

ARTICLE VI: SIGN REGULATIONS

Section 601 General Purpose

The purpose of this section is to provide sign regulations for the Town of Williamston in order to:

- Protect the public welfare and town property values by preserving the aesthetic and environmental qualities of the Town.
- Promote safety by eliminating traffic hazards or hazards due to collapse, decay, or abandonment of signs.
- Maintain the economic viability of businesses in our community through the availability of appropriate signage.
- Promote the efficient transfer of public and commercial information through sign management.

The regulations herein shall apply and govern all zoning districts. No sign shall be erected or maintained unless it is in compliance with the regulations of this Article, except that a nonconforming sign as set forth in Article VIII, relating to nonconforming uses, may be maintained if in existence prior to the adoption of this ordinance.

Section 602 Permit Required

Except as otherwise provided in this Ordinance, it shall be unlawful for any person to erect, construct, enlarge, move or replace any sign or cause the same to be done, without first having obtained a sign permit for such sign from the Zoning Administrator or designee as required by this Ordinance. A fee, in accordance with a fee schedule adopted by the Town Council, shall be charged for each sign permit issued.

Section 603 Permit Denial

If an application for a sign permit is denied by the Zoning Administrator or designee, a letter stating the reasons for the denial and the relevant Code Section number relating to the denial shall be sent by first class mail to the applicant.

Section 604 Sign Design Guidelines

The following regulations shall apply to all permitted signs in the Town of Williamston.

- A. Materials, colors, and shapes of proposed signs should be architecturally compatible with the buildings and the surrounding area of its location and be made of durable materials.
- B. The sign shall not be the dominant feature of its location and shall be scaled in accordance with the size of conforming signs on adjacent and nearby properties.
- C. A uniform sign plan shall be required for all major site plans, major subdivisions, office and retail complexes, multi-tenant buildings, and multi-family developments.
 - 1. The development plans shall denote maximum total sign area permitted for the project.
 - 2. All tenants shall comply with the approved uniform sign plan.

Section 605 Maximum Number of Signs Allowed

Unless otherwise specified in the Code, no establishment shall have more than one primary identification sign in accordance with this Section. Corner lots may be permitted to have one (1) sign per street

frontage. Wall signs may be permitted where a primary entrance fronts a parking lot. Structures subordinate to the principle uses are permitted one wall sign.

Section 606 Sign Area

The sign area shall be the area of smallest geometric figure, which encompasses the facing of the sign including the copy, insignia, logo, symbol, photograph, background, and borders.

- All area provisions in this Ordinance are calculated from the sign surface area dimensions as defined above.

In the case of signs mounted back-to-back, only one side of the sign is to be used for computation of the area. Back-to-back signs shall be defined as double-faced signs. Otherwise, the surface area of each sign is to be separately computed. In the case of cylindrical signs, signs in the shape of cubes, or other signs that are substantially three-dimensional with respect to their display surfaces, the entire display surface or surfaces are included in computations of area. If a sign is attached to an entrance wall or fence, only that portion of that wall or fence onto which the sign face or letters are placed shall be calculated in the sign area. Entrance wall or fence area outside of the sign area width shall not be considered a part of the sign. The entrance wall or fence outside of sign area width shall not exceed 3 feet in height.

Section 607 Sign Height

The height of a sign shall be measured from the highest point of a sign to the point of ground surface beneath it. Ornamentation such as caps, spires, and finials shall not extend more than 2 feet from the top of the sign. The use of berms or raised landscape areas is only permitted to raise the base of the sign to the mean elevation of the fronting street. Maximum height for all ground mounted signs is 6 feet.

Section 608 Sign Setbacks

All signs shall be set back a minimum 5 feet from the right-of-way of a public or private street. At intersections, no sign shall be in the sight triangle as defined by this ordinance in Article VIII, Section 809.

Section 609 Maintenance and Upkeep of Signs

All signs and all components thereof, including supports, braces, anchors, etc., shall be kept in a good state of repair, in compliance with all building and electrical codes, and in conformance with the requirements of this Ordinance. Any sign which is determined by the Zoning Administrator as being insecure, in danger of falling or otherwise endangering the public safety shall be immediately removed by its owner unless it is repaired and made to otherwise comply with the requirements of this Ordinance.

Section 610 Sign Illumination

Illuminated signs shall conform to the following:

- A. Illumination shall be externally located and directed solely at the sign.
- B. The light source shall not be visible from the right-of-way nor cause glare hazards to pedestrians, motorists, or adjacent properties.
- C. Light source shall not be mounted to any part of sign.
- D. Only one exterior light shall be permitted per sign face for signs 32 sq. ft. or less and 2 exterior lights for sign faces that exceed 32 sq. ft. in size.
- E. Channel letters may be internally illuminated.

- F. All lighting shall meet all applicable electrical codes.

A commercial sign within 100 linear feet of a pre-existing residential structure shall not be illuminated between the hours of 11:00 midnight and 6:00 a.m. A residence shall be deemed "pre-existing" for purposes of this Section if it has a valid building permit in effect for construction of said structure or if construction of said structure was complete on or prior to the effective date of this provision.

Section 611 Prohibited Signs

The following signs are prohibited in the Town of Williamston:

- A. **Signs Imitating Warning Signals:** No sign shall display intermittent lights resembling the flashing lights customarily used in traffic signals or in police, fire, ambulance, or rescue vehicles, nor shall any sign use the words "stop", "danger", or any other phrase, symbol, or character in a manner that might mislead or confuse the driver of an automobile.
- B. **Signs Within Street or Highway Right-of-Ways:** No sign, whether temporary or permanent, except traffic signs and signals and information signs erected by a public agency approved by the Zoning Administrator, is permitted within any street or highway right-of-way.
- C. **Certain Attached and Painted Signs:** Signs painted on or attached to trees, fence posts, and telephone or other utility poles or signs painted on or attached to rocks or other natural features or painted on the roofs of buildings are prohibited.
- D. Signs placed or painted on a motor vehicle or trailer and parked with the primary purpose of providing a sign not otherwise allowed by this ordinance.

Section 612 Signs For Which A Permit Is Not Required

A permit is not required for the following types of signs in any zoning district. However, such signs shall conform to the applicable requirements set forth in this Article.

- A. Traffic, directional, warning, or information signs authorized by any public agency approved by the Zoning Administrator.
- B. Official notices issued by any court, public agency, or public office.
- C. One non-illuminated "for sale," "for rent", or "for lease" sign not exceeding six (6) square feet in area in residential districts and twenty (20) square feet in other than residential districts and located at least ten (10) feet back from the street right-of-way line, unless attached to the front wall of a building.
- D. Signs erected in connection with elections or political campaigns. Such signs shall be removed within seven (7) days following the election or conclusion of the campaign. No such sign may exceed sixteen (16) square feet in surface area. Signs are not permitted in the public right-of-way.
- E. On site directional signs provided such sign bears no commercial message and does not exceed four (4) square feet in area.
- F. Identification sign indicating the name and street number or owner or occupant of a parcel, as long as such sign does not exceed four (4) square feet of copy area.
- G. Bulletin board, which is defined as a permanent signs which primarily displays the name of a noncommercial place of public assembly and announces the upcoming events of that organization. To not require a permit, such a sign shall not exceed thirty-six (36) square feet

of copy area or five (5) feet in height. Signs of this type shall be restricted to one (1) per parcel of land.

- H. Sign identifying a project under construction which denote the name of the project, the architect, engineer, contractor, owner, etc., as long as such sign does not exceed twenty-five (25) square feet in residential districts, or one hundred (100) square feet in non-residential zones, is not illuminated, and is removed within seven days of completion of the project.
- I. Signs attached or integrated into a gasoline pump, automatic bank teller machine, or drive through component of a fast food restaurant, which give operational instructions to users, the price of the product, the brand name of the product, or descriptive information about the product.
- J. Signs on the interior side of window glass.
- K. Decorative flags and banners which contain no commercial message when displayed on a residence.

Section 613 Signs Permitted In Residential Districts

The following types of signs are permitted in all residential districts:

- A. Signs for which permits are not required.
- B. For multiple family dwellings, group dwellings, and for buildings other than dwellings, one (1) non-illuminated business identification sign or bulletin board per entrance, not exceeding sixty (60) square feet in area. Such sign or bulletin board shall be set back at least ten (10) feet from any street right-of-way line.
- C. Subdivision signs and private directional signs, under the provisions of Subsections 616.7 and 616.8.

Section 614 Signs Permitted In Commercial And Industrial Districts

The following types of signs are permitted in the commercial and industrial districts:

- A. All signs permitted in residential districts are permitted in commercial and industrial districts.
- B. Within the front or side setback area of any parcel in the commercial or industrial districts, a maximum of one (1) permanently mounted detached sign of the type required to secure a permit shall be permitted for each three hundred (300) feet of road frontage for each road fronted, except that only one (1) such sign shall be permitted if total road frontage is less than three hundred (300) feet. The maximum allowable sign copy area for signs permitted under this provision shall be one hundred fifty (150) square feet multiplied by the number of signs permitted. No such sign shall be located closer than ten (10) feet to any street right-of-way. The maximum height of detached signs shall be thirty five (35) feet, as measured from the base of the sign.
- C. Wall signs, in no case, shall exceed the requirements of Section 616, Regulations Applying To Specified Types Of Signs.
- D. On any lot in an OC or industrial district on which no business enterprise is located, one off-premise free-standing sign structure having a total sign area not exceeding three hundred sixty (360) square feet is permitted. Additional sign structures, each of which does not exceed three hundred sixty (360) square feet in combined total sign area, are permitted provided they are spaced no closer than one thousand (1000) linear feet from any other sign structure of greater than one hundred fifty (150) square feet. Any off-premise sign of greater than one hundred fifty (150) square feet shall be required to be spaced a minimum of five hundred (500) feet from any residentially zoned parcel or parcel used for a church or public school.
- E. Signs in any commercial or industrial district may be illuminated.

Section 615 Signs in the Central Business District

The following regulations shall apply to all signs located within the Central Business District, in addition to the regulations listed in 616:

- A. Signs shall be constructed of such materials which complement and are coordinated with the architectural style of the existing building or land use.
- B. No more than three colors are permitted on any one sign.
- C. One sign color must match the predominant building color.
- D. No more than two lettering styles are permitted.
- E. If signs are to be illuminated, lighting shall be limited to one color.
- F. Copy area for canopy signs shall not exceed 30 square feet.
- G. No more than one free-standing or detached sign per building or site shall be permitted.
- H. Signs shall be permanently mounted.
- I. Signs shall not be placed to obscure building ornamentation or detail.
- J. Canopy sign and awnings shall not extend beyond the curb line of any public street, nor shall they interfere with the growth or maintenance of street trees.

Section 616 Types Of Signs

616.1 Wall Signs: Signs on the wall of a building (including signs attached flat against the wall, painted wall signs and projecting signs) shall meet the following requirements:

- A. In calculating the maximum permitted aggregate area of wall signs for all buildings except shop fronts, the square footage of windows and doorways shall be excluded.
- B. In calculating the maximum permitted aggregate area of wall signs for shop front buildings, the square footage of windows and doorways shall be included. The residential portion of mixed use buildings shall not be used to calculate the aggregate wall area.
- C. No wall sign shall project more than 18 inches from the building wall. Further, no wall sign or its supporting structure shall cover any window or part of a window, nor shall it extend on the roofline, parapet, or mansard roof.
- D. No wall sign shall be attached to any cupola, tower, chimney, or other architectural structure that is above the roofline.
- E. Canopy and awning signs may be substituted for part or all of the allowable wall signage per premises. Signs may be painted or printed onto a canopy or awning. Canopies and awnings may only be illuminated externally (exception: Service Station canopies).
- F. Principal building walls and service station canopies on corner lots may have signage on all facades which front on a public street. Such signage shall not exceed 20% of the building wall or canopy face. The 20% maximum signage area permitted shall include all signage on a wall face.
- G. Wall signs should reflect the proportional and dimensional relationships of the structure.

616.2 Ground Mounted Signs

- A. All ground mounted signs shall be located a minimum of five (5) feet behind the street right-of way.
- B. No ground mounted sign shall be located closer than ten (10) feet to any adjacent lot line. A fifteen (15) foot side-yard setback shall be required if the side lot line abuts a residential district.
- C. All ground mounted signs shall have a maximum area of 32 sq. ft. and a maximum height of 6 feet.
- D. An arm sign may be substituted for a ground mounted sign but shall meet all height and area requirements as provided.

616.3 Projecting Signs

- A. The projecting sign shall be a minimum of eight (8) ft. from the bottom of the sign above the finished grade of the sidewalk.
- B. One projecting sign per business entrance.
- C. The projecting sign shall not be mounted above the floor of the second story, parapet wall or eave line of the building.
- D. The projecting sign shall not project more than four (4) ft. from the wall and shall not exceed ten (10) sq. feet.

616.4 Arm Signs

- A. Arm signs shall not exceed eight (8) sq. ft.
- B. Arm signs shall be located a minimum of five (5) feet behind the street right-of-way.
- C. A ten (10) foot side-yard setback shall be required if the side lot line abuts a residential district.

616.5 Banners

Banners and flags for civic and non-profit special events, grand openings and going out of business sales used in conjunction with a commercial building, project, or enterprise are permitted for a period not to exceed forty-five (45) days provided that:

616.6 Subdivision Entrance Signs

One (1) or two (2) signs shall be permitted at each entrance of a residential subdivision or mobile home park, provided that such signs do not exceed a total of one hundred (100) square feet at any subdivision or mobile home park entrance. Further, such signs shall have a maximum height of six (6) feet. If illuminated, only indirect lighting shall be permitted. If such subdivision entrance sign is built into a decorative wall or fence, the maximum copy area requirements will apply and setback requirements shall comply with regulations for fences contained herein.

616.7 Private Directional Signs

Signs indicating the location and direction of premises available for or in the process of development, but not erected upon such premises, and having inscribed thereon the name of the owner, developer, builder, or agency, may be erected and maintained, provided:

- A. the size of any such sign is not in excess of six (6) square feet, nor in excess of four (4) feet in length;
- B. not more than one (1) such sign is erected for each five hundred (500) feet of street frontage.

616.8 Portable Signs

The proliferation of portable signs is dangerous. Improperly located signs can obstruct motorist sight causing traffic hazards and other dangers to motorists and pedestrians. The following restrictions are intended to keep the total number of portable signs at a low level and to allow for effective monitoring of portable signs.

- A. A mobile sign is a sign mounted on a trailer-type frame or portable wood or metal frame not permanently attached to the ground.
- B. One portable sign may be permitted for 45 consecutive days for no more than twice per year.
- C. One (1) portable sign, in addition to the number of signs permitted under Section 616 of this ordinance, may be used for new businesses (businesses open for less than six (6) months) for a period of three months only. Such business shall not be permitted for a portable sign more than once.
- D. Portable signs may be permitted for non-profit organizations such as churches, schools, etc.; to announce upcoming special events.
- E. Applicant obtaining the sign permit shall be responsible for removal of the sign upon expiration date.
- F. Signs shall be located on the site for which they are being permitted.
- G. Usage of portable signs shall conform to Article IX, permitting requirements; Article VI, Section 601, General Provisions; Section 602, Prohibited Signs; Section 606, Number of

signs permitted stipulations, and any other requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and all other applicable ordinances of the Town of Williamston except as provided below.

- H. If a portable sign is to be illuminated it shall be in compliance with all Southern Standard Building Code and UL Regulations.

Section 617 Applications For Sign Permits

617.1 General. Applications for sign permits shall include a scaled drawing of the sign which depicts and describes:

- A. size
- B. shape
- C. colors
- D. materials to be utilized
- E. copy/wording and designs
- F. illumination type, and electrical detail
- G. location on building, if attached

617.2 Detached Signs. In addition, permit applications for detached signs shall be accompanied by a plot plan or sketch of the site, to show:

- A. the location of the sign on the lot
- B. scale
- C. dimensions of parcel lines
- D. height of the sign
- E. any support structure to be utilized
- F. electrical sources
- G. base landscaping

617.3 The Zoning Administrator may waive any of the application requirements listed in this Section 617, Application for Sign Permits, which are deemed unnecessary to process an application.