

Chapter 7.102 SIGNS

[Amended by Ordinance No. 12-672-O 12/2/12]

7.102.010 General Authority. In all areas of the City, municipal approval of a sign permit application must be obtained before any sign, except a sign specifically identified in this Chapter, is erected, placed, painted, constructed, carved or otherwise given public exposure. The sign provisions of this Chapter may be considered as a part of a development application or individually. Applications shall be filed with the City on an appropriate form in any manner prescribed by the City, accompanied with an application fee in the amount established by general resolution of the City Council.

7.102.020 Purpose. The purpose of this chapter is to:

- Protect the health, safety, property and welfare of the public;
- Provide a neat, clean, orderly and attractive appearance in the community;
- Improve the effectiveness of signs;
- Provide for safe construction, location, erection and maintenance of signs;
- Prevent the proliferation of signs and sign clutter, minimize adverse visual safety factors to travelers on public highways and on private areas open to public travel; and
- Achieve these purposes in a manner that is consistent with state and federal constitutional limits on the regulation of speech.

To achieve the above, it is necessary to regulate the design, quality of materials, construction, location, height, electrification, illumination, and maintenance of signs that are visible from public property, public right of ways and private areas open to public travel.

7.102.030 Sign Permits Required.

- A. No person shall place on, or apply to, the surface of any building any painted sign, or erect, construct, place or install any other sign, unless a sign permit has been issued by the City for such sign. Application for a sign permit shall be made in accordance with Section 7.102.040. The person(s) in control of said building or property or in control of each business contained thereon shall make application for a sign permit in writing upon forms provided by the City. Such application shall contain the proposed location of each sign on the premises, the street and number of the premises, the name and address of the sign owner, the type of construction of each sign, the design and dimensions of each sign, type of sign supports, location of each sign on the premises, and other such information as may be required by the City.
- B. No person having a permit to erect a sign shall construct or erect same in any manner, except in the manner set forth in the approved permit.
- C. The application for a sign permit shall be accompanied by a filing fee or sign permit fee in an amount established by resolution of the City Council.

7.102.040 Application. An application for a sign permit shall be made on forms provided by the City and shall be accompanied by:

- A. A drawing of the sign indicating its colors, lettering, symbols, logos, materials, size, and area; and,

- B. An elevation and plot plan indicating where the proposed sign will be located on the structure or lot, method of illumination, if any, and similar information.

7.102.050 Definitions. For the purposes of this chapter, unless context indicates otherwise, words in the present tense include the future; the singular number includes the plural and the plural number includes the singular; undefined words have their ordinance accepted meaning; and the following words and phrases mean:

"Abandoned sign" means a sign or sign structure where:

- a. The sign is no longer used by the person who constructed the sign. Discontinuance of a sign use may be shown by cessation of use of the property where the sign is located.
- b. The sign has been damaged, and repairs and restoration are not started within ninety days of the date the sign was damaged, or are not diligently pursued, once started.
- c. Any period of such non-continuance caused by government actions, strikes, materials shortages or acts of God and without any contributing fault by the business or user, shall not be considered in calculating the length of discontinuance for purposes of this definition.

"Alteration" means any change in size, shape, method of illumination, position, location, construction or supporting structure of a sign.

"Balcony" means a platform projecting from the exterior wall, enclosed by a railing, supported by brackets or columns or cantilevered out.

"Banner" means a temporary paper, cloth, or plastic sign advertising a single event of civic or business nature.

"Billboard" means a sign on which any sign face exceeds 80 (eighty) square feet in area.

"Building facade" means the vertical exterior wall of a building including all vertical architectural features.

"Building register sign" means a sign which identifies four or more businesses contained within a single building structure or complex.

"Bulletin board" means a permanent sign providing information in a horizontal linear format that can be changed manually through the placement of letters or symbols on tracks mounted on a panel.

"Business" means a commercial or industrial enterprise.

"Business frontage" means the lineal front footage of the building or a portion thereof, devoted to a specific business or enterprise, and having an entrance/exit opening to the general public.

"Curvilinear" means represented by curved lines.

"Direct illumination" means a source of illumination directed towards such signs so that the beam of light falls on the exterior surface of the sign.

"Event" means the time period from the official or contractual start of an activity to the completion of the same activity. For example, an election event begins with the closing of the filing period and is complete when the time for casting ballots is complete; a real estate event begins with public disclosure the property is for sale, lease or rental and is complete when the property is sold, leased or rented; and a residential sales event begins three days prior to the date purchases are permitted and ends on the day following the posted sale dates.

"Flag" means a light flexible cloth, usually rectangular and bearing a symbol(s) representing a nationality, statehood, or other entity.

"Flashing sign" means a sign incorporating intermittent electrical impulses to a source of

illumination, or revolving in a manner which creates the illusion of flashing, or which changes color or intensity of illumination.

"Fluorescent colors" means extra bright and glowing type colors; includes "dayglow" orange, fluorescent green, etc.

"Fluorescent lighting" means light provided by tubes.

"Free-standing" means a sign which is entirely supported by a sign structure in the ground.

"Frontage" means the single wall surface of a building facing a given direction.

"Illustration" means a line drawing or silhouette of a realistic object.

"Marquee" means a permanent roofed, non-enclosed structure projecting over an entrance to a building which may be attached to the ground surface or not.

"Neon light" means a form of illumination using inert gases in glass tubes. Includes "black light" and other neon lights.

"Non-conforming signs" means those signs which were lawfully installed which do not comply with the requirements of this ordinance.

"Parcel" or "premises" means a lot or tract of land under separate ownership as depicted upon the Columbia County assessment rolls.

"Primary revenue source" means no less than seventy-five percent of gross total principal income derived from a business.

"Public right-of-way" means the area commonly shared by pedestrians and vehicles for right of passage. An easement for public travel or access including street, alley, walkway, driveway, trail or any other public way; also, the land within the boundaries of such easement.

"Quality material" means materials that are appropriate to make temporary window signs, including poster board, heavy bond paper or wood. All temporary signs will be lettered using the approved lettering styles. Brown paper or brown bags, ragged edges or lightweight paper are not allowed.

"Sidewalk" means a hard surface strip within a street right-of-way to be used for pedestrian traffic.

"Sign" means any writing, video projection, illumination, pictorial representation, illustration, decoration, emblem, symbol, design, trademark, banner, flag, pennant, captive balloon, streamer, spinner, ribbon, sculpture, statue, or any other figure or character that:

a. Is a structure or any part thereof (including the roof or wall of the building) and communicates or is designed to communicate on any subject whatsoever; or

b. Is written, printed, projected, painted, constructed, or otherwise placed or displayed upon or designed into a structure or an outdoor screen or monitor, or a board, plate canopy, awning, marquee, or a vehicle, or upon any material object, device, or surface whatsoever and communicates or is designed to communicate on any subject whatsoever. This definition does not include outdoor showings of movies designed for the purpose of entertainment.

"Sign, area of" In determining whether a sign is within the area limitations of this title, the area of the total exterior surface shall be measured and computed in square feet; provided that where the sign has two or more faces, the area of the total exterior surface shall be measured and divided by the number of faces; and provided further that if the interior angle between the two planes of two faces exceeds one hundred thirty-five degrees, they shall be deemed a single face for the purposes hereof. Measurement shall be made at the extreme horizontal and vertical limit of a sign.

"Street frontage" means the lineal dimension in feet of the property upon which a structure is built, each frontage having one street frontage.

"Temporarily attached" means attached to a building, structure, vegetation or the ground in a manner that is easily removable.

"Temporary sign" means a sign that is temporarily attached to a building, structure, vegetation, or the ground. Temporary signs include, but are not limited to, A-frames, banners, flags, pennants, balloons, blimps, streamers, lawn signs and portable signs.

"Unlawful sign" means a sign that does not conform to the provisions of this ordinance and is not a non-conforming sign.

"Video sign" means a sign providing information in both a horizontal and vertical format (as opposed to linear), through use of pixel and sub-pixel technology having the capacity to create continuously changing sign copy in a full spectrum of colors and light intensities.

"Wind sign or device" means any sign or device in the nature of a series of one, two or more banners fastened in such a manner as to move upon being subject to pressure by wind or breeze.

"Window" means all the glass included with one casement.

7.102.060 Signs that do not require a permit. The following signs are allowed without a permit. Use of these signs does not affect the amount or type of signage otherwise allowed by this chapter. The painting, repainting, cleaning, maintenance and repair of these signs shall not require a permit, unless a substantial structural alteration is made. The changing of a sign copy or message shall not require a permit. While exempt from this Chapter and its provisions, all signs listed in this section are subject to all other applicable requirements with this CCDC. [Amended by Ordinance No. 25-740-O 3/23/25]

- A. Memorial tablets, cornerstones or similar plaques not exceeding six square feet.
- B. Flags of national, state, or local governments.
- C. Temporary signs not exceeding four square feet per sign totaling no more than eight square feet per fifty foot of frontage provided the signs are located on private property, are not illuminated, and are posted for a period beginning not more than five days prior to the event they relate to, and removed not more than five days following the event or for a period not to exceed 30 days. Signs shall not obstruct pedestrian walkways, or in any way impede the normal flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic, and shall comply with any applicable ADA requirements. A-frame signs must be removed at the end of each business day.
- D. Temporary signs placed upon a window opening of a building, when such signs do not obscure more than twenty percent of the window area for a period not exceeding forty-five days.
- E. In non-residential zones, no more than four non-illuminated, incidental, informational signs, not larger than one (1) square foot per sign and attached to the primary structure. Examples include "open/closed" signs, credit card signs, rating or professional association signs, and signs of a similar nature.
- F. Signs placed by the state or federal governments or required by state and federal agencies.
- G. A sign identifying the name of the occupant or owner, provided the sign is not larger than one (1) square foot, is not illuminated and is either attached to the structure or located within the front setback.

- H. For approved Type II Home Occupations, one non-illuminated sign, not exceeding 144 square inches, which shall be attached to the residence or accessory structure or placed in a window.
- I. Signs, banners, pennants and flags placed by the City of Columbia City.
- J. Signs that are not visible offsite either from other private properties or the public right of way.
- K. Holiday decorations.

7.102.070 General Sign Provisions. The following general sign provisions apply to all signs within the City:

- A. All signs that are not temporary signs shall be constructed and erected in accordance with the requirements of the Uniform Building Code.
- B. No sign shall be attached to a utility pole nor placed within any public right-of-way, unless specifically approved by the City Council.
- C. When lighting is used for signs, only internal or indirect lighting is allowed. Fluorescent and/or internal neon lighting is not allowed in residential zones.
- D. No sign shall contain any flashing lights, blinking or moving letters, characters or other elements, nor shall it be rotating or otherwise movable.
- E. Billboards, video signs and wind signs or devices are prohibited.
- F. Any unofficial sign which purports to be, is in imitation of, or resembles an official traffic light or a portion thereof, or which hides from view any official traffic sign or signal, is prohibited.
- G. No sign or portion thereof shall be so placed as to obstruct any fire escape, standpipe or human exit from a window located above the first floor of a building; obstruct any door or exit from a building; or obstruct any required light or ventilation.
- H. No free standing sign, or any portion of any free standing sign, shall be located on or be projected over any portion of a street, sidewalk or other public right-of-way.
- I. Roof signs are not permitted.
- J. All illuminated signs must be installed by a state-licensed sign contractor, subject to the requirements of the State Electrical Code. All electrically illuminated signs shall be listed, labeled, and tested by a testing agency recognized by the State of Oregon.
- K. Building and electrical permits shall be the responsibility of the applicant. Prior to obtaining building and electrical permits, the applicant shall obtain a sign permit or demonstrate an exception from the permit requirements of this chapter.
- L. All signs, together with all of their supports, braces, guy wires, and anchors shall be kept

in good repair and be maintained in a safe condition. All signs and the site upon which they are located shall be maintained in a neat, clean, and attractive condition. Signs shall be kept free from excessive rust, corrosion, peeling paint or other surface deterioration. The display surfaces of all signs shall be kept neatly painted or posted. Signs which are faded, torn, damaged or otherwise unsightly or in a state of disrepair shall be immediately repaired or removed.

7.102.080 Residential Zones. Signs in residential zones shall be permitted as follows:

- A. Neighborhood Identification. One freestanding sign shall be permitted at each entry point to a subdivision. The sign shall not exceed an area of twelve (12) square feet per sign, nor five feet in height above grade.
- B. Multiple-Family Residential and Conditional Uses. Where otherwise permitted, one sign of not more than twelve (12) square feet shall be permitted for multiple-family dwellings and for conditional uses. The sign may be attached to the building or freestanding. If freestanding, the sign shall be mounted in a planter or landscaped area and shall not exceed eight feet in height.

7.102.090 Commercial, Industrial and Public Land Zones. Signs in Commercial, Industrial and Public Land Zones shall be permitted as follows:

- A. Freestanding sign for uses bordering Highway 30: One free standing sign per parcel. The maximum height shall be 24 feet to the top of the sign. The sign shall contain a maximum of 80 square feet per side and shall be limited to two sides. Where parcel frontage exceeds 200 feet, a second free standing sign with a maximum height of 8 feet, a maximum of 32 square feet per side and a maximum of two sides shall be permitted. Any lighting shall be indirect.
- B. Freestanding sign for uses not bordering Highway 30: One free standing sign per parcel. The maximum height shall be 24 feet to the top of the sign. The sign shall contain a maximum of 32 square feet per side and shall be limited to two sides. Where parcel frontage exceeds 200 feet, a second free standing sign with a maximum height of 8 feet, a maximum of 32 square feet per side and a maximum of two sides shall be permitted. Any lighting shall be indirect.
- C. Wall signs placed flat against a building which supports it, extending not more than twelve inches from the building, and not exceeding ten (10) percent of the gross area of the face of the building to which the sign is attached.

7.102.100 Nonconforming Signs.

- A. Nonconforming signs shall not be changed, expanded or altered in any manner which would increase the degree of nonconformity, or be structurally altered to prolong the useful life, or be moved in whole or in part to any other location and remain nonconforming.
- B. Any nonconforming sign damaged or destroyed, by any means, to the extent of one-third of its replacement cost shall be terminated and shall not be restored.

- C. Termination shall consist of removal of the sign or its alteration to eliminate fully all nonconforming features.

7.102.110 Abandoned Signs.

- A. Abandoned signs are hereby declared to be a public nuisance.
- B. Abandoned signs shall be removed by their owners within thirty days.
- C. An extension of time for removal of signage of an abandoned business, not to exceed an additional thirty days, may be granted by the City Council upon a written request by the legal owner of the premises or person in control of the business.
- D. Termination of abandoned signs by the City shall be in accordance with Chapter 7.20, Enforcement.

7.102.120 Unlawful Signs.

- A. Unlawful signs are hereby declared to be a public nuisance.
- B. Termination of unlawful signs by the City shall be in accordance with Chapter 7.20, Enforcement, except where an unlawful sign is installed or placed on public right of way or on City-owned real property.
- C. Any unlawful sign installed or placed in the public right-of-way or on City-owned real property may be immediately removed by the City without prior notice to the owner of the sign. The City shall store any sign removed by the City for a period of 15 days from the time the person responsible is notified as provided in this section. The City shall continue to store such sign for any additional period during the enforcement process.
 - 1. If a telephone number or address of the owner of the sign, person responsible therefore, or person or business that is the subject of the communication on the sign is in the text of a sign, the City shall contact said person or business by telephone or by mail (based on the manner of contact stated on the sign) and advise that the sign was found in a location that the City believes to be a public right-of-way or City-owned real property, no permit was issued for the placement of the sign in said location, and that the sign is not otherwise lawfully permitted to be in said location. The communication shall advise said person or business that the City has removed the sign and shall destroy the sign after seven (7) calendar days from the time the person responsible therefore is notified, unless the sign is claimed and the removal and notice fees are paid in full, or an abatement hearing is requested.
 - 2. If no telephone number or mailing address is stated for the owner of the sign on the sign, the City shall retain the sign for a period of fifteen (15) days to permit the sign owner to determine that the sign has been removed.

7.102.130 Unsafe signs.

- A. Any sign the City determines to present an immediate and serious danger to the public

is hereby declared to be a public nuisance.

- B. If the City finds that any sign, by reason of its condition, presents an immediate and serious danger to the public, the City may, without prior written notice, order the immediate removal or repair of the sign within a specified period.
- C. If the City determines that the sign presents an immediate and serious danger to the public, then within such time as set by the City the owner of the sign, or owner of the building, structure or premises on which the sign is located shall cause the sign to be removed, or altered in such a manner as to be made to eliminate the threat of death, injury, or damage to the public and its property. A sign which is not removed or altered in such a manner as to be made safe is defined as a public nuisance.
- D. Costs shall be the responsibility of the sign owner and the person responsible for the placement of the sign, collectively and individually. The costs shall be made a lien against the land or premises on which such sign is located, and may be collected or foreclosed in the same manner as liens otherwise entered in the liens docket of the City.
- E. This chapter shall not be construed to create mandatory enforcement obligations for the City. The enforcement of this chapter shall be a function of the availability of sufficient financial resources consistent with adopted budgetary priorities and prosecutorial priorities within the range of delegated discretion to the City Administrator.