

ARTICLE 8
DISPLAY AND OUTDOOR ADVERTISING SIGNS

8.01 Definition of Terms

The following definitions shall be used for terms contained in this chapter that are not otherwise defined in the Washington County Code or in this Zoning Ordinance.

- A. Abandoned Sign: A sign, including sign face and supporting structure, which refers to a discontinued business, profession, commodity, service, or other activity or use formerly occupying the site; or which contains no sign copy on all sign faces for a continuous period of six months.
- B. Attached Sign: A sign that is structurally connected to a building or depends upon that building for support.
- C. Directional Sign: A sign that serves only to designate the location or direction of any area or place.
- D. Freestanding Sign: Any sign supported by structures or supports that are placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that are independent from any building or other structure.
- E. Obsolete Signs: Signs that identify a business or occupant that is no longer in operation at the premises.
- F. Outdoor Advertising Signs (Billboards): A panel for the display of information relating to a business, product, event, or other subject of advertising or publicity. Outdoor advertising signs may advertise on-premise or off-premise businesses or products, but are not included in the sign provisions of Section 8.05. Section 8.06 contains special regulations applicable to outdoor advertising signs permitted in certain zoning districts within Washington County.
- G. Projecting Signs: A sign other than a wall sign that is attached to and projects from a building face.
- H. Roof Sign: Any sign or part of sign erected upon, against, or directly above a roof or on top of or above the parapet or cornice of a building.
- I. Temporary Signs: Any sign designed or fabricated of materials that advertise or communicate messages that change frequently or that become outdated; are made of materials of relatively low durability; are intended to be removed or replaced within a period of six months or less; or are portable. Temporary signs generally fall into two categories: temporary civic signs and temporary commercial signs.
- J. Wall Sign: A sign attached to and parallel with the side of a building.

- K. Window Sign: A sign painted on or installed inside a window for the purpose of viewing from outside the premises.

8.02 General Provisions

The following general provisions shall apply to display and outdoor advertising signs:

- A. Nothing in this Chapter shall require the removal or discontinuance of a legally existing sign that is not altered, rebuilt, enlarged, extended, or relocated and the same shall be deemed a non-conforming use under the terms of this ordinance; provided however, the following signs shall be made to conform with the provisions of this Chapter or shall be removed by the owner upon written notice of the Zoning Officer, forthwith in the case of the immediate danger and in any case within not more than thirty (30) days following said notice:

1. Any sign which is in a state of serious disrepair or is no longer functional;
2. An obsolete sign that advertises an activity, business, product or service no longer conducted on the premises on which the sign is located, or any other sign which has been abandoned;
3. Any sign which is in violation of the provisions of Subsection 8.01B, 8.01C;
4. Any sign which swings or otherwise noticeably moves as a result of wind pressure because of the manner of their suspension or attachment;
5. Any portable sign that is not permanently anchored or secured to either a building or the ground;
6. Any sign that becomes insecure, in danger of falling, or otherwise unsafe; or any sign unlawfully installed, erected or maintained.

If within thirty (30) days said order is not complied with, the Development Director may cause such sign to be removed at the expense of the owner.

- B. No sign shall closely resemble or approximate the shape, form and color of any official traffic sign, signal or device. No sign shall be erected at any location where it may, by reason of its size, location, content, coloring or manner of illumination, constitute a traffic hazard or a detriment to traffic safety by obstructing the vision of motorists, by detracting from the visibility of any traffic control device. No rotating beacon, beam or flashing illumination resembling an emergency light shall be used in connection with any sign or be visible for any adjacent street. Lights resembling an emergency light or such words as "Stop", "Look", "Danger" or any other words, phrases, symbols or characters, which in any manner interfere with, mislead or confuse traffic shall not be used in connection with any sign.

- C. No sign other than an official traffic, street, or related sign approved for placement by the County Engineer or other public officer in the performance of his public duty, shall be placed on or over any street or public property.
- D. Off-site signs are prohibited in all districts except as specifically permitted in this Article; provided however, such signs may be permitted by the *Board of Adjustment* when unusual or compelling circumstances may require.
- E. Two (2) or more signs may be mounted on the same sign standard or structure provided that the combined surface areas of such signs shall not exceed the maximum area permitted for a single sign, except as specifically permitted in this Article.
- F. Illuminated signs shall not be of an intermittent flashing type.
- G. Signs which are displayed inside or upon a window facing the outside and which are intended to be seen from the exterior shall be permitted subject to the same conditions and restrictions as wall signs.
- H. These regulations shall not apply to any sign that is visible only from the premises upon which it is erected, such as on walls of courts or malls in shopping centers.
- I. These regulations shall not apply to signs which are accessory to the use of any kind of operable vehicle, provided the sign is painted or attached directly to the body of the vehicle.

8.03 Signs Permitted in All Districts

Signs hereinafter designated shall be permitted in all zoning districts:

- A. The following temporary signs shall be permitted:
 - 1. One (1) non-illuminated sign not to exceed fifty (50) square feet in area shall be permitted per lot frontage to advertise the sale, rental or lease of the premises or part of the premises on which the sign is displayed. Such sign shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line unless mounted flat against the wall of the building. Such sign shall be removed within seven (7) days after the disposition of the premises.

2. One (1) non-illuminated sign not to exceed fifty (50) square feet in area shall be permitted per lot frontage to identify the architects, engineers, contractors, or other individuals involved in construction of the building on the premises on which the sign is displayed. Such sign may also announce the character of the building enterprise or the purpose for which the building is intended, but shall not include product advertising. Such sign shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line unless mounted flat against the wall of the building or on a protective barricade surrounding the construction. Such sign shall be removed within seven (7) days following completion of construction.
 3. One (1) non-illuminated sign not to exceed fifty (50) square feet in area shall be permitted at the entrance to a recorded subdivision to identify and/or provide information regarding such subdivision. One additional such sign shall be permitted at an auxiliary entrance provided such auxiliary entrance fronts on a separate street from the main entrance. Such sign shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line. Such sign shall be removed upon completion of the sale of ninety (90) percent of the lots located within the subdivision.
 4. One (1) non-illuminated sign not to exceed nine (9) square feet in area shall be permitted for each dwelling which is used for display or as a model home. Such sign shall not extend higher than four (4) feet above grade level and shall only be located within the front yard of the lot containing such dwelling. Such sign shall be removed when a display or model home is no longer so used.
 5. Political campaign signs shall be permitted to announce candidates seeking public political office or pertinent political issues. Such signs shall not be erected earlier than forty-five (45) days prior to the date balloting takes place for the candidates or issues indicated on the sign, and shall be removed no later than seven (7) days after said balloting date.
 6. Seasonal decorations shall be permitted when pertaining to recognized national holidays and national observances.
 7. Signs which contain or consist of banners, balloons, pennants, ribbons, streamers, spinners or other similarly moving devices shall be permitted on the premises of an establishment having a grand opening or other special event.
- B. One (1) non-illuminated sign not to exceed fifty (50) square feet in area shall be permitted at the entrance to a recorded subdivision. Such sign shall be of ornamental metal, stone, masonry, wood or other permanent material and shall indicate only the name of such subdivision. Such sign shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line.

- C. One (1) sign or nameplate not to exceed fifteen (15) square feet in area shall be permitted to identify the occupant of the premises or a permitted use. Such sign shall not extend higher than six (6) feet above the grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line unless mounted flat against the wall of the building or on a free-standing mail box.
- D. Non-illuminated community direction signs shall be permitted at a county road intersection when such signs are placed, controlled and maintained by a cooperative neighbor organization, and approved by the County Engineer. The County Engineer shall not approve such sign unless there is an adequate shoulder to permit short-term standing, and unless the visual clearance at the intersection will not be impaired by the sign or such standing. Each participating neighbor may place upon such community direction sign one (1) "arrow" sign, not to exceed one (1) square foot in area, show his name, the distance to his property, and indicating the direction.
- E. Community service information signs, public transit service signs, public utility information signs, safety signs, danger signs, trespassing signs, memorial or commemorative plaques, signs indicating scenic or historical points of interest, and all other similar signs, including all signs erected by or upon the order of a public officer in the performance of his public duty, shall be permitted when such signs are of a noncommercial nature and in the public interest.
- F. Off-site signs not to exceed three (3) square feet in area shall be permitted to display the emblem of a service club or of a church, and information on the time and location of meetings or services. More than one (1) such sign may be mounted on a common sign standard or structure, provided such standard or structure shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line.
- G. Integral signs for churches or temples, or names of buildings, dates of erections, monumental citations, commemorative tablets and other similar signs shall be permitted when carved into stone, concrete or other permanent type of construction and made an integral part of the structure to which they are attached.
- H. Official flags, insignias, and emblems of the United States, the State of Iowa, and municipal and other bodies of established government; and flags which display the recognized symbol of on-site business firms and enterprises, religious, charitable, public and nonprofit organizations shall be permitted provided that no single flag shall exceed fifty (50) square feet in area.

8.04 Signs in Agricultural and Residential Districts

The following signs shall be permitted in the "AG", "UR", "CD", "AR" and "VR" Districts or platted residential subdivisions:

- A. On-site and off-site signs not to exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area shall be permitted to identify a farm premises or to indicate the product grown or material and equipment used on the farm premises.

- B. One (1) non-illuminated sign not to exceed fifteen (15) square feet in area shall be permitted to identify a home occupation, home professional office or rural enterprise business. Such sign shall not extend higher than six (6) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line unless mounted flat against the wall of the building or on a free-standing mail box.
- C. One (1) sign not to exceed fifteen (15) square feet in area shall be permitted per lot frontage of a lot upon which is located any building or buildings containing not less than three (3) nor more than nine (9) dwelling units. A similar sign not to exceed twenty-four (24) square feet in area shall be permitted for each lot frontage upon which is located any building or buildings containing ten (10) or more dwelling units. Such signs shall denote only the name and/or the name and address of the management thereof, or allied information. Such signs shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line unless mounted flat against the wall of the building.
- D. One (1) sign not to exceed fifty (50) square feet in area shall be permitted at any main entrance to a mobile home park. Such sign shall be of ornamental metal, stone, masonry, wood or other permanent material, and shall indicate only the name of such mobile home park. Such signs shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line.
- E. One (1) sign not to exceed twenty (20) square feet in area shall be permitted per lot frontage to identify a church, school, institution, or public building or use. Such signs shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level and shall be mounted flat against the wall of the building. In addition, one (1) bulletin board not to exceed fifty (50) square feet in area shall be permitted for each premise. Such bulletin board shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line unless mounted flat against the wall of the building.
- F. One (1) sign not to exceed twenty (20) square feet in area shall be permitted per lot frontage to identify a permitted conditional use, or a legally established nonconforming use, which did have any signs prior to the effective date of adoption or amendment of this ordinance. Such sign shall denote only the name and/or profession of professional persons occupying premises, and/or the name of the establishment. Such sign shall not extend higher than eight (8) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line unless mounted flat against the wall of the building.

8.05 Signs in Commercial and Industrial Districts

The following signs shall be permitted in the "C" and "I" Districts:

- A. One (1) free-standing sign not to exceed eighty (80) square feet in area, plus one (1) square foot in area for each additional linear foot of lot frontage over eighty (80) feet shall be permitted per lot frontage, provided that in no case shall such sign exceed a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet in area. Such sign shall not exceed a maximum vertical or horizontal dimension of greater than twenty-two (22) feet. Such

sign shall not extend higher than forty-five (45) feet above grade level, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet to any property line unless the bottom of the sign face is higher than twelve (12) feet above grade level.

- B. One (1) projecting sign not to exceed twenty-four (24) square feet in area shall be permitted per lot frontage. Such sign shall not extend lower than eight (8) feet, nor higher than the roof or parapet line of the wall to which it is attached, and shall not extend more than six (6) feet beyond the wall to which it is attached.
- C. One (1) roof sign not to exceed twenty (20) percent of the surface area of any one (1) given wall of the building to which it is attached, shall be permitted per lot frontage, provided that in no case shall such sign exceed a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet in area. Such sign shall not exceed a maximum vertical or horizontal dimension of greater than twenty-two (22) feet. All roof signs shall adhere to the height requirements of the district in which they are located. The back of such sign shall be effectively shielded from public view by a building wall, by backing the sign against another sign face, by grouping such signs in clusters to conceal the exposed backs, or by painting the exposed back a neutral color.
- D. The maximum area of all wall signs shall not exceed twenty (20) percent of the surface area of the wall to which they are attached, provided that in no case shall such signs exceed a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet in area per wall. Such signs shall be mounted flat against the wall of the building; shall be restricted to remain within the outline of the wall to which they are attached; and shall not exceed more than one (1) foot out from the wall.

8.06 Outdoor Advertising Signs and Billboards

The following regulations shall govern the placement of outdoor advertising signs and billboards:

- A. The regulations governing outdoor advertising signs and billboards shall comply with all State and Federal regulations.
- B. Outdoor advertising signs shall only be allowed in the "C" Commercial and the "I" Industrial Districts. The maximum size of any outdoor advertising sign is 672 square feet.
- C. All outdoor advertising signs and billboards shall be setback from any existing or proposed right-of-way line of any street, county road, or highway as shown on the official street plan, at least as far as the required front yard setback for the district in which it is located; except at any street intersection, the setback of any outdoor advertising sign or billboard shall not be less than one hundred (100) feet from the established right-of-way line of each such street." The setbacks for signs meeting the Iowa Department of Transportation's criteria as a private directional signs placed adjacent to Interstate right-of-way shall be not less than ten (10) feet from said right-of-way.

- D. No outdoor advertising sign or billboard which faces the front or side lot line of any lot in AR or VR Districts or platted residential subdivision used for residential purposes shall be permitted within one hundred (100) feet of such lot line.
- E. No outdoor advertising sign or billboard which faces any public parkway, public square or entrance to any public park, public or parochial school, church or cemetery or similar institution shall be permitted within three hundred (300) feet thereof.

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