

Chapter 58

SIGNS*

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***Cross references**—Buildings and building regulations, ch. 18; planning, ch. 54; zoning, app. A; improvement standards for traffic signs, app. B, § 4-31 et seq.

State law references—Prohibited placement of campaign posters, signs and advertisements, O.C.G.A. § 21-1-1; signs used by retail distilled spirits dealers, signs advertising Georgia lottery, O.C.G.A. § 3-4-3; control of signs and signals, O.C.G.A. § 32-6-50 et seq.; unlawful placement of signs within right-of-way of public road, O.C.G.A. § 32-6-51; outdoor advertising near state highways, O.C.G.A. § 32-6-70 et seq.

Sec. 58-1. Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this chapter, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

Accessory sign means a separate unit displaying information related to the principal business conducted on the premises, which unit is attached to or supported from another advertising device and not made a principal part of the device.

Advertising device means any structure or device erected or intended for the purpose of displaying advertising and situated upon or attached to real property.

Animated sign means any sign with action, motion, with moving characters or changing colors which require electrical energy, including wind-actuated elements such as flags, spinners, banners and aerial devices. This definition does not include signs which indicate time, temperature or date.

Area of sign means and shall be computed as the entire area with a continuous perimeter enclosing the limits of the writing, representations, emblems or any figures of similar character together with the frame, or other material, the open space, or colors forming an integral part of the display or used to separate such display area from the background against which it is placed. When the supports, uprights or structures on which any sign is supported are designed in such a manner as to form an integral part of the display, such supports, uprights or structures shall be included in determining the sign area. When the sign area is composed of a painted wall or wall signs are fixed to a wall composed of letters only, such sign area shall be the sum of the area of a rectangle which encloses all of the letters used in the sign. Only one face of a double-faced sign with parallel, opposing faces 15 inches or less apart and bearing identical copy shall be used in computing the area of such a sign.

Awning sign and canopy sign means a sign imposed or painted upon any roof-like structure which provides either permanent or temporary shelter for adjacent walkways or entrances to a building or property.

Banner means a sign with or without characters, letters, illustrations or ornamentations, applied to cloth, paper, plastic or fabric of any kind with only such material for a backing, being normally hung or displayed on buildings or suspended in midair across streets, passageways and other areas visible to the general public.

Bench sign means any sign attached to or painted upon a bench or other seat placed in the public view and meant to be for public use or viewing.

Billboard means any off-site or off-premises sign not located on the premises of the business, activity or entity indicated or advertised by the sign.

Bulletin board and community event sign means a sign announcing activities sponsored by a non-profit, charitable or service organization or activities by such organization, including directional signs to events sponsored by that organization.

Business sign means any notice or advertisement, pictorial or otherwise, which directs attention to goods, commodities, products, services or entertainment sold or offered upon the premises where such sign is located.

Changeable copy sign means any sign constructed with letters or characters whereby changes can be made advertising price, special events or business hours, etc.

Construction sign means a temporary sign erected and maintained on premises during construction to identify a construction project for which a building permit has been issued.

Digital sign means any sign erected outdoors which electronically or mechanically displays time, date, temperature, population or other data in addition to a business advertisement.

Directory sign, arcade sign and mall sign means a serial sign which identifies the names of businesses, offices, professionals, industries or other entities located within a planned center.

Double-faced sign means a sign which has two display areas against each other or where the interior angle formed by the display areas is 60

degrees or less, and where one face is designed to be seen from one direction and the other face from another direction.

Flashing sign means a sign which is illuminated with varying intensity and which exhibits marked changes in lighting effects. Illuminated signs which indicate the time, temperature or date shall not be considered as flashing signs.

Freestanding sign means a sign mounted on upright supports as an on-site business identification.

Frontage, building, means the width in linear feet of the front exterior wall of a particular structure.

Frontage, road, means the width in linear feet of each lot where the lot abuts the right-of-way of any public street.

Fuel pricing signs means any sign advertising current prices for petroleum products.

Ground sign means a permanently affixed sign which is wholly independent on a building for support.

Height of sign means the distance in vertical feet from the ground to the highest point of the sign face.

Illuminated sign, direct, means a sign illuminated by an internal light source.

Illuminated sign, indirect, means a sign illuminated by an external light source directed primarily toward such sign.

Marquee means a roofed structure attached to and supported by a building and projecting over public or private sidewalks or rights-of-way.

Marquee sign means a business sign painted on, attached to or incorporated within or hung from a marquee.

Nonconforming sign means any sign which does not conform to the provisions of this chapter.

Re: 58-8(2)
Off-site sign means any sign or graphic not located on the premises of the business or entity indicated, advertised or identified by such sign, or any sign which advertises or calls attention to any activity, product, event, service, business or insti-

tution that is not conducted, furnished, sold or offered on the premises where the sign is located.

Parallel radius means such distance from a point as measured to either side of such point parallel to the street right-of-way.

Planned center, office, commercial or industrial, means a group of retail stores, service establishments, offices, industries or any other businesses planned to serve the public which is in common ownership or condominium ownership.

Political signs and posters means signs identifying and urging voter support for a particular election issue, political party or candidate for public office.

Portable sign means any sign which is not permanently affixed, including but not limited to signs mounted on vehicles parked in such a manner as to serve the purpose of an advertising device.

Real estate directional sign means a sign which conveys directions to a specific property being offered for sale, rent, lease or development.

Real estate sign means a temporary sign erected by the owner, or his agent or broker, advertising real property upon which the sign is located for rent, lease or sale.

Roof sign means any sign or graphic erected or maintained on a building, any portion of which extends above the lowest horizontal line of any roof.

Sidewalk sign means a movable sign not permanently secured or attached to the ground or surface upon which it is located.

Sign means any visual medium, including its structure and component parts, including any name, identification, graphic, description, illustration or device, which is used or intended to be used to attract attention to the subject matter of the sign, including a product, place, activity, person, institution or business.

Sign face means the part of a sign that is or can be used for advertising purposes.

Swinging or projecting sign means a sign projecting more than 12 inches from the outside walls of any building or supports upon which it is located.

Temporary sign means a sign of a nonpermanent nature which must be removed within ten days after the accomplishment of the purpose for which the sign was erected.

Trailer sign means any sign which is mounted on any trailer or truck and may be moved from one location to another by means of being towed by a vehicle, or a sign which is mounted on any other portable device and which may be towed or moved from one location to another.

Wall sign means a sign applied to or mounted to the wall or surface of a building or structure. The display surface which sign does not project more than 12 inches from the outside wall of such building or structure. The total lettering on one side of a building or structure shall constitute one wall sign.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-01, 9-23-1991)

Cross reference—Definitions generally, § 1-2.

Sec. 58-2. Sign permit required.

Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, it shall be unlawful for any person to post, display, erect, substantially change, alter or otherwise place a sign or advertising device in the city without first having obtained a permit for such sign as provided by this chapter.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-02, 9-23-1991)

Sec. 58-3. Permit application procedure.

(a) Application for sign permits as required by this chapter shall be submitted to the building official on the forms provided by the city for that purpose. The application shall contain sufficient information as may be required by the building official to allow the building official to determine the nature and type of sign being applied for. The application shall include a photograph or line drawing of the proposed sign depicting precisely what is to be portrayed on the sign. The exact location of the sign shall be identified.

(b) For signs which meet the requirements of this chapter, the building official shall issue a sign construction permit. Upon completion of the construction of the sign, the applicant shall notify the building official, and final approval shall be issued within five working days provided the sign has been constructed and located in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. Any sign not constructed so as to meet the requirements of this chapter shall be changed or removed within ten days of written notification to the applicant by the building official, which notification shall contain the basis for the rejection of the final approval.

(c) Any applicant dissatisfied by a decision of the building official may appeal the decision to the city council. Such appeal must be in writing and filed with the city clerk within ten days of the written notification of the rejection. The city council shall schedule the matter for hearing at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the council. At such meeting the council may continue the matter or affirm, reverse or modify the decision of the building official regarding the sign.

(d) When a literal enforcement of the provision of this chapter will work an undue hardship upon an applicant or when unusual circumstances preclude an applicant from meeting the requirements of this chapter, upon application being made to the council setting forth the particulars of such circumstances, the city council may grant a variance from the provisions of this chapter.

(e) The building official shall collect a sign license fee in such amount as the city council shall authorize.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-03, 9-23-1991)

Sec. 58-4. Enforcement.

Any person violating any provision of this chapter shall upon conviction be fined or imprisoned in accordance with section 1-12.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-04, 9-23-1991)

Sec. 58-5. Prohibited signs and advertising devices.

The following signs and advertising devices are prohibited in all zoning districts of the city:

- (1) Animated signs, including air-filled and gas-filled devices;

- (2) Banners and pennants except official government flags;
 - (3) Bench signs;
 - (4) Billboards and off-site signs;
 - (5) Flashing signs or lights;
 - (6) Portable signs;
 - (7) Roof signs;
 - (8) Sidewalk signs;
 - (9) Swinging or projecting signs;
 - (10) Trailer signs;
 - (11) Search lights, laser beacons or similar devices;
 - (12) Signs on a public right-of-way except such signs as are exempt under other provisions of this chapter;
 - (13) Signs which contain or are in imitation of an official traffic sign or signal or contain the words "stop," "go," "slow," "danger" or similar words;
 - (14) Signs affixed to utility poles, trees, street markers and fenceposts;
 - (15) Signs that advertise or promote illegal activities or signs which contain indecent, scandalous, obscene or immoral matters as part of the sign or the activity the sign intends to promote;
 - (16) Signs that are erected, located or maintained in such a manner as to interfere with safe and free ingress and egress of any door or emergency exit; and
 - (17) Any sign erected with height in excess of 25 feet or more than 60 square feet in size.
(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-05, 9-23-1991)
- (2) Signs of a governmental body or agency erected or posted pursuant to requirements of law or for such similar public purpose;
 - (3) On-premises credit card identification window signs not exceeding 144 inches per card honored;
 - (4) Signs not visible from a public thoroughfare;
 - (5) Bulletin boards or community event signs not exceeding 35 square feet in area and not erected for more than two weeks, application for such sign to be made to the building official;
 - (6) On-premises public notice signs such as "No Trespassing" or "No Solicitation" signs less than two square feet in size and not located on a public highway;
 - (7) Signs advertising home occupations provided such sign does not exceed two square feet in area, with only one such sign per business allowed; 288^{sq} in. ie: 1'x2'
 - (8) Political signs and posters placed on private property with the permission of the owner and removed within ten days after the decision or election in question, but no political signs or posters shall be permitted on public property;
 - (9) Garage sale signs or yard sale signs not exceeding four square feet and posted on the property at which the sale is occurring and not erected for more than three consecutive days;
 - (10) Building identification signs for buildings other than dwellings not in excess of 35 square feet and mounted on the building identified; one sign per building is exempt except where the building fronts on two streets, then two are permitted;
 - (11) Professional or name signs not to exceed 200 square inches; and
 - (12) Temporary signs of mechanics and artisans which are erected only on premises

Sec. 58-6. Exempt signs.

The following signs and advertising devices are exempt from the provisions of this chapter:

- (1) One real estate sign or construction sign per lot or building not in excess of 16 square feet in all zoning districts providing such signs must be temporary signs (not more than two signs per 500 feet of real estate frontage);
- (2) Signs of a governmental body or agency erected or posted pursuant to requirements of law or for such similar public purpose;
- (3) On-premises credit card identification window signs not exceeding 144 inches per card honored;
- (4) Signs not visible from a public thoroughfare;
- (5) Bulletin boards or community event signs not exceeding 35 square feet in area and not erected for more than two weeks, application for such sign to be made to the building official;
- (6) On-premises public notice signs such as "No Trespassing" or "No Solicitation" signs less than two square feet in size and not located on a public highway;
- (7) Signs advertising home occupations provided such sign does not exceed two square feet in area, with only one such sign per business allowed; 288^{sq} in. ie: 1'x2'
- (8) Political signs and posters placed on private property with the permission of the owner and removed within ten days after the decision or election in question, but no political signs or posters shall be permitted on public property;
- (9) Garage sale signs or yard sale signs not exceeding four square feet and posted on the property at which the sale is occurring and not erected for more than three consecutive days;
- (10) Building identification signs for buildings other than dwellings not in excess of 35 square feet and mounted on the building identified; one sign per building is exempt except where the building fronts on two streets, then two are permitted;
- (11) Professional or name signs not to exceed 200 square inches; and
- (12) Temporary signs of mechanics and artisans which are erected only on premises

where work is being performed, not to exceed 16 square feet, and are to be removed after work is completed.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-06, 9-23-1991)

Sec. 58-7. General regulations.

(a) Businesses shall be permitted to utilize the following combination of wall, ground and freestanding signs subject to the provisions stated in this section:

- (1) The types of signs permitted are wall signs, ground signs or freestanding signs. A business may be permitted to use a combination of a wall and ground sign or a combination of a wall and freestanding sign, but no business shall use more than two signs at any one location.
- (2) Businesses located in shopping centers shall be permitted one wall sign and one identification sign.

(b) Brand names and trademarks or a combination of the two shall constitute a sign.

(c) Fuel pricing signs with a maximum sign area of four square feet per fuel price and a total combined area of 18 square feet for fuel pricing at business premises shall be in addition to other signs regulated.

(d) Changeable copy signs shall be prohibited except on ground signs other than theater marquees. Changeable copy shall be allowed on only 30 percent of the area of the sign face of a ground sign.

(e) Signs which are relocated from an old business site to a new business site shall be required to conform with this chapter.

(f) If three or more businesses are located within a plan center, the rules regarding directory, arcade and mall signs shall apply. All multiple-business structures undetached with only one entrance, including structures housing two businesses, shall only be allowed one wall sign per business and one directory sign per business constructed.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-07, 9-23-1991)

Sec. 58-8. Regulated signs.

(a) All signs or advertising devices not specifically permitted in a zoning district as an exempt sign shall be considered a regulated sign and are prohibited except as provided in this chapter.

(b) Freestanding signs are permitted in commercial, business or industrial zoning districts of the city, but no freestanding sign shall have a height greater than 25 feet above ground level or a sign area greater than ~~50~~²⁵ square feet. No freestanding sign shall be located within ten feet of a street right-of-way or within 50 feet of any other sign, structure or building.

(c) Wall signs shall be permitted in the commercial, business and industrial zoning districts. One square foot of sign space shall be permitted for each linear foot of distance from building frontage to the right-of-way on which the building shall front except where the building structure is located less than ten feet from the street right-of-way. In such event, a maximum of 35 square feet of area shall be permitted for wall signs. No wall sign shall be permitted which is greater in area than five percent of the wall upon which the sign is mounted.

(d) Directory signs, arcade signs and mall signs are permitted in areas in which a planned center, either office, commercial or industrial in nature has been approved by the zoning authority for the city. Such signs shall contain the name of the center and shall be of an area not to exceed 60 square feet, and each tenant located in such center shall be permitted an identification sign not to exceed eight square feet in area. A theater within a planned center may erect one sign not exceeding 50 square feet in sign area, which sign shall identify the theater and its current features provided further no theater sign shall be permitted within 50 feet of any other ground, freestanding, directory sign, arcade sign or mall sign.

(e) No sign shall be permitted within 500 feet of the intersection of any other state highway or major thoroughfare without the prior approval of the city council. In reviewing an application for such sign, the council shall consider the stan-

dards prescribed for such signs and the potential dangers presented by the proposed sign as well as the aesthetics of the city.

(f) No temporary sign shall have a sign face area greater than 35 square feet.

(g) In all zoning districts other than residential and office districts, signs or advertising devices shall be permitted if such signs or devices are located on the premises to be advertised and conform to the requirements of the department of transportation of the state. In no event shall the signs or devices detached from the building exceed 35 square feet in total area or 25 feet in height or the height of the building, and in no event shall the signs or devices attached to the building exceed 50 square feet or exceed the height of the building.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-08, 9-23-1991)

Sec. 58-9. Nonconforming signs.

(a) Any premises which contains nonconforming signs shall not receive permits or other signs to be erected on the same property so long as nonconforming signs remain in existence.

(b) A nonconforming sign which is altered in structure or has 50 percent of either the structure or sign face damaged or is relocated, when repaired or restructured shall be repaired or restructured in conformance with this chapter.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-09, 9-23-1991)

Sec. 58-10. Construction requirements.

(a) No sign shall be constructed in such a manner as to hinder vehicle traffic or pedestrians or block any entrances or exits from any buildings to or from any building or sidewalks. Each sign shall be securely erected and free of any protruding nails, tacks and wire.

(b) No sign shall be constructed with any type material, finished letters, characters or surface which will reflect sunlight or any other type of light of such an intensity as to hinder vehicle traffic or in any way create a nuisance to the surrounding area.

(c) No wall sign or its supports shall protrude more than 12 inches from the wall on which it is mounted.

(d) All signs shall be constructed in such manner and fastened in such a way as to prevent movement by wind action or to allow movement with wind action in a stabilized manner.

(e) No wood, metal or any other type of supports for ground or freestanding signs shall be less than four by four inches in size for each support or less than three inches in diameter if circular.

(f) Wood signs shall be framed on the two sides attached to the supports. Supports can be considered framed if the sign is so designed with supports as part of framing on both sign face areas.

(g) All signs must be constructed in accordance with chapter 23 of the Standard Building Code. Where there is a conflict, the more restrictive requirement will apply.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-10, 9-23-1991)

Sec. 58-11. Removal of certain signs.

Any sign which no longer advertises a bona fide business, any sign which has become dilapidated and by its condition and state of repair is deemed to be dangerous to the health and welfare of the citizens of the city, or any sign which has been erected in a manner which fails to meet the requirements of this chapter may be removed by the building official in the following manner:

- (1) The building official shall cause a notice to be sent to the owner of the premises and the owner of the sign, if that ownership can be reasonably determined, identifying the problem with the sign and giving the owner of the premises ten days from the date of the receipt of the notice to take appropriate remedial action.
- (2) After the passage of ten days from the date of the notice as prescribed in subsection (1) of this section, the building official shall cause the signs to be removed and disposed of in the manner provided by law for the disposition of abandoned personal property.

- (3) No sign removed under the provisions of this chapter shall be returned to the owner of the sign or premises until all expenses incurred in the removal or storage have been paid.

(Ord. No. 91-4, § 22-11, 9-23-1991)