

Best Practices Used in Allegheny County:

This proposal is not meant to be comprehensive; rather, it describes the parameters that local officials, citizens, and businesspersons should consider in developing guidelines, regulations, and zoning ordinances. The suggested regulations have been compiled from zoning ordinances currently in use in Allegheny County jurisdictions.

We recommend zoning policy on size, place, and illumination focused on three discriminating factors:

- Aesthetics – The courts have upheld a community’s right to set aesthetic standards.
- Public Safety – The determination that signage could threaten public safety
- Use – How a sign is used

It is our recommendation that deference to the first amendment to the constitution protecting free speech that signs not be regulated based on content.

Special attention should be given to the number measurements contained here and the magnitude, quantity, or size should be adjusted to suit the municipality. Currently ___(Municipality)___ zoning ordinance has a sign size restriction of 40 square feet. This value is continued in the proposed legislation.

Ordinances should be specially tailored to the needs of the community and municipal leaders should consult with their solicitor to validate the lawfulness of any proposed legislation.

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Signs Allowed: The following signs that are permitted in the Borough of ___(Municipality)__. No permit is required:

↵ **Barber Poles**

↵ **Customary holiday decorations.** Temporary displays or signs in the nature of decorations, clearly incidental and commonly associated with any national, local or religious holiday, permitted in any district provided they shall not be displayed for a period of more than ninety (90) consecutive days nor more than ninety (90) days in any one (1) year.

↵ **Directional, Informational, and Parking Signs.** No more than two (2) directional and parking Signs not exceeding two (2) square feet per business and no taller than three (3) feet high.

↵ **Convenience Signs** identifying location of rest rooms, freight entrances and transit service not exceeding two (2) square feet per business and no taller than three (3) feet high.

↵ **Flags** in any district provided that they do not exceed fifteen (15) square feet in area (this size limitation shall not apply to a Flag of the United States of America), and governmental, religious, charitable, or fraternal organization flags displayed in a respectful manner and in accordance with established or recognized rules, standards, and criteria. Any such flag shall

be hung in a safe manner with adequate support based on its size, weight, and exposure to wind in order to avoid hazard to persons and property.

☞ **Pennants or Insignia** of any religious, charitable or fraternal organization.

☞ **Governmental Signs or Emblems.** Official signs erected and maintained by a governmental body, or under direction of such body, bearing no commercial advertisement, such as traffic signs, street name signs, railroad crossing signs, safety signs, official signs identifying public buildings of the Borough, signs identifying public schools and playgrounds, zoning requests, hospital emergency signs, etc.

☞ **Historical Marker and Historical Site Signs, Memorial Plaques, Monuments or Tablets** not exceeding three square feet in size unless otherwise provided by state or federal law.

☞ **Home Occupation Signs**, provided there it not more than one such sign per residence; that each sign does not exceed two square feet in area; shall be non-illuminated; and may be attached to a wall of the building and shall not project more than twelve (12) inches therefrom or may be situated as a pole sign not extending more than ten (10) feet from the top of the sign to the grade beneath the sign and shall be setback at least five (5) feet from any lot line when such space is unoccupied by a building;

☞ **Family Name Signs or names on mailboxes** not to exceed two (2) square feet in area.

☞ **Name Plates** not exceeding two square feet in area, containing only the name of the occupant, the title of the person practicing a profession, the name of the building or property, the name of the agent and the hours and days of operation.

☞ **No Trespassing Signs** not to exceed two (2) square feet in area.

☞ **Political Signs.** Political signs must be removed within 14 days after the election.

☞ **Public Service, Public Notice, or Public Warning Signs** required by a valid applicable federal, state or local law, regulation or ordinance. Also danger signs, emergency signs, legal notices, railroad crossing signs, temporary signs, safety signs, and public utility information signs, traffic or other municipal signs, as may be approved.

☞ **Real Estate Sign**, of 6 square feet or less.

☞ **Sandwich Signs.** Sandwich Signs shall have a minimum of five (5) feet of unobstructed space between the sign and the curb to allow for unimpeded vehicular and pedestrian access. The maximum area of such signs shall be no more than six (6) square feet.

☞ **Emergency Signs** Any sign relating to an emergency during the existence of such emergency.

☞ **Clocks, Time and Temperature Signs**, provided that they are no larger than 10 square feet.

Prohibited Signs. The following signs are prohibited in the Borough of ____ (Municipality) ____:

☞ Abandoned signs. A Sign shall be deemed Abandoned if:

1. It does not display a well-maintained message for a consecutive 120-day period;
2. The Owner of the Sign cannot be located at the Owner's last known address, as reflected on the records of the Borough.
3. A structure designed to support a Sign no longer supports the Sign for a period of 120 consecutive days.

☞ Animated signs, rotating or otherwise moving sign or signs with moving parts.

☞ Any sign that emits noise or odor.

☞ Any sign that causes distraction, confusion, nuisance or hazard to traffic, aircraft, or other properties.

☞ Any roof sign or sign that extends above the roof line or parapet wall.

☞ Any sign exceeding a vertical measurement of twenty (20) feet.

☞ Any sign erected, painted or maintained upon fences, trees, bushes, rocks or similar natural feature.

☞ Any sign that is structurally unsafe or in disrepair.

- ↵ Any sign which obstructs free ingress or egress from a fire escape, door, window or other required exitway.
- ↵ No sign shall be attached to any utility pole, light standard, street tree or any other public facility located within the public right-of-way.
- ↵ Any sign that imitates or resembles any official traffic sign, signal or device; any sign erected or maintained in such a manner as to obscure or otherwise physically interfere with an official traffic sign, signal or device or to obstruct or physically interfere with the driver's view of approaching, merging or intersecting traffic. No sign shall be constructed, located or illuminated in any manner which causes undue glare, distraction, confusion, nuisance or hazard to traffic or which obstructs free and clear vision of traffic flow.
- ↵ Off-premises advertising signs. *(note - No further regulation of off-premise signs is required if _____(Municipality)_____ decides to prohibit these signs).*
- ↵ Portable Signs except as permitted as Temporary Signs.
- ↵ Signs on public property, public rights-of-way or utility poles that are not erected by a governmental body or utility company.
- ↵ Tri-face changeable signs or other electrically activated changeable signs.
- ↵ Signs in Rights-of-Way. No signs, except official traffic signs of the Borough, county or state, on streets within their respective jurisdiction, shall be erected within two feet of any street, or within any public right-of-way unless otherwise provided herein. All signs located on properties adjacent to public rights of way shall allow adequate clearance for motor vehicles and pedestrians.
- ↵ Vehicle Signs. Any sign attached to, or placed on, a vehicle or trailer parked on public or private property, except for signs meeting the following conditions:
 1. The primary purpose of such vehicle or trailer is not the display of signs.
 2. The signs are magnetic, decals, or painted upon an integral part of the vehicle or equipment as originally designed by the manufacturer, and do not break the silhouette of the vehicle.
 3. The vehicle or trailer is in operating condition, currently registered and licensed to operate on public streets and actively used or available for use in the daily function of the business to which such signs relate.

Business Identification Signs

- ↵ No business identification sign shall contain any information or advertising for any product not sold on the premises.
- ↵ No building wall shall be used for the display of advertising, unless the sign message pertains to a use carried on within such building.
- ↵ **Wall Signs.** Each business establishment shall be permitted to have Wall Signs which may be illuminated or non-illuminated.
 1. The aggregate area of all Wall Signs shall not exceed two (2) square feet for each lineal foot of width of the front wall of the building, or portion of the building, occupied by the business or a maximum of sixty (40) square feet for each business, whichever is less.
 2. The aggregate area of all Wall Signs shall apply to business identification signs, any Canopy Sign and any other legal sign affixed to the wall of the building. The number and location of Wall Signs shall be further subject to [other provisions in this Code].
 3. The Wall Sign shall not be located on the roof nor extend above the height of the building.

↪ **Projecting signs.**

Projecting sign means any business or identification sign which sole means of support is by attachment to a legal structure on a zoning lot and which projects more than twelve (12) inches into a public right-of-way.

1. A projecting sign shall contain no more than two (2) sign faces which include lettering, and these signs faces shall be back-to-back.
2. For each street-level business a maximum of one (1) projecting sign shall be permitted for each facade of a structure facing a street;
3. Projecting signs shall be a maximum of ten (10) square feet per side. The area of irregular or three-dimensional shapes shall be computed by multiplying the height and width at the widest points;
4. Projecting signs shall extend no more than four (4) feet from the front of a building or structure or two-thirds (2/3) of the width of the sidewalk beneath the sign where such sidewalk exists, whichever is less. The bottom most point of a projecting sign shall be no less than ten (10) feet above the grade beneath the sign; and
5. No projecting sign structure shall be placed onto or obscure or damage any significant architectural feature of a building.

↪ **Freestanding Signs. Ground Signs. Pole Signs** In addition to the Wall Signs, one (1) Freestanding Sign shall be permitted per lot, regardless of the number of businesses on the lot, provided that: Freestanding Signs shall conform with the following standards:

1. When a building is set back from its front lot line by a distance greater than ten (10) feet, one freestanding sign not exceeding forty (40) square feet, in area may be installed by such business a minimum of ten (10) feet behind the front lot line. All Freestanding Sign shall be located at least ten (10) feet from any property line, except where property abuts on a public right-of-way, the Freestanding Sign shall be set back at least ten (10) feet from the right-of-way or at least fifteen (15) feet from the edge of the cartway if the right-of-way is not contiguous with the front lot line.
2. The maximum surface area of the Freestanding Sign shall not exceed twenty-four (40) square feet.
3. The maximum height of the top of the Freestanding Sign shall be twenty (20) feet;
4. The minimum height of the bottom edge of the Freestanding Sign shall be eight (8) feet;
5. No portion of any Freestanding Sign shall project over any public right-of-way nor shall it be located within the Clear Sight Triangle of any street intersection as herein defined.
6. This section shall not be deemed to include Off-Premises Advertising Signs.

↪ **Awning and Canopy Signs.** Each business establishment shall be permitted to have one (1) Canopy Sign, provided that:

1. The maximum surface area of the Canopy Sign shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet.
2. If there are other Wall Signs on the building, the Canopy Sign shall be included in the aggregate area of all Wall Signs authorized by [other provisions in this Code].
3. Awning and Canopy Signs shall be permitted to project into a Right-of-Way, provided that such projection shall not exceed five (5) feet nor project closer than three (3) feet from the side of the curb line of the street.

Off-Premises Advertising Signs (Billboards and outdoor advertising signs)

↪ No billboard, freestanding or overhanging outdoor advertising shall be permitted in any zoning district of the Borough of ___(Municipality)___, except as provided for herein:

1. Billboards and/or outdoor advertising signs may be permitted as a conditional use when approved by Council, after submission and review by the Planning Commission, and provided that all requirements detailed are met.
2. Off-Premises Advertising Signs may be used only in the Industrial District.
3. Billboards are a conditional use, and must be the principal use to which the property is devoted and shall be situated so as to be entirely within the boundaries of the subject property. No more than one sign on any property at any one time. Minimum lot size 6,000 sq. ft.
4. The number of advertising sign structures shall be limited to one (1) structure per zoning lot which shall contain no more than two (2) separate sign faces.
5. Billboards shall not be erected within 500-2000 feet of the floodway of the Allegheny River or any bridge which crosses the Allegheny River.
6. Billboards shall not be erected within 500-2000 feet of the boundary line of any Residential District, or any school property, park, library, church or other place of worship, recreational facility including those in abutting municipalities.
7. No billboard/outdoor advertising sign shall be erected within 500-2000 feet of any other outdoor advertising sign.
8. The height of an advertising sign shall be measured from the ground elevation nearest to the sign to the highest elevation of the sign structure, the overall height of the sign shall not exceed a height of twenty (20) feet.
9. Advertising signs shall only be permitted on public transit shelters as follows:
Such signs shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet in display surface per sign;
There shall be a maximum of two (2) advertising signs or one (1) back-to-back advertising sign on each shelter or kiosk; Sign display areas must be integral to the design of the structure and may not extend more than five (5) inches from the face of the structure; and
No advertising display shall exceed the height of the public transit shelters.

Illumination

↪ Signs may be illuminated in the following ways, subject to and in compliance with other provisions of this Ordinance.

1. Signs may be non-illuminated, internally illuminated, or externally illuminated. During daylight hours between sunrise and sunset, luminance shall be no greater than two thousand five hundred (2,500) nits, and at all other times, luminance shall be no greater than two hundred fifty (250) nits.
2. Sign shall have no flashing, moving, rotating, scrolling, glittering, oscillating, animated, sequential, intermittent, blinking, dissolving, fading, or fluttering signs or displays.
3. Illumination which is not directed at any portion of the traveled rights of way but which is of such intensity or brilliance as to cause glare or to impair the vision of the driver of the vehicle, or which interferes with any driver's operation of a motor vehicle must be effectively shielded from any portion of the traveled rights of way.
4. Illumination shall be effectively located, screened, directed, and shielded so as to prevent beams or rays of light from being directed at any property zoned Residential or containing residences; in any case, the amount of illumination reaching any property zoned Residential from a Sign shall not exceed two-tenths of a footcandle (0.2 fc) at the property line, directly or indirectly.
5. Between 12:00 Midnight and 6:00 a.m., prevailing local time, no Sign shall be illuminated. Between closing time and opening time, when the business is not in operation, any sign on the premises shall not be illuminated. *[Note: Some municipalities mandate illumination off at 10:00 p.m. and not on until after 8:00 a.m.]*

Temporary Signs

↵ For the purposes of this Subsection, “Temporary” means no more than twenty (20) days in any calendar year.

1. Temporary signs for the same event shall not be approved, pursuant to this section, more than once per calendar year.
2. Temporary signs advertising auctions, garage, porch, or yard sales provided that they do not exceed five (5) square feet in area and are removed as soon as the event or activity has occurred, and provided that they shall not be permitted to be erected more than seven (7) days prior to the event and shall be permitted only at the site at which the event will take place, not more than twice per year at the same location.
3. Temporary signs no larger than five (5) square feet of sign area, advertising the sale of farm products produced on the premises, or advertising auctions or events of charitable, political or public service groups.
4. Temporary signs denoting the architect, engineer, or building contractors and artisans, or property maintenance company contracted to remodeling and property maintenance activities, when placed upon work under construction, and not exceeding 12 square feet in area. Such signs must be removed upon completion of work.
5. Balloons, streamers, banners, and pinwheels may be temporarily displayed as part of a Community Special Event or Private Special Event. Temporary banner signs shall not be larger than 40 square feet.

Additional Legislation

↵ **Maintenance and Inspection.** Any sign found to be in disrepair or in an unsafe condition upon inspection shall be declared to be a public nuisance and the Zoning Officer shall give notice as provided for herein to the owner in writing to repair or remove the sign within 10 days. Upon failure of the owner to comply, the Borough shall remove the sign at the owner’s expense.

↵ **Code Conformance.** All Signs shall conform to the latest edition of the applicable building and electrical codes.

↵ **Identification.** All Signs for which a permit is required shall identify the name and operating telephone number of the Person responsible for the Sign.

↵ **Proximity to Electrical Conductors.** Signs and all supporting structures shall be no closer to electrical utilities than is permitted by applicable codes. No Sign, including cables and supports, shall, in any event, be within six feet (6’) of any electrical conductor, electrical light pole, electric street lamp, traffic light, or other public utility pole.

↵ **Sanitation.** Property surrounding any Ground Sign shall be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. It shall be free from weeds, rubbish, and flammable material.

↵ **Landscaping requirements.** Landscaping shall be maintained by the sign owner in an attractive and healthy manner in accordance with accepted conservation practices and municipal ordinances.

1. In erecting any Sign, it shall be impermissible to clear-cut an area of mature growth, to cut down any tree exceeding one foot diameter, or to lay bare land on a hillside or slope or clear it in any way such that it may in the future contribute to creation of a runoff or slope failure.
2. All cuts or fills shall be permanently seeded or planted, and subsequently tended.

3. The area beneath and around any Sign shall be landscaped with native plants and material so as to complement the site and integrate the Sign with buildings, parking areas, and natural site features.
4. A hedge or other durable planting of at least two (2) feet in height measured from grade, shall extend the entire length and breadth of the required landscaped strip.
5. The rear side of a single-faced billboard sign shall be of one color and screened by existing or natural landscaping material or by an evergreens or flowering trees planting at least six (6) feet tall and extending the length of the billboard.

☞ **Responsibility for Compliance.** The Owner of the Parcel on which a Sign is placed and the Owner of the Sign are each fully responsible for the condition and the maintenance of the Sign and the area around the Sign.

☞ **Liability Insurance.** The applicant for a sign permit to erect a Sign shall provide a certificate of insurance for public liability and property damage which holds the Borough harmless. The amount of insurance to be maintained shall be determined and adjusted from time to time by resolution of the governing body of this Borough. The insurance certificate shall contain a clause stating that the insurance shall not be cancelled or reduced without first giving 10 days notice to the Borough.

☞ **Inspection.** Every year, the owner of the Off-Premises Advertising Sign shall have a structural inspection made of the Off-Premises Advertising Sign by a qualified Pennsylvania registered engineer and shall provide to the Borough a certificate from the engineer certifying that the billboard is structurally sound.

☞ **Nonconforming Signs - Intent.** This Ordinance is intended to encourage the eventual elimination of Signs which do not comply with the Ordinance. The elimination of non-conforming Signs is as much a subject of health, safety, and welfare as is the prohibition of new Signs in violation of this Ordinance. Therefore, this Ordinance attempts to realize the removal of non-conforming Signs and to avoid any unreasonable invasion of established property rights.

1. Any billboard that is damaged or destroyed by more than fifty-one percent (51%) of its replacement value at the time of damage or destruction shall be reconstructed only in compliance with all provisions of this section.
2. Amortization. A Sign not complying with this Ordinance, but in place on the effective date of this Ordinance, shall be removed, or brought into compliance with this Ordinance, within twelve (12) years after the Effective Date of this Ordinance.
3. Permit. Within ninety (90) days after the Effective Date of this Ordinance, the Person owning a Non-Conforming Sign shall apply for a Permit to the Zoning Office. The Zoning Office shall issue the Permit for not more than twelve (12) years.
4. Continuance. A non-conforming Sign may be continued during the Amortization period if it is maintained in good condition. It shall not, however, be replaced by another non-conforming Sign. It may not be structurally altered so as to prolong the life of the Sign.
5. Nuisance. An unsafe or Abandoned Sign is declared a public nuisance which shall be abated. From and after the passage of this chapter, it shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to erect or maintain any Off-Premises Advertising Signs within the Borough, and the erection or maintenance of the same is hereby declared to be a public nuisance.