

Council Agenda Report

Date: June 13, 2016
Submitted by: Odie Wheeler, Director of Public Works *OW*
Prepared by: Pat Escher, City Planner, A.I.C.P.

SUBJECT: Ordinance No. 1080 to amend the Unified Development Code to provide clarification between free standing signs and multi-tenant signs, reorganizing text language and removing repetitive review criteria.

Recommendation that Council:

Introduce Ordinance No. 1080 by reading of title only and
Schedule June 20, 2016 for second reading, public hearing and adoption.

Discussion: The intent of this amendment is more technical in nature; it is to provide some clarification between free standing signs and multi-tenant signs, to not include these signs in the overall signage of the site as it may be too limiting on some properties and to relocate language into more logical sections of the ordinance.

§ 6.5.5 General Sign Standards

A. Standards are Maximum Allowable

The dimension requirements provided in this Section represent the maximum size or area or distance allowed. Nothing in this Section shall be deemed to imply that these regulations confer a right to the maximum.

B. Computations of Area and Height

1. Area

- a. Measurement of the area of a sign shall be based on the entire area of the sign with a continuous perimeter enclosing the extreme limits of the sign surface. For a sign consisting of letters or symbols attached to a building wall, or other surface, the area shall be computed by means of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or combination thereof that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop, surface or structure against which it is placed, but not including

any supporting framework, bracing, or decorative fence or wall when such fence or wall otherwise meets the requirements of this Ordinance and is clearly incidental to the display itself.

- b. When a sign consists of two or more faces, the area of all faces shall be included in determining the area, except where two faces are placed back to back and are at no point more than 18 inches from each other. In this case, the sign area shall be determined by measuring either face and if such faces are unequal, the largest face shall be used.

2. **Height**

The height of a sign shall be computed as the distance from the base of the sign at normal grade to the top of the highest attached component of the sign. Normal grade shall be construed to be the lower of: (1) existing grade prior to construction or (2) the newly established grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign. In cases in which the normal grade cannot reasonably be determined, sign height shall be computed on the assumption that the elevation of the normal grade at the base of the sign is equal to the elevation of the nearest point of the crown of a public street or the grade of the land at the principal entrance to the principal structure on the zoning lot, whichever is lower.

3. **Sight Visibility**

- a. No sign shall obstruct a clear view to and from traffic along any street right-of-way, entrance or exit.
- b. A sight visibility triangle determined appropriate for the site by the city engineer upon request of the Planning Commission or Zoning Official shall be kept free of obstructions to vision between the heights of two and one-half feet and twelve feet above the street.

C. Illumination/Lighting of Sign

1. No internally lighted signs shall be permitted within the Residential, Institutional, Resource Conservation, or Open Space districts. Where illumination of a sign is permitted in these districts, it shall be permitted only by indirect means external to the sign face.
2. Electronic/Digital Signs are permitted in the General Commercial and Industrial districts upon approval of the Zoning Official and provided the following special standards are met:

- a. Displays must use no more than three colors of light for entire sign display.
- b. Graphics and/or animation are not allowed.
- c. Intensity of speed of message may be determined by the Zoning Official.
- d. The electronic message display may comprise no more than 35 percent of the face area.

§ 6.5.6 Standards Specific to the Residential Districts

Signs permitted in NC districts, the Residential district and the Neighborhood and Gateway subdistricts of the Downtown/Waterfront Development district shall be limited by the following:

A. For Public, Open Space, Institutional Uses, Public Assembly, Townhouse and Multiple Family Uses

B.

- 1. One freestanding sign or wall sign is permitted, per road frontage meeting the following standards.
 - a. Maximum sign area is 32 square feet per sign face as provided in § 6.5.5 B1(b).
 - b. Maximum sign height is six feet except that a wall sign may reach eight feet.
 - c. Maximum distance from any other zoning lot is eight feet.
 - d. One Wall Mounted Sign is permitted with maximum letter height of 30 inches.
- 2. No sign shall project into or over a public right-of-way.

B. Subdivision or Community Entrance Signs

- 1. One sign not exceeding 12 square feet may be located at each street entrance.
- 2. The maximum sign height allowed is six feet.

C. Home Occupations, Home Day Care, Bed and Breakfast Uses

- 1. One freestanding sign per lot is permitted.
- 2. Maximum sign area shall be four square feet.
- 3. Maximum freestanding sign height shall be four feet.
- 4. Maximum distance from a property line lot shall be ten feet.
- 5. One wall-mounted plaque or nameplate sign is permitted provided it does not exceed two square feet in size and is made to be compatible in appearance with the building.

§ 6.5.7 Standards Specific to All Other Districts

Signs permitted in all districts except the NC districts, the Residential district and the Neighborhood and Gateway subdistricts of the Downtown/Waterfront Development district shall be limited by the following:

A. Freestanding Single or Multi-Tenant Sign

1. Only one freestanding single tenant sign or freestanding multi-tenant sign is permitted per site. An approved Sign Program may however provide for an additional freestanding single tenant sign and/or freestanding multi-tenant sign when a lot exceeds five acres in size or is greater than two acres and has two public street frontages.
2. Freestanding single and/or multi-tenant signs shall not be located within parking lots if possible. The area of a freestanding single tenant sign shall not exceed 32 square feet. A freestanding multi-tenant sign shall not exceed ten (10) square feet. Such sign shall be placed on a continuous base that is at least as wide as the horizontal width of the sign it supports and shall be solid and designed as an architecturally integrated element of the sign.
3. The base of all freestanding single/multi-tenant signs shall be set back a minimum of ten feet from any property line. No part of a freestanding sign shall be located within or overhang into a public or private right-of-way, sidewalk, or adjoining property.
4. A landscaped area equivalent to the area of each side of a freestanding single/multi-tenant signs sign shall be maintained by the permit holder.
5. Freestanding single/multi-tenant signs shall not exceed a maximum height of eight feet, except that on any lot with public road frontage adjacent to a lot in the NC districts and/or the Residential district, the maximum height shall be six feet.
6. For lots with frontage on U.S. Route 50 or located in the Industrial district, the Planning Commission may authorize, upon approval of a Sign Program for qualifying projects, an increase in allowable freestanding single/multi-tenant sign area and height to a maximum of 50 square feet and 10 feet respectively provided the sign is set back at least 50 feet from the right-of-way of U.S. Route 50 and all signs, existing and proposed, are made to be conforming to the standards of this section.

B. Attached to Building

1. Signs attached to a building shall not project more than 18 inches from the face of the building. All such signs shall have a minimum clearance of eight (8) feet above the ground/sidewalk.
2. Wall mounted signs shall be no higher than the second floor windowsill on a building.

3. No single wall-mounted signs shall exceed 30 square feet in area except that on lots with frontage on U.S. Route 50 or in the Industrial district, the maximum area of a wall-mounted sign shall be computed as 1.0 square foot per building frontage up to a maximum of 60 square feet.
4. The provisions of this subsection are to include wall mounted multi-tenant signs.

C. Window Signs

Window displays and signs. Signs erected or suspended in the interior of a structure to be viewed from the outside provided the following conditions are adhered to:

1. No more than 50 percent of the window area is covered in signing.
2. The area of window signing shall be included in the count of maximum allowable sign area and sign number for the site.

D. The Maximum Allowable Sign Area

1. The maximum allowable area for all signs excluding freestanding single/multi-tenant signs on a site shall be computed as follows:
 - a. Within the Core, General, and Center subdistricts of the Downtown/Waterfront Development district, the lesser of 1 square foot per linear building frontage on the public street or 50 square feet except where additional sign area is specifically authorized by the Historic Preservation Commission or in the case of a sign program, approved by the Planning Commission.
 - b. For lots with frontage on U.S. Route 50 or in the Industrial zone, 1.25 square feet per linear building frontage on the public street up to a maximum allowable area of 150 square feet except that each additional building frontage facing a secondary street may have up to 0.5 square foot of sign area per linear foot of the secondary street frontage ~~but~~ and such additional sign area shall only be used on that side of the building frontage or signs may distribute the allowable signage equally on the two frontages, if that total signage does not exceed the maximum allowed. Signs may be installed on sides of the building with no street frontage, such as facing parking lots, however, this signage will be included in the maximum area calculation and such sides do not receive the benefit of additional square footage.
 - c. For all other locations, 1.0 square foot per linear building frontage on the public street up to a maximum allowable area of 100 square feet, including free standing signs, except that each additional building frontage facing a street may have up to 0.5 square foot of sign area per linear foot of street frontage ~~but~~ and such additional

sign area shall only be used on that side of the building frontage or signs may distribute the allowable signage equally on the two frontages, if that total signage does not exceed the maximum allowed. Signs may be installed on sides of the building with no street frontage, such as facing parking lots, however, this signage will be included in the maximum area calculation and such sides do not receive the benefit of additional square footage.

2. Multi-tenant signs may be permitted for the purpose of consolidating several signs into one sign structure. No separate on-premise freestanding sign shall be permitted for site occupants that already have an identification panel on a multi-tenant sign. A multi-tenant sign shall be spaced at a minimum of 300 feet from another multi-tenant sign.
3. Shopping centers, industrial parks and office parks that do not have an approved Sign Program per § 6.5.2E shall be allowed one (1) freestanding sign or multi-tenant sign. Each tenant shall be allowed one wall sign not exceeding the square footage equal to one (1) square foot for each linear foot of store frontage.
4. Shopping centers, industrial parks, office parks and other developments that qualify for a sign program approval may be exempted from the maximum signage area limitation of § 6.5.2(E)1 provided the Planning Commission has approved a Sign Program per § 6.5.2E. The owner of any shopping center, industrial park or office park existing prior to the date of adoption of this Ordinance may apply in writing to the Planning Commission for approval of a Sign Program which approval shall provide a schedule for bringing non-conforming signs into conformance with this Section within three years.

E. Special Standards by Sign Type

- ~~1. The area of wall mounted signs shall be limited as follows:~~
 - a. ~~No single wall mounted signs shall exceed 30 square feet in area except that on lots with frontage on U.S. Route 50 or in the Industrial district, the maximum area of a wall mounted sign shall be computed as 1.0 square foot per building frontage up to a maximum of 60 square feet.~~
 - b. ~~Notwithstanding the above standard, in no district shall one wall mounted sign exceed seven percent of the total area of the face of the building wall inclusive of windows and door openings. Removed~~
1. One marquee sign is permitted provided the sign area for the site does not exceed the maximum allowable sign area in that district and no additional signs are attached to the marquee sign.

Fiscal Impact: None

Approved by: 

PROPOSED ORDINANCE

ORDINANCE NO. 1080

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND, TO AMEND THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE TO PROVIDE CLARIFICATION BETWEEN FREE STANDING SIGNS AND MULTI-TENANT SIGNS, REORGANIZING TEXT LANGUAGE AND REMOVING REPETITIVE REVIEW CRITERIA.

WHEREAS, upon consideration of the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission, and upon consideration of the staff of the Department of Planning and Zoning, the comments made at a public hearing before City Council, held on June 20, 2016 the City Council finds that the proposed amendments are needed to protect the public health, safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, on April 5, 2016 the Planning Commission held a public hearing and issued recommendation regarding the proposed text amendment. The Planning Commission unanimously recommended that the Commissioners of Cambridge approve the text to amend the Unified Development Code to provide clarification between free standing signs and multi-tenant signs, reorganizing text language and removing repetitive review criteria; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioners of Cambridge find that it is in the best interest of the City to amend the Unified Development Code to provide clarification between free standing signs and multi-tenant signs, reorganizing text language and removing repetitive review criteria; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Commissioners of Cambridge, that the City's Unified Development Code is hereby amended as follows:

§ 6.5.5 General Sign Standards

A. Standards are Maximum Allowable

The dimension requirements provided in this Section represent the maximum size or area or distance allowed. Nothing in this Section shall be deemed to imply that these regulations confer a right to the maximum.

B. Computations of Area and Height

1. Area

- a.** Measurement of the area of a sign shall be based on the entire area of the sign with a continuous perimeter enclosing the extreme limits of the sign surface. For a sign consisting of letters or symbols

attached to a building wall, or other surface, the area shall be computed by means of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or combination thereof that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop, surface or structure against which it is placed, but not including any supporting framework, bracing, or decorative fence or wall when such fence or wall otherwise meets the requirements of this Ordinance and is clearly incidental to the display itself.

- b. When a sign consists of two or more faces, the area of all faces shall be included in determining the area, except where two faces are placed back to back and are at no point more than 18 inches from each other. In this case, the sign area shall be determined by measuring either face and if such faces are unequal, the largest face shall be used.

2. **Height**

The height of a sign shall be computed as the distance from the base of the sign at normal grade to the top of the highest attached component of the sign. Normal grade shall be construed to be the lower of: (1) existing grade prior to construction or (2) the newly established grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign. In cases in which the normal grade cannot reasonably be determined, sign height shall be computed on the assumption that the elevation of the normal grade at the base of the sign is equal to the elevation of the nearest point of the crown of a public street or the grade of the land at the principal entrance to the principal structure on the zoning lot, whichever is lower.

3. **Sight Visibility**

- a. No sign shall obstruct a clear view to and from traffic along any street right-of-way, entrance or exit.
- b. A sight visibility triangle determined appropriate for the site by the city engineer upon request of the Planning Commission or Zoning Official shall be kept free of obstructions to vision between the heights of two and one-half feet and twelve feet above the street.

C. Illumination/Lighting of Sign

1. No internally lighted signs shall be permitted within the Residential, Institutional, Resource Conservation, or Open Space districts. Where illumination of a sign is permitted in these districts, it shall be permitted only by indirect means external to the sign face.
2. Electronic/Digital Signs are permitted in the General Commercial and Industrial districts upon approval of the Zoning Official and provided the following special standards are met:

panel on a multi-tenant sign. A multi-tenant sign shall be spaced at a minimum of 300 feet from another multi-tenant sign.

3. Shopping centers, industrial parks and office parks that do not have an approved Sign Program per § 6.5.2E shall be allowed one (1) freestanding sign or multi-tenant sign. Each tenant shall be allowed one wall sign not exceeding the square footage equal to one (1) square foot for each linear foot of store frontage.
4. Shopping centers, industrial parks, office parks and other developments that qualify for a sign program approval may be exempted from the maximum signage area limitation of § 6.5.2(E) provided the Planning Commission has approved a Sign Program per § 6.5.2E. The owner of any shopping center, industrial park or office park existing prior to the date of adoption of this Ordinance may apply in writing to the Planning Commission for approval of a Sign Program which approval shall provide a schedule for bringing non-conforming signs into conformance with this Section within three years.

E. Special Standards by Sign Type

- ~~1. The area of wall mounted signs shall be limited as follows:~~
 - a. ~~No single wall mounted signs shall exceed 30 square feet in area except that on lots with frontage on U.S. Route 50 or in the Industrial district, the maximum area of a wall mounted sign shall be computed as 1.0 square foot per building frontage up to a maximum of 60 square feet.~~
 - b. ~~Notwithstanding the above standard, in no district shall one wall-mounted sign exceed seven percent of the total area of the face of the building wall inclusive of windows and door openings.~~ Removed
1. One marquee sign is permitted provided the sign area for the site does not exceed the maximum allowable sign area in that district and no additional signs are attached to the marquee sign.

AND BE IT FURTHER enacted and ordained that this Ordinance shall become effective on the tenth (10th) day following the date of adoption.

ATTEST:

THE COMMISSIONERS OF CAMBRIDGE

Sandra Tripp-Jones, City Manager

By: _____
Donald Sydnor, Acting Mayor

Introduced the 13th day of June, 2016
Adopted the 20th day of June, 2016
Effective the 30th day of June, 2016