

## **ARTICLE 20 SIGN REGULATIONS**

### **Section 20.01 Purpose**

The purpose of this Article is to regulate the size, placement, and general appearance of all privately owned signs and billboards in order to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare, to enhance the aesthetic desirability of the environment, and reduce hazards to life and property in Blair Township.

### **Section 20.02 General Provisions**

Signs and billboards may be permitted for identification of premises, for providing information relative to the functions of the premises, or for advertising, subject to the provisions of this Article.

1. Maximum surface display area per side of any sign or billboard shall be computed as follows:
  - a. If a sign has only one (1) exterior face, the surface display area of that face shall not exceed the specified maximum.
  - b. If a sign has two (2) exterior faces, the surface display area of each face shall not exceed the specified maximum.
  - c. If a sign has more than two (2) exterior faces, the sum of the surface area of all the faces shall not exceed twice the specified maximum.
  - d. In the case of a canopy sign, the copy area of the canopy shall be measured to determine total surface display area.
2. Signs may be illuminated, but no flashing or moving illumination shall be permitted, except as otherwise expressly provided for under this Ordinance. Signs shall not revolve or move in any manner. The source of illumination (lamp or light source) for any sign shall not be visible beyond the property lines of the parcel on which the sign is located.
3. Any sign not expressly permitted is prohibited.
4. *Any sign containing lewd, indecent or obscene words or symbols is prohibited.* (Amendment 104-05-06-15; Effective 07/10/07)
5. *All signs shall be permanently secured in accordance with applicable building codes, unless otherwise noted.* (Amendment 104-05-06-16; Effective 04/27/07)

### **Section 20.03 Signs Permitted in All Districts**

The following signs are permitted in all zoning districts subject to the following conditions:

1. Real Estate Signs
  - a. One (1) non-illuminated sign advertising the sale or lease of the lot or structure.
  - b. Surface display area of such sign shall not exceed six (6) square feet per side in residential districts. Surface display area of such sign shall not exceed sixteen (16) square feet per side and shall not exceed a height of eight (8) feet above grade in commercial and industrial districts.
  - c. Such sign shall be located at least ten (10) feet from the road right-of-way line.
2. Construction Signs
  - a. One (1) non-illuminated wall or *pole* sign announcing the names of individuals or firms responsible for a development under construction, alteration or repair, and announcing the character or the purpose of the development.
  - b. Surface display area shall not exceed forty (40) square feet per side. The height of a *pole* sign shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet above grade.
  - c. Such sign shall be located at least ten (10) feet from the road right-of-way line.
  - d. Such sign shall require a sign permit that shall authorize use of the sign for a period not to exceed one (1) year.
3. Development Entry Signs
  - a. A maximum of (2) signs, which may be illuminated, shall be permitted at each entrance to a development.
  - b. Surface display area shall not exceed fifty (50) square feet and the sign height shall not exceed ten (10) feet above grade.
  - c. Such signs shall be located at least ten (10) feet from the road right-of-way line.
  - d. Such signs shall include only the names of the development, development logo and the developer and the sign and structure shall be harmonious and

appropriate in appearance with the existing and intended character of the general vicinity.

4. Temporary Real Estate Development Sign

- a. One temporary development entry sign, advertising the lots/units for sale in a new residential development, shall be permitted at each entrance in addition to permanent development entry signs allowed in this section.
- b. Surface display area shall not exceed fifty (50) square feet and the sign height shall not exceed ten (10) feet above grade.
- c. Such signs shall not be illuminated.
- d. Such signs shall be located at least ten (10) feet from the road right-of-way line
- e. Such sign shall be permitted for two years or when 75% of the lots or units have sold, whichever comes first.
- f. The permit may be extended, in one year intervals, at the discretion of the Zoning Administrator if he/she finds all of the following:
  - 1) 75% of lots or units have not been sold;
  - 2) the sign is found to be in good condition; and
  - 3) the applicable renewal fee is paid.

5. Temporary Political Signs

- a. Temporary political signs are not permitted in the road right-of-way.
- b. Political signs shall be removed within *five (5) days* of the election to which they pertain. (Amendment 104-05-06-17; Effective 04/27/07)

6. Temporary Signs Advertising Charitable Events

- a. Surface display area shall not exceed thirty-five (35) square feet per side.
- b. Such sign shall be located at least ten (10) feet from the road right-of-way line.
- c. Such signs may be illuminated, but no flashing or moving illumination shall be permitted.
- d. Temporary signs may be permitted for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) days for purposes of advertising charitable events and shall be removed within five (5) days after the event.

7. Directional signs conforming to the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control

Devices.

8. Highway signs erected by the Michigan Department of Transportation and/or the Grand Traverse County Road Commission.
9. Signs erected by governmental agencies to designate hours and uses for parks, parking lots, governmental buildings, and other public spaces.
10. Historic signs designating sites recognized by the State Historical Commission.
11. Signs prohibiting hunting or trespassing.
12. Signs denoting utility lines, railroad lines, hazards, and precautions.
13. Memorial signs which are either cut in masonry or stone or constructed of bronze or other metal when attached flush to a building.
14. Menu boards and drive-through signs in conjunction with a drive-through establishment.

#### **Section 20.04 Signs in Recreation-Conservation and Agricultural Districts**

1. Signs related to agricultural or recreation-conservation uses in the Recreation-Conservation and Agricultural Districts shall be subject to the following limitations:
  - a. Farm Products Signs
    - 1) One (1) non-illuminated sign advertising the products grown on the farm.
    - 2) Surface display area shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet in area.
    - 3) Sign shall be placed behind the road right-of-way line.
  - b. Identification Signs
    - 1) One (1) non-illuminated sign identifying the recreation or conservation use.
    - 2) Surface display shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet in area.
    - 3) Sign shall be placed behind the road right-of-way line.
  - c. Home Occupation Signs

- 1) One (1) non-illuminated sign announcing a home occupation.
  - 2) Surface display area shall not exceed two (2) square feet.
  - 3) Sign shall be attached flat against a building wall.
- d. Yard or Garage Sale Signs
- 1) One (1) non-illuminated sign announcing the sale.
  - 2) Surface display area shall not exceed four (4) square feet.
  - 3) Sign shall be placed behind the road right-of-way line.
  - 4) Sign shall be removed within five (5) days of the date that the sale ended.

### **Section 20.05 Signs in Residential Districts**

1. Signs related to residential uses in residential districts shall be permitted subject to the following limitations:
  - a. Home Occupation Signs
    - 1) One (1) non-illuminated sign announcing a home occupation.
    - 2) Surface display area shall not exceed two (2) square feet.
    - 3) Sign shall be attached flat against a building wall.
  - b. Yard or Garage Sale Signs
    - 1) One (1) non-illuminated sign announcing the sale.
    - 2) Surface display area shall not exceed four (4) square feet.
    - 3) Sign shall be placed behind the road right-of-way line.
    - 4) Sign shall be removed within five (5) days of the date that the sale ended.
2. Signs for nonresidential uses, such as institutions for human care, churches, educational or social institutions, and public utility buildings, permitted by special land use approval in residential districts, shall be permitted subject to the following limitations:

- a. All limitations governing signs for professional and office uses in the Commercial zoning districts shall apply.
- b. Surface display area for freestanding signs shall not exceed twenty-five (25) square feet per side.

### **Section 20.06 Signs in Commercial Manufacturing Districts**

(Text added. Amendment 104-05-06-11; Effective 04/27/07)

1. *Signs shall be limited to one (1) pole sign and wall signs not to exceed total allowable area on the premises of a business establishment or composite of businesses under single ownership subject to the following conditions:*
  - *A canopy sign may be substituted for a wall sign.*
  - *A monument sign may be substituted for the permitted pole sign.*
  - *Signs permitted in the Commercial Manufacturing Districts shall require a sign permit.*
  - *Signs shall be limited to the following:*
    - a. **Wall Signs**
      - 1) Signs shall not project above the roofline or cornice.
      - 2) Surface display area shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the building facade; however, no sign shall exceed one hundred (100) square feet.
      - 3) In the case of several tenants utilizing a common customer access, such as a shopping mall or office building, one (1) common wall sign shall be permitted provided that such sign does not provide more than twenty (20) square feet of surface display area for each tenant listed, up to a maximum of ten (10) percent of the building facade.
    - b. **Canopy Signs**
      - 1) Surface display area shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the building facade; however, no such sign shall exceed one hundred (100) square feet.
      - 2) Such canopy shall have a minimum clearance height of eight (8) feet above grade; except that canopies shall be erected, whenever practicable, to match the underclearance and projection of canopies which exist on adjacent businesses, buildings, or lots.
    - c. **Pole Signs**

- 1) In no case may *pole* signs exceed fifty (50) square feet in surface area if the lot on which the sign is located has less than two hundred (200) feet of lot frontage on the road toward which that sign is primarily oriented, seventy-five (75) square feet on lots with two hundred (200) or more, but less than four hundred (400) feet of lot frontage, and one hundred (100) square feet on lots with four hundred (400) or more feet of frontage.
  - 2) Such sign shall be located behind the road right-of-way line. Further, a *pole* sign shall not be located within twenty (20) feet of the intersection of the access drive and the road right-of-way line.
  - 3) A *pole* sign shall not exceed a height of twenty (20) feet above ground level.
  - 4) *If more than one support pole is present, the area between the poles shall not be enclosed.* (Amendment 104-05-06-13, Effective 04/24/07)
  - 5) *Pole cover shall not exceed 25 % of sign width.* (Amendment 104-05-06-19, Effective 07/10/07)
- d. Monument Signs
- 1) Surface display area of such sign may be twenty-five (25) percent greater than the permitted *pole* sign.
  - 2) A monument sign shall not exceed a height of eight (8) feet above grade.
  - 3) Such signs shall be landscaped at the base.
- e. Automobile Service and Gasoline Station Signs
- 1) Automobile service and gasoline stations shall be permitted additional areas for signs on each pump island for displays, and on the pump island canopy. The aggregate area of such signs shall not exceed a total of one hundred (100) square feet.
  - 2) Two (2), two-sided signs indicating price and grade of gasoline, each side not to exceed twelve (12) square feet in surface display area, may be erected.
- f. Temporary Grand Opening Signs
- 1) One (1) such sign may be permitted for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) days for those businesses which are new to a particular location.

- 2) Surface display area shall not exceed thirty-five (35) square feet per side.
- 3) Such signs may be illuminated providing there shall be no flashing lights or moving lights or parts of the sign.
- 4) Such sign shall be located at least ten (10) feet from the road right-of-way line.
- 5) Wind-blown devices, such as pennants, spinners, and streamers shall also be allowed on the site of the business advertising a grand opening for the fifteen (15) day time period designated for the grand opening sign.

g. Time and Temperature Signs

- 1) Such signs may take the form of wall, *pole* or monument sign, and must conform to the standards that apply to each of these sign types.
- 2) Surface display area shall not be larger than twenty-five (25) square feet per side. The surface display area of a time and temperature sign shall be deducted against the total surface display area allowed for other signs on the site.

h. Directory Signs

- 1) Directory signs shall front on parcels having direct access to M-37 and US-31, exclusively.
- 2) Directory signs shall not exceed a height of five (5) feet and a width of four (4) feet.
- 3) The directory sign shall consist of individual sign panels, each of which is no greater than eight (8) inches in height and forty (40) inches in width.
- 4) Directory signs shall not count toward the total number of signs permitted per business or maximum sign surface area permitted per business as specified in this Ordinance.
- 5) Only one (1) directory sign shall be allowed per business. That sign shall be located at the intersection of M-37 or US-31 and the road the business is located on.
- 6) Directory signs may require M-DOT approval prior to their placement.



- i. *Changeable Letter Sign* (Amendment 104-05-06-14; effective 11/27/07)
  - 1) *Changeable letter signs, which are either mechanical or electronic shall be permitted, provided that they are either a wall, pole or monument type of sign.*
  - 2) *Electronic changeable letter sign display shall change a maximum of 1 time per 5 seconds.*
  
- j. *Temporary Signs* (Amendment 104-05-09-03; Effective October 6, 2009)
  - 1) *Temporary signs including flags, pennants and banners may be in continuous use for a period not to exceed fourteen (14) days in any one hundred twenty (120) day period and must be removed for sixty (60) days before another shall be permitted.*
  - 2) *All temporary signs shall be securely affixed to permanent structures on the site.*
  - 3) *Maximum of three (3) temporary signs, including flags, pennants, and banners, not to exceed a total of thirty (30) square feet shall be displayed at one time.*
  - 4) *Temporary signs shall be kept in good repair.*
  - 5) *Temporary signs shall not be illuminated.*
  - 6) *Temporary signs shall be located on the site for which they are advertising; no temporary off-premise signs shall be permitted.*
  - 7) *A portable sign shall not be used as a temporary sign*
  - 8) *Temporary sign permits will not be issued to businesses with more than one (1) sign violation within the past year.*

## **Section 20.07 Billboards**

Billboards shall be permitted in commercial and industrial districts in accordance with the following limitations:

- 1. Surface display area of a billboard shall not exceed three hundred (300) square feet per side. Maximum height of such structure shall not exceed thirty (30) feet.
- 2. Such structures shall be at least fifty (50) feet from any road right-of-way line. No billboard shall be closer than two hundred (200) feet to any other zoning district than CM Commercial Manufacturing.
- 3. Such structure shall not be located closer than two thousand six hundred forty (2,640) feet of any other billboard on either side of the road.
- 4. Such structure may be illuminated, provided the source of said illumination (lamp or light source) is shielded downward so that no light is visible beyond the property lines of the parcel upon which the structure is located.

## **Section 20.08 Existing Nonconforming Signs**

1. It is the intent of this Section to permit the continuance of a lawful use of any sign or billboard existing at the effective date of this Ordinance, although such sign or billboard may not conform to the provisions of this Ordinance. It is the intent of this Section that nonconforming signs and billboards shall not be enlarged upon, expanded, or extended. Further, it is the intent of this Section that nonconforming signs and billboards shall be gradually eliminated and terminated upon their natural deterioration or accidental destruction. The continuance of all nonconforming signs and billboards within Blair Township shall be subject to the conditions and requirements set forth in this Section.
2. The faces, supports, or other parts of any nonconforming sign or billboard shall not be structurally changed, altered, substituted, or enlarged unless the resultant changed, altered, substituted, or enlarged sign or billboard conforms to the provision of this Article for the district in which it is located, except as otherwise provided for in this Section. (Amendment 104-05-12-01; Effective May 22, 2012)
3. Nothing in this Section shall prohibit the repair, reinforcement, alteration, improvement, or modernization of a lawful nonconforming sign or billboard, provided that such repair, reinforcement, alteration, improvement, and modernizing do not exceed an aggregate cost of thirty (30) percent of the appraised replacement cost of the sign or billboard, as determined by the Zoning Administrator, unless the subject sign or billboard is changed by such repair, reinforcement, alteration, improvement, or modernization to a conforming structure. Nothing in this shall prohibit the periodic change of message on any billboard.
4. Any lawful nonconforming sign or billboard damaged by fire, explosion, or an act of God, or by other accidental causes, may be restored, rebuilt or repaired, provided that the estimated expense of reconstruction does not exceed thirty (30) percent of the appraised replacement cost thereof, as determined by the Zoning Administrator.
5. Whenever the activity, business, or usage of a primary premises to which a sign is attached or related has been discontinued for a period of ninety (90) days or longer, such discontinuance shall be considered conclusive evidence of an intention to abandon legally the nonconforming sign attached to the premises. At the end of this period of abandonment, the Zoning Administrator shall give notice to the person responsible for the nonconforming sign that said sign shall either be removed or altered to conform to the provisions of this Article within thirty (30) days.
6. The Township Board may acquire any nonconforming sign or billboard, with or without acquiring the property on which such sign or structure is located, by condemnation or other means, and may remove such sign or structure.

## **Section 20.09 Required Information and Fees for Sign Permits**

All signs shall require a sign permit. Application for a sign permit shall be made to the Zoning Administrator by submission of the required forms and fees, exhibits and information by the owner of the property on which the sign is to be located, his agent, or lessee.

1. The application shall contain the following information:
  - a. The property owner's, sign owner's, and applicant's name and address.
  - b. Address of the property on which the sign is to be situated.
  - c. Description of business to which the sign relates and purpose of the sign.
  - d. Drawing of the sign that includes a description of sign type, sign height, total surface display area in square feet, proposed graphics, and/or sign copy.
  - e. Site drawing that depicts lot and building dimensions, right-of-way line location, and proposed setback from road right-of-way line.
2. The Zoning Administrator shall not approve plans or issue a sign permit for any sign that does not conform to the provisions of this Ordinance.
3. Fees for the review of site plans shall be established by resolution of the Township Board.
4. The following signs shall not require permits:
  - a) 20.03(1) Real Estate Signs
  - b) 23.03(4) Temporary Political Signs
  - c) 20.03(5) Temporary Signs Advertising Charitable Events
  - d) 20.03(6) Directional signs conforming to Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices
  - e) 20.03(7) Highway signs erected by MDOT or Grand Traverse County
  - f) 20.03(8) Governmental signs
  - g) 20.03(9) Historical Commission signs
  - h) 20.03(10) Hunting or Trespassing signs
  - i) 20.03(11) Signs denoting utility lines, railroad, hazards and precautions
  - j) 20.03(12) Memorial signs
  - k) 20.03(13) Menu boards and drive through signs
  - l) 20.04(1) Agriculture signs
  - m) 20.05(1) Home occupation and yard sale signs

(Amendment 104-05-06-18; Effective 04/27/07)

**Section 20.10 Sign Variance Standards**

Any person filing an application for a sign permit who feels that he has been aggrieved by the decisions of the Zoning Administrator may have the application reviewed by the Board of Appeals. A variance may be allowed by the Board of Appeals only in cases involving practical difficulties when the evidence in the official record of the appeal supports all the following affirmative findings:

1. That the alleged practical difficulties are peculiar to the property of the person requesting the variance by reasons of the physical and/or dimensional constraints of the building and/or site, and result from conditions which do not exist generally throughout the Township;
2. That the granting of the requested variance would not be materially detrimental to the property owners in the immediate vicinity;
3. That the granting of the variance would not be contrary to the general objectives of this Article and is in keeping with the spirit and intent of this ordinance; and,
4. That allowing the variance will result in substantial justice being done, considering the public benefits intended to be secured by this Article, the individual hardships that will be suffered by a failure of the Board of Appeals to grant a variance, and the rights of others whose property would be affected by the allowance of the variance.
5. Fees for sign variances shall be as established by resolution of the Township Board.