

ARTICLE 26. SIGNS

Sec. 15-411 Statement of intent

The purpose of these sign standards is to regulate the publicly visible displays or graphics placed on private property for exterior observation. These regulations help to ensure traffic safety, enhance opportunities for visual communication, preserve property value, promote aesthetics, create an attractive business climate, and ensure the right to free speech.

Sec. 15-412 Definitions

Animated sign. A sign or part of a sign that is designed to rotate, move, or appear to rotate or move. Such sign is sometimes referred to as a “moving sign.”

Banner. A sign constructed of flexible material such as plastic or fabric that is attached to supports, a framework, or a flat surface.

Billboard. See “outdoor advertising sign.”

Electronic message center. A sign or portion of a sign that is capable of displaying words, symbols, figures, or images that can be electronically changed by remote or automatic means.

Construction sign. A temporary sign erected on the premises where construction is taking place, during the period of construction.

Feather sign. A lightweight, temporary sign mounted along one edge on a single, vertical, flexible pole, the physical structure of which may resemble a sail, bow, feather, or teardrop.

Flashing sign. A sign that includes lights that flash, blink, or turn on and off intermittently, or any illuminated sign with light(s) which are not constant in intensity and color.

Freestanding sign. Any permanent sign supported by a structure or supports in or on the ground and not supported by any building.

Ground-mounted sign. A freestanding sign, other than a pole sign or raised sign, in which the entire bottom of sign or sign structure is in contact with the ground or base.

Minor sign. A freestanding sign smaller than nine square feet.

Off-premises sign. A sign that identifies or advertises a business, activity, good, product, service, or facility not located on the premises where the sign is installed.

Outdoor advertising sign (billboard). A sign structure with a sign face greater than 50 square feet which provides displays or display space for general advertising and not primarily or necessarily for advertising related to the premises on which erected or to nearby premises. Such signs, commonly referred to as “billboards” are generally designed so that the copy, or sign face can be changed frequently, and typically the sign face is available for lease.

Projecting sign. A sign that is wholly or partly dependent upon a building for support, projects more than 12 inches from the building, and is not a roof sign.

Raised sign. A sign that hangs from a pole.

Roof sign. Any sign erected or constructed on and above a building, supported solely on the roof structure and which projects above the highest point of a flat roof, or the lowest point of a pitched roof.

Sign. Any object, device, display, or structure, or part thereof, that is visible from a public place and used to advertise, identify, display, direct, or attract attention to an object, person, institution, organization, business, product, service, event, or location by any means, including words, letters, figures, design, symbols, or images. However, window displays that are inside a building, public art, and holiday displays, are excluded.

Sign face. The portion of a sign structure bearing the message.

Sign structure. Any portion of a sign, including the sign face and all poles, posts, supports, framework, border, background, and trim.

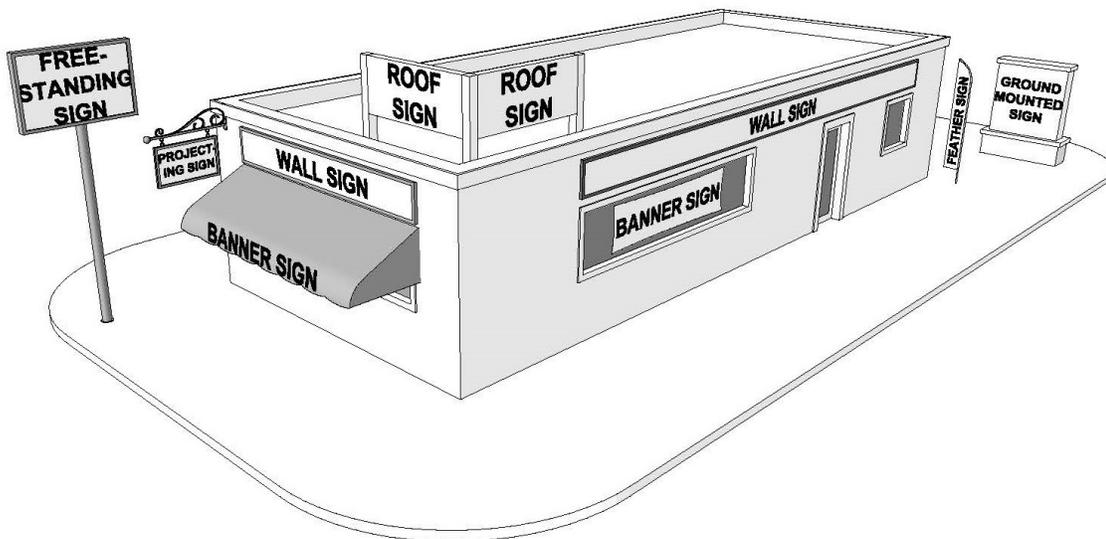
Temporary sign. Any sign, banner, pennant, feather sign, or other advertising medium not permanently affixed to the ground or a building. See Sec. 15-417

Wall sign. Any sign attached to and supported by the exterior surface of the wall of a building or structure in a place substantially parallel to that of the supporting wall and which is not a projecting sign. No wall sign can extend above the wall of the building.

Sec. 15-413 General provisions

- A. A sign permit is required for the erection, alteration, or reconstruction of any sign except for signs exempt under Sec. 15-415. An application for a sign permit must be filed on forms provided by the community development department. Staff will approve or deny a sign permit application within 15 business days. Any application that complies with all provisions of this zoning ordinance, the building code, and other applicable laws, regulations, and ordinances will be approved. For temporary signs, see Sec. 15-417.
- B. See figure below for signage types.

Figure 4. Signage types



- C. Signs cannot be erected or maintained except in compliance with this article.

- D. All signs must be constructed, installed, and maintained in compliance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.
- E. Signs may be internally lit or illuminated by indirect lighting, the light must be shielded and not directed toward the public right-of-way, upwards to the sky, or adjoining properties. No flashing or animated features may be used other than through a conditional use permit for an electronic message board. Internally lit signs must have full cutoff fixtures.
- F. Signs cannot be located in any road's sight distance triangle.
- G. Signs cannot unduly distract or obstruct the vision of motorists and pedestrians.

Sec. 15-414 Prohibited signs

The following signs are prohibited:

- A. Outdoor advertising signs (billboards).
- B. Flashing signs.
- C. Permanent signs that move to attract attention, regardless of whether the sign has a written message and whether all or any part of it moves by means of rotating, fluttering, movement of the atmosphere, or any other method. This regulation does not apply to temporary signs.
- D. Signs that emit smoke, scent, liquid, gas, or sound.
- E. Roof signs.
- F. Off-premises signs.
- G. Signs on property without permission from the property owner, tenant, or other authorized person.
- H. Signs within a public right-of-way without written authorization from the Virginia Department of Transportation.
- I. Signs on public property unless in compliance with a written policy or pursuant to written permission from the appropriate government official.

Sec. 15-415 Signs not requiring a permit

The following signs do not require a permit, but they must be constructed and maintained in compliance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code:

- A. Plaques or tablets cut into the masonry surface of buildings, walls, or fences.
- B. Signs posted solely for traffic control, public safety, or hazard warnings.
- C. Signs erected and maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, the county or other government agencies, and signs required by law, regulation, or any government or government agency.
- D. Signs on trucks, buses, or other vehicles, while in use during the normal course of business unless the vehicles are parked primarily to serve the function of a sign.
- E. Temporary signs.

Sec. 15-416 Electronic message board

- A. Electronic message boards are allowed in agricultural, commercial, and industrial districts with a conditional use permit. In reviewing the application, the planning commission and board of

supervisors may consider the following factors as well as other appropriate land use considerations:

- (1) Proportion of the sign face to be used for the electronic message.
 - (2) Use of colors in the electronic message.
 - (3) Relationship to nearby residences.
 - (4) Distance to other electronic message boards.
 - (5) Speed limit of roadway and road classification.
 - (6) General character of area.
 - (7) Landscaping incorporated into sign package.
- B. The following standards are required unless otherwise approved by the board of supervisors through the conditional use permit:
- (1) General requirements
 - a. Building and electrical permits and inspections are required.
 - b. Sign cannot be located in a manner which could cause confusion with or from traffic signals.
 - c. Messages must be static; no animation, videos, flashing, or scrolling text is permitted.
 - (2) Display
 - a. Messages cannot change more than once every minute.
 - b. Transitions between messages can only be a black screen or an immediate transition; no flashing, fading, or scrolling text is permitted.
 - c. In the event of a malfunction, the display must be changed to a dark screen.
 - d. If sign is two-sided, both sides must display the same message.
 - (3) Brightness controls
 - a. Illumination from sign shall not exceed 0.5-foot candle above ambient lighting at any property line.
 - b. Lighting cannot shine directly toward any dwelling.
 - c. Signs are required to have an automatic dimmer and be turned off between 11:00 p.m. (or as late as the business is open) and sunrise.
 - d. Prior to sign permit approval, applicant must provide certification showing compliance with brightness controls.
 - (4) Gas stations
 - a. Gas stations can have 16 square feet of light emitting diode (LED) signs.
 - b. The LED display area will be included in sign area calculation.

Sec. 15-417 Temporary signs

- A. Temporary signs cannot exceed 32 square feet.
- B. Sign height cannot exceed 10 feet.
- C. A sign permit is not required.
- D. Display of temporary signs is permitted for one 180-day period during the calendar year except:
 - (1) There is no time limit for temporary signs on property zoned or being used for agricultural or residential purposes; and
 - (2) Banners, feather signs, or other signs that flutter, wave, or move are only permitted for one 30-day period during a calendar year.

Sec. 15-418 Measurement of sign area and height

- A. *Freestanding sign area.* Supports, uprights, or structures on which any sign is supported are not included in determining the sign area (see Figure 5 below). If sign is double-faced, sign area will be calculated on one side only. Sign area is measured by establishing a continuous perimeter consisting of the smallest circle, square, rectangle, or triangle, or combination thereof, of the outer extremities of the sign face (wording or graphics).
- B. *Wall sign area.* Signs may cover 10% of the front facade which is calculated based on the length and height of the front of the building. Corner lots are permitted to have signs on 10% of each façade that faces a public road. For a multi-tenant building, the calculation will be based on the portion of the front of the building the tenant is leasing.
- C. *Sign height.* Measurement is based on the maximum vertical distance to the top of the highest attached component of the sign from the ground at the sign base unless the ground at the sign base is lower than the finished elevation of the road providing principal access to the site, then the sign is measured from the bottom of the curb or edge of pavement. See Figure 6 below.

Figure 5. Sign area measurement

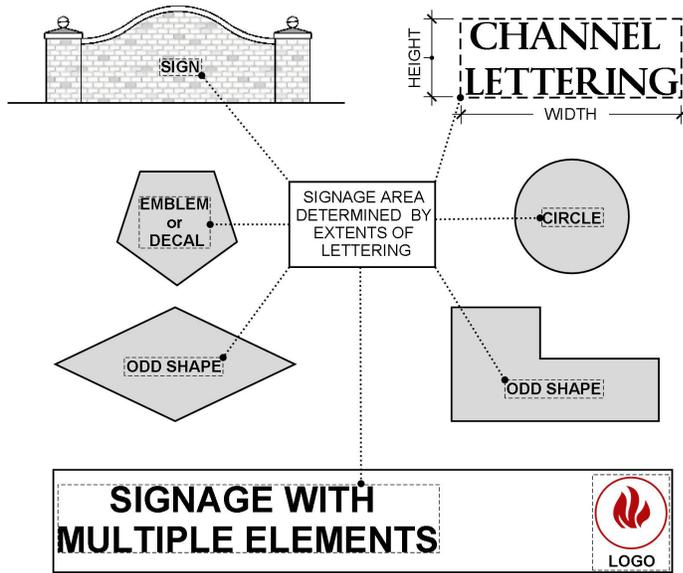
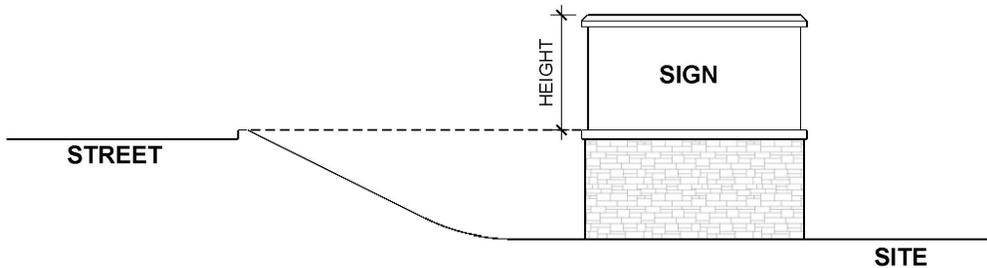


Figure 6. Sign height measurement



Sec. 15-419 Nonconforming signs

Any signs that become nonconforming because of the adoption or amendment of this ordinance are allowed to remain subject to the following conditions:

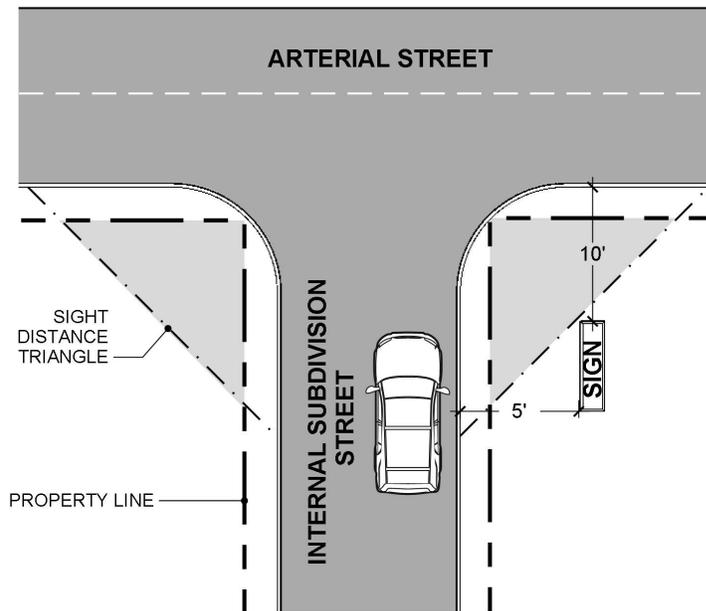
- A. The nonconforming sign may not be enlarged or altered in a way which would increase its nonconformity, but any structure or portion may be altered to decrease its nonconformity.
- B. If the sign structure is moved for any reason, it must thereafter conform to these sign regulations.
- C. Repair or replacement work may be done in any period of 12 consecutive months for ordinary repairs to the sign structure, fixtures and wiring, so long as the repair cost does not exceed 25% of the assessed value of the sign as assessed by the commissioner of revenue.

Sec. 15-420 Maintenance and removal

- A. Signs must be constructed of durable materials and maintained in good condition.
- B. Any permanent sign which promotes an activity, business, product, or service which has ceased operation or production must be removed within six months of the discontinuance of the activity, business, product, or service.

Figure 7. Subdivision road entrance sign location

Signs must adhere to sight distance triangle. See Sec. 15-510.



SUBDIVISION SIGN LOCATION PLAN

Sec. 15-421 Sign regulations by zoning districts or location

A. Each lot in the R-R, R-P, R-1, R-3, R-N, RPUD districts is allowed the following:

Sign Type	Number of Signs Permitted	Maximum Sign Area (sf)	Setback from Property Line or Right-of-Way (ft)	Maximum Height (ft)
Minor sign	2	9	5	5
Temporary sign	2	32	5	10
Sign, temporary or permanent	1	32	10	10
Freestanding sign	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sign located on a property for sale or lease	1	32	10	10
Sign located on a property with active construction	1	32	10	10
<i>Specific Locations</i>				
Sign located at the road entrance to a subdivision of 2 or more lots	2 per entrance	25 (cumulative sign area)	10 from external road 5 from internal subdivision road	15

B. Each lot in the R-O district is allowed the following; however, if lot is within an overlay district, different sign regulations may apply:

Sign Type*	Number of Signs Permitted	Maximum Sign Area (sf)	Setback from Property Line or Right-of-Way (ft)	Maximum Height (ft)
Minor sign	2	9	5	5
Temporary sign	2	32	5	10
Sign, temporary or permanent	1	32	10	10
Freestanding sign	1	16	10	10
Sign located on a property with active construction	1	32	10	10
Sign located on property for sale or lease	1	32	10	10

*No signs shall be illuminated in the R-O District.

C. Each lot in the A-1, A-2, and A-3 districts is allowed the following; however, if lot is within an overlay district, different sign regulations may apply:

Sign Type	Number of Signs Permitted	Maximum Sign Area (sf)	Setback from Property Line or Right-of-Way (ft)	Maximum Height (ft)
Minor sign	2	9	5	5
Temporary sign	2	32	5	10
Sign, temporary or permanent	1	32	5	10
Gas station signs (LED portion of sign)	1	16	10	10
Wall sign	1	10% of the front façade of the building for each side that fronts a public road	N/A	N/A
Projecting sign	1	20		8 ft. above street grade Cannot project over a right-of-way
Sign located on property for sale or lease	1	32	10	10
Sign located on a property with active construction	1	32	10	10
<i>Specific Location</i>				
Sign located at the entrance to a farm operation, agricultural operation, or agri-business	2	50 (cumulative sign area)	10	10

D. Each lot in the B-1, B-2, B-3, M-1, and M-2 districts is allowed the following; however, if lot is within an overlay district, different sign regulations may apply:

Sign Type	Number of Signs Permitted	Maximum Sign Area (sf)	Setback from Property Line or Right-of-Way (ft)	Maximum Height (ft)
Minor sign	4	9	5	5
Temporary sign	2	32	5	10
Freestanding	1	50	5	35
		70	50	If lot abuts a residential zoning district, maximum height is 15 ft. and sign must be located at least 100 ft. from the boundary of the residential zoning district.
Gas station signs (LED portion of sign)	1	16	5	10
Raised sign	1	10	5	10
Wall sign	1	10% of the front façade of the building for each side that fronts a public road	N/A	N/A
Projecting sign	1	20	N/A	8 ft. above street grade Cannot project over a right-of-way
Sign located on property for sale or lease	1	32	5	10
Sign located on a property with active construction	1	32	10	10
<i>Specific Locations</i>				
Emergency centers and hospitals located on a controlled access	1	100	50	35 If lot abuts a residential zoning

Sign Type	Number of Signs Permitted	Maximum Sign Area (sf)	Setback from Property Line or Right-of-Way (ft)	Maximum Height (ft)
road may have a second freestanding sign				district, maximum height is 15 ft. and sign must be located at least 100 ft. from the boundary of the residential zoning district.
Sign located at the entrance to a shopping center, office park, or industrial park, but then no other freestanding sign is allowed within the development	1 per entrance	120 (cumulative sign area) No sign may exceed 70	5	35
Sign located at drive-thru locations	N/A	50 (cumulative sign area)	N/A	8
For properties in the area bounded by State Route 288, Interstate 64, a line 500 ft. south of Broad Street Road (State Route 250), and the Goochland-Henrico County line	1 sign per shopping center, office park, industrial park, or a coordinated group of commercial establishments	150	15 Sign must be located a minimum of 20 ft. from any other freestanding sign	15 Sign must be ground mounted with a brick or stone base
	When sign above is used, each lot may have 1 additional freestanding sign	35	5 Sign must be located a minimum of 20 ft. from any other freestanding sign	10 Sign must be ground mounted with a brick or stone base

Secs. 15-422 through 15-430. Reserved.