

Chapter 17.48 Signs

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17.48.010 Purpose

The purpose of this Chapter is to regulate signs as an information system that preserves and enhances the aesthetic character and environmental values of Visalia, its residential neighborhoods, its Downtown, and commercial/industrial areas, while also providing an effective means for members of the public to express themselves through the display of signs. These regulations recognize the importance of business activity to the economic vitality of the City as well as the need to protect the visual environment. Specifically, these regulations are intended to implement the General Plan and:

- A. Provide minimum standards to safeguard life, health, property, public welfare, and traffic safety by controlling the design, quality of materials, construction, illumination, size, location and maintenance of signs and sign structures;
- B. Preserve and enhance the visual attractiveness of the City for residents, businesses, and visitors;
- C. Protect and enhance property values and community appearance by encouraging signs that are compatible with the architectural style, character, and scale of the building to which they relate and with adjacent buildings and businesses;
- D. Restrict signs that may create visual clutter or a nuisance to nearby properties, violate privacy, create hazards or unreasonable distractions for pedestrians and drivers;
- E. Provide adequate opportunity for the exercise of the free speech by display of a message or image on a sign, while balancing that opportunity with other community and public interests;
- F. Ensure that commercial signs are accessory or auxiliary to a principal business or establishment on the same premises, rather than functioning as general advertising for hire; and
- G. Prohibit signs that may cause traffic or pedestrian safety hazards or interfere with ingress and egress.

17.48.020 Applicability and Severability

This Chapter regulates signs that are located or mounted on private property within the jurisdictional boundaries of Visalia. The provisions in this Chapter apply in all Zoning Districts within the City. No sign within the regulatory scope of this Chapter shall be erected or maintained anywhere in the City except in conformity with this Chapter. If any part, section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, phrase, clause term or word in this Chapter is declared invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the validity or enforceability of the remaining portions of the Chapter.

17.48.030 Exempt Signs

The following signs are exempt from the permit requirements of this Chapter and do not count toward the total sign area limit for a site, provided that they conform to applicable standards:

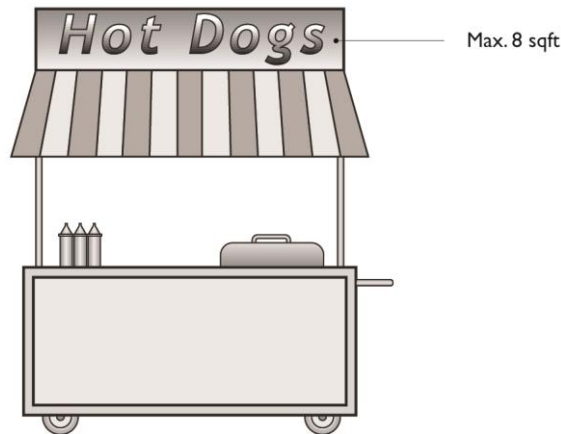
- A. **Address Signs.** One nameplate, not exceeding two square feet in area, identifying the address of the property.

- B. **Barber Poles.** Barber poles, not exceeding 18 inches in height, located on a non-residential zoned property and containing no lettering.
- C. **Commercial Displays On Vehicles.** Signs on vehicles may be displayed, provided that:
 - 1. The message pertains to the establishment of which the vehicle is an instrument or tool; and
 - 2. The message does not utilize changeable copy or special illumination.
- D. **Decorations.** Holiday and cultural observance decorations on private property. Decorations cannot include commercial advertising. This exemption includes strings of lights associated with a holiday decoration.
- E. **Flags.** Flags may be erected and located in accordance with the following standards:
 - 1. **Location.** Flagpoles must not be located within any required side yard setbacks.
 - 2. **Maximum Flagpole Height.** If a flag is on a flag pole, the pole height must not exceed 30 feet or the distance from the base of the pole to the closest lot line plus two feet, whichever is less.
 - 3. **Maximum Size.** The maximum individual flag area on a lot is 48 square feet in all zoning districts.

Pennants, banners, feather banners, strings of ornamental fringes and streamers are not included in this exemption and are regulated under Section 17.48.130, Temporary Signs.
- F. **Government Signs.** Official notices issued by a court, public body or office and posted in the performance of a public duty; notices posted by a utility or other quasi-public agency; signs erected by a governmental body to direct or regulate pedestrian or vehicular traffic; noncommercial bus stop signs erected by a public transit agency, or other signs required or authorized by law. This exemption also covers signs and banners for special civic events sponsored by the City, which may be displayed in public rights of way.
- G. **Interior Signs.** Signs that are located entirely within a building or enclosed structure and not visible from the public right of way.
- H. **Mobile Vendor Signs.** Signs and menu display boards fixed to mobile vending carts or food trucks that identify or advertise the name, product, or service provided by the vendor. Each mobile vending cart or food truck is

limited to a maximum of eight square feet of sign area, plus a menu display board.

FIGURE 17.48.030(H): MOBILE VENDOR SIGNS



- I. **Newspaper Stands.** Signs that are part of newspaper stands provided the sign area does not exceed four square feet.
- J. **Temporary Signs.** Signs that conform to the standards of Sections 17.48.090(C), 17.48.090(D), 17.48.110(B), 17.48.120(G) or 17.48.130.
- K. **Public Carrier Graphics.** Graphic images mounted on carrier vehicles such as buses, taxicabs, and limousines that legally pass through the City.
- L. **Window Signs.** Permanent Window Signs that conform to the standards of Section 17.48.110(I).

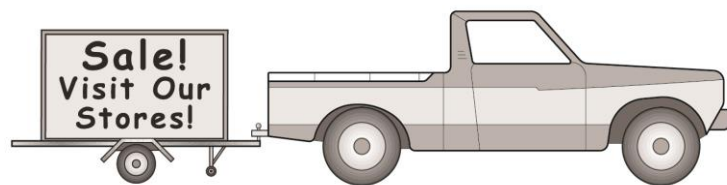
17.48.040 Prohibited Signs

Unless expressly allowed by another Section of this Chapter or other applicable law, the following signs, locations, and materials are prohibited:

- A. **Animated or Moving Signs.** Animated, flashing, blinking, reflecting, revolving, or other similar sign with visibly moving or rotating parts or visible mechanical movement of any kind, unless expressly permitted under this Chapter. This prohibition does not apply to signs using digital display technology, such as LED (light emitting diodes) or functionally equivalent display methods, which are permitted, subject to the regulations of this Chapter.

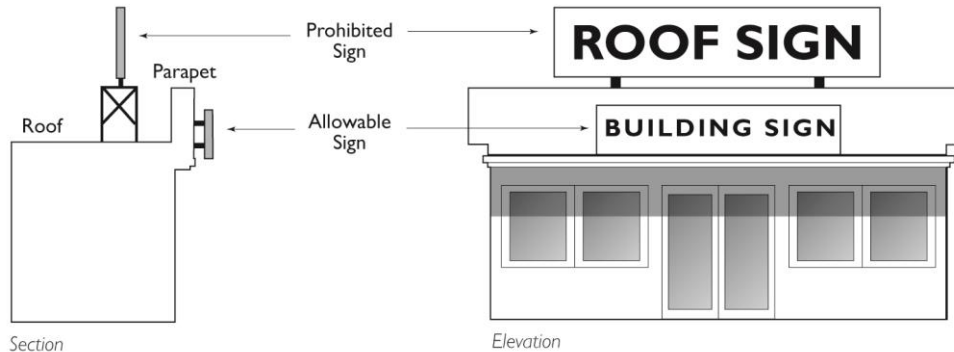
- B. **Air Activated Graphics and Other Attention-Getting Devices.** Balloons, blimps and air activated graphics which serve as attention-getting devices, made of light-weight fabric or similar material, designed to rotate or move with the wind or activated by forced air, that direct, promote, or that are otherwise designed to attract attention for outdoor advertising purposes are prohibited in all zoning districts. Stationary, inflatable signs displayed and secured at ground level are allowed as temporary portable signs.
- C. **General Advertising (for Hire).** Except as otherwise specifically provided in this Chapter, temporary signs that publicize or promote other businesses or causes using methods of advertising (in contrast to self-promotion, on-site sales, or on-site advertising). General advertising is also known as advertising for hire.
- D. **Mobile Billboards.** The City prohibits any person to conduct, or cause to be conducted, any mobile billboard advertising upon any street, or other public place within the City in which the public has the right of travel. The purpose of this prohibition is to eliminate mobile billboard advertising within the City in order to reduce traffic congestion, promote the safe movement of vehicular traffic, to reduce air pollution, and to improve the aesthetic appearance of the City. This prohibition does not apply to signage on a licensed commercial vehicle that is related to the goods or services provided by the vehicle owner or operator and to public transit/public carrier graphics on properly licensed buses and taxicabs.

FIGURE 17.48.040(D): MOBILE BILLBOARDS



- E. **Murals.** Murals which contain advertising copy or function as advertising. Murals without advertising copy must be approved by the City Council under the provisions of the City's adopted mural policy.
- F. **Outdoor Advertising Displays ("Billboards").** Permanent signs that display outdoor advertising for hire are prohibited in all zones.
- G. **Roof Signs.** Roof signs, including signs mounted or painted on roofs, except those painted on a flat roof and not visible from the public right of way.

FIGURE 17.48.040(G): ROOF SIGNS



- H. **Search Lights and Klieg Lights.** Search and Klieg lights when used as attention attracting devices for commercial uses. They may be allowed with a temporary conditional use permit for special events.
- I. **Signs in the Public Right-of-Way without an Encroachment Permit.** Other than government signage, and except as otherwise provided in this Chapter, no sign can be placed in the public right-of-way in median strips or islands, sidewalks, on street trees or retaining walls, on bridges, public benches, traffic signals, public fences, street poles, utility poles and equipment, street lighting, traffic signs, or within a railroad right-of-way, unless it has be authorized by an encroachment permit issued by the City.
- J. **Signs on Doors, Windows, or Fire Escapes.** Signs shall not be located or installed on any door, window, or fire escape that will prevent free ingress or egress. No sign shall be attached to any standpipe or fire escape, except those required by other codes.
- K. **Signs that Create a Traffic Hazard or Affect Pedestrian Safety.** Signs located in such a manner as to constitute a safety hazard or to impede the public use of the public right of way. These signs include but are not limited to:
1. Signs located in such a manner as to constitute a traffic hazard or obstruct the view of traffic or any authorized traffic sign or signal device.
 2. Signs that may create confusion with any authorized traffic sign, signal, or traffic control device because their color, design, illumination, location or wording, or use of any phrase, symbol, or character which interferes with, misleads, or confuses vehicular drivers in their use of roads or conflicts with any traffic control sign or device.

3. Signs within five feet of a fire hydrant, street sign, or traffic signal.
 4. Signs erected at or near the intersections of public and/or private rights-of-way in such a manner as to create a safety hazard by obstructing clear view of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- L. **Signs that Produce Noise or Emissions.** Signs that produce visible smoke, vapor, particles, odor, noise, or sounds that can be heard at the property line, excluding voice units at menu boards and devices for servicing customers from their vehicles, such as drive up windows at banks or pharmacies, provided these latter units comply with the standards of the City's Noise Ordinance.
- M. **Commercial Mascot Signage.** A person or animal, whether or not costumed or decorated, that actively holds, displays or attends to a commercial sign, are prohibited in all zones. Includes "sign twirlers", "sign clowns", "human sandwich boards", and persons or animals holding or supporting any sign or advertising device displaying commercial speech or conveying a commercial message. This prohibition also applies to robotic devices intended to simulate a live person or animal.
- N. **Snipe Signs.** Signs tacked, nailed, posted, pasted, glued, or otherwise attached to trees, utility poles, government signs, fences, trailers, temporary construction barriers or other supporting structures.

17.48.050 Permits Required

- A. **Sign Permit Required.** No sign shall be erected, altered, reconstructed or relocated without a sign permit. A permit is not required for ordinary maintenance and repairs to signs and for temporary signs on private property that conform to the standards of this Chapter. The Planning Department will review all applications for sign permits for consistency with this Chapter.
- B. **Encroachment Permit.** Signs that project over or extend into a public street or sidewalk shall be subject to Encroachment Permit approval by the Community Development Department pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 12 of the Municipal Code.
- C. **Conditional Use Permit Required.** A Conditional Use Permit, issued pursuant to Chapter 17.38 of the Visalia Municipal Code, is required for Master Sign Programs (see paragraph E below) and electronic signs, excluding interior electronic signs and digital displays that are regulated as window signs and are exempt from permit requirements.

- D. **Owner's Consent Required.** Consent of the property owner or business owner is required before any sign may be displayed on any real or personal property in the City.
- E. **Master Sign Program.** A Master Sign Program, prepared pursuant to Section 17.48.130, is required for the following projects:
 - 1. New or remodeled non-residential or mixed used projects on a site of five or more acres; and
 - 2. Any development in the BRP zone.

17.48.060 Sign Design Principles

The following sign design principles should be used as criteria for review and approval of sign permits and Master Sign Programs.

- A. **Architectural Compatibility.** A sign, including its supporting structure, if any, should be designed as an integral design element of a building's architecture and be architecturally compatible, including color and scale, with any building to which the sign is to be attached and with surrounding structures. A sign that covers a window or that spills over "natural" boundaries or architectural features and obliterates parts of upper floors of buildings is detrimental to visual order and will not be permitted. Common indicators of compatibility include:
 - 1. Quality sign design and construction;
 - 2. Proportional size and scale; and
 - 3. Use of materials, shapes and colors that complement the building's architectural style and the surrounding environment.
- B. **Legibility.** The size and proportion of the elements of the sign's message, including logos, letters, icons and other graphic images, should be selected based on the average distance and average travel speed of the viewer. Sign messages oriented towards pedestrians may be smaller than those oriented towards automobile drivers. Colors chosen for the sign text and/or graphics should have sufficient contrast with the sign background in order to be easily read during both day and night. Symbols and logos can be used in place of words. Substantial contrast should be provided between the color and materials of the background and the letters or symbols to make the sign easier to read in both day and night.
- C. **Readability.** A sign message should be easily recognized and designed in a clear, unambiguous and concise manner, so that a viewer can understand or make sense of what appears on the sign.

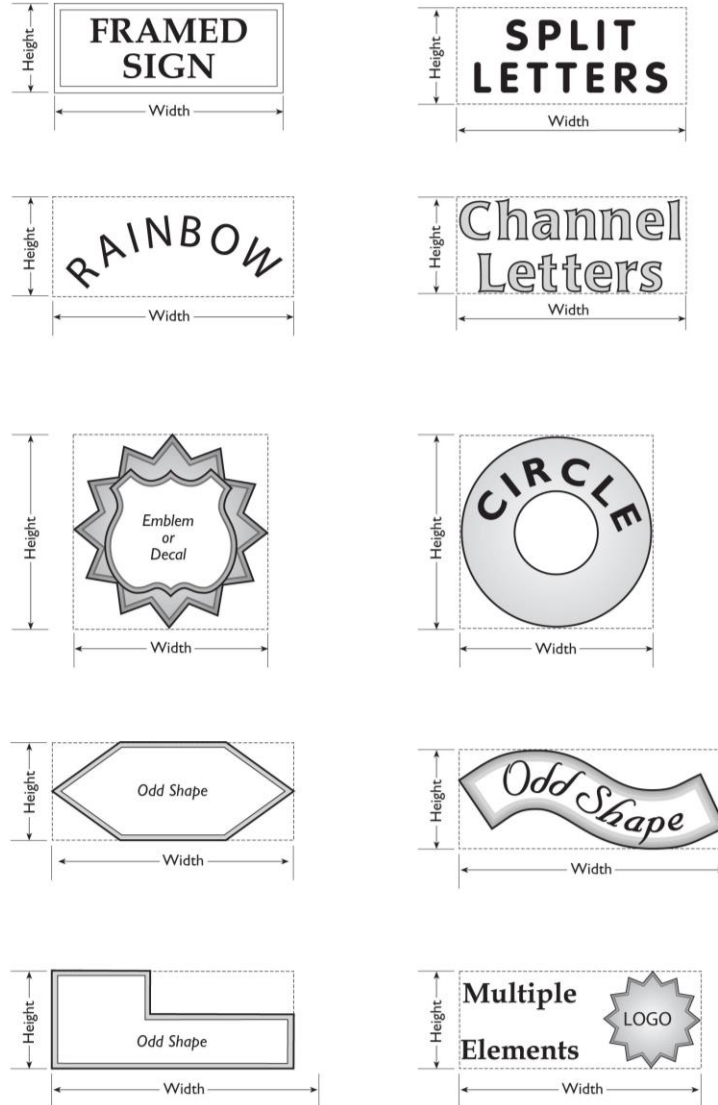
- D. **Visibility.** A sign should be conspicuous and readily distinguishable from its surroundings so a viewer can easily see the information it communicates.
- E. **Placement.** Often, a building's architectural details create logical places for signage. Signs should not cover or interrupt architectural details or ornaments of a building's façade. On buildings with a monolithic or plain façade, signs can establish or continue appropriate design rhythm, scale and proportion. Well-designed and well-located retail signs create visual interest and continuity with other storefronts on the same or adjacent buildings. Signs should not obstruct windows or doors.

17.48.070 Rules for Sign Measurement

- A. **Calculation of Sign Area.** The area of an individual sign must be calculated as follows:
 - 1. **Single-Faced Signs.** Sign area includes the entire area within a single continuous perimeter composed of squares or rectangles that enclose the extreme limits of all sign elements, including, but not limited to, sign structures or borders, written copy, logos, symbols, illustrations, and color. Supporting structures such as sign bases and columns are not included in sign area provided that they contain no lettering or graphics except for addresses or required tags. The calculation of sign area for various types of single-faced signs is illustrated in Figure 17.48.070(A)(2).
 - 2. **Double-Faced Signs.** Where two faces of a double-faced sign are located two feet or less from one another at all points, or located at an interior angle of 45 degrees or less from one another, the sign area must be computed as the area of one face. Where the two faces are not equal in size, the larger sign face will be used. Where two faces of a double-faced sign are located more than two feet or 45 degrees from one another, both sign faces will be counted toward sign area. See Figure 17.48.070(A)(3).

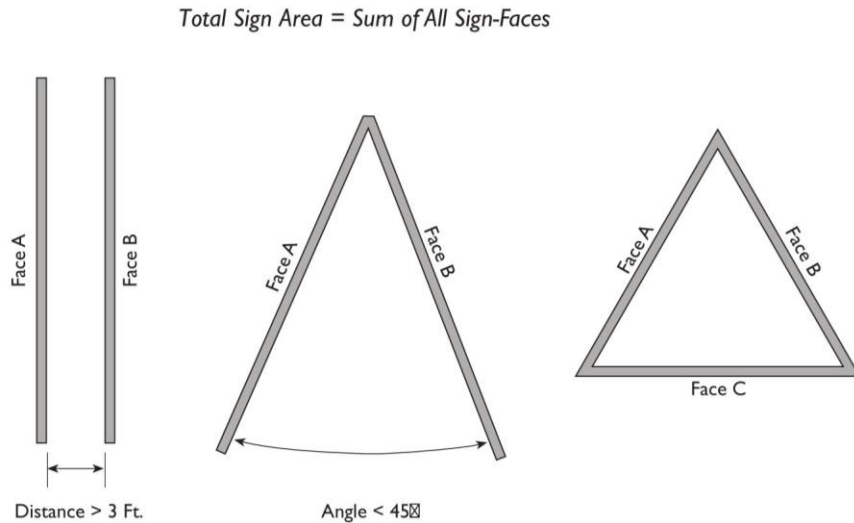
FIGURE 17.48.070(A)(2): MEASUREMENT OF SIGN AREA

Sign Area = Height x Width



3. **Multi-Faced Signs.** On a three-faced sign, where at least one interior angle is 45 degrees or less, the area of two faces (the largest and smallest face) must be summed to determine sign area. In all other situations involving a sign with three or more sides, sign area will be calculated as the sum of all faces.

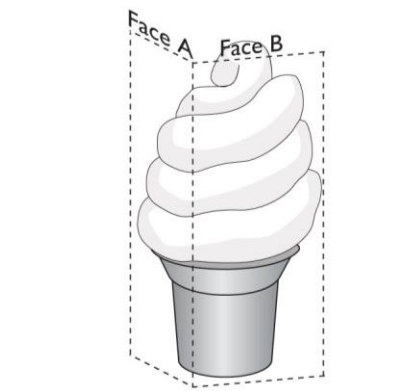
FIGURE 17.48.070(A)(3): MEASUREMENT OF MULTI-FACED SIGNS



4. **Three-Dimensional Signs.** Signs that consist of, or have attached to them, one or more three-dimensional objects (i.e., balls, cubes, clusters of objects, sculpture, or statue-like trademarks), may have a sign area that is the sum of two adjacent sides of the smallest cube that will encompass the sign. See Figure 17.48.070(A)(4).

FIGURE 17.48.070(A)(4): MEASUREMENT OF 3-DIMENSIONAL SIGNS

Sign Area = Sum of Two Adjacent Sides



- B. **Calculation of Lot Frontage.** If a lot fronts on two streets, both frontages may be used for calculating the allowable sign area. On lots with three or more frontages on a public street, the length of only two contiguous sides shall be added together to determine allowable sign area.

- C. **Measuring Sign Height.** The height of a sign is the vertical distance measured from the ground level directly beneath the sign to the highest point at the top of the sign, including any structural or architectural components of the sign. The ground level shall be either the natural grade or finished grade, whichever is lowest.
1. **Height of Freestanding Signs.** The height of freestanding signs shall be measured as the vertical distance from grade at the edge of the right-of-way along which a sign is placed to the highest point of the sign, including any structural or architectural components of the sign. When the grade at the edge of the right-of-way is higher than the site on which the sign is placed, that portion of the sign below the grade at the edge of the right-of-way shall not be included in determining the sign's overall height. Signs oriented towards a freeway shall be measured from the project site grade or pad, whichever is lower.
- D. **Measuring Sign Clearance.** Sign clearance shall be measured as the smallest vertical distance between finished grade and the lowest point of the sign, including any framework or other embellishments.
- E. **Building Frontage.** Building frontage is the building facade that directly abuts a public street, private street, parking lot driveway, or parking spaces in which main customer access is provided to the business. A building's frontage is considered continuous if projections or recesses in a building wall do not exceed 10 feet in any direction. For buildings with two or more frontages, the length of the wall and allowable sign area shall be calculated separately for each building frontage.

17.48.080 General Sign Standards

- A. **Message Neutrality.** It is the City's policy to regulate signs in a constitutional manner that is content neutral as to noncommercial messages which are within the protections of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the corollary provisions of the California Constitution.
- B. **Maximum Sign Area.** The maximum allowable, permissible sign area for permanent signs, exclusive of area of exempt signs, is based on the Zoning District in which the sign is located and the type of sign to be installed. These standards are established in subsequent Sections of this Chapter.
- C. **Message Substitution.** A noncommercial message of any type may be substituted, in whole or in part, for any duly permitted commercial message, and any noncommercial message may be substituted, in whole or in part, for any other noncommercial message.

1. **No Additional Approval.** Such substitution of message may be made without any additional approvals. The purpose of this Section is to prevent any inadvertent favoring of commercial speech over noncommercial speech, or favoring of any particular noncommercial message over any other noncommercial message.
 2. **Limitations.** This message substitution provision does not: 1) create a right to increase the total amount of signage on a parcel, lot or land use; 2) affect the requirement that a sign structure or mounting device be properly permitted; 3) allow a change in the physical structure of a sign or its mounting device; or 4) authorize the substitution of an off-site commercial message in place of an on-site commercial message or in place of a noncommercial message.
- D. **Changeable Copy.** Non-electronic changeable copy shall represent no more than 20 percent of the total allowable sign area. Copy shall not be changed more than once every 24 hours.
- E. **Electronic Copy.**
1. **Location.** Electronic copy is allowed as a display medium wherever monument signs are allowed. A Conditional Use Permit, issued pursuant to Chapter 17.38 of the Visalia Municipal Code, is required for the installation of any electronic sign except an interior electronic sign or digital display, which are regulated as permanent window signs.
 2. **Physical Standards.**
 - a. The sign display face must be directed in a manner that is not visible from the front or side yards of residential properties located in a residential zone district.
 - b. Electronic display faces must be an integral part of the remainder of the sign area.
 3. **Operational Standards.**
 - a. Electronic display shall be limited to no more than 30 lumens output, measured at 10 feet from the sign face.
 - b. No portion of the electronic display (either sign copy or pictures) shall change more frequently than once every six seconds.
 - c. No audible output from any portion of the sign shall be permitted.

- d. Electronic signs shall be operative only during the hours of operation of the associated business.
- e. Sign copy or electronic picture displays shall be limited to advertising related to the use(s) on the property for which the monument sign is located, except for message substitution, as allowed in Section 17.48.080 D.
- f. No change of lighting intensity may occur during a display or between displays except to respond to a change in ambient lighting conditions.
- g. No display shall create a potential distraction to drivers by virtue of the frequency of changes of images (i.e. the time between images expressed in seconds), and the Planning Commission may impose limitations on the number of images that can be displayed over a specified time period for reasons of traffic safety.

F. **Illumination.** The illumination of signs, from either an internal or external source, must be designed to avoid negative impacts on surrounding rights-of-way and properties. The following standards apply to all illuminated signs:

- 1. **Light Intensity.** Sign lighting must not be of an intensity or brightness that will create a nuisance for residential buildings in a direct line of sight to the sign.
- 2. **Shielding Required.** External light sources must be directed, shielded, and filtered to limit direct illumination of any object other than the sign, according to Table 17.48.080.F.2 below.

TABLE 17.48.080.F.2: REQUIREMENTS FOR SHIELDING AND FILTERING		
Fixture Lamp Type	Shielding Required	Filtering Required
Low Pressure Sodium ¹	None	None
High Pressure Sodium	Fully	None
Metal Halide	Fully	Yes ⁴
Fluorescent	Fully ⁵	Yes ²
Quartz ³	Fully	None
Incandescent Greater than 100W	Fully	None
Incandescent 100W or less	None	None
LED	Fully	None
Mercury Vapor	Not permitted.	
Fossil Fuel	None	None
Glass Tubes filled with neon, argon, or krypton	None	None
Other Sources	As approved by the Director.	
1. This is the preferred light source to minimize undesirable light into the night sky affecting astronomical observations.		

- 2. Warm white natural lamps are preferred to minimize detrimental effects.
- 3. For the purposes of this article, quartz lamps are not considered an incandescent light source.
- 4. Most glass, acrylic, or translucent enclosures satisfy these filter requirements.
- 5. Outdoor signs constructed of translucent materials and wholly illuminated from within do not require shielding.

- 3. ***Energy Conservation.*** Light sources shall be hard-wired fluorescent or compact florescent lamps, or other lighting technology that is of equal or greater energy efficiency. Incandescent lamps are prohibited, except when used in signs of historic character as part of the architectural design.
- 4. ***Light Sources Adjacent to Residential Areas.*** Illuminated signs located adjacent to any residential area shall be controlled by a rheostat or other acceptable method to reduce glare that will create a nuisance for residential buildings in a direct line of sight to the sign.
- G. **Materials.** Signs shall be made of sturdy, durable materials. Paper, cardboard, or other material subject to rapid deterioration can only be used for signs that comply with applicable requirements for Temporary Signs in Section 17.48.130. Fabric signs are restricted to Awnings, Canopies, Flags, and Temporary Signs.
- H. **Mounting Required.** All permanent signs shall be firmly anchored and comply with all requirements for public safety and codes.
- I. **Minimum Clearance from Utilities.** Signs and their supporting structures shall maintain clearance from and not interfere with electrical conductors, communications equipment, or lines, underground facilities and conduits.
- J. **Concealed Electrical Systems.** External conduits, boxes, and other connections related to the function of a sign and associated lighting shall not be exposed. A switch disconnecting each circuit shall be placed in plain sight and near the inspection opening.

17.48.090 Sign Standards for Agricultural and Residential Zones

- A. **Purpose and Applicability.** This Section establishes standards for signs associated with specific types of land uses in Agricultural and Residential zones. Unless otherwise specified below, each sign type also is subject to the standards established in Section 17.48.110, Standards for Specific Sign Types.
- B. **Permanent Commercial Signs Prohibited for Residential Zones.** Unless otherwise allowed or exempted by this Chapter, permanent signs displaying a commercial message are prohibited in Residential Zones.

- C. **Permanent Noncommercial Signs Allowed on Residential Properties.** The aggregate sign area allowance for all permanent noncommercial signs on a developed lot or site in Residential Zones, excluding exempt signs or signs otherwise allowed by this Chapter, is 8 square feet.
- D. **Temporary Signs Allowed on Residential Properties.** The aggregate sign area allowance for all temporary signs on a developed lot or site, or on the common area of a fully developed residential subdivision with 5 or more parcels, or on the common area of fully developed multi-family apartment or condominium complexes with 5 or more units, excluding exempt signs or signs otherwise allowed by this Chapter, is 24 square feet, 4 square feet of which may be used as general advertising for hire. For an undeveloped lot or site not subject to regulation pursuant to subsection E, the basic sign area allowance for all temporary signs is 16 square feet, all of which may be used as general advertising for hire.
1. **Sign Types, Materials and Maintenance.** Allowable temporary signs include portable signs, window signs, or banners. Portable signs shall be constructed of materials and maintained as set forth in Section 17.48.130.B.4 below, temporary window signs shall be constructed of materials and maintained as set forth in Section 17.48.130.C.5 below, and banners shall be constructed of materials and maintained as set forth in Section 17.48.130.D.2 below. All temporary signs shall also be maintained in accordance with Section 17.48.170.
 2. **Location.** Signs may be posted or displayed from the yard, window, door, balcony, or outside wall of a building.
 3. **Maximum Height.** Six feet for freestanding signs. Banner and window signs must not be more than 12 feet above grade.
 4. **Maximum Size.** The maximum sign area for any individual sign shall be 16 square feet.
- E. **Temporary Signs on Developing Residential Properties.**
1. The aggregate sign area allowance for all temporary signs on residential zoned property for which a building permit has been issued for purposes of constructing a single-family home or multi-family apartment complex, excluding exempt signs or signs otherwise allowed by this Chapter, is 32 square feet.
 - a. **Duration.** Temporary signs shall be allowed on a developing residential lot or site after the building permit has been issued and shall be removed upon its expiration, cancellation or termination.

- b. *Sign Types.* Signs may be portable signs, window signs, or banners.
 - c. *Maximum Height.* Eight feet for freestanding signs. Banners and window signs must not be more than 12 feet above grade.
- 2. Temporary signs on a developing residential subdivision for which at least one final subdivision map has been issued pursuant to Chapter 16.24 are allowed as follows:
 - a. *Duration.* Temporary signs shall be allowed on a developing residential subdivision site after the first final subdivision map of an approved tentative subdivision map is recorded and shall be removed when all of the lots shown on the approved tentative subdivision map are sold. However, once individual lots or sites are developed and sold, Section 17.48.090.D above shall apply to those developed and sold lots or sites.
 - b. *External Temporary Signage.* Temporary signs located and intended to be viewed from the public streets surrounding a developing residential subdivision may be erected and maintained within the boundaries of the subdivision in accordance with the sign area allowance above. The basic sign area allowance for external temporary signage is the greater of 64 square feet, or 32 square feet for every 300 lineal feet that the subdivision site fronts upon a public street. External temporary signage shall be non-illuminated, shall not be made or constructed from cloth, bunting, plastic, paper or similar material, and shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of Section 17.48.170. Dimensions for temporary external signage shall not exceed four feet by eight feet per sign and 32 square feet per sign face, or a height of eight feet, or if located behind an exterior wall of a residential subdivision, at a height not to exceed 12 feet. The signs shall be no closer than 300 feet from each other.
 - c. *Internal Temporary Signage.* Additional portable signs, banners and flags may be maintained within the boundaries of a residential subdivision, provided that they are predominantly not viewable from the exterior of the developing residential subdivision, and do not create a safety hazard by obstructing the clear view of pedestrian and vehicular traffic within the developing residential subdivision. Inflatable portable signs may only be displayed on Saturdays and Sundays. Portable signs shall be constructed of materials and maintained as set forth in Section 17.48.130.B.4 below and banners shall be

constructed of materials and maintained as set forth in Section 17.48.130.D.2 below. All internal temporary signs shall also be maintained in accordance with Section 17.48.170.

- d. Wall Mounted Banners. Banners or wall mounted temporary signs not exceeding 80 square feet in the aggregate are allowed on an exterior wall of a residential subdivision.

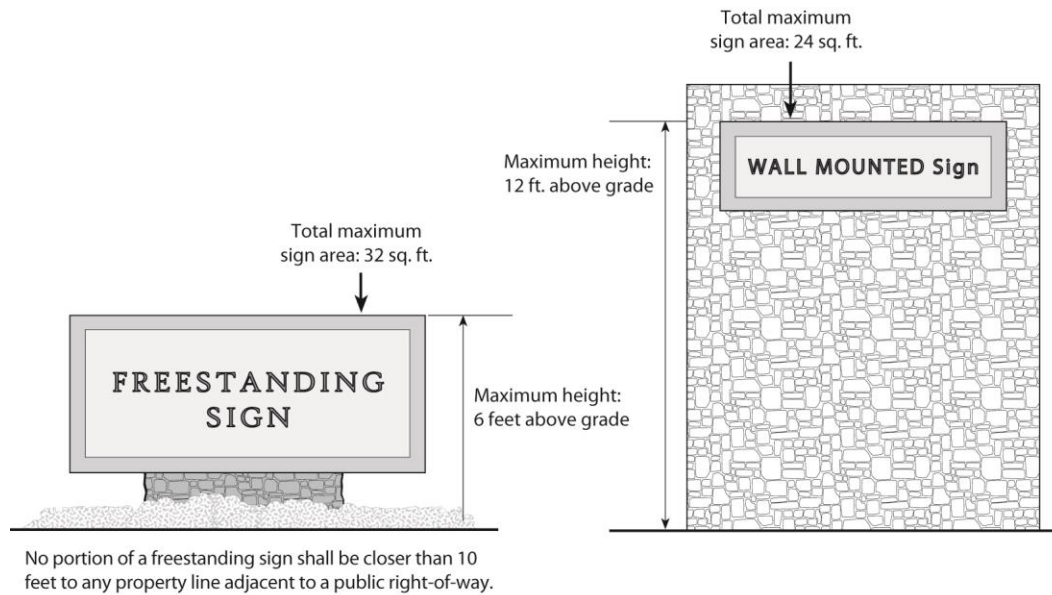
F. **Agricultural Zones.** Permanent commercial signs incidental to agricultural operations conducted in Agricultural Zones may be erected subject to the following standards:

1. **Maximum Number of Signs.** One sign per street frontage, which may be either a freestanding sign or a wall sign.
2. **Location.** Signs shall be setback a minimum of five feet from the public right-of-way.
3. **Maximum Sign Area per Sign.** 32 square feet.
4. **Maximum Height.** Six feet.

G. **Public and Quasi-Public Uses.** Signs for Public and Quasi-Public uses located in Agricultural and Residential Zones may be erected subject to the following standards. Public and Quasi-Public uses are those identified as permitted or conditionally permitted pursuant to Chapter 17.52.

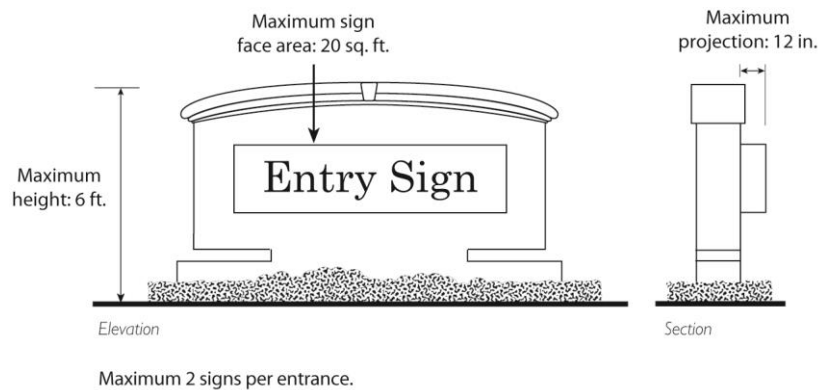
1. **Maximum Number of Signs:** One freestanding sign and one wall sign.
2. **Maximum Sign Area per Sign:** Freestanding signs shall not be more than 35 square feet in area. Wall signs shall not be more than 36 square feet in area.
3. **Maximum Sign Height.** Freestanding signs shall not be more than 6 feet in height above grade. Wall mounted signs shall not be more than 12 feet in height above grade.
4. **Setback, Freestanding Signs:** Freestanding signs shall be setback a minimum of 10 feet from the public right-of-way.
5. **Illumination:** Signs may be internally illuminated.

FIGURE 17.48.090(G): PUBLIC AND QUASI-PUBLIC USES



- H. **Entrance Signs.** Entrance signs for residential subdivisions with 5 or more than residential parcels, or multi-family apartment or condominium complexes with 5 or more units, shall be permitted subject to the following standards:
1. **Maximum Number:** Two signs per entrance.
 2. **Maximum Sign Face per Sign:** 20 square feet.
 3. **Maximum Height:** Six feet.
 4. **Maximum Projection:** 12 inches from sign surface.
 5. **Location:** Entrance signs may be attached to a wall, fence, or project identification feature located at or within 100 feet of the entrance to a development.
 6. **Illumination.** Entrance signs may be externally illuminated.

FIGURE 17.48.090(H): ENTRANCE SIGNS



17.48.100 Sign Standards for Other Zones

- A. **Purpose and Applicability.** This Section establishes sign area allowances for specific Zones as well as dimensional standards for the type of signs permitted. Unless otherwise specified below, standards for each sign type are in Section 17.48.110.
- B. **Aggregate Wall Sign Area.** In all Zones other than Agricultural and Residential Zones, the basic sign area allowance for all wall signs on a lot or site, excluding signs for which no permit is required under Section 17.48.030 (Exempt Signs), is as follows:

TABLE 17.48.100.B: MAXIMUM AREA FOR WALL SIGNS BY ZONE

	<i>Commercial Zones</i>	<i>Office Zones</i>	<i>Industrial Zones</i>	<i>Quasi-Public Zones</i>
Total Sign Area Allowed*	2 sq. ft. x ln. ft. of frontage	1 sq. ft x 2 ln. ft. of frontage	1 sq. ft x ln. ft. of frontage	0.5 sq. ft x ln. ft. of frontage
	Maximum 150 sq. ft.	Maximum 30 sq. ft.	Maximum 100 sq. ft.	Maximum 100 sq. ft.

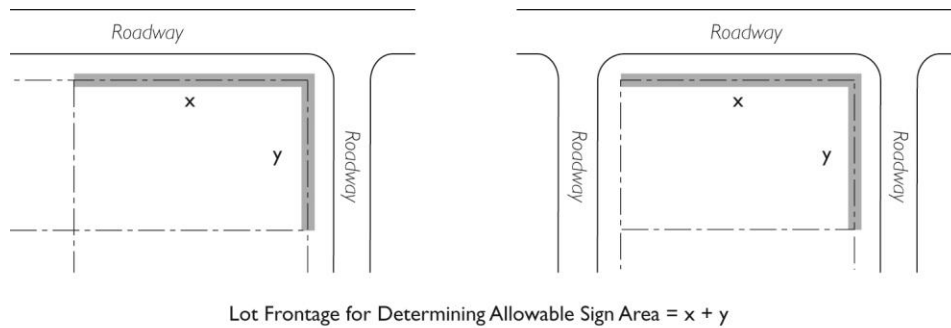
* Total Sign Area is based on an allowance in square feet per lineal foot (ln. ft.) of street frontage.

(I): Unless the standards in the specific Design District state otherwise.

1. **Sites with Multiple Frontages.** On lots and sites with more than one frontage on a public street (excluding alleys), the maximum permitted wall sign area is calculated as follows:
 - a. **Corner and Through Lots.** Where a lot fronts on two streets (a corner or "through lot"), either both the front and side, or front and rear lot lines as related to the applicable frontages may be used for calculating the allowable wall sign area.
 - b. **Three or More Frontages.** Where a lot has three or more frontages on a public street, the length of only two contiguous

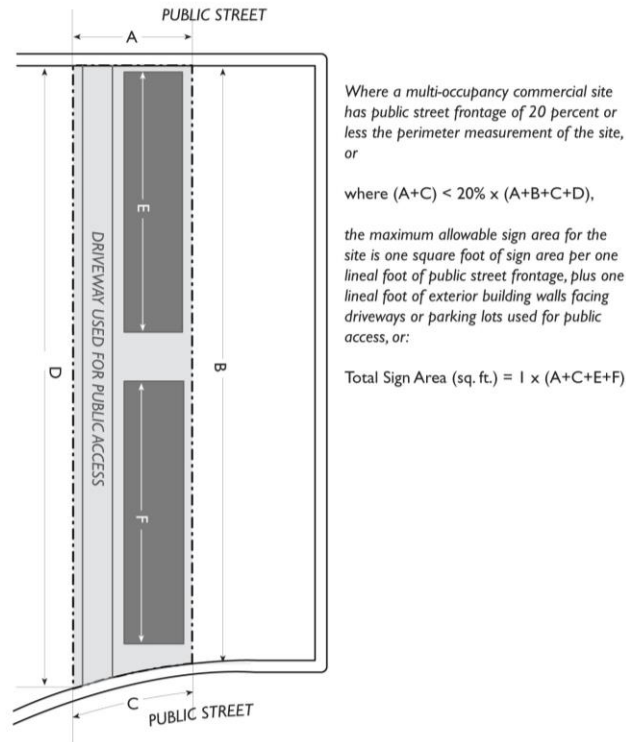
sides, one of which must be the principal street frontage, are added together to determine allowable wall sign area.

FIGURE 17.48.100(B)(1): SITES WITH MULTIPLE FRONTAGES



2. ***Multiple-Occupancy Commercial Sites with Limited Frontage.***
Where a multiple-occupancy commercial site has public street frontage equal to 20 percent or less of the perimeter measurement of the site, the maximum allowable wall sign area for the site is calculated as follows (see Figure 17.48.100(B)(2)):
 - a. One square foot of sign area per one lineal foot of public street frontage; plus
 - b. One lineal foot of exterior building walls fronting on driveways and parking lots that are generally used for public access and are located on the same site.
 - c. Pedestrian-only passageways that are lined on both sides by building walls are considered interior spaces, and although signs may be placed on such walls, the area of such walls is not included in the calculation of the maximum allowable sign area for the site.

FIGURE 17.48.100(B)(2): CALCULATION OF AGGREGATE SIGN AREA FOR MULTI-OCCUPANCY COMMERCIAL SITES WITH LIMITED FRONTAGE



3. **Additional Allowance for Signs in Shopping Centers.** Shopping centers may exceed the basic sign allowance by up to 25 percent through the approval of a Conditional Use Permit issued pursuant to Chapter 17.38 of the Visalia Municipal Code.
 4. **Minimum Allowance in Multi-Tenant Projects.** For multi-tenant commercial projects, the aggregate sign area may be increased to the extent that each tenant has a minimum of 0.5 square feet of sign area per lineal foot of business frontage on a primary access way.
- C. **Dimensional Standards for Signs.** The Table below presents the dimensional standards for signs in Zoning Districts other than Agricultural and Residential Zones. Detailed controls by sign type are located in Section 17.48.110.

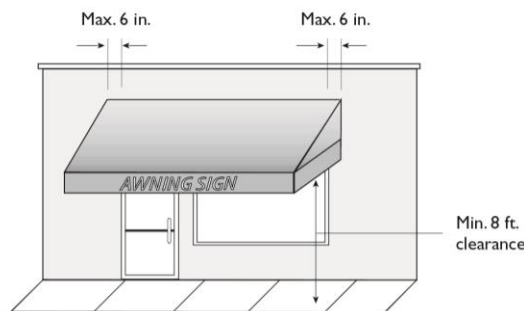
TABLE 17.48.100.C: STANDARDS FOR SIGNS IN NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS					
<i>Sign Type</i>	<i>Maximum Number Permitted</i>	<i>Maximum Area per Individual Sign</i>	<i>Maximum Height</i>	<i>Maximum Horizontal Projection from Wall</i>	<i>Additional Regulations</i>
Awning or Canopy Sign	N/A	25% of exterior surface of awning or canopy	N/A	N/A	Minimum 8 ft. vertical clearance.
Freestanding Sign	1 per street frontage	35 sq. ft. per face; 70 sq. ft. total	12 ft. in Commercial Districts; 6 ft. in Office and Industrial Districts	N/A	
Projecting Sign	1 per building frontage or tenant space	8 sq. ft. per face; 3 sq. ft. per face if under awning canopy	18 ft. but not above the ground floor of the frontage or tenant space	4 ft.	
Wall Sign	N/A	See Table 17.48.100.B.	The height of the wall of the building	6 in.	
Permanent Window Signs	N/A	100% of aggregate window area for permanent window signage	N/A	N/A	

17.48.110 Standards for Specific Sign Types

- A. **Purpose.** This Section establishes location and other general standards for specific sign types that apply to all areas where such signs are permitted. Additional standards applicable to these signs in specific Zoning Districts are located in Sections 17.48.090 and 17.48.100.
- B. **Awning and Canopy Signs.** The installation of awnings and canopies and signage located on awnings and canopies are subject to the following standards:
1. **Location.** Awning signs shall be located on the ground floor of buildings and the maximum height above grade shall not exceed 14 feet.
 2. **Minimum Vertical Clearance.** Eight feet.
 3. **Width.** Awnings shall be designed to fit the width of the storefront opening or individual window opening. Awnings shall not extend more than six inches on either side of the storefront or window opening.
 4. **Materials.** Awning signs must be made of durable, long lasting materials.

5. **Type.** Awnings may have a flexible or fixed skirt, be open or closed on the sides, and be fixed or retractable.
6. **Signs on Awnings.** Sign copy may be located on permitted awnings in lieu of other signage but may not exceed the total aggregate sign area. The area of the sign copy shall not exceed 25 percent of the exterior surface of the awning or canopy.

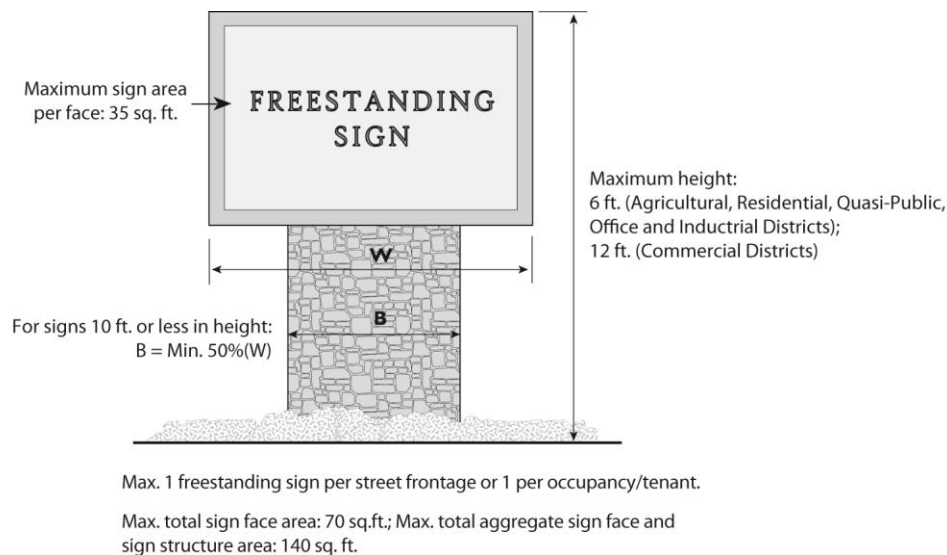
FIGURE 17.48.110(B): AWNING AND CANOPY SIGNS



- C. **Freestanding Signs.** Freestanding signs are subject to the following standards:
 1. **Where Allowed.** The base of the supporting structure must be setback at least five feet from the street right-of-way.
 2. **Maximum Number.** One per street frontage or one per occupancy/tenant.
 3. **Maximum Height.**
 - a. *Agricultural, Residential, and Quasi-Public Districts.* Six feet.
 - b. *Commercial Districts.* 12 feet.
 - c. *Office and Industrial Districts.* Six feet.
 4. **Maximum Area.** The sign area must not exceed 35 square feet per face, not to exceed 70 square feet in total. The total aggregate surface of the sign faces and sign structure shall not exceed 140 square feet.
 5. **Setback.** Freestanding signs may be located within the required setback areas as long as they are a minimum of five feet from the front property line, and 20 feet from any interior side property line.

6. **Sign Base.** Freestanding signs of 10 feet or less shall be mounted on a base, the width of which shall not be less than 50 percent of the width of the widest part of the sign.

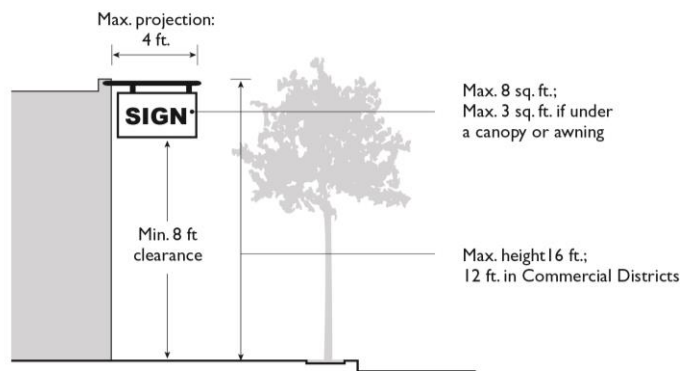
FIGURE 17.48.110(C): FREESTANDING SIGNS



7. **Monument Base Exception.** The City Planner, or their designee, may approve a post or similar style sign structure instead of the required monument base for properties which are residential conversions wherein all of the following criteria are met:
- The sign structure is designed to match the primary structure on the site in architectural style and general appearance.
 - All other sign requirements are met.
 - The primary structure is a residential conversion which has maintained a residential character/appearance.
8. **Open Air Uses.** For open air uses such as automobile dealerships, the additional standards apply to freestanding signs:
- Maximum Sign Area.** 35 square feet per face, with the total sign area not exceeding 70 square feet.
 - Setback.** 20 feet from any interior side property line
- D. **Projecting Signs.** A sign may project horizontally from the exterior wall of a building or beneath a canopy structure subject to the following standards:

1. **Maximum Number.** One per building or tenant space.
2. **Maximum Size.**
 - a. *Projecting Signs.* Eight square feet.
 - b. *Under Canopy of Awning Signs.* Three square feet.
3. **Maximum Height.** 18 feet; 12 feet in Commercial Districts.
4. **Minimum Vertical Clearance.** Eight feet.
5. **Projection Allowed.** A projecting sign cannot extend more than four feet from the building to which it is attached and shall be designed and located so as to cause no harm to street trees.

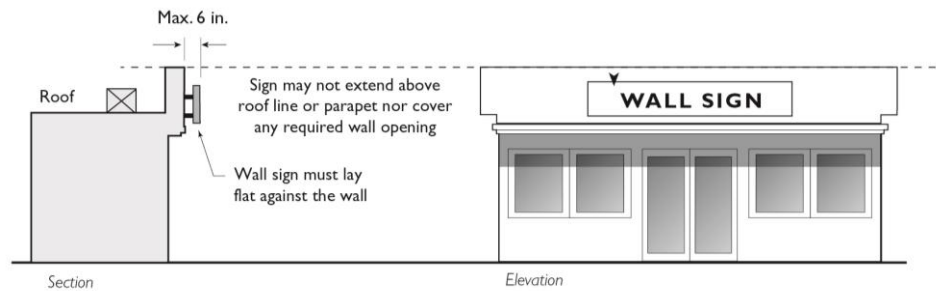
FIGURE 17.48.110(D): PROJECTING SIGNS



- E. **Wall Signs.** Wall signs are subject to the following standards:
1. **Maximum Number.** No limit, provided that the total area of wall signs does not exceed the limits in Table 17.48.100.B.
 2. **Maximum Height.** No higher than the roof line or the parapet of the wall of the building to which the sign is attached, whichever is lower.
 3. **Maximum Sign Area per Sign.** See Table 17.48.100.B.
 4. **Projection Allowed.** Wall signs shall not extend more than six inches beyond the face of the wall to which they are attached.
 5. **Placement.** No wall sign may cover, wholly or partially, any required wall opening.

6. **Orientation.** Unless a different orientation is specifically authorized, each wall-mounted sign shall be placed flat against the wall of the building.

FIGURE 17.48.110(E): WALL SIGNS



7. **Rear Facades.** Where a property has two facades and both are visible from the public right-of-way, a wall sign may be installed on the rear (non-primary) façade if it meets the following:

- a. **Size.** Maximum of 25 percent of the allowed sign area calculated for the primary occupancy frontage.
- b. **Illumination.** *Signs on rear facades may not be internally illuminated.*

- F. **Permanent Window Signs.** Window signs capable of enduring without fundamental change and affixed to either side of an exterior window of a building, or erected or mounted in the interior of the building, and intended to be viewed from the exterior of such building, are allowed subject to the following standards:

1. **Materials.** Permanent window signs shall be made from or involve the use of materials intended for permanent, enduring display, such as:
 - a. Etching, frosting, painting or similar chemical or physical non-removable glass treatments.
 - b. Interior electronic signs or digital displays.
 - c. Window shades, blinds, draperies or similar window treatments bearing a commercial message and utilized for the primary purpose of energy efficiency and sun glare and UV ray reduction to the interior of a building or structure.
2. **Maintenance.** All permanent window signs shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of Section 17.48.170. The structural

integrity of signs shall be maintained at all times. Normal wear and tear of aged signs shall be repaired when they detract from the visible quality of the sign, based on the current condition of the sign compared to the appearance of the sign when first installed. Exposed surfaces shall be cleaned and painted and defective parts shall be replaced if necessary.

3. **Sign Area.** Window sign area shall not be considered in computing the maximum allowed building signage.

17.48.120 Downtown Retail Design District Sign Standards

The following standards apply to all signage within the Downtown Retail Design District.

A. Size Standards.

1. Two square feet of sign area is permitted for each lineal foot of occupancy frontage to a maximum of 50 square feet.
2. Users may choose any exterior side of the building as the primary frontage for the purpose of calculating the permitted sign area. The building sign so calculated must then be mounted on that side of the building.
3. A building sign may be affixed to or incorporated as a part of the design of an awning; however, such sign area shall be deducted from that calculated for the exterior building wall to which the awning is attached. Numerals used for the purpose of identifying street addresses need not be deducted from the calculated sign area.
4. Additional signs of a maximum 25 percent of the sign area calculated for the primary occupancy frontage will be allowed for each remaining exterior wall, provided that the sign for any given wall does not exceed two square feet per linear foot of the wall length. This subsection does not apply to alley frontages or buildings that have frontages on two streets with no common visibility for vehicles or pedestrians. In these latter two cases, the allowable signage is in addition to the amount calculated above, and shall be calculated on the basis of two square feet of sign area per lineal foot of public street or alley frontage.

B. Projecting Signs Beneath a Canopy/Awning Structure.

1. One double-faced sign not exceeding an area of three square feet per face is permitted. Signs shall be a minimum of 7 feet above the sidewalk and shall not exceed a maximum height of 12 feet.

2. A sign may also be affixed to or incorporated into the design of the side valance of awnings which are perpendicular to the store frontage. Both side valances of an awning may be so utilized, however, only one sign face per awning side is allowed. Each sign face shall not exceed three square feet for each individual shop or tenant.
- C. **Alley Signs.** The maximum building sign area on an alley frontage is calculated separately from that permitted for the primary occupancy frontage, using the same allowance as for the primary occupancy frontage (two square feet per linear foot of the wall length).
- D. **Reader Boards and Multi-Tenant Buildings.**
1. Each building may display a reader board of a maximum area of 20 square feet indicating the name, address and type of business of the businesses within the building. If the reader board is located on a part of the building qualifying as an occupancy frontage for which sign area is calculated, the sign area used for the reader board shall be deducted from the total permitted for that building; otherwise it is considered exempt from sign area limits. Reader boards shall be designed as one with each copy panel consisting of similar materials and designs. Permits for reader boards shall not be issued without the consent of the property owner.
 2. Each commercial use which has direct pedestrian access through an exterior building wall which is visible from a public right-of-way, shall be allowed at least 10 square feet of building sign area, regardless of building occupancy frontage. Commercial uses have a sole access from the interior of any building or from an enclosed lobby or court shall not be allowed the minimum building sign area referred to in this section.
- E. **Window Signage.** See Sections 17.48.110.F and 17.30.130.D.
- F. **Enclosed Bulletin Boards and Message Centers.** Enclosed bulletin boards or message centers shall be allowed in the Downtown Retail Design District, subject to the following requirements.
1. **Locations Allowed.** Unless located on private property, enclosed bulletin boards and message centers shall require an encroachment permit.
 2. **Size.** Enclosed bulletin boards and message centers shall not be greater than eight feet in height and 12 feet in width.
 3. **Materials and Maintenance.** Enclosed bulletin boards and message centers shall be constructed of metal painted frames, shall have

lockable display cases with shatter resistant glass or similar materials, and may only include internal illumination. Enclosed bulletin boards and message centers shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of Section 17.48.170.

4. ***Prohibitions.*** Enclosed bulletin boards and message centers shall not include electronic message displays.
- G. **Temporary Signs.** Banners shall be allowed in the Downtown Retail Design District pursuant to the requirements of Section 17.48.130.C. All portable signs covered in Section 17.48.130.B shall be prohibited in the Downtown Retail Design District, except A-frame signs, which shall be allowed subject to the following requirements. A-Frames and easels are generally allowed for the purpose of advertising the location, goods or services offered on the premises, however, they may be used as general advertising for hire subject to the limitations in this section.
1. ***Prohibitions.*** A-Frame signs are prohibited from any form of broadcasting or audio presentation.
 2. ***Materials and Maintenance.*** A-frame signs must be made of a durable, rigid material not subject to rapid deterioration, such as, without limitation, wood, plastic or metal, and must be professional in appearance. A-frame signs must be maintained in accordance with the requirements of Section 17.48.170.
 3. ***Locations Allowed.*** A-Frame signs are allowed within a front or corner side setback area and in the public right-of-way directly in front of a business.
 4. ***Maximum Height and Area.*** The A-Frame sign, when placed in an open position must not exceed a height of four feet from ground level to the top of the sign and be no more than 7.5 square feet per sign face.
 5. ***Maximum Number:*** One A-Frame sign is allowed per business, which does not count against maximum allowed permanent sign area. They must be removed at the close of business.
 6. ***Placement:*** A-Frame signs shall be placed so that a minimum of four feet is left clear for pedestrian passage on all sidewalks and walkways. They shall only be placed at grade level and shall not be placed in site visibility triangles or on walls or boulders, within planters, flower beds or tree wells, on vehicles, on other signs or on or affixed to any other type of structure.

7. **City's Right to Remove:** If at any time any portion of the public right-of-way occupied and used by the A-Frame sign may be needed or required by the City, or the business fails to maintain the permitted sign in accordance with the requirements of this subsection, it may be removed by the City.

H. **Projecting Signs Mounted to Building Face.**

1. Projecting signs shall be located no higher than the cornice or parapet line, whichever is lower, and must be located so as to not obscure any architectural detail of the façade. A double face projecting sign shall be considered one sign.
2. The maximum size of a projecting sign shall be 40 square feet (20 square feet per side). Projecting signs shall not project more than five feet horizontally. In no case may the sign come within 2.5 feet of the curb.
3. Projecting signs shall be clear of street trees, traffic signals, street lighting and regulatory signs.
4. Projecting signs shall be counted against overall allowed signage square footage per location.

17.48.130 Temporary Signs

A. **General Requirements.**

1. **General.** Each developed property or establishment, or property for which a building permit has been issued, in non-residential zones, as specified, shall be allowed sign copy area for the display of temporary signs, in addition to allowed permanent signage as specified in this Chapter. No permit shall be required for temporary signage.
2. **Limits.** Temporary signage must comply with the sign area limits and maximum number of allowed temporary signs, for each of the categories of temporary signage specified in this section. No other temporary signage shall be allowed in non-residential zones.
3. **Illumination.** Temporary signs cannot be illuminated or constructed with reflective materials.

B. **Portable Signs.** Portable signs are allowed subject to the following standards.

1. **Relation to Associated Business.** Portable signs may be located up to 300 feet away from the business so long as they remain within the

development site with which the business is associated and the business obtains property owner authorization.

2. **Maximum Sign Area per Parcel or Business Location.** The total aggregate sign area for all portable signs may not exceed 16 square feet for each developed or developing parcel, or business location where more than one business is located on a single parcel. Where a parcel or business location has a street frontage exceeding 75 lineal feet, the aggregate sign area for all portable signs shall be 16 square feet for each 75-foot segment of street frontage. Each undeveloped parcel shall have a maximum aggregate portable sign area of 16 square feet, all of which may be used as general advertising for hire.
3. **Maximum Size and Sign Area.** All portable signs, except A-Frame signs and feather banners, shall not exceed 8 feet in height above ground level, nor have a maximum sign area greater than 8 square feet. A-Frames sign, when placed in an open position, must not exceed a height of four feet above the ground level, to the top of the sign, nor have a maximum sign area greater than 7.5 square feet. Feather banners must not exceed a height of ten feet above the ground level, nor have a maximum sign area greater than 16 square feet.
4. **Materials and Maintenance.** Portable signs shall:
 - a. Be constructed of durable, weather-resistant materials not subject to rapid deterioration or fading, and be professional in appearance.
 - b. Be maintained in accordance with the requirements of Section 17.48.170.
 - c. Portable signs shall be constructed of acceptable materials such as corrugated extruded, twin wall plastic or acrylic sheets mounted to stakes or polls, metal sign blanks, traditional painted wood or vinyl or paper film attached to a plywood core, or similar materials. Acceptable materials for feather banners include vinyl, nylon reinforced vinyl, polyethylene or polyester-like materials, durable fabric or similar materials.
 - d. Be affixed to supporting structures made of a durable, rigid material such as, without limitation, wood, plastic or metal. Feather banners must be secured and stabilized so as to withstand wind gusts, or be removed during windy conditions.
5. **Placement.** The portable signs shall be placed on private property on the same lot or development site as the establishment that qualifies for

such sign and, with an encroachment permit, may be placed in the public right of way in front of the associated use or on the nearest sidewalk provided a four-foot wide pedestrian clear zone is maintained. Portable signs must be a minimum of seven feet from the back of the curb, or edge of pavement where no curb exists. Feather banners cannot interfere with either pedestrian or vehicular sight distance, any view corridor or obstruct views to any existing business or existing permanent sign.

6. ***Prohibited Locations.*** Portable signs shall not be located:
 - a. In any public right-of-way;
 - b. In parking lot driving lanes, aisles or stalls;
 - c. On multi-use trails or sidewalks if they would block a four-foot wide pedestrian clear zone;
 - d. At any location where they would block pedestrian access;
 - e. Within 100 feet on either side, or in front of a monument sign;
 - f. Within 20 feet from any other portable sign; and
 - g. Within 30 feet from a shopping center access drive or street intersection.
7. ***Hours for Display for A-frame Signs and Feather Banners.*** A-frame signs and feather banners are permitted during the hours a business is open for business and one-half hour before opening and one-half hour after closing. They must be removed during hours when the establishment is not open to the public.

C. **Banners and Pennants.** Banner signs and pennants, including similar devices such as strings of ornamental fringes or streamers, are allowed for establishments within commercial zones, subject to the following standards:

1. ***Maximum Sign Area per Parcel or Business Location.*** The total aggregate sign area for banners and pennants may not exceed 32 square feet for each parcel, or business location where more than one business is located on a single parcel. Where a parcel or business location has a street frontage exceeding 75 lineal feet, the aggregate sign area for banners or pennants shall be 32 square feet for each 75-foot segment of street frontage.
2. ***Maximum Size.*** The maximum size for any banner is 64 square feet, provided that the parcel or business location has an aggregate sign

area allowance that allows for banners within this maximum size allowance.

3. **Maximum Height.** Banners and pennants shall not extend above the roofline or the parapet of a wall.
 4. **Banners as Permanent Signs Prohibited.** Banners shall not be used as permanent signs, and shall not otherwise replace the primary permanent identification sign(s) for the business or establishment, and the business or establishment utilizing a banner must have a permanent sign application on file with the City.
 5. **Materials and Maintenance.** Banners and pennants shall be constructed of durable, weather-resistant materials not subject to rapid deterioration or fading, and shall be professional in appearance. Acceptable materials include but are not limited to vinyl, nylon reinforced vinyl, polyethylene or polyester-like materials, or durable fabric. Banners and pennants shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of Section 17.48.170.
 6. **Allowable Locations.** Banners are only allowed on sites where permanent signs are allowed.
- D. **Temporary Window Signs.** Temporary window signs are allowed for establishments within commercial zones, subject to the following standards:
1. **Maximum Sign Area.** The allowable sign area of temporary window signs shall not exceed 40 percent of the total window area for each window or transparent door in a building or structure. For the purpose of defining window area, multiple windows separated by mullions or frames of less than four (4) inches are considered a single window.
 2. **Materials and Maintenance.** Temporary window sign shall be constructed of suitable materials and be professional in appearance. Suitable materials include glossy paper, matte paper, card stock or presentation bond paper, vinyl, polypropylene, or paint-on decals, water-based or other easily removable paint or similar materials. Temporary window signs shall be maintained in accordance with requirements of Section 17.48.170.
 3. **Illumination.** Temporary window signs shall not be illuminated.

17.48.140 Master Sign Program

- A. **Purpose.** The purpose of a Master Sign Program is to provide a method for an applicant to integrate the design and placement of signs within a project with the overall design of the development to achieve a more unified

appearance. Master Sign Programs may also be used for subdivision projects with a phased development and/or sales plan. Minor variations in dimensional standards and other limitations of this Section may be approved, provided they achieve a result that is superior to what would otherwise be allowed. The Sign Program must demonstrate how it:

1. Improves the safety and welfare of the general public by minimizing distractions, hazards, and obstructions from sign design or placement;
2. Provides for sign design or placement appropriate for the area;
3. Incorporates sign design and placement related to architectural and landscape features on site; and
4. Incorporates sign design, scale, and placement oriented to pedestrian traffic.

B. Applicability and Approval Required.

1. ***Master Sign Program Required.*** A Master Sign Program approved by the Planning Commission is required for:
 - a. New or remodeled non-residential or mixed used projects on sites of five acres or more;
 - b. Multiple tenant commercial or mixed use buildings where the entire façade is being remodeled; and
 - c. Any development in the BRP Zone.
2. ***Optional Sign Program.*** A Master Sign Program may be substituted for specific sign designs and individual applications if requested by an applicant and approved by the Planning Commission.

C. Required Submittals. Applications for a Master Sign Program must include the following plans and text:

1. A site plan showing the location of buildings, parking lots, driveways and landscaped areas;
2. Computation of the maximum total sign area, the maximum area for individual signs, the height of signs and the number of freestanding signs allowed, if proposed;
3. An accurate indication on the site plan of the proposed location of each proposed sign and existing sign which is to remain;

4. Color schemes, lettering and graphic style (if tenants are not known, generic styles may be presented);
 5. Lighting and sign construction materials; and
 6. Sign dimensions (if tenants are not known, generic dimensions may be presented); and
 7. A written program of standards for all sign types to be distributed to future tenants, including color, size, illumination, construction details, and sign placement.
- D. **Findings.** The Planning Commission will only approve a Master Sign Program if the following findings are made:
1. That the proposed signs are in harmony and visually related to:
 - a. *Other Signs Included in the Master Sign Program.* This may be accomplished by incorporating several common design elements such as materials, letter style, colors, illumination, sign type or sign shape.
 - b. *The Buildings They Identify.* This may be accomplished by utilizing materials, colors or design motifs included in the building being identified.
 - c. *The Surrounding Development.* Approval of a planned sign program must not adversely affect surrounding land uses or obscure adjacent conforming signs.
 2. That the proposed signs will comply with all the provision of this Section, except with regard to:
 - a. Number of signs allowed; and
 - b. Location and height of signs.
- E. **Conditions.** Reasonable conditions of approval may be imposed by the Planning Commission to achieve the purposes of this Section and ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses and signage.
- F. **Post-Approval Procedures.** After approval of a Master Sign Program, no signs shall be erected, placed, painted, or maintained, except in conformance with such Program, and such Program may be enforced in the same way as any provision in this Section.

1. **Lease Agreements.** The Master Sign Program and all conditions of approval shall be attached to the lease agreements for all leasable space within a project.
2. **Individual Signs.** Any sign that conforms to an approved Master Sign Program may be approved by the City Planner or designee; however, approval of a Master Sign Program does not waive the permit requirements for individual signs.
3. **Amendments.** The City Planner or designee may approve minor amendments to a Master Sign Program that are in substantial conformance with the original approval. All other amendments, including amendments to conditions of approval shall be processed as a new application.

17.48.150 Variances and Exceptions

A. Purposes.

1. **Variances.** The Planning Commission may grant variances for setbacks, locational and dimensional standards that apply to signs in order to prevent unnecessary hardships that would result from a strict or literal interpretation and enforcement of certain regulations prescribed by this chapter. A practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship may result from the size, shape or dimensions of a site or the location of existing structures thereon, from geographic, topographic or other physical conditions on the site or in the immediate vicinity, or from street locations or traffic conditions in the immediate vicinity that would affect the signing of a site or building.
2. **Exception.** The Planning Commission may grant an exception to the physical design standards if it can be demonstrated that such an exception is necessary to facilitate an improved aesthetic relationship between a sign and the structures upon which it is mounted.

B. Application Procedures. Application for a sign variance or sign exception shall be submitted to the City Planner on an approved form and include the following:

1. Name and address of the applicant;
2. Statement that the applicant is the owner of the property, is the authorized agent of the owner(s), or is or will be the plaintiff in an action in eminent domain to acquire the property involved;
3. Address and legal description of the property;

4. Statement of the precise nature of the variance or exception requested and the hardship or practical difficulty which would result from the strict interpretation and enforcement of the standards in this Chapter;
5. The application shall be accompanied by such sketches or drawings as may be necessary to clearly show applicant's proposal in comparison with the standards that otherwise would apply; and
6. The required fee or deposit.

The application shall be reviewed by the City Planner, who shall determine whether it is complete or, if not, what additional information is needed. Once the application is determined to be complete, the City Planner shall give notice to the applicant of the time when the application will be considered by the Planning Commission. The City Planning also may give notice of the time to any other interested party.

C. Public Notice and Hearing.

1. Notice of a public hearing on a sign variance or sign exception shall be given not less than ten days nor more than 30 days prior to the date of the hearing by mailing a notice of the time and place of the hearing to property owners within three hundred (300) feet of the boundaries of the area occupied or to be occupied by the use which is the subject of the hearing.
2. After the required notice has been provided, the Planning Commission shall hold a public hearing on an application for a variance.

D. Staff Report. The City Planner shall prepare a staff report on the application, including a recommendation, which shall be submitted to the Planning Commission.

E. Public Hearing Procedure. At a public hearing the Planning Commission shall review the application and the statements and drawings submitted by the applicant and the staff report and the evidence presented in that report with respect to the findings listed below, that are required to approve a variance or exception.

F. Findings Required for a Variance.

1. The Planning Commission may grant a variance to a regulation or standard prescribed by this Chapter, as applied for or as modified by the Commission, provided that, on the basis of the application and staff report and/or evidence submitted, the Commission determines:

- a. That strict or literal interpretation and enforcement of the specified regulation would result in practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the purposes of the sign regulations;
 - b. That there are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property which do not apply generally to other properties classified in the same zoning district;
 - c. That strict or literal interpretation and enforcement of the specified regulation would deprive the applicant of privileges enjoyed by the owners of other properties classified in the same zoning district;
 - d. That the granting of the variance will not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations on other properties classified in the same zoning district; and
 - e. That the granting of the variance will not be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare, or materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity.
 - 2. A variance may be revocable, may be granted for a limited time period, or may be granted subject to such reasonable conditions as the Commission may prescribe.
 - 3. The Planning Commission must deny a variance application if the required findings can not be made.
- G. **Findings Required for an Exception.** The Planning Commission may approve, conditionally approve or deny a request for an exception to the physical design standards of this chapter. For the Planning Commission to approve or conditionally approve an exception, the following findings must be made:
- 1. That the granting of the exception is necessary to attain a high aesthetic sign design which would be restricted if the provisions and standards of this Chapter were strictly applied;
 - 2. That the granting of an exception would not adversely affect the visibility of signs on adjacent properties; and
 - 3. That the granting of an exception would not constitute a granting of a special privilege.

- H. **Appeal to City Council.** The decision of the Planning Commission on a variance or exception application shall be subject to the appeal provisions of the zoning ordinance.
- I. **Revocation.** A variance or exception granted subject to a condition or conditions shall be revoked by the Planning Commission if the applicant fails to comply with any the condition of approval.
- J. **Time Limits for Filing a New Application.** Following the denial of a variance or exception application or the revocation of a variance or exception, no application for the same or substantially the same sign shall be filed within one year of the date of denial of the variance or exception application or the date of revocation of the variance or exception.

17.48.160 Nonconforming Signs

- A. **Purpose.** A nonconforming sign is a sign that was lawfully constructed and maintained prior to the adoption of the regulations codified in this Chapter but which does not conform to the provisions of this Chapter. The purpose of the regulations in this Section is to limit the number and extent of nonconforming signage by prohibiting alteration or enlargement of such signage so as to increase the discrepancy between their condition and the standards and requirements of this Chapter.
- B. **Continuance and Maintenance.** Reasonable and routine maintenance and repairs may be performed on signs that are nonconforming provided there is no expansion of any nonconformity with the current requirements of this Chapter.
- C. **Abandonment of Nonconforming Sign.** Whenever a nonconforming sign has been abandoned, or the use of the property has been discontinued for a continuous period of 30 days, the nonconforming sign must be removed.
- D. **Restoration of a Damaged Sign.** An on-premise sign may be restored that meets any of the following criteria:
 - 1. A sign with damage that does not exceed 50 percent of the total sign area, including hardware and attachments, provided that the repairs start within 30 days and diligently pursued to completion.
 - 2. A sign that is a danger to the public or is unsafe as determined by the Building Official.
- E. **Signs Rendered Nonconforming by Annexation.** Any sign that becomes non-conforming subsequent to the effective date of this Chapter by reason of annexation to the City of the site upon which the sign is located is subject to the provisions of this Section.

17.48.170 Maintenance, Abandonment, and Enforcement

- A. **Maintenance Required.** All signs and associated supporting structures shall be maintained in like-new condition, without rips, tears, fading and similar damage that inevitably occurs as a result of normal wear and aging.
1. ***Deteriorated Signs.*** Any sign or sign structure that is sagging, leaning, fallen, decayed, broken, deteriorated, ripped, torn, faded, or other deteriorating or dilapidated condition shall be promptly repaired, to the satisfaction of the City, or removed.
 2. ***Graffiti.*** Graffiti on a sign shall be removed within two days of notice of its placement on such sign.
 3. ***Maintenance Standards.*** All parts, portions, units and materials composing a sign, together with the frame, background, surface, support or enclosure shall be maintained in a like-new, safe condition, painted, and adequately protected from weathering with all braces, bolts and structural parts and supporting frames and fastenings reasonably free from deterioration, rot, rust, and loosening so that they do not create a hazard to persons or property or constitute a nuisance.
 4. ***Summary Removal of Hazards.*** Whenever any sign, by virtue of its physical nature and condition, poses an immediate and serious threat to the public safety, the same may be removed by City personnel, or its physical deficiency cured, to the extent necessary to protect the public safety. The cost of such removal or repair shall be assessed against the sign owner.
- B. **Abandoned or Obsolete Sign.** An on-premise sign advertising an activity, business, service or product must be removed within 30 days following the actual discontinuance of the activity, business, service or product. If the sign is not so removed, the City Planner or designee may have the sign removed in accordance with the public nuisance abatement provisions of this Code.
- C. **Illegal Signs.** Any sign, banner, or sign structure not erected, constructed or located in conformance with this Chapter and not classified as a legal nonconforming sign is an illegal sign and is subject to abatement in accordance with the public nuisance abatement procedures set forth elsewhere in the Visalia Municipal Code.
- D. **Enforcement.** Signs which do not conform to the provisions of this Chapter and are erected after its effective date and signs erected after the effective date of this Chapter without obtaining the permit required thereby are declared to be unlawful and a public nuisance. All signs declared to be unlawful by this Section and all persons erecting or maintaining them shall be subject to the terms of Chapter 17.46, Administration and Enforcement,

specifically Sections 17.46.010 to 17.46.060, of this Code and all amendments thereof, as well as Chapter 1.13, Administrative Code Enforcement. The City Planner or designee shall forthwith take all necessary actions or proceedings for the abatement, removal and enjoinder pursuant of said sections of the Visalia Municipal Code. The remedies provided for in this Section are cumulative and nonexclusive.

17.48.180 Definitions

The following definitions apply within this Chapter, regardless of how the terms may be defined in the Municipal Code.

A-Frame Sign. A portable upright, rigid, self-supporting frame sign in the form of a triangle or letter “A”.

Abandoned Sign. A sign remaining in place or not maintained for 30 days that does not provide direction for, advertise, or identify a legally established business, product, or service available on the business premises where the sign is located.

Animated Sign. A sign with messages that visually change, or images that move or appear to move, flash on or off, wink or blink with varying light intensity, show motion or create the illusion of motion, or revolve to create an illusion of being on or off. This definition does not include traditional barber poles or scoreboards, nor does it include “commercial mascots,” “digital displays” and “electronic signs”, which are defined separately.

Awning. Any structure made of flexible fabric or similar material covering a metal frame attached to a building, whether or not the same is so erected as to permit its being raised to a position flat against the building when not in use.

Awning or Canopy Sign. Sign copy placed on an awning or any other projecting structure made of flexible fabric or similar material covering a metal frame supported by the ground or sidewalk.

Banner Sign. Any sign of vinyl, nylon reinforced vinyl, polyethylene or polyester-like materials, durable fabric or similar material that is mounted to a structure or a building at one or more edges with no enclosing framework on which a message or image is painted or otherwise affixed. Flags are not within this definition.

Billboard: See Outdoor Advertising Display.

Changeable Copy Sign. A sign constructed or designed to allow for periodic changes of copy, and for which the copy is changed not more than once each 24 hour period. Examples include signs for an auditorium, theater, school, church,

meeting hall, or similar uses characterized by public assembly and changing programs or events, or gas station prices. This definition does not include animated signs or electronic signs.

Commercial Message. A message on a sign, or portion of a sign, that promotes, informs, or proposes an economic transaction, primarily concerns the economic interests of the sign sponsor and/or audience, or is intended to further discussion in the marketplace of goods and services.

Copy. Any letters, numerals, or symbols displayed on a sign face conveying a message to the public.

Digital Display. A method of displaying a visual image that uses liquid crystal cells or other types of light emitting diodes (LEDs) or their functional equivalent allow for the message or image to be easily changed, typically by remote control or computer programming. This definition applies to signs displaying a series of still images.

Electronic Sign. A sign that is capable of presenting variable message displays by projecting an electronically controlled pattern and which can be programmed to periodically change the message display. See also Digital Display.

Exempt Sign. A sign which may be legally displayed, erected or maintained, but is not subject to a sign permit requirement.

Externally Illuminated Sign. Any sign that is lit by a light source that is external to the sign directed towards and shining on the face of the sign.

Face. That portion of a sign upon which the copy is mounted or displayed.

Feather Banner. A portable sign consisting of a vertical banner made of vinyl, nylon reinforced vinyl, polyethylene or polyester-like materials, durable fabric or similar material, the longer dimension of which is typically attached to a pole or rod that is driven into the ground, supported by an individual stand or bracketed to a structure. Also called a “blade sign,” “swooper,” “flutter flag,” “bow sign” or “teardrop banner.” This definition includes functionally similar devices.

Flag. Any fabric or banner containing distinctive colors, patterns, or design that displays the symbol(s) of a nation, state, local government, company, organization, belief system, idea, or other meaning.

Freestanding Sign. A permanent sign that is self-supporting in a fixed location and not attached to a building. It includes monument signs, which are connected or attached to a sign structure, fence, or wall that is not an integral part of a building, and pole signs, which is mounted on a pole(s) or other support(s) that is placed on

and anchored in the ground or on a base and that is independent from any building or other structure. Freestanding signs are of two types: monument and pole. Flag poles are not within this definition.

Graffiti. Marks, such as inscriptions, drawings, or designs, which are placed, scratched, etched, painted, or sprayed on public or private property without the owner's consent.

Illuminated Sign. A sign with an artificial light source incorporated internally or externally for the purpose of illuminating the sign. This includes signs made from neon or other gas tube(s) that are bent to form letters, symbols, or other shapes. Ambient lighting, by itself, does not make a sign "illuminated."

Master Sign Program. A coordinated sign plan which includes details of all signs (not including exempt or temporary signs) which are or will be placed on a site, including master identification, individual business and directory signs.

Mobile Billboard. Any vehicle, or wheeled conveyance which carries, conveys, pulls, displays, or transports any sign or billboard for the primary purpose of advertising a commercial or noncommercial message, or other general advertising for hire.

Monument Sign. See Freestanding Sign.

Moving Sign. A sign or any portion thereof that rotates, moves, or appears to move in some manner by mechanical, electrical, natural, or other means.

Mural. A work of graphic art on an exterior building wall that may or may not contain a commercial logo or trademark but does not serve to advertise or promote any business, product, activity, service, interest, or entertainment.

Name Plate. A sign that identifies an occupant and/or address.

Noncommercial Message. A message or image on a sign, or portion of a sign, which displays noncommercial speech, e.g., commentary or advocacy on topics of public debate and concern. This definition shall be construed and interpreted in light of relevant court decisions. Noncommercial messages do not have a location factor, such as on-site or off-site.

Non-Communicative Aspects. Those aspects of a sign that are not directly communicative, such as physical structure, mounting device, size and height, setback, illumination, spacing, and scale relative to other structures.

Nonconforming Sign. A sign lawfully erected and legally existing on the effective date of this Section, or of amendments thereto, but which does not conform to the provisions of this Chapter.

On-Site or On-Premise Sign. Any sign or portion thereof that identifies, advertises, or attracts attention to a business, product, service, event or activity sold, existing or offered upon the same property or land use as the sign. The off-site/on-site distinction applies only to commercial messages.

Outdoor Advertising Display. A sign that identifies, advertises or attracts attention to a business, product, service, event or activity sold, existing or offered at a different location or which identifies by brand name a service or product which, although sold on the premises, does not constitute the principal item for sale on the premises. The off-site/on-site distinction applies only to commercial messages. This type of sign is also known as a billboard.

Pennant. Any lightweight plastic, fabric, or other material, whether or not containing a message of any kind, attached to a rope, wire, or string, usually in a series, designed to move in the wind and attract attention. Flags and banners are not within this definition.

Pole Sign. See Freestanding Sign.

Portable Sign. A movable sign that has a transitory purpose or functionality that is intended to be displayed for a time only. The definition includes A-frame type signs, feather banners, stationary inflatable signs displayed and secured at ground level, and other free standing temporary signs made of materials not suitable for or intended for permanent display, affixed to stakes or poles or similar supporting structures that accommodate the ability to affix such free standing temporary signs in multiple locations.

Projecting Sign. A single or double faced sign that is perpendicular to the face of a building and projects more than 18 inches from the face. This category includes awning and under canopy signs.

Primary Building Face. The wall of a building which contains the principal entrance(s) to the building. If there are principal entrances in more than one wall, the longest of the walls in which principal entrances are located shall be the primary building face. "Primary building face" shall include not only the wall itself but all doors, windows, or other openings therein and projections therefrom.

Readerboard. A sign structure or mounting device on which at least a portion of the display face may be used for changeable copy that is either non-commercial or commercial, electronic or manual.

Roofline. The top edge of a roof or building parapet, whichever is higher, excluding any cupolas, pylons, chimneys, or minor projections.

Roof Sign. Any sign located on a roof of a building or having its major structural supports attached to a roof.

Sign. Any identification, description, illustration, or device illuminated or non-illuminated, which is visible to the general public from any exterior public right-of-way, and directs attention to a product, service, place, activity, person, institution, business or solicitation, including any permanently installed or situated merchandise; or any emblem, painting, banner, pennant, or placard designed to advertise, identify, or convey information. A display, device, or thing need not contain lettering to be a sign. Notwithstanding the generality of the foregoing, the following are not within this definition:

- A. Architectural features. Decorative or architectural features of buildings (not including lettering, trademarks or moving parts), that do not perform a communicative function;
- B. Fireworks, etc. The legal use of fireworks, candles and artificial lighting not otherwise regulated by this Code;
- C. Foundation stones, cornerstones;
- D. Grave markers, grave stones, headstones, mausoleums, shrines, and other markers of the deceased;
- E. Personal Appearance. Items or devices of personal apparel, decoration or appearance, including tattoos, makeup, wigs, costumes, and masks, but not including commercial mascots or hand-held signs; and
- F. Symbols Embedded in Architecture. Symbols of noncommercial organizations or concepts including, but not limited to, religious or political symbols, when such are permanently integrated into the structure of a permanent building, including stained glass windows on churches, carved or bas relief doors or walls, bells, and religious statuary.

Sign Area. The area contained within a single continuous perimeter enclosing all parts of such sign copy, excluding any structural elements outside the limits of the sign required to support the sign.

Sign Face. An exterior display surface of a sign, including non-structural trim, exclusive of the supporting structure. It includes the area of a sign which is available for mounting and public display of the visually communicative image.

Temporary Sign. A structure or device with a transitory purpose or functionality and used for the public display of visual messages or images intended to last for a time only.

Vehicle Display Sign. A sign mounted, attached, affixed, or painted upon any surface of a motor vehicle, trailer, or similar conveyance parked on public or private property for the purpose of general advertising for hire.

Wall Sign. Any sign attached to, erected against or painted upon the wall of a building or structure, the face of which is in a single plane parallel to the plane of the wall. Wall signs also include signs on a false or mansard roof.

Window Sign. Any structure, device or substance device used for the public display of visual messages or images and affixed to either side of an exterior window of a building, or in the interior of the building, within two feet of a window, intended to be viewed from the exterior of such building, which is not intended for or suitable for long term or permanent display. Window displays placed behind a window that are presentations of merchandise provided by the establishment with associated artwork and features are not considered signs.