

Article XVI — Sign Regulations

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Article XVI — Sign Regulations

§ 21-1601 Purpose.

This Article recognizes that signs perform an important function by identifying offices, businesses, and industry, but that minimum control of signs is necessary to promote the health, safety, and general welfare by lessening hazards to pedestrian and vehicular traffic, by conserving property values, by preventing unsightly and detrimental development which has a blighting influence upon residential, business, and industrial uses, by preventing signs from reaching such excessive size that they obscure one another to the detriment of all concerned, and by securing certain fundamentals of design for the Borough.

§ 21-1602 Definitions.

As used in this Article, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

(a) **Sign:** Any permanent or temporary structure or part thereof, or any device attached, painted, or represented directly or indirectly on a structure or other surface, that shall display or include any letter, word, insignia, flag, or representation used as or which is in the nature of an advertisement, announcement, visual communication, or direction, or is designed to attract the eye or bring the subject to the attention of the public. Flags of any governmental unit or branch or of any charitable or religious organization, interior signs not visible from a public right-of-way or adjoining property, and cornerstones built into or attached to a wall of a building are excluded.

(b) **On-Premises Sign:** A lawful sign which directs attention to a person, business, profession, home occupation or activity conducted on the same lot.

(c) **Off-Premises Sign:** A lawful sign which directs attention to a person, business, profession, product, home occupation, or activity not conducted on the same lot. No more than one (1) “off-premises sign” shall be permitted for any use.

(d) **Freestanding Sign:** A self-supporting lawful sign resting or supported by means of poles or standards on the ground. The height of freestanding signs shall be measured from the curb level.

(e) **Parallel Sign:** A lawful sign mounted parallel to a wall or other vertical building surface. Parallel signs shall not extend beyond the edge of any wall or other surface to which they are mounted, nor project more than eighteen (18) inches from its surface.

(f) **Window Sign:** A temporary or permanent lawful sign which is oriented to the public right-of-way, is legible to persons in vehicles, and is located on the outside or inside of a window to direct attention to an activity conducted on the same lot.

(g) **Projecting Sign:** Any lawful sign mounted on a wall or other vertical building surface, other than a parallel sign. Projecting signs shall not project more than eighteen (18) inches from the wall or surface to which they are mounted, nor in any way interfere with normal pedestrian or vehicular traffic, nor project over or encroach within any street line.

(h) **Roof Sign:** A lawful sign erected upon the roof or parapet of a building. No sign except such directional devices as may be required by the Federal and State Aviation Authorities shall be placed, inscribed, or supported upon the roof or upon any structure which extends above the roof or parapet of any building.

§ 21-1603 Prohibited Signs.

The following signs are prohibited in all districts:

(a) Signs which in any way simulate official, functional, directional, or warning signs erected or maintained by the United States government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, a county or municipality thereof, or by any railroad, public utility, or similar agency concerned with the protection of public health or safety.

(b) Banners, spinners, flags, pennants, or any moving object used for commercial advertising purposes, whether containing a message or not.

(c) Flashing, blinking, twinkling, animated, twirling, or moving signs of any type, except those portions of signs which indicate time and temperature changes.

(d) Any sign containing information on it which states or implies that a property may be used for any purpose not permitted under the provisions of this Chapter in the district in which the property to which the sign relates is located.

(e) On-site signs advertising a use no longer in existence or a project no longer available shall be removed or changed to advertise the new use or product immediately after cessation of the original use. Signs once removed shall be replaced only by signs in conformance with this Chapter.

(f) No signs except those of a duly constituted governmental body, including traffic signs and similar regulatory notices, shall be allowed within street lines unless specifically authorized by other ordinances and regulations of the Borough and in compliance with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania regulations.

(g) No vehicle shall be permitted to carry a sign affixed in such a manner that the carrying of such sign or signs no longer is incidental to the vehicle's primary purpose but becomes a primary purpose in itself.

§ 21-1604 Permit Requirements.

(a) All on-premises signs and all off-premises signs, including temporary signs, regardless of size, shall require the issuance of a zoning permit from the Zoning Officer before erection or replacement. All signs must comply with all of the regulations contained herein, regardless of

whether a permit is required. However, no permit shall be required to repaint any sign, *provided* there are no changes or alterations whatsoever.

(b) Permits for temporary signs shall be for a maximum period of twelve (12) months. The permit for such signs may be renewed at the end of each twelve (12) month period.

§ 21-1605 Nonconforming Signs.

(a) Only lawful signs existing at the time of passage of this Chapter (or any predecessor zoning ordinance) or any amendment thereto and which do not conform to the requirements of the Chapter (or predecessor zoning ordinance) as so passed or amended shall be considered nonconforming signs, and once removed, shall be replaced only with conforming signs. However, lawful nonconforming signs may be repainted or repaired, *provided* such repainted or repaired sign does not exceed the dimensions of the existing sign. Any sign or billboard destroyed, damaged, or dismantled for any reason whatsoever may only be rebuilt on its previous location in strict conformity with the regulations of the district in which it is located.

(b) Every unlawful sign (a sign which does not have a zoning permit and which does not conform to the provisions of this Article) erected prior to March 5, 1975 shall be removed within thirty (30) days from the date of official notification of the Zoning Officer. All signs erected prior to March 5, 1975 which do not have a zoning permit but do conform to the provisions of this Article shall be required to apply for a zoning permit within sixty (60) days after March 5, 1975.

§ 21-1606 Area of Signs.

(a) The size of any sign shall be computed by multiplying its greatest height by its greatest length, exclusive of supporting structures, unless such supporting structure is illuminated or is in the form of a symbol or contains advertising copy. In the case of signs that have no definable edges, such as raised letters attached to a building facade, the sign size shall be that area within the smallest rectangle enclosing the extreme limits of the actual message or copy area.

(b) The area of a sign shall be construed to include all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs and symbols, together with the background, whether open or enclosed, on which they are displayed, but not including any supporting framework and bracing which are incidental to the display itself.

(c) Where the sign consists of individual letters or symbols attached to or painted on a surface, building, wall, or window, the area shall be considered to be that of the smallest rectangle which encompasses all of the letters and symbols.

(d) In computing square foot area of a double-face sign, only one (1) side shall be considered, *provided* both faces are identical. If the interior angle formed by the two (2) faces of the double-faced sign is greater than forty-five degrees (45°), then both sides of such sign shall be considered in calculating the sign area, and it shall be considered as a parallel sign.

(e) If an establishment has walls fronting on two (2) or more streets, the sign area for each fronting street may be computed and used. The sign shall be placed on the frontage used in the computation. When a freestanding sign is used, only one (1) wall sign shall be allowed.

§ 21-1607 Illumination of Signs.

The following regulations apply to the illumination of signs.

(a) **Directly Illuminated Sign:** A sign designed to give forth artificial light directly (or through transparent or translucent material) from a source of light within such sign, including but not limited to neon and exposed lamp signs. Signs may be illuminated by direct lighting but shall have such lighting shielded so no direct light will shine on abutting properties or in the normal line of vision of the public using the streets or sidewalks. No flood- or spotlights shall be mounted higher than twenty-five (25) feet above ground level.

(b) **Indirectly Illuminated Sign:** A sign illuminated with a light so shielded that no direct rays therefrom are visible elsewhere on the lot where said illumination occurs. If such shielding device is defective, such sign shall be deemed to be a directly illuminated sign.

(c) **Flashing and Moving Sign:** A sign that is prohibited in all districts but is an illuminated sign on which the artificial light is not maintained stationary and constant in intensity and color at all times when in use.

(d) **Festoon Lighting** is prohibited in all districts and is a directly illuminated sign comprised of either:

(1) A group of incandescent light bulbs hung or strung overhead or on a building or structure; or

(2) Light bulbs not hooded or otherwise screened to prevent the direct rays of the light from shining on an adjacent property or right-of-way.

§ 21-1608 General Performance Criteria.

All signs, except temporary signs, shall be constructed of durable material and kept in good condition and repair. Electrical signs shall be subject to the performance criteria of the Underwriters' Laboratories, Inc., or to applicable Borough codes, whichever is more stringent.

§ 21-1609 Application to Smokestacks, Water Towers, and Similar Structures.

All sign provisions of this Chapter shall apply to smokestacks, water towers and other similar structures.

§ 21-1610 Interference with Traffic.

No sign shall be so located or arranged that it interferes with traffic through glare, through blocking of reasonable sight lines for streets, sidewalks, or driveways, through confusion with a traffic control device (by reason of color, location, shape, or other characteristic), or through any other means. In no case shall any sign, other than an official governmental sign, be erected within the official right-of-way of any street unless specifically authorized by other ordinance or regulations of the Borough and in conformance with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania regulations, where appropriate. No sign shall violate the corner visibility restrictions outlined in this Chapter.

§ 21-1611 Setbacks.

(a) **In General.** All signs, other than those traffic control signs permitted within the street right-of-way, shall be set back from the street right-of-way line a minimum distance of two (2) feet or as otherwise specified in this Chapter and in conformance with the minimum regulations outlined in corner visibility restrictions of this Chapter.

(b) **Freestanding Signs.** All freestanding signs shall be set back at least ten (10) feet from the front lot line.

§ 21-1612 Protection of Residential Districts.

(a) **Buffer.** No freestanding sign in other than a residential district shall extend within fifty (50) feet of any residential district boundary line.

(b) **Off-Premises Advertising.** No sign which directs attention to a business, commodity, service, or entertainment conducted, sold, or offered only elsewhere than upon the premises where it is displayed shall be established nearer than one hundred (100) feet to a residential district, unless the advertisement surface of such sign is not visible therefrom and does not create a nuisance to adjacent property owners, in which instance such sign shall be no closer than fifty (50) feet to a residential district.

(c) **Signs Facing Residential District.** No sign in other than a residential district shall be located so as to face any residential district on the same side of the street as the property bearing the sign fronts. This provision shall not apply to signs at right angles to the street line of such street.

(d) Exceptions by Consent of Adjoining Property Owners.

(1) **In General.** A developer or property owner may install a sign otherwise prohibited by virtue of subsection (b) or (c) if the owner of the Protected Property consents to the installation in a notarized writing filed with the Borough. The consenting owner or his successors in title to the Protected Property may withdraw his consent at any time, and such withdrawal shall take effect one (1) year after the date the owner files a notarized writing with the Borough.

(2) **Recorded or Filed Plan.** If a developer or property owner elects to install a sign under this subsection (d), then:

(A) if a subdivision and/or land development plan is required in connection with the proposed sign, then the developer or property owner must show the sign on the approved and recorded subdivision and/or land development plan, with a notation that the sign is permitted under this subsection by consent of the owner of the Protected Property until one (1) year after that consent is withdrawn, at which time the sign must be removed or moved to a permitted location; **or**

(B) if no subdivision and/or land development plan is required in connection with the proposed sign, then the developer or property owner must file a plan, bearing the notarized signature of the property owner, showing the location of the proposed sign, with a notation that the sign is permitted under this subsection by consent of the owner of the Protected Property until one (1) year after that consent is withdrawn, at which time the sign must be removed or moved to a permitted location.

(3) **Protected Property.** For purposes of the exemption from subsection (b), the term “Protected Property” means a property(ies) in a residential district which is within one hundred (100) feet of the sign; and for purposes of the exemption from subsection (c), the term “Protected Property” means any abutting property which is on the same side of the street and which the sign faces.

§ 21-1613 Temporary Signs.

(a) **For Sale or For Rent Signs.** A temporary sign may be permitted within the property lines, advertising the prospective or completed sale or rental of the premises upon which it is located, not exceeding six (6) square feet in area within any residential district and not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in area within commercial and industrial districts, *provided* that it shall be maintained and removed within seven (7) days after consummation of a lease or sale transaction.

(b) **Construction Sites.** Temporary signs may be permitted on new construction sites, such signs not to exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in total area, *provided* they shall be removed within seven (7) days after completion of the construction work, and not more than one (1) sign shall be placed on each street frontage of the construction site.

(c) **Noncommercial Signs.** Temporary signs may be permitted on nonresidential properties only, announcing or advertising any political, educational, charitable, civic, professional, religious, or like campaign or event for a total period not to exceed thirty (30) days in any calendar year, *provided* they do not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area and are removed promptly after the conclusion of the campaign or event.

(d) **Special Occasions.** Special promotional devices, signs or displays such as floodlights, flags, banners, pennants, A-type (sandwich type) sidewalk or curb signs, and related devices shall only be permitted for a new business and an existing business for special occasions not more than four (4) times a year in a commercial or industrial district for a period of not more than a total of fifteen (15) days in any one (1) calendar year. At no other time shall such devices be permitted.

§ 21-1614 Signs Permitted in Residential Districts.

The following signs are permitted in residential districts, *provided* that no directly illuminated signs shall be allowed:

(a) On-premises Signs.

(1) Official traffic signs and other official federal, state, county, and municipal governmental signs.

(2) Signs displaying only the name and address of the occupant of the premises, *provided* that the area of any such sign shall not exceed one (1) square foot and not more than one (1) such sign shall be erected for each occupant of a premises, unless such property fronts on more than one (1) street, in which case one (1) such sign may be erected on each street frontage.

(3) Signs for bulletin or announcement boards or for identification of permitted non-residential buildings or uses, *provided* that the area of any such sign shall not exceed fifteen (15) square feet.

(4) Signs advertising the sale, lease, or rental of property, *provided* that the area of any such sign shall not exceed six (6) square feet and not more than one (1) such sign shall be placed on property held in single and separate ownership unless such property fronts on more than one (1) street, in which case one (1) such sign shall be allowed for each frontage. All signs shall be removed within seven (7) days after an agreement of sale or rental has been entered into.

(5) Trespassing signs and signs indicating the private nature of a road, driveway, or premises, *provided* that the area of any such sign shall not exceed two (2) square feet.

(6) Temporary signs erected in connection with the development or proposed development of the premises by a builder, contractor, developer, or other persons interested in such sale or development, *provided* that the aggregate area of the sign shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet. Such signs shall be removed within seven (7) days after the last structure has been initially occupied.

(7) Temporary signs announcing a campaign, drive, or event of a civic, philanthropic, educational, or religious organization, or a sporting event. Such signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area and shall be removed immediately upon completion of the campaign, drive, or event.

(b) Off-premises Signs.

(1) Signs directing patrons, members, or audiences to temporary exhibits, shows, or events located in the Borough, and signs erected in conjunction with a political election, subject to the following requirements:

(A) No such sign shall exceed twenty-five (25) square feet in area.

(B) Signs shall be removed within one (1) week after the date of the exhibit, show, event, or election.

(C) No permit shall be issued for the erection of such signs until a deposit shall be made with the Zoning Officer in accordance with a fee schedule adopted by Council to guarantee removal within the time prescribed. Failure to remove such signs within the time prescribed shall result in forfeiture of the deposit.

(D) No such sign shall be posted earlier than three (3) weeks before the occurrence of the event to which it relates, with the exception of political signs, which shall be posted not earlier than one (1) month prior to an election.

(2) Signs necessary for the direction, regulation, and control of traffic, street name signs, legal notices, warning at railroad crossings, and other official signs which are similarly authorized or erected by a duly constituted governmental body.

§ 21-1615 Signs Permitted in Commercial Districts.

No sign shall be permitted in commercial districts except as follows:

(a) On-premises Signs.

(1) All signs permitted in § 21-1614 according to the standards prescribed therein except as otherwise provided in this section.

(2) No sign except such directional devices as may be required by the Federal Aviation Administration shall be placed, inscribed, or supported upon the roof or upon any structure which extends above the roof or parapet of any building, except as allowed herein.

(3) Parallel and projecting signs, *provided*:

(A) Signs attached to a main wall of a principal building shall not project more than eighteen (18) inches therefrom and no portion shall be less than ten (10) feet above the basic grade and no more than thirty-five (35) feet above the basic grade. If not projecting more than three (3) inches from a wall of a building, the sign may be placed lower than the ten (10) foot height limit.

(B) The total area of all signs shall not exceed twenty-five percent (25%) of the area of the building face (including window and door area and cornices) to which they are attached. In no case, however, shall the total area of all signs exceed seventy-five (75) square feet.

(C) Permanent window signs shall be considered parallel signs and included in this computation, but shall nevertheless not exceed forty percent (40%) of the total window area on each street.

(D) In the case of a group of stores, offices, or other business uses on a lot held in single and separate ownership, the provisions of this section relating to the total area of signs permitted on a premise shall apply with respect to each building, separate store, or similar use.

(b) Freestanding Signs.

(1) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection (b), only one (1) freestanding sign shall be permitted on a lot for each street which abuts the lot. The sign permitted for a given street shall be located in the yard which abuts that street and be directed towards persons using that street.

(2) No portion of any such sign shall be more than thirty-five (35) feet above the ground.

(3) The area of any face of a freestanding sign, except such signs as described below, shall not exceed one (1) square foot for each two (2) feet of lineal lot frontage or seventy-five (75) square feet, whichever is smaller.

(4) No sign shall be located beyond the rear wall of the main building when the rear property line upon which it is situated abuts a residential district, except signs that convey information such as parking, entrances, and traffic flow directions. The area on one (1) side of any such sign shall not exceed eight (8) square feet.

(5) In the case of a group of business uses held in single and separate ownership, a single freestanding sign, including individual signs identifying different establishments, may be erected on a common backing, *provided* that the total area of one (1) side of the sign does not exceed seventy-five (75) square feet and that any individual sign does not exceed four (4) square feet. The structural backing for all such signs shall be uniform, and no sign may extend, in any direction, beyond the outside edge of the backing. No portion of any such backing shall be more than thirty-five (35) feet above the ground, nor be placed or extend within any existing or future road right-of-way.

(6) In addition to the signs described above, signs that convey information such as parking, entrances, and traffic flow directions shall be permitted if approved by Council as a conditional use.

§ 21-1616 Signs Permitted in Light Industrial–Office Research Districts.

No sign shall be permitted in a light industrial-office research district except as follows:

- (a) All signs permitted in § 21-1615.