



Title 17 ZONING¹

Chapter 17.50 SIGN CODE*

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*Prior legislation: Ord. 1405.

17.50.010 Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to regulate the number, size, height, and placement of signs within the city. In conformance with the comprehensive plan, the regulation of signs is found to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens. It is further intended to encourage quality design that creates an attractive and harmonious community and business environment which provides businesses with the adequate means to advertise their products and/or services. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.020 Definitions.

“A-board/sandwich board signs” means small type signs, either single- or double-faced, portable, upon which is generally placed advertising copy denoting products or services being offered upon the premises on which such signs are placed.



“Abandoned signs” means a sign that no longer correctly identifies, exhorts or advertises any person, business, lessor, owner, product or activity conducted or available on the premises where such sign is located and which has not been changed or removed within 180 days of a tenancy change.

“Advertising copy” means any sign graphics, background colors, logos or trademarks that identify or promote the sign user or any product or service; or that provides information about the sign user, the building or the products or services available.

“Awning” means any structure made of cloth, metal, or other material with a 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 sign” means a sign affixed to the surface of an awning and which does not extend vertically or horizontally beyond the limits of such awning.

“Balloon” means a latex balloon 36 inches or less in diameter tethered on a cord not greater than four feet in length.

“Balloon, rooftop” means a balloon with a vertical dimension greater than 36 inches but not greater than 25 feet.

“Banner sign” means a sign made of cloth, fabric, paper, nonrigid plastic or similar types of material. Banners may contain text, numbers, graphic images or symbols. Pennants and flags are not considered banners.

“Billboard” means a preprinted or handpainted changeable advertising copy sign that directs attention to businesses, commodities, services, or facilities that are not primarily sold, manufactured, or distributed from the property on which the sign is located. The term “billboard” includes both the structural framework that supports a billboard and any billboard faces attached thereto. Although sometimes smaller, billboard sizes often range from 12 to 14 feet in height and 24 to 48 feet in width. A billboard is not a “changeable copy sign” as defined below.

“Building facade” means the exterior walls of a building exposed to public view or that wall viewed by persons not within the building.

“Business sign” means a sign located on the premises of the business with which it is associated.

“Canopy” means any structure, other than an awning, made of cloth, metal, or other materials with framework attached to a building or carried by a frame supported by the ground.

“Canopy sign” means any sign erected upon, against or directly above a canopy.

“Center identification sign” means any sign that identifies a shopping center, industrial center, or office center by name, address, or symbol. Center identification signs may also identify individual tenants or businesses within the center.

“Change in nature” means an expansion of the building or structure housing the business in excess of 50 percent of the existing assessed value, or a change in the name of the business that would require a change in signage.

“Changeable copy sign (manual)” means any sign that is designed so that characters, letters, or illustrations can be changed or rearranged by hand without altering the face or the surface of the sign; i.e., readerboards with changeable pictorial panels. A billboard is not a changeable copy sign.

“Changing message center” means an electronically controlled sign, message center, or readerboard where copy changes of a public service or commercial nature are shown on the same lamp bank; i.e., time, temperature, date, news, or commercial information of interest to the traveling public.



“Commercial flag” means a flag no larger than 24 square feet identifying the words, numbers, or business/corporate images and symbols. No more than 12 commercial flags may be erected on a site.

“Construction sign” means a temporary nonilluminated sign giving the name or names of principal contractors, architects, lending institutions, or other persons or firms responsible for construction on the site where the sign is located, together with other information included thereon.

“Damaged/disrepaired sign” means a sign that is damaged, in disrepair, or vandalized and not repaired within 60 days of the damaging event.

“Dangerous sign” means a sign that by nature of its condition is hazardous to the public’s health, safety, and welfare.

“Directional sign” means a permanently erected single- or double-faced sign designed to guide or direct pedestrian or vehicular traffic to an area, place, or convenience. Directional signs shall only contain information on exits, entrances, parking, telephones, restrooms, or similar types of information and the name and/or logo of the business where the directional sign is located.

“Directory sign” means a sign on which the names and locations of occupants or the use of a building is given.

“Display surface” means the area made available by the sign structure for the purpose of displaying the advertising message.

“Double-faced sign” means a sign that has advertising copy on opposite sides of a single display surface or sign structure. Wedge, round or multi-faceted signs shall not be considered double-faced signs when determining square footage. Instead, the area of each face of such signs is used when figuring square footage.

“Electrical sign” means a sign or sign structure that uses electrical wiring, connections and/or fixtures as a part of the sign, but not including signs illuminated by exterior light source.

“Electronic sign” means a sign designed to allow changes in the sign graphics electronically.

“Festoon” means a strip or string of balloons that includes clusters or strings of balloons connected to a fixed object or vehicle on at least one end of the festoon.

“Flag” means a piece of cloth or other nonrigid material identifying one of the following:

1. Flag of a nation;
2. Commemorative flag such as a POW flag; or
3. Flag of a political subdivision.

“Flag, commercial.” See “Commercial flag.”

“Flashing sign” means a sign or a portion thereof that changes light intensity or switches on and off in a constant, random or irregular pattern or contains motion or the optical illusion of motion by use of electrical energy. Changing message centers shall not be considered flashing signs.

“Freestanding letters” means individual letters, characters or marks comprising any portion of a sign or sign structure, whether erected flat against a wall or upon a framework for support.

“Freestanding sign” means a sign supported by a poles, uprights, braces, or standards and is not connected to or supported by any other structure. Pole signs and monument signs are examples of freestanding signs.

“Freeway sign” means a pole or monument sign that is allowed by code for those properties that are located along the Interstate 5 (I-5) right-of-way as defined in this chapter. “Freeway signs” are specifically oriented to the traffic on the interstate rather than other state or local roadways.



“Garage sale sign” means a temporary sign that advertises a residentially based garage sale.

“Grade” means the elevation or level of the street (or parking lot) closest to the sign to which reference is made, as measured at the street centerline, or the relative ground level in the immediate vicinity of the sign.

“Grand opening” means welcoming clients, customers, etc., into a newly opened or relocated place of business for the purpose of promoting or familiarizing people with the business. To be eligible for grand opening signs, the business must be lawfully licensed by the city of Milton and have been open for three months or less (see also MMC [17.50.040\(B\)](#)).

“Graphic” means any of the following: symbols or pictures formed by writing, drawing, or engraving, relating to the written or printed word, the symbols or devices used in writing or printing to represent a symbol, word, meaning, or message.

“Identification sign” means a sign that is limited to the name, address and number of a building, institution, or person and to the activity carried on in the building or institution, or the type of occupancy of the person.

“Illuminated sign” means a sign designed to give forth any artificial or reflected light, either directly from a source of light incorporated into or connected with such sign, or indirectly from a source intentionally directed upon it, so shielded that no direct illumination from it is visible elsewhere than on the sign and in the immediate proximity thereof.

“Incidental sign” means a small sign, four square feet or less in area, intended primarily for the convenience and direction of the public on the premises. Incidental signs do not advertise but are for informational purposes only. Incidental signs may contain information that denotes the hours of operation, telephone number, credit cards accepted, entrances and exits, and information required by law. Incidental information may appear on a sign having other copy as well, such as an advertising sign.

“Institutional sign” means a sign to identify educational, civic, and religious institutions.

“Internal illumination” means a source of lighting concealed entirely within a sign that makes sign graphics visible by transmitting light through a translucent or semi-translucent material.

“Landscaping” means trees, shrubs, and groundcover used around or under the base of monument signs. Required landscaping may be planted in concrete planters, landscape beds, or planter boxes.

“Lawn sign” means a temporary sign within the lawn or landscape area of a site. Lawn signs often identify businesses that have performed improvements to a building or site. Political signs are not considered lawn signs.

“Liquidation sign” means a temporary sign for the purposes of identifying liquidation sales.

“Logo” means an identifying emblem or insignia containing sign graphics, symbols or colors typically used for identification and/or advertisement.

“Marquee” means a permanent structure attached to, supported by and projecting from a building and providing protection from the weather elements, but does not include a projecting roof. For purposes of this chapter, a freestanding permanent roof-like structure providing protection from the elements, such as a service station gas pump island, will also be considered a marquee. This also includes canopies.

“Marquee sign” means a sign attached to and made part of a marquee. A marquee (or canopy) is defined as a permanent roof-like structure attached to and supported by the building and projecting beyond a building, but does not include a projecting roof.

“Monument sign” means a ground-mounted, fixed sign with a height ranging from five to 12 feet above the average ground elevation. The base (not included in the sign surface area



calculation) is attached to the ground as a wide base of solid construction. In no instance shall the bottom of the sign be more than six inches above the base.

“Multiple occupancy building” means a single structure with a common building access that houses more than one retail business, office or commercial venture.

“Municipal facility sign” means a sign that is located on the premises of a facility owned or operated by the city of Milton.

“Mural” means a decorative design or scene intended to provide visual enjoyment that is painted or placed on an exterior building wall. A mural contains no commercial message, logo, corporate symbol, or registered trademark.

“Neighborhood identification sign” means a sign to identify a particular residential area or development.

“Neon lighting” means illuminated tubing forming sign graphics or that is otherwise used as an exposed lighting source. For the purpose of this chapter, the term “neon” will be considered a generic term for this type of lighting regardless of the type of fluorescing gas or material contained within the tubing.

“Neon sign” means neon lighting used to draw attention to a business or building in any manner, including (but not limited to) neon sign graphics, logos or outlining of a building’s architectural features.

“Nonconforming sign” means any sign, legally constructed, that does not conform to the requirements of this chapter.

“Nonstructural trim” means the molding, battens, caps, nailing strips, latticing, cutouts, or letters and walkways that are attached to the sign structure.

“Off-premises sign” means a sign that identifies, advertises, or gives directional information to a commercial establishment not located on the premises where the sign is installed or maintained. A billboard is an example of an off-premises sign.

“Off-site directional arrow real estate signs” means an off-site, portable, temporary, directional sign intended to assist people in finding the location of difficult to locate property that is offered for sale. They may not exceed 6 inches in height or 24 inches in length per side, must be freestanding on their own stake and the bottom edge of the sign must be placed at ground level.

“On-premises sign” means a sign that carries only advertisements and messages strictly applicable to a lawful use of the premises on which it is located.

“On-site real estate sign” means a temporary or portable sign placed on the subject property that advertises that the property is for sale, rent, or lease. The number of such signs shall be limited to one per broker per street frontage or public entrance, whichever is greater. For a dwelling unit, the area of the sign shall be no greater than 12 square feet, where no sign face may exceed six square feet. For other uses and developments, the size of an on-site real estate sign shall not exceed 64 square feet, where no sign face may exceed 32 square feet. All on-site real estate signs must be removed when the sale closes or in the case of a rental or lease, when the tenant takes possession.

“Open house sign” means a portable or temporary sign advertising property that is for sale, rent, or lease. The number of such signs shall be limited to three per property per agent, except that if the agent has more than one property in a development listed for sale, rent, or lease, the agent’s total number of such signs for the development shall be limited to four. The area of such signs shall be no greater than 12 square feet. They may be placed in the right-of-way outside of median strips, public sidewalks, and vehicular and bicycle lanes. They may not block driveways or be affixed to utility poles, trees, or traffic signs. Open house signs must be removed each day



at the conclusion of the open house and are permitted only between sunrise and sunset when the seller or the agent are in attendance at the property.

“Painted signs” means a sign or sign structure, nonelectrical in nature, except such signs may have illumination from an exterior light source.

“Parapet” means that portion of a building wall that extends above the roof of the building.

“Patio sale sign” means a temporary sign that advertises a residentially based patio sale.

“Pennant” means a sign made of cloth, fabric, nonrigid plastic, or similar types of material that is not more than 24 square feet in size. Pennants may not contain text, numbers, or business/corporate images and symbols. No more than 12 pennants may be erected on a site. Banners and flags are not considered pennants. Pennants need not be triangular in shape.

“Perimeter” means the outer boundary required to enclose a sign area.

“Permanent sign” means a sign that is erected without restriction on the time period allowed for display.

“Planned center” means a group of structures housing at least one retail business, office, commercial venture or independent or separate part of a business that were processed through the site approval process as one project or that share the access and/or parking facilities. Individual parcels need not be under the same ownership in order to qualify as a planned center.

“Pole sign” means any sign, electric or otherwise, hung, supported or cantilevered from one or more supports constructed of structural steel, pipe, other materials or combinations of same.

“Political sign” means a sign that advertises a candidate for public elective office or any political party or a sign that promotes a position on a public or ballot issue.

“Porch sale sign” means a temporary sign that advertises a residentially based porch sale.

“Portable sign” means any sign that is manifestly designed to be transported, including by trailer or on its own wheels, even though the wheels of such sign may be removed and the remaining chassis or support constructed without wheels is converted to an A or T frame sign, or attached temporarily or permanently to the ground, since this characteristic is based on the design of such a sign. It is characteristic of such a portable sign that the space provided for advertising matter consist of a changeable copy sign.

“Projecting sign” means a sign, other than a wall sign, that is attached to and projects more than one foot from a structure or other building face.

“Projection” means the distance by which a sign extends beyond its means of support.

“Public information sign” means a sign erected and maintained by any governmental entity for traffic direction or for designation of or directions to any school, hospital, historical site, or public service, property, or facility.

“Readerboard” means a sign consisting of tracks to hold letters that allows for frequent changes of copy; usually such copy is not electronic. A readerboard may be a component of a monument, pole, or wall sign.

“Readerboard, mobile” means a readerboard sign that is not permanently installed on-site.

“Real estate sign” means a sign erected by the owner or owner’s agent displayed for a limited time and offering the sale, rent or lease of ground upon which it is located or of a building located on the same parcel of ground.

“Repair” means to paint, clean, or replace damaged parts of a sign, or to improve its structural strength, but not in a manner that would change the size, shape, location, or character.

“Revolving sign” means any sign or sign structure that revolves or partially revolves by means of some mechanical method about an axis.



“Roof” means the exterior surface and its supporting structures on the top of a building. Overhangs extending beyond the facade of the lower wall are considered part of the roof.

“Roof sign” means any sign erected upon, against, or directly above a roof or parapet of a building or structure. Eighty percent of the sign area shall be backed by the roof system.

“Seasonal decorations” means temporary decorations for holidays that do not fall under the definition of a sign and that are installed no sooner than 30 days before a holiday and removed no later than five days after the holiday. Decorations that fall under the definition of a sign must conform to all provisions of the sign code.

“Sign” means any object, device, display, structure or part thereof that is used to advertise, identify, direct, or attract attention to a product, business, activity, place, person, institution, or event using words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, fixtures, colors, illumination, or projected images. Directional and incidental signs are considered signs for the purpose of this chapter.

“Sign area” means the entire area of a sign on which advertising copy, logos, trademarks, and business or corporate colors are to be placed. Sign structures and associated architectural embellishments, framework and decorative features that contain no written or advertising copy, that are not illuminated and that contain no logos or trademarks shall not be included. Sign area shall be calculated by measuring the area of the smallest rectangle, circle, triangle or parallelogram that can be drawn around all parts of the sign from the viewpoint exposing the largest sign surface area, including the sign face background, and including all spaces and voids between or within letters or symbols that comprise a single word, statement, description, title, business name, graphic symbol or message for all sign faces. Sign supporting structures that are part of the sign display shall be included in the area of calculation. The entire perimeter area of the letters, graphics, symbols, and framework shall be used to determine sign area.

“Sign graphics” include all lines, strokes, text, symbols and logos applied to a sign surface and does not include the background surface to which they are applied.

“Sign height” means the vertical distance measured from the adjacent grade at the base of the sign to the highest point of the sign structure; provided, however, that the grade of the ground may not be built up in order to allow the sign to be higher.

“Sign structure” means any structure that supports or is capable of supporting any sign as defined in this chapter. A sign structure may be a single pole and may or may not be an integral part of a building. Any structure that performs an entirely separate use, such as a telephone booth, bus shelter, Goodwill container, fence, etc., shall not be considered a sign structure.

“Silhouette lighting,” sometimes called “halo lighting,” means lighting being emitted from the back side of pan-channel sign graphic that has the open side of the channel facing the wall or sign face it is mounted to, thereby silhouetting the sign graphics.

“Subdivision identification sign,” means a sign no larger than 36 square feet to identify a particular subdivision that is larger than four acres or more in size.

“Swinging sign” means a sign installed on an arm or spar that is fastened to an adjacent wall or upright pole, which sign is allowed to move or swing to a perceptible degree.

“Temporary sign” means any banner, pennant, or other advertising display, with or without frames, constructed of cloth, light fabric, paper, plastic, cardboard, or other similar material. Temporary signs are not intended for ongoing advertising of products or services or for the naming of a business in lieu of a permitted permanent sign.

“Temporary sign, sports field” means any maintained, non-freestanding sign attached to fencing at a sports field that can only be displayed during the sport’s season of play and must be removed at end of the sport’s season of play.



“Traffic advisement sign” means a sign erected within the public right-of-way alerting motorists of impending road conditions. Signs depicting rail road crossings, curves ahead, crosswalks, and deer crossings are examples of traffic advisement signs. Allowable traffic advisement signs are identified in the AASHTO manual.

“Traffic control signs” means a sign erected within the public right-of-way identifying restrictions on travel. Examples of traffic control signs include stop signs, one-way signs, and speed limit signs.

“Unlawful sign” means any sign that was erected in violation of any applicable ordinance or code governing such erection or construction at the time of its erection, which sign has never been in conformance with all applicable ordinances or codes.

“Vision clearance area” means an area for the preservation of unobstructed sight distance. Vision clearance areas shall conform to the following requirements:

A. All corner lots shall maintain for safety vision purposes a triangular area, two sides of which shall extend 20 feet along the lot lines from the corner of the lot formed by the intersection of the two streets. Within the triangle no tree shall be allowed, and no fence, shrub, or other physical obstruction higher than 42 inches above the established grade shall be permitted.

B. On lots upon which a vehicular driveway is maintained, an area of vision clearance shall be maintained on each side of the driveway. The area shall be defined by a triangle, extending 20 feet along the lot line abutting the street and 20 feet along the driveway.

C. If the driveways of adjacent properties vision clearance is affected then the fence, shrub, tree or sign must meet the requirements of subsections A and B of this section.

D. The requirements listed in subsections A, B and C of this section shall be subject to MMC [12.20.030](#).

“Wall plane” includes that portion of a facade that is contained on one general plane. A single wall plane may contain windows and doors but it is generally a solid surface. The fascia of projecting porches or colonnades may be considered part of the wall plane the porch or colonnade projects for calculating signage area.

“Wall sign” means a sign attached or erected parallel to and extending not more than one foot from the facade or face of any building to which it is attached. Wall signs shall be supported throughout its entire length, with the exposed face of the sign parallel to the plane of said wall or facade. Signs incorporated into mansard roofs, marquees, or canopies shall be treated as a “sign attached to a building.”

“Window sign” means a sign painted on, affixed to, or installed inside a window for purposes of viewing from outside the premises.

“Yard sale sign” means a temporary sign that advertises a residentially based yard sale. (Ord. 1563 § 1, 2003; Ord. 1474 § 1, 2001; Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.030 Administration and enforcement.

A. All new permanent signs require sign permits. Sign permits require full conformance with all city codes. The land use administrator shall issue all permits for the construction, alteration, and erection of signs in accordance with the provisions of this section and related chapters and titles of the municipal code.

B. It shall be the duty of the land use administrator, or code enforcement officer, of the city of Milton to interpret and enforce this section. In addition to meeting the provisions of this section of the zoning code, the permits, materials, structural design, construction, inspection, and maintenance requirements for signs must conform to Chapter [15.04](#) MMC, administered by the public works department. In addition, all signs, where appropriate, shall conform to the current



National Electrical Code and the National Electrical Safety Code. (Ord. 1536 § 1, 2002; Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.040 Permits required.

A. It shall be unlawful for any person to erect, re-erect, construct, enlarge, display, change copy, alter or move a sign, or cause the same to be done, without first obtaining a permit for each sign from the land use administrator as required by this chapter.

B. A permit shall be required for signs installed simultaneously on a single supporting structure. Thereafter, each additional sign(s) erected on the structure must have a separate permit.

C. This section shall not be construed to require an additional permit to repaint, clean, or otherwise perform normal maintenance or repair of a permitted sign or sign structure, nor shall it be construed to require an additional permit for the change of copy for a changeable copy sign. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.050 Permit application requirements.

To obtain a sign permit, the applicant shall make application in writing on forms furnished by the public works department. Every application for a permanent sign shall include the following:

A. Telephone number and address of the owner or agent are required on temporary signs. This information need not be on the front of the sign;

B. Identification and description of the sign including the type, size, dimensions, height, and number of faces;

C. Description of the land where the proposed sign is to be located by street address;

D. An affidavit that the written consent of the owner or person in legal possession of the property or agent of the owner or person in legal possession of the property to which or upon which the sign is to be erected has been obtained;

E. Sign drawings showing display faces with the proposed message and design accurately represented as to size, area, and dimensions;

F. Site plan drawn to scale containing a north arrow, location of property lines, lot dimensions, location of existing signs, and the location of the proposed sign on the site;

G. Plans, elevations, diagrams, light intensities, structural calculations and other material as may be reasonably required by the land use administrator;

H. If the sign application is for a freestanding sign that proposes a footing, a building permit is required;

I. Documentation demonstrating that the sign installer has a valid Washington State contractor's license when a sign requires a building permit unless the sign is being installed by the owner of the sign;

J. Application for an electrical permit from the city of Milton or other electric provider for any electrical sign;

K. A permit fee as adopted in the latest fee ordinance of the city council. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.060 Prohibited signs.

The following signs shall not be permitted in any zoning district:

A. Signs that pose a hazard to public health or safety, as determined by the building official;

B. Signs that make use of words such as "Stop," "Look," "One-Way," "Danger," "Yield," "Slow, Children At Play," "Detour," "Road Construction" or any similar word, phrase, symbol, or



light so as to interfere or be confused with pedestrian or vehicular public safety signs as identified in the AASHTO manual;

C. Signs displaying obscene, indecent, or immoral matter as per Chapter [5.44](#) MMC;

D. Signs that obstruct ingress or egress from fire escapes, doors, windows, or other exits or entrances;

E. Signs attached to or placed on any stationary vehicle or trailer, whether operating or not, so as to be visible from a public right-of-way for the purpose of providing advertisement of services or products or for the purpose of directing people to a business. This provision shall not apply to the identification of a firm or its principal products on operable vehicles operating in the normal course of business. Public transit buses and licensed taxis are exempt from this restriction;

F. Off-premises signs except for off-premises real estate signs as permitted under MMC [17.50.140](#);

G. Rotating and revolving signs;

H. Signs containing strobe lights that are visible beyond the property line;

I. Abandoned signs;

J. Permanent signs on undeveloped sites, except for subdivision signs;

K. Outdoor, portable electric signs;

L. Mobile readerboard signs except as permitted under MMC [17.50.140](#) as temporary signs;

M. Signs on utility poles;

N. Signs on sign posts of advisory signs such as “curve ahead,” “crosswalk,” or “road narrows”;

O. Blinking or flashing lights, balloons, searchlights, clusters of flags, strings of twirlers or propellers, flares, and other displays of a carnival nature, grand opening displays, or on a limited basis as seasonal decorations except as provided for in MMC [17.50.140](#);

P. Banners except as approved as temporary signs under MMC [17.50.140](#);

Q. Balloons except as approved as temporary signs under MMC [17.50.140](#);

R. Changing message center signs, where the message changes more frequently than every 10 seconds, except for display of time and temperature;

S. Signs on or eligible for listing on federal or state historic registers are excluded from this provision;

T. No public address system or sound devices shall be used in conjunction with any sign or advertising device;

U. No sign shall be used as a fence nor shall any fence be used as a sign nor shall any sign be attached to a fence;

V. Billboard signs; and

W. Any other type or kind of sign that does not comply with the terms, conditions, provisions, and intent contained in this chapter and other applicable ordinances. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.070 Exempt signs.

The following signs do not require a permit for installation. All other provisions of this chapter apply.

A. Political signs;

B. Legal notices, identification, traffic, or other signs erected or required by governmental authority under any law, statute or ordinance;

C. Seasonal holiday decorations not including any form of advertising or the name of a business;



- D. Handicap parking signs;
- E. Signs on product dispensers permitted outside of a business. These signs may include signs on vending machines and gas pumps;
- F. Menu boards for drive-through businesses; provided, that the copy on the sign is not intended to be readable from a public right-of-way;
- G. Professional nameplates not exceeding two square feet in area;
- H. Plaques, tablets or inscriptions indicating the name of a building, date of erection, or other commemorative information, that are an integral part of the building structure or are attached flat to the face of the building, that are nonilluminated, and that do not exceed four square feet in surface area;
- I. Signs of the state, city or public service companies indicating danger, aids to service or safety, traffic control or traffic direction signs or signs identifying programs such as the adopt-a-road litter control program, etc.;
- J. Historic site markers, plaques, or gravestones;
- K. Address numbers or signs depicting a family name, such as Keck's residence;
- L. Signs on structures or improvements intended for a separate use, such as phone booths, charitable donation containers, and recycling boxes;
- M. Building addresses with numbers and letters not more than 10 inches in height;
- N. Signs not oriented or intended to be legible from a right-of-way, other property, or from the air. Examples may include signs identifying rules for a swimming pool, signs identifying restroom facilities, and tow-away signs;
- O. Parking lot painting of handicap symbols, striping, numbers, and notations of compact spaces;
- P. Painted wall decorations or murals;
- Q. Painted wall highlights;
- R. Signs affected by stipulated judgments to which the city is a party, entered by courts of competent jurisdiction;
- S. Flags and commercial flags not to exceed 12 in number; and
- T. Locally designated historic signs. The Milton Light and Water sign located on the western building elevation of the Public Works Building at 1000 Laurel Street has been identified as a sign of locally important historical significance. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.080 General provisions.

A. The area of all signs shall not exceed 200 square feet except for uses with building fronts more than 100 feet long. For uses in which the building linear front footage exceeds 100 feet, the maximum area of all signs shall not exceed an area equal to 2.0 times the linear front footage of the building or 450 square feet, whichever is less. Multiple occupancy buildings may display an additional 50 square feet of wall signage for no more than two building tenants, other than the primary tenant, subject to the provisions of MMC [17.50.110](#). In no instance shall the primary tenant be permitted to use any of the additional signage to increase the maximum allowed signage for the primary tenant.

B. Number and Spacing of Monument Signs. One monument sign is permitted per primary street frontage; one additional monument sign is permitted for each additional 300 feet of primary street frontage. Multiple monument signs shall be a minimum of 250 feet apart along one or more street frontages.

C. Indirect Lighting. Monument signs, where permitted in residential zones (RS, RMD, RM), shall only be illuminated from an indirect source. Civic uses that are a permitted or a conditional



use in the residential zones may have an “electronic sign,” subject to the approval of a conditional use permit for the sign. For civic uses that are conditional uses in the residential zones, the approval for the use and the sign may be combined into a single conditional use permit.

D. Placement within Right-of-Way. With the exception of traffic control and advisement signs, A-board/sandwich board signs, open house signs, real estate directional arrow signs, temporary construction signs associated with work within the public right-of-way, and properly authorized banners (see MMC [17.50.140\(A\)\(4\)](#)), no signs shall be erected or placed within the public right-of-way. Traffic control and advisement signs, A-board/sandwich board signs, open house signs, and real estate directional arrow signs may be placed in the right-of-way outside of median strips, public sidewalks, and vehicular and bicycle lanes. They may not block driveways or be affixed to utility poles, trees, or traffic signs, and shall not block vision clearance areas.

E. Vision Clearance Area. Pole signs are permitted in the vision clearance area where the bottom of the sign is at least 10 feet above the elevation of the street grade.

F. Vehicle Area Clearances. When a sign extends over a private area where vehicles travel or are parked, the bottom of the sign structure must be at least 14 feet above the ground. Vehicle areas include driveways, alleys, parking areas, and loading and maneuvering areas. Exceptions are prohibited.

G. Pedestrian Area Clearances. When a sign extends over a walkway or other space accessible to pedestrians, the bottom of the sign structure must be at least eight feet above the ground. Exceptions are prohibited. (Ord. 1474 § 2, 2001; Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.085 Freeway signs.

Freeway signs are located along and specifically oriented toward traffic on I-5.

A. Maximum Number and Spacing.

1. RS, RMD, RM, MX, CF, OS: Zero.

2. B, M-1: One per parcel or one per planned center when the parcel or planned center directly abuts the I-5 right-of-way. The parcel or planned center shall be a minimum of 12,000 square feet in area, or have been legally created prior to January 1, 2003, in order to erect a freeway sign. The freeway sign is in addition to other allowed signage, it shall be located along the side of the property nearest I-5, and it shall be oriented toward I-5.

B. Size Allocation.

1. RS, RMD, RM, MX, CF, OS: Does not apply.

2. B, M-1: Up to a maximum sign area of 250 square feet. No sign face shall exceed 125 square feet.

C. Maximum Height.

1. RS, RMD, RM, MX, CF, OS: Does not apply.

2. B, M-1: 40 feet.

D. Landscape and Siting Requirements. Freeway signs shall be located in a planting bed of equal area to the area of the sign. The planting bed may be included within the planting strips required under Chapter [17.15](#) MMC. The minimum dimension of the planting bed shall be 10 feet measured from the inside face of the curb to inside face of curb. The planting beds shall be improved with the following:

1. One gallon groundcover planted 12 inches on center; and

2. One shrub per 10 square feet of sign area. Shrubs located within the vision clearance area shall not be taller than 36 inches. (Ord. 1563 § 2, 2003).



17.50.090 Pole signs.

Pole signs are an alternative to monument signs for planned centers on parcels of five acres or greater with a minimum of 300 feet of street frontage.

A. Maximum Number and Spacing.

1. RS, RMD, RM, MX: Zero.

2. B, CF, M-1, OS: One center identification sign per parcel of five acres or greater with a minimum of 300 feet of street frontage or one per planned center of five acres or greater with a minimum of 300 feet of street frontage. One additional center identification pole sign is permitted for each additional 300 lineal feet of street frontage. Multiple center identification pole signs shall be a minimum of 250 feet apart along one or more street frontages.

B. Size Allocation.

1. RS, RMD, RM, MX: Does not apply.

2. B, CF, M-1, OS: One square foot of sign area for each lineal foot of primary street frontage up to a maximum sign area of 200 square feet. No sign face shall exceed 100 square feet.

C. Maximum Height.

1. RS, RMD, MX: Does not apply.

2. RM: 12 feet.

3. B, CF, M-1, OS: 20 feet.

D. Landscape and Siting Requirements. Pole signs shall be located in a planting bed of equal area to the area of the sign. The planting bed may be included within the planting strips required under Chapter [17.15](#) MMC. The minimum dimension of the planting bed shall be five feet measured from inside face of curb to inside face of curb. The planting beds shall be improved with the following:

1. One gallon groundcover planted 12 inches on center; and

2. One shrub per 10 square feet of sign area. Shrubs located within the vision clearance area shall be not taller than 36 inches. (Ord. 1474 § 3, 2001; Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.100 Monument signs.

Monument signs are the preferred sign type along street frontages.

A. Maximum Number.

1. RS, RMD, MX: Zero for residential uses; one per street frontage for permitted or conditionally permitted nonresidential uses. One subdivision identification sign is permitted per subdivision greater than four gross acres in size.

2. RM: One per street frontage. The parcel must have a minimum 30 feet of street frontage.

3. B, CF, M-1, OS: One per street frontage. The parcel must have a minimum of 30 feet of street frontage.

B. Size Allocation.

1. RS, RMD, MX: Does not apply to residential uses. Maximum 64 square feet for permitted or conditionally permitted nonresidential uses; except for a subdivision identification sign which may be a maximum of 36 square feet.

2. RM: 64 square feet.

3. B, CF, M-1, OS: Minimum of 32 square feet plus one square foot per lineal foot of primary street frontage up to a maximum sign area of 96 square feet. No sign face shall exceed 48 square feet.

C. Maximum Height.



1. RS, RMD, MX: Eight feet.
2. RM: 12 feet.
3. B, CF, M-1, OS: 12 feet.

D. Landscape and Siting Requirements. Monument signs shall be located in a planting bed of equal area to the area of the sign. The planting bed may be included within the planting strips required under Chapter [17.15](#) MMC. The minimum dimension of the planting bed shall be five feet measured from inside face of curb to inside face of curb. The planting beds shall be improved with the following:

1. One gallon groundcover planted 12-inches on center; and
2. One shrub per 10 square feet of sign area. Shrubs located within the vision clearance area shall be not taller than 36 inches.

E. When Not Allowed. A monument sign is not permitted if existing signs attached to buildings exceed the limit of 15 percent of the wall area. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.105 Mixed use town center monument sign.

A. In addition to any other signs allowed by this chapter and notwithstanding any restriction placed by this chapter on off-premises signs, there is allowed one community monument sign in the mixed use town center. This community monument sign may be placed anywhere within the area depicted in Exhibit A, attached to the ordinance codified in this section and incorporated by this reference as if set forth in full.

B. The community monument sign allowed by this section shall be a maximum of eight feet high, one foot thick and 64 square feet of area.

C. Only one community monument sign shall be allowed for the businesses located in the MX district.

D. The Milton/Edgewood Chamber of Commerce or the first MX district business to submit a complete application for a sign permit for a community monument sign shall be authorized to construct and maintain the sign upon acquiring approval of the permit. Any sign permit issued for a community monument sign shall expire if the sign is not constructed within six months of permit issuance, subject to a six-month extension for good cause as determined by the community development director. If a sign permit expires or is denied, the right to build the sign shall go to the next person to file a complete permit application.

E. In addition to the requirements specified in MMC [17.50.050](#), an application for a community monument sign shall contain the following information:

1. An affidavit or declaration of mailing evidencing that all businesses within the MX district have been notified of the opportunity to have their business advertised on the community monument sign. Said notice shall have given businesses at least 15 days to elect to participate by written mailed or delivered response to a specified address. Said notice shall be mailed to the addresses of each business as identified in records at the Pierce County assessor's office.

2. A list of all those businesses that have elected to participate.

3. An acknowledgement approved in form by the city that the applicant agrees to assume full responsibility for maintenance of the sign and compliance with applicable city regulations. The acknowledgement shall provide that the applicant may transfer its responsibilities to any other MX district business owner willing to sign the acknowledgement if a copy of the new acknowledgement is provided to the city.

4. An easement approved as to form by the city that authorizes the city to remove the sign at the expense of the person or entity subject to the acknowledgement identified in subsection (E)(3) of this section if the acknowledgor relinquishes its responsibilities to maintain



the sign or comply with city regulations. The acknowledgor shall be deemed to have relinquished its responsibilities if it fails to undertake an act required by this section within 30 days of receiving written notice from the city.

F. In addition to any other requirement that may apply to a sign permit, the following conditions apply for the issuance of a sign permit for a community monument sign:

1. All businesses identified in subsection (E)(2) of this section shall have equal advertising space on the community monument sign. The acknowledgor can condition the participation of each business on entering into a private agreement with the acknowledgor to reimburse the acknowledgor for its proportionate share of costs in constructing the sign and fulfilling its responsibilities imposed by this code section. All advertising on the community monument sign shall be limited to advertising MX district businesses. Beyond those limitations identified in this paragraph, the acknowledgor may not place any further limitations on participation in the community monument sign.

2. The community monument sign as proposed will comply with the requirements of this code section and all other applicable city requirements.

G. The person or entity subject to the acknowledgement in subsection (E)(3) of this section shall have the following responsibilities upon permit issuance:

1. Ensure that the sign complies with all city regulations during the life of the sign, including maintenance responsibilities imposed by MMC [17.50.160](#) as now or hereafter amended.

2. Remove businesses advertised on the community monument sign that are no longer located within the MX district and replace them with businesses that wish to participate and have located in the MX district after notice to MX business was issued under subsection (E)(1) of this section. Businesses shall be given priority in order of seniority in the MX district. If no new business wishes to replace a business that is removed from the sign, the acknowledgor may inquire if businesses that previously declined to participate in the sign wish to be added, in order of seniority in the MX district. Any newly participating business shall be subject to the applicable limitations of subsection (F)(1) of this section. (Ord. 1577 § 1, 2003).

17.50.110 Signs attached to buildings.

Awning, fascia, graphic, marquee, roof, and wall signs are permitted signs for attachment to buildings. Signs attached to buildings are permitted on wall elevations that are viewable from public rights-of-way or on wall elevations containing public entrances to the building.

A. Maximum Number. No limit within the size allocation. A limit of one roof sign per wall elevation viewable to the public (see roof sign definition). Multiple occupancy buildings may display one additional wall sign for each tenant, other than the primary tenant, up to a maximum of two additional secondary tenant signs, subject to the maximum area per sign described in subsection C of this section.

B. Size Allocation.

1. RS, RMD: Four square feet for residential uses; 10 percent of the wall area for permitted or conditionally permitted nonresidential uses.

2. RM: Eight square feet.

3. MX: 48 square feet or 15 percent of the wall area, whichever is greater.

4. B, CF, M-1, OS: 48 square feet or 15 percent of the wall area, whichever is greater.

C. Maximum Area Per Sign.

1. RS, RMD: Four square feet; 32 square feet per sign for signs for permitted or conditionally permitted nonresidential uses (roof signs are prohibited).



2. RM: Eight square feet (roof signs are prohibited).

3. MX: 100 square feet (each roof sign may be a maximum of 48 square feet, where no sign face may exceed 24 square feet). For multiple occupancy buildings, the individual building tenant signs allowed by subsection A of this section shall not exceed 25 square feet per sign face.

4. B, M-1: 200 square feet (each roof sign may be a maximum of 48 square feet, where no sign face may exceed 24 square feet). For multiple occupancy buildings, the individual building tenant signs allowed by subsection A of this section shall not exceed 25 square feet per sign face.

5. CF, OS: 100 square feet (each roof sign may be a maximum of 48 square feet, where no sign face may exceed 24 square feet).

D. Wall signs shall not exceed 12 inches in thickness. (Ord. 1474 § 4, 2001; Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.120 A-board/sandwich board signs.

A. Maximum Number.

1. RS, RMD, RM: Zero

2. B, CF, M-1, MX, OS: One.

B. Size Allocation.

1. RS, RMD, RM: Does not apply.

2. B, CF, M-1, MX, OS: 12 square feet.

C. Maximum Height.

1. RS, RMD, RM: Does not apply.

2. B, CF, M-1, MX, OS: Four feet.

D. Duration. A-board/sandwich board signs are permitted to remain in place only during the hours of a business' operation. A-board/sandwich board signs shall be removed at the close of business each day. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.130 Directional signs.

A. Type. Directional signs refer to a permanently erected single- or double-faced sign designed to guide or direct pedestrian or vehicular traffic to an area, place, or convenience.

B. Content. Directional signs shall only contain information on exits, entrances, parking, telephones, restrooms, or similar types of information and the name and/or logo of the business where the directional sign is located.

C. Number. One per directional access from a primary street frontage plus one additional directional sign per business.

D. Size and Height. The maximum size of directional signs shall be six square feet. The maximum height for directional signs shall be 42 inches. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.140 Temporary signs.

A. Temporary signs shall conform to the general provisions section of this chapter (MMC [17.50.080](#)).

1. Unless otherwise identified below, the duration of display of a temporary sign shall not exceed 90 days during any 12-month period, unless otherwise noted in subsection B of this section;



2. No flashing temporary signs of any type shall be permitted; however, internally illuminated signs, e.g., portable readerboards, shall be permitted; provided, that they conform to the current National Electrical Code and the National Electrical Safety Code;

3. All temporary signs shall be securely fastened and positioned in place so as not to constitute a hazard to pedestrians or motorists;

4. No temporary sign shall project over or into a public right-of-way or property except properly authorized banners over streets installed by the city of Milton.

B. The duration of display for the following temporary signs shall be as follows:

1. Grand opening displays including: posters, pennants, banners or streamers, balloons, searchlights, clusters of flags, strings of twirlers or propellers, flares, and other displays of a carnival nature (12-day maximum time period);

2. Lawn signs (30-day maximum time period);

3. Liquidation signs (one week maximum time period);

4. Garage, porch, and patio sale signs (72-hour maximum time period);

5. Yard sale signs (72-hour maximum time period);

6. Real estate signs (30-day maximum time period beyond the date when the property is sold or no longer offered for sale);

7. Off-premises real estate signs (daily, signs may only be posted during the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.);

8. Open house signs (72-hour maximum time period);

9. Subdivision signs (30-day maximum time period beyond the date when the final certificate of occupancy has been issued);

10. Construction signs denoting the architect, engineer or contractor, when placed upon the premises while construction work is in progress. Said signs not to exceed 16 square feet in area (30-day maximum time period beyond the date when the certificate of occupancy is issued for the last structure);

11. Rooftop balloon signs with a vertical dimension not greater than 25 feet (maximum of one week per calendar year per business);

12. Banners (maximum of six 21-day periods per calendar year); and

13. Temporary signs, sports field (maximum of 75 days per calendar year). (Ord. 1474 § 5, 2001; Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.150 Nonconforming signs.

A. A sign is legally nonconforming if it is out of conformance with this code, and:

1. The sign was lawfully erected in compliance with the applicable sign ordinance of the city or county which was effective at the time of sign installation, and a valid permit for such sign exists; or

2. The sign was erected prior to January 1, 1996.

B. A legal nonconforming sign shall be brought into compliance with this chapter or shall be removed if:

1. The sign is abandoned;

2. The sign is damaged in excess of 50 percent of its replacement value, unless such destruction is the result of vandalism or intentional destruction or removal by someone not authorized by the sign owner;

3. The owner seeks to change the sign structure supporting, holding, or surrounding the sign, other than minor maintenance or repair;



4. The owner seeks to change the copy of the sign. Changes to a sign face are changes in copy. Changes of removable letters or numbers are not considered changes in copy;

5. The tenant space(s) to which the sign applies is undergoing an expansion or renovation which increases the size of the tenant space floor area or site coverage by 20 percent or more, or the value of the expansion or renovation exceeds 50 percent of the assessed value of the structure;

6. The building to which the sign applies is demolished. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.160 Maintenance of signs.

All signs and landscape, including signs heretofore installed, shall be constantly maintained in a state of security, safety, and repair. If any sign is found not to be so maintained or is insecurely fastened or otherwise dangerous (see dangerous signs), it shall be the duty of the owner and/or occupant of the premises on which the sign is fastened to repair or remove the sign within five working days after receiving notice from the building official. For damaged or disrepaired signs, it shall be the duty of the owner and/or occupant to repair or remove the sign within 30 days. The premises surrounding a sign shall be free and clear of rubbish and the landscaping area free of weeds. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.170 Removal of signs.

A. All signs and sign structures nonconforming in the structural requirements as specified in the Uniform Building Code which as a consequence are a hazard to life and property, or which by its condition or location present an immediate and serious danger to the public, shall be discontinued or made to conform within the time the building official may specify. In the event the owner of such sign cannot be found or refuses to comply with the order to remove, the building official shall then have the dangerous sign removed and the owner cited. The cost of removing the sign plus administrative costs will be charged to the property owner.

B. Any person who owns or leases a nonconforming sign shall remove such sign when the sign has been abandoned:

1. If the person who owns or leases such sign fails to remove it as provided in this section, the building official shall give the owner of the building, structure, or premises upon which such sign is located 60 days' written notice to remove it;

2. If the sign has not been removed at the expiration of the 60 days' notice, the building official may remove such sign at cost to the owner of the building, structure, or premises; and

3. Costs incurred by the city of Milton due to removal may be made a lien against the land or premises on which such sign is located, after notice and hearing, and may be collected or foreclosed in the same manner as liens otherwise entered in the liens docket of the city. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.180 Variances.

A. The land use administrator may grant a variance from the provisions of MMC [17.50.150\(B\)\(4\)](#) requiring the removal of a nonconforming sign because of a change in copy only if the applicant demonstrates compliance with all of the following criteria:

1. The variance as approved shall not constitute a grant which is inconsistent with the intent of the most recently adopted version of the sign code;

2. That the granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity and in the zone in which the subject property is located;



3. That the circumstances prompting the variance request do not result from the actions of the applicant. A change in telephone area code or street name are two examples of potential changes in copy that would not be prompted by the actions of the applicant.

B. Upon the written request of the applicant, the land use administrator may grant a variance to increase the height and/or size allocation of a sign by no more than 10 percent of the applicable standard.

C. The hearing examiner may grant a variance to the requirements of this chapter only if the applicant demonstrates compliance with all of the following criteria:

1. The variance as approved shall not constitute a grant which is inconsistent with the intent of the sign code;

2. That the variance is necessary because of special circumstances relating to the size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings of the subject property to provide it with use rights and privileges permitted to other properties in the vicinity and in the zone in which the subject property is located;

3. That the granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity and in the zone in which the subject property is located;

4. That the special conditions and circumstances prompting the variance request do not result from the actions of the applicant;

5. That the variance as granted represents the least amount of deviation from the prescribed regulations necessary to accomplish the purpose for which the variance is sought and which is consistent with the stated intent of this chapter;

6. That the granting of the variance shall result in greater convenience to the public in identifying the business location for which a sign code variance is sought; and

7. That the granting of the variance will not constitute a public nuisance or adversely effect the public safety and the proposed variance shall not interfere with the location and identification of adjacent buildings or activities. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.190 Penalty for violations.

A. It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, or corporation to erect, construct, enlarge, alter, move, improve, convert, demolish, equip, or use any sign or sign structure in the city, or cause or permit the same to be done, contrary or in violation of any provisions of this chapter.

B. Any person, firm, or corporation violating any of the provisions of this chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and punishable as set forth in Chapter [1.08](#) MMC. (Ord. 1536 § 2, 2002; Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).

17.50.200 Severability.

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part of this chapter or the application thereof to any person or circumstances shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such order or judgement shall be confined in its operation to the controversy in which it was rendered and shall not affect or invalidate the remainder of any part thereof to any other person or circumstances and to this end the provisions of each clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part of this law are hereby declared to be severable. (Ord. 1437 § 1, 2000).