

**CITY OF VENICE**  
**Planning & Zoning Department**

**Memorandum**



**FROM:** Chad L. Minor, AICP, LEED G.A., Community Development Director

**SUBJECT:** Religious Display

**DATE:** January 11, 2013

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A determination regarding the use of flags and other similar displays by religious institutions within the boundaries of their private property has been requested. Complaints have been received indicating that these displays should be considered signs and are not permitted by the city's ordinance. It must be determined whether these types of displays fit within the city's Land Development Code definition of a "sign" as follows:

***Section 86-570. Definitions.***

*Sign means any device designed to inform or attract the attention of persons not on the premises on which the sign is located; provided, however, that the following shall not be included in the application of the regulations in this chapter:*

- (1) Signs not exceeding one square foot in area and bearing only property numbers, postbox numbers, names of occupants of premises, or other identification of premises not having commercial connotations.*
- (2) Flags and insignia of any government, except when displayed in connection with commercial promotion.*
- (3) Legal notices or identification, informational or directional signs erected or required by governmental bodies.*
- (4) Integral decorative or architectural features of buildings, except letters, trademarks, moving parts or moving lights.*
- (5) Signs not exceeding two square feet in area directing and guiding traffic and parking on private property, but bearing no advertising matter.*

Code indicates that a sign is "any device designed to inform or attract the attention of persons not on the premises on which the sign is located". The intent of this definition is to prevent the proliferation of devices that fit within this definition that are used by commercial businesses in order to "inform or attract" customers into their business. Typically, these devices will include text or symbols that are designed to "inform and attract" such as, "open", "sale", "model" or some other text or symbol used in connection with commercial promotion.

**Based on the above information and code citations, the following determination is made:**

Flags and other similar displays by religious institutions within the boundaries of their private property are not considered "signs" as long as they are being used to signify important events of religious or historical significance. These displays are not meant to "inform or attract", but only to commemorate specific religious or historical events. They typically do not include text or symbols however, they may as long as it is pertinent to the specific event.

Cc: Ed Lavalley, City Manager  
Vincent Laporta, Building Official  
John Patek, Code Enforcement Officer  
Pat Stuehler, Code Enforcement Officer  
Kellie Bricker, Planning Coordinator  
Roger Clark, Planner