



January 18, 2024

RE: City of El Centro Campaign Activities Guidelines and Sign Requirements

Dear Candidate for Public Office and Campaign Staff,

The purpose of this letter is to explain the guidelines and requirements that campaign activities are subject to in the City of El Centro. Those include, but are not limited to, campaign restrictions for the use of City property and the display of “campaign signs” in the City. Please understand that the purpose of this letter is not to stifle campaigning but to meet the City’s legal obligations to protect public health, safety, and welfare by explaining the rules for timing, place, and manner of campaign activities and signage.

Use of City property, facilities, and other resources

The City cannot use its resources to support or oppose any candidate or ballot measure, and therefore does not allow its property to be used for campaign purposes unless that property is a traditional public forum, which would include sidewalks, streets, or parks. Other City properties fall into two further categories: a limited public forum and a non-public forum.

Limited public forums, such as City programs at a City facility or programming for a registered group at City facilities, cannot be used for campaigning.

Non-public forums are administrative and other areas used for City business and not available to the public such as administrative buildings, parking areas of parks and other buildings, City yards, and City equipment such as vehicles, traffic signals, light poles, and landscaping. Limited public forums and non-public forums are not available for campaigning. For example, campaign signs cannot be posted on City light poles, traffic signals or in City landscaped areas. However, “campaigning” on these properties does not include wearing a campaign button or an article of clothing supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure.

The following campaigning activities are not allowed on City property that is not a traditional public forum:

- Displaying, leaving, handing out or posting signage or materials supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure.

City Clerk

1275 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243 (760) 337-4515 Fax (760) 337-4564

- Making a speech or presentation regarding a current candidate or ballot measure.
- Visiting a City facility, such as the Library, Community Center, Adult Center or City Hall, to hand out campaign literature or make campaign presentations.
- Using City-funded photographs, videos, or newsletters in campaign presentations.
- Using a photo or video in the City Council Chambers or on the dais, or in front of a City administrative building or with City property (such as a vehicle), as opposed to a photo taken on a City street or sidewalk.
- Using City logos, the City seal, or replicas of the logos or seal or any City insignia.
- Using the City's email directory or City email addresses to solicit political support or opposition.
- Distributing campaign literature in the City Council Chambers or in City buildings or facilities.
- Making a campaign presentation at a City Council meeting other than an unrelated comment during public comment or on any agenda item.
- Use of social media content: City of El Centro social media posts, content, and hashtags cannot be liked, commented, shared, retweeted, or used in support or opposition of a candidate or ballot measure.
- Enforcement: The City may request the removal of, or will remove, materials posted on its property, whether physical or virtual. Those conducting the prohibited campaigning activities described above may be asked to leave City property.

Displaying of Election Signs

The display of “election signs” is subject to the City of El Centro Sign Ordinance provisions regarding temporary non-commercial signs. If the City determines there is a violation of those provisions of the Sign Ordinance, the candidate will be notified by email, text, or phone call that a sign needs to be removed or relocated. Noncompliant signs must be removed within 24 hours of receipt of that notice. After 24 hours, City Code Enforcement staff will remove and store the sign. There is no charge for storage of the sign but signs stored longer than ten days will be destroyed. It is the responsibility of the candidate or ballot measure proponent or opponent to pick up stored signs within that time frame. Code Enforcement retains the power to issue an administrative citation or use other remedies. Generally, that power will be reserved for safety violations or repeated non-compliance after written notice.

The following is a list of requirements for a temporary non-commercial sign (which include elections-related materials) within the City of El Centro:

- Signs must be installed only with the permission of the property owner. It is the responsibility of the candidate to obtain the property owner’s contact information,


obtain consent and confirm the boundaries of the owner's property.

- Signs shall not be placed on property owned by any public agency or within the public right-of-way. This includes, but is not limited to, property owned by the City of El Centro, El Centro Regional Medical Center, Imperial Irrigation District, and the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans).
- Signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area.
- Signs, including any structural support, shall not exceed eight (8) feet in height.
- Signs greater than three (3) feet in height shall not be installed near driveways and intersections in a manner that reduces the visibility of pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. Signs shall also not block visibility of any street signs, street lights, or other traffic control devices.
- Signs shall not be installed more than 90 calendar days before the date of the election.
- Signs must be removed within fifteen (15) calendar days after the date of the election. If not removed by that time, Code Enforcement staff will notify the candidate to remove the sign within 24 hours. Code Enforcement staff may issue an administrative citation to candidates with signs that remain after 24 hours of that notification.

If you have any questions or concerns in general about campaigning, the election process, or the use of City parks, special events, or City resources, please contact Norma Wyles, City Clerk at (760) 337-4515 or by email at nwyles@cityofelcentro.org. Should you have questions or concerns regarding signs, please contact Angel Hernandez, Director of Community Development, at (760) 337-4545 or by email at angel_hernandez@cityofelcentro.org.

Sincerely,

CITY OF EL CENTRO



Angel Hernandez, AICP
Director of Community Development

CITY OF EL CENTRO



Norma Wyles, CMC
City Clerk