

CURRENT SIGN ORDINANCE

*Borough of Trappe, PA
Friday, May 10, 2013*

Chapter 340. ZONING

Article XI. Signs

§ 340-66. Purpose.

[Amended 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281] It is recognized that signs perform an important function in identifying properties, businesses, services, residences, events, and other matters of interest to the public. It is hereby found and declared, however, that control of signs is necessary to promote the health, safety and general welfare by:

- A. Lessening hazards to pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- B. Preserving property values.
- C. Preventing unsightly and detrimental development which has a blighting influence upon residential, business and industrial areas.
- D. Preventing signs from reaching such excessive size that they obscure one another to the detriment of all concerned.
- E. Securing certain fundamentals of design for the Borough.

§ 340-67. Definitions.

[Amended 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281]

- A. Sign. A structure, building, wall or other outdoor surface, or any device used for visual communication which is used for the purpose of bringing the subject thereof to the attention of the public, or to display, identify and publicize the name and product or services of any person, exclusive of supporting members that bear no message.
- B. Sign area.
 - (1) The area of a sign shall mean the area of all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs, logos, and symbols, together with the background on which they are displayed (whether such background is open or enclosed), but excluding any supporting framework and bracing which are solely incidental to the display itself provided the same do not contain any lettering, wording, or symbols.

- (2) Where the sign consists of individual letters, designs or symbols attached to a building, awning, wall or window, the area shall be that of the smallest rectangle which encompasses all of the letters, designs and symbols.
- (3) Where a sign consists of an identical double-face, only one side shall be considered in the calculation of area, but if the interior angle formed by the two faces is greater than 45°, both sides of the sign shall be considered in the calculation of area.

C. Sign height. The distance from the highest portion of the sign to the mean grade at the base of the sign.

D. Sign types.

ADVERTISING SIGN

An off-premises sign which advertises or otherwise directs attention to a commodity, business, industry, home occupation or other similar activity which is sold, offered, or conducted elsewhere than on the lot upon which the sign is located.

ANIMATED SIGN

A sign with action or motion, flashing or color changes requiring electrical energy, but not including window displayed monitors or wind-actuated elements such as flags, banners or novelty items.

AWNING SIGN

A sign painted on, printed on, or attached flat against the surface of an awning.

BUSINESS SIGN

An on-premises sign which advertises or otherwise directs attention to a business, commodity, service, industry or other activity which is sold, offered or conducted, other than incidentally, on the premises upon which the sign is located, or to which it is affixed.

DIRECTOR SIGN

A sign on which the names and location of the occupants or the use of a building is given, including office building and church directories.

FREESTANDING SIGN

A self-supporting sign resting on, or supported by means of poles or standards, either on the ground or on the roof of a building.

IDENTIFICATION SIGN

A sign whose copy is limited to the name of a building, institution or person and/or to the activity or occupation being identified.

INCIDENTAL SIGN

A directional sign of a public service nature which contains no advertising.

MARQUEE SIGN

Any sign attached to or supported by a marquee structure.

OFF-PREMISES SIGN

A sign structure advertising an establishment, merchandise, service or entertainment, which is sold, produced, manufactured, or furnished at a place other than on the property on which said sign is located; a sign which advertises or otherwise directs attention to an activity not on the same lot where the sign is located; e.g., billboards, outdoor advertising, subdivision directional sign.

ON-PREMISES SIGN

A sign which advertises or otherwise directs attention to an activity on the same lot where the sign is located.

PAINTED WALL SIGN

Any sign which is applied with paint or similar substances on the face of a wall.

PARALLEL WALL SIGN

A sign mounted parallel to a wall or other vertical building surface, but does not extend beyond the edge of any wall, roof line, or other surface to which it is mounted, and does not project more than 10 inches from the surface to which it is mounted.

PROJECTING WALL SIGN

Any sign mounted to a wall or other vertical surface other than a parallel sign, but does not project more than seven feet from the surface to which it is mounted, nor project above the wall, roof line, or surface to which it is mounted, nor in any way interfere with normal pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

REVOLVING SIGN

Any sign which revolves 360°.

ROOF SIGN

A sign erected upon or above a roof or parapet wall of a building, and which is wholly or partially supported by that building.

SNIPE SIGN

A permanent or temporary sign or poster affixed to a tree, fence, utility pole, or upon rocks or natural features.

TEMPORARY SIGN

A sign which advertises community or civic projects, construction projects, real estate for sale or lease, or other special events on a temporary basis. The following types of signs shall be considered temporary signs:

- (1) Banner sign. A temporary sign intended to be hung either with or without frames, possessing characters, letters, illustrations or ornamentations applied to paper, plastic, or fabric of any kind. National flags, flags of political subdivisions, and symbolic flags of any institution or business shall not be considered banners for the purpose of this chapter.
- (2) Construction sign. Any sign giving the name or names of principal contractors, subcontractors, architects, and lending institutions responsible for construction on the site where the sign is placed.
- (3) Development sign. An on-premises sign on a building or lot which announces the nature, purpose, or name of the prospective building/enterprise.
- (4) Political sign. A temporary sign used in connection with a local, county, state or national election or referendum.
- (5) Portable sign. Any sign not permanently attached to the ground or other permanent structure, or a sign designed to be transported, including, but not limited to, signs designed to be transported by means of wheels; signs converted to A- or T-frames; menu and sandwich board signs; balloons used as signs; umbrellas used for advertising; and signs attached to or painted on vehicles parked and visible from the

public right-of-way, unless said vehicle is used in the normal day-to-day operations of the business.

(6) Real estate sign. A temporary sign which advertises the sale, lease or rent of the property on which the sign is placed. Open house signs for property shall be considered real estate signs.

(7) Special event signs. On-premises window signs, banners, or commemorative flags which advertise a grand opening or other special event.

(8) Street banner sign. Any banner sign which is stretched across and hung over a public right-of-way.

(9) Subdivision sign. An on-premises or off-premises directional sign advertising to the public the name of the subdivision project and the nature of the project offered.

(10) Window sign. Any sign affixed to or visible through a window and intended to be viewed from the outside.

§ 340-68. Applicability.

[Amended 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281] Any sign erected or maintained after the effective date of this chapter shall conform to the following regulations.

§ 340-69. Administration.

[Amended 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281]

- A. Sign permits. It shall be unlawful to erect, construct or significantly alter any sign which requires a sign permit without first filing with Trappe Borough an application in writing, in order to obtain a formal permit.
- B. Signs not requiring sign permits.
- (1) Government signs (i.e., traffic signs, parking signs, etc.).
 - (2) Legal notices.
 - (3) Public monument, plaque, historic identification sign erected by a government agency.
 - (4) Government flag or insignia.
 - (5) Public service and information signs advertising availability of public rest rooms, telephones or similar conveniences, not exceeding three square feet in area.
 - (6) Address signs, not exceeding two square feet.
 - (7) Name plates and identification signs provided that characters do not exceed three inches in height and an area not exceeding two square feet.

- (8) Vending machine signs, where a product name is an integral component of the vending machine, provided that the machine is not placed in the front yard of a property.
 - (9) Incidental signs, provided that at the aggregate area of incidental signs on a property does not exceed four square feet; incidental sign area in excess of four square feet shall be included in the calculation of a property's permitted sign area.
 - (10) Home security signs, not exceeding one square foot.
 - (11) Temporary political signs.
 - (12) Real estate signs.
- C. Sign permit review. The Building Inspector shall either approve or deny the application, or refer the application back to the applicant in any instance where insufficient information has been submitted.
- D. Fees. All applications for permits for the erection, construction, or alteration of signs shall, at the time of making application, be paid to the Borough, in accordance with the respective fee schedule adopted by the Borough Council from time to time. *Editor's Note: Current Fee Schedule is on file in the Borough offices.*

§ 340-70. General regulations.

[Amended 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281] In all districts the following sign regulations shall apply:

- A. Prohibited signs. The following types of signs or illumination of signs shall be prohibited in the Borough:
- (1) Animated signs.
 - (2) Beacon lighting.
 - (3) Flashing, moving or reflective signs.
 - (4) Illuminated temporary signs.
 - (5) Nonstationary signs.
 - (6) Revolving signs.
 - (7) Roof signs.
 - (8) Trailer signs.
 - (9) Vehicular signs.
- B. No sign shall be placed in such a position as to endanger traffic on a street by obscuring a clear view or by confusion with official street signs or signals.

- C. No sign, other than official street signs, street banner signs, or political signs shall be erected or maintained within the ultimate street right-of-way.
- D. No sign shall be erected or maintained so as to prevent free ingress or egress to or from any door, window or fire escape.
- E. Property owners shall assume the cost of relocating any sign within the ultimate right-of-way of a street which is widened.
- F. All signs shall be constructed of durable material and shall be maintained in good condition and repair at all times.
- G. Illumination standards.
- (1) Signs may be illuminated, unless otherwise specified herein. Floodlighting of any sign shall be so shielded that the source of the light shall not be visible from any point off the lot on which the sign is erected and so that only the sign is directly illuminated. No more than 1/2 footcandle of light shall be detectable along the boundary of any adjacent property. Illumination of signs shall be subject to the National Electrical Code.
 - (2) The source of light must be concealed by translucent covers.
- H. Sign location requirements.
- (1) Yard requirements. No portion of any freestanding sign, business sign or advertising sign may be located within the side or rear yard setback or within the required buffer zone when located adjacent to a residential district.
 - (2) Public use areas. No freestanding sign can occupy a designated parking area, walkway, cartway, driveway, or area designated for any other use.
- I. Removal of signs.
- (1) The Zoning Officer/Building Inspector shall have the authority to require the removal and/or demolition of signs under the following circumstances:
 - (a) When it is determined that the sign has deteriorated to the point of becoming a danger to the public;
 - (b) When a sign is erected without an approved sign permit;
 - (c) When a sign is erected which does not comply with the requirements of this chapter;
 - (d) A nonconforming sign which has not been removed or brought into conformity under the provisions of § **340-72**.

- (e) A political sign that has been posted on a property without the consent of the property owner.

[Added 7-7-2009 by Ord. No. 411]

- (2) With the exception noted in below Subsection **1(2)(a)**, in all of the above circumstances, the removal procedure shall be initiated by a letter to the owner or the lessee by the Zoning Officer requiring the removal of such sign within 30 days.

[Amended 7-7-2009 by Ord. No. 411]

- (a) The Zoning Officer may remove political signs that have been posted on a property without the consent of the property owner(s), provided the property owner(s) authorizes said action.
- (3) Owner or lessee's removal responsibility for each circumstance:
- (a) Deteriorated/hazardous sign: rehabilitation/repair sign within 30 days.
- (b) No sign permit: obtain permit within 30 days.
- (c) Prohibited sign or nonconforming sign required to be brought into conformity: made to conform to ordinance within 30 days.

§ 340-71. Signs permitted in residential districts.

[Amended 9-5-1989 by Ord. No. 261; 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281]

- A. Official street and traffic signs, and any signs required by law.
- B. Professional accessory use, home occupation or name signs on the same lot with, and indicating the name, profession or activity of the occupant of the dwelling, provided that the area of any one side shall not exceed two square feet, and provided that not more than one such sign shall be erected for each permitted use or dwelling.
- C. Signs for a school, church, hospital, sanitarium, club or other institution of a similar nature, on the same lot therewith, for the purpose of displaying the name of such institution and its activities or services, provided that the area on any one side of such sign shall not exceed 20 square feet and 10 feet in height, and provided that not more than two such signs shall be erected on any one street frontage of any property in single and separate ownership.
- (1) Each institutional building is permitted one wall sign for purposes of identification, not to exceed 10 square feet in area.
- D. For residential development containing more than 10 units, one freestanding identification sign per external street frontage not exceeding 15 square feet in area and 12 feet in height. The sign shall be aesthetically compatible with the structure, as established within the subdivision or land development agreement.

E. Trespassing signs and signs indicating private ownership of roadways or other property, on the same premises therewith, provided that the total area of any one side of such signs shall not exceed four square feet.

F. Real estate signs as follows:

- (1) For advertising the sale or rental of the premises upon which the sign is erected, provided that the total area on any one side of such sign on any one street frontage of any property in simple or separate ownership shall not exceed nine square feet.
- (2) For advertising, on the premises, the sale or development of homes within a subdivision, provided that the area of any one side of any such sign shall not exceed 35 square feet, and provided that such signs shall be spaced at intervals of not less than 500 feet of street frontage. A maximum of three off-premises directional signs shall be permitted for one development. Permission must be obtained in advance from the property owner where the sign is to be placed. Signs may not be erected more than 60 days prior to the beginning of the actual construction of the project, and shall be removed within 10 days after the date of the sale or rental of the final unit in such development.

G. Temporary signs of contractors, mechanics, painters and artisans erected and maintained on the premises where the work is being performed during the period in which such work is being performed, provided that the area of any one side of any such sign shall not exceed 12 square feet, and provided that such sign shall be removed upon completion of the work.

H. For sale of agricultural products, signs indicating the name of the owner or occupant, and the product sold, provided that the total sign area shall not exceed 16 square feet.

I. Open house signs (on- and off-premises). There shall be a maximum of one on-premises open house sign for each property line of street frontage.

- (1) A maximum of three off-premises directional open house signs shall be permitted for each home or development.
- (2) Signs shall not exceed four square feet per side, and may not be illuminated.
- (3) Off-premises directional signs must have permission in advance from the property owner where the sign is to be placed.
- (4) Freestanding open house and directional signs shall not exceed a height of six feet.

J. Signs which advertise public auctions for the sale of real estate, property or merchandise.

- (1) Signs shall not exceed nine square feet in area, at a maximum height of six feet, and shall be placed only on the property where the stated auction is being conducted.

- (2) Signs may be erected not earlier than 30 days prior to the advertised auction, and shall be removed within 10 days after the auction.

K. Political signs. All political signs posted on a property must be posted by the property owner(s), or by another who has obtained the prior consent of the property owner(s).

[Amended 7-7-2009 by Ord. No. 411]

§ 340-72. Signs permitted in commercial and limited industrial districts.

[Amended 12-1-1982 by Ord. No. 281] For any one lot located in the C-1 Limited Commercial District and LI Limited Industrial District, the following number and type of signs are permitted:

- A. One freestanding business or identification sign per street frontage.
 - (1) At gas stations one additional freestanding sign per street frontage for advertising gas prices only.
- B. One of the following types of signs for each side of the building which faces a street or a parking lot located on the same property:
 - (1) Awning sign.
 - (2) Identification sign.
 - (3) Marquee sign.
 - (4) Painted wall sign.
 - (5) Parallel wall sign.
 - (6) Permanent window sign.
 - (7) Projecting wall sign.
- C. Incidental signs for the convenience and safety of the public (for example, signs identifying parking areas, telephone, rest rooms, etc.) not to exceed four square feet in size and containing no advertising.
- D. One of the following types of temporary signs for a given thirty-day period only:
 - (1) Portable signs.
 - (2) Special event signs.
- E. Real estate signs, which shall be removed within seven days after the sale or lease of the property.

- F. Other signs permitted in residential districts according to the regulations of § 340-71.
- G. In the CC Community Commercial District, signs are regulated by the development agreement, with the exception of temporary signs, which shall be regulated by the provisions of this chapter.

§ 340-73. Dimensional standards.

[Amended 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281]

- A. Freestanding signs shall not exceed 35 square feet in area (16 square feet for signs advertising gas prices), and must be set back a minimum of 20 feet from the curbline of the frontage street or outer edge of the shoulder and outside the legal right-of-way. The maximum height, including supports, is 12 feet.
 - (1) Multiuse or multitenant buildings, where the freestanding sign is to be shared by two or more uses or tenants, the maximum sign area calculated in Subsection A above may be increased by 25% for each additional use/tenant in excess of one use/tenant.
- B. The maximum area of a marquee sign, painted wall sign, parallel wall sign or awning sign shall be 100 square feet. However, the total area of painted wall signs, parallel wall signs, signs affixed to awnings and any signs affixed to the inside or outside of windows, may not exceed 25% of the area of the wall, including windows and floor area and cornices, to which they are attached.
- C. The maximum area of a projecting wall sign shall be 30 square feet.
 - (1) The sign shall not project more than seven feet from the surface to which it is mounted, nor project over the wall, roof line or surface to which it is mounted.
 - (2) The outermost portion of a projecting sign shall project no closer than five feet from a curbline or shoulder of a public street.
 - (3) There shall be a minimum clearance of 10 feet between the bottom of the projecting sign and a public sidewalk or walkway.
- D. Special event signs, banners, portable signs or commemorative flags for businesses announcing a grand opening, going out-of-business sale or other special promotional event shall comply with the following standards:
 - (1) The area of the special event sign, banner, portable sign or commemorative flag shall not exceed 25 square feet.
 - (2) The property or business shall display only one special event sign, banner, portable sign or commemorative flag at any one time.
 - (3) A special event sign, banner, or a commemorative flag for a business shall be displayed no more than four times during the calendar year for periods of time not exceeding 30

calendar days. Portable signs may be displayed only once during the calendar year for a period of time not exceeding 30 calendar days.

- (4) Special event signs or signs for public or quasi-public events shall comply with the following standards:
 - (a) Such banners shall be affixed to a building or some other appropriate sturdy structure.
 - (b) The permitted size of any street banner shall be determined on a case-by-case basis by the building inspector.
 - (c) If the banner is to be strung across a state-owned road, the sponsoring organization must receive necessary approvals from PennDOT.
 - (d) Signs or banners shall not be posted earlier than one month prior to the advertised event and must be removed within five days after the date of the event.
- (5) A maximum of two off-premises directional signs, not exceeding six square feet in area and six feet in height, shall be permitted for any special event provided that permission has been obtained from the property owner where the sign is to be placed.

§ 340-74. Off-premises advertising signs.

[Amended 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281]

- A. Off-premises advertising signs are permitted only in the LI Limited Industrial District as a conditional use pursuant to § **340-115** of this chapter, provided that:
- (1) If the provisions with respect to location, size or height of signs are more restricting in the building code adopted by the Borough of Trappe or any Acts of Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or regulations of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), those restrictions shall take precedence over the regulations and conditions as set forth in this chapter.
 - (2) An off-premises sign may be double-faced with two advertising surfaces. However, both surfaces shall be the same size and shape, and the total length of the sign structure shall not exceed 20 feet and the total height of the copy areas shall not exceed 18 feet, with a total copy area not exceeding 100 square feet.
 - (3) Off-premises signs may not be attached to a building.
 - (4) Off-premises signs shall be located 75 feet from the ultimate right-of-way, or 100 feet from any property line.
 - (5) An open space of not less than four feet shall be maintained between the lower edge of the off-premises sign display surface and the ground.

- (6) No portion of the supporting structure shall be visible above any advertising display area.
 - (7) No off-premises sign shall be located closer than 500 feet to the nearest off-premises sign on the same side of the highway, regardless of the size of the sign.
 - (8) No off-premises sign shall be allowed within 500 feet of the nearest public or private elementary, middle or high school or religious institution.
 - (9) All off-premises signs shall be erected on permanent footings or support structures designed by a registered structural engineer.
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- (10) The applicant for any sign permit shall present a written statement from the owner of the property, duly authorized, that the applicant has the right to use the property to erect a sign as well as maintain the sign during the time that the sign is erected. The owner must further verify in writing that it will, at its sole cost and expense, cause the sign to be removed at such time as there is no further use of the sign.
 - (11) The applicant, at his sole expense, shall remove any off-premises sign, if the sign remains without bona fide advertisement, which shall not include rental of the sign space, for 90 days, or if the right to use the property has expired for any reason whatsoever.
 - (12) Notwithstanding any provisions in this chapter to the contrary, temporary off-premises advertising signs shall be allowed pursuant to resolution of the Borough Council for municipal and/or fire company purposes in accordance with conditions as Council shall reasonably impose.

[Added 12-2-2003 by Ord. No. 372]

§ 340-75. Nonconforming signs.

Editor's Note: See also § 340-130 of this chapter which contains earlier-enacted provisions on nonconforming signs. Since § 340-130 was enacted earlier than § 340-75, the provisions of § 340-130 would be effective only as long as they are not inconsistent with § 340-75. [Amended 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281]

- A. Signs legally in existence at the time of the adoption of this chapter which do not conform with the requirements of this chapter shall be considered nonconforming signs.
- B. All such nonconforming signs shall be removed or altered so as to be in conformity with the standards contained herein at such time when:
 - (1) Trappe Borough receives an application for a sign permit in cases where the nonconforming sign is to be significantly altered. Changes to the sign copy or the replacement of a sign panel of an existing establishments' nonconforming sign shall be considered a significant alteration. If more than 50% of a sign is damaged, it shall be repaired to conform with this chapter.

- (2) The property in which the nonconforming sign is located submits a subdivision or land development application requiring municipal review and approval.
 - (3) The property in which the nonconforming sign is located undergoes a change of land use requiring the issuance of either a use and occupancy permit or a change of use and occupancy permit by Trappe Borough.
- C. To determine the legal status of existing signs, in each of the three cases listed in Subsection **B**, the applicant shall submit the following information to the Borough Building Inspector:
- (1) Type(s) of existing sign(s) located on the property.
 - (2) The area and height of all signs.
 - (3) For freestanding signs, the distance the outermost portion of the sign is set back from the curblineline or shoulder.
 - (4) Type of sign illumination.
 - (5) The material of which the sign is constructed.
 - (6) The building length along public street frontage.
- D. Prior to the events listed in Subsection **B**, nonconforming signs may be repainted, repaired up to 50%, the sign copy may be changed, or sign panels may be replaced, provided that such actions do not increase the dimensions of the existing sign, nor in any way increase the extent of the sign's nonconformity.
- E. Under the following conditions, nonconforming signs shall be exempt from the provisions of Subsection **B**:
- (1) The nonconforming sign possesses documented historic value.
 - (2) The nonconforming sign is of an unique nature or type of virtue of its architectural value or design.
 - (3) For a change of use when a business name is retained.

§ 340-76. Severability.

[Added 12-1-1992 by Ord. No. 281] Should any portion of this article be declared invalid, those conditions and standards required, at a minimum, by law, shall be the prevailing condition and requirement with respect to the signage allowed as though the same had been the standard and condition originally adopted by this chapter.