



# LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

## Chapter 8 Signs

### CHAPTER 8 SIGNS

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### CHAPTER 8 SIGNS

#### 8.00.00 PURPOSE.

The purpose of these sign regulations is to encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication in the County, to maintain and enhance the aesthetic environment and the County's ability to attract sources of economic development, to improve pedestrian and traffic safety, and to enable the fair and consistent enforcement of these sign regulations.

#### 8.01.00 DEFINITIONS.

The following definitions are germane to this chapter.

**ANIMATED SIGNS:** Any sign that uses movement or change of lighting to depict action or create a special effect or scene.

**BANNER:** Any sign of lightweight fabric or similar material that is mounted to a pole or a building by a permanent frame at one or more edges.

**BEACON:** Any light with one or more beams directed into the atmosphere or directed at one or more points not on the same lot or parcel as the light source; also, any light with one or more beams that rotate or move.

**CANOPY SIGN:** Any sign that is a part of or attached to an awning, canopy, or other fabric, plastic, or structural protective cover over a door, entrance, window, or outdoor service area. A marquee is not a canopy.

**CHANGEABLE COPY SIGN:** A sign or portion thereof with characters, letters, panels or illustrations that can be changed or rearranged without altering the surface of the sign.

**FLAG:** Any fabric, banner, or bunting containing distinctive colors, patterns, or symbols, used as a symbol of a government, political subdivision, or other entity.

**FREESTANDING SIGN:** Any sign supported by structures or supports that are placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that are independent from any building or other structure.

**INCIDENTAL SIGN:** A sign, generally informational, that has a purpose secondary to the use of the lot or parcel on which it is located, such as "no parking," "entrance," "loading only," "telephone," and other similar directives. No sign with a commercial message legible from a position off the lot or parcel on which the sign is located shall be considered an incidental sign.

**MARQUEE:** Any permanent roof-like structure projecting beyond a building or extending along and projecting beyond the wall of the building, generally designed and constructed to provide protection from the weather.

**MARQUEE SIGN:** Any sign attached to, in any manner, or made a part of a marquee.

**NON-CONFORMING SIGN:** Any sign that does not conform to the requirements of this ordinance.



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**PENNANT:** Any lightweight plastic, fabric, or other material, whether or not containing a message of any kind, suspended from a rope, wire, or string, usually in series, designed to move in the wind.

**POLITICAL SIGNS:** Signs which are permitted only during the period of an election campaign or referendum.

**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; balloons used as signs; umbrellas 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.

**PRINCIPAL STRUCTURE:** A building in which the primary use of the lot or parcel on which the building is located is conducted.

**PROJECTING SIGN:** Any sign affixed to a building or wall in such manner that its leading edge extends more than six (6) inches beyond the surface of such building or wall.

**ROOF-SIGN:** Any sign erected and constructed wholly on and over the roof of a building, supported by a roof structure, and extending vertically above the highest portion of the roof.

**ROOF-SIGN, INTEGRAL:** Any sign erected or constructed as an integral or essentially integral part of a normal roof structure of any design, such that no part of the sign extends vertically above the highest portion of the roof and such that no part of the sign is separated from the rest of the roof by a space of more than six (6) inches.

**SIGN:** Outdoor advertising display by means of any letter, figure, character, mark, plane, point, marquee sign, design, poster, pictorial, picture, stroke, stripe, line, trademark, reading matter, or illuminated service, which shall be so constructed, placed, attached, painted, erected, fastened, or manufactured in any manner whatsoever, so that the same shall be used for the attraction of the public to any place, subject, person, firm corporation, public performance, article, machine, or merchandise, whatsoever, and which is displayed in any manner whatsoever outdoors.

**SIGN, ON-SITE:** A sign relating in its subject matter to the premises on which it is located or to products, accommodations, service or activities on the premises. Free-standing signs are those which have structural support for the sign independent of support by buildings or other structures.

**SIGN, OFF-SITE:** A sign relating in its subject matter to a premises other than the premises on which it is located or to products, accommodations, service or activities available on premises other than on the site on which the sign is located, including billboard signs erected in the conduct of the outdoor advertising business.

**STREET:** A strip of land or way subject to vehicular traffic (as well as pedestrian traffic) that provides direct or indirect access to property, including, but not limited to, alleys, avenues, boulevards, courts, drives, highways, lanes, places, roads, terraces, trails, or other thoroughfares.

**STREET FRONTAGE:** The length of the front property line of the lot, lots, or tract of land abutting a public street, road, highway, or rural right-of-way.



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**SUSPENDED SIGN:** A sign that is suspended from the under-side of a horizontal plane surface and is supported by such surface.

**TEMPORARY SIGN:** Any sign that is used only temporarily and is not permanently mounted.

**WALL SIGN:** Any sign attached parallel to, but within six (6) inches of, a wall, painted on the wall surface of, or erected and confined within the limits of an outside wall of any building or structure, which is supported by such wall or building, and displays only one sign surface.

**WINDOW SIGN:** Any sign, picture, symbol, or combination thereof, designed to communicate information about an activity, business, commodity, event, sale, or service, that is placed inside a window or upon the window panes or glass and is visible from the exterior of the window.

### 8.02.00 PERMITS REQUIRED.

Permanent signs require permitting under the provisions of this ordinance, and are to be placed, constructed, erected or modified on a lot or parcel. The owner of the lot or a contractor shall secure a permit prior to the construction, placement, erection, or modification of such sign in accordance with the requirements of this ordinance.

**8.02.01 Permanent On-Site Signs:** Permanent On-Site signs may be illuminated and are allowable in all zoning districts provided that the requirements of this code are met and the necessary permits have been acquired. In addition, the following restrictions apply:

1. No portion of any type of sign shall project or be located closer than ten (10) feet from the nearest right-of-way line, or property line.
2. The height and location of the sign shall not create any traffic or visual obstructions at ground level or if elevated. Signs shall not exceed forty-five (45) feet in height.

**8.02.02 Permanent Off-Site Signs:** Permanent Off-Site signs may be illuminated and are allowable in certain zoning districts, provided that the requirements of this code are met and that the necessary permits have been acquired. In addition, the following restrictions apply:

1. Permanent off-site signs are permitted in the following zoning districts: AA, C-2, C-3, and I-1.
2. The maximum size of each off-site sign, including border and trim but excluding supports, shall not exceed four hundred (400) square feet for each sign face.
3. The height of each off-site sign measured from grade level must be a minimum of fifteen (15) feet from the bottom of the sign, and shall not exceed forty-five (45) feet from grade.
4. The required setback for each off-site sign shall be twenty (20) feet from the nearest right-of-way line from any street, road, or highway, and forty five (45) feet from the intersection point of right-of-way line of any street, road, or highway and ten (10) feet from any other property line.
5. There shall be spacing of five-hundred (500) feet between off-site signs, which are located on the same side of the street. Spacing shall be one thousand (1,000) feet from any other permitted sign on the same side of the highway, if on a federal aid primary



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highway. Spacing shall be one thousand five hundred (1,500) feet from any other permitted sign on the same side of the highway, if on an interstate highway.

6. Permits required from other agencies shall be obtained prior to receiving a permit from the Planning and Inspection Department. Reference F.S. Chapter 479.

**8.02.03 Temporary Signs:** Temporary signs are allowed throughout the County, subject to the following provisions:

1. Temporary signs shall be posted securely in the ground or on a building.
2. Temporary signs may display messages of construction in progress or announce temporary events such as fairs/carnivals, sporting events, or any public, charitable, educational or religious events. Such temporary signs shall not be installed more than seven (7) days prior to the special event, and shall be removed within five (5) days after the special event. One (1) Construction sign may be permitted for each parcel, identifying the name of the development, company and general contractor, and other pertinent similar information, which shall be removed at the time a certificate of occupancy is issued for the building or structure. The following restrictions shall apply to construction signs:
  - a. In residential zoning districts, temporary signs shall be placed a minimum of ten (10) feet from the roadway or curb, and shall not exceed six (6) square feet in size.
  - b. In commercial zoning districts, temporary signs shall be placed a minimum of ten (10) feet from the roadway or curb, and shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet.
  - c. The permit board used for the required display of permits issued by the county shall not exceed sixteen (16) square feet.
3. Real Estate signs located at subdivision entrances and model homes, exceeding eight(8) square feet, but not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet are permitted during the marketing of the property provided that:
  - a. The sign maintains a ten (10) foot setback from the right-of-way.

### **8.03.00 COMPUTATIONS.**

The following principles shall control the computations of sign area and sign height.

**8.03.01 Computations of Area of Individual Signs:** The area of a sign face (which is also the sign area of a wall sign or other sign with only one (1) face) shall be computed by the area of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or geometric figure that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display, or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or structure against which it is placed, also including any supporting framework, bracing, or decorative fence or wall.



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**8.03.02 Computations of Area of Multifaced Signs:** The sign area for a sign with more than one (1) face shall be computed by adding together the area of all sign faces visible from any vantage point. When two (2) identical sign faces are placed back to back, so that both faces cannot be viewed from any one point at the same time, and when such sign faces are part of the same structure, the sign area shall be computed by the measurement of one of the faces. The sign area for billboard signs will be calculated separately for each sign face.

**8.03.03 Computations of Height:** The height of a sign shall be computed as the distance from the base of the sign at normal grade to the top of the highest attached component of the sign. Natural grade shall be construed to be the lower of existing grade prior to construction or the finished grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign. The maximum height allowed for signs except flags and banners in all districts except Industrial Protected (IP) shall be forty-five (45) feet. Flags shall be limited to a maximum height of forty (40) feet in height. Banners shall be limited to a maximum height of twenty-five (25) feet in height. The height limitation in the IP District shall be established by a determination of "No Hazard" by the FAA.

**8.03.04 Computations of Total Permitted Sign Area:** The permitted sum of signage on any lot shall not exceed the total of two (2) square feet per lineal foot of frontage on any public street. Lots fronting on two (2) or more streets are allowed the permitted sign area for each street frontage. However, the total sign area that is oriented toward a particular street may not exceed the portion of the lot's total sign area that is derived from the above formula.

### 8.04.00 MASTER SIGNAGE PLAN.

1. For any lot or parcel on which the owner proposes to erect two or more signs requiring permits, unless such lot or parcel is included in a Common Signage Plan, the owner may submit to the Department of Growth Management a Master Signage Plan. The Master Signage Plan shall be kept on file and any subsequent permits shall not be issued unless such sign is depicted on such plan. In addition, a Master Signage Plan is required in a planned development.
2. For the purposes of this section, a "planned development is an area approved for concentrated business locations characterized by a comprehensive, unified plan of development and either centralized land ownership or multiple owners or tenants, including, but not limited to shopping centers and office parks. A "planned development" includes a Planned Unit Development (PUD) as defined in this Code, a Development of Regional Impact (DRI), and a Regional Activity Center (RAC), as defined in Chapter 380, Florida Statutes.
3. The Master Signage Plan shall contain the following information and meet the following criteria:
  - a. **Site Plan:** An accurate site plan, drawn to scale indicating the existing and proposed buildings, parking lots, driveways and landscaped areas on such lot and parcel or in such planned development.
  - b. **Area and Height:** Computation of the maximum total sign area, the maximum total sign area for individual signs, the height of signs and the number of freestanding signs allowed on the lot or parcel or in the planned development included in the plan under this ordinance. In commercial developments,



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maximum size of signs may vary based on the height and width of a storefront and distance to the viewer.

- c. **Format:** A format for all signs to be used on the lot or parcel or in the planned development, including their color, location, illumination details, lettering type, and mounting details. Signs may be located on accessory structures, such as water towers.
- d. **Scale and Proportion:** Every sign shall have a good scale and proportion in its design and in its visual relationship to the other signs and buildings and the lot, parcel, or planned development, and to the surrounding development.
- e. **Compatibility:** Each sign shall be compatible with other signs on the lot or parcel or in the planned development. Each sign and the overall Master Signage Plan shall be compatible with adjacent development.
- f. **Integral Elements:** The signs in the Master Signage Plan shall be designed as integral architectural elements of the building or buildings and the lot, parcel, or planned development to which it principally relates and shall not appear as incongruous “add-ons” or intrusions.
- g. **Restraint and Harmony:** The colors, materials and lighting of every sign shall be restrained and harmonious with the building or buildings and the lot, parcel, or planned development to which it principally relates.
- h. **Effective Composition:** The number of graphic elements and letters shall be held to the minimum needed to convey each sign’s message and shall be composed in proportion to the area of the sign’s face.
- i. **Unified Image:** The effect of the signs proposed in the Master Signage Plan shall be the establishment of a unified image for the lot, parcel, or planned development to which they principally relate.
- j. **Future Signs:** An accurate indication on the site plan of the proposed location of any future sign of any type, whether requiring a permit or not as well as the location of each existing sign. Incidental signs need not be shown.
- k. **Schedule for Pre-Existing Signs:** Master Signage Plans being submitted for lots or parcels or planned developments containing signage prior to the effective date of these provisions shall contain the above information, as well as a schedule for bringing into conformance within seven (7) years, all signs not conforming to the proposed plan or to the requirements of this ordinance in effect on the date of submission.
- l. **Directory Signs in Planned Developments:** Planned developments may have common directory signs to guide pedestrians to individual businesses on the site. The number, location, and size of directory signs shall be established in the Master Signage Plan.
- m. **Identification Signs in Planned Developments:** In addition to the other signs permitted herein, a planned development may have one primary identification sign for each street frontage plus one secondary identification sign at each





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entrance from an access road. The number and locations of the signs shall be established in the Master Signage Plan and are subject to the following additional criteria:

- i. Both primary and secondary identification signs may include the name and graphic logo of the planned development, the address of the planned development, and a time and/or temperature sign. In addition, one identification sign may include a reader board, and one identification sign may include a street-side theater marquee. Identification signs shall be set back a minimum of ten (10) feet from the property line, and shall be located so that they do not obstruct the vision of pedestrians, cyclists, or motorists traveling on or entering the streets adjoining the site; except that signs for subdivisions and for planned developments, as defined in this section, may be located in the median where the entrance street is divided as approved by the County Public Works Department.
- ii. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Code to the contrary, the maximum area of the primary sign structures in planned developments shall be 400 square feet per side for up to a four-sided structure, with a maximum height of 35 feet. The sign structure may include a tower, logo, and roof element designed to create a unique sign statement. The maximum permitted sign face area, consisting of copy, logo, and/or logotype (excluding a reader board or theater marquees) shall be 160 square feet per side. Otherwise, primary identification signs shall conform to parameters established in the Master Signage Plan.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Code to the contrary, the maximum area of the secondary sign structures in planned developments shall be 200 square feet for up to a four-sided structure, to a maximum height of 25 feet. The sign structure may include a tower, logo, and roof element designed to create a unique sign statement. The maximum permitted sign face area, consisting of copy, logo, and/or logotype (excluding a reader board or theater marquees) shall be 80 square feet per side. Otherwise, secondary identification signs shall conform to parameters established in the Master Signage Plan.

**8.04.01 Amended Master Signage Plan:** If any amended Master Signage Plan is filed for a property on which existing signs are located, it shall include a schedule for bringing into conformance within three (3) years, all signs not conforming to the proposed amended plan or to the requirements of this ordinance in effect on the date of submission of the amended Master Signage Plan.

### **8.05.00 SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMITTING.**

The following signs are exempt from the permitting process required by this code:

1. Any sign required to be maintained or posted by law or governmental order, rule or regulation;
2. Public warning signs which indicate the dangers associated with trespassing, swimming, or similar hazards;





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4. Incidental signs and any signs not exceeding one (1) square foot in area and bearing only property numbers, post office numbers, names of occupants of premises, or other identifications of premises not having commercial connotations;
5. Real estate signs which are securely constructed and erected on the site listed for sale, rent, or lease and do not exceed eight (8) square feet in size. The sign shall be removed when the property is no longer for sale, rent, or lease;
6. Flags and insignia of any government except when displayed in connection with commercial promotions;
7. Integral decorative or architectural features of buildings except letters, trademarks, and moving lights, and
8. Signs directing and guiding traffic and parking, but bearing no advertising matter, and not exceeding four (4) square feet in size. Off-site directional signs for churches, schools and other not for profit organizations shall not exceed six (6) square feet in size.
9. Normal servicing of previously permitted sign structures, including a change of copy for billboards and a panel change in structures designed to allow changeable copy.

### **8.06.00 PROHIBITED SIGNS.**

It shall be unlawful to erect any sign not authorized or exempted from this code. The following signs are expressly prohibited:

1. Signs which are in violation of the building codes adopted by the county;
2. Any portion of a sign, including its surface supports, closer than ten (10) feet to the right-of-way line (property line) of any public street or the side or rear of the property lines, excluding signs for subdivisions and planned developments defined in Section 8.04.00 which may be located in the median where the entrance street is divided as approved by the County Public Works Department;
3. Abandoned signs,
4. Vehicles not used for operating purposes and parked on any parcel solely for advertising purposes, and
5. Signs, commonly referred to as snipe signs, made of any material whatsoever and attached in any way to a utility pole, tree, fence post, stake, stick or any other object located or situated on public property, except as otherwise expressly allowed by, or exempted from this code.
6. Wind signs,
7. Any description or representation, in whatever form, of nudity, sexual conduct, or sexual excitement, when it is patently offensive to contemporary standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable sexual material for minors, and taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.
8. Any sign which emits audible sound, vapor, smoke, or gaseous matter.



9. Any sign which obstructs, conceals, hides or otherwise obscures from view any official traffic or government sign, signal or device, is erected or maintained so as to obstruct any fire fighting equipment, window, door, or opening used as a means of ingress or egress for fire escape purposes including any opening required for proper lighting and ventilation, or constitutes a traffic hazard, or detriment to traffic safety by reason of its size, location, movement, content, coloring, or method of illumination, or distracting the vision of drivers or pedestrians.
10. Signs located upon, within, or otherwise encroaching upon County or public right-of-way, except as may be permitted by the Board of County Commissioners and those erected by a governmental agency or required to be erected by a governmental agency.
11. Neon type signs except where permitted within all commercial and industrial districts.

### **8.07.00 COMPLIANCE.**

It shall be the applicant's responsibility to submit to the Growth Management Department documentation in the form of site plans, drawn to scale, indicating the location of all proposed signage as well as existing signage, both freestanding and wall mounted, and detailed drawings of the sign(s) to be permitted prior to obtaining a permit for the proposed sign(s). The applicant shall submit two (2) blueprints or ink drawings, certified by a Florida Registered Engineer, of the plans and specifications and method of construction and attachment to the building or the ground for all pole signs and all projecting signs; and any ground sign over thirty-two (32) square feet.

**8.07.01 Existing Nonconforming Signs:** Existing signs expressly prohibited by this code and not conforming to its provisions shall be regarded as nonconforming signs.

The following signs and sign structures shall be removed or made to conform to this Code within ninety (90) days from the effective date thereof:

1. Signs made of paper, cloth, or other nondurable materials.
2. No permits shall be issued for repair or replacement of these existing non-conforming signs.
  1. Subject to the following limitations, a nonconforming sign may be continued and shall be maintained in good condition, but shall not be:
    2. Structurally or mechanically extended or altered to further the nonconformity, except in cases where it has been determined that there exists imminent danger to the public safety. However, existing nonconforming signs may be structurally extended or altered to reduce the nonconformity or to comply with existing regulations.
  3. Repaired or rebuilt when destroyed or damaged to the extent of fifty (50) percent or more of its replacement value, except in conformity with this Chapter.
  4. A nonconforming permanent on -site sign or off-site sign shall not be replaced by another nonconforming sign except that substitution or interchange of letters, poster panels, and painted boards, or dismountable materials on nonconforming signs shall be permitted through the period of nonconformity established by this code.



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- Continued in use when any land use to which the sign pertains has ceased for a period of thirty (30) consecutive days, or has otherwise changed.
- Nonconforming status shall not be afforded to any sign erected without the required permit issued by the County, State, or any Federal agency either before or after the enactment of this Ordinance, or to any pre-existing signs which have been illegally installed, constructed, placed or maintained.

**8.07.011 Nonconforming On-Site Signs:** All permanent nonconforming on-site signs, and sign structures shall be removed, or made to comply with the requirements of this Code within three (3) years from the date upon which the sign became nonconforming under this Ordinance.

**8.07.012 Nonconforming Off-Site Signs:** All nonconforming off-site signs and sign structures having an original cost or value of one-hundred (100) dollars or more may be maintained for the longer of the following periods under the following conditions:

- Two (2) years from the date upon which the sign became nonconforming under this Ordinance, or
- A period of three (3) years to seven (7) years from the date upon which the sign became effective according to the amortization table below:

Sign Cost/Value	Permitted Years From Effective Date of Code
\$100 to \$1,000	3 Years
\$1,001 to \$3,000	4 Years
\$3,001 to \$10,000	5 Years
More than \$10,000	7 Years

**8.07.013 Existing Nonconforming Amount of Total Square Footage of Signage:** No permits shall be issued for additional signage or repair of existing signage on any lot which exceeds the maximum allowable square footage of signage until the existing non-conformity is brought into compliance with the provisions of this ordinance.

**8.07.014 Variances:** The Board of Adjustment may grant a variance from the terms of this Section as will not be contrary to the public interest when owing to special conditions, a literal enforcement of the provisions of this Ordinance would result in unnecessary and undue hardship. In order to grant any variance from the provisions of this Section the Board of Adjustment must find:

- That special conditions and circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, structure or building involved and which are not applicable to other lands, structures or buildings in the same zoning district;
- That the special conditions and circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant;
- That granting the variance requested will not confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by the Land Development Code to other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning district;



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4. That literal interpretation of the provisions of the Land Development Code would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district under the terms of the ordinance and would work unnecessary and undue hardship on the applicant;
5. That the variance granted is the minimum variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the land, building or structure; and
6. That the grant of the variance will be in harmony with the general intent and purpose of the Land Development Code, and that such variance will not be injurious to the area involved or otherwise detrimental to the public welfare.
7. In granting any variance, the Board of Adjustment may prescribe a reasonable time limit within which the action required for the variance shall be begun or completed or both. Under no circumstances, except as permitted above, shall the Board of Adjustment grant a variance to permit a use not generally or by special exception permitted in the zoning district. No non-conforming use of neighboring lands, structures or buildings in the same zoning district and no permitted use of lands, structures or buildings in other zoning districts shall be considered grounds for the authorization of a variance.

### **8.08.00 DESTIN CORRIDOR.**

SR 293 to U.S. Highway 98, and west from the Walton County line to the Destin city limits.

1. Off-Site signs shall be prohibited within the Destin Corridor. Existing signs shall be considered as non-conforming signs and subject to the provisions of Section 8.07.01.