

Section 10.24. **Signs.**

Subd. 1. **Purpose and Findings.** The purpose and findings of the sign ordinance is as follows:

A. **Purpose:** The sign ordinance is intended to establish a Comprehensive and balanced system of sign control that accommodates the need for a well-maintained, safe, and attractive community, and the need for effective communications including business identification. It is the intent of this section, to promote the health, safety, general welfare, aesthetics, and image of the community by regulating signs that are intended to communicate to the public, and to use signs which meet the City's goals by authorizing:

- 1) permanent signs that establish a high standard of aesthetics;
- 2) signs that are compatible with their surroundings;
- 3) signs that are designed, constructed, installed and maintained in a manner that does not adversely impact public safety or unduly distract motorists;
- 4) signs that are large enough to convey the intended message and to help citizens find their way to intended destinations;
- 5) signs that are proportioned to the scale of, and are architecturally compatible with, principal structures;
- 6) permanent signs which give preference to the on-premise owner or occupant; and
- 7) temporary signs and advertising displays which provide an opportunity for grand openings and special events while restricting signs that create continuous visual clutter and hazards at public right-of-way intersections.

B. **Findings:** The City of Alexandria finds it is necessary for the promotion and preservation of the public health, safety, welfare and aesthetics of the community that the construction, location, size and maintenance of signs be controlled. Further, the City finds:

- 1) permanent and temporary signs have a direct impact on and relationship to the image of the community;
- 2) the manner of installation, location and maintenance of signs affects the public health, safety, welfare and aesthetics of the community;
- 3) an opportunity for viable identification of community businesses and institutions must be established;
- 4) the safety of motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and other users of public streets and property are affected by the number, size, location and appearance of signs that unduly divert the attention of drivers;
- 5) installation of signs suspended from, projecting over, or placed on the tops of buildings, walks or other structures may constitute a hazard during periods of high winds and an obstacle to effective fire-fighting and other emergency service;
- 6) uncontrolled and unlimited signs adversely impact the image and aesthetic attractiveness of the community and thereby undermine economic value and growth;
- 7) uncontrolled and unlimited signs, particularly temporary signs which are commonly located within or adjacent to public right-of-way or are located at driveway/street intersections, result in roadside clutter and obstruction of views of oncoming traffic. This creates a hazard to drivers and pedestrians and also adversely impacts a logical flow of information;
- 8) commercial speech signs are generally incompatible with residential uses and should be strictly limited in residential zoning districts; and
- 9) the right to express noncommercial opinions in any zoning district must be protected, subject to reasonable restrictions on size, height, location and number.

Subd 2. **Application of Regulations and Substitution Clause.** This section shall apply to the location, erection, and maintenance of signs in all zoning districts within the City of Alexandria, Minnesota. The owner of any sign which is otherwise allowed by this Section of City Code may substitute non-commercial copy or message in lieu of any other commercial or non-commercial sign copy or message without any additional approval or permitting subject to the operational standards set forth herein. The purpose of this provision is to prevent any inadvertent favoring of commercial speech or message over non-commercial speech or message. This provision prevails over any more specific provision to the contrary.

Subd 3. **Severability.** If any section, subsection, subdivision, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Section is for any reason held to be invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of the Section. The City Council hereby declares that it would have adopted any section, subsection, subdivision, sentence, or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, subdivisions, sentences, clauses, or phrases be declared invalid

Subd. 4. **Definitions.**

1. **Abandoned Sign.** Any sign and/or its supporting sign structure which remains without a message or whose display surface remains blank for a period of one (1) year or more, or any sign which pertains to a time, event or purpose which no longer applies, shall be deemed to have been abandoned. Permanent signs applicable to a business temporarily suspended because of a change in ownership or management of such business shall not be deemed abandoned unless the property remains vacant for a period of one (1) year or more. Any sign remaining after demolition of a principal structure shall be deemed to be abandoned. Signs that are present because of being legally established nonconforming signs or signs that have required a conditional use permit or variance shall also be subject to the definition of abandoned sign.

2. **Alteration.** Refers to any major alteration to a sign but shall not include routine maintenance, painting or change of copy of an existing sign.

3. **Area Identification Sign.** A freestanding sign which identifies a residential subdivision, a multiple

residential complex, a shopping center, and industrial area, an office complex, or any combination.

4. Awning. A shelter projecting from and supported by the exterior wall of a building constructed of non-rigid material on a supporting framework.

5. Awning Sign. A building sign or graphic printed on or in some fashion attached directly to the awning material.

6. Balloon Sign. A temporary sign consisting of a bag made of lightweight material supported by helium, hot or pressurized air which is greater than twenty-four (24) inches in diameter. A simple helium balloon is not considered a balloon sign.

7. Banners. A sign advertising products or services being offered to the public or directing one's attention to goods and services composed of lightweight material either enclosed or not enclosed in a rigid frame and mounted to be moved by atmospheric conditions.

8. Building Facade. That portion of any exterior elevation of a building extending from grade to top of the roof including parapet wall eaves and the entire width of the building elevation.

9. Building Sign. Any sign attached or supported by any structure used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or occupancy.

10. Building Silhouette. The sum in square feet of the area of the horizontal projections of a building excluding buttresses, chimneys, cornices, eaves, open pergolas, patios, steps, unenclosed and unroofed terraces, unenclosed private balconies not used for access, and minor ornamental features projecting from the walls of a building which are not directly supported by the ground.

11. Business Frontage. The property line at the front of a building in which the business is located or the location of the main public entrance of said building.

12. Canopy Sign. Any message or identification which is affixed to a projection or extension of a building of structure, erected in such manner as to provide a shelter

or cover over the approach of any entrance of the store, building, place of assembly.

13. Changeable Copy. Display of text information in which each alphanumeric character, graphic or symbol is defined by objects, not consisting of an illumination device and may be changed or re-arranged manually or mechanically with characters, letters, or illustrations that can be changed or rearranged without the altering the face or the surface of the sign.

14. Changeable Copy, Electronic. A sign or portion thereof that displays electronic, non-pictorial, text information in which each alphanumeric character, graphic, or symbol is defined by a small number of matrix elements using different combinations of light emitting diodes (LED's), fiber optics, light bulbs or other illumination devices within the display area. Electronic changeable copy signs include computer programmable, microprocessor controlled electronic displays. Electronic changeable copy signs do not include official or time and temperature signs. Electronic changeable copy signs include projected images or messages with these characteristics onto building or other objects. Electronic changeable copy signs are considered to be dynamic signs.

15. City property. Means real property over which the City (1) holds an interest, including, without limitation, fee title ownership, easement, leasehold, and public street right-of-way; and (2) has the present right of possession and control.

Source: Ord. 770-2<sup>nd</sup> Series  
Effective Date: 08/14/17

16. Commercial Speech. Speech advertising a business, profession, commodity, service, or entertainment.

17. Community Promotion Sign. A sign which solicits support for a civic event, community use or public use. Such signs may include, but shall not be limited to, seasonal holidays, community programs and activities or location of places or events of community or tourist interest.

18. Directional Signs. Signs which provide direction or instruction, and are located entirely on the property to which they pertain.

19. Dynamic Display. Any characteristics of a sign that appear to have movement or that appear to change, caused by any method other than physically removing and replacing the sign or its components, whether the apparent movement or change is in the display, the sign structure itself, or any other component of the sign. This includes a display that incorporates a technology or method allowing the sign face to change the image without having to physically or mechanically replace the sign face or its components. This also includes any rotating, revolving, moving, flashing, blinking, or animated display and any display that incorporates rotating panels, LED lights manipulated through digital input, "digital ink" or any other method or technology that allows the sign face to present a series of images or displays.

20. Electronic Graphic Display Sign. A sign or portion thereof that displays electronic, static images, static graphics, or static pictures, with or without text information, defined by a small number of matrix elements using different combinations of light emitting diodes (LED's), fiber optics, light bulbs or other illumination devices within the display area where the message change sequence is accomplished immediately or by means of fade, re-pixelization or dissolve modes. Electronic graphic display signs include computer programmable, microprocessor controlled electronic displays. Electronic graphic display signs include projected images or messages with these characteristics onto building or other objects. Electronic graphic display signs are considered to be dynamic signs.

21. Establishment. Any of the following definitions should apply: 1) a distinct business entity situated in a single building, 2) a distinct business entity located in a structure attached to other similar structures by common wall and ceiling or floors, or attached by means of an enclosed arcade, 3) a distinct business entity contained within a single structure and not separated by walls or other physical barriers, but made distinct due to its existence as a single leased space and operation

by separate entrepreneurs or by its singularity of purpose.

22. Flashing Sign. A directly or indirectly illuminated sign or portion thereof that exhibits changing light or color effect by any means, so as to provide intermittent illumination that changes light intensity in sudden transitory bursts and creates the illusion of intermittent flashing light by streaming, graphic bursts showing movement, or any mode of lighting which resembles zooming, twinkling, or sparkling with an interval between flashes of less than eight seconds. Flashing signs are considered to be dynamic signs.

23. Free-standing Sign. Any stationary or portable, self-supported sign not affixed to any other structure. A sign supported by one or more columns, uprights, or braces in or upon the ground, not attached to or forming part of a building.

24. Governmental Sign. A sign that is erected by a governmental unit for the purpose of identification in directing or guiding traffic.

25. Grade. Grade shall be construed to be the final ground elevation after construction. Earth mounding criteria for landscaping and screening is not part of the final grade for sign height computation.

26. Hand-held sign. Means a sign displaying a noncommercial message that is held by a natural person, not including insignia on apparel or aspects of personal appearance.

Source: Ord. 770-2<sup>nd</sup> Series  
Effective Date: 08/14/17

27. Illuminated Sign. Any sign that is lighted by an artificial light source either directed upon it or illuminated from an interior source.

28. Information Sign. Any sign giving information to employees, visitors or delivery vehicles but not containing any advertising or identification.

29. Institutional Sign. A sign or bulletin board which identifies the name or other characteristics of a public

or private institution on a site where the sign is located.

30. Interior Sign. A sign which is located within the interior of any building, or within an enclosed lobby or court of any building, and a sign for and located within the inner or outer body, court or entrance of any theater.

31. Marquee. Any permanent roof-like structure projecting beyond a theater building or extending along and projecting beyond the wall of that building, generally designed and constructed to provide protection from the weather.

32. Marquee Sign. Any building sign painted, mounted, constructed, or attached in any manner, on a marquee.

33. Monument Sign. Any freestanding sign with its sign face mounted on the ground or mounted on a base at least as wide as the sign and which has a height exceeding eight (8) feet.

34. Motion Sign. Any sign that revolves, rotates, has any moving parts or gives illusion of motion.

35. Multiple Tenant Site. Any site that has more than one (1) tenant, and each tenant has a separate ground level exterior public entrance.

36. Non-Commercial Speech. Dissemination of messages not classified as Commercial Speech which include, but are not limited to, messages concerning political, religious, social, ideological, public service and informational topics.

37. Nonconforming Signs. Any advertising structure or sign which was lawfully erected and maintained and which fails to conform to all the applicable regulations and restrictions of this ordinance.

38. On-Premise Message. A message which identifies or advertises an establishment, person, activity, goods, products or services located on the premises where the sign is installed.



39. Off-Premise Sign. A commercial speech sign which directs the attention of the public to a business, activity conducted, or product sold or offered at a location not on the same premises where such business is located.

40. Parapet. A low wall which is located on a roof of a building will be known as a parapet for the purpose of this section.

41. Portable Signs. Any sign which is clearly designed to be transported, including by trailer or on its own wheels, even though the wheels of such sign may be removed and the remaining chassis or support is converted to another sign or attached temporarily or permanently to the ground since this characteristic is based on the design of the sign. Portable signs are considered a type of temporary sign.

42. Projecting Signs. A sign other than a wall sign which is affixed to the building and which extends perpendicularly from the building wall.

43. Public events banner. Means a sign made of material similar to heavy canvas or reinforced plastic and used in connection with a community event, parade, protest, march or demonstration.

Source: Ord. 770-2<sup>nd</sup> Series  
Effective Date: 08/14/17

44. Pylon Sign. Any freestanding sign which has its supportive structure(s) anchored in the ground and which has a sign face elevated above ground level by pole(s) or beam(s) and with the area below the sign face open.

45. Roof Line. The uppermost line of a roof of a building or in the case of extended facade, the uppermost height of said facade.

46. Roof Sign. Any sign which is erected, constructed, or attached wholly or in part upon or over the roof of a building.

47. Rotating Sign. A sign which revolves or rotates on its axis by mechanical means.

48. Sandwich Board Sign. A portable sign that is so designed to be self-supporting by design. Often times this sign is of the folding type and when collapsed is flat in nature, therefore "sandwiches" together.

49. Sign. Any structure, device, advertising, advertising device, or visual representation intended to advertise, identify, or communicate information to attract attention of the public for any purpose including but not limited to symbols, letters, figures, illustrations, or forms painted or otherwise affixed to a building or structure, any beacon or search light intended to attract the attention of the public, and any structure or device designed to border, illuminate, animate, or project a visual representation, provided however, that this definition shall not be held to include official notices issued by any court or public office or officer in the performance of a public duty, and traffic control signs as defined in the Motor Vehicle Act.

50. Sign Calculation. The surface area of a sign shall be calculated by enclosing the extreme limits of all framing, emblem, logo, representation, writing, or other display within a single continuous perimeter composed of squares or rectangles with no more than eight perimeter lines. Standard formulas for common geometric shapes shall be used for computing sign area(s). Where a sign consists of one or more three-dimensional objects (i.e., balls, cubes, clusters of objects, sculpture or statue-like trademarks), the sign area shall be measured as their maximum projection upon a vertical plane.

51. Sign Height. The vertical distance measured from the grade to the top of a sign.

52. Sign Structure. The supports, uprights, bracing and framework for a sign including the sign area.

53. Snipe sign. Means a temporary sign displaying a commercial message, placed on City property or the public right-of-way in violation of this chapter or other applicable law.

54. Street banner. Means a sign made of material similar to heavy canvas or reinforced plastic, attached

to poles or buildings, and suspended over a City street from time to time.

Source: Ord. 770-2<sup>nd</sup> Series  
Effective Date: 08/14/17

55. Street Frontage. The proximity of a parcel of and to one or more streets. An interior lot has one (1) street frontage and a corner lot has two (2) frontages.

56. Temporary Sign. Any sign or sign structure which is not permanently affixed or installed, and is intended to be displayed for a limited period only to promote a specific event of activity or is a pedestrian-oriented sign displayed during business hours.

57. Traditional public forum. Means the surfaces of City-owned streets (not including a median or roundabout area), City-owned parks (not including athletic fields or community centers) during the hours that they are normally open to the public, City-owned parking lots, and public sidewalks that are connected to the City's pedestrian circulation system. In consultation with the City Attorney, the Zoning Administrator shall interpret this phrase for compliance with court decisions, as may occur from time to time.

Source: Ord. 770-2<sup>nd</sup> Series  
Effective Date: 08/14/17

58. Vehicle Sign. A permanent or temporary sign affixed, painted on, or placed in or upon any parked vehicle, parked trailer, or other parked device capable of being towed, which is displayed in public view such that the primary purpose of said display is to attract the attention of the public, rather than to serve the business of the owner thereof in the manner which is customary for said vehicle.

59. Video Display Sign. A sign that changes its message or background in a manner or method of display characterized by motion or pictorial imagery, which may or may not include text and depicts action or a special effect to imitate movement, the presentation of pictorials or graphics displayed in a progression of frames which give the illusion of motion, including but not limited to the illusion of moving objects, moving

patterns or bands of light, or expanding or contracting shapes, not including electronic changeable copy signs. Video display signs include projected images or messages with these characteristics onto building or other objects. Video display signs are considered to be dynamic signs.

60. Wall Sign. A sign which is affixed to the exterior wall of a building and which is parallel to the building wall. A wall sign does not project more than twelve (12) inches from the surface to which it is attached nor does it extend beyond the top of the parapet wall.

61. Window Sign. Any building sign, pictures, symbol, or combination thereof, designed to communicate information about an activity, business, commodity, event, sale, or service, that is placed inside a window or upon the window panes or glass and is visible from the exterior of the window.

Subd. 5. **Exemptions.** The following signs are allowed without a permit, but shall comply with all other applicable provisions of this subdivision. These exemptions, however, shall not be construed as relieving the owner of the sign from the responsibility of its erection and maintenance, and its compliance with the provisions of this ordinance or any other law or ordinance regulating the same.

- A. Copy/Face Change. The changing of copy on an existing non-dynamic sign does not require a permit for the changing of the face or display surface on a painted or printed sign that does not involve any other structural alterations provided it meets all area requirements of this Ordinance.
- B. Directional Signs. On premises directional signs not exceeding six (6) square feet in area or three (3) feet in height, if freestanding, displayed strictly for the direction, safety, or convenience of the public, including signs which identify restrooms, parking area entrances or exits, freight entrances, addresses, or similar information. A sign may contain an on-premise logo without text provided that the logo may not comprise more than 15% of the total sign area.
- C. Informational Signs. Not to exceed two (2) square feet in area displayed strictly for the convenience of the

public and which set forth no advertising, including signs which identify rest rooms, waste receptacles, addresses, doorbells, public interest signs or signs indicating the private nature of a road, driveway or premises, signs prohibiting or otherwise controlling hunting or fishing upon particular premises, and signs indicating ownership of a property mailboxes or building entrances. The City shall determine that the proposed location, sign material, manner of affixing or anchoring, size, and any illumination are safe and proper

- D. Permanent Window Signs. Except in residential zones, for each ground floor occupancy of a building not more than 25% of the window surface may have signage painted on or otherwise displayed from the inside surface of any window, showcase or other similar facility. Said signs shall be in addition to those signs permitted under the other provisions of this Code.
- E. Real Estate Signs. Temporary on site and off site real estate signs pertaining to the sale or rental of real property, provided these signs shall be limited to one (1) sign per property totaling no more than six (6) square feet in sign face area. These signs shall be removed within seven (7) calendar days from the time of the sale, lease or rent.
- F. Community promotion signs.
- G. Banners. Temporary banners may be used without a permit for grand openings and special events limited to once a year not to exceed ten (10) calendar days. Permanent banners are allowed as wall signs in accordance with the sign area requirements of Subdivision 13.
- H. Campaign Signs. Political campaign signs are permitted on private property in any zoning district subject to the express consent of the owner or occupant of such property and in accordance Minnesota Statute 211B.045 provided that:
  - a. No such sign is located within a hundred (100) feet of any polling site;
  - b. No such sign is placed within the public right-of-way;
  - c. No such sign is posted earlier than 46 days before

- d. the primary in a State General Election year; and
- d. The political campaign sign is removed within ten (10) days following the state general election.

I. Traditional public forum areas.

- 1) Applicability. This section applies only in traditional public forum areas as defined herein.
- 2) Display Right. In an area qualifying as a traditional public forum, private persons may display signs expressing noncommercial messages that are within the protection of the First Amendment, without a permit, but subject to:
  - a. The signs must be personally held by a person, or personally attended by one or more persons;
  - b. Inanimate signs which are left unattended may not be displayed under this section, regardless of the type of message they may display;
  - c. The signs may be displayed only during the time period of sunrise to thirty minutes after sunset, except on occasions when the City Council, Planning Commission, or other reviewing authority of the City is holding a public hearing or meeting; on such occasions, the display period is extended to thirty minutes after such meeting is officially adjourned;
  - d. The maximum aggregate area of all signs held by a single person is eight square feet, measured one side only. For purposes of this rule, apparel and other aspects of personal appearance do not count towards the maximum aggregate sign area;
  - e. The maximum area of any one sign that is personally held or attended by two or more persons is thirty-two square feet, measured one side only;
  - f. The sign must have no more than two display faces and may not be inflatable or air-activated;
  - g. In order to serve the City's interests in traffic flow and safety, persons displaying signs pursuant to this section may not stand in any vehicular traffic lane when a roadway is open for use by vehicles, and persons

displaying signs on public sidewalks must give at least five feet width clearance for pedestrians or other traffic to pass by. Signs and persons holding signs may not block the free and clear vision of drivers, bicyclists and/or pedestrians;

- h. So long as the foregoing rules are followed, no permit is required for display of signs authorized by this section.

Source: Ord. 770-2<sup>nd</sup> Series  
Effective Date: 08/14/17

**Subd. 6. Prohibited Signs.** This section specifically prohibits the following signs:

- A. Which purports to be or resembles an official traffic control device, sign, signal, railroad sign or signal; or which hides from view or interferes in any material degree with the effectiveness of any traffic control device, sign, signal, railroad sign or signal, or the sign area of which obstructs or interferes with the driver's view of approaching, merging, or intersecting traffic for a distance not to exceed 500 feet.
- B. Which prominently displays the word "stop" or "danger."
- C. Which contains statements, words, or pictures of an obscene, indecent, or immoral character, or such as would offend public morals or decency.
- D. On any right-of-way of the interstate system of highways, except as otherwise provided by law.
- E. On private land without the consent of the owner thereof.
- F. On trees, shrubs, fences, or on public utility poles including Snipe Signs.
- G. Vehicle Signs.
- H. Off-premise signs in or within 500 feet of a national, state, or local parks, historical sites, and public picnic or rest areas or within 100 feet of a church or school.
- I. Flashing lights not falling under the definition of video display sign.

- J. Off-premise advertising signs; including billboards.
- K. Signs with dynamic displays except those allowed under Subdivision 16. All displays shall be shielded to prevent any light to be directed at oncoming traffic in such brilliance as to impair the vision of any driver. No device shall be illuminated in such a manner as to interfere with or obscure any official traffic signs or signal. This section, however, does not include time, temperature or other similar informational signs.
- L. Which are structurally unsafe, in disrepair or are abandoned.
- M. Any sign which contains or consists of pennants, ribbons, streamers, string of lights, spinners, or similar devices.
- N. Signs within the public right of ways or easements, excepting the following:
  - i. As erected by an official unit of government or public utilities for the direction of traffic or necessary public information.
  - ii. Community promotion signs as authorized by the City. To ensure that the safety of the public is not compromised, the size, location and method or installation of such signs shall be subject to the approval by the City pursuant to good engineering and traffic safety practices.
  - iii. Projecting signs may extend at least seven (7) feet above the sidewalk and three (3) feet away from the curb line.
- O. Sidewalk decals.
- P. Balloon signs greater than 24" in diameter.
- Q. Rotating signs (excluding Barber Pole signs).
- R. Search Lights.
- S. Roof signs unless placed on parapet or incorporated into building to provide overall finished appearance.
- T. Signs not listed as permitted are prohibited.



U. Signs displaying either commercial or non-commercial messages and located or displayed in locations defined as the traditional public forum, which are not in compliance with Section 10.24, Subd. 5.

Source: Ord. 770-2<sup>nd</sup> Series  
Effective Date: 08/14/17

Subd. 7. **Traffic Hazards.** No sign permitted by this section shall, by reason of its location, color or intensity, create a hazard to the safe, efficient movement of vehicular or pedestrian traffic. No private sign shall contain words which might be construed as traffic controls, such as "stop", "caution", "warning", etc. unless such sign is intended to direct traffic on the premise.

Subd. 8. **Sign Maintenance.** All signs and sign structures shall be properly maintained and shall be kept in a safe orderly condition. In addition, all parts and supports shall be properly painted. Any sign or sign structure which is rotted or unsafe, deteriorated, defaced or otherwise altered, shall be repainted, or repaired or replaced by the licensee, owner or agent of the owner of the property from which the sign stands.

Subd. 9. **Sign Location.** No sign other than public or governmental sign shall be erected or temporarily placed within any street right-of-ways. No sign or sign structure shall be erected or maintained so as to prevent fire ingress or egress from any door, window, or fire escape. No sign or sign structure shall be attached to a standpipe, streetlight or fire escape. No sign shall obstruct traffic flow or sight views nor constitute a traffic hazard.

Subd. 10. **Area Identification Signs.** A permanent subdivision or development sign, not located within the public right-of-way, not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in size each, inclusive of any logo, shall be allowed for any planned development, subdivision, multiple family or condominium development with ten (10) or more units, or for any commercial and/or industrial subdivision, or commercial/industrial planned development with five (5) or more lots. Where the subdivision or development has access on two (2) or more streets, or has more than one (1) entrance on one (1) street, identification signs shall be allowed at each entrance.

Subd. 11. **Temporary Signs.**

A. Portable or temporary changeable copy signs over twelve (12) square feet but not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in area are allowed provided:

1. A sign permit is issued for the sign.
2. The sign is not located in the public right-of-way.
3. The sign does not obstruct sight views or constitute a traffic hazard.
4. The sign may be illuminated but shall not contain any flashing, blinking, moving, rotating or exterior lights.
5. Only one temporary portable changeable copy sign shall be allowed per lot of record or business.
6. No more than four (4) permits per lot of record or business in any twelve-month period.
7. Each permit shall be valid for no more than ten (10) calendar days.
8. Permits shall be issued only for temporary non-commercial speech signs.

B. **Sandwich Board Signs** A pedestrian-oriented portable sign located in business or industrial zoned districts which do not exceed twelve (12) square feet in area are allowed without a permit provided that said signs are limited to two (2) signs per business frontage, are not located in the public right-of-way, are within 15 feet of the principal structure(s), are not dynamic signs, and in the opinion of the Zoning Administrator do not constitute a traffic hazard. Such signs must be separated by not less than fifty (50) feet and must be setback from adjoining property lines by not less than ten (10 ) feet.

Subd. 12. **Off-Premise Signs.** The construction of an off-premise sign shall comply with the following requirements:

- A. All off-premise signs may be erected or maintained only in the I-1 "Light Industrial" or I-2 "Heavy Industrial" zoning districts. Any off-premise sign in existence in any other zoning district as of the effective date of this ordinance may be allowed to continue as an existing, non-conforming use and thus may not be enlarged, improved or relocated on the same site.
- B. Off-premise signs must be landscaped around the base of the signs;
- C. Off-premise shall not be erected or maintained in such a manner or place as to obscure or otherwise physically interfere with a governmental sign or a railroad safety device or sign, or to obstruct or physically interfere with the driver's view of approaching, merging, or intersecting traffic for a distance of five hundred (500) feet;
- D. Off-premise signs shall be located so as not to obstruct any existing business or sign;
- E. No off-premise sign shall be erected closer to any other legally conforming business sign, whether detached or attached, on the same or separate property, than fifty (50) feet.
- F. No person shall construct, erect, convert to dynamic signage, use or permit the use of an off-premise sign unless and until a sign permit is first secured from the City and, if required, Minnesota Department of Transportation;
- G. All other standards including setbacks that are applicable to other signs and structures shall apply to off-premise signs. There shall be a maximum setback of 350 feet from the centerline of the right-of-way of an adjacent Federal Aid Interstate Highway;
- H. No off-premise sign shall be erected closer to any other such off-premise sign than one thousand (1000) feet, provided that the provision shall not prevent the erection of a single-faced, back-to-back or V-type

advertising device and further providing that such spacing requirement shall not apply as between any off-premise advertising device permitted under the provisions of Laws 1971, Chapter 883. No off-premise sign shall be erected less than one thousand (1000) feet from the surface of the Central Lakes Trail.

- I. No off-premise sign shall be erected within three hundred (300) feet of any property located in a residential zoning district.
- J. No off-premise sign shall exceed four hundred (400) square feet in area and no portion of a billboard sign shall extend beyond the regular face of the sign framework.
- K. No off-premise shall exceed 36 feet in maximum height or the sign height maximum described in Section 10.24.
- L. No off-premise sign structure may contain more than one sign per facing;
- M. No off-premise sign may be erected on or above the roof of any building.
- N. No off-premise sign or portion thereof may turn on an axis, rotate, revolve or otherwise physically move;
- O. Light projecting onto the off-premise sign face from an external source must be hooded and directed away from any adjacent public roadway;

Subd. 13. **Sign Standard by Zoning District.** Dimensional standards not provided elsewhere in this Section are as follows:

District	Maximum Sign Area Single Sign	Maximum Total Area for All Signs	Freestanding Signs	Notes

A-O, R-1, R-2	8 sq.ft.	16 sq. ft.		Awnings and Canopies Prohibited																				
R-3, R-4 Res. PUD	12 sq. ft.	24 sq. ft.		Awnings and Canopies Prohibited																				
R-B, B-1, B-2 I-1, I-2, I-B, PUD		20% Visible Gross Building Silhouette visible from public streets up to 300 sq. ft.  (If for future on- premise - 64 sq. ft.)	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gross Floor Area (Sq. Ft.)</th> <th>Max Area (Sq. Ft.)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt;2200</td> <td>90</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2201-4400</td> <td>150</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4401-7500</td> <td>170</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7501-9200</td> <td>175</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9201-17,600</td> <td>195</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17,601-19,800</td> <td>205</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19,801-22,000</td> <td>220</td> </tr> <tr> <td>22,001-24,000</td> <td>240</td> </tr> <tr> <td>&gt;24,000</td> <td>250</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Additional signs allowed if 50' from adjoining lines &amp; 155' apart.</p>	Gross Floor Area (Sq. Ft.)	Max Area (Sq. Ft.)	<2200	90	2201-4400	150	4401-7500	170	7501-9200	175	9201-17,600	195	17,601-19,800	205	19,801-22,000	220	22,001-24,000	240	>24,000	250	
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		Where the Gross Floor Area exceeds 24,000 sq. ft. or the building has a sign area exceeding 300 sq. ft. total signage up to 10% exposed and visible gross bldg silhouette.																						

A. **Findings.** Studies show that there is a correlation between dynamic displays on signs and the distraction of highway drivers. Distraction can lead to traffic accidents. Drivers can be distracted not only by a changing message, but also by knowing that the sign has a changing message. Drivers may watch a sign waiting for the next change to occur. Drivers are also distracted by messages that do not tell the full story in one look. People have a natural desire to see the end of the story and will continue to look at the sign in order to wait for the end. Additionally, drivers are more distracted by special effects used to change the message, such as fade-ins and fade-outs. Finally, drivers are generally more distracted by messages that are too small to be clearly seen or that contain more than a simple message. Time and temperature signs appear to be an exception to these concerns because the messages are short, easily absorbed, and become inaccurate without frequent changes.

Despite these public safety concerns, there is merit to allowing new technologies to easily update messages. Except as prohibited by state or federal law, sign owners should have the opportunity to use these technologies with certain restrictions. The restrictions are intended to minimize potential driver distraction and to minimize proliferation in residential districts where signs can adversely impact residential character.

Local spacing requirements could interfere with the equal opportunity to use such technologies and are not included. Without those requirements, however, there is the potential for numerous dynamic displays to exist along any roadway. If more than one dynamic display can be seen from a given location on a road, the minimum display time becomes critical. If the display time is too short, a driver could be subjected to a view that appears to have constant movement. This impact would obviously be compounded in a corridor with multiple signs. If dynamic displays become pervasive and there are no meaningful limitations on each sign's ability to change frequently, drivers may be subjected to an unsafe degree of distraction and sensory overload. Therefore, a longer display time is appropriate.

A constant message is typically needed on a sign so that the public can use it to identify and find an intended

destination. Changing messages detract from this way-finding purpose and could adversely affect driving conduct through last-second lane changes, stops, or turns, which could result in traffic accidents. Accordingly, dynamic displays generally should not be allowed to occupy the entire copy and graphic area of a sign.

In conclusion, the city finds that dynamic displays should be allowed on signs but with significant controls to minimize their proliferation and their potential threats to public safety.

**B. Regulations.** Dynamic displays on signs are allowed subject to the following conditions:

1. Dynamic displays are allowed only on freestanding signs for conditionally permitted uses in residential districts. They are allowed on wall signs and freestanding signs in all other zoning districts.
2. Signs less than 200 square feet: Dynamic displays may occupy no more than 40% of the sign area, up to a maximum of 40 square feet. The remainder of the sign must not have the capability for dynamic displays. Only one, contiguous dynamic display area is allowed on a sign face.
3. Signs greater than 200 square feet: Dynamic display may occupy up to 100% of the sign area and may change messages no more frequently than once every 20 minutes. Changes between messages must be achieved by instantaneous re-pixelization.
4. Flashing dynamic displays are prohibited.
5. Dynamic displays must be designed and equipped to freeze the device in one position if a malfunction occurs. The displays must also be equipped with a means to immediately discontinue the display if it malfunctions, and the sign owner must immediately stop the dynamic display when notified by the city that it is not complying with the standards of this ordinance;
6. Dynamic displays must comply with the brightness standards contained in subdivision 15;

7. Dynamic displays existing on the effective date of this ordinance must comply with the operational standards listed above. An existing dynamic display that does not meet the structural requirements 2 and 3 above may continue as a non-conforming use;
8. Audio speakers or any form of pyrotechnics are prohibited in association with the dynamic display;
9. Video display signs must be wall signs and may be a maximum of eight square feet.
10. One dynamic display sign is allowed per parcel.
11. Unless permitted as an off-premise sign no dynamic sign will display messages or images of off-premise advertising.
12. The images and messages displayed must be complete in themselves, without continuation in content to the next image or message or to any other sign. Signs existing on the effective date of this ordinance that utilize this technique may continue as a non-conforming use until the sign is replaced or, if feasible, be reprogrammed to conform to this section.

C. **Incentives.** Off-premise signs do not need to serve the same way-finding function as do on-premise signs. Further, new off-premise signs are strictly limited in the city, and there is no potential that they will proliferate. Finally, off-premise signs are in themselves distracting and their removal serves public safety. The city is extremely limited in its ability to cause the removal of those signs. This section is intended to provide incentives for the voluntary and uncompensated removal of off-premise signs in certain settings. This removal results in an overall advancement of one or more of the goals set forth in this section that should more than offset any additional burden caused by the incentives. These provisions are also based on the recognition that the incentives create an opportunity to consolidate off-premise signs that would otherwise remain distributed throughout the community. Spacing requirements are included in this section to prevent drivers from viewing multiple enhanced off-premise dynamic displays at one time.

1. A person may obtain a permit for an enhanced



dynamic display on one face of an off-premise sign if the following requirements are met:

- a. The applicant agrees in writing to permanently remove, within 45 days after issuance of the permit, at least two other faces of an outdoor advertising sign in the city that are owned or leased by the applicant, each of which must satisfy the criteria of parts (b) through (d) of this subsection. This removal must include the complete removal of the structure supporting each sign face. The applicant must agree that the city may remove the sign if the applicant does not timely do so, and the application must be accompanied by a cash deposit or letter of credit acceptable to the city attorney sufficient to pay the city's costs for that removal. The applicant must also agree that it is removing the sign voluntarily and that it has no right to compensation for the removed sign under any law.
- b. The city has not previously issued an enhanced dynamic display permit based on the removal of the particular faces relied upon in this permit application.
- c. Each removed sign has a copy and graphic area of at least 200 square feet
- d. If the removed sign face is one for which a state permit is required by state law, the applicant must surrendered its permit to the state upon removal of the sign. The sign that is the subject of the enhanced dynamic display permit cannot begin to operate until proof is provided to the city that the state permit has been surrendered.

- e. The applicant must agree in writing that no dynamic displays will ever be used on one additional off-premise sign that has a copy and graphic area of at least 200 square feet in size. This agreement will be binding on the applicant and all future owners of the sign. If the sign is subsequently removed or destroyed and not replaced, the holder of the enhanced dynamic display permit is not required to substitute a different sign for the one that no longer exists.
  - f. No enhanced dynamic off-premise sign shall be erected closer to any other such off-premise sign than 2,640 feet.
  - g. Two or more enhanced dynamic off-premise signs may not be used to present a sequential message.
  - h. If one sign face on a double-faced off-premise sign is approved for dynamic signage, the remaining of the two faces must be one of the two faces designated for removal.
  - i. One of the two faces designated for removal must be within 1,000 feet of a road designated as an Interstate or State Highway.
2. If the applicant complies with the permit requirements noted above, the city will issue an enhanced dynamic display permit for the designated off-premise sign. This permit will allow a dynamic display to occupy 100 percent of the potential copy and graphic area and to change no more frequently than once every eight seconds. The designated sign must meet all other requirements of this ordinance.

Subd. 15. **Brightness.**

- A. All signs must meet the following brightness standards:

1) No sign may be brighter than is necessary for clear and adequate visibility.

2) No sign may be of such intensity or brilliance as to impair the vision of a motor vehicle driver with average eyesight or to otherwise interfere with the driver's operation of a motor vehicle.

3) No sign may be of such intensity or brilliance that it interferes with the effectiveness of an official traffic sign, device or signal.

Subd. 16. **Height.** The following maximum sign heights shall apply:

A. Individual signs in residential areas (except area identification signs) -4 feet.

B. Freestanding signs north of 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue -18 feet

C. Freestanding signs between 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue and T.H. 27/34<sup>th</sup> Avenue -24 feet

D. Signs south of T.H. 27/34<sup>th</sup> Avenue -36 feet

E. Signs within 100 feet of the Interstate 94 right-of-way; signs within 100 feet of the Interstate 94/T.H. 27 and Interstate 94/T.H. 29 interchange right-of-way -45 feet

Subd. 17. **Master Signage Plan.** A master signage plan shall be provided for any non-residential development plan, site plan/building permit review, exterior remodel, non-residential planned development district, exterior remodel or other official plan for developments with more than one individual business or tenant. No permit shall be issued for an individual sign requiring a permit in a development where more than one business or industry will be located until a master signage plan has been approved by the City. The master signage plan is intended to control total sign area and sign placement so as to help eliminate inconsistencies as tenant/occupants change.

A. The owner/agent shall submit a master signage plan containing the following information in addition to

that required under Subdivision 8 of this Ordinance:

1. A scaled site plan showing location of buildings, parking lots, driveways and landscaped areas and an accurate indication on the site plan of the proposed location of present and future signs of any type, whether requiring a permit or not.
  2. Scaled color drawings clearly showing the location of signage on building **elevation**.
  3. Computation of the maximum total sign area permitted under this Ordinance, the maximum area for individual signs and the height of signs.
  4. Specifications for color scheme, lettering or graphic style, lighting, location of each sign on the building, materials and sign proportions.
- B. The maximum number of signs affixed to a building by each business within the building shall be controlled by the master signage plan.
- C. Other provisions of the plan may contain such other restrictions as the owner of the development or building may reasonably determine.
- D. The plan shall be signed by all owners or their authorized agents on such form as required by the City.
- E. A master signage plan may be amended by filing a new master signage plan that conforms with all requirements of this Ordinance.
- F. After approval of a master signage plan, no sign shall be erected, placed, painted or maintained, except in conformance with approved master signage plan and such plan may be enforced in the same way as provisions of this Ordinance. In case of any conflict between the provisions of such a plan and this Ordinance, the Ordinance shall govern.

Subd. 18. **Non-Conforming Signs.** It is recognized that signs exist which were lawful before this Sign Ordinance was enacted, but will be prohibited under the terms of this Ordinance. It is the intent of this Sign Ordinance that nonconforming signs shall not be enlarged upon or expanded, nor be used as grounds for adding other signs or uses prohibited elsewhere in the same district. It is further the intent of this Sign Ordinance to permit legal nonconforming signs to continue as legal nonconforming signs provided such signs are safe, are

maintained so as not to be unsightly, and have not been abandoned or removed subject to the following provisions:

- A. No sign shall be enlarged or altered in a way which increases its nonconformity.
- B. If the use of the nonconforming sign or sign structure is discontinued for a period of one year, the sign or sign structure shall not be reconstructed or used except in conformity with the provisions of this Ordinance.
- C. Should such nonconforming sign or sign structure be damaged or structure be destroyed by any means to an extent greater than fifty (50) percent of its market value and all required permits for its reconstruction have not been applied for within 180 days of when the sign or sign structure was damaged, it shall not be reconstructed or used except in conformity with the provisions of this Ordinance.
- D. Should such sign or sign structure be moved for any reason for any distance whatsoever, it shall thereafter conform to the regulations for the zoning district in which it is located after it is moved.
- E. No existing sign devoted to a use not permitted by the zoning code in the zoning district in which it is located shall be enlarged, expanded or moved except in changing the sign to a sign permitted in the zoning district in which is it located.
- F. When a building loses its nonconforming status all signs devoted to the structure shall be removed and all signs painted directly on the structure shall be repainted or recovered in a neutral color or a color or material which will harmonize with the structure.

Subd. 19. **Administration.**

- A. **Permits.** No sign shall be erected, altered, reconstructed, or moved in the City without first securing a permit from the City, unless specifically waived within this Section or elsewhere in the Ordinance. The content of the sign shall not be reviewed or considered in determining whether to approve or deny a sign permit. Application for the permit shall be in writing addressed to the issuing authority and

shall contain the following information:

1. names and addresses of the owners of the display structure and property;
  2. the address at which any signs are to be erected;
  3. the names of the licensed sign hanger erected the sign, if applicable;
  4. the lot, block and addition at which the signs are to be erected and the street on which they are to front
  5. a complete set of plans showing the necessary elevations, distances, size and details to fully and clearly represent the construction and place of the signs;
  6. type of sign (i.e. wall sign, pylon sign, etc.)
  7. if the proposed sign is along a state trunk highway or interstate highway, the application shall be accompanied by proof that the applicant has obtained a permit from the state for the sign.
- B. **Sign Hangers License.** All sign hangers engaged in the business of erecting, constructing, enlarging, alteration, repair, moving, removing, demolition, or equipping a sign shall be required to be licensed annually. Fees for the sign hanger license shall be established by the Alexandria City Council.
- C. **Fees.** The fee for an application to the Planning Commission and all sign permits shall be established by the Alexandria City Council.
- D. **Enforcement.** The Zoning Administrator is empowered to enforce the provisions of this Ordinance as necessary to carry out the purpose of this Ordinance. The Administrator shall cause the removal of any sign that endangers the public safety such as an abandoned, dangerous, or

electrically or structurally defective sign or a sign for which no permit has been issued or a sign which obstructs or interferes with the public right-of-way. A notice of violation shall be mailed to the sign holder citing the violation. If the violation is not corrected within ten (10) days, the City shall have the authority to remove the sign. No notice is required to be provided to the holder of a temporary sign not meeting the requirements of Subdivision 10 of this Section, and the Public Works Coordinator, Chief of Police or Zoning Administrator are hereby expressly authorized to immediately remove and impound such a temporary sign, the costs of which removal and impoundment shall be charged against the owner of the site on which the sign was displayed.

Source: Ord. 639-2<sup>nd</sup> Series  
Effective Date: 6/22/09