

CHAPTER 17 SIGNS

SECTION 17.01 INTENT AND PURPOSE

The intent of this Chapter is to regulate the location, size, construction, and manner of display of signs and outdoor advertising in order to minimize their harmful effects on the public health, safety and welfare. While this Chapter recognizes that signs and outdoor advertising are necessary to promote commerce and public information, failure to regulate them may lead to poor identification of individual businesses, deterioration and blight of the business and residential areas of the township, conflicts between different types of land use, and reduction in traffic safety to pedestrians and motorists.

SECTION 17.02 DEFINITIONS

- A. Awning: A retractable or fixed shelter constructed of non-rigid materials on a supporting framework that projects from the exterior wall of a building.
- B. Awning sign: A sign affixed flat against the surface of an awning.
- C. Balloon sign: A sign composed of a non-porous bag of material filled with air or gas.
- D. Banner sign: A fabric, plastic, or other sign made of non-rigid material without an enclosing structural framework.
- E. Construction Sign: A sign that identifies the owners, financiers, contractors, architects, and/or engineers of a project under construction.
- F. Directional Sign: A sign that gives directions, instructions, or facility information for the use on the lot on which the sign is located, such as a parking, or exit and entrance sign.
- G. Freestanding Sign: A sign supported on poles not attached to a building or wall.
- H. Government Sign: A temporary or permanent sign erected by Grass Lake Charter Township, state or federal government or other appropriate governmental agencies.
- I. Ground Sign: A sign resting directly on the ground or supported by short poles not attached to a building or wall.
- J. Marquee: A permanent structure constructed of rigid materials that projects from the exterior wall of a building.
- K. Marquee Sign: A sign affixed flat against the surface of a marquee.

- L. Mural: A design or representation painted or drawn on a wall that does not advertise an establishment, product, service, or activity.
- M. Placard: A sign not exceeding two (2) square feet which provides notices of a public nature, such as "No Trespassing" or "No Hunting" signs.
- N. Political Sign: A temporary sign used in connection with an official city, village, township, school district, county, state, or federal election, referendum, or public issue.
- O. Portable Sign: A sign designed to be moved easily and not permanently attached to the ground, a structure, or a building.
- P. Projecting Sign: A double-faced sign attached to a building or wall that extends more than twelve (12) inches but not more than forty-eight (48) inches from the face of the building or wall.
- Q. Reader Board: A portion of a sign on which copy is changed manually.
- R. Real Estate Sign: A sign advertising the real estate upon which the sign is located as being for sale, rent, or lease.
- S. Roof Line: The top edge of a roof or parapet wall, whichever is higher, but excluding any cupolas, chimneys, or other minor projections.
- T. Roof Sign: A sign erected above the roofline of a building.
- U. Sign: A device, structure, fixture, or placard using graphics, symbols, and/or written copy designed specifically for the purpose of advertising or identifying an establishment, product, service, or activity.
- V. Special Event Sign: Temporary and portable signs containing public messages concerning special events sponsored by governmental agencies or non-profit organizations.
- W. Wall Signs: A sign painted or attached directly to and parallel to the exterior wall of a building extending no greater than twelve (12) inches from the exterior face of the wall to which it is attached.
- X. Window Sign: A sign installed inside a window and intended to be viewed from the outside.

SECTION 17.03 GENERAL SIGN PROVISIONS

- A. No person shall erect, alter, place or permit to be placed, or replace any sign without first obtaining a building permit, except as noted in Section 17.04 and 17.09.

- B. Signs shall be maintained free of peeling paint or paper, fading, staining, rust, or other conditions that impairs legibility or intelligibility. Broken or damaged parts of signs shall be repaired as soon as possible after the damage occurs.
- C. Sign supports, braces, guys and anchors shall be maintained in a manner as not to cause a hazard.
- D. Signs may be internally or externally illuminated, except for home occupation signs, which shall not be illuminated. External light fixtures shall be enclosed and directed to prevent the source of light from shining directly onto traffic or residential property.
- E. No sign shall be erected, relocated or maintained so as to obstruct fire fighting or prevent free access to any door, window or fire escape.
- F. All signs shall be so placed as to not interfere with the visibility or effectiveness of any official traffic sign or signal; driver vision at any access point or intersection; or, pedestrian movement on any public sidewalk.
- G. No sign shall be placed in, upon or over any public right-of-way, or other public place, except as may be otherwise permitted by this Chapter, or placed so as to interfere with the visibility or effectiveness of any official traffic sign or signal; driver vision at any access point or intersection; or, pedestrian movement on any public sidewalk.
- H. No light pole, utility pole, or other supporting member shall be used for the placement of any sign unless specifically designed and approved for that use.
- I. No sign shall be erected in any place where it may, by reason of its position, shape, color, or other characteristic, interfere with, obstruct the view of, or be confused with any authorized traffic sign, signal, or device, or constitute a nuisance per se.
- J. No commercial vehicles, which, in the opinion of the Zoning Administrator, have the intended function of acting as signs, shall be parked in any area abutting the street, unless no other parking area is available.
- K. No sign shall contain any moving or animated parts nor have the appearance of having any moving or animated parts. No sign shall employ any flashing, moving, oscillating, blinking, or variable intensity light. This provision is not intended to exclude those signs that give the time or temperature, provided no other animated messages are displayed.
- L. No wall sign shall extend beyond the edge of the wall to which it is affixed or extend above the roofline of a building.
- M. No sign shall be erected above the roofline of a building.

- N. No obscene message or profanity, as determined by the Zoning Administrator, shall be displayed on any sign.
- O. Only signs that direct attention to a business or profession conducted as an allowed use or to a principal commodity, service or entertainment sold or offered as an allowed use upon property where the sign is located are permitted, except where expressly provided otherwise in this Ordinance.
- P. Any sign not expressly permitted by this Ordinance is prohibited.

SECTION 17.04 EXEMPTED SIGNS

The following signs shall be exempt from the provisions of the Grass Lake Charter Township Zoning Ordinance.

- A. Flags or insignia of any nation, state, county, community organization, or educational institution.
- B. Government signs.
- C. Historical markers.
- D. Memorial signs or tablets.
- E. Murals.
- F. Signs for essential services.
- G. Signs not visible from any street.
- H. Signs with address, owner, or occupant name, of up to two (2) square feet in area attached to a mailbox, light fixture or exterior wall.
- I. Window signs.

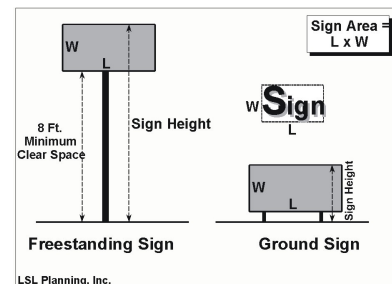
SECTION 17.05 NON-CONFORMING SIGNS, ILLEGAL SIGNS, AND SIGNS ACCESSORY TO NON-CONFORMING USES

- A. Every permanent sign that does not conform to the height, size, area, or location requirements of this Chapter as of the date of the adoption of this Ordinance, is hereby deemed to be non-conforming.
- B. Except as noted in C, below, non-conforming signs may not be altered, expanded, enlarged, or extended; however, non-conforming signs may be maintained and repaired so as to continue the useful life of the sign.
- C. For purposes of this Chapter, a non-conforming sign may be altered provided that the alteration results in a diminished size or dimension. The copy of the sign may be amended or changed without jeopardizing the privilege of non-conforming sign.

- D. Any non-conforming sign destroyed by fire or other casualty loss shall not be restored or rebuilt if reconstruction will constitute more than fifty percent (50%) of the value of the sign on the date of loss.
- E. Any sign, including non-conforming signs, which for a period of one (1) year or more no longer advertises a bona fide business conducted or product sold shall be removed by the owner of the building, structure, or property upon which the sign is located, within thirty (30) days of receipt of written notice by the Zoning Administrator.

SECTION 17.06 UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

- A. The area of a sign shall be measured as the area within a single, continuous perimeter composed of any straight line geometric figure which encloses the extreme limits of writing, representation, emblem, logo, or any other figure of similar character, together with any frame or other material or color forming an integral part of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the background against which it is placed, excluding only the structure necessary to support the sign.
- B. The area of a freestanding, ground, or projecting sign that has two (2) or more faces shall be measured by including the area of all sign faces, except if two (2) faces are placed back-to-back and are of equal size, the area of the two (2) back-to-back faces shall be counted as one face. If the two (2) back-to-back faces are of unequal size, the larger of the two (2) sign faces shall be counted as the one (1) face. The back-to-back sign faces shall be no greater than eighteen (18) inches apart.
- C. The height of a sign shall be measured as the vertical distance from the highest point of the sign to the grade of the adjacent street or the average grade of the ground immediately beneath the sign, whichever is less.



SECTION 17.07 REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL DISTRICTS

The following sign regulations are applicable to all districts:

- A. All ground, wall and freestanding signs may include reader boards.
- B. Any sign, including awnings to which signs are affixed or displayed, not resting directly on the ground shall maintain a minimum clear space of eight (8) feet from the bottom of the sign to the ground.
- C. The following signs are permitted subject to the restrictions noted.
1. Political signs cannot be placed more than 30 days prior to an election. Political signs shall be removed by the candidate or candidate's designee within seven (7) days after the official election or referendum to which the sign pertains.

2. Real estate signs shall be removed within thirty (30) days after completion of the sale or lease of the property.
3. Construction signs:
 - a. Signs shall be no larger than thirty-two (32) square feet and not exceed eight (8) feet in height.
 - b. Signs shall not be erected until a building permit has been issued for the project that is the subject of the proposed sign and construction activity has begun.
 - c. Signs shall be removed immediately upon the issuance of any Occupancy Permit for the building or structure that is the subject of the construction sign.
4. Special event signs, including banner signs:
 - a. No more than five (5) signs shall be displayed for each event. The signs may be located either on or off the lot on which the event is held.
 - b. The display of the signs shall be limited to the twenty-one (21) days immediately preceding the event and be removed within forty-eight (48) hours of the conclusion of the event that is being advertised.
 - c. The signs shall have a maximum size of thirty-two (32) square feet in area, and a maximum height of five (5) feet and shall be set back from any side or rear property line a minimum of fifteen (15) feet.
5. Directional signs:
 - a. A sign may contain a logo of an on-premise establishment, but no advertising copy but shall be limited to traffic control functions only.
 - b. No sign shall exceed six (6) square feet in area or four (4) feet in height.
6. Garage, yard, basement, estate sale, and similar signs:
 - a. One (1) sign per premises is permitted, located on the premises on which the sale is being conducted, and set back a minimum of five (5) feet from any property line.
 - b. The sign shall not exceed six (6) square feet in area.
 - c. The sign shall be erected no more than seven (7) days prior to the day(s) of the sale and shall be removed within one (1) day after the completion of the sale.
7. Temporary and portable signs:
 - a. No more than one (1) sign is allowed on the premises and shall be located on the same lot as the business to which the sign pertains.

- b. Display shall be limited to seven (7) days in any thirty (30) day period and no more than fourteen (14) days in any six (6) month period.
- c. Maximum allowed size is thirty-two (32) square feet in area, with a maximum height of six (6) feet and set back a minimum of fifteen (15) feet from any property line.
- d. Signs shall not be located in any required parking space or located so as to interfere with the vision of motorists or pedestrians, as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

SECTION 17.08 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS BY SIGN TYPE

A. Wall Signs

1. No wall sign shall be erected to extend above the top of the wall to which it is attached, nor extend beyond the ends of the wall to which it is attached. Signs erected on the vertical portion of a mansard roof are considered to be wall signs.
2. All wall signs shall be safely and securely attached to the building by means of metal anchors, bolts, or expansion screws. In no case shall any wall sign be secured with wire, straps of wood or nails.
3. No more than one (1) wall sign is permitted for each building, except buildings with frontages on more than one (1) public right-of-way are permitted a wall sign on both building frontages.

B. Freestanding Signs (except as provided in Section 17.10):

1. One (1) sign shall be permitted per street frontage, provided that each frontage meets the minimum lot width requirements of the district for the lot on which the use is located. The second sign shall not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the area allowed for the sign.
2. The sign shall have a setback equal to one-half (1/2) of the required setback of the district in which the sign is located and a setback distance equal to the height of the sign from all other property lines.

SECTION 17.09 PERMITTED BILLBOARDS (Section Added by Amendment 2010)

The following regulations shall apply to billboards:

- 17.09.1 Where Permitted. Billboards shall be permitted only in the LI – Light Industrial District and HC – Highway Commercial District, subject to the standards contained herein, and the Highway Advertising Act of 1972, as amended.

- 17.09.2 Spacing.
- A. Not more than three billboards may be located per linear mile of street or highway regardless of the fact that such billboards may be located on different sides of the street or highway. Double-faced and V-type billboard structures having only one face visible to traffic proceeding from any given direction on a street or highway shall be considered as one billboard. Additionally, billboard structures having tandem or stacked billboard faces shall be considered as one billboard. Otherwise, billboard structures having more than one billboard face shall be considered as two billboards and shall be prohibited in accordance with the minimum spacing requirement set forth in Subsection B below.
 - B. No billboard shall be located within 1,000 feet of another billboard abutting either side of the same street or highway.
 - C. No billboard shall be located within two hundred (200) feet of residentially zoned or used property. An illuminated billboard shall be located at least three hundred (300) feet from residentially zoned or used property.
 - D. No billboard shall be located closer than 75 feet from a property line adjoining a public right-of-way or 10 feet from any interior boundary lines of the premises on which the billboard is located.
- 17.09.3 The height of a billboard shall not exceed thirty (30) feet above the level of the street or road upon which the billboard faces or to which the message upon the billboard is directed. In the event that the billboard is situated upon two streets or roads having different levels, the height of the billboard shall be measured from the higher street or road.
- 17.09.4 Surface Area. The surface display area of any side of a billboard may not exceed 300 square feet. In the case of billboard structures with tandem or stacked billboard faces, the combined surface display area of both faces may not exceed 300 square feet.
- 17.09.5 Illumination. A billboard may be illuminated, provided such illumination is concentrated on the surface of the sign and is located so as to avoid glare or reflection onto any portion of an adjacent street or highway, the path of on-coming vehicles or any adjacent premises. In no event shall any billboard have a flashing or intermittent lights, nor shall the lights be permitted to rotate or oscillate.
- 17.09.6 Construction and Maintenance.

- A. No billboard shall be on top of, cantilevered or otherwise suspended above the roof of any building.
- B. A billboard must be constructed in such a fashion that it will withstand all wind and vibration forces that can normally be expected to occur in the vicinity. A billboard must be maintained so as to assure proper alignment of structure, continued structural soundness and contained readability of message.

SECTION 17.10 PERMITS REQUIRED

- A. It shall be unlawful to display, erect, relocate, or alter any sign without obtaining a sign permit. The Building Official shall issue a permit only if the proposed sign meets all requirements of the Ordinance.
- B. The following signs shall not require a sign permit:
 - 1. Directional signs.
 - 2. Placards.
 - 3. Government signs.
 - 4. Political signs.
 - 5. Special event signs.
 - 6. Temporary sale signs of four (4) square feet in size or less.
 - 7. Window signs.
- C. When a sign permit has been issued by the Township, it shall be unlawful to change, modify, alter, or otherwise deviate from the terms or conditions of the permit without prior approval of the Building Official. A written record of such approval shall be entered upon the original permit application and maintained in the files of the Township.
- D. The application for a sign permit shall be made by the owner or tenant of the property on which the sign is to be located, or his authorized agent, or a sign contractor. Applications shall be made in writing on forms furnished by the Township and shall be signed by the applicant. The application shall be accompanied by the following plans and other information:
 - 1. The name, address, and telephone number of the owner or persons entitled to possession of the sign and of the sign contractor or erector.
 - 2. The location by street address of the proposed sign structure.
 - 3. A site plan, elevation drawings and caption of the proposed sign.
 - 4. Plans indicating the scope and structural detail of the work to be done, including details of all connections, guy lines, supports and footings and materials.

5. Application for, and required information for the application, an electrical permit for all signs requiring an electrical connection.
6. A statement of valuation.

SECTION 17.11 SIGNS PERMITTED BY ZONING DISTRICT

A. AG, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4 Districts	
Freestanding signs for residential subdivisions, site condominiums, manufactured home communities, multiple family complexes, other permitted non-residential uses.	
Number	1 per major entrance
Size	32 sq. ft.
Location	See Section 17.08, B
Height	5 feet
Wall Signs	
Number	1 per street frontage
Size	1 sq. ft. for each lineal foot of building wall to which the sign is attached up to maximum
Location	On wall facing street
Height	N/A
Political Signs	
Number	1 per candidate or issue
Size	6 sq. ft.
Location	A minimum of 5 ft. from any property line
Height	4 ft.
Real Estate Signs	
Number	1 per lot which is the subject of the sign
Size	6 sq. ft.
Location	A minimum of 5 ft. from any property line
Height	4 ft.
B. HC, GC, LI Districts	
Freestanding signs	
Number	1 per lot, except as provided in Section 17.08, B
Size	50 sq. ft.
Location	See Section 17.08, B
Height	12 ft., with 8 ft. between the bottom of the sign and the ground within 10 ft. of the sign
Wall Signs	
Number	1 per street frontage
Size	1 sq. ft. for each lineal foot of building wall to which the sign is attached
Location	On wall facing street
Height	N/A
Political Signs	
Number	1 per candidate or issue
Size	20 sq. ft.
Location	A minimum of 5 ft. from any property line
Height	4 ft.
Real Estate Signs	
Number	1 per lot which is the subject of the sign

A. AG, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4 Districts	
Size	20 sq. ft.
Location	A minimum of 5 ft. from any property line
Height	4 ft.

- C. Signs in the PUD District shall adhere to the requirements of the District in which the use to which the sign is referring would be permitted either as a Permitted Use or by Special Land Use.