

## CHAPTER 46 – SIGNS

### 46.01 Legislative findings

The Common Council makes the following legislative findings relating to signs:

- (1) In addition to signage allowed by this chapter, individuals, groups of people, and businesses have numerous means to communicate different types of speech, including print media, broadcast media, direct mailings to households, and dissemination of information on the Internet.
- (2) Sign regulations in this chapter (i) promote the public welfare, health, and safety of people using the public roads and other public travelways; (ii) advance the aesthetic goals of the city, and to ensure the effectiveness and flexibility in the design of, and the creativity of, the use of such devices without creating detriment to the general public; and (iii) reduce the visual clutter caused by advertising signage which is a significant cause of unsafe traffic and visibility conditions.
- (3) Sign regulations in this chapter are not intended to control the content of a message, except as allowed by law, or to unduly restrict the appearance of a sign.
- (4) The limitations placed on signs by this chapter are deemed to be the minimum necessary to accomplish the purposes of this chapter.

### 46.02 Purpose

This chapter promotes the public health, safety, and general welfare and is intended to:

- (1) encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication in the city;
- (2) maintain and enhance the aesthetic environment and the city's ability to attract sources of economic development and growth;
- (3) promote the desired community character described in the City's comprehensive plan;
- (4) protect the safety of the public by requiring proper maintenance of signs and establishing minimum design and construction standards;
- (5) improve pedestrian and traffic safety;
- (6) minimize the possible adverse effect of signs on nearby public and private property;
- (7) restrict off-premises signage to reduce visual clutter thereby helping to prevent unsafe traffic conditions; and
- (8) enable the fair and consistent enforcement of these restrictions.

### 46.03 Applicability

All signs erected or maintained after July 28, 2021 must comply with this chapter, except for the following which are exempt:

- (1) A traffic control sign and other similar signage when located on public property along a roadway or other travelway when placed by or authorized by the federal government, the state of Wisconsin, Wood County, or a municipal government.
- (2) A sign inside of a building that does not meet the definition of a window sign.

- (3) A legal notice posted on private property as may be required or authorized by municipal, state, or federal law.
- (4) A scoreboard associated with an outdoor athletic field, which is to be reviewed as part of a site plan review.
- (5) A sports league sponsor sign (banner or rigid) that is temporarily affixed to a fence on an outdoor athletic field, which is subject to other regulations as may be adopted by the Common Council.
- (6) A civic event banner that is temporarily placed above a public right-of-way or in a public park, which is subject to other regulations as may be adopted by the Common Council.

#### 46.04 Internal conflict

More specific provisions of this chapter shall be followed in lieu of more general provisions unless the context otherwise requires. Additionally, the most restrictive provisions shall apply.

#### 46.05 General rules of interpretation

In the construction of this chapter, the following shall be observed, unless such construction would be inconsistent with the text or with the manifest intent of this chapter:

- (1) **Gender.** Words of the masculine gender include the feminine and neuter, and vice versa.
- (2) **Singular and plural words.** Words in the singular include the plural and words in the plural include the singular.
- (3) **Tense.** Words in the present tense include the past and future tense, and the future tense includes the present tense.
- (4) **“Must”, “shall” and “will”.** The words “must”, “shall” and “will” imply a mandatory condition.
- (5) **“May” or “should”.** The words “may” and “should” imply a permissive condition.
- (6) **“Includes” or “including”.** The words “includes” or “including” shall not limit a provision to the specific example(s) listed, but are intended to extend their meaning to all other instances or circumstances of like kind or character.
- (7) **“Such as”.** The phrase “such as” shall not limit a provision to the specific example(s) listed, but is intended to extend its meaning to all other instances or circumstances of like kind or character.
- (8) **Conjunctions.** When used at the end of a series, the word “and” indicates that all listed items apply. When the word “or” is used at the end of a series, it indicates that one or more of the listed items apply.

#### 46.06 Definitions

(a) **Words and phrases not defined.** Unless specifically defined in this section, words and phrases used in this chapter shall be interpreted so as to give them the meaning they have in common usage and to give this chapter its most reasonable application.

(b) **Words and phrases defined.** For the purpose of this chapter, certain words and phrases are defined below and shall have the meaning ascribed to them, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning.

**Abandoned sign** means a sign, and all of its components, which no longer correctly directs or exhorts any person, advertises a bona fide business, lessor, owner, product or activity conducted, or product available on the premises where the sign is displayed.

**Alteration of sign** means changes to the exterior appearance of any part of the frame, supporting structure, or lighting of a sign; including material, size, height, or location of a sign. Alteration does not include the normal maintenance of a sign or changing the face of a sign under the same business.

**Animated sign** means a sign that uses movement or change of lighting to depict action or create a special effect or scene. A changeable message sign shall not be considered an animated sign.

**Area of copy** means the entire area within a single, continuous perimeter generally composed of squares or rectangles which enclose the extreme limits of the advertising message, announcement, or decoration of a wall sign.

**Athletic field sign** means a sign located within an athletic field owned by a school or other government entity. Advertising associated with these signs is to be incidental to the sign and not a primary function thereof.

**Banner** means a temporary sign composed of cloth, canvas, plastic, fabric, or similar lightweight, non-rigid material that can be mounted to a structure with cord, rope, cable, or similar method or that may be supported by stakes in the ground. Banners attached to fences shall be permitted.

**Billboard.** See off-premises sign.

**Building face** means that portion of a building, which is parallel or nearly parallel to an abutting roadway.

**Changeable message sign** means a sign such as an electronic or a controlled time and temperature sign, message center or reader board, whether electronic, electric, or manual, where different copy changes.

**Copy** means the advertising message, announcement or decoration on a sign surface, including lettering, logos, graphics, and the like.

**Directional sign** means any sign which serves to designate the location or direction of any place or area up to 6 square feet in area.

**Dynamic sign display** See electronic message display

**Electric sign** means any sign containing electrical wiring, which is attached or intended to be attached to an electrical energy source.

**Electronic message display** means a sign message that can change by electronic means. (In contrast, see static display.)

**Feather banner** means a temporary sign on cloth, bunting, plastic, paper, or similar nonrigid material attached to a structure, staff, or pole and that is taller than it is wide. A feather banner is not a flag.

**Flag** means any fabric, banner, or bunting containing distinctive colors, patterns, or symbols. Flags of a city, county, state, country, corporation, or institution shall not be considered a sign under this code.

**Flashing sign** means any sign which contains an intermittent or flashing light source, or which includes the illusion of flashing, light by means of animation, or an externally mounted intermittent light source, not including changeable message signs.

**Ground sign** means a permanent sign supported by structures or supports placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that are independent from any building or other structure. The area of ground signs is calculated on one face only.

**Inflatable device** means an object that is inflated with air or gas utilized to attract attention to a use or business activity being conducted.

**Illuminated sign** means a sign in which a source of light, either internal or external, is used to make the message legible.

**Incidental sign** means a sign, generally informational, that has a purpose secondary to the use of the lot on which it is located, such as "no parking", "entrance", "loading only", "telephone", and other similar directives.

**Integrated shopping center** means a building under single ownership or under unified control which contains 4 or more businesses.

**Monument sign** means a sign mounted on a base or platform. The base shall be constructed out of a solid material such as stone, brick or poured concrete and its dimensions shall be proportionate to those of the sign. The bottom of the sign shall be located within six (6) inches of the base.

**Movable sign** means any sign not permanently attached to the ground or a building in excess of 10 square feet in area.

**Mural** means a non-commercial work of art generally attached to a building or painted directly on a wall. Maximum size is computed the same as a wall sign. Approval is by a special exception as outlined in Section 11.05.133 of the Municipal Code. Murals do not count against the maximum area of allowable signs on a parcel.

**Name plate sign** means a sign indicating the name and/or address of the building, tenant of the unit or manager of the property that is located upon a premise where the sign is displayed.

**Nonconforming sign** means a sign that does not meet current code regulations but was permitted under a previous ordinance or regulation.

**Off-premises sign** means a sign, including billboard, which advertises goods, products, facilities, or services not necessarily located on the premises, or directs persons to a different location from where the sign is located. Athletic field signs shall not be considered off-premises signs.

**Pennant** means any lightweight plastic, fabric, or other material, whether or not containing a message of any kind, suspended from a rope, wire, or string.

**Permanent sign** means a sign that is self-supporting and sufficiently attached to a building or its own ground foundation.

**Projecting sign** means a sign, other than a wall sign, which is attached to and projects more than 18 inches from a structure or building face. The area of a projecting sign is calculated on one face only.

**Roof sign** means a sign erected upon, against or above a roof.

**Sidewalk sign** means an unlit freestanding, internally weighted portable sign frequently but not exclusively having the cross-sectional shape of an A.

**Sign** means any identification, description, illustration, or device illuminated or non-illuminated which is visible from any public place or is located on private property and exposed to the public and which directs attention to a product, service, place, activity, person, institution, business, or solicitation, including any permanently installed or situated merchandise; or any emblem, painting, banner, pennant, placard, or designed to advertise, identify or convey information with the exception of window displays and flags. For the purpose of removal, signs shall also include all sign structures.

**Sign structure** means any structure or material, which supports, has supported, or is capable of supporting or helping maintain a sign in a stationary position, including decorative covers.

**Static display** means a sign message that does not change by electronic means. The term includes fuel prices on a free-standing sign. (In contrast see electronic message display)

**Temporary sign** means a sign intended to be displayed for a limited period of time. They shall be constructed of weatherproof materials capable of withstanding the elements and shall not be constructed of materials intended for a different purpose. If a sign display area is permanent but the message displayed is subject to periodic changes, that sign shall not be considered as temporary.

**Vehicle sign** means a sign mounted, painted or otherwise placed on a trailer, truck, automobile or other vehicle which are parked on a public right-of-way, or private property so as to be visible from the right-of-way. However, this does not include signs affixed to vehicles and trailers, such as lettering on motor vehicles, where the sign is incidental to the primary use of the vehicle or trailer.

**Vision clearance area/triangle** shall have the meaning set forth in s. 11.06.119 of the City's zoning code.

**Wall sign** means a permanent sign attached to or erected against the wall of a building with the face parallel to the plane of the building wall. A wall sign shall not project more than 18 inches from the surface of the wall.

**Window sign** means a sign located inside of a building that is visible from outside the premises and is within 16 inches of an exterior window or door.

#### **46.07 Enforcing officer**

The Department of Community Development shall enforce this chapter and shall perform the following duties:

- (1) Issue permits and conduct inspections of property to determine compliance with the terms of this chapter;
- (2) Establish and enforce necessary or desirable regulations in writing, clarifying or explaining any provision of this chapter;
- (3) Receive and file any application for exceptions or appeals; and
- (4) Maintain permanent and current records of this chapter, including but not limited to the following: all permits, plans, exceptions and appeals.

#### **46.08 Permits required**

It shall be unlawful for any person to alter, erect, construct, relocate, enlarge, change copy, or structurally modify any sign in the City, or cause the same to be done without first obtaining a sign permit for each sign as required by this chapter. Permits shall not be required by a change of copy on a sign under the same business, nor for repainting, cleaning, and other normal maintenance or repair of the sign or sign structure.

#### **46.09 Inspection required**

The applicant shall, upon completion of the installation, relocation, or alteration of a sign, notify the Department of Community Development, which will inspect to ensure that the sign complies with the regulations of this chapter.

#### **46.10 Permit issuance or denial**

A sign permit shall be issued when the application is properly made, all fees have been paid, and the proposed sign complies with all appropriate laws and regulations of the City. If the sign permit is denied, written notice of the denial shall be given to the applicant, together with a written statement of the reasons for the denial.

#### **46.11 Administrative appeal**

A person may appeal an administrative decision made under this chapter to the Zoning Board of Appeals within 30 days of the date of the decision being appealed.

#### **46.12 Dangerous, unmaintained and abandoned signs**

(a) **Intent.** In order to ensure public welfare and safety, and to promote community aesthetics, any dangerous, unmaintained, and abandoned signs shall be ordered removed from the property upon which they are located.

(b) **Maintenance and repair.** Every sign, including but not limited to those signs for which a permit is required, shall be maintained in a safe, presentable, and good structural condition at all times, including replacement of defective parts, painting, cleaning and other acts for the maintenance of said sign.

(c) **Abandoned signs.** All signs or sign messages shall be removed within 60 days by the owner or lessee of the premises, when, for an on-premises sign, the business it advertises is no longer conducted; and for an off-premises sign, when lease payment and rental income are no longer provided.

(d) **Removal.** If the owner or lessee fails to remove a sign, the Department of

Community Development shall give the owner 30 days written notice to remove said sign. Upon failure to comply with this notice, the City may cause removal to be executed, the expenses of which will be a special charge placed upon the tax roll of the property on which the sign is located.

#### **46.13 Prohibited signs**

(a) **Intent.** Some specific signs and classes of sign, provide little value in identifying a specific business, promoting advertising for a business or communication for a business, and may only harm community aesthetics and/or the public welfare.

(b) The following types of signs are specifically prohibited, unless a sign exception is obtained:

- (1) any sign not specifically allowed in this chapter;
- (2) vehicle signs;
- (3) off-premises signs;
- (4) roof signs; abandoned signs;
- (5) signs located within the public right-of-way, easements, or other City property, unless otherwise specifically approved by the Common Council or other city rule or regulations, and
- (6) Flashing signs

#### **46.14 General standards**

A sign allowed by this chapter shall comply with the following general requirements:

- (1) A sign shall not resemble, imitate, or approximate traffic or railroad signs, signals, or devices, including emergency vehicles.
- (2) A sign shall not obstruct or interfere with the effectiveness of railroad or traffic signs, signals, or devices.
- (3) A sign shall not cause glare, mislead or confuse traffic, or impair driver visibility on public ways, private roadways, or adjoining properties.
- (4) A sign shall not be erected, relocated, or maintained so as to prevent free ingress to or egress from any door, window, stairway, fire escape, or driveway.
- (5) A sign shall not be attached to a standpipe or fire escape.
- (6) A sign may not be attached to a tree or painted on rocks
- (7) A sign shall not be flashing, revolving, blinking, strobe, or animated, except for the display of the time and temperature.
- (8) A sign shall not be placed within the vision clearance triangle except as allowed by the municipal code.
- (9) A sign shall not oscillate or rotate or move in any other manner.
- (10) A sign shall not emit an audible sound, odor, or any visible matter.
- (11) A sign shall not be placed on a telecommunication tower, except as required or permitted under the zoning code.
- (12) A sign shall be constructed and mounted so as to comply with state and local building codes as applicable.
- (13) A sign containing electrical wiring shall be constructed, installed, and operated so

as to comply with state and local electrical codes as applicable.

- (14) When a sign is authorized to contain electrical power or when a sign is illuminated by one or more external light fixtures, the electric wire providing the electric power to the sign or the light fixture shall be placed underground.
- (15) A sign shall not be constructed, operated, or maintained so as to constitute a nuisance to adjoining properties, or materially affect or detract from the value of the adjoining properties

**46.15 Electronic message displays**

(a) **Findings.** The Common Council makes the following findings regarding electronic message displays:

- (1) Electronic displays are designed to produce sufficient brightness to ensure clear legibility during daylight hours. However, daytime brightness settings are usually inappropriate for night-time viewing.
- (2) Electronic displays that are too bright at night can be offensive and reduce the legibility of the display copy.
- (3) Technology exists to control lighting levels, with scheduled dimming based on sunset-sunrise tables or with photocells.
- (4) Appropriate standards are necessary to ensure electronic displays do not become a nuisance to surrounding property owners or pedestrians or a distraction to passing motorists.

(b) **General standards.** An electronic message display when allowed by this chapter shall comply with the following standards:

- (1) An electronic message display must be equipped with technology for automatic dimming based upon ambient light conditions or controls that the sign owner can use to program lighting levels to comply with the lighting standards in this section.
- (2) Except for time and temperature displays, the message shall remain static at least 2 seconds before the next message appears.
- (3) No part of the message shall give the appearance of movement.
- (4) There shall be no flashing transitions, and transition time shall be one second or less.
- (5) Lighting levels shall not exceed 0.3 footcandles over ambient lighting conditions when measured at the specified distance in the table below, based on the size of the display. However, lighting levels shall not exceed 0.1 footcandles over ambient lighting conditions at the property boundary line of a residential property or 0.2 footcandles over ambient lighting conditions at the property boundary line of a commercial, industrial, or institutional property.

Sign Area (square feet)	Measurement Distance (feet)
10	32
15	39
20	45



25	50
30	55
<p>Note: The sign areas listed in this table are for illustration only. The City's sign regulations may not allow the sign areas listed. For signs areas not listed, the measurement distance is calculated with the following formula:</p> $\text{Measurement Distance} = \sqrt{\text{Area of Sign Sq. Ft.} \times 100}$	

- (6) The message on an electronic message display shall only relate to the premises on which it is located, except for public service announcements.
- (7) Except for in the General Commercial (B-2) District, the electronic message display shall be turned off by 11:00 p.m. each day or one hour after the close of the business on the premises whichever is later and shall remain off until 5:00 a.m. the following day.
- (8) An electronic message display shall be located on no more than one sign per road frontage.

**46.16 Projecting signs**

A projecting sign shall comply with each of the following:

- (1) The sign shall complement the scale, proportion, and architectural style of the building on which it is to be attached.
- (2) The sign shall not extend more than 5 feet from the building on which it is attached.
- (3) The top of the sign shall not be higher than the building on which it is located.
- (4) When located above a walkway, the bottom edge of the sign shall be at least 10 feet above the surface of the walkway beneath the sign.
- (5) When located above a driveway or an alley, the bottom edge of the sign shall be at least 15 feet above the surface of such driveway or alley.
- (6) If a projecting sign extends over public property (i.e., above a public sidewalk), the property owner must provide all assurances as may be specified by the city attorney and/or the Public Works and Community Development Departments, before a sign permit can be issued.

**46.17 Awning signs**

A sign on an awning shall comply with each of the following:

- (1) The sign shall complement the scale, proportion, and architectural style of the building on which it is to be attached.
- (2) If a canopy extends over public property (i.e., above a public sidewalk), the property owner must provide all assurances as may be specified by the city attorney before a sign permit can be issued for a canopy sign.
- (3) When located above a walkway, the bottom edge of the canopy shall be at least 8 feet above the surface of the walkway beneath the canopy.
- (4) The sign may be placed on awning and may not occupy more than 50 percent of the area.

- (5) The canopy, whether existing or proposed, shall be made of a visually opaque material.

#### 46.18 Ground signs

- (a) **General standards.** A ground sign shall comply with each of the following as applicable:

- (1) When a free-standing sign is located in a residential zoning district, landscaping shall be provided and maintained around the base of the sign for a minimum radius distance of 2 feet. Such landscaping may consist of turf, small shrubs, ground cover, or a combination thereof.
- (2) The base of a monument sign shall be covered with brick, stone, split-face masonry block, wood, stucco, or other material that complements the materials on the principal building.
- (3) The base of a monument sign shall be at least 80 percent of the width of the sign.
- (4) A monument sign may be double-faced, provided the angle between the two sign faces does not exceed 30 degrees (Exhibit 1). If the sign faces are more than 30 degrees, both faces are considered single-sided and included in determining the area of the sign.
- (5) A pole or pylon sign may be double-faced provided the two faces are parallel to one another.
- (6) A free-standing sign shall be located at least 15 feet from an access drive and 5 feet from a parking lot.
- (7) A free-standing sign shall be self-supporting (i.e., no guy wires or the like).
- (8) A free-standing sign shall be attached to a permanent foundation set in the ground. If the height of the sign is 15 feet or more, the petitioner must provide a design approved by a professional engineer, qualified to provide such certification.

(b) **Measuring the area of a free-standing sign.** The area of a freestanding sign is the entire surface area on which the message could be placed (Exhibit 2). The supporting structure or bracing is not included.

(c) **Measuring the height of a sign.** If the location of a freestanding sign is above street grade, the height of the sign is measured from the surrounding grade which may not be modified so as to increase the overall height of the sign (Exhibit 3). If the location of a monument sign is below street grade, the height of the sign is measured from the centerline of the street immediately in front of the sign (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 1. Maximum angle for a double-faced monument sign

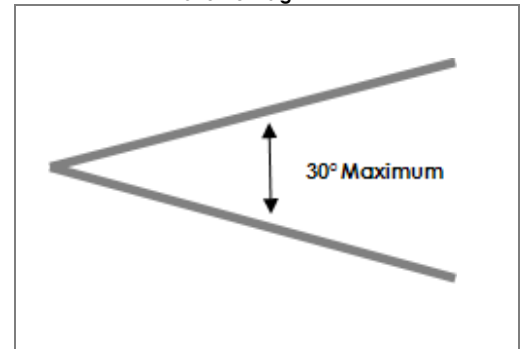
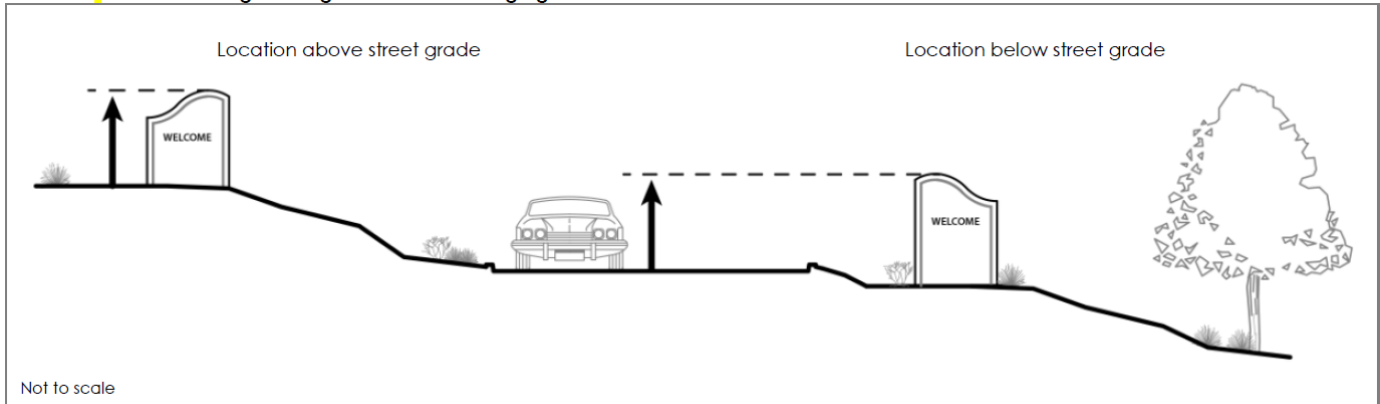


Exhibit 2. Measuring the area of a free-standing sign



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Exhibit 3 Measuring the height of a free-standing sign



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**46.19 Wall signs**

- (a) **Standards.** A wall sign shall comply with each of the following:
- (1) The sign shall complement the scale, proportion, and architectural style of the building on which it is to be attached.
  - (2) A wall sign shall not project from the wall on which it is attached by more than 18 inches.
  - (3) No portion of the sign shall extend above the wall face on which the sign is located.
- (b) **Measuring the area of a wall sign.** The area of a wall sign without a distinctive border or background is the smallest rectangle encompassing all words, letters, figures, emblems, and other elements of the sign message. The area of a wall sign with a distinctive border or background is the small rectangle encompassing the border or background (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4. Measuring the area of a wall sign



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**46.20 Window signs**

A window sign shall comply with each of the following:

- (1) The placement of a window sign shall not be placed on a door window or window so as to constitute a hazard for pedestrian or guest traffic and safety.
- (2) Signage shall be placed on the interior of the glass.

**46.21 Other Signs Requiring a Permit**

The following signs are permitted with a permit, subject to the specified conditions:

(a) **Sidewalk signs**

A sidewalk sign (aka sandwich board sign) shall comply with each of the following:

- (1) A sidewalk sign must be located a minimum of one foot from the face of the street

curb but no more than 4 feet or the sign must be located within 3 feet of the building face.

- (2) The placement of a sidewalk sign must leave a minimum of 5 feet of clear sidewalk space for pedestrian movement.
- (3) A sidewalk sign must be freestanding and at sidewalk grade level.
- (4) A sidewalk sign shall not have other attention-getting devices, such as balloons and ribbons, attached to them.
- (5) A sidewalk sign must be kept inside the business when the business is closed.
- (6) A sidewalk sign must be securely weighted or otherwise designed to not shift, move, or topple over in the wind or present a hazard to the public.
- (7) A sidewalk sign shall not obstruct vehicular/bus stops, benches, fire hydrants, or other features located legally in the right-of-way or be located closer than 10 feet to another sidewalk sign.
- (8) The permittee must provide a certificate of general liability insurance naming the City of Wisconsin Rapids as an additional insured in the form of general commercial liability insurance in the minimum amount of \$1,000,000 per occurrence/general aggregate,
- (9) The permittee must obtain a right-of-way occupancy permit from the Engineering Department as set forth in s. 6.24 of the Municipal Code.

**(b) Inflatable Devices/Signs**

Inflatable devices shall be temporarily allowed in the B-2 District by permit for a business, up to four (4) times per year, for a maximum of 5 business days per permit. The one (1) device may not exceed 20' in height and must meet sign setbacks and all other applicable requirements within this code.

**(c) Feather Signs**

*Feather signs shall be prohibited for use on a permanent basis. They shall be allowed for use by permit during special civic events or commercial business events within any Commercial, Industrial or Institutional district for a maximum of 15 business days, not to exceed four (4) times per year. Feather signs may not exceed 16 square feet and shall be allowed in number equal to the number of street frontage abutting the property, unless otherwise noted in this code. Note that they shall not be considered as part of the total sign allowance on the property but shall meet all other applicable sections of this ordinance.*

**(d) Temporary Signs (Freestanding or Wall Signs)**

*Temporary signs other than a flag or feather sign may be allowed for use by permit during special civic events or commercial business events within any Commercial, Industrial or Institutional district for a maximum of 15 business days, provided the sign is not permanently mounted or affixed to the ground. The sign area shall not exceed 32 square feet on one side or 64 square feet on all sides. Only one temporary sign may be located on a lot, unless otherwise noted in this code, not to exceed four (4) times per year. Note that they shall not be considered as part of the total sign allowance on the property but shall meet all other applicable sections of this ordinance.*

**46.22 Other Signs Not Requiring a Permit**

- i. The following signs are permitted in all zoning districts without a permit, subject to the specified conditions:

- (a) **Building Signs.** Signs Carved Into or affixed flat to a building in such a way that they are not directly illuminated, are not made of a reflecting material, do not contrast sharply in color with the building, and do not exceed two inches in thickness and are of historical significance. Examples include historic plaques or building names (i.e. "Est. 1909").
- (b) **Temporary Freestanding or Wall Sign.** Temporary Freestanding or Wall Signs on properties or buildings for sale, lease, or rent not exceeding six square (6) feet in area on one side or 12 square feet in area on all sides and a maximum of six feet in height in a residential district; or not exceeding 24 square feet in area on one side or 48 square feet in area on all sides and a maximum of 12 feet in height in other districts. Such signs shall meet all other requirements of this code and shall not be located in a public right-of-way. They shall be removed within 10 days after the property or building is sold, leased, or rented.
- (c) **Signs During Election Campaigns.** As provided in Section 12.04 of the Wisconsin Statutes, election campaign signs are permitted in all zoning districts subject to the following requirements:
- (1) The sign shall not be erected prior to the first day of the "election campaign period" as defined in the Wisconsin Statutes, and shall be removed within 10 days following the election.
  - (2) Sign during an election campaign shall not exceed 11 square feet in area unless the sign is affixed to a permanent structure; does not extend beyond the perimeter of the structure; and does not obstruct a window, door, fire escape, ventilation shaft, or other area which is required by the building code to remain unobstructed.
  - (3) The number of signs allowed during an election campaign shall not exceed the number of candidates or causes on the ballot in the properties voting ward.
  - (4) No election campaign sign shall be placed within a public right-of-way nor so close to a pedestrian way as to hinder or endanger safe passage
- (d) **Additional Temporary Freestanding Sign.** One Additional Temporary Freestanding Sign, not exceeding six square (6) feet in area on one side or 12 square feet in area on all sides, provided that no such signs shall exceed four feet in height or be erected or placed within a public right-of-way.

Signage allowed under this subsection may include the following:

- (1) Construction/maintenance signage (i.e., signage that identifies the architects, engineers, contractors and other individuals or firms involved with construction/maintenance currently taking place on the premises)
- (2) Personal greeting and congratulatory sign (i.e., signage related to a homecoming of a person or group of people or a personal event or accomplishment)
- (3) Free speech signage, including political and religious messages
- (4) Quasi-public event signage (i.e., signage announcing a noncommercial event or celebration in the community that is sponsored by a civic, educational, patriotic, religious, or nonprofit organization), allowed to be erected one week prior to the event or celebration and removed upon the conclusion of the event or celebration.
- (5) Yard sale signage (i.e., signage announcing a yard, rummage, or garage as may be authorized under the City's zoning regulations), allowed to be

erected during the sale or event and limited only to the premises.

(6) Private property protection signage (i.e., signage containing wording indicating an intent to deny entry to the general public, such as "no trespassing" or "private property")

(7) Property address

ii. The following signs are permitted in all commercial, industrial, and institutional zoning districts without a permit, subject to the specified conditions:

(a) Window signage is allowed without a permit as follows:

(1) Placement / type: no limitation

(2) Time limitation: none

(3) Number permitted: no limitation

(4) Maximum sign area: 50 percent of glass area located on the ground floor level per road frontage, including perforated window graphics.

(5) Type of illumination permitted: none

(6) Type of display permitted: static display and/or one electronic message display per street frontage not to exceed 5 square feet

#### **46.22 Signs allowed with a permit in a non-residential zoning district**

(a) **Permitted signs.** The signs listed in Table 1 are allowed with a permit in a non-residential zoning district as specified.



**46.23 Signs allowed with a permit in a residential zoning district**

(a) Signage for an authorized commercial use of the property (e.g., bed and breakfast)

A Permanent non-internally illuminated static display Wall Sign, or Freestanding sign, or combination of the two, not to exceed a combined total of six (6) square feet in area. Existing ambient lighting may be permitted.

(b) The signs listed in Table 2 are allowed with a permit in a residential zoning district as specified.

**Table 2. Signs Requiring a Sign Permit in Residential Zoning Districts**

Land use / sign type	Number of signs	Maximum sign area	Maximum sign height	Illumination	Type of display permitted	
Signage for auth. commercial use	A. Wall sign	1 per premise	6 square feet combined total	6 feet	Existing ambient	Static display
	B. Free-standing sign – monument sign	1 per premise		6 feet	Existing ambient	Static display
Signage for a residential complex	A. Wall sign	1 per street frontage	16 square feet or 10 percent of the wall area, whichever is less	8 feet	External	Static display
	B. Free-standing sign – monument sign only	1 per premises	16 square feet when single-sided; 32 square feet per side when double-sided	6 feet	External	Static display
Signage for a subdivision	Free-standing sign – monument sign only	1 per vehicular access point	32 square feet when single-sided; 32 square feet per side when double-sided	6 feet	External	Static display
Temporary signage for an approved subdivision	Free-standing sign – monument sign only	1 per vehicular access point	32 square feet when single-sided; 32 square feet per side when double-sided	6 feet	External	Static display
Signage for an institutional use	A. Wall sign	1 per street frontage	32 square feet or 10 percent of the wall area, whichever is less	10 feet	External or internal	Static display
	B. Free-standing sign – monument only	1 per premises	32 square feet when single-sided; 32 square feet per side when double-sided	6 feet	External	Static display
	C. Parking lot entrance sign	One at each vehicular access point to the site but no closer than 300 feet on the same road frontage or closer than 300 feet to another free-standing sign	8 square feet when single-sided; 8 square feet per side when double-sided	5 feet	External	Static display

**46.24 Sign permit**

(a) **Application fees.** From time-to-time, the Common Council may establish an



application fee for a sign permit.

(b) **Forms.** Application for all signs, except those signs that do not require a permit, shall be made on forms provided by the zoning administrator.

(c) **Completeness.** Sign applications must contain all pertinent information as required on the form, and any additional information as may be required by the zoning administrator.

(d) **Review.** Sign permit applications shall be filed with the zoning administrator who shall review the application for accuracy and completeness. The zoning administrator is authorized to issue permits when he or she determines that the proposed signage complies with all applicable provisions set forth in this chapter.

(e) **Approval period.** A sign permit shall become null and void if work authorized under the permit has not been completed within one year of the date of issuance.

#### 46.25 Sign Exception

(a) Sign Exceptions are appropriate for proposed signage that is not completely described by the terms of this Code or not fully in compliance with the specific provisions of the Code. Exceptions shall be reviewed and approved by the City Plan Commission. The Plan Commission shall use the following to determine whether to approve the exception, in addition to the requirements outlined in section 11.05 – Division 7 of the Municipal Code.

- (1) If the sign is not in full compliance with the definition or the type of sign is not permitted within a given district, the Plan Commission may make considerations for unique signs that match or have similar architectural styles or materials as the principal building(s).
- (2) Site difficulties. If there are unusual site factors, which preclude an allowed sign from being visible to the street immediately in front of the site, an adjustment may be granted to achieve visibility standards. This adjustment is not intended to be used to make signs visible to other streets, but to address site difficulties of visibility to the street on which the sign has direct frontage. Site difficulties may include the sign face being blocked due to topography of the site, elevation of street, setback of the existing development, or landscaping on the site, or from abutting development or landscaping. This set of adjustment criteria is generally intended to allow greater flexibility in placement and dimension requirements of the sign. The adjustment may be approved if the following criteria are found to be met:
  - a. There is no reasonable place on the site for an allowed sign without an adjustment to achieve visibility standards to the street immediately in front of the site. This may include consideration of an off-premise sign where appropriate.
  - b. If the proposed sign extends into the five-foot setback requirement, the sign will not create a traffic or safety hazard.
  - c. Of potential adjustments to meet the visibility standard, the request is the most consistent with the surrounding development and sign patterns.
  - d. The adjustment is the minimum needed for a sign to meet the visibility standards.
  - e. Additional signage may not constitute an over proliferation of signs on a property or cause needless repetition or redundancy of signage.
  - f. The sign would not be located so as to have a negative impact on adjacent property.

- g. The size and height adjustment is the minimal to adhere visibility standards.
- (3) If a proposed sign structure, including required landscaped areas would take up required parking spaces and is unable to be suitably placed where setbacks can be met and required parking is not removed, the Plan Commission may reduce or waive the setbacks and landscaping requirement.
- (4) Signs where a Sign Exception is specifically required elsewhere in this chapter such as a mural, may not need to meet all of the above criteria for approval. These are unique signs, and the Plan Commission may grant approval on a case by case basis.
- (5) The Zoning Administrator may require a Sign Exception review when provisions of the sign code are unclear or contradicting.

#### **46.26 Nonconforming Signs**

- (a) **Change of copy.** The copy of a nonconforming sign may be changed.
- (b) **Change of sign face.** The face of a nonconforming sign may be changed provided the building inspector determines that the other features of the sign are structurally sound and properly maintained.
- (c) **Change in location.** A nonconforming sign shall not be relocated.
- (d) **Change in area.** The area of a nonconforming sign shall not be enlarged or reconfigured in any manner.
- (e) **Change in height.** A nonconforming sign shall not hereafter be placed higher even though the height is otherwise permitted.
- (f) **Change in lighting.** A nonconforming sign that is not illuminated may not hereafter be illuminated even though such lighting may be otherwise permitted. A nonconforming sign that is illuminated may not hereafter be illuminated in any other manner even though such lighting may be otherwise permitted, except to bring the existing lighting into compliance (e.g., removal of exposed lights bulbs).
- (g) **Addition of an electronic message display.** A nonconforming sign shall not hereafter incorporate an electronic message display even though it may be otherwise permitted.
- (h) **Temporary signs.** A nonconforming sign that is described in this chapter as being temporary shall be made to conform with all applicable standards or be removed within 90 calendar days of the date the sign became nonconforming or within a lesser time period specified by the building inspector if he or she determines that the sign poses an unacceptable risk to public health or safety.
- (i) **Ongoing maintenance and safety.** A nonconforming sign shall comply with all applicable provisions in this chapter related to maintenance and safety.
- (j) **Abandonment.** A nonconforming sign that is abandoned for more than 12 months shall thereafter be made to conform with all applicable standards or be removed.
- (k) **Reconstruction following damage.** A nonconforming sign that is damaged by violent wind, vandalism, fire, flood, ice, snow, mold, or infestation on or after March 2, 2006, may be restored to its condition (e.g., size, location, and use) prior to the damage, except the sign may be larger when necessary to comply with state or federal requirements.
- (l) **Loss of nonconforming status.** If a property owner or the owner of the sign modifies a nonconforming sign in any manner that violates one or more limitations imposed in this chapter, such sign shall thereafter be made to conform with all applicable standards or be removed within 60 calendar days of the date the zoning administrator makes such

determination in writing, or within a lesser time period specified by the zoning administrator if he or she determines the sign poses an unacceptable risk to public health or safety.

**46.27 Penalties**

Any person who fails to comply with the provisions of this chapter is subject to the provisions in s. 1.07 of the Municipal Code.