



Mount Vernon

An Innovative Community; Authentically Hometown

Mount Vernon to Enforce Sign Restrictions

Signs will be removed from City right-of-way starting July 15

MOUNT VERNON, June 13, 2023 – In about a month, Mount Vernon will begin removing and disposing of any temporary signs that have been placed in the City right-of-way. This represents a change in enforcement for the City, which previously had left the small yard signs alone, leading to several complaints from residents that the proliferating signs were unsightly.

In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* nullified many of the content restrictions in Mount Vernon’s sign ordinance (Chapter 1175). The court determined that, in order to preserve citizens’ right to freedom of speech, municipalities cannot discriminate on signs based on their message.

In other words, the City cannot create certain rules for political signs and different rules for real estate or commercial/non-profit advertising signs. The City is currently addressing its sign ordinance in a zoning code re-write, but believes it is time to perform some enforcement of temporary sign placement.

After collaboration amongst City staff, it has been decided that the City will no longer allow any signs in its rights-of-way. The only exception will be signs placed by the City of Mount Vernon itself.

“This is being enforced in order to create a more welcoming atmosphere throughout the City and a cleaner-looking town,” said Rick Dzik, Safety-Service Director.

“This is a step in the right direction to improve the aesthetics of the City,” said Council Person Mel Severns, who pushed for the change in enforcement. “Signage needs to be appropriately placed so that all residents in Mount Vernon and those visiting will realize the value we place on City appearance.”

Traditionally, rights-of-way are defined as the grass between the curb and sidewalk, or tree lawn, as well as the sidewalk itself. For areas of the City without sidewalks, the right-of-way is generally considered to be the first ten feet extending from the street.

While signs will no longer be allowed in the City right-of-way, they are still permitted on private property, with the permission of the property owner. Therefore, political signs, advertising signs, real estate signs, etc., can be placed between the sidewalk and house/business, or ten feet off of the street, with owner permission.

Beginning July 15, 2023, the City, with support from the Mount Vernon Municipal Court Probation Department, will begin removal and disposal of all signs located in the City right-of-way. Please relocate those signs before that date, if possible.

In addition, while utility poles in the City are owned and maintained by American Electric Power, the utility company has given the City permission to remove signs from its poles that are in the City right-of-way, so those signs will be subject to removal as well.

Any questions about this upcoming project can be addressed to the City’s Property Maintenance Enforcement Office at (740) 393-9577.

END

ABOUT THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON:

The City of Mount Vernon is an innovative community with an authentic hometown feel. The City is dedicated to providing modern services with an emphasis on continual improvement, customer service and equitable laws that support our citizens and visitors, while retaining and attracting investors in our community. Home to 17,000 people, Mount Vernon is the county seat for Knox County and boasts historic buildings and districts as well as business and professional, educational and recreational opportunities through many adaptive reuses of the community's infrastructure and spaces. The City has strong ties to higher education, with Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Kenyon College and Central Ohio Technical College operating satellite locations in the historic downtown. Located 40 miles northeast of Columbus, Mount Vernon is near the geographic center of Ohio and has connections all over the globe.

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