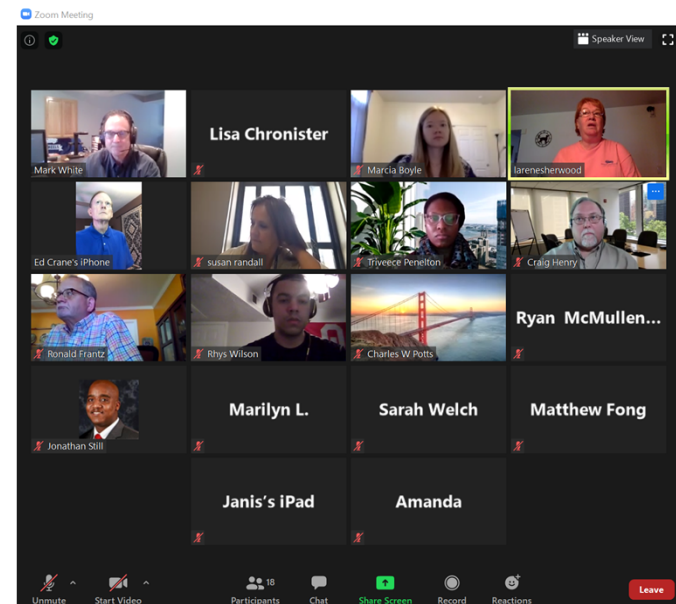
- Recent court cases
- City’s response to Knutson
- Avoids difficult interpretations
- Focus on traditional basis of sign regulation
  - Dimensions (area, height, etc.)
  - Number (e.g., per frontage)
  - Location (District, Street, Freestanding v. Attached)
  - Type (e.g., pole v. monument)
  - Materials
  - Illumination / Digital / Electronic
  - Copy Type (e.g., integrated v channel letters)
  - Moving parts
  - Portability
  - Public property
  - Temporary time restrictions





# Outreach

- Focus groups (residents and industry)
- Individual discussions & follow-up
- Additional industry group meetings
- Stakeholder Advisory Team meetings
- Policy Committee meetings
- Council Member meetings
- Planning Commission informational presentations
- Design review committee informational presentations
- Artist Workshop
- Staff workshops





# Proposed new sign code

Development Codes Update Project

# Benefits of the new sign code

## Everyone

- Highly-graphic and user-friendly
- Avoids difficult interpretations regarding content
- Fewer dilapidated signs
- Improved code enforcement
- Better tailored attached sign standards
- Limit use of PUD/SPUD to modify sign standards

## Residents

- Increased distance from EMD signs
- Smaller, shorter conditional use billboards in C-3, DBD, and I-1

## Business and Industry

- More precise measurement standards
- More efficient permitting process
- Provides flexibility via Master Sign Plans

# Proposed Code - Overview

- Establishes **new Article XVI Sign Regulations (Chapter 59) to replace Chapter 3, Article V**
- Many provisions have not changed but have been relocated
- Defines five types of signs
- Design Districts
  - Requirements for Bricktown Core (BC) relocated
  - Specific design district signage requirements supersede Article XVI provisions
- Highly graphic
- User-friendly

|  | Existing             | Proposed Approach       |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Code section   | Chapter 3, Article V | Chapter 59, Article XVI |
| Regulates by content (accessory and non-accessory)   | ✓                    |                         |
| Regulates by physical feature (content neutral) *  |                      | ✓                       |
| Regulates by zoning district, street frontage, building width, and building setback                        | ✓                    |                         |
| Regulates by zoning district, wall size (for attached signs), and street typology (for freestanding signs) |                      | ✓                       |
| Regulations organized into tables and consolidated by sign type *  |                      | ✓                       |
| Explanatory graphics *   |                      | ✓                       |
| Flexible (master sign plan) *  |                      | ✓                       |

\* Recommended by Code Diagnosis

# Overview

## Existing

- (c) Standards for commercial and industrial zoning districts (other than O-1, O-2, and C-1). These standards shall apply to respective Design Districts unless modified within the regulations and guidelines of the specific design districts.

- (4) Size standards for freestanding signs.
- a. Display surface area shall be permitted on the basis of one square foot of sign for each one lineal foot of frontage for sites with less than 100-foot of frontage, one and one-half (1.5) square foot of sign for each one lineal foot of frontage for sites with frontage of 100-foot or more; up to the following maximum size:
    1. C-2, C-3, C-CBDF, DBD, 200 square feet.
    2. I-1 District, 200 square feet.
    3. C-4, C-HC, C-CBD, I-2, and I-3 Districts, 700 square feet.
  - b. Any frontage above 200 feet utilized in calculations to permit an additional freestanding sign location under Paragraph (c)(2)a. above shall not also be included in calculations to permit a larger sign.
  - c. Where an individual or aggregate use abuts a freeway a freestanding sign location may have 200 feet of display surface area, regardless of frontage, for better identification of the use from the freeway, provided that all other regulations of this chapter shall apply.
- (5) Height.
- a. Freestanding sign. A minimum clearance of 14 feet above any driveway, service drive, or trafficway; and as follows:
    1. Lineal foot frontage from zero through 100 feet: maximum height of 20 feet above grade level.
    2. Lineal foot frontage 101 feet through 200 feet: maximum height of 30 feet above grade level.
    3. Lineal foot frontage 201 feet through 300 feet: maximum height of 40 feet above grade level.
    4. Lineal foot frontage above 300 feet: one additional foot for each 40 additional feet of lineal frontage to a maximum height of 50 feet above grade level.
    5. Use abutting a freeway: maximum height of 50 feet above grade level on freeway frontage to provide better identification of the use from the freeway; subject to all other regulations of this article.

## Proposed

| Table 59-16107.1 Ground and Pole Sign Standards                      |  |   |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|
|  | R<br>(Agricultural, residential, and mobile home zoning districts and Tracts 1, 2, and 3 of the NC District) | C-Low<br>(O-1, C-1, RC, NB, C-CBD, O-2 NR on < 12,000 sf parcels, NC Tract 4) | C-Medium<br>(O-2 NR on > 12,000 sf parcels)  | C-High<br>(DBD, DTD-1, DTD-2) & I-Low<br>(C-2, C-3, C-CBD, I-1) | I-High<br>(C-4, C-HC, TP, I-2, and I-3)      | BC<br>(Bricktown OverlayCore Development District) |
| Permitted?   | NR/MF  | Yes   | Yes  | Yes   | Yes  | Yes (MF only)                                      |
| Permit required?   | Yes  | Yes   | Yes  | Yes   | Yes  | --   |
| Number (max.)  | 1 per public building entrance   | 1 per public building entrance  | 1 + 1/200 lf of frontage in excess of 200 lf | 1 + 1/200 lf of frontage in excess of 200 lf                    | 1 + 1/200 lf of frontage in excess of 200 lf | 1 (MF only)  |
| Sign area (max.-sf):   |  |   |  |   |  |  |
| MF (see subsection 2 below)  | 8-100 sf   | 8-100 sf  | 8-100 sf                                     | 8-100 sf  |  | 8-100 sf   |
| NR   |  |   |  |   |  |  |
| Area based on frontage (sf / lf) up to max by street category below: |  |   |  |   |  |  |
| ▪ Site with < 100' of frontage                                       | 1 sf per 2 lf  | 1 sf per 2 lf   | 1 sf per 2 lf                                | 1 sf per 1 lf   | 1 sf per 1 lf                                | 1 sf per 2 lf                                      |
| ▪ Site with > 100' of frontage                                       | 1 sf per 2 lf  | 1 sf per 2 lf   | 1 sf per 2 lf                                | 1.5 sf per 1 lf   | 1.5 sf per 1 lf                              | 1 sf per 2 lf                                      |
| Up to the following maximum area:                                    |  |   |  |   |  |  |
| Fronting neighborhood street   | 15 sf  | 25 sf   | 40 sf  | 40 sf   | 40 sf  | 15 sf  |
| Fronting main street   | 25 sf  | 30 sf   | 40 sf  | 50 sf   | 60 sf  | 25 sf  |
| Fronting connector street  | 35 sf  | 50 sf   | 65 sf  | 75 sf   | 85 sf  | 35 sf  |
| Fronting downtown street   | 35 sf  | 50 sf   | 65 sf  | 75 sf   | 85 sf  | 85 sf  |

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- c. Where an individual or aggregate use abuts a freeway a freestanding sign location may have 200 feet of display surface area, regardless of frontage, for better identification of the use from the freeway, provided that all other regulations of this chapter shall apply.

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## Proposed





# Proposed Sign Code: Specific Changes

Development Codes Update Project

- Code enforcement
- Billboards
- Attached signs
- Pole signs
- Electronic Message Displays (EMD's)
- Neighborhood signs

# Code Enforcement

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## Stakeholder Concerns

- Dilapidated signs are detrimental to community appearance
- Code Enforcement acts on a complaint basis
  - City powers are limited to citations
  - Most sign citations have not been prosecuted
  - Difficult to prove timeframes for dilapidated signs
- Existing code limits sign work (including repairs) to licensed sign contractors

## Proposed Approach

- Improves definition of abandoned
- Specifies the time of compliance for “abandoned” signs
- Specifies that the City has the authority to remove dilapidated signs (similar to process for dilapidated structures)
- Strengthens description of “not maintained in good repair”
- Removes requirement that only licensed sign contractors can perform demolition and repair





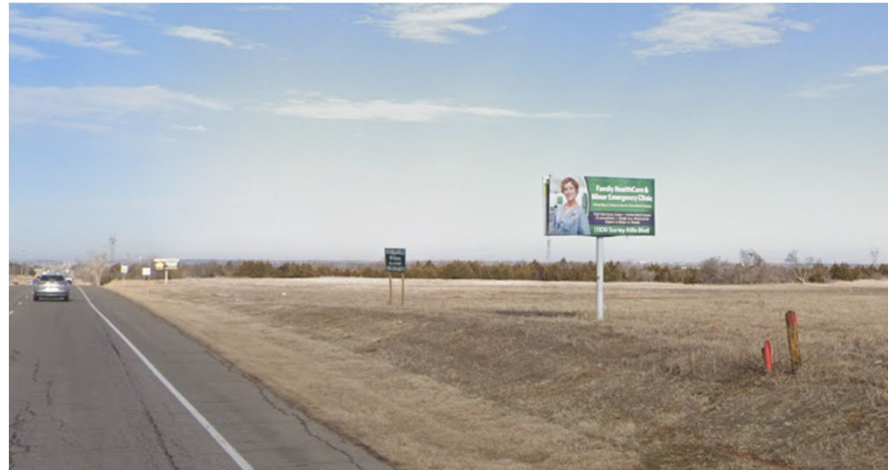
# Billboards

## Stakeholder Concerns:

- Competitive disadvantage for independent companies
- Competition drives quality and customer rates; therefore, market needs to be kept open
- The cause of “sign clutter” is old, dilapidated signs – not billboards
- Existing code is fair, but companies with more resources get variances via PUD/SPUD process

## Proposed Approach:

- Maintain existing size, height, spacing, and most by-right zoning locations
- Allow smaller, shorter billboards as conditional uses in C-3, DBD, and I-1
- Improve dilapidated sign standards
- Limit use of PUD/SPUD to modify sign standards



Example> Northwest Expressway,  
west of Morgan Rd

# Billboards

## What doesn't change:

- Size\*
- Height\*
- Spacing between billboards\*
- • Spacing from residential and historic districts
- By right zoning locations (C-4, I-2, and I-3)
- Lighting standards
- Prohibition in Scenic Corridors

## Proposed approach:

| Regulation   | Existing | Proposed |
|--|----------|----------|
| Define billboards by physical feature, not content                                   |          | ✓        |
| Permitted by right in C-CBD  | ✓        |          |
| Conditional use in C-HC  | ✓        |          |
| Additional use conditions in C-3, DBD, and I-1 (size, height, spacing)               |          | ✓        |
| Allowed on all street types (except Scenic Corridors)                                | ✓        |          |
| Allowed only on Highway, Industrial, and Major Arterials (except Scenic Corridors) * |          | ✓        |
| Designation procedure for additional Scenic Corridors                                |          | ✓        |

\* Except in C-3, DBD, and I-1 (see new use conditions)



# Pole Signs

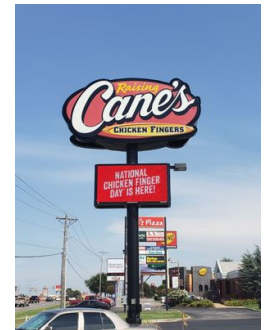
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## Industry Concerns:

- Competitive disadvantage for new businesses if pole signs are no longer allowed
- The way sign area is measured counts the entire structure – not just the text area – leaving little room for decorative elements or pole covers
- There is not always enough room on the site for a monument sign; sight triangle requirements further complicate placement
- The cause of “sign clutter” is old, dilapidated signs – not pole signs

## Proposed Approach

- Continue to allow pole signs
- Define “sign area” to be the sign face only, not the supporting structure
- Change sign measurement to count only the area of copy, to not count the supporting structure, and to use a multi-sided polygon to accommodate irregular shapes.
- Incentivize the use of monument signs in lieu of pole signs.
- Improve definitions/processes for abandoned and dilapidated.



# Electronic Message Displays (EMDs)

## Stakeholder concerns

- Churches and schools are often located in residential zoning districts and must seek variances to install EMD's
- EMD signs that are too big, busy or bright disrupt district appearance and can distract drivers
- Must balance business needs with residents' needs

## What doesn't change:

- Type of sign allowed
- Where Level 3 EMD is not allowed

| Regulation   | Existing | Proposed                            |
|--|----------|-------------------------------------|
| Type of sign (ground sign or attached sign)                | ✓        | ✓                                   |
| Size of any EMD limited to maximum 100 sf                  | ✓        |                                     |
| Level 1 EMD up to 100% of allowable sign area (100 sf max) |          | ✓                                   |
| Level 2 EMD up to 50% of allowable sign area               | ✓        | ✓                                   |
| Level 3 EMD not allowed                                    | ✓        | ✓                                   |
| Limited to one per street frontage                         | ✓        |                                     |
| No limit to the number per street frontage                 |          | ✓                                   |
| Separation from residentially-zoned property               | 150 ft.  | 300 ft.                             |
| Height limit   | 8 ft.    | 12 ft.<br>(where fronting arterial) |
| Allowed on Collector street types and above                | ✓        |                                     |
| Allowed on any street types                                |          | ✓                                   |



# Attached Signs

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## Stakeholder Concerns

- Signs are critical to businesses
- The limits to the number of signs in some zoning districts are too restrictive
- If there are no content restrictions on signs, anyone with a sign will be able to sell advertising on it

## Proposed Approach

- Allow an unlimited number of attached signs up to the total maximum allowable area.
- Reduce the total maximum allowable area for attached signs.
  - Many existing properties are not using their entire sign allowance, therefore, reducing the allowable area should not impact businesses
  - Reducing the size of signs will improve community aesthetics
  - Reducing the allowable area will discourage businesses from selling sign area for advertising
- Increase sign area for gas station canopies.



# Neighborhood Signs

- Subdivision Entry Signs

**Measurement only counts text area, not entire wall**



Table 59-16107.3 Standards for Subdivision Entry Signs

|  | R (Agricultural, residential, and mobile home zoning districts and Tracts 1, 2, and 3 of the NC District) |
|--|---|
| Permitted?   | Subdivision or residential developments $\geq$ 5 acres  |
| Permit required?   | Yes   |
| Number (per entry street)  | 3 monument signs (1 for each side of the street or entry street median)                                   |
| Sign area (max-sf)   |   |
| Each side of entry street  | 64 sf   |
| Median   | 40 sf   |
| Height (max-feet)  |   |
| Each side of entry street  | 10'   |
| Median   | 6'  |
| Setback (min-feet)   | Z   |
| <b>Design Characteristics</b>  |   |
| Digital  | No  |
| Illumination, Internal   | No  |
| Illumination, External   | Yes   |
| Illumination, Halo Lit   | Yes   |
| Channel Letters  | Yes   |
| <b>Rules of Interpretation:</b><br>Yes = the sign type or characteristic is permitted<br>No = the sign type or characteristic is not permitted<br>Z = as established for the principal building by the applicable zoning district or sign master plan.<br>See § 59-16106 for sign districts and street categories. |   |

# Neighborhood Signs

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- Subdivision Entry Signs
- Sign Toppers

**No changes**



# Neighborhood Signs

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- Subdivision Entry Signs
- Sign Toppers
- Signs on Light Poles

**New provisions for City-Designated Districts**





# Neighborhood Signs

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- Subdivision Entry Signs
- Sign Toppers
- Signs on Light Poles
- Signs on residential properties

**Allowed for non-residential and multi-family uses**

# Benefits of the new sign code

## Everyone

- Highly-graphic and user-friendly
- Avoids difficult interpretations regarding content
- Fewer dilapidated signs
- Improved code enforcement
- Better tailored attached sign standards
- Limit use of PUD/SPUD to modify sign standards

## Residents

- Increased distance from EMD signs
- Smaller, shorter conditional use billboards in C-3, DBD, and I-1

## Business and Industry

- More precise measurement standards
- More efficient permitting process
- Provides flexibility via Master Sign Plans

# Schedule & Next Steps

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- Public comment
- Design Review/Arts Commission
- Planning Commission
- City Council

**through Oct 3, 2021**

**Oct/Nov 2021**

**Dec 2021/Jan 2022**

**Mar 2022**



# Review & Comment on the New Sign Code

[www.okc.gov/codeupdate](http://www.okc.gov/codeupdate)



The screenshot shows the OKC Planning Department website. The main heading is "DEVELOPMENT CODES UPDATE". The left navigation menu includes "Code Update", which is highlighted with a red arrow. The main content area features a graphic with the text "OKC Development Codes Update" and an "Overview" section. The "Get Involved" section lists several actions for users to take.

DEPARTMENTS » PLANNING » CURRENT PROJECTS »

## DEVELOPMENT CODES UPDATE

TEXT SIZE: [A] [A-] [A+] SHARE & BOOKMARK FEEDBACK PRINT

### OKC Development Codes Update

#### Overview

The Planning Department is managing a multi-phase project to update the City's development-related codes, including the Zoning and Planning Code, Sign Code, and Subdivision Regulations. Changes are intended to implement the City's comprehensive plan, [planokc](#), and address challenges with existing regulations.

#### Get Involved

- [Review the proposed new sign code and leave feedback](#)
- [Take the Survey](#)
- [Sign up for email updates](#)
- [Submit feedback about Oklahoma City's existing codes and regulations](#)

#### Department Contacts

[codeupdate@okc.gov](mailto:codeupdate@okc.gov)

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[marilyn.lamensdorf@okc.gov](mailto:marilyn.lamensdorf@okc.gov)

#### Downloads & Resources

[Browse Current Code](#)

[Find your Street Typology](#)

#### Stakeholder Advisory Team

[Meeting Agendas & Minutes](#)

[Members](#)

Free viewers are required for some of the attached



# Discussion & Questions