FROM THE DESK OF

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July 20, 2025

Mayor Pro Tem Parks-Shaw
Neighborhood Planning & Development Committee Members
414 E 12th Street
Kansas City, MO 64106

Re: Ordinance 250580

Dear Mayor Pro Tem Parks-Shaw,

The amendments in 250580 have been proposed to address a recently identified gap related specifically to menu boards in drive-throughs. Menu boards are currently evaluated as a form of monument sign (88-445-08.A), which does not allow the use of digital technology in all zoning districts. As the fast food industry rapidly transitions to the use of digital drive-through technology, the conflict with existing code has resulted in numerous non-compliant sign upgrades already in place across the City and is blocking new developments seeking plan approvals.

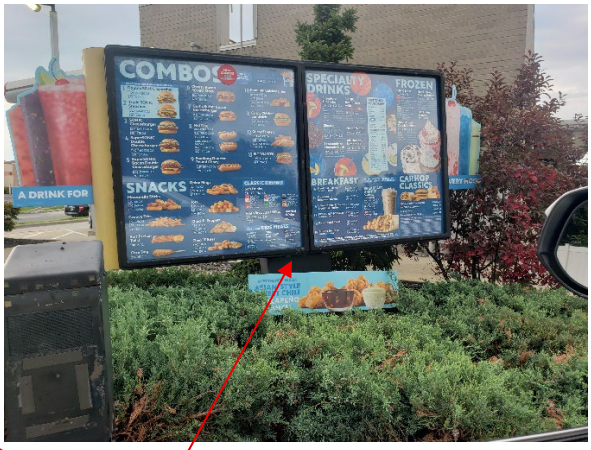
The City Plan Commission agreed with testimony provided during the July 02, 2025, hearing of CD-CPC-2025-00086 and affirmed that broadly allowing digital technology on all monument signs was not in the best interest of the City. The Commission recommended narrowing the amendments by defining a menu board sign and establishing guidelines for the use of digital technology in drive-throughs. ***Due to concerns with the formatting and structure of those recommendations, the changes are not reflected in the language introduced by ordinance 250580.***

Menu board signs in drive-throughs have near zero impact on traffic safety because of existing site plan requirements. Digital illumination is similar to the illumination of fixed signs and residential property is already protected by screening requirements of commercial development. Additionally, they are often out of compliance with the base requirements of the monument sign standards, creating an enforcement burden that returns little value to the community.

As a result of those key criteria, the transition to digital menu board signs in drive-throughs is not considered to be harmful to residentially occupied property or neighborhoods in general. Amendments narrowly applied to allow this type of signage will be supported by many community leaders. ***However, language to broadly expand the use of digital technology to monument signs will be opposed.***

I am formally requesting that the Neighborhood Planning & Development Committee consider a committee substitute to incorporate City Plan Commission recommendations through the creation of a new sign type. This approach is consistent with section 88-445-08 where 12 types of signs are independently defined and regulated. The attached draft reflects the language introduced in 250580 but narrowly applies the amendments to allow digital technology on menu board signs in drive-throughs without altering the language regulating monument signs in general.

Current drive-through examples to consider (all non-compliant):



Menu board signs in drive-throughs really aren't monument signs and have always had common issues with compliance, such as being pole mounted.

This recent upgrade is compliant with the base requirements of the monument sign code, but the digital screens are non-compliant.

There is little interest in broadly expanding digital signage along City streets, however time is of the essence to ensure this identified gap in the existing signage code does not impact the approval of otherwise appropriate commercial development in Kansas City. Please consider a committee substitute for 250580 that is truly in the best interest of the City.

Sincerely,

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cc: Staff, City Planning & Development
Mayor Lucas
City Council members
City Manager Vasquez
Patricia Jensen, Rouse, Frets, et al.

Enclosures:
Draft committee sub for 250580 (88-445-08_committee sub draft_250718)