

Queen Annes County, MD  
Thursday, October 6, 2016

## Chapter 18:1. Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

### Part 4. Site Development Standards

#### Article XII. Signs

#### § 18:1-78. Purpose of sign standards.

- A. Purpose. The purposes of the *sign* regulations under this article are to:
- (1) Protect the public health, safety, and welfare by minimizing traffic hazards created by signage that may onerously distract a driver's attention from the *road*;
  - (2) Encourage the effective *use* of *signs* as a means of communication in the *County*;
  - (3) Maintain and enhance the aesthetic environment and the *County's* ability to attract and retain sources of economic development and growth;
  - (4) Protect the rural appearance of the *County* in areas where rural character predominates;
  - (5) Conserve the scenic beauty of the *County*;
  - (6) Improve traffic and pedestrian safety;
  - (7) Minimize the possible adverse effects of *signs* on nearby public and private property; and
  - (8) Enable the fair and consistent enforcement of these *sign* regulations.
- B. Intent. The *sign* regulations under this article are not intended to regulate or infringe upon any type of free speech and shall be applied to all advertising displays regardless of the content of the *sign* message.

## § 18:1-79. Measurement of sign area.

- A. In general. *Sign* area shall be measured in the following manner.
- B. *Freestanding, projecting, and marquee signs.*
  - (1) In the case of a *freestanding, projecting, or marquee sign*, *sign* area consists of the entire surface area of the *sign* on which copy could be placed.
  - (2) The supporting *structure* or bracing of a *sign* shall not be counted as part of the *sign's* area.
  - (3) If a *sign* has two display faces back-to-back that are no more than two feet apart, the area of only one face shall be considered as the *sign* face area.
  - (4) If a *sign* has more than one display face, all areas that can be viewed simultaneously shall be considered the *sign* face area.
- C. Other *signs*; border. In the case of a *sign*, other than a *freestanding, projecting, or marquee sign*, whose message is fabricated together with the background that borders or frames that message, *sign* face area shall be the total area of the entire background.
- D. Other *signs*; no border. In the case of a *sign*, other than a *freestanding, projecting, or marquee sign*, whose message is applied to a background which provides no border or frame, *sign* face area shall be the area of the smallest polygon that can encompass all words, letters, figures, emblems, and other elements of the *sign* message.

## § 18:1-80. Sign lighting.

- A. In general.
  - (1) Subject to Subsection **B** of this section, *signs* may be illuminated by any of the following techniques.
  - (2) In the AG, CS, E, SE, SR, UR, and NC Districts, *signs* for nonresidential uses may only be illuminated by illuminated letter lighting or a shielded spotlight.
- B. General illumination. With general illumination, the *sign* itself neither is lighted internally nor has an external source of light specifically directed at it. Rather, the *sign* depends on the general illumination of the area (e.g., *parking* lot, traffic, or pedestrian areas) for its illumination.
- C.

Internally illuminated *sign*. With an internally illuminated *sign*, the *sign* is made of translucent material with internal lights.

- D. Internally illuminated letter *sign*. With an internally illuminated letter *sign*, the *sign* is made of metal, wood, or other material that is not translucent, and the message is made of a translucent material that is lighted from within the *sign*. *Signs* that consist of or contain tubes that:
- (1) Are filled with neon or some other gas that glows when an electric current passes through it; and
  - (2) Are intended to form or constitute all or part of the message of the *sign*, rather than merely providing illumination to other parts of the *sign*, shall be considered internally illuminated letter *signs*.
- E. Backlight illumination. With backlight illumination, the *sign* message is opaque and is raised beyond the *sign's* background, and the diffused-lighting sources illuminate the background.
- F. Shielded spotlight illumination. With shielded spotlight illumination, the *sign* is lighted by spotlights specifically directed at the *sign* and fully shielded so that the source is not visible from streets or adjoining property.

## § 18:1-81. Permits; alterations; moving signs; location; performance standards.

- A. *Sign* permit needed; exceptions.
- (1) Except as provided in Subsection **A(2)** of this section, a *person* may not erect, alter, or relocate any *sign* without first obtaining a *sign* permit as provided in Part 7 of this Chapter **18:1**.
  - (2) Allowed *signs* without a permit. The following *signs* are allowed, subject to the restrictions under this subsection, without a *sign* permit.
    - (a) *Signs* not exceeding four square feet in area that are customarily associated with a *residential use* and that are not of a commercial nature, such as:
      - [1] *Signs* giving property identification names or numbers or the names of occupants;
      - [2] *Signs* on mailboxes or newspaper tubes; and
      - [3] *Signs* posted on private property relating to *parking* or warning the public against trespassing, hunting, danger from animals, etc.

- (b) *Signs* erected by or on behalf of or pursuant to the authorization of a governmental body, including legal notices, identification and informational *signs*, and traffic, directional, or regulatory *signs*.
- (c) Official *signs* of a noncommercial nature erected by *public utilities*.
- (d) National, state, local, and nonprofit or service organization flags when not displayed in connection with a commercial promotion or as an advertising device.
- (e) Internal decorative or architectural features of *buildings* or works of art, as long as such features or works do not contain letters, logos, trademarks, or moving parts.
- (f) *Signs* directing and guiding traffic on private property that do not exceed four square feet and that do not bear advertising matter.
- (g) *Church* bulletin boards, *church* identification *signs*, and *church* directional *signs* as long as such *signs*:
  - [1] Do not exceed one per *abutting* street;
  - [2] Do not exceed 16 square feet in area; and
  - [3] Are not internally illuminated.
- (h) *Signs* painted on or otherwise permanently attached to currently licensed motor vehicles that are not primarily used as *signs*.
- (i) One *sign* identifying a *home occupation* permitted in accordance with the provisions of § 18:1-56 of this Chapter **18**.  
[Amended 4-24-2007 by Ord. No. 06-21]
- (j) One property security system identification *sign*, provided that the *sign* does not exceed one square foot in area.
- (k) Crop identification *signs*, provided each *sign* does not exceed 32 square feet in area and is not illuminated.
- (l) Political *signs*.
  - [1] Political *signs* advertising political parties or candidates for election.
  - [2] A political *sign* may not:
    - [a] Exceed 32 square feet in area; or
    - [b] Be erected more than 70 days prior to the election to which it pertains.

- [3] Unsuccessful candidates in a primary election must remove their political *signs* within 30 days after the primary election.
  - [4] All political *signs* must be removed within 30 days after a general election.
  - [5] The erector of a political *sign* or an authorized agent of the political party or candidate shall be required to obtain a temporary sign permit from the Zoning Office.
- (m) A real estate *sign*, provided that the *sign*:
- [1] Is located on the property advertised;
  - [2] Is not directly illuminated;
  - [3] Is removed within seven days after a deed has been recorded for the sale or a lease is signed for the lease or rental of the property; and
  - [4] Does not exceed:
    - [a] For residential districts, six square feet or six feet in height; or
    - [b] For commercial or office districts, 32 square feet or 10 feet in height.
- (n) *Signs* advertising permitted temporary produce sales, provided that the *signs* are in conformance with § 18:1-53D(6) of this Chapter **18**:1.
- (o) Construction *signs*.
- [1] Construction *site* identification *signs*, which may:
    - [a] Identify the project, the owner or *developer*, architect, engineer, contractor and subcontractors, and funding sources; and
    - [b] Contain related information, including sale and leasing information.
  - [2] Not more than one construction *sign* may be erected per *site*.
  - [3] A construction *sign* may not exceed 32 square feet in area or 10 feet in height.
  - [4] A construction *sign*:
    - [a] May not be erected prior to issuance of a building permit; and
    - [b] Shall be removed within 10 days after issuance of a final occupancy permit.

- [5] For single-family residential projects, one *sign*, not to exceed 10 square feet or six feet in height, may be allowed.
- (p) Displays, including lighting, erected in connection with the observance of *County*, state, or federally recognized holidays, provided that such display is removed within 10 days following the holiday.
  - (q) *Signs* attached to the interior of a *building* window or glass door.
- (3) *Sign* alterations. The repainting, changing of parts, and preventative maintenance of *signs* are not deemed alterations requiring a sign permit.
- (4) Moving *signs* generally prohibited. Except for time and/or temperature *signs*, and other permitted *electronic signs*, no flashing, fluttering, undulating, swinging, rotating, or otherwise moving *signs*, pennants, or other decorations are permitted.
- (5) Obstructing traffic prohibited. A *sign* may not obstruct a clear view of traffic along any street right-of-way, entrance, or exit. *Signs* located at the intersection of public *roads* shall be subject to the requirements of Chapter **23** of this Code.
- (6) *Sign* location. Except for *signs* of a duly constituted governing body, a *sign*, including a traffic *sign* or similar regulatory notice, may not project or be located within road right-of-way lines.
- (7) Height and clearance.
- (a) The height of a *freestanding sign* may be measured from the grade of an adjoining *road*, provided that the *road* is within 50 feet of the location of the proposed *sign*. If there is no *road* located within 50 feet, or if the natural grade of the *sign site* is higher than the grade of the adjoining *road*, the height of a *freestanding sign* shall be measured from the existing natural grade of the ground below the proposed *sign*.
  - (b) The clearance of a *projecting sign* shall be measured from the base of the *sign* face to the ground below finished grade. Clearance of a *projecting sign* shall be at a minimum of seven feet above finished grade.
- (8) *Wall signs*. A *wall sign* may not extend beyond the *facade* edge of a *building*. *Wall signs* may not extend beyond the edge of any wall to which they are mounted, nor may they project more than 18 inches from the wall surface. A *sign* attached to the roof is considered a *wall sign* and may not extend beyond the edge of a roofline or higher than the roofline.

(9) In *buffer yard*. A sign may not be located within a required *buffer yard* unless the *buffer yard* is adjacent to a public road or right-of-way.

(10) Sign performance standards for permanent *freestanding, wall, and projecting signs*.  
[Amended 9-7-2004 by Ord. No. 04-26]

(a) The number of *freestanding signs* allowed is as follows.

[1] In the UC, TC, SC, SI, SIBE, LIHS, VC, GVC, SHVC, GNC, and GGMC Districts, a *nonresidential development site* (single- or multiple-use site) is allowed one *freestanding sign* or, if the site has more than 500 feet of road frontage on a single road or has frontage on two or more adjoining roads, two *freestanding signs*. If a site has adjoining frontage on multiple roads, only one *freestanding sign* is allowed on each frontage unless that frontage exceeds 500 feet. In no case shall a *development site* have more than two *freestanding signs* with a total combined *freestanding sign* surface area exceeding that which is allowed under this Chapter 18:1.  
[Amended 1-24-2012 by Ord. No. 11-17]

[2] In the AG, CS, E, SE, SR, UR, and NC Districts, a legally permitted *nonresidential development site* (single- or multiple-use site) is allowed one *freestanding sign*.

(b) The *freestanding sign* surface area is as follows.

[1] In the UC, TC, SC, SI, SIBE, LIHS, VC, GVC, SHVC, GNC, and GGMC Districts, the total maximum *freestanding sign* surface area for a *nonresidential development site* (single- or multiple-use site) shall be determined in accordance with the following table.  
[Amended 1-24-2012 by Ord. No. 11-17]

<i>Development Site</i>	<b>M a x i m u m Freestanding Sign Surface Area (square feet)</b>
0 - 24,999 square feet gfa or 0 - 299 feet linear road frontage	150
25,000 - 49,999 square feet gfa or 300 - 499 feet linear road frontage	200
50,000 square feet gfa or 500 or more feet linear road frontage	250
NOTES:	

**M a x i m u m  
Freestanding Sign  
Surface Area  
(square feet)**

**Development Site**  
gfa = gross floor area

[2] In the AG, CS, E, SE, SR, UR, and NC Districts, a legally permitted *nonresidential development site* (single-or multiple-use site) is allowed a maximum of 35 square feet of total *freestanding sign* surface area.

(c) *Freestanding sign* height, setback, and base restrictions are as follows.

[1] In the UC, TC, SC, SI, SIBE, LIHS, VC, GVC, SHVC, GNC, and GGMC Districts, the maximum height of a *freestanding sign* shall be determined in accordance with the following table.  
[Amended 1-24-2012 by Ord. No. 11-17]

<b>Distance of Sign to Nearest Property Line (foot setback)</b>	<b>Maximum Height (feet)</b>
At property line to 24	20
25 to 49	25
50 or larger	30

[2] In the AG, CS, E, SE, SR, and NC Districts, the maximum height of a *freestanding sign* is 10 feet.

[3] No portion of a *freestanding sign* may extend beyond a property line of the *development site* onto another property or public right-of-way.

[4] All *freestanding signs* shall have an architectural base or a landscaped area consisting of low shrubs, ornamental grasses, or similar vegetation at the base of the *sign* that is at least as long as the *sign* face area and a minimum of four feet in width. A *freestanding sign* support may not consist of bare poles or posts entering the ground.

(d) *Wall or projecting sign* surface area restrictions are as follows.

[1] A *nonresidential development* (single- or multiple-use site) is allowed a maximum *wall or projecting sign* surface area per use. The maximum total area can be used solely for *wall signs*, solely for *projecting signs*, or for a combination of *wall and projecting signs*.

[2] In the case of a *nonresidential development site* with multiple uses on a parcel of record, *wall or*

*projecting sign* permits may be issued in the name of the parcel owner or the owner's agent rather than in the name of individual businesses requesting a particular *sign*. The property owner or agent may proportionately allocate total *wall or projecting sign* area among various uses or tenants. The *County* is not responsible for enforcing any provisions of an owner's allocation formula, lease arrangements, or other private contractual restrictions.

- [3] In the UC, TC, SC, SI, SIBE, LIHS, VC, GVC, SHVC, GNC, and GGMC Districts, total maximum *wall or projecting sign* surface area per nonresidential use shall be determined in accordance with the following table.

[Amended 1-24-2012 by Ord. No. 11-17]

<b>Gross Floor Area of Individual Uses (square feet)</b>	<b>Maximum Wall or Projecting Sign Surface Area (square feet)</b>
0 - 24,999	60
25,000 - 49,999	80
50,000 or larger	100

- [4] In cases where a *property owner* or agent has devised and submitted an allocation formula for a multiple-use *development site*, *wall or projecting sign* area for a specific *use* may exceed that allowed in the above table, provided that the overall total *wall or projecting sign* surface area for the entire multiple-use *development* is not exceeded.

- (e) In the AG, CS, E, SE, SR, UR, and NC Districts, a legally permitted *nonresidential development site* is allowed 20 square feet of *wall or projecting sign* area per *use*.
  - (f) As long as total *wall or projecting sign* surface area is not exceeded, there is no limit on the total number of *wall or projecting signs*.
  - (g) A *property owner* may increase total *wall or projecting sign* surface area by transferring up to 25% of the *development site's* total *freestanding sign* surface area to wall signage if a reduced size *freestanding sign* is used. If no *freestanding sign* is used, a *property owner* may transfer up to 50% of the *development site's* total *freestanding sign* surface area to wall signage.
- (11) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, a nonresidential *use* in the UC, SC, SI, LIHS, or VC District that adjoins a navigable waterway is allowed the following

signage in addition to what is otherwise allowed under this Chapter 18:1.

- (a) One *freestanding sign* oriented toward the waterway, not exceeding 10 feet in height and 32 square feet in surface area, is allowed.
  - (b) One *wall sign* on the *building facade* facing the waterway, not exceeding 60 square feet in area, is allowed.
- (12) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, all permitted and conditional, *commercial, and institutional uses* in the CS District that are located on property within 1,000 feet of an *arterial road* are allowed one *freestanding sign* with a total *sign* area not exceeding 150 square feet and not exceeding 20 feet in height.
- (13) *Electronic signs*, including light-emitting diode ("LED") signs, are permitted as *freestanding signs* subject to the following limitations:
- (a) No *electronic sign* shall exceed 60 square feet of the maximum *freestanding sign* surface area otherwise permitted pursuant to § 18:1-81A(10)(b)[1] above; and
  - (b) Surface area copy may not change more frequently than one time per day.
  - (c) *Electronic signs* shall have no revolving, flashing, moving, scrolling, rotating or similar intermittent lights or features that simulate movement.
  - (d) An *electronic sign* may not be animated, play video or audio messages or blink in any manner.
  - (e) An *electronic sign* shall consist only of alphabetic or numeric characters on a plain background and may not include graphic, pictorial, or photographic images.
  - (f) *Electronic signs* shall not exceed a maximum illumination of 7,500 nits during daylight hours and a maximum illumination of 750 nits for the time period between sunset and sunrise as measured from the *sign's* face at maximum brightness. The applicant shall provide written certification from the *sign* manufacturer that the light intensity has been preset not to exceed the levels specified above, and the intensity level is protected from end-user manipulation by password protected software or other appropriate methods.

## § 18:1-82. Detailed sign regulations by sign type.

- A. Development identification *signs*.
- (1) On-premises development identification *signs* are permitted, provided that a *sign*:
    - (a) Only provides the name of the *subdivision, planned residential development, or planned industrial/business park, or institutional, recreational, and public uses*;
    - (b) Does not exceed 32 square feet in surface area;
    - (c) Does not exceed six feet in height; and
    - (d) Is freestanding.
  - (2) Lighting of a development identification *sign* may be by internal lighting, backlighting, general illumination lighting, or by shielded spotlights.
  - (3) A development identification *sign* for a rental or lease *development* may contain the name and telephone number of the leasing agent, together with such wording as "Rental Information," "Leasing," or other related wording, provided this information is limited to less than eight square feet or 1/4 of the total *sign* area, whichever is less.
  - (4) Not more than two on-premises development identification *signs* are permitted per *development access road*.
- B. *Marquee signs*. Theaters, museums, and auditoriums are permitted one *marquee sign*, provided that:
- (1) The *sign* is not larger than the greater of:
    - (a) Fifteen percent of the area of the *facade* on which it is located; or
    - (b) Two hundred fifty square feet in area; and
  - (2) No other *wall or projecting signs* are permitted.
- C. Directional information on certain on-premises *freestanding signs*. Notwithstanding the provisions of § 18:1-81A(10) of this Chapter **18:1**, any on-premises *freestanding sign* in the UC, SC, SI, LIHS, VC, and GGMC Districts that is oriented towards a controlled access highway may incorporate a ten-square-foot increase in *sign* area, provided that a minimum of 10 square feet is used for highway exit information.  
[Amended 1-24-2012 by Ord. No. 11-17]
- D. Off-site *directional signs*.

- (1) Except as provided under Subsection **D(4)** of this section, a permanent off-site *directional sign* stating the name of a business or business area is allowed in all districts in accordance with this subsection.
- (2) The business or business area *sign* shall be located on a local or *collector street* and shall be at least 1,000 feet of *road* distance from a major highway or arterial roadway.
- (3) An off-site *directional sign* may only be used for:
  - (a) Any other *use* determined by the *Planning Commission* to be tourism related.
  - (b) *Bed-and-breakfasts*;
  - (c) *Campgrounds*;
  - (d) Clubs, lodges, and fraternal and service organizations;
  - (e) Community business areas;
  - (f) *Conference centers*;
  - (g) *Country store*;
  - (h) Cultural, historical, or environmental education *sites*;
  - (i) Golf courses;
  - (j) *Hotels, motels, and country inns*;
  - (k) *Marinas*;
  - (l) Pick-your-own-produce stands;
  - (m) Plant *nurseries*;
  - (n) Produce stands;
  - (o) *Restaurants*;
  - (p) *Shooting clubs*; and
  - (q) *Waterfront event sites*.
- (4) Off-site *directional signs* may not be used for *home occupations*.
- (5) Off-site *directional signs* shall only be located in public *road* rights-of-way. The location of the *sign* is to be determined, as applicable, by:
  - (a) The County Department of Public Works; or
  - (b) The State Highway Administration.
- (6) Each *sign* shall be constructed in accordance with standards adopted by the County Department of Public Works.

- (7) Not more than four *signs* may be supported by a single *structure*.
  - (8) Not more than one *sign* for a single business or business area is allowed in one direction at any intersection on any major highway or arterial roadway.
  - (9) Not more than two *structures* that support the *signs* are allowed in any one direction at an intersection located on a major or arterial roadway.
  - (10) The *Planning Commission* may allow additional *signs* in excess of the number allowed under this subsection at not more than two intersections of *collector* or *local roads* leading to a business or business area.
  - (11) An off-site *directional sign* may not be illuminated by an external source of light specifically directed at it.
  - (12) Approval shall be obtained from the Department of Planning and Zoning authorizing the installation of a *sign*. Application for approval shall be made to the *Department* and shall include:
    - (a) The location of the business or business area;
    - (b) The intersections requested for the location of the *sign*; and
    - (c) The name of the business or business area that will appear on the *sign*.
  - (13) There is a fee of \$150 for each *sign*. All fees for the installation and maintenance of the *sign* are to be paid when required.
  - (14) The *person* requesting approval of an off-site *directional sign* shall provide a *sign* that conforms to the standards adopted by the County Department of Public Works.
  - (15) The Department of Public Works is responsible for the installation of each *sign*.
  - (16) A *sign* may be replaced by:
    - (a) Paying an installation fee of \$25 to the *County*; and
    - (b) Providing the Department of Public Works with a new *sign* that conforms to the Department's standards.
- E. Public/quasi-public *directional signs*.
- (1) Off-premises *directional signs* are permitted so as to give sufficient notice of the location of governmental facilities, hospitals, colleges, schools, unincorporated communities, or general commercial areas, provided that a *sign* may not exceed eight square feet in area.

- (2) On-premises *directional signs* shall be permitted for the purpose of directing on-site circulation and identifying *parking* and loading areas, provided that a *sign* may not exceed:
  - (a) Four square feet in area; and
  - (b) Five feet in height.

F. Banners.

- (1) Banners are allowed as a *temporary sign* in the UC, SC, SI, LIHS, VC, and GGMC Districts, subject to the conditions under this subsection.  
[Amended 1-24-2012 by Ord. No. 11-17]
- (2) A temporary sign permit is required.
- (3) A permit for a banner is valid for 15 days.
- (4) A maximum of six banner permits are allowed per *use* per year.
- (5) A banner may not exceed 60 square feet of *sign* area.
- (6) A banner must be securely fastened to a solid wall of a permanent on-site *structure* and may not be supported by freestanding poles or deck railings, hung on the side of a vehicle, or be located on any roof.
- (7) A banner may be used only to advertise activities conducted on the property on which the banner is located or to present public service information.

G. Special event activities.

- (1) On-premise *signs* and banners for a special event, such as a grand opening, fair, carnival, circus, festival, or other similar event, are allowed, subject to the conditions under this subsection.
- (2) A *sign* or banner may not be erected earlier than four weeks before the event and shall be removed not later than one week after the event. There may not be more than two *signs* or banners per event.
- (3) A *sign* or banner may not exceed 32 square feet in *sign* area.
- (4) Banners used as special event *signs* may be supported by freestanding poles.
- (5) Periodic sales events and promotional marketing for an existing business do not constitute special events for purposes of this subsection.

H. *Off-premises signs*. *Off-premises signs* (including billboards) are prohibited except as specifically allowed under this Chapter 18:1.