

**CITY OF COLUMBIA, ILLINOIS
ORDINANCE NO. 3602**

**AN ORDINANCE REPEALING AND REPLACING CHAPTER 15.44 “SIGN CODE”
OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, ILLINOIS MUNICIPAL CODE**

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia (“City”), Monroe and St. Clair Counties, Illinois is a duly created, organized and validly existing municipality of the State of Illinois under the 1970 Illinois Constitution and the laws of the State of Illinois, including particularly the Illinois Municipal Code, and all laws amendatory thereof and supplementary thereto; and

WHEREAS, the City is authorized under the Illinois Municipal Code, 65 ILCS 5/11 et seq. to establish controls regulating the design, placement, and construction of signs within the City’s corporate boundary; and

WHEREAS, the City currently regulates signs under Article 15 “Buildings and Construction” as Chapter 15.44 “Sign Code” of the Columbia Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Sign Code has been amended countless times since adoption and it has become difficult to administer as currently constituted; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has determined it necessary and appropriate to repeal and replace the current iteration of the Sign Code.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED, by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Columbia, as follows:

Section 1. The recitals contained above in the preamble of this Ordinance are hereby incorporated by reference, the same as if set forth in this section of this Ordinance verbatim, as findings of the City Council of the City of Columbia, Illinois.

Section 2. Chapter 15.44 “Sign Code” of the City of Columbia Municipal Code is hereby repealed in its entirety and shall be replaced verbatim with the content of Exhibit A, attached hereto.

Section 4. This Ordinance shall take full force and effect immediately upon passage by the Corporate Authorities.

PASSED by the City Council and **APPROVED** by the Mayor of the City of Columbia, Illinois and deposited and filed in the office of the City Clerk on the 21st day of March 2022, the vote being taken by ayes and noes and entered upon the legislative record as follows:

AYES: Aldermen Niemietz, Huch, Martens, Riddle, Garmer, and Khoury.

NOES: None.

ABSTENTIONS: None.

ABSENT: Aldermen Roessler and Holtkamp.

APPROVED:



BOB HILL, Mayor

ATTEST:



ANDREW HITZEMANN, City Clerk

(SEAL)

Chapter 15.44 Sign Code

44.01 INTENT AND PURPOSE

- A. This Chapter is broadly intended to establish sign regulations that protect Columbia's public health, safety, and general welfare while allowing for the constitutionally guaranteed right of free speech.
- B. Specific objectives of these regulations are to:
 - 1. Guide pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic
 - 2. Identify and minimize safety hazards to drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians
 - 3. Eliminate excessive and confusing signs
 - 4. Prevent blight and clutter
 - 5. Encourage context-sensitive signs
 - 6. Protect public and private investments
 - 7. Support the desired quality of aesthetics and development patterns in various zoning districts
 - 8. Provide, maintain, and enhance community safety, and welfare
 - 9. Provide adequate opportunity for signs
- C. These regulations seek to define reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner of sign displays without regulating speech or content.
- D. The above purposes and objectives are implemented herein by:
 - 1. Providing opportunities for freedom of expression through signs that do not require a permit.
 - 2. Establishing a permit process for permanent and temporary signs that:
 - a. Reviews the design and placement of proposed new signs and alterations to existing signs for compliance with applicable sign and zoning regulations.
 - b. Inspects the construction and installation for compliance with approved permits.
 - c. Certifies that newly constructed and altered signs comply with applicable regulations.

44.02 APPLICABILITY & GENERAL PROVISIONS

- A. No sign shall be displayed, erected, or altered until a sign permit has been issued, except as explicitly allowed by these regulations or exempted from permit requirements.
- B. All signs shall be considered accessory structures by definition. No land, personal property, object, vehicle or structure shall be used for sign purposes, except as provided herein.
- C. Adherence to the regulations and provisions of this chapter are the responsibility of the property owner.
- D. The regulations and requirements of this chapter apply to all outdoor signs that are viewable or intended to be viewed from an adjacent street, highway or property parcel, except as otherwise exempted.
- E. The Building Official is responsible for sign permitting, determining applicable building codes for individual signs, and enforcing all provisions of this chapter that are not specifically reserved and assigned to other designated officials or other entities.
- F. The Zoning Administrator is responsible for administering and interpreting this chapter, and determining the applicable regulations for individual signs, when based upon land use or zoning considerations.
- G. The boundaries and locations of all zoning districts referenced in this chapter are illustrated on the City's Official Zoning Map.
- H. Sign regulations based on a parcel's zoning district and/or land use are intended as supplemental standards to applicable regulations of the Zoning Code.
- I. Proposed signs and alterations to existing signs for which this chapter is silent or does not provide a clear basis for allowing or regulating the sign, shall be prohibited.

44.03 DEFINITIONS

Abandoned Sign Structure: A sign structure on which no sign has been installed for a continuous period of 180 days or longer.

Accessory Use or Structure: Any use or structure on a parcel that is ancillary or subsidiary to the primary use or structure.

Aggregate Sign Area: The combined total area of all signs on a single parcel, calculated as described herein.

Alteration: Any modification to a sign or sign structure that affects the size, shape, height, or sign location; changes in structural materials; or replacement of electrical components with other than comparable materials. Does not include ordinary maintenance, repair, or exempted changes to copy.

Awning: A covered framework attached to a building that projects over a door or window to provide protection from the weather or sun and which may have a sign placed on its exterior surface.

Awning Sign: A sign applied directly to the exterior surface of an awning.

Banner: A portable sign, typically constructed fabric or other flexible material, which has no internal support structure and is designed to hang flush against a surface or suspend between tethering points. See Figure 2.



Awning Sign



Banner



Blade Sign

Blade (Projecting) Sign: A building sign with a support structure anchored to and oriented perpendicular to the wall's vertical face.

Building Official: The City of Columbia's appointed staff position in the Community Development Department responsible for administering the City's Building Code, Property Maintenance Code, and other municipal codes.

Building Sign: A sign that is affixed or applied directly to a building wall, canopy or marquee, or a sign having an independent support structure anchored to a wall, canopy or marquee.

Canopy: A permanent attached or accessory structure that offers protection from the weather, but is not a marquee.

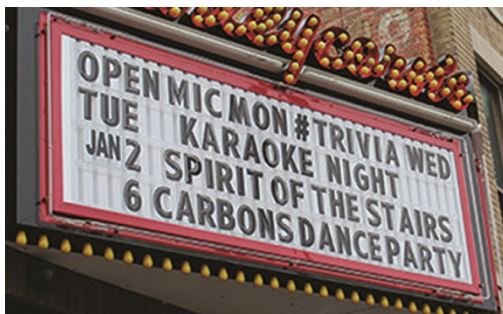
Canopy Sign: A building sign mounted flush and parallel to the vertical face of a canopy.

Changeable Copy Display: A sign panel that allows for manual changes to its copy, but has no electronic or mechanical means of changing copy.

Dilapidated Sign: A sign that is structurally unsound, unsafe, defective, or in need of maintenance.



Canopy Sign



Changeable Copy Display (Marquee Sign)



Electronic Message Display (Monument Sign)

Dynamic Display: A sign panel with copy that changes, either by electronic or manual means.

Electronic Message Display: An electronic sign panel that can be programmed to change copy automatically, but does not have full-motion video display capabilities.



External Illumination (Monument Sign)

External Illumination: The illumination of a sign face or panel by an artificial light source located outside of the body and aimed toward the sign.

Flag: A sign panel made of fabric that may be attached to a pole on 1 side allowing it to move in the wind or hung from a structure or fixed object.

Freeform Sign Panel: A sign panel that takes the shape of copy elements and has no visually discernible frame.

Freestanding Sign: A ground-mounted sign with an independent support structure that requires no physical attachment to a building, wall, fence, or other structure.

Incidental
that
engaged in

Internal
source
artificial
electronic

Legal



Sign: A small sign, emblem or decal with an area of 4 square feet or less provides specific information to individuals viewing it from within the site and an activity or use occurring on the same parcel.

Illumination: The illumination of a sign face or panel by an artificial light located inside of the sign body or having copy that is comprised of an light source such as neon tubes or light-emitting diodes (LED), including message and video displays.

Nonconforming Sign: A sign that legally existed prior to the effective date

of these regulations, but does not fully comply with the regulations enacted with the adoption of these regulations.



Freeform Sign Panel (Wall Sign)

Lot or Parcel: A tract of real property that has a specific legal description and deed of ownership recorded with the Register of Deeds of the county in which the tract is located.

Marquee: A permanent structure over a building entrance that offers protection from the weather, which is common in theater architecture.

Marquee Sign: A type of building sign with a dynamic display installed flush and parallel to the vertical face of a marquee.

Monument Sign: A type of permanent freestanding sign with an internal support structure enclosed in a sign body having a width that measures at least 75% of the sign face width.



Internal Illumination (Wall Sign)



Monument Sign

Off-Premise Sign: A sign that is not directly related to a use, establishment, structure or activity found on the parcel where said sign is displayed.

On-Premise Sign: A sign that is directly related to a use, establishment, structure or activity found on the parcel where said sign is displayed; or that expresses an opinion or belief of an owner or tenant of the parcel where said sign is displayed.

Permanent Sign: A sign constructed of durable, weatherproof materials that is designed for perpetual display, the installation of which requires the issuance of a permanent sign permit.

Portable Sign: A sign designed and constructed to be easily moved between locations.

Primary Elevation: The exterior wall of a building where the main building access is located.

Primary Frontage: The street frontage of a parcel that the property is addressed to and where the main property access is typically, but not always located.

Primary Use or Structure: The predominant purpose for which a parcel is used, which determines the applicable zoning regulations, or in the case of primary structure, the main building where related activities take place.

Prohibited Sign: A sign that does not conform to or is not allowed by these regulations, excluding legal nonconforming signs.

Secondary Elevation: Any exterior building wall that is not the primary elevation.

Secondary Frontage: Any street frontage of a parcel that is not the primary frontage.

Setback: The minimum distance allowed between a sign and adjacent property line, as measured from the property line to the nearest point on the sign or sign structure.



Sidewalk Sign

Sidewalk Sign: A portable temporary sign made of rigid materials that is capable of being held in place by its own weight. This includes signs frequently referred to as A-frame or sandwich board signs.

Sign: A medium of visual communication that conveys a message, expresses an ideology, symbolizes an entity, portrays an image, provides information, or attracts attention.

Sign Base: The portion of a freestanding sign structure that supports the sign body and contacts the ground or foundation.

Sign Body: The cabinet, frame or portion of a sign structure that displays the sign face, excluding the base or decorative cap.

Sign Classification: The means of identifying individual signs or types of signs according to the structural and display characteristics by which they are regulated.

Sign Copy: The words, letters or graphic elements on a sign that convey its message, idea or purpose.

Sign Face: The surface of a sign upon which the sign copy is placed or attached, which may be comprised of one or more individual sign panels.

Sign Foundation: The component of a permanent freestanding sign made of concrete or similar material to which the base or support structure is anchored, and which extends below the ground surface to provide lateral and vertical stability.

Sign Panel: An individual portion of a sign face that is clearly distinguished from other portions by its design and copy. A sign face may be comprised of a single panel or multiple panels.

Sign Permit: A written certificate issued by a designated official of the City of Columbia, which certifies that a proposed sign conforms to these regulations, has permission to be installed, and is authorized for display as stipulated by the permit so long as it remains in conformance. Sign permits may be issued for permanent installation or temporary display.

Sign Setback: The minimum required distance between a sign and the exterior boundary of the parcel where it is installed.

Sign Support Structure: The structural support and bracing elements for a sign, including posts and poles.

Static Display: A sign panel with copy that is intended for permanent display and incapable of manual or automatic copy changes.

Street Frontage: The property line(s) of a parcel shared with public highway or street right-of-way boundary.

Temporary Sign: A portable sign designed to be displayed for a limited time period, which shall be issued a temporary sign permit prior to installation unless it is specifically exempted from these regulations.

Vehicle Sign: A sign with a static display that is mounted on or applied directly to a motor vehicle or trailer.



Vehicle Sign

Video Display: An electronic sign panel capable of displaying enhanced text, graphic effects, or full-motion video.

Wall Sign: A type of building sign that is installed flush and parallel to the vertical surface of a wall.

Window Sign: A sign applied to the surface window or hung in a window and oriented to be viewed from outside the building.

Yard Sign: A portable temporary sign that is held in place by weight or a support structure inserted directly into the ground, but not anchored by a foundation.



Video Display

Zoning Administrator: The City of Columbia's Director of Community Development, who is responsible for administering the City's Zoning Code and provisions of other municipal code related to land use or zoning.



Window Sign



Window Sign (Internal Illumination)



Yard Sign



Yard Sign

44.04 PROHIBITED SIGNS

- A. Signs, other than legal nonconforming signs, that are not in full compliance with this chapter.
- B. Sign types and display types that are not specifically allowed by this chapter.
- C. Signs which by location, color, illumination level, or design element conflict with traffic control signs or traffic signals or that may interfere with, mislead, or confuse traffic.
- D. Off-premise signs, except as explicitly allowed by these regulations.
- E. Vehicle signs that have a dynamic display and illegal vehicle signs visible from a public right-of-way.
- F. New signs located on property without the permission of the property owner except those authorized or required by a federal, state, or local government agency.
- G. Signs incorporating beacon, flashing, or strobe lights.
- H. Signs which emit smoke, particulate matter, sound, odor, or other visible vapors.
- I. Signs which prevent free ingress or egress from any door, window, or fire escape.
- J. Abandoned sign structures.

44.05 GENERAL EXEMPTIONS FROM SIGN REGULATIONS

- A. Alterations to existing signs involving only a change in copy. This shall include the replacement of a static display sign panel with another static display, provided there are no alterations to any other sign component.
- B. Signs placed by or at the direction of the City of Columbia or other government agency with such authority, within the public right-of-way or on other property owned by a unit of government.
- C. Signs required by federal, state, or local laws.

- D. Signs authorized by the City that identify or recognize historic events or buildings.
- E. Signs are not visible or distinguishable beyond the parcel where the sign is located.
- F. Incidental signs and other on-premise signs that display specific information intended solely for individuals engaged in a use or activity occurring on the same parcel where the sign is located. This includes, but is not limited to parking lot traffic control and directional signs, sidewalk signs, drive-thru restaurant menu boards, and automated car washes.
- G. Display of goods in a window, including incidental signs related to said goods.
- H. Signs carried by people.
- I. Antique or collectible signs displayed as a personal or museum exhibit and those painted on a wall or architectural element of a historic building.
- J. Scoreboards and off-premise signs on athletic fields that are oriented towards the field of play.
- K. Signs affixed to or incorporated into machines or equipment by the manufacturer or distributor.

44.06 REGULATED SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Exempt Sign Types	Applicable Zoning Districts	Qualifying Conditions & Provisions	Applicable Regulations (subject to Section 15.44.10 General Sign Standards)
Window Signs Awning Signs	All	Surface coverage not to exceed 25% of any window or awning surface	No limit on the number of windows or awnings exempted per structure
Vehicle Signs	All	Vehicles used for deliveries, service calls, and other legal routine purposes related to the conduct of the applicable business	Vehicles shall be legally licensed and registered, operable, and parked in a lawful authorized location
Flags	All	Up to 3 flags allowed per parcel, subject to Building Code compliance if applicable	Max sign area (square feet): 48 Max aggregate area (square feet): 144 Max freestanding height (vertical feet): 25 Setback (linear feet): 5 in C-2 district; 10 in all other zoning districts
Yard Signs Banners	All	Up to 2 signs per parcel may be displayed at any given time	Max sign area (square feet): 6 Max freestanding height (vertical feet): 5 Freestanding sign setback (linear feet): 5 in C-2 district; 10 in all other zoning districts
Sidewalk Signs	C-2	Parcels with Main Street frontage; Up to 3 signs per parcel at any given time allowed during operating hours only	Display limit: 1 sign per commercial establishment holding current City business license Max sign area (square feet): 8 Max height (vertical feet): 4 Display locations: immediately adjacent to primary structure; allowed on sidewalk subject to restrictions

Signs exempt from permit requirements under these provisions shall not be illuminated by any internal or external means of lighting.

44.07 TEMPORARY SIGN REGULATIONS

Temporary signs exceeding the exemptions per Section 15.44.06 shall require a temporary sign permit as provided below.

Allowed Temporary Signs	Applicable Zoning Districts	Qualifying Conditions & Provisions	Applicable Regulations (subject to Section 15.44.10 General Sign Standards)
Yard Signs Banners	All	Parcels with a single-family residential primary use allowed 1 such sign at any given time	Max sign area (square feet): 16 Max freestanding height (vertical feet): 6 Sign setback (linear feet): 5 in C-2 district; 10 in all other zoning districts
Yard Signs Banners	A-1, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, R-6, R-7, C-1, C-2	Parcels with a non-residential primary use allowed 1 such sign at any given time	Max sign area (square feet): 16 Max freestanding height (vertical feet): 6 Sign setback (linear feet): 5 in C-2 district; 10 in all other zoning districts
Yard Signs Banners	C-3, CP, BP-1, BP-2, OP, I-1	Parcels with a non-residential primary use allowed 3 such signs at any given time	Max sign area (square feet): 16 Max aggregate area (square feet): 40 Max freestanding height (vertical feet): 6 Sign setback (linear feet): 5 in C-2 district; 10 in all other zoning districts

Under these temporary sign regulations, off-premise signs for City-approved and not-for-profit sponsored special events may be approved and shall be exempted from the general prohibition of off-premise signs, but such approval shall require the written authorization of the property owner, which may be satisfied by signature on the permit application.

44.08 PERMANENT SIGN REGULATIONS

Allowed Permanent Signs	Applicable Zoning Districts	Qualifying Conditions & Provisions	Applicable Regulations (subject to Section 15.44.10 General Sign Standards)
Wall Signs	All	Parcels with a single-family residential primary use allowed 1 wall sign ONLY in conjunction with a legal home occupation	Max sign area (square feet): 4 Allowable lighting: None
Monument Signs	R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, R-6, R-7	Residential subdivisions and multi-family residential developments allowed 1 sign on each public street vehicle entrance*	Max sign area (square feet): 32 Max height (vertical feet): 6 Min monument sign spacing (linear feet): 200 Sign setback (linear feet): 5 in C-2 district; 10 in all other zoning districts Allowable lighting: External Allowable display: Static
Monument Signs Building Signs (all types)	A-1, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, R-6, R-7	Parcels with non-residential primary uses allowed 1 primary frontage monument sign, PLUS 1 primary elevation building sign	Max sign area (square feet): 24 Max monument sign height (vertical feet): 6 Min monument sign spacing (linear feet): 100 Sign setback (linear feet): 10 Allowable lighting: External, allowed only on monument signs Allowable display: Static

Allowed Permanent Signs	Applicable Zoning Districts	Qualifying Conditions & Provisions	Applicable Regulations (subject to Section 15.44.10 General Sign Standards)
Monument Signs Building Signs (all types)	C-1, C-2	Parcels with non-residential primary uses allowed signs per the following schedule: (A) 1 primary frontage monument sign, PLUS either B or C, whichever applies (B) single tenant buildings allowed 1 primary elevation building sign (C) multiple tenant buildings allowed 1 primary elevation building sign per tenant mounted on ground floor wall	Max sign area (square feet): (A) 32; (B) 24; (C) 16 Max monument sign height (vertical feet): 6 Min monument sign spacing (linear feet): 100 Monument sign setback (linear feet): 5 Allowable lighting: (A) external or internal; (B) external; (C) None Allowable display: (A) static or dynamic, video displays allowed in C-2 district only; (B, C) static
Monument Signs (Primary)	C-3, CP, BP-1, BP-2, OP, I-1	Each parcel allowed 1 primary frontage sign as follows: (A) < 25 linear feet of frontage (B) > 25 and < 65 linear feet of frontage (C) > 65 linear feet of frontage	Max sign area (square feet): (A) 32; (B) 64; (C) 100 Max height (vertical feet): (A, B, C) 8 Min monument sign spacing (linear feet): 200 between primary monument signs; 100 all other monument signs Sign setback (linear feet): (A, B, C) 10 Allowable lighting: External or internal Allowable displays: Static or dynamic
Monument Signs (Secondary)	C-3, CP, BP-1, BP-2, OP, I-1	Each parcel allowed 1 secondary frontage sign	Max sign area (square feet): 32 Max height (vertical feet): 6 Min monument sign spacing (linear feet): 100 Sign setback (linear feet): 10 Allowable lighting: External or internal Allowable display: Static
Building Signs (all types)	C-3, CP, BP-1, BP-2, OP, I-1	Each primary structure shall be allowed primary elevation building signs as follows: (A) 1 sign per single tenant building (B) multiple tenant buildings with multiple floors, such as office buildings (C) multiple tenant buildings with 1 floor, such as retail strip centers, allowed 1 sign per tenant mounted on ground floor wall	Max sign area: (A) 100 square feet; (B) max of 5 signs with an aggregate area not to exceed 10% of primary elevation area; (C) 24 square feet Allowable lighting: External or internal Allowable displays: Static
Flags	C-3, CP, BP-1, BP-2, OP, I-1	Permanent flag installations exceeding the exemptions of Section 15.44.06	Max height: Max height of applicable zoning district Max area: Aggregate area shall not exceed 200 square feet, provided no single flag shall exceed 135 square feet (9 feet X 15 feet) Max quantity: No limit on the number of flags allowed within the max allowable aggregate area Allowable lighting: External
Development Directory Monument Signs	C-3, CP, BP-1, BP-2, OP, I-1	Multiple parcel developments having 3 or more contiguous parcels with a total combined area of 5 or more acres, such as shopping centers and industrial or business parks*	Allowed 1 additional sign as follows: Max sign area (square feet): 100 Max height (vertical feet): 12 Allowable lighting: External or internal Allowable displays: Static or dynamic
NOTE:	* Applies only to developments with a single active home/property owners association (HOA/POA) and those under unified ownership of a valid corporate or other legal entity. Signs shall be located on a parcel under ownership of said entity.		

44.09 MEASUREMENTS AND CALCULATIONS

A. Primary Building Elevation

1. The wall area of the primary elevation shall be calculated as follows:
 - a. Wall area shall be calculated as the vertical exterior surface including windows, doors, structural (integrated with a load-bearing wall) parapets, and vertical wall surfaces of canopies and marquees, but excluding decorative/false parapets and fascia, roofs and roof components.
 - b. Area shall be based on scaled architectural plans, when such plans are provided. Otherwise, the area shall be calculated assuming a vertical wall height of 12 feet for the first floor above grade (ground floor); 10 feet for all other floors above the first; and 10 feet for exposed walls of all floors below grade. The area of the elevation is then calculated based on the formula:

(Primary elevation ground floor width) X (12 feet) plus

((Primary elevation width other floors) X (number of floors) X (10 feet))

- B. Street frontage shall be measured along the property line parallel to the street centerline, where applicable.
- C. Vertical sign clearance shall be measured from the adjacent finished grade to the lowest point of the sign body or sign structure extending horizontally over the finished grade.

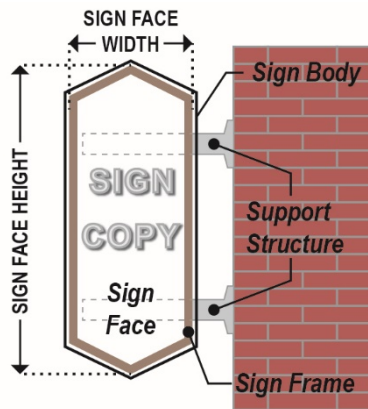
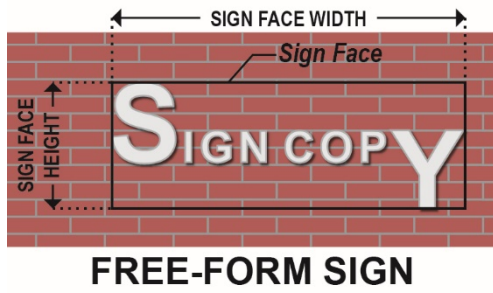
D. Sign Area

1. The sign area shall include the entire area of the sign face. The area of a sign face shall be calculated by multiplying the sign face width by the sign face height using a rectangular shape that completely encloses the sign face, without regard to the actual shape of the sign face.
2. The sign area of a freeform sign panel shall include the entire area within a single rectangle enclosing the extreme limits of the sign copy and other graphic element used to portray the sign's message.
3. The sign area of video and electronic message displays shall include the entire screen/panel area plus the surrounding cabinet, when such are integrated components.
4. A sign designed to be viewed from 2 or more directions shall be considered 1 sign, provided that the sign faces are parallel or form an angle of no more than 30 degrees. If 1 sign face is larger, the sign area shall be considered the larger of the 2 sign faces.
5. For cylindrical and other 3-dimensional sign faces, area shall be based on the largest flat plane rectangle that would bisect and be completely contained within the outer bounds of the sign face.
6. The aggregate sign area shall be the sum total area of all signs for which a maximum aggregate area is specified, not including signs that are exempted from regulation.

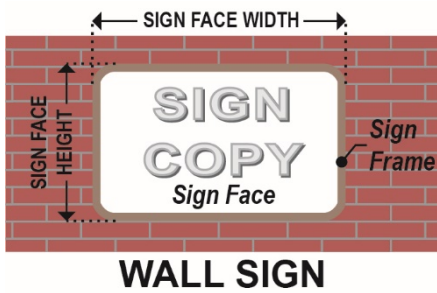
E. Freestanding Sign Height

1. Shall be measured from the adjacent grade at the base of the sign structure to the highest point on the sign or sign structure.
2. Where the finished ground grade at a monument sign is lower than the elevation of the nearest pavement edge of the adjacent street or highway, sign height may be measured from the highest elevation of the adjacent edge of pavement to the highest point of the sign or sign structure. Said elevations shall be located and labeled on the site plan, which shall be signed and sealed by a professional land surveyor or civil engineer licensed to practice in Illinois.

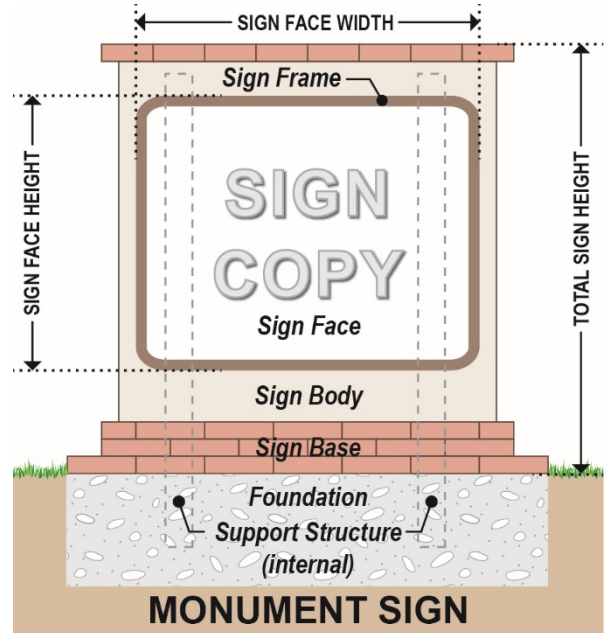
Figure 1: Depictions of Regulated Sign Components



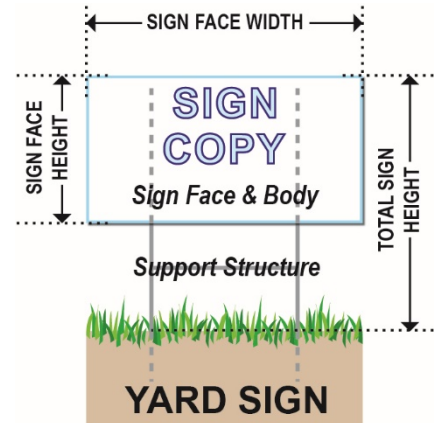
BLADE (PROJECTING) SIGN



WALL SIGN



MONUMENT SIGN



YARD SIGN

44.10 GENERAL SIGN STANDARDS

A. Construction Materials

1. Permanently installed sign structures shall be constructed of non-combustible materials, except for wood or other materials capable of providing sufficient structural strength that are allowed by the Building Code.
2. Sign bodies and sign faces shall be constructed of durable all-weather materials.

B. Sign Placement

1. Signs shall not be placed on or attached to any object located in public right-of-way.
2. Signs and sign structures shall not block or interfere with pedestrian access on sidewalks, building entrances or exits, wheelchair ramps, or otherwise violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Where allowed on sidewalks, 4 linear feet of clear sidewalk width and 5 linear feet of clearance from wheelchair ramps shall be maintained at all times.
3. Signs and sign structures shall not obstruct vehicular access of a driveway, alley, parking area, or other designated vehicular access area.
4. Signs shall not be placed in or extend into/over public rights-of-way, except as specifically allowed per this chapter. When allowed, such signs may be required by the City to be temporarily or permanently modified or removed due to construction or other official purpose. Modification or removal will be at the expense of the owner. In cases of temporary modifications and removals, legal nonconforming signs may be reinstalled without being brought into conformance. Privately owned signs on or above public right-of-way or other government-owned property, except as approved, allowed, or required by the owning agency pursuant to a government contract or franchise. For the purpose regulating signs, this prohibition shall include utility, drainage, access, and pipeline easements

C. Sight Triangles

1. Signs shall not be allowed in a sight triangle, as defined per the City's Zoning Code, except for Blade Signs that provide the minimum clearance established herein.
2. For the purpose of regulating signs, sight triangles shall refer to the intersections of driveways with streets, in addition to the intersection of 2 or more streets.

D. Aggregate Sign Area

1. Maximum aggregate sign area for a parcel or for any type of sign on a parcel shall not be exceeded. Exceptions shall not be allowed by variance, special use permit, or other adjustment, unless specifically provided herein.

E. Vehicle & Portable Signs

1. Vehicle signs are subject to applicable regulations for the appropriate vehicular code when in use on public roadways.
2. Portable signs may temporarily replace legal permanent signs removed by a government agency due to a construction project. The quantity, size, and area of such signs shall be limited to that equal to the removed signs. The original legally permitted signs shall be reinstalled within 10 days of project completion. In such cases, a new sign permit shall not be required, but the installation shall be inspected for compliance with applicable codes.

F. Building Signs

1. Blade:
 - a. Shall only be anchored to a primary structure and shall not extend vertically above the highest point of the wall surface to which it is anchored.
 - b. No point of the sign shall extend horizontally more than 6 feet from the vertical wall surface, which may extend over public right-of-way where the building setback is less than said horizontal sign dimension. However, in no case shall such signs extend to within 2 feet of the curb face, or the edge of pavement where no curb is provided.
 - c. There shall be a minimum vertical sign clearance of 10 feet from the adjacent grade.

2. Canopy & Marquee:
 - a. Shall not extend vertically above the highest point of the surface to which it is anchored.
 - b. The sign body depth shall not exceed 12 inches, as measured from the vertical mounting surface to the surface of the sign face.
 3. Wall:
 - a. Shall only be anchored to a primary structure and shall not extend vertically above the highest point of the wall surface to which it is anchored.
 - b. The sign body depth shall not exceed 12 inches, as measured from the vertical wall surface to the surface of the sign face.
 - c. May extend horizontally over public right-of-way where the building is setback less than the sign body depth.
- G. Window Signs
- a. Window signs painted on or applied directly to the surface of a window shall not be illuminated.
 - b. Window signs hung in a window may be internally illuminated only.
- H. Freestanding Signs
1. Shall not be located within 100 feet of another freestanding sign, except as otherwise provided herein.
 2. Shall not be allowed in a sight triangle, as defined per the City's Zoning Code.
- I. Illuminated Displays & Signs with Electrical Components
1. Shall conform to all applicable provisions of the current City of Columbia Building and Electrical Codes.
 2. Signs with Internal Illumination displays shall provide the minimum level of illumination necessary for night-time display, without producing unreasonable glare beyond the parcel boundaries.
 3. Signs with External Illumination displays shall have the light source aimed directly at the sign face. Lighting fixtures shall be shielded to minimize light trespass onto other properties and public rights-of-way.
 4. All electrical wiring shall be concealed from public view. If the sign is freestanding, underground electrical service wiring shall be required.
 5. Wiring diagrams and technical lighting specifications demonstrating conformance to these regulations shall be attached to the sign permit application.
- J. Video & Electronic Message Displays
1. May comprise the entire sign face. However, such displays shall not comprise more than 50% of the total sign area of a multiple panel sign.
 2. Shall conform to all applicable provisions of the current City of Columbia Building and Electrical Codes.
 3. Shall be equipped with a working light detector, photocell, or timer that automatically decreases the illumination level for night-time display. If used, timers shall account for seasonal changes in daylight hours.
 4. Displays shall be programmed or equipped to turn off or show a full black image in the event of a malfunction that affects more than 50% of the sign face.
 5. Shall only be allowed on parcels having street frontage to Illinois Route 3, Old Route 3, and Illinois Route 158 and shall only be located along such primary or secondary street frontages.
 6. In addition, video displays shall be subject to the following:
 - a. Shall be allowed on monument signs only.
 - b. Display of full-motion video and animation shall be strictly prohibited, except that transitions between slides or individual messages may depict motion or movement.
 - c. Slides or individual messages shall remain static for a period of at least 10 seconds before transitioning to a different slide or message.

44.11 MAINTENANCE PROVISIONS

- A. All signs shall be designed, constructed, and maintained in compliance with applicable provisions of the Building Code and other City codes. Sign supports and structural components shall be painted, constructed of galvanized or non-ferrous materials, or otherwise treated to prevent rust.
- B. All signs within the City shall be kept in the same general condition as approved by permit and in a manner that avoids visual detriment to the community at large. This shall include:
 - 1. Maintaining a safe structural condition.
 - 2. Keeping exposed surfaces free of rust and corrosion.
 - 3. Keeping painted surfaces free chips, cracks, flaking, and peeling.
 - 4. Replacing broken components made of glass, plastic, or other materials.
 - 5. Maintaining all lights and electrical components in a safe and operable condition.
 - 6. Maintaining the legibility of textual and graphic sign components.

44.12 LEGAL NONCONFORMING SIGNS

- A. Legally existing permanent signs that do not comply with these regulations may continue to exist as legal nonconforming signs upon the effective date of these regulations.
- B. Such signs shall be subject to applicable sign maintenance requirements and other provisions for legal nonconforming structures.
- C. Owners of such signs may request a legal nonconforming use certificate.
- D. Removal or Modification of Nonconforming Signs
 - 1. Existing signs that do not comply with these regulations, regardless of sign type or legal status, shall be removed or modified in compliance with these regulations under any of the following circumstances.
 - a. The nature of the business conducted on the premises changes and the sign is changed or modified either in shape, size, or legend.
 - b. The name of the business changes and the sign is changed or modified either in shape, size, or legend.
 - c. A principal structure is destroyed or removed due to natural or man-made circumstances, unless a Building Permit has been issued to replace the structure within 90 days.
 - d. The sign is damaged by any means when the cost of restoring it to original condition exceeds 50% of its replacement cost at the time of damage.
 - e. The building or use to which the sign applies is vacated, abandoned, or otherwise dormant for a period of time exceeding 180 days, except that sign structures may remain in place to be used by the next owner or tenant for a period not to exceed 1 year of building vacancy/abandonment.
 - 2. All nonconforming signs required to be removed by these regulations shall be removed within 90 days of notification by the City.

44.13 SIGN PERMITTING PROCESS

- A. No sign permit application shall be accepted without a site plan and plans and specifications of the proposed sign, which shall include relevant drawings with items such as location, dimensions, construction, structural design, electrical design, and illumination specifications.
- B. A sign permit shall not be issued for a permanent sign encroaching into or over public right-of-way without the installer first providing a certificate of Accident Public Liability Insurance with minimum coverages of \$50,000 per person, \$100,000 per accident and \$25,000 property damage.
- C. Review and Action
 - 1. The Building Official and Zoning Administrator shall review the sign permit application to determine if the proposed sign complies with all the applicable regulations of this chapter. Sign permits shall be either approved or denied within 15 days of the application submittal date.

- d. A sign permit shall be approved only if determined fully compliant with applicable regulations.
 - e. If a sign permit is denied, the reasons for denial shall be specified in writing.
2. Issued sign permits shall expire if the work authorized by the permit has not commenced within 180 days from the date of issuance or the authorized work is suspended for a period of 120 days at any time after work has begun. If a sign permit expires, work may proceed only upon issuance of a new sign permit.
- D. No sign permit application shall be accepted without the correct filing fee being paid. Individual applications and permit fees shall be submitted for each such sign or other advertising structure on a parcel. The schedule of fees, which may be amended periodically by City Council.
 - E. In addition to a sign permit, signs with lighting or other electrical components shall require an approved electrical work permit issued by the City, including electrical inspections, as required.
 - F. Applicants may apply for multiple signs on the same lot as a "sign package." In such cases, all permits may be applied for with a single application with no additional filing or inspection fees, provided all required information/documents are provided for each sign. However, each sign shall be required its own individual electrical work permit, if applicable.
 - G. All applicable provisions of the Building Code and Electrical Code shall be enforced for signs subject to such provisions.
 - H. Once the sign has been erected or installed, the permit holder shall notify the Community Development Office. The sign shall then be inspected for compliance with the approved permit by the Building Official or designated official. As deemed necessary, any sign erected may be periodically inspected to verify continued compliance.
 - I. All rights and privileges acquired under the provisions of this chapter or any amendment thereto, are mere licenses revocable at any time by the Building Official or Zoning Administrator; and all such permits shall contain this provision.

44.14 VARIANCES

- J. Variances from the specific terms of these sign regulations may be granted by ordinance of the City Council, upon receiving a recommendation from the Plan Commission.
 - 1. An application for variance shall be submitted that includes:
 - a. Name, address, and signature of the applicant and property owner.
 - b. Address of the sign for which the variance is sought.
 - c. Citation of the applicable section of the Sign Code with a full detailed explanation of the requested variance.
 - d. Site plan depicting existing and proposed conditions.
 - e. Applicable standards and specifications for regulated sign components.
 - 2. A public hearing with the Plan Commission shall be scheduled within 60 days of application submittal.
 - a. Notice of public hearing shall be sent via first class mail to the owners and tenants of all properties adjoining the subject property.
 - b. Notices shall be sent no more than 30 days, but no less than 15 days prior to the scheduled public hearing.
 - c. Notices shall include the time, date, and place of the hearing, with a description of the requested variance.
 - d. The Plan Commission shall conduct said hearing in accordance with its adopted rules and procedures. Upon completion of the public hearing, the Plan Commission shall adopt recommendation of approval, approval with conditions, or denial, which shall be supported by findings of fact. Said recommendation shall be forwarded to the City Council for consideration.

- e. The City Council shall consider the Plan Commission's recommendation and take one of the following actions:
 - i. Approve by ordinance, as submitted.
 - ii. Approve by ordinance, with modifications.
 - iii. Deny/disapprove.
- 3. A variance shall be granted only if all of the following provisions are met.
 - a. It is consistent with purpose and intent of this chapter and does not violate any other applicable provisions of the Columbia Municipal Code.
 - b. It is not contrary to the public interest.
 - c. It constitutes a hardship wherein the strict application of the applicable regulation is impractical due to the physical attributes of the subject parcel or the nature of pre-existing development on the subject parcel.
 - d. Under no circumstance shall a variances be granted that allow:
 - i. Individual sign area, aggregate sign area, or sign quantity above the maximum allowances of this Sign Code.
 - ii. A sign having a total height in excess of 15 feet.
 - iii. A sign type that is not explicitly allowed per this Sign Code.

44.15 IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT

- A. Authority - The City shall have the authority to implement and enforce these sign regulations as described below.
 - 1. The Building Official or other designated official shall be charged with the responsibility and authority to implement these sign regulations as follows.
 - a. Coordinate with property owners, developers, permit applicants, permit holders, sign designers, and sign installers.
 - b. Review and approve sign permit applications.
 - c. Inspect new and existing signs to ensure compliance with these regulations and issued permits.
 - d. Initiate enforcement actions within the delegated degree of authority.
 - 2. The Building Official or other designated official may inspect any sign whenever there is reasonable cause to believe a violation of these regulations may exist. Upon being presented with proper credentials by the Building Official or designated official:
 - a. No person may refuse entry or access to the site or property where a sign exists when entry is required for the purpose of conducting an inspection.
 - b. No person may obstruct, hamper, or interfere with such City representatives while in the process of carrying out their official duties.
 - 3. The City shall have the authority to order the removal, modification, minor repair, or maintenance of any sign erected or displayed in the City. This shall include signs that the Building Official or designated official:
 - a. Deems unsafe, insecure, or a menace to the public.
 - b. Finds to be constructed or erected in violation of these regulations or an issued permit, but is not exempt.
 - c. Determines is not being maintained in accordance with these regulations, but is not exempt.
- B. Enforcement
 - 1. If upon inspection the Building Official or designated official determines the need to order the removal or modification of any sign, the City shall immediately notify the property owner or permit holder in writing.

- a. Such written notification shall contain:
 - i. The action(s) being ordered.
 - ii. A citation of the specific regulation(s) or code(s) whereby the City has authority to order such action(s).
 - iii. A citation of the specific regulation(s) or code(s) being violated.
 - iv. A description of the observed conditions or violations that warrant such ordered action(s).
 - v. The deadline of 30 days for such conditions or violations to be remedied by the ordered action(s).
 - b. The property owner or permit holder shall notify the Building Official or designated official upon completing the ordered action(s) by the specified deadline. The Building Official or designated official shall inspect the subject sign for compliance with the ordered action(s). If the completed action(s) are found to comply with the order, the City shall send the property owner or permit holder a written letter certifying compliance.
2. Should the property owner or permit holder fail to fully complete the ordered action(s) by the specified deadline, at the discretion of the Building Official and Zoning Administrator based on the severity of the infraction, the City may either:
 - a. Issue a second written notice to the property owner or permit holder according to the same procedures.
 - b. Initiate the ordered action(s) and invoice said abatement costs to the property owner or permit holder. The City shall not issue a letter of certification or a subsequent permit for the subject sign to any property owner or permit holder who refuses to pay the assessed costs. In addition, the City shall file a lien against the subject property with the applicable county. The amount of said lien shall be equal to actual abatement costs plus lien filing fees plus a \$30 administrative fee. Upon being notified by the property owner or county that the lien has been paid in full, the City shall provide a lien release to the property owner who shall be responsible filing said release and applicable lien release fees.
 3. If upon inspection the Building Official or designated official determines the need to order the minor repair or maintenance of a permitted sign, the City shall notify the permit holder in writing of the deficiency and necessary corrective action(s). Should the permit holder fail to prove compliance within 30 days of the date the notification was sent, the City shall cause the owner to be cited for violation of this regulation.
 4. The Building Official or designated official shall hereby be authorized to remove and dispose of any sign illegally placed in public rights-of-way. The owners of such signs shall not notified of said removal and shall not be entitled to any compensation.