

## CHAPTER 154 — SIGNS

154.001 PURPOSE

The purpose of this article is to regulate signs and outdoor advertising in a manner which will minimize their harmful effects while permitting latitude for creative and effective advertising.

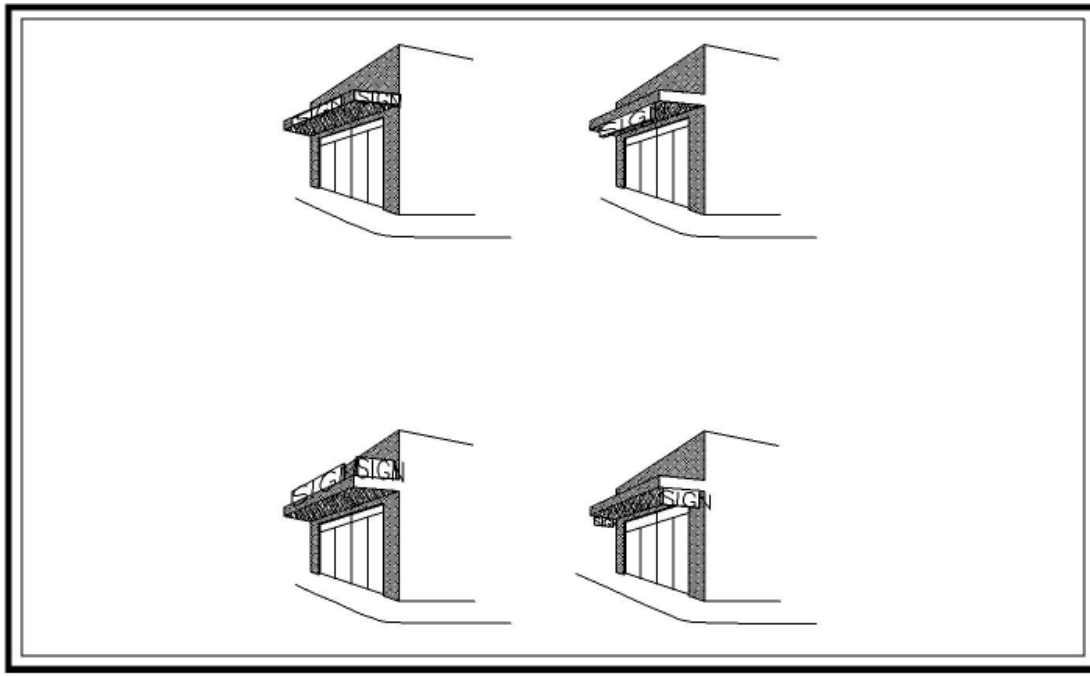
154.002 DEFINITIONS

As used in this Ordinance, the following words shall have the meaning set forth below:

Flag: A piece of cloth or bunting attached to a pole attached to and perpendicular to the ground, bearing the official design of any unit of government, education institution, fraternal benefit societies, order or organization, or any organization operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes, except when displayed in connection with commercial promotion.

Height of a Sign: The vertical distance measured from the ground immediately beneath the sign to the highest point of its structure

Marquee Sign: A display on a marquee or extending above or below a marquee, awning or canopy.



Nonconforming Sign: Any sign which does not conform with the provisions of this ordinance but which was lawfully existing and maintained within the city prior to and at the time this Ordinance

became effective, or was lawfully in existence and in use on the property inside the City on the date this Ordinance went into effect.

Projecting Sign: Any sign attached to a building which extends more than fifteen (15) inches beyond any vertical surface of the building which supports it.

Roof Sign: Any sign which is attached to a building and any part of which extends above either the top of the building silhouette or any portion of the roof surface.

Sidewalk Sign: A portable, non-permanent sign placed on a public sidewalk in the Central Business District (CBD) during regular business hours.

Sign: Any device designed to inform or attract the attention of persons not on the premises on which the sign is located; excepting, however, the following which shall not be included within this definition:

- A. Signs not exceeding one (1) square foot in area and bearing only property numbers, post box numbers, names of occupants of premises, or other identification of premises not having commercial connotations;
- B. Legal notices; identification, informational, or directional signs erected or required by governmental bodies;
- C. Integral decorative or architectural features of buildings, except letters, trademarks, moving parts, or moving lights;
- D. Signs directing and guiding traffic and parking on private property, but bearing no advertising matter.

Sign area: The area of a sign consisting of the entire surface of any regular geometric form, including words, letters and symbols, or combinations of regular geometric forms, comprising all of the display area of the sign and including all of the elements of the matter displayed. Frames and structural members not bearing advertising matter shall not be included in computation of such area.

Sign, on-site: A sign relating in its subject matter to the premises on which it is located, or to products, accommodations, services, or activities on the premises.

Sign, off-site: A sign other than an on-site sign.

Temporary Sign: Any sign which is designed to be transported, including but not limited to signs with wheels, signs with chassis or support constructed without wheels, signs designed to be transported by trailer or wheels, signs converted to an A - or T - frame sign, menu signs or sandwich boards, searchlight stands, pennants, banners or hot air or gas filled balloons used for advertising.

Wall Sign: A sign which is attached directly to, or otherwise inscribed upon, a building wall or the exterior of a window.

Window Sign: Any sign which is permanently or temporarily applied, affixed, or attached to the interior or exterior of any building window.

#### 154.103      PERMITS

No person shall erect, place, structurally alter, paint, or add to any sign nor attach any sign to an existing sign, which shall either increase the area thereof or constitute a structural alteration thereof or an addition thereto, without first obtaining a permit to do so.

##### A.      Application for Sign Erection Permits

Application for such permit shall be filed upon forms provided by the Zoning Administrator and shall contain the following information:

1.      Name, address, and telephone number of the applicant.
2.      Location of building, structure or lot to which the sign is to be attached or erected.
3.      Position of the sign in relation to nearby buildings, structures, and property lines.
4.      A drawing of the plans and specifications and method of construction and attachment to the building or in the ground.
5.      Copy of stress sheets and calculations, if deemed necessary, showing the structure as designed for dead load and wind pressure in accordance with regulations adopted by the Building Official.
6.      Name and address of the person, firm, corporation, or association erecting the structure.
7.      Such other information as may require to show full compliance with this and all other applicable laws of the City of St. Johns and the State of Michigan.

##### B.      The Zoning Administrator shall approve the application and provide the applicant with a sign permit if:

1.      The applicant has paid the required sign permit fees
2.      The applicant has submitted a complete application
3.      The application meets all of the requirements of this ordinance.

### C. No Permit Required

No permit shall be required for ordinary servicing, repainting of existing sign message, or cleaning of a sign. No permit is required for change of message of a sign without change of structure, including a bulletin board or billboard, but not including a sign to which a new permanent face may be attached.

## 154.104 SIGNS NOT REQUIRING PERMITS

### A. Signs in Residential Districts

On-site signs may be permitted in residential districts as follows:

1. One professional sign or name plate sign for a permitted home occupations in the R-3L and R-3H districts not more than one square foot in area which shall be non-illuminated. The sign must be mounted flat against the residence.
2. One non-commercial sign or name plate not more than one square foot in size.
3. Signs permitted in the residential districts shall not be erected closer to any adjacent street right-of-way line than one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) the setback required for said lot, provided that a non-commercial sign or nameplate may be placed anywhere within the front yard.
4. Temporary garage sale signs provided that the garage sale is in compliance with the requirements of Section 5.504 (4) of the City Zoning Ordinance and the sign is removed within one (1) day of the end of the garage sale. Signs shall not be placed within the street right-of-way.

### B. Signs in All Districts

#### 1. Flags

Flags shall be permitted in any district provided the top of the flagpole shall be no higher than thirty-five feet (35') above grade and the height of the flagpole shall be at least eight feet (8') higher than the length of the longest side of the flag, measured from the lowest point of the flag (at relaxed position) to grade. There shall be no more than one flag pole per lot.

2. Legal notices; identification, informational, or directional signs erected or required by governmental bodies.
3. Political signs advertising political candidates and / or political and election positions provided that the total area of the sign shall not exceed 14 square feet, and further provided that they shall be removed within five days after said election is

completed. Political signs shall be non-illuminated and not to be placed or project into a public right-of-way and shall only be placed on private property with prior permission of the property owner. No political signs shall be placed in such a manner as to obstruct the view of vehicle drivers when leaving or entering a street, driveway or parking space. The painting of any political sign on the exterior of any building or structure is prohibited.

4. Community Special Event Signs are permitted either on or off the lot on which the special event is held. The display of the signs shall be limited to the ten (10) days immediately preceding the special event which is being advertised and shall be removed within forty-eight (48) hours of the conclusion of the special event which is being advertised. The signs shall have a maximum size of 32 s.f. in area and a maximum height above ground level of six (6) feet. Community Special Event Signs shall be non-illuminated and not to be placed or project into a public right-of-way and shall only be placed on private property with prior permission of the property owner. No Community Special Event Signs shall be placed in such a manner as to obstruct the view of vehicle drivers when leaving or entering a street, driveway or parking space.
5. Sponsor Signs are permitted with advertisement limited to the name, address and telephone number of the sponsor. No Sponsor Signs shall be illuminated and the surface area denoting the sponsor information shall not exceed four (4) s.f. in total area. All sponsorship signs shall be removed within seven (7) days after the conclusion of the special event, sporting function, community event or similar functions. All Sponsor Signs NOT meeting the aforementioned requirements may be approved by the St. Johns Planning Commission upon submittal of sign information prior to placement of the sponsor sign. Sponsor Signs shall not to be placed or project into a public right-of-way and shall only be placed on private property with prior permission of the property owner. No Sponsor Signs shall be placed in such a manner as to obstruct the view of vehicle drivers when leaving or entering a street, driveway or parking space.
6. One non-illuminated temporary sign pertaining to the lease or sale of the premises upon which it is placed, not exceeding eight (8) square feet in total area, provided that it shall be removed within seven (7) days after the consummation of a lease or sale transaction.
7. One (1) non-illuminated temporary sign indicating the name of the architect, developer, financing institution and/or construction company responsible for the construction of a development while construction is in progress. The sign shall be no greater than 12 square feet in size in residential districts and 32 square feet in size in commercial or industrial districts. Project signs for a multi lot or multi-unit residential development may be a maximum of 32 square feet in area. Project signs located on a site for greater than 3 months shall require a permit and shall be shown on the developments proposed site plan.

8. Illumination – Source of illumination shall not be visible beyond the property line of parcel where sign is located. Canopy signs may not be internally lighted. If sign externally illuminated, the source of the light shall be enclosed and directed to prevent light from shining directly onto traffic or neighboring property.
- C. Sidewalk Signs in Central Business District may be permitted in the Central Business District, subject to the following requirements:
- (1) Sidewalk signs shall be displayed only during the normal business hours of the business advertised. All sidewalk signs shall be stored indoors at all other times.
  - (2) Sidewalk signs shall be placed in a location so as not to impede pedestrian traffic or be a hazard to parked vehicles. A continuous path at least five (5) feet in width shall be maintained on the public sidewalk.
  - (3) Sidewalk signs shall not be placed in a location to impede the visibility of motorists at intersections.
  - (4) No sign shall exceed a height of forty-two (42) inches and a width of thirty (30) inches.
  - (5) Sidewalk signs shall not be lit artificially or contain any moving parts or displays.
  - (6) Sidewalk signs shall be removed from the public sidewalk at any time weather conditions render the presence of such signs a hazard because of wind, ice, or snow.
  - (7) One sidewalk sign is permitted for each storefront. Any sign that advertises a business other than that of the storefront must be granted the permission of the building owner and/or business.
  - (8) Signs and lettering must be of professional quality. No paper or cardboard signs are permitted. Chalk boards are permitted provided they meet other requirements.
  - (9) Signs and supports must be maintained and kept painted, sealed or preserved from weather conditions.
- D. Temporary Signs shall only be displayed upon receipt of a permit issued by the Zoning Administrator. No Temporary Sign shall be displayed for more than 15 consecutive days, renewable quarterly. No Temporary Sign shall exceed 32 s.f. and only one temporary sign is permitted per lot. No flashing light or more than one (1) color of light. All Temporary Signs shall be designed and constructed to withstand a wind pressure of not less

than thirty (30) pounds per s.f. of area. No Temporary Sign shall be closer than five (5) feet from any property line fronting on a public street. Sign shall be removed immediately upon expiration of permit.

E. Directional Signs shall not exceed two (2) s.f. in area and three (3) feet in height and shall be set back at least five (5) feet from any lot line and edge of any driving lane. A Directional Sign may contain a commercial logo or trademark, not exceeding one-third of the sign size, but not a business name nor commercial message.

154.105 Permitted Signs

The following signs for identification of activities and services available on the premises, for providing information relative to the functions of the premises, or for the advertising are allowed by the issuance of a zoning permit with the particular limitations for each use district noted:

SIGN TYPE AND STANDARDS	R-1	R-2	MU	R-3L	R-3H	MC	GC	CBD	O	I-1	I-2	T
For each recorded <u>residential</u> subdivision or development, 1 identification crest or insignia not to exceed 32 sq. ft. in area, no closer to street or lot line than 30 ft., for no more than 2 years. <u>For non-residential developments, any construction sign shall be removed upon issuance of certificate of occupancy for the building.</u>	P	P	P	P	P							P
1 sign not exceeding 12 sq. ft. for identification of housing developments such as apartment complexes.				P	P							P
Wall signs or window signs, not projecting over roof <u>line or extending beyond edge of wall</u> , not exceeding 20% of building height, total area of all signs not to exceed 20% of the area of building face or window to which they are attached.			P				P	P				P
Canopy signs or Marque signs not projecting over roof line, not exceeding 20% of the area of canopy face or marque to which they are attached.			P				P	P				P
1 freestanding sign, not to exceed 30 ft. In height or 50 sq. ft. in area. <u>Freestanding signs shall have a clear space of at least eight (8) feet between the grade and the bottom of the sign to permit an</u>			P				P	P				P

SIGN TYPE AND STANDARDS	R-1	R-2	MU	R-3L	R-3H	MC	GC	CBD	O	I-1	I-2	T
unobstructed view for motorists and pedestrians.												
Wall signs or window signs, not projecting over roof line or extending beyond wall, not exceeding 10% of building height, total area of all signs not to exceed 10% of the area of building face or window to which they are attached.						P			P			
Canopy signs or marque signs not projecting over roof line, not exceeding 10% of the area of canopy or marque to which they are attached.						P			P			
1 freestanding sign, not to exceed 10 ft. in height or 12 sq. ft. in area						P			P			
1 freestanding sign up to 24 sq. ft. in area and a wall sign not to exceed 5% of the area of side of building.										P	P	
Sidewalk Signs not to exceed 42" in height & 30" in width, displayed only during normal business hours of business advertised and stored indoors at other times. Sidewalk signs not to impede visibility of traffic or impede pedestrian traffic or be a hazard to parked cars. Sidewalk signs not to be lit or contain moving parts. One sidewalk sign permitted per storefront and must be of professional quality and maintained.								P				
Temporary signs including pennants and banners no more than 15 consecutive days, no more than once every 3 months, not in the ROW, no flashing light or more than 1 color of light.						P	P	P	P	P	P	P



154.106 Billboard Signs

Billboard signs are permitted in the City of St. Johns under the following conditions:

SIGN TYPE AND STANDARDS	R-1	R-2	MU	R-3L	R-3H	MC	GC	CBD	O	I-1	I-2	T
Billboards, only along state highways and meeting the requirements of the State Highway Advertising Act and further provided that each sign shall be spaced a minimum of 2000' apart							P	P		P	P	

154.107 Digital Standard

A. Purpose and Intent. More businesses desire to utilize advancements in technology which permit signs to change copy electronically (e.g., utilizing an LED type of sign). These newer technologies pose additional risks of impacting adjacent areas and adversely dominating the environment in which they operate unless regulated in a reasonable fashion. The intent of this section is to establish operating standards and regulations for signs which utilize these newer technologies in order to minimize the secondary effects that often accompany the unregulated display of digital signs, preserve the character and repose of adjacent areas (with a principle focus on residential neighborhoods), protect property values, and reduce traffic hazards caused by undue distractions.

B. Display

1. Electronic message boards shall be permitted provided they meet the requirements for illumination and message display as delineated in Title VX, Chapter 155 of the City Ordinances.
2. A digital sign may not allow the display or message to change more frequently than once every eight seconds, with a transition period of one second or less. Any electronic message boards that are placed adjacent to residential properties may only switch from one message to another by fading in and out.
3. A digital sign must have installed an ambient light monitor, which shall continuously monitor and automatically adjust the brightness level of the display based on ambient light conditions consistent with the terms of this article.
4. The maximum brightness levels for all digital signs shall not exceed 0.1 footcandles over ambient light levels measured within 150 feet of the source, consistent with terms of this section. Certification must be provided to the City demonstrating that the sign has been preset to automatically adjust the brightness to these levels or lower. Re-inspection and recalibration may be periodically required by the City in its

reasonable discretion, at the owner's expense, to ensure that the specified brightness levels are maintained at all times.

5. Brightness of digital signs shall be measured as follows:

- a. At least 30 minutes following sunset, a foot candle meter shall be used to obtain an ambient light reading for the location. This done while the sign is off or displaying black copy. The reading shall be made with the meter aimed directly at the sign area at the pre-set location.
- b. The sign shall then be turned on to full white copy to take another reading with the meter at the same location.
- c. If the difference between the readings is 0.1 foot candles or less, the brightness is properly adjusted.

6. Other Requirements.

- a. Any digital message board that will be located within 150 feet of a residential structure must be a freestanding, monument sign not exceeding eight (8) feet in height.
- b. The use, size and location of digital signs must comply with all other relevant regulations and ordinances of the City.

154.108 Prohibited Signs

The following signs are prohibited in the City of St. Johns:

- A. Any signs including window signs with any visible moving, animation, revolving or mechanical parts or movements, or other apparent visible movement achieved by electrical, electronic or mechanical means, including intermittent electrical pulsations, or by action of normal wind current shall not be permitted (excluding time and temperature signs, which are permitted).
- B. Balloons, balloon signs, strings of light bulbs, pennants, streamers, banners, or flags, except for those flags of a non-commercial nature not used for the purpose of commercial advertisement and specifically exempted, or except at the opening of a new business in a commercial or industrial district, for a period not exceeding fifteen (15) days. Exterior banner signs and pennant display signs shall be permitted in commercial or industrial districts only to call attention to a sale or promotion of goods sold on the premises, for a period not exceeding fifteen (15) consecutive days, each sale or promotion, with a maximum 60 days per calendar year.
- C. Roof signs

D. Off-site signs other than approved billboards

154.109 General Requirements

- A. No signs may be placed in or overhang into a public right-of-way other than signs established and maintained by the City, County, State or Federal government.
- B. No light pole, utility pole, tree or other supporting member shall be used for the placement of any sign unless specifically designed and approved for such use.
- C. Signs may not be placed so as to obstruct the clear vision of motorists or pedestrians or be confused with any authorized traffic sign, signal, or device or constitute a nuisance per se.
- D. No commercial vehicle, which in the opinion of the Zoning Administrator has the intended function of acting as a sign, shall be parked in an area abutting the street, unless no other parking area is available.

154.110 Maintenance

- A. All signs for which a permit is required and all supports thereof shall:
1. Be kept in compliance with the plans and specifications filed and approved for issuance of the sign permit.
  2. Be kept and maintained in a safe condition.
  3. At all times conform to all provisions of this ordinance.
  4. The Zoning Administrator has the authority to inspect any sign requiring a permit at any given time to ensure compliance with the requirements of this ordinance.
  5. The Zoning Administrator may require the repair or removal of a sign requiring a permit within seven (7) days upon the finding that any of the following conditions exist:
    - a. The sign is found to be unsafe.
    - b. The sign is in a condition that does not comply with this ordinance.
    - c. The sign was established as an accessory use for a principal use which has ceased to exist for a period of six (6) months.
    - d. The sign is deteriorated and constitutes a blight to the community's appearance. Evidence of deterioration include peeling paint, missing letters, broken or cracked sign face or burned out lights.

154.111 Non-conforming Signs

- A. Legal, non-conforming signs in existence at the time of the adoption of this ordinance shall be removed or brought into conformance with this ordinance within seven years of its adoption, with the following exceptions:
1. Billboard signs
  2. Signs granted a variance from the requirements of this ordinance by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

154.112 Violations; Penalties

- A. Unless a section of this article specifically provides otherwise, any person, firm, corporation, trust, partnership or other legal entity which violates a provision of this article shall be responsible for a municipal civil infraction and shall be fined accordingly.
- B. Each day a violation occurs or continues shall constitute a separate offense; and shall make the violator liable for the imposition of a fine and other penalties for each day of violation.
- C. The owner, co-owner and occupant(s) of any lot which is in violation of a provision of this article shall each be responsible for a municipal civil infraction and shall be subject to the fines, costs and orders as provided herein.
- D. Any structure which is erected, altered or converted in violation of any provision of this article is declared to be a public nuisance per se, and may be abated by order of court of competent jurisdiction.
- E. Any person or entity who, after having been determined to be responsible for a violation of this section, commits or is found responsible for a subsequent violation within a two-year period, shall be fined double the amount assessed for the immediate preceding violation.
- F. The rights and remedies provided are cumulative and are in addition to any other remedies provided by law.
- G. Nothing herein shall be interpreted to limit the authority of the City to revoke an approval previously granted due to any violations of this article, which right is expressly reserved.