



## Legislative Department Seattle City Council Memorandum

**Date:** March 19, 2014  
**To:** Committee on Housing Affordability, Human Services, and Economic Resiliency (CHASER)  
**From:** Sara Belz, Council Central Staff  
**Subject:** **Council Bill (CB) 117991: Proposed Changes to City Wall Sign Regulations**

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On March 20, 2014, CHASER will have its third discussion of CB 117991, which would make the following amendments to the City's wall sign regulations:

- Establish a 287 square foot area limit for all new on-premise wall signs located in Commercial, Seattle Mixed, Industrial, and Downtown zones;
- Clarify existing definitions that apply to on-premise wall signs in order to make plain that providing customers with gift cards or gift certificates (or other similar documents) or with access to computers or phones (or other devices) that they could use to obtain a product or service that is featured on an on-premise sign but not directly available on the site where the sign is located is not permitted; and
- Increase penalties for violations of certain Sign Code regulations from \$500/day to \$1,500/day and direct the collected revenues from such violations to DPD's Operations Division, which includes the Department's sign and billboard inspection unit.

The proposed changes are intended to help address the proliferation of large, illegal wall signs around the City, many of which appear to be functioning as off-premise advertising. CHASER previously discussed and hosted a public hearing on CB 117991 at its February 20, 2014, meeting and reviewed a decision agenda prepared by Central Staff at its March 6 meeting. CB 117991 was developed for the Council's consideration at the request of Councilmember Clark.

### **Substitute Version of CB 117991: Alternative Area Limit**

At the March 6 CHASER meeting, the Committee members in attendance directed Central Staff to develop an amendment to CB 117991 that would increase the proposed new area limit for future wall signs located in Commercial, Seattle Mixed, Industrial, and Downtown zones from 287 square feet to 672 square feet. A substitute version of CB 117991 (version 7) that reflects Committee members' request is attached to this memorandum on YELLOW paper. If adopted by CHASER, version 7 of CB 117991 will become the new baseline version of the bill.

***Committee Action:***

**Amendment: Area limit for on-premise wall signs located on spectator sports facilities (Clark)**

The City of Seattle is home to large spectator sports facilities that occupy sizeable tracts of land and extend substantial lengths along rights-of-way. These venues have expansive exterior walls that at times feature on-premise wall signs promoting the events that take place inside. Representatives of some of these facilities have conveyed to CHAHSER members that the scale of their buildings necessitates the use of very large wall signs. The largest spectator sports facilities located in the zones that would be subject to the wall sign area limit established under CB 117991 are Century Link Field (maximum seating capacity of around 72,000) and Safeco Field (maximum seating capacity of about 47,000), both of which are located in Industrial zones. About 20 percent of the nearly 100 permits issued over the last 10 years for on-premise wall signs in excess of 672 square feet were for sign installations at either Century Link Field or Safeco Field.

Councilmember Clark is proposing to amend CB 117991 to adopt a 3,000 square foot wall sign area limit for spectator sports facilities with a maximum seating capacity of at least 40,000. The use of the seating capacity measure is intended to serve as a proxy for identifying structures that occupy a large total area, feature vast exterior walls, and occupy extended lengths of street frontage. The intent of the amendment is to allow the operators of large spectator sports facilities to install wall signs that are proportionate to the size of their buildings, thereby allowing them to adequately communicate with the public about the events, services, and products located inside.

A copy of Councilmember Clark's amendment is attached to this memorandum on GREEN paper. If Councilmember Clark's amendment is not adopted, the area limit that will apply to wall signs installed on large event facilities will either be 287 square feet or 672 square feet, depending on whether CHAHSER adopts the substitute version of CB 117991 described on the previous page.

***Committee Action:***

**Next Steps:**

If CHAHSER does not vote on CB 117991 at its March 20, 2014, meeting, the Committee's next opportunity to take up the legislation will be on April 3. If you have questions about the content of CB 117991 or would like to discuss additional amendment options, please feel free to contact me at any time.