

## CHAPTER 145 SIGNS

### **Section 145-010 Purpose**

The purpose of this section is to promote the public safety and welfare by providing standards to control the location, area, number, illumination, and overall design of signs. Benefits of such standards include assurance that emergency personnel may quickly locate an address; motorists are not hindered by an excess of signage or associated lighting when attempting to locate a specific business or address; motorist safety on roadways and when exiting and entering business parking lots is enhanced; signs are compatible with the size and type of businesses being identified and advertised; aesthetic values of the community are honored; blight upon the business community is prevented; and property values are preserved.

### **Section 145-020 Definitions**

**Sign:** The term “sign” shall include any structure, or part thereof, or any device attached to a building or structure or painted or represented thereon which displays or includes letters, words, symbols, trademarks, or any other graphic representation which is in the nature of an announcement, direction, advertisement or other device used to attract the attention of the public for commercial purposes or otherwise; similarly, any natural object, such as a tree, stone, or the earth itself, which is painted or arranged so as to represent or display any of the aforesaid graphic representations.

**Billboard:** A sign designed or intended to direct attention to a business, product, activity or service that is not sold, rented, offered or existing on the property where the sign is located, including the billboard structure and all attached sign faces.

**Building Frontage:** The length of the side of the building which is parallel or nearest to parallel with the front lot line.

**Directional Sign:** A small free-standing sign typically used to denote entrances and exits at a business location. Signs may be illuminated (see definition below). The maximum size of a directional sign shall be two (2) square feet. A directional sign may be placed at each entrance and exit to a parking lot or driveway. Directional signs located within a parking lot may be permitted as part of a site plan application under Chapter 175.

**Free-Standing Sign:** A free-standing sign may be located within the front landscape area setback at least ten (10) feet from the front property line for business and industrial properties. This sign may contain the emergency response address with lettering and numbering at a suggested minimum height of eight (8) inches. The sign may be illuminated. The size of such sign may not exceed fifteen (15) feet in height from the ground level to the top of the sign. The portion of the sign containing the emergency response address shall not be considered part of the total square footage of the allowable

sign, provided this additional sign area does not exceed ten (10) square feet. The maximum allowable area of a free-standing sign can be found in Section 145-050.

**Gasoline Price Sign:** One (1) price sign per lot where gasoline is legally sold, not larger than twenty four (24) square feet.

**Illuminated Sign:** A sign lit from within; typically constructed of plastic or other translucent or opaque material. Illuminated signs shall be designed, located, installed and directed in such a manner as to prevent objectionable light and glare. Any illumination of signs shall be confined to the surface of the illuminated sign.

**Interior Window Sign:** A sign, temporary or permanent, displayed in the window of a business, located within 36 inches of the window glass, that is visible to pedestrians or passing vehicles. Such signs shall not be larger than fifteen percent (15%) of the window surface they are visible through, or six (6) square feet in area, whichever is smaller. No more than two windows per storefront shall be utilized for such purpose.

**Lot Frontage:** The length of the front lot line. Where a building is located on a lot having frontage on two (2) public streets (corner lot), the Zoning Enforcement Officer or Land Use Inspector shall determine which lot line shall be used in determining compliance with these regulations.

**Off-site sign:** A public convenience sign located on a parcel of land which directs the public to a business located on another parcel of land. (Effective June 1, 2007)

**Pennants/Banners:** Signs composed of fabric, plastic or similar sheeting materials that are hung from or otherwise mounted or attached on buildings or poles, including flags and banners.

**Political Signs:** Political campaign signs or signs concerning a matter of public interest or controversy including any poster, writing, notice, insignia, and any other device, to announce the candidacy of any persons seeking public office or to state a position or opinion on a matter of public interest or controversy. Each sign shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area.

**Public Convenience Sign:** Small sign not exceeding two (2) square feet in area attached flat against a principal building to identify hours of operation or other basic information of a non-advertising nature.

**Public Signs:** Signs of a non-commercial nature, erected in the public interest by or on the order of a public official, in the performance of his/her duty, including temporary signs legally required by a board or commission, including, but not limited to safety, trespassing, traffic control signs, and signs of memorial or historic interest, not to exceed sixteen (16) square feet.

**Residential Dwelling Sign:** A sign located on a residential property. It is suggested that the emergency response address be indicated on such sign. One ground sign per parcel is permitted, not to exceed one and one-half (1 ½) square feet, and one building face sign per parcel is permitted, not to exceed one (1) square foot.

**Sandwich Board Sign/ “A” Frame Sign:** Free-standing tent sign typically placed on the sidewalk or in the front landscape area.

**Searchlight:** Lighting directed into the sky from a specific business on a temporary or permanent basis that is intended to attract the attention of prospective customers to that business.

**Special Event Signs:** For temporary public, charitable, educational, or religious events: One (1) sign not exceeding twenty (20) square feet in area on the same lot as the event, plus a maximum of three (3) other signs, no larger than four (4) square feet in area at other locations (with the permission of the property owner), provided that said signs are posted no sooner than fifteen (15) days prior to the event, and removed within three (3) days of the close of the event. No such signs shall be placed in the street right of ways. No special event signs shall be illuminated.

**Wall Sign:** Sign mounted directly on the building’s façade as opposed to being constructed as a free-standing structure. Such signs may be illuminated. Canopies and awnings are considered part of the building to which they are attached and any sign face on such shall be considered a wall sign and subject to these regulations.

**Wall-Hung Sign:** A sign attached to a building that is perpendicular to the building’s façade.

**Warning Sign:** “Do not trespass” signs and other signs indicating the private nature of a driveway or other premises, not exceeding two (2) square feet in area.

### **Section 145-030 Exempt Signs**

The following signs do not require a zoning permit provided such sign meets the sign definition as found in section 145-020, where so noted:

1. Interior window sign
2. Directional signs
3. Political signs
4. Public convenience sign
5. Public signs

6. Special event signs
7. Residential dwelling sign
8. Warning sign
9. Sign indicating a building is part of an historic district, listed on the National Historic Register, or otherwise honored for its historic significance, not to exceed four (4) square feet.
10. Sign indicating the year of a building's construction not to exceed two (2) square feet.
11. Illustrations, insignia or lettering which is an integral and permanent part of the architecture of a building constructed prior to 1950, as may be verified by the New Milford Trust for Historic Preservation.
12. Flags, insignia or pennant of any government unit.
13. Window signs are permitted, provided (a) they shall only be painted on or affixed to the interior face of windows and (b) the total sign face area does not exceed fifteen percent (15%) of each window area through which such signs are painted on or affixed. The total area of such signs may not exceed six (6) square feet in area per window. Said signs shall not be used to compute allowances for total sign face areas specified herein.
14. Building contractors and real estate sale or lease signs, provided that
  - a. In a Residential Zone, Village Center Zone, B-4 Zone, Litchfield Corridor Overlay District, and the Town Landmark District the size does not exceed six (6) square feet in area and four (4) feet in height and is located at least ten (10) feet from the front property line, or if the building is located closer than 10' to the front property line, such sign shall be placed on the building.
  - b. In a B-1, B-2, B-3, R-I, I, IC, Airport or MV zone the size does not exceed fifteen (15) square feet in area or five (5) feet in height and must be placed at least 30' from the front property line, or if the building is located closer than 30' to the front property line, such sign must be located on the building.
  - c. All such signs must be removed with three (3) days of finalization of sale, signing of lease, or completion of construction. Signs may not be illuminated, and one (1) sign is permitted per lot.

#### **Section 145-040 Prohibited Signs**

The following signs are prohibited in all zones:

1. Flashing signs
2. Moving signs, which include, but are not limited to, permanent spinners and streamers
3. Portable or mobile signs, including any sign which is mounted on wheels, is collapsible (including “A” frame signs or sandwich board signs) or is suspended in the air by a balloon or other lighter-than-air device, with the exception of those sandwich board signs as permitted in the Village Center Zone under section 080-040(2)G of the regulations.
4. Any sign attached to a building or structure which extends above the roofline or parapet, or beyond the confines of the building on which such sign is placed.
5. Pennants and banners
6. Signs with electronic displays

#### **Section 145-050 Permitted Signs**

All signage described in this section requires a zoning permit.

1. **Residential Zones:** In a residential district, MR District, AACZ, MPRDD, CCSD, or any future residential zone which may be created, one sign is permitted for legally existing uses as follows:
  - a. One sign not exceeding four (4) square feet in area is permitted for legally pre-existing home occupations, professional offices, bed and breakfast inns, riding academies, farm stands, and general home occupations. The sign may be either free standing, wall-hung, or a wall sign. A free-standing sign may not exceed a height of four (4) feet from the ground to the top of the sign.
  - b. One sign not exceeding sixteen (16) square feet in area and (10) feet in height for a free standing sign may be permitted for churches, schools, colleges, public libraries, community buildings, public parks, public playgrounds, public recreation buildings, stadium or athletic field, golf course, nursery, hospitals, nursing homes, convalescent homes, cemeteries, marinas, municipal buildings, and other philanthropic organizations.
  - c. One free-standing sign posted at the entrance to a residential subdivision, multiple-residence development, or active adult community, not to exceed twelve (12) square feet in area and three (3) feet in height noting the name of the complex or development and may include the property’s address.

- 2. Business, Industrial, Airport, and Motor Vehicle Junkyard Zones:** In a B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, I, IC, RI, Airport and MV zones, and any future non-residential zones which may be established, the following signs are permitted, as follows:
- a. All signs permitted in residential zones.
  - b. Wall signs, free-standing signs, and wall-hung signs are permitted, provided that only one free-standing sign is allowed per lot and one face sign is allowed per business, with the exception that properties where gasoline is legally sold may also erect a second free standing gasoline price sign.
  - c. The total area of all wall and wall-hung signs on a property, excluding those exempt signs listed under section 145-030, shall not exceed one (1) square foot for each running foot of building frontage.
  - d. The maximum allowable area of a free standing sign shall be determined as follows: the length of the lot frontage multiplied by .2 equals the maximum square footage allowable for the area of a free standing sign, up to a maximum size of forty (40) square feet in area, with the exception that in the B-4 zone, free standing signs may not exceed sixteen (16) square feet in area.
  - e. The maximum allowable height of a free-standing sign shall be fifteen feet (15') from the ground to the top of such sign.
  - f. Where a building is located on a lot having frontage on two (2) public streets (corner lot), the maximum total sign area which may be permitted, on or parallel to the main façade of the building, shall not exceed the provision of subsection c. above. An additional wall sign may be permitted parallel to the next abutting street or on the rear of the building provided that such sign does not exceed one (1) square foot for each running foot of building frontage to the abutting street and that in no case shall exceed twenty five (25) square feet in total area.
- 3. Village Center Zone:** In the Village Center Zone the following signs are permitted and the following special standards shall apply:
- a. All signs permitted in a residential zone, as noted in section 1 above, are permitted.
  - b. Permitted businesses with a front lawn or front landscape area may choose from either a free-standing sign or a wall sign. The maximum size for either type of sign shall not exceed sixteen (16) square feet in area and ten (10) feet in height.
  - c. Permitted businesses with buildings that front directly on the sidewalk may choose from either a wall sign or a wall-hung sign. One sign is permitted per business. The maximum size allowed of a wall sign is one (1) square foot of area for each foot of building frontage, not to exceed sixteen (16) square feet. The maximum size of a wall-hung sign, excluding its structure is six (6) square feet, and must be located a minimum of 84 inches from the ground level at its lowest point, and may

not project more than 36 inches from the building face. Said sign shall not project over or beyond the property line of the lot on which the building is located.

- d. No signs, including interior window signs, shall be illuminated or neon.
- e. It is recommended that signage be designed to be consistent with the architectural style, character and composition of the façade of which it is a part.
- f. Most commercial facades will have a natural location for signage in an area above the ground floor fenestration and below the second floor fenestration.

### **Section 145-060      Application Procedures**

Unless otherwise provided in this regulation, no sign shall be established, constructed, reconstructed, enlarged, extended, moved or structurally altered until a zoning permit has been issued for such sign. Every application for a sign zoning permit shall include the following information and exhibits:

- 1. A site plan depicting the proposed location of the sign in relation to other structures, parking areas, exits, entrances, required yards and buffers located on the lot.
- 2. Design, height, width, structural details, dimensions and lighting of the proposed sign.
- 3. Any other information deemed necessary by the Zoning Enforcement Officer or Land Use Inspector required to show full compliance with the zoning regulations.

### **Section 145-070      Additional Standards**

- 1. No sign shall extend beyond any lot line.
- 2. No signs, including those not requiring permits, shall be placed in such a position as to endanger traffic on a street or public way by obscuring a clear view or by confusion with official street or highway signs or signals.
- 3. No signs, other than official street or highway signs, shall be erected or maintained within street or highway right of ways.
- 4. Signs may advertise, identify or give publicity or notice only with respect to a use of land, buildings or structures located on the lot where the sign is located.
- 5. Sign Dimensions: The permitted size of a sign is measured by determining the area of the rectangle, circle or triangle of the actual sign face to determine its square footage, excluding any structure necessary to support the sign. When a

free-standing sign is double-faced, only one side shall be counted to determine square footage.

6. An existing sign structure which conforms to the standards of this regulation may be repaired or repainted without a new sign zoning permit, provided no other change is made to the sign.
7. It shall be unlawful to erect, cause to erect, or allow to remain erected:
  - a. Any sign for which a zoning permit is required and has not been issued.
  - b. Any sign which, once erected, does not comply with the specifications or any other permit requirement on which basis a permit was issued.
  - c. Any sign, lights, or supports thereof which identify a use which no longer exists or has been abandoned for a period of more than three months.

#### **Section 145-080 Non-Conforming Signs**

All signs which legally existed upon the effective date of this regulation and not conforming to its provisions, or any amendment thereto, shall be deemed a non-conforming sign. No nonconforming sign shall be structurally altered, relocated, or replaced except in compliance with these regulations.

#### **Section 145-090 Off Site Signage (Effective June 1, 2007)**

Purpose: In certain circumstances large parcels of land zoned for commercial, industrial or business uses may be integral parts of the state highway corridors, however, these parcels may not have actual frontage on such roads. Out of concern for the safety, welfare and convenience of the public, it is recognized that these goals of zoning can be better achieved by allowing limited off-site signage to allow the public to more easily locate a business, commercial or industrial use which is located on a business or industrial zoned property.

In the event that a parcel of land has no frontage on a state highway, but some portion of the property is located within 1000 feet of the edge of the state right of way at its nearest point, an applicant may locate one sign on an adjacent, sub-servient property that has frontage on a state highway, provided:

1. The size of the off-site sign may not exceed 20 square feet in area and 15 feet in height from the ground level to the top of the sign.
2. A single sub-servient property may not allow more than one off-site sign to be placed on such property.
3. The non-frontage property may not have more than one corresponding off-site sign.

4. The area of the off-site sign shall be deducted from the allowable square footage for permitted signage on the non-frontage property.
5. The applicant for an off-site sign permit must apply for and obtain a special permit and site plan approval in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 175 and 180 of these regulations.
6. The applicant shall furnish a signed and notarized statement from the owner of the property on which the off-site sign is to be placed authorizing the applicant to place an off-site sign on the frontage property.

(Chapter Revised and Adopted by the Zoning Commission November 9, 2005;  
Effective January 1, 2006)