

Chapter 8 Sign Regulations

801. Intent and Purpose

The intent of this article is to regulate the type, number, physical dimensions, erection and placement of signs in Swan Creek Township. The purpose of these regulations is to:

- a. Promote the public health, safety, and welfare of residents and visitors;
- b. Reduce hazardous distractions to motorists, pedestrians, and air traffic;
- c. Protect commercial districts from visual clutter and chaos;
- d. Protect property values;
- e. Protect the rural character and natural beauty of Swan Creek Township.

802. Billboards.

Billboards are permitted *only* in those areas of the Township that are adjacent to a state highway (M-52), and that are zoned Commercial (B) or Industrial (M). Billboards erected in these areas shall conform to all requirements of the Highway Advertising Act (P.A. 106 of 1972, as amended) and the requirements of this Ordinance:

- a. **Maximum Sign Area:** A billboard shall have a sign area of no greater than 300 square feet per sign face.
- b. **Maximum Height:** A billboard shall have a height of no greater than 25 feet, as measured from the ground surface to the highest point of the sign, including any borders or trim.
- c. **Minimum Clearance:** A billboard shall have a minimum clearance of ten (10) feet between the ground surface and the lowest point of the sign.
- d. **Minimum Setbacks:** A billboard shall have minimum setbacks of twenty-five (25) feet from all public street right-of-way lines and ten (10) feet from all property lines.
- e. **Minimum Spacing Standard:**
A billboard shall not be established within one thousand (1,000) feet of another billboard on the same side of the road.

803. Zoning Permit Required

Unless a sign is exempt from permit requirements as specified in Section 805, a Zoning Permit must be obtained from the Township Zoning Administrator prior to the construction or placement of any sign.

804. Signs and Activities Exempt From Permit

Subject to the standards as noted and other applicable ordinance requirements, the following signs and related activities are permitted by right and are exempt from the permit requirements of this Ordinance.

a. Temporary Construction Signs:

One (1) construction sign for each street frontage at a construction project, not to exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in sign area per sign. Such signs may be erected no more than thirty (30) days prior to commencement of construction and must be removed no longer than thirty (30) days after completion of construction.

b. Directional Signs:

On-premise directional signs, not to exceed four (4) square feet per sign, shall be permitted as a means of directing traffic to parking, loading, customer service, and related areas.

c. Political Signs:

Political signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area per sign. Such signs shall be placed only on private property and only with permission of the property owner. Signs may be placed no more than thirty (30) days before the election or referendum *and* must be removed within fourteen (14) days following the election or referendum.

d. Public Signs or Notices:

Public signs or notices of Swan Creek Township, Saginaw County, the State of Michigan, or the United States of America may be erected as deemed necessary and appropriate by the unit of government.

e. Real Estate Signs:

(1) For parcels less than two (2) acres, one (1) non-illuminated real estate sign not to exceed eight (8) square feet in area is permitted.

(2) For parcels two (2) acres or more, one (1) non-illuminated real estate sign not to exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area, or one (1) non-illuminated sign per two hundred (200) feet of lot frontage provided the total area of all such signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet.

- f. **Name Plates:**
One (1) nameplate sign per premises not to exceed four (4) square feet in sign area.
- g. **Garage or Yard Sale Signs:**
Two (2) signs not to exceed six (6) square feet in sign area per sign. Signs shall be removed within twenty-four (24) hours after the sale.
- h. **Retail Fuel Pricing Signs:**
Retail fuel pricing signs typically and historically displayed by service stations and convenience stores with fuel sales which indicate the per gallon and/or per liter price of fuel.
- i. **Corporate Logo Signs:**
Corporation logo signs of less than six (6) square feet and independent of other advertising of messages. The number of such signs shall be limited to one (1) per street frontage.
- j. **Historic Sites:**
Signs designating sites recognized by the State Historical Commission.
- k. **Miscellaneous Signs:**
Placards posted to control or prohibit hunting or trespassing on public or private property, and signs that identify crop varieties.
- l. **Replacement of Copy:**
The replacement or changing of copy on an approved sign does not require a Zoning Permit. However, if the replacement creates a sign that violates the provisions of this Chapter, it shall be deemed a violation of this Ordinance and any Zoning Permit issued for the sign shall be invalidated.
- m. **Maintenance:**
Painting, cleaning, light bulb replacement, and other normal maintenance or repair of a sign or its supporting structure does not require a Zoning Permit. However, any structural change or relocation of a sign or its supporting structure does require a Zoning Permit.

805. Prohibited Signs

Signs listed in this section are prohibited in all zoning districts.

- a. Abandoned signs or signs in disrepair that have become safety hazards.
- b. Signs that incorporate flashing or moving lights in any manner.

- c. Any sign that moves or has any moving or animated parts or images, whether the movement is caused by any mechanical or electronic device, or by wind or other means. This prohibition shall not pertain to electronic message boards as defined in Chapter 2. Also, banners, pennants, streamers, and so forth are permitted when used in accordance with Section 809 of this Ordinance.
- d. Signs, that by their location, cause a hazard to pedestrian or vehicular traffic by depriving the pedestrian or driver of a clear and an obstructed view of approaching, intersecting, or merging traffic.
- e. Signs that do not comply with the Building and Safety Codes of Swan Creek Township.
- f. Signs, other than public signs or notices, placed in a designated public right of way unless permission to authorize such placement has been given, in writing, by the public agency having jurisdiction over said right of way. A copy of such written permission shall be provided to the Township prior to placement of such sign.
- g. Signs imitating or resembling official traffic or government signs or signals.
- h. Signs that by their location and character cause a hazard to air traffic.
- i. Signs, other than billboards, that do not advertise or identify a product, service, or establishment located on the parcel to which the sign is attached.

806. General Sign Standards

- a. Illumination, if permitted, shall be by a non-flashing reflective light. The source of illumination shall be shielded from direct view of adjacent properties.
- b. All signs shall be subject to the Building and Safety Codes of Swan Creek Township.
- c. All signs shall be set back a minimum of three (3) feet from the front lot line and ten (10) feet from all other property lines and road right-of-way lines, except where otherwise required by this Ordinance.
- d. No signs shall be placed in required clear vision areas.
- e. No person shall erect or relocate or cause to be erected, any sign without first obtaining a Zoning Permit.
- f. No person shall repair or alter, or cause to be repaired or altered, any sign without obtaining a Zoning Permit if one-half (1/2) of the replacement value of the sign or billboard will be exceeded.

- g. A sign shall be removed by the owner or lessee of the premises upon which a sign is located when the business which it advertises is no longer conducted on the premises. Failure to remove the sign is a violation of this Ordinance. However, if a successor to a defunct business agrees to maintain the existing sign(s) as provided in this Ordinance, this removal requirement shall not apply.

807. Conservation Zoning District (CG)

Signs as specified in Section 804 are allowed without obtaining a permit. In addition, the following signs are also permitted, provided that a permit is obtained as specified in Section 803.

- a. One (1) on premise, non-illuminated, ground-mounted sign not over six (6) feet in height and not more than sixteen (16) square feet advertising a permitted non-residential use or an authorized special use.
- b. One (1) on-premise, non-illuminated, ground-mounted sign not more than six (6) feet in height and displayed on a seasonal basis advertising the sale of farm produce to the general public. The sign shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in sign area and shall be displayed only during the seasonal period of time which sales occur. The sign shall be removed within fourteen (14) days of the closure of the public sales.

808. Agricultural and Residential Zoning Districts (A and R Districts)

Signs as specified in Section 804 are allowed without obtaining a permit. In addition, the following signs are also permitted, provided that a permit is obtained as specified in Section 803.

- a. One (1) on premise, non-illuminated, wall-mounted sign not more than six (6) square feet in area.
- b. Ground signs located at the entrance to platted subdivisions, residential site condominiums, multiple family housing developments, mobile home parks, or residential PUD's. No more than one sign not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in area, nor more than six (6) feet in height may be erected at any single entrance.

809. Business and Manufacturing Zoning Districts (B and M Districts)

Signs as specified in Section 804 are allowed without obtaining a permit. In addition, the following signs are also permitted, provided that a permit is obtained as specified in Section 803.

- a One freestanding sign per establishment or use, not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in area per sign face, nor more than twenty-five (25) feet in height, as measured from grade level to the highest point of the thirty-two (32) square feet in area. Wall signs shall be attached and parallel to the face of the building wall.
- a Electronic Message Boards. The portion of a sign that is an electronic message board may not exceed one-third (1/3) of the total sign size, including the supporting structures.
- b Signs may be attached to or painted on a marquee or canopy, provided that such signs are at least ten (10) feet above grade.
- c No sign shall project above the roof line of the building to which it is attached.
- d One portable sign not to exceed thirty-two (32) square feet, provided:
 - (1) The sign must meet required setbacks.
 - (2) The sign shall be properly anchored and wired and shall meet all Township Building and Safety Codes.
 - (3) The sign shall possess a nameplate or other such identification area indicating the name, address, and telephone number of the sign owner.
 - (4) The length of the display period shall be limited to two (2) periods of not more than thirty (30) days each within a single twelve (12) month period.
 - (5) A sign permit is required for each occasion.
- g. Pennants and banners may be displayed on commercial property of a retail sales nature provided that they shall be securely anchored.
- h. Illumination of signs is permitted, provided that it complies with the standards specified in Section 810.

810. Illumination

- a. The light from any illuminated sign shall be shaded, shielded, and directed in such a manner so that the light intensity or brightness will not be objectionable to surrounding areas.
- b. No sign shall have blinking, flashing or fluttering lights, or other illuminating devices that have a changing light intensity, brightness, or color. No sign shall utilize moving patterns of light that convey an illusion of motion or animation. Beacon lights are not

permitted. This section shall not be interpreted to prohibit electronic message boards as defined in Chapter 2.

- c. No colored lights shall be used at any location or in any manner that imitates or might be confused with traffic control devices.
- d. Neither direct nor reflected light from primary light sources shall create a traffic hazard to motor vehicle operators on public roads.
- e. No exposed reflective type bulbs and no strobe light or incandescent lamp that exceeds fifteen (15) watts shall be used on the exterior surface of any sign in a manner that would expose the face of the bulb, light, or lamp to any public road or adjacent property.

811. Non-Conforming Signs

A non-conforming sign or sign structure existing and in place as of the date of the enactment of this Article may continue to have the copy or message on the sign changed and may also have normal maintenance performed. However, a non-conforming sign existing on the day of enactment of this Chapter *shall not*:

- a. Be changed to another non-conforming sign;
- b. Be structurally altered so as to prolong the life of the sign or change the shape, size, location, type, or design of the sign;
- c. Be re-established after the activity, business, or use to which it relates has been discontinued for thirty (30) days or longer; or
- d. Be re-established after damage by any means if the damage is in excess of the State Equalized Value (SEV) of the sign, as determined from its most recent assessed valuation.

812. First Amendment Protection

The placement of directional signs, signs at entrances to residential developments, historical site signs, and flags is specifically authorized in this Ordinance. All other signs allowed under this Ordinance may contain any lawful message.