

April 2026

Sign Ordinance User Guide



Purpose

Anne Arundel County adopted a new sign ordinance in 2026. This guide provides graphic and explanatory information about different sign types and outlines how the adopted sign ordinance regulations apply to them. Information in this guide is intended to help individuals understand the sign regulations and how to apply them, however, the Code regulates signs and this document does not substitute or serve in place of the Code as written. Individuals are responsible for complying with all aspects of the Anne Arundel County Code including the sign ordinance, as well as other building and Zoning Code regulations.

Topics in the guide include:

- (1) Understanding the Sign Code
 - a. Illustrative Examples of Sign Types – Permanent Signs
 - b. Illustrative Examples of Sign Types – Temporary Signs
 - c. What are the different sections of the Sign Code?
- (2) Permits – When do I need to apply for a Sign Permit?
- (3) Sign Area Measurement – How do I measure my sign area?

Understanding the Sign Code

A. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF SIGN TYPES – PERMANENT SIGNS

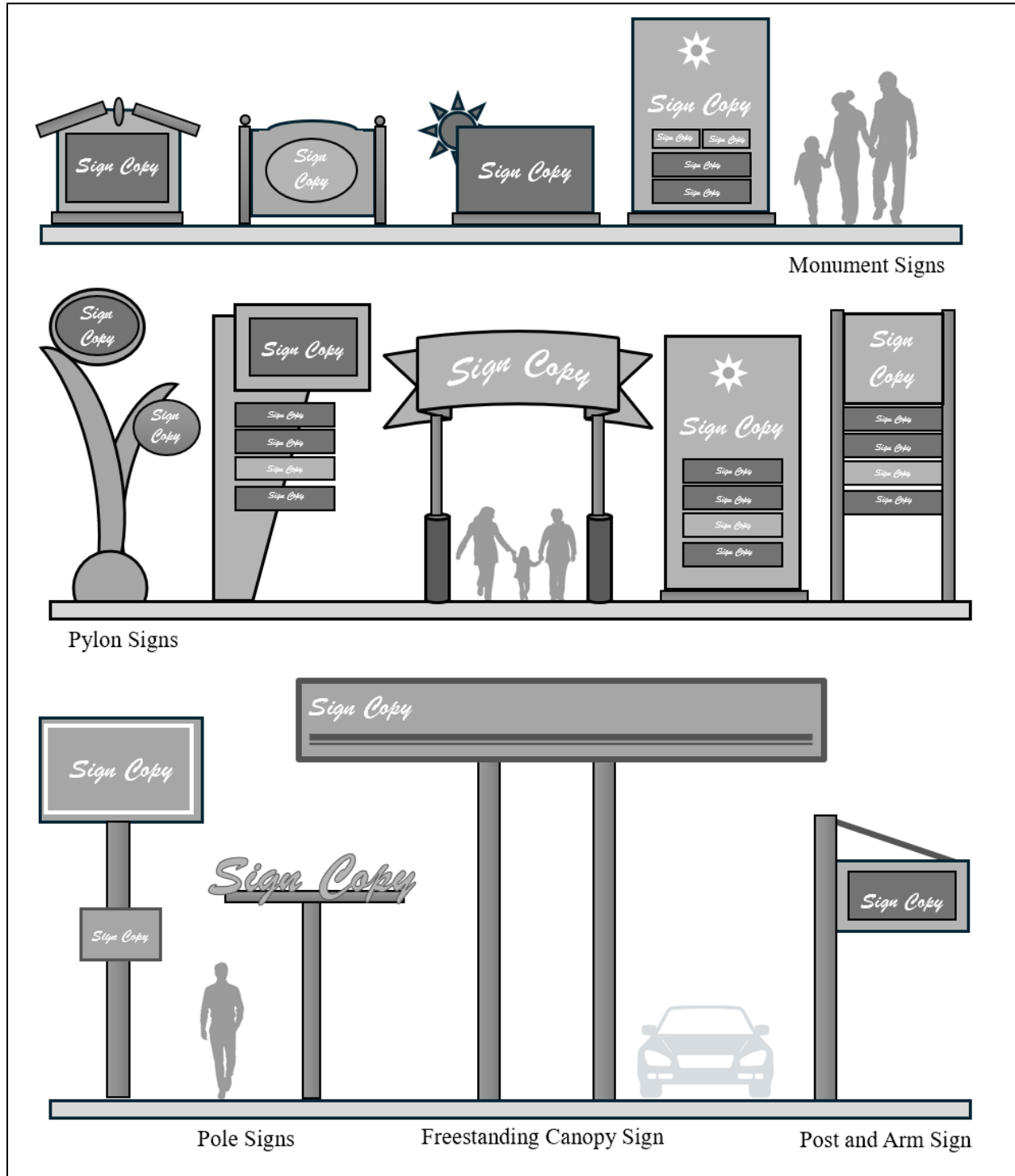


Figure A. Permanent freestanding sign types.

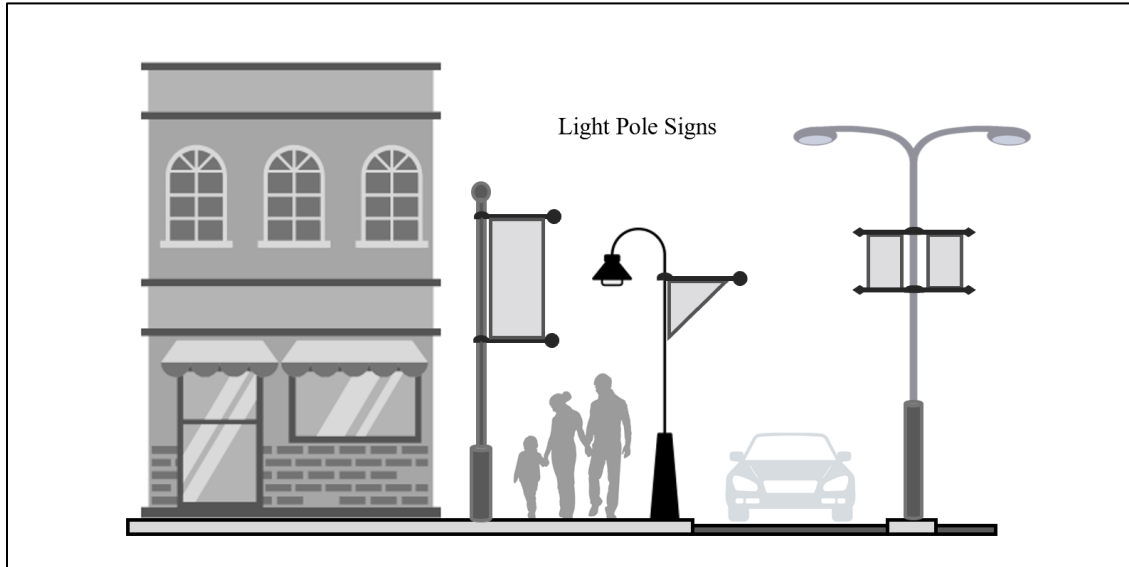


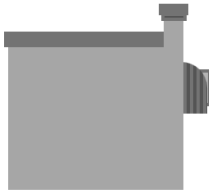
Figure B. Light pole signs are attached to light poles and other pole structures via brackets and other permanent mounting structures.



Figure C. Permanent building sign types include window signs and projecting signs. Note that not all building sign types are represented.

Roof-like Projections

Pent Eave Mount



side elevation



front elevation

Mansard Mount



side elevation



front elevation

Parapet Mount



side elevation



front elevation

Canopy Mount



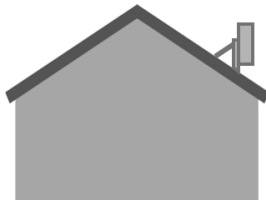
side elevation



front elevation

Prohibited Roof Signs

Sloping Roof
Mount



side elevation



front elevation

Projecting Above
Highest Roof Peak

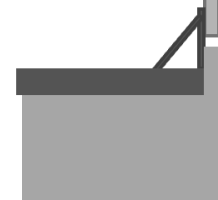


side elevation



front elevation

Flat Roof
Mount



side elevation



front elevation

Figure D. Roof-like Projections and Prohibited Roof Signs.



Figure E. Window signs include signs applied to the glass surface as well as interior signs hung or placed within 12 inches of the face of a window.

B. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF SIGN TYPES – TEMPORARY SIGNS

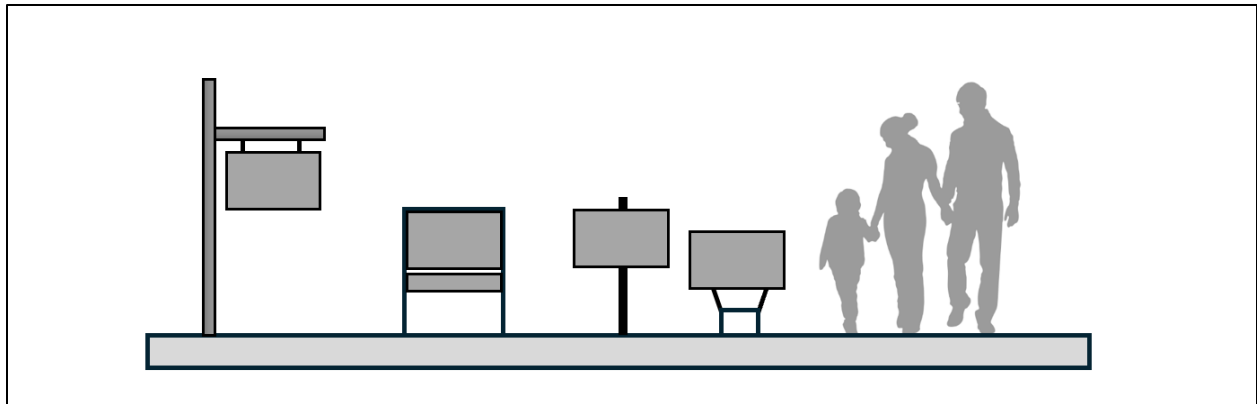


Figure F. Small Temporary Signs. These signs are usually designed to be viewed at close range. They are typically associated with (but not limited to) real estate transactions, political campaigns, event announcements, and a wide range of commercial and non-commercial speech.

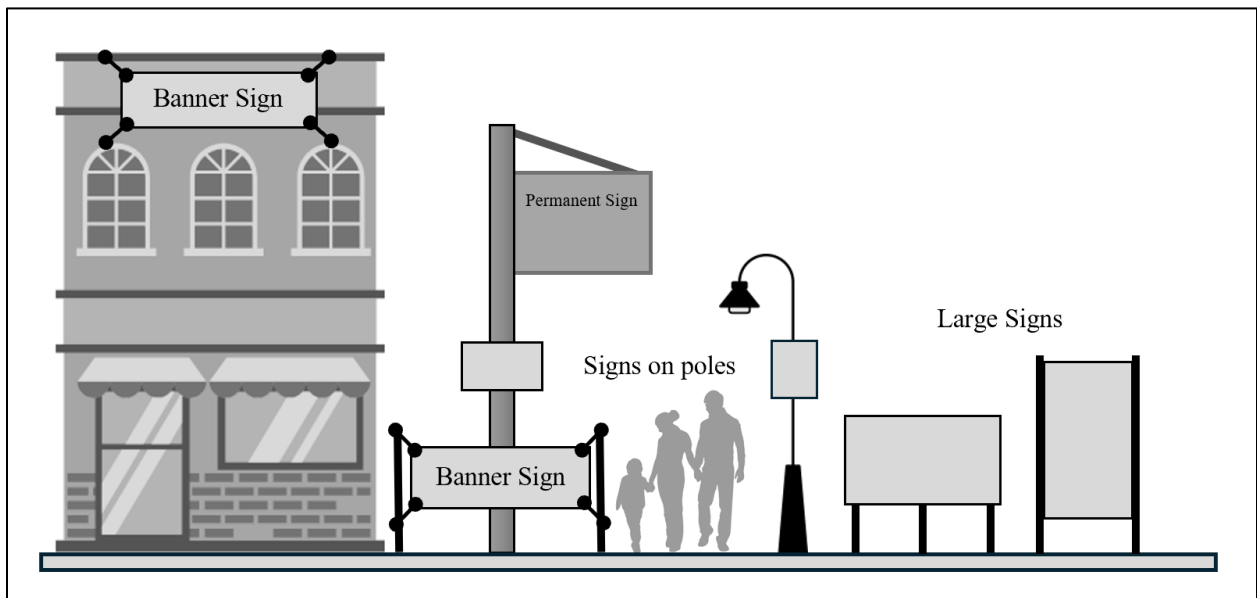


Figure G. Large temporary signs, temporary banner signs, and temporary signs placed on poles. Signs in this category consist of larger, temporary yard and/or wall signs intended to be viewed at close range and from a distance. They are typically associated with (but not limited to) real estate transactions, political campaigns, event announcements, and a wide range of commercial and non-commercial speech. Temporary signs attached to light poles or other pole structures are distinct from permanently attached light pole signs

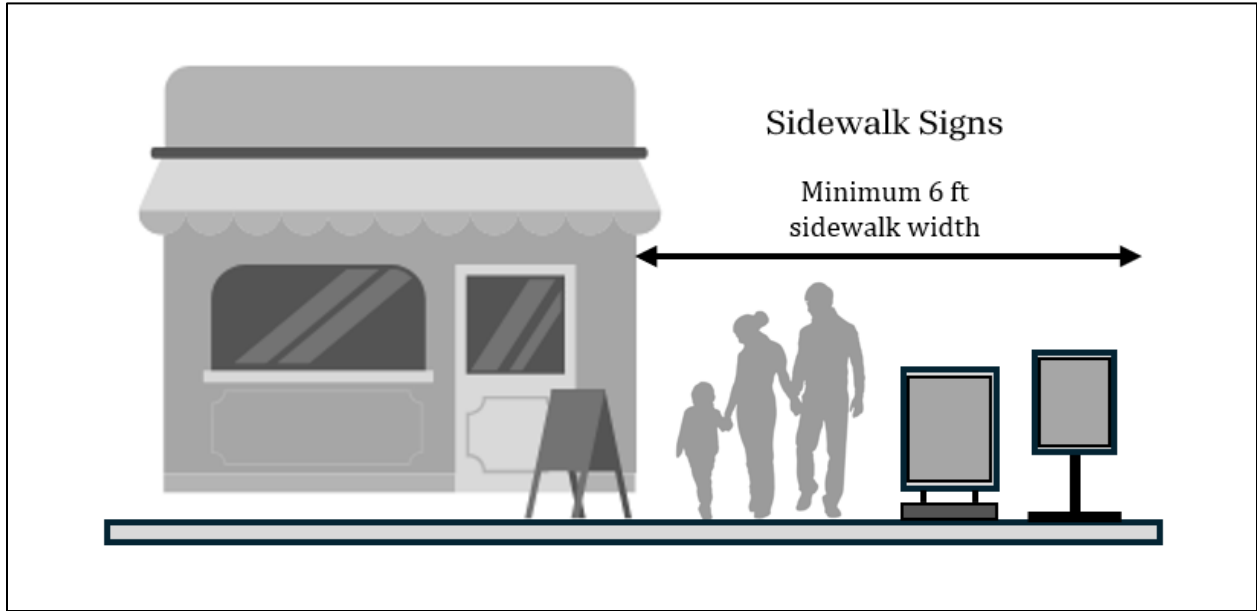


Figure H. Sidewalk signs.

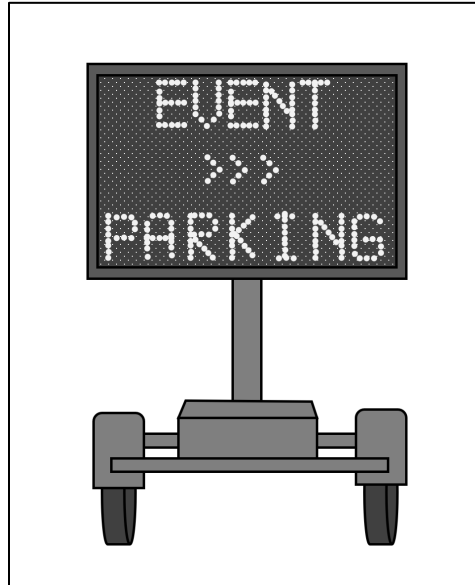


Figure I. Temporary Portable Message Center Sign.

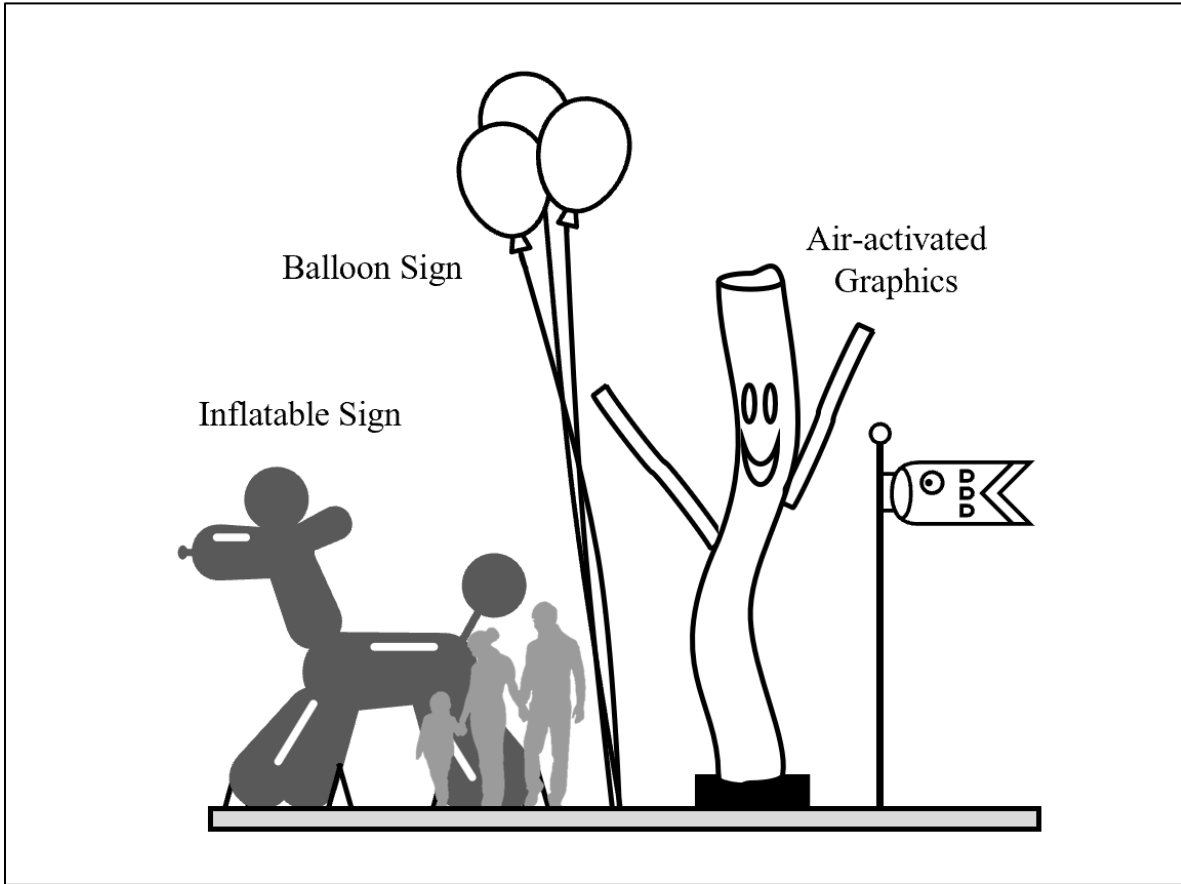


Figure J. Temporary air-activated graphic signs, inflatable signs, and balloon signs.

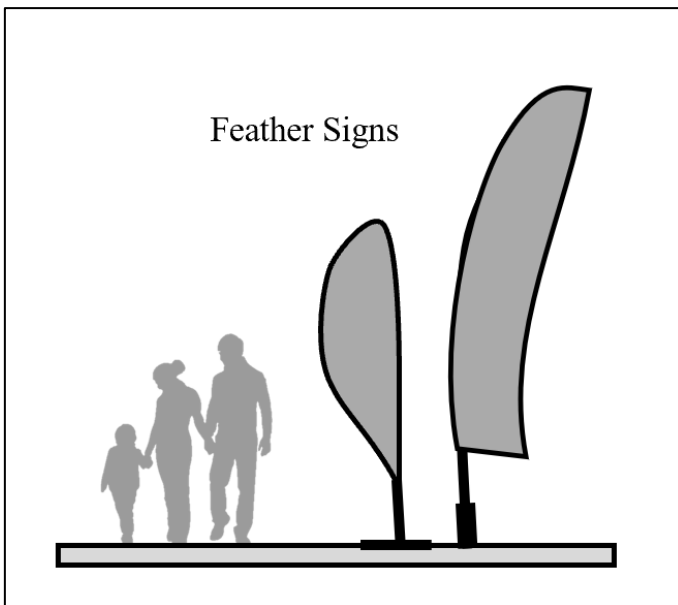


Figure K. Feather signs. Temporary air-activated graphic signs, inflatable signs, balloon signs as well as feather signs come in a variety of forms and are customarily associated with special events and commercial advertising.

c. SIGN CODE SECTIONS *The following provides a brief overview and explainer of different Sign Code sections.*

(1) **§ 18-3-301. Definitions**

These are the legal definitions of terms used in the sign ordinance. Not all terms are defined in the sign ordinance subtitle, and it is important to reference definitions found in the Zoning Code (Article 18), the Natural Resources Article of the State Code, Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), or in other Articles of the Anne Arundel County Code. If a term is not defined in Code, the common dictionary definition of those terms should be used. For questions on how a term or regulation is applied, contact the Zoning Administration Section at 410-222-7437.

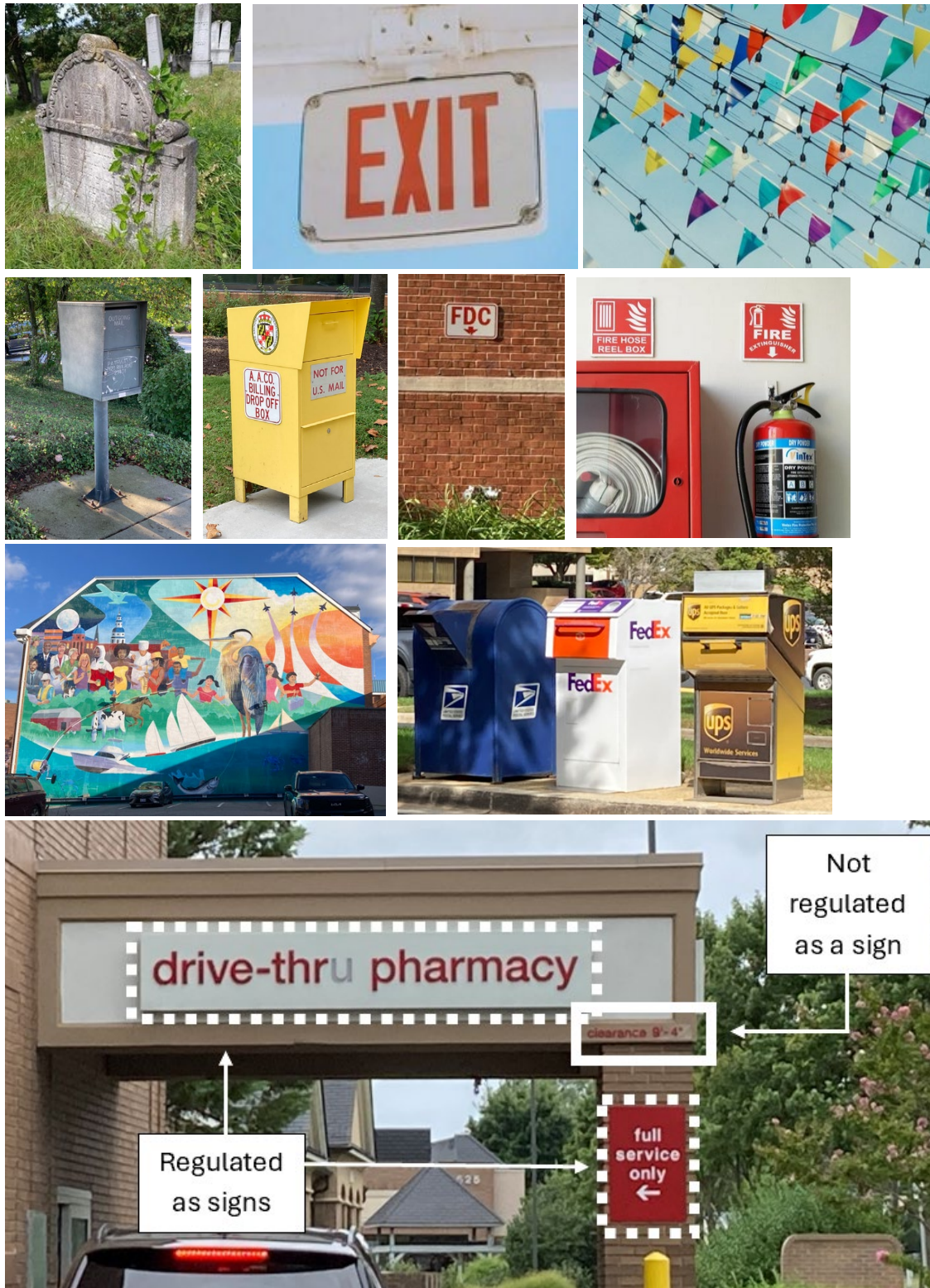
The overall definition of a “sign” is found in Article 18 Zoning [under § 18-1-101 Definitions](#), while sign type and other specific sign-related definitions are mostly located in [Subtitle 3. Signage](#). Some zoning districts may have unique sign regulations and terms, so be sure to check the regulations of your specific zoning district.

Is this a Sign?

Signage serves many different purposes and takes many forms. Because signs can be broadly defined as something that conveys a message through words or graphics, the County’s definition of a sign includes a list of objects that, while they convey a message, should not be regulated as signs under the County’s sign ordinance.

Per the Code, a “sign” means any writing, letter, or numeric work, pictorial presentation, illustration or decoration, emblem, device, symbol, trademark, banner, figure, or character, or any other device, fixture, placard or structure, including its component parts, utilized to advertise, announce, identify, or make known or attract attention”. A “sign” does not include graveyard and cemetery markers, clearance bars associated with a height restriction and other safety notices integral to an object’s purpose, vending machines, mail drop-off boxes, mailbox signs regulated by the United States Postal Service, flags, pennants, decorations, murals, artwork, a building’s architectural features, or a manufacturer or seller’s markings on machinery or equipment.”

Common objects that are not regulated as signs in Anne Arundel County:



(2) **§ 18-3-302 Purpose and Intent**

The purpose section of the sign ordinance outlines the reasons why the County has adopted a sign ordinance and the goals it aims to achieve through its sign regulations. No single purpose statement carries more weight than others in this section and they are not regulations of individual signs in and of themselves. Instead, the regulations of the Zoning Code and sign ordinance were adopted as a reasonable means to achieve and balance the many different goals outlined in this section.

(3) **§ 18-3-303 Scope**

The County understands that businesses and individuals have put time, money, and effort into legally erecting signage under prior regulations. It is not the intent that all signage in the County will instantly be able to comply with the new regulations, only that over time the intended outcomes of the regulations will be achieved as new signage is erected that complies with these regulations. Therefore, this section outlines the conditions under which permanent signage existing before the effective date of Bill 98-25 may legally remain or be altered. This section does not apply to temporary signage given that it is, by definition, supposed to be erected for a limited duration of time. Therefore, all temporary signage will need to comply with the sign ordinance regulations that govern temporary sign types.

(4) **§ 18-3-304 General Provisions Section**

This section lays out a list of general regulations that apply to all sign types in almost all scenarios. Reminder: it is important to look at the entirety of the Code sections to make sure your sign is complying with all applicable regulations.

(5) **§ 18-3-305 Exemptions**

For the most part, the County's interest in regulating signs is limited to exterior signage that has an impact on the public realm (what is visible from outside of a building) as this will help achieve the public purposes outlined in the purpose and intent section. Most interior signs, signs that are only visible from limited access/enclosed facilities or certain areas which are not visible from the public realm are exempt from the signage regulations. There are a limited number of exemptions outlined in the Code for exterior signage when that signage is needed to fulfill a necessary government function or comply with a federal, state, or local law. The following examples demonstrate some, but not all, of the specific signs that are exempt from the provisions of Subtitle 3:

Example 1: Address Signs.

[Under § 12-7-101. Display of address.](#) As a matter of public safety, the County requires all improved property to post a sign with the property's address and outlines the minimum design standards of those signs. Since this is a requirement of the County Code, these signs are exempt from the Sign Ordinance.

Example 2: Warning Signs.

Certain provisions of the County Code require that a property owner place conspicuous signage with certain content, of a certain size, at a specific location in order to legally comply with other rules and regulations for operating or managing their property. For instance, there are requirements for signage under [§ 11-16-402. Parking lot and private road owner and operator requirements.](#) In these circumstances, this signage is exempt from the Sign Ordinance.

Example 3: Safety Signs.

Under the Uniform Fire Code, there are requirements that certain fire protection equipment be marked with an approved sign or marking. It is also standard practice for there to be industry standard markings indicating hazard equipment. In instances where signage is required to comply with a government regulation, or the primary purpose of the signage is to convey safety information, such signs are not regulated as signage under Subtitle 3.

(6) **§ 18-3-306 Permit Requirements**

While signs that are not exempt from Subtitle 3 must comply with the regulations in the sign ordinance, not all signs need to go through an official permit review and approval process. Whether a permit is or is not required is determined by either the sign's physical size or location and not the sign's content. Most permanent signs will require a permit as the permit process includes reviewing the physical sign structure and ensuring that it complies with all applicable building regulations. This section lists those signs which do not need to receive a permit to be erected but individuals are still responsible for making sure they do not exceed the number, size allowances, or placement rules that govern these sign types. Additional information is provided in the Permit section of this guide as well as the Signage Program section.

(7) **§ 18-3-307 Prohibited Signs**

The County has determined that there are certain types of signs, or aspects of sign design, that are not compatible with the goals outlined in the purpose and intent

section of the sign ordinance. Therefore, this section lists the type of signs or sign design that are not permitted in the County. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

Example 1: Signs placed or painted on a vehicle with the primary purpose of providing signage. This vehicle has been parked at the same location for an extended period of time, is oriented toward a highway, and



advertises a commercial use occurring at a location adjacent to the lot on which it is parked. This situation suggests that the vehicle has been placed and painted to serve as an off-premise commercial advertising sign with a primary purpose to direct attention to an adjacent commercial use. This would be considered a prohibited sign since its primary purpose is providing signage not otherwise allowed in this Code.

Example 2: Blinking, flashing and strobing lights. Animated signage is allowed in the Code and is most noticeable in electronic message center signs or lighting associated with marquee signs. However, if the illumination elements of these signs are programmed to have a fast-paced repetitive on/off sequence, they may be



categorized as prohibited strobing, blinking, or flashing elements. This is more exactly defined in the definition section of Subtitle 3.; however, lighted elements should generally stay on for more than four seconds to avoid classification as a prohibited sign.

Example 3: Revolving and Whirling Signs. These signs rotate or spin, or have elements that rotate or spin, on a vertical or horizontal axis.



Billa Sign Picture Source: Robot8A, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Pink Elephant Car Wash Picture Source: Joe Mabel, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Example 4: Prohibited roof signs that extend over the highest peak of a roof structure. The distinction between roof signs and signs mounted on roof-like projections is also shown in the illustrative examples of permanent sign types.



(8) **§ 18-3-308 Measurement of Area and Height**

This section outlines the procedures for determining the size and height of a sign, depending on what type of sign it is and the context where it will be installed. A more detailed explanation and illustrative examples are found in the section of this guide dedicated to Sign Area Measurement.

(9) **§ 18-3-309 Permanent Signs**

(A) through (C.) - Given the variety of different signs and their distinct visual impacts, there are different regulations that govern the total number, size, location, and manner of installation for each of these sign types. These regulations are primarily based on the physical characteristics and locational setting of these sign types and not their content or function. In general, two location-based regulations apply to all permanent signs:

- 1) Commercial signage should be installed within the property boundaries where the corresponding commercial use is occurring. However, it is common for

business complexes and development sites to be made up of multiple small parcels or lots. These types of development also typically consolidate signage for multiple commercial tenants at the entrance points or along the road frontage on the perimeter of such sites. Consolidation of signage helps to limit visual clutter along County roads and is a major goal of the sign ordinance regulations. Therefore, so long as the commercial use occurs in the same business complex or development that its corresponding sign is also located in, the regulations do not consider these commercial signs to be off-site signs if they are located on different lots or parcels in the same complex or development.

- 2) Unless otherwise stated in the Code, all freestanding signs should be set back a minimum of two feet from the traveled surface of any road, bicycle, or pedestrian area. This is to ensure that the signs do not physically impede the ability of people to safely move within the transportation network. Additional setback requirements may apply depending on the specific zoning district where the sign is being erected or the specific sign type.

(D.) Light Pole Signs. The defining characteristic of Light Pole Signs is that they are mounted to pole-like structures with permanent mounting brackets. Unlike Pole and Pylon signs, Light Pole Signs are generally smaller, often utilize banner signs, and are usually attached to pole structures associated with a purpose or use other than signage. Although the sign copy content of these signs may change frequently, they are distinct from temporary signs where the entire sign/sign structure should be erected and removed after a short duration. These signs may be appropriately used in a wide variety of different environments including street corridors, large parking lots, or site entrances. Given this variety in application, there is no limit on the number of such signs for a given lot or parcel; however, there are restrictions on the size and total number of such signs that are allowed on individual pole structures.

It is also important to note that not all pole structures are designed to handle the weight and wind load effects that such signage place on the pole structure. In particular, most standard street light poles are not designed for this purpose which is why such signs are not permitted to be installed on County owned or maintained utility or light poles unless specifically authorized. Before installing such signage on existing poles, it is important to check whether the pole structures are able to support such signage.

The following are examples of signs that would be categorized as light pole signs:



Upper right-most corner picture source: Best Practices in Regulating Temporary Signs by Wendy E. Moeller, AICP, Published by Sign Research Foundation, 2015

(E.) General Standards for building signs. This section includes three regulations that apply to all signs mounted on a building. It explains which signs count toward the total amount of signage permitted for any single building (sign area) and how signage on awnings should be located to be considered awning signs. Signs mounted on buildings near traveled road surfaces need to be sufficiently setback from the road for safety reasons. However, certain signs, such as drive thru signage and suspended signs from

canopy structures, can be placed within this setback limit so long as the vertical clearance between the roadway and the sign is sufficient to allow for safe passage of vehicles. Vertical clearance heights are generally established in the applicable roadway design manuals and are not specified in the Sign Code.

(F.) Projecting Signs. There are several regulations that govern where projecting signs may be located on the façade of a building in relation to each other, the buildings surrounding environment and with respect to the building’s occupancy. These regulations are intended to work for a variety of different environments including small-scale pedestrian-oriented commercial corridors such as traditional downtown settings as well as more suburban, vehicle-oriented spaces. All of the projecting signs erected on a building count toward the total overall sign allowance for that building. Before applying for a sign permit, applicants should inventory the existing or proposed number and location of signs on their building to determine where a projecting sign can be located and its overall allowable size. Some examples of projecting signs are included below:



(G.) Window Signs. Window signs are considered a unique sign type because of the great variety of sign material and mounting methods. They do not count towards the total allowable sign area for a building. Instead, there are restrictions on the total area of the window that can be covered or obstructed by installed or displayed signage in

any given window. Interior signage is generally exempt from the Sign Code; however, signs hung within twelve inches of a window are considered window signs and are not exempt from the Sign Code regulations. Please note that decorative finishes and construction techniques associated with glass buildings, such as spandrel glass, are considered architectural elements of a building and not signage unless they are designed to serve as a display surface. Examples of window sign types:



Note that the window signage examples shown below exceed the 50% coverage limit and do not comply with the Sign Code.



The following example would not be considered a window sign although it is mounted on the façade of a building made up of windows. This “Weis” sign would be considered and measured as a “wall” sign and would count towards the overall building signage allowance.



(H.) Drive Thru or Service Window Signage. Because the consumer activity associated with drive-thru and window services occur exterior to buildings, these uses often require additional exterior signage. The Code allows for a certain amount of additional total sign area per drive thru lane or window service. Establishments typically incorporate menu board, advertising, and identification signage in their drive thru lanes; however, this additional allowance is not regulated by content or purpose other than that it must directly relate to the drive-thru lane and is restricted by the same on-site commercial signage requirements applicable to all commercial signage.



Picture Source: <https://sprintervanusa.com/2016/10/26/how-tall-are-we-how-long-are-we/#gsc.tab=0>

(I.) Directional Signs. The County has determined that there is a compelling government interest in allowing onsite directional signs as necessary to ensure efficient and safe navigation which may be essential to guide pedestrian and vehicular traffic on a particular site. Given that each development site is unique and may best be served by a different number or placement of directional signage, there is no limit to

the number of smaller directional signs which may be erected on any particular lot. It is recommended that directional signs be utilized at decision points in the transportation network internal to a site. Directional signs which are larger than four square feet require a permit to ensure that their location complies with all applicable regulations in the County Code. Unlike other provisions of this Code, regulations governing directional signage do look at the content of signs to determine if they are, in fact, primarily serving as directional signage.



- (10) **§ 18-3-310 Electronic Message Centers.** Electronic Message Centers can be programmed to display a variety of different sign copy messages; however, if messages change too frequently or the illumination setting of these sign types is not correctly calibrated, they can adversely impact driver safety and adjacent property owners. Therefore, the total number of signs allowed on any frontage is restricted. The dwell time, or the time that a unique message must remain unchanged as well as the transition speed between messages is regulated. And finally, these signs must be able to adjust their illumination in real-time to ensure they are not over-bright.



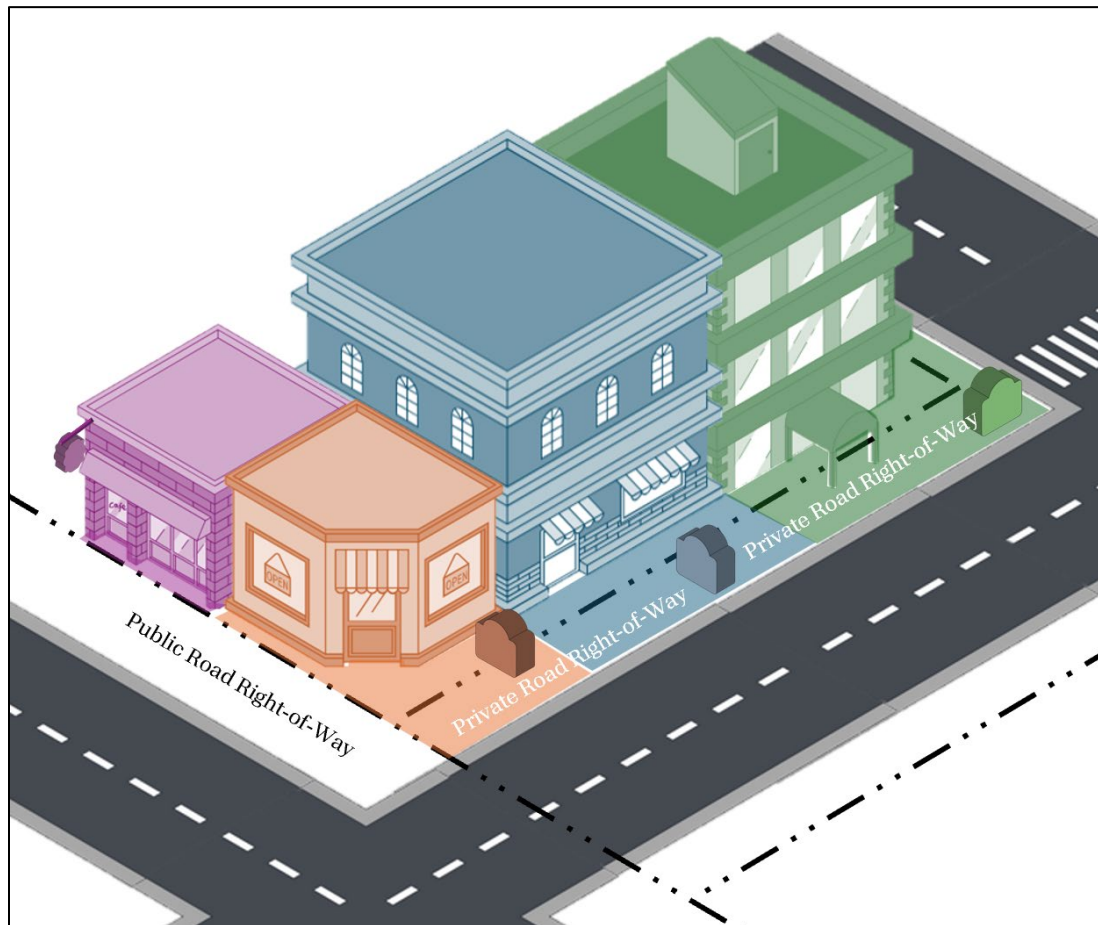
(11) **§ 18-3-311 Signs in County or Private Rights-of-Way.**

Permanent Signs. For the most part, signs should be located within the property lines of the property owner erecting or allowing for the erection of a sign. In certain zoning districts, buildings may be located directly on the property boundary line or so near it that signs attached to that building are likely to project over the boundary line. This is known as zero lot line development. When the adjacent property is a private or County right-of-way, this section provides some additional regulations on how such signage may be installed. There are other circumstances, such as community entrance signs, where the County may approve of private signs being located in the County right-of-way. The process for requesting and reviewing such requests goes through the Department of Public Works.

Questions? Please contact the Department of Public Works Bureau of Highways at:
[\(410\) 222-7321](tel:4102227321) or
hwyscustomercare@aacounty.org
www.aacounty.org/public-works/highways

Diagram Example: In the diagram below, four individual lots are located in a zoning district that allows for zero lot line development. The stores facing a private right-of-way have received permission from the private entity that maintains the private roadway to install permanent freestanding signage in the private right-of-way. Although not restricted to the same lot as the corresponding commercial land use, these signs must be located between the traveled roadway and the frontage of the commercial land use to which the sign corresponds to be considered on-site commercial signage. The property facing the public right-of-way received permission

from the County Department of Public Works to install a permanent building sign that projects into this right-of-way. Note that the sign still maintains the necessary setback from the roadway and is solely supported by the building.



Temporary Signs. The County recognizes that the public right-of-way is a common location for individuals to communicate via small signs and there is a community expectation that such space is available for this use. Both commercial entities and residents utilize such spaces for advertising weekend events, yard sales, political signs, open houses, and conveying a wide variety of other information. The County does not regulate the content of any temporary sign placed in the right-of-way; however, the Code does restrict the size, height, installation method, placement, and times when such signs may be installed. These limits balance road safety and adverse conditions such as litter and visual clutter while allowing for community use of the right-of-way. Be sure to double-check the Code, but generally, any temporary sign, including commercial signs, can be placed in the public right-of-way over the weekend (Friday-Sunday). Signs should be small (no larger than 3 square feet) and should not be installed taller than four feet. Make sure to place signs securely, ensure they can

support themselves, and are at least three feet away from the road, sidewalk, or bicycle pathway to keep travelers safe.

(12) **§ 18-3-312 Temporary Signs on Private Property.**

Depending on the specific temporary sign type, there are different regulations that govern the total number, size, location, manner of installation and length of time a temporary sign may be erected. These sections lay out regulations that apply to different specific temporary sign types. Refer to the definition section of the Code and the illustrative examples of this guide to determine what type of sign you are erecting and then make sure you follow the specific regulations for that type of sign as well as the general provisions that apply to all temporary signs.

(A.) through (D.) Scope and General Provisions; Material; Condition of Temporary Signs; Location. Similar to other general provisions, these sections outline regulations that apply to all temporary signs installed on private property. For the most part, temporary signs should not have an internal light source. They should be appropriately self-supported by either a freestanding stake or frame designed for this purpose or be otherwise secured so as to not easily fall over and become litter. Most signs need to be installed at least six feet away from the road, sidewalk, or pathway or adjacent residential property so that signage does not impede safe travel or unduly impact neighbors. Some types of temporary signs require a greater setback.

By definition, temporary signs are not intended to be displayed permanently and are generally not made to withstand long-term installation. Smaller temporary signs do not have a set time when they must be removed once installed; however, once they are no longer in good condition, they should be removed. Other types of temporary signs may only be installed for a specific length of time, therefore, any temporary sign larger than 4.5 square feet as well as air-activated graphic signs, inflatable signs, balloon signs, and feather signs should have the date of installation written on the sign.

What kind of temporary signs may I use?

This depends on your land use and your zoning district. If you are a residential property with less than twelve dwelling units, then you may only utilize eight small temporary signs per unit at any given time. If you are a non-residential use, are a mixed-use development, or are a multifamily dwelling, then you are not restricted to using only small temporary signs. Instead, you may utilize any assortment of different

temporary sign types with each sign counting towards a total cap of no more than 144 square feet of temporary signage overall for the entire property. There are additional limits as to the total amount and size of specific temporary signs so be sure to confirm how many of each and how large these signs can be.

How does this apply to me if I rent an apartment or own a condo?

Individual residential dwelling units in a multi-use or multi-family building are allotted the eight small sign allowance if the signs are installed in or on the dwelling unit area (for example in the windows or balcony or designated unit outdoor space). The owner of the multi-family building would be allowed up to 144 square feet of signage for the entire site.

(E.) Property Listed for Sale or Lease or Under Construction. Properties that are under construction or are for sale or lease are permitted one additional large temporary sign on each frontage of their property while actively under construction or marketed for sale or lease. These signs may be up to twelve square feet in size in residential zoning districts while properties in nonresidential zoning districts are permitted up to thirty-six square feet. When the property is no longer actively under construction or for sale or lease, this additional signage is no longer permitted.

(F.) Temporary One-Time Event Signs. To reduce the amount of outdated, abandoned, or confusing signage that may be erected in association with a one-time event, the Code imposes a more limited time restriction on signs used to direct or inform when those signs are associated with a specific limited-duration event with distinct timeframes. These signs may only be installed for sixty days before the event and should be removed no later than seven days after the event. This applies only to temporary signage posted on private property and on-site requirements do apply. Please see the section on temporary signs in the right-of-way for applicable regulations for that location.

The following examples help demonstrate how this regulation could apply to different scenarios but should not be considered a definitive guide as each circumstance would need to be individually assessed based on available information. Note that in most of these examples, the event dates are included in the sign message; however, this regulation does not discriminate based on topic or subject and this information need not be included in the sign message itself to qualify as a specific limited-duration event when that information can readily be assessed via other means. For example, an

“event parking” sign associated with a known or advertised single one-time event occurring over one weekend should be removed within seven days of that event’s conclusion, but the same sign associated with multiple weekend events over the course of a summer festival at an event venue may remove the sign at the conclusion of the last event of the festival.

Examples of One-Time Event Signs	Examples of Signs NOT considered One-Time Event Signs
 <p>Picture Source: Tony Webster from Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States, CC BY 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>, via Wikimedia Commons</p> <p>The “vote here” sign is associated with a specific election event and voting time period with distinct start and stop dates and should only be posted 60 days before the start of voting at this location for that election.</p>	 <p>Picture Source: {{subst:usernameexpand Seth_1ly}}, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons</p> <p>Signs erected by individuals in support of a specific political candidate are not considered one-time event signs, even if that candidate may or may not be associated with an upcoming or past one-off election event, as there is neither a start nor end-date on expressing support for political figures.</p>
 <p>Yard Sale Sign Source: Rick Obst, CC BY 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>, via Wikimedia Commons</p> <p>A reasonable individual would clearly assess that this yard sale sign is associated with a distinct one-time event.</p>	 <p>Picture Source: Anna Hanks from Austin, Texas, USA, CC BY 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>, via Wikimedia Commons</p> <p>This sign, however, is not <u>clearly</u> associated with a one-time event and should not be restricted by the one-time event durational limits.</p>

Examples of One-Time Event Signs



Picture Source: John Phelan, CC BY 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons



Picture Source: Marathon sign by Jonathan Billinger, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons



Picture Source: Ludlow Food Festival sign by Oast House Archive, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

These signs are all clearly associated with limited-duration events with distinct timeframes.

Examples of Signs NOT considered One-Time Event Signs



Picture Source: Direction sign for the Royal Parks Half Marathon starts by Rod Allday, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Although associated with a festival, this sign is not clearly associated with a specific limited-duration event with a distinct timeframe.

(G.) Small Temporary Signs. Given their smaller size and lower installation height, small temporary signs are allowed in all zoning districts and may be installed closer to traveled road, sidewalk, and pathway surfaces. Common examples of small temporary signs include:



(H.) Large Temporary Signs and Temporary Banner Signs. There are unique durational, size, and locational limits that apply to these sign types. In general, these signs are not compatible with most residential uses, except multi-family dwellings. The allowable size of the signs themselves is determined by the property’s zoning district, regardless of the property use, with each individual large temporary sign’s maximum size being more restrictive in residential districts with greater allowances for properties with larger frontage lengths. Regardless, these signs count towards the total amount of temporary sign area each property is permitted.

On a per-lot basis, only one freestanding large temporary sign is permitted and only one large temporary sign is permitted to be located on a wall. However, each establishment in a building with multiple establishments may also utilize a large temporary sign on the wall of their building. Large temporary signs should only be erected a maximum of one hundred and eighty days in a given year. Examples of this sign type include:



(I.) Temporary Signs Attached to Poles. Unlike Light Pole Signs, these signs are not installed via a permanent bracket mounting system. No more than one sign may be placed on a single pole and the total sign area of all such signs cannot exceed thirty-six square feet per lot or parcel. Examples include:



(J.) Sidewalk Signs. Each nonresidential establishment may utilize one sidewalk sign directly in front of their establishment and only during business hours. These signs may not be larger than twelve square feet or taller than four feet. Sidewalk signs may only be utilized if the sidewalk area is at least six feet wide and need to be placed so as not to prevent usage of the sidewalk. They may not be placed in landscaped areas.



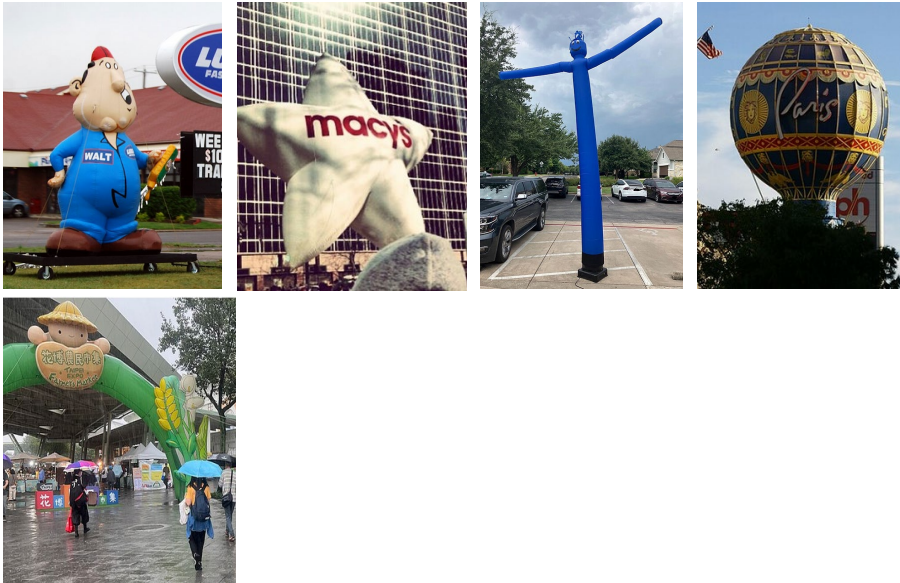
Note that the placement location of the example sign to the immediate left would not be permitted as it impedes pedestrian use of the sidewalk and is located on a sidewalk of insufficient width.

(K.) Portable Message Centers. The same illumination and programming requirements that apply to Electronic Message Centers also apply to these temporary sign types. Only



one is permitted per lot and they may only be utilized up to four times a year for a fourteen-day period. Reminder that these regulations apply to private use on private property and do not apply to traffic management or road construction situations where this sign type may or may not be located in the right-of-way in association with such work.

(L.) Temporary Air-Activated Graphic Signs, Inflatable Signs, and Balloon Signs. While these sign types do not count toward the total per-lot temporary sign area allowance, the total number of these signs that may be used at any given time is restricted. The Code specifies the setback, height, and durational limits that apply to these sign types and it is important to note that additional setback distance may be required to ensure that these signs do not cause hazards if they deflate.



(M.) Feather Signs. Also known as blade signs and teardrop signs, they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. In general, these signs are not compatible with most residential uses, except multi-family dwellings or mixed-use development. The Code restricts their maximum width and the signs must be spaced apart from each other the same distance as their height. The number of these signs permitted on a property depends on its road frontage. They may not be used for more than four consecutive 45-day periods in a single year.



(13) § 18-3-313 through § 18-3-320 Zoning District and Use Specific Regulations

In addition to the overall regulations that apply to different types of signage, there are regulations that apply depending on where that sign is located, either the zoning district or the land use. These sections primarily outline the total number of signs that are allowed on a property, how many or the size of signs that can be located along the same property line or a building’s side, and any regulations that are unique to that district or land use category.

(14) § 18-3-321 Signage Programs

For some large-scale development projects, it may be more appropriate to create more detailed or unique sign regulations that apply only to that specific

development. This is known as a sign program. Developments in Mixed-use and Town Center zoning districts, Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and Business Complexes on 10 acres or more are eligible for a sign program. If the property/project is eligible and if the developer or property owner takes the initiative to propose a sign program for their site, they will need to follow the guidance provided in the model signage program submission package and submit an application demonstrating how the sign program achieves the required elements.

Questions? Please contact the Office of Planning and Zoning, Zoning Administration Section at: [410-222-7437](tel:410-222-7437) or www.aacounty.org/planning-and-zoning/zoning-administration

Permits

Although most permanent signs will require a permit, some sign types, such as temporary signs, are exempt from the permitting process. Regardless of whether a permit is or is not required, all signs in the County must comply with the regulations outlined in the sign ordinance unless exempted under § 18-3-305. This guide is focused on helping

the user understand those regulations but will not cover all the steps necessary to submit a sign permit application. Permit applications are submitted to the Department of Inspections and Permits through either the online portal or in person at the Permit Center.

Questions? Please contact the Department of Inspections and Permits at: (410)222-7730 or ipmailbox@aacounty.org www.aacounty.org/inspections-and-permits

The Permit Center is located at:
2664 Riva Road, Heritage Office Complex
Annapolis, MD 21401

ERECTING OR RELOCATING A SIGN – DO I NEED A PERMIT? HOW LARGE CAN MY SIGN BE?

Step 1: Determine your Sign Category and Sign Type

Each individual property, dwelling unit, or non-residential establishment is permitted a certain amount of signage (both the total number of signs and the size of those signs) depending on their zoning designation and the sign type. Depending on your circumstances, where, how much, how long, and what type of signage you are allowed

to erect will be different. The goal of the regulations is to allow everyone an opportunity to communicate with signage while making sure that the signs are regulated appropriately given their specific time, manner, and place circumstances. Questions to ask yourself:

- Is this a “sign” under the definition of a sign in the Code? Is it an exempted sign?
- Is your sign a permanent or temporary sign?
- Will the sign be erected on your property?
- Is your sign a building or a freestanding sign?
- What is the zoning district of the property? Which regulations should apply?

Step 2: Determine the maximum allowable sign area you are allowed.

- (1) Determine the total number of signs you are allowed based on your use and zoning district by referencing § 18-3-313 through § 18-3-320 Zoning District and Use Specific Regulations. Remember to double check the general provisions and sign specific requirements as well.
- (2) How large any single sign is will depend on the type of sign and the appropriate method used to measure its area. You will need to determine how large your sign is allowed to be based in part on its design. Some portions of the sign structure used to install your sign are not considered part of the display area and are not counted toward to allowable sign area. Utilize the guidance under the “How to Measure the Sign Area” section of the guide and reference § 18-3-308 Measurement of Area and Height of the Code to determine how large your sign is.

Step 3: If required, submit your permit application to the Department of Inspections and Permits. Submittal requirements, forms, fees and other information is available at <https://www.aacounty.org/inspections-and-permits/permits/non-residential-permits/sign-permit>.

How to Measure the Sign Area

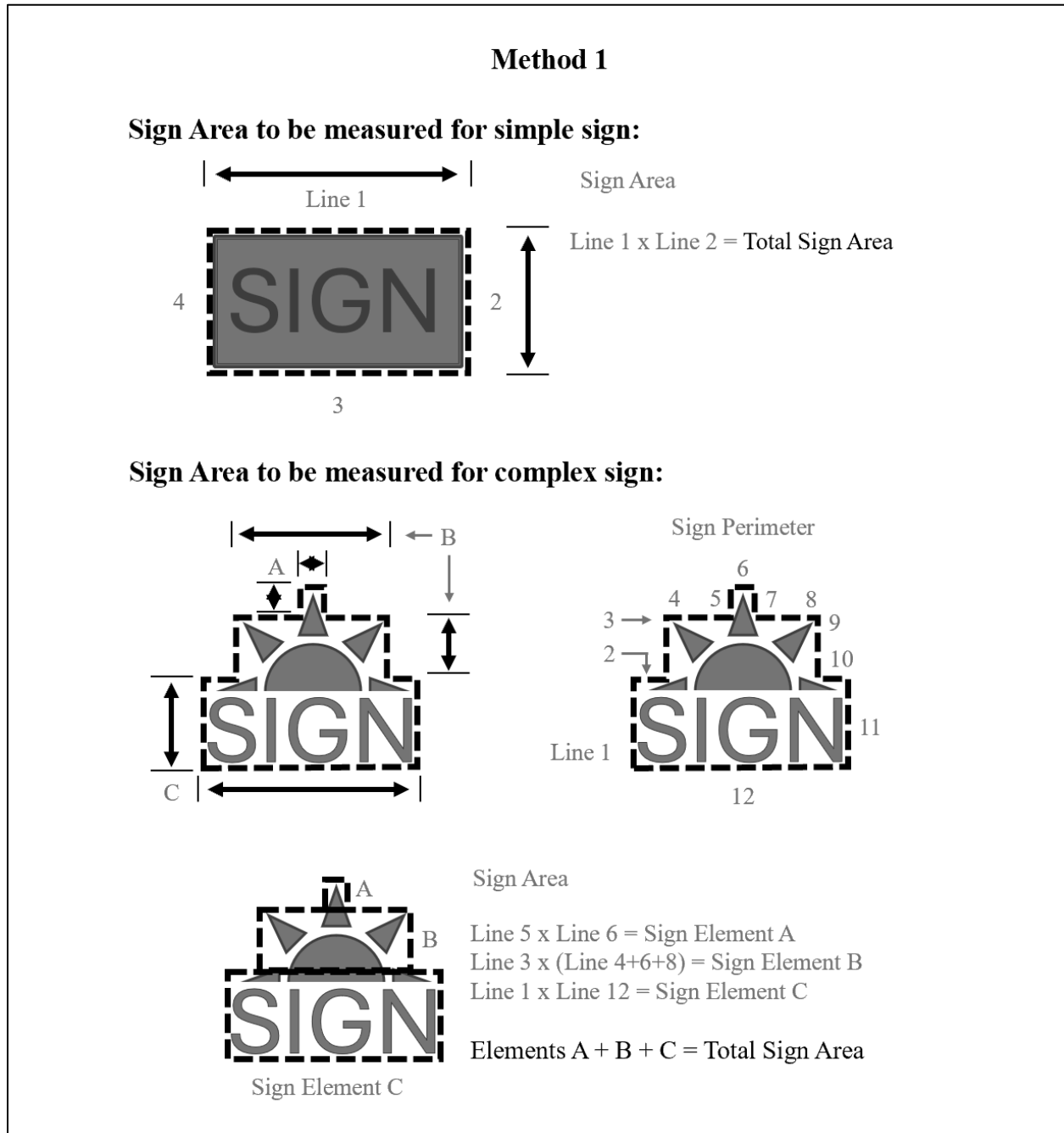
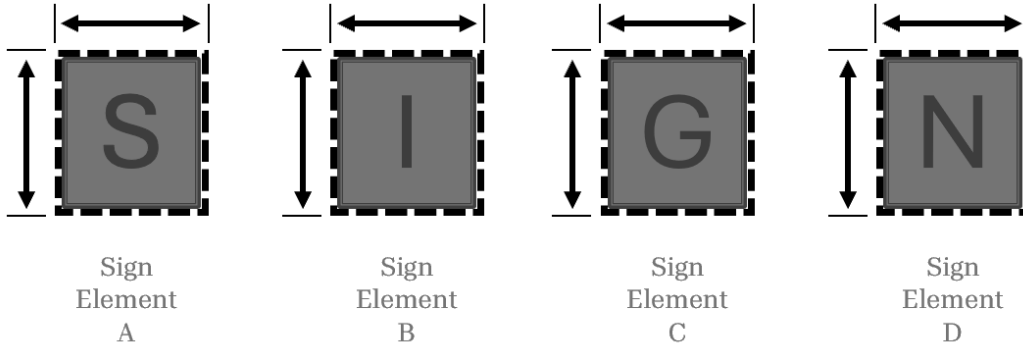


Figure L. Sign Area Measurement Method 1 (§ 18-3-308(c)(1)). Method 1: Calculated as the area within a single continuous rectilinear perimeter of not more than 12 straight lines intersecting at right angles enclosing the outer limits of the sign copy or sign face.

Method 2

Sign Area to be measured:

Elements A + B + C + D = Total Sign Area



Sign Area to be measured:

Elements A + B + C + D + E = Total Sign Area

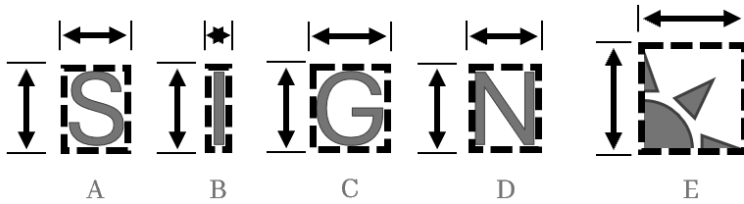


Figure M. Sign Area Measurement Method 2 (§ 18-3-308(c)2). Method 2: Calculated as the sum of each individual sign element enclosed in a four-sided rectangle. Used when the space between the elements is greater than the width of the widest sign element.

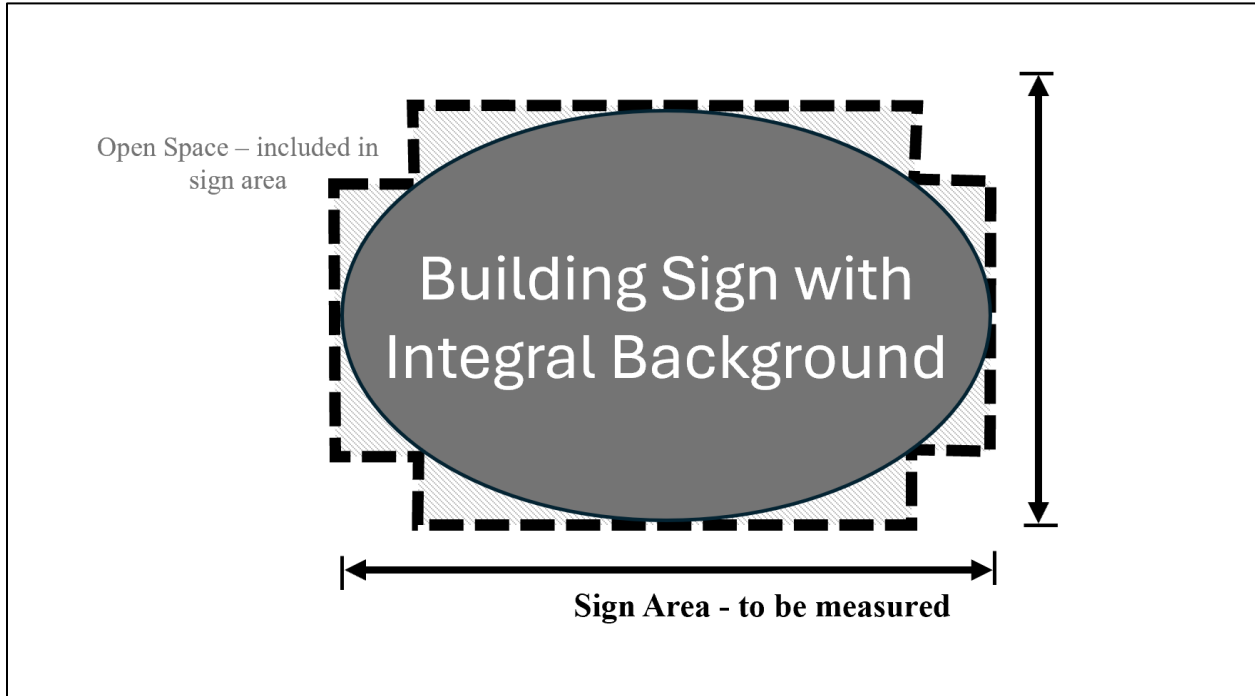


Figure N. Building sign with background as integral element of sign. In this example, the sign area is measured by a continuous rectilinear perimeter of not more than 12 straight lines intersecting at right angles enclosing the outer limits of a sign face.

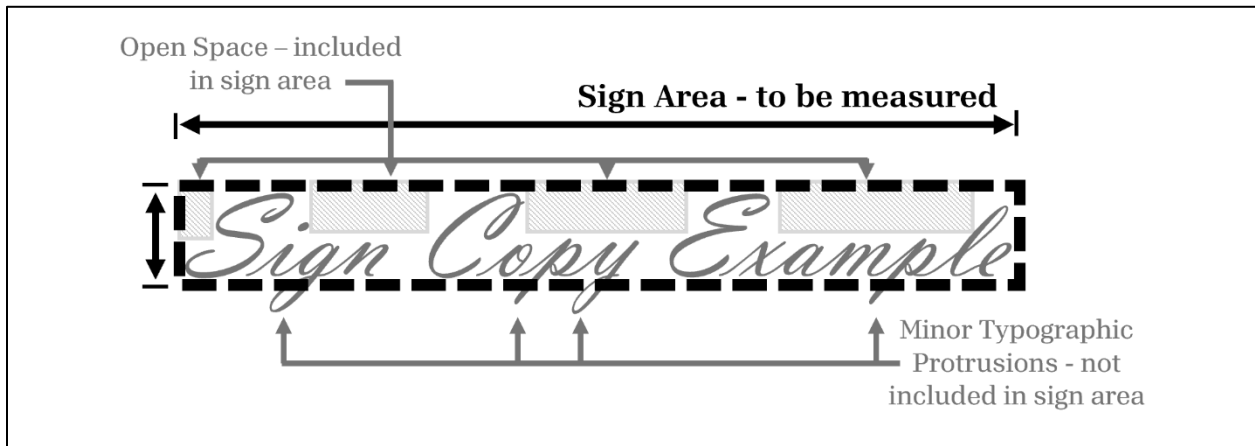


Figure O. Building sign area without an integral sign area background that excludes minor typographic protrusions.

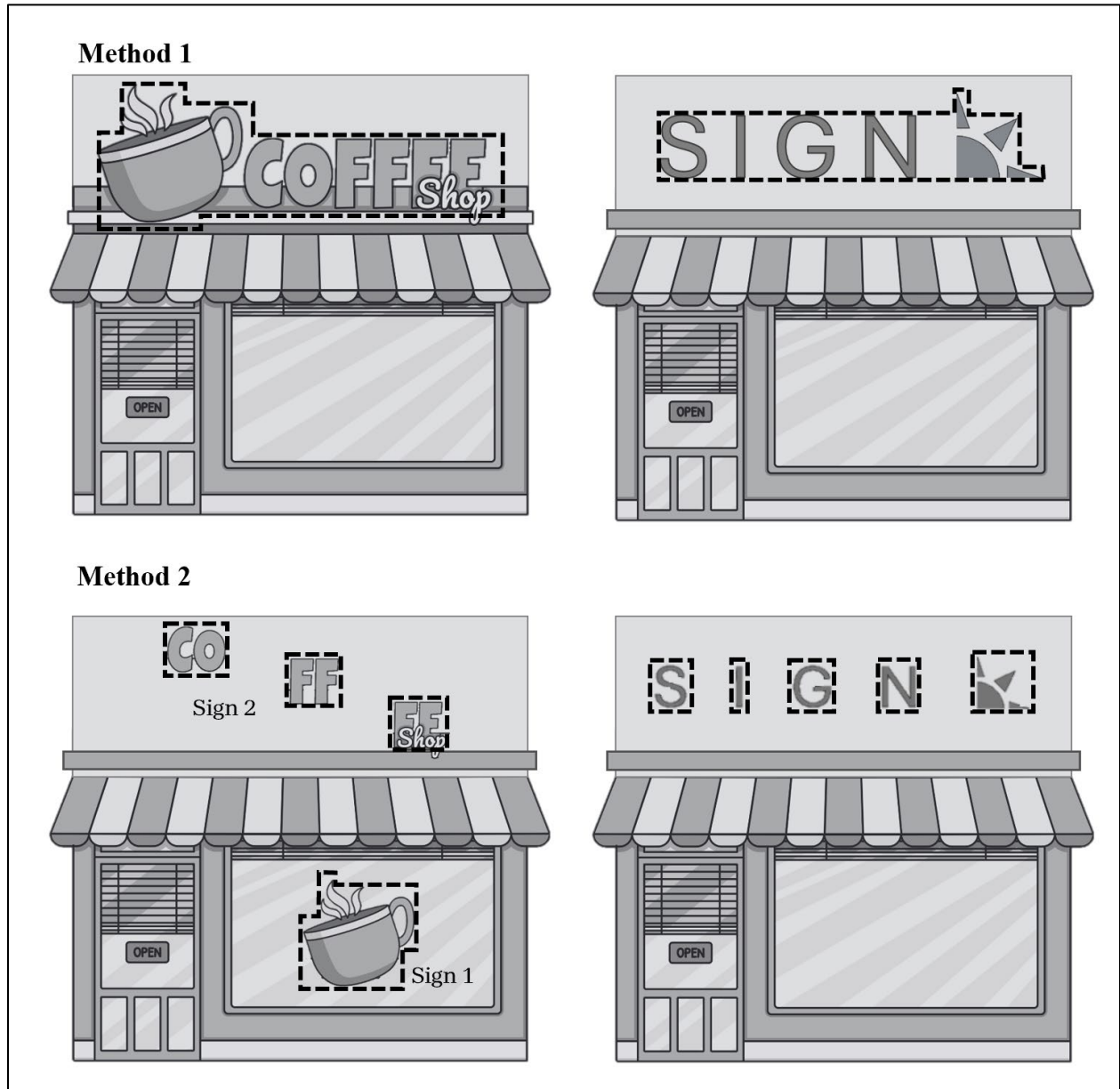


Figure P. Further measurement illustration. Note that the width of the component parts relative to other elements of the sign is a determining factor of whether Method 1 or Method 2 should be used.

Method 1

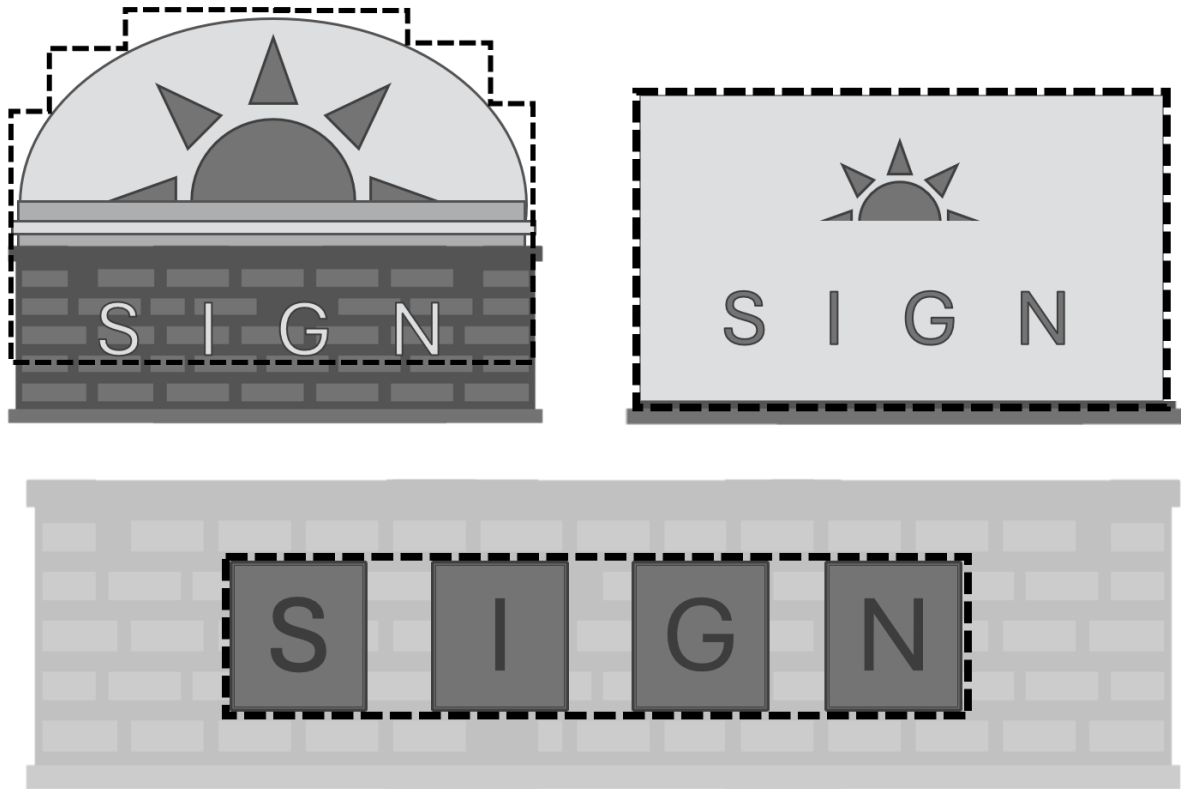


Figure Q. Freestanding sign measurement Method 1 (§ 18-3-308(c)(1)). In this example, Method 1 applied to freestanding monument signs. Note that decorative walls are not included as sign area unless they constitute a display surface. For freestanding signs, as in the upper right-most sign, the entire sign face is considered a display surface based on the design and materials used.

Method 1

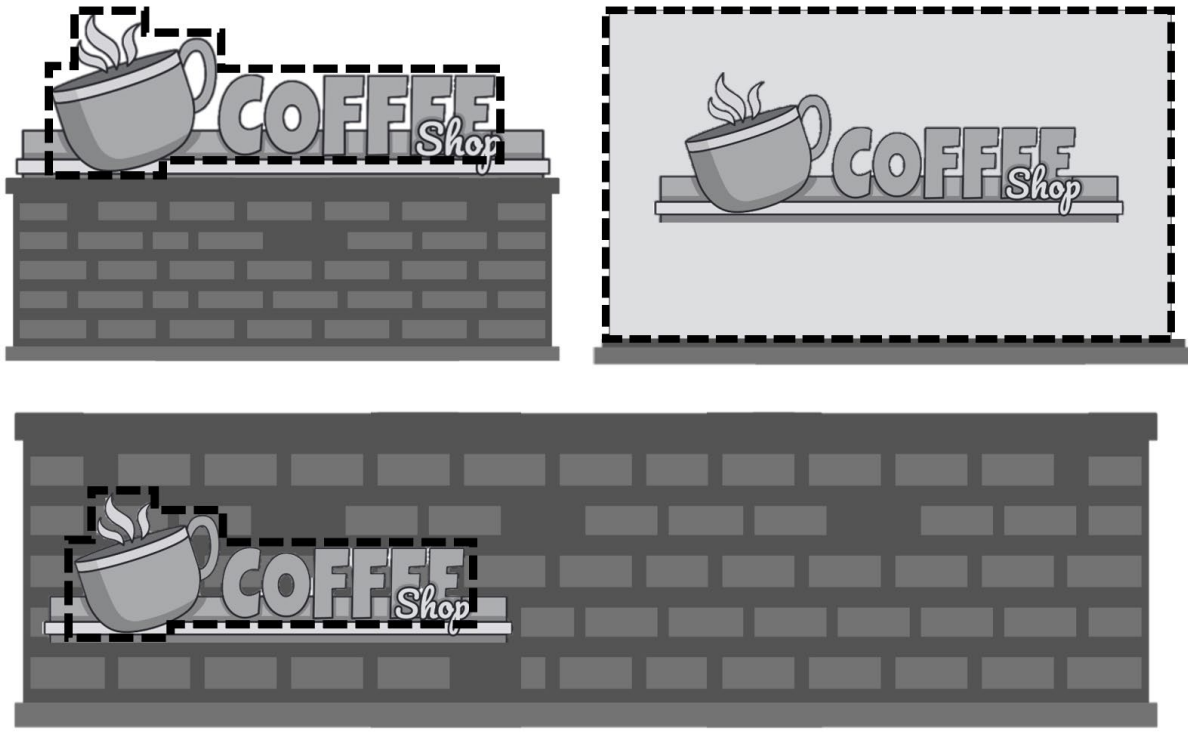


Figure R. Freestanding sign measurement Method 1 (§ 18-3-308(c)(1)). Note that decorative walls, raceways, and structural supports are not included as sign area unless they constitute a display surface. For freestanding signs, as in the upper right-most sign, the entire sign face is considered a display surface.

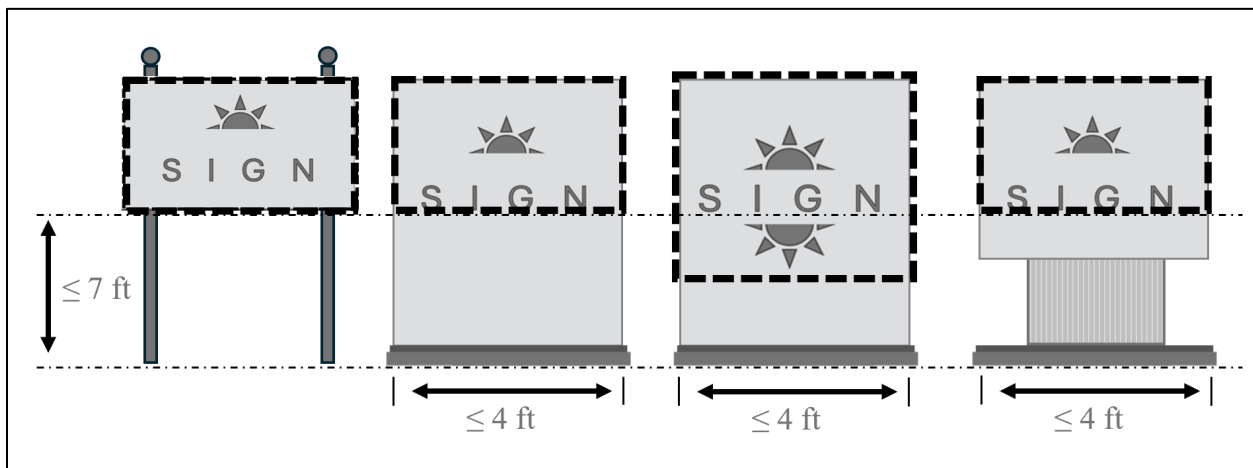


Figure S. Measurement for freestanding signs no greater than 4 feet wide. Note that the sign area does not include the sign face or cladding below 7 feet in height unless sign copy is placed in this area.

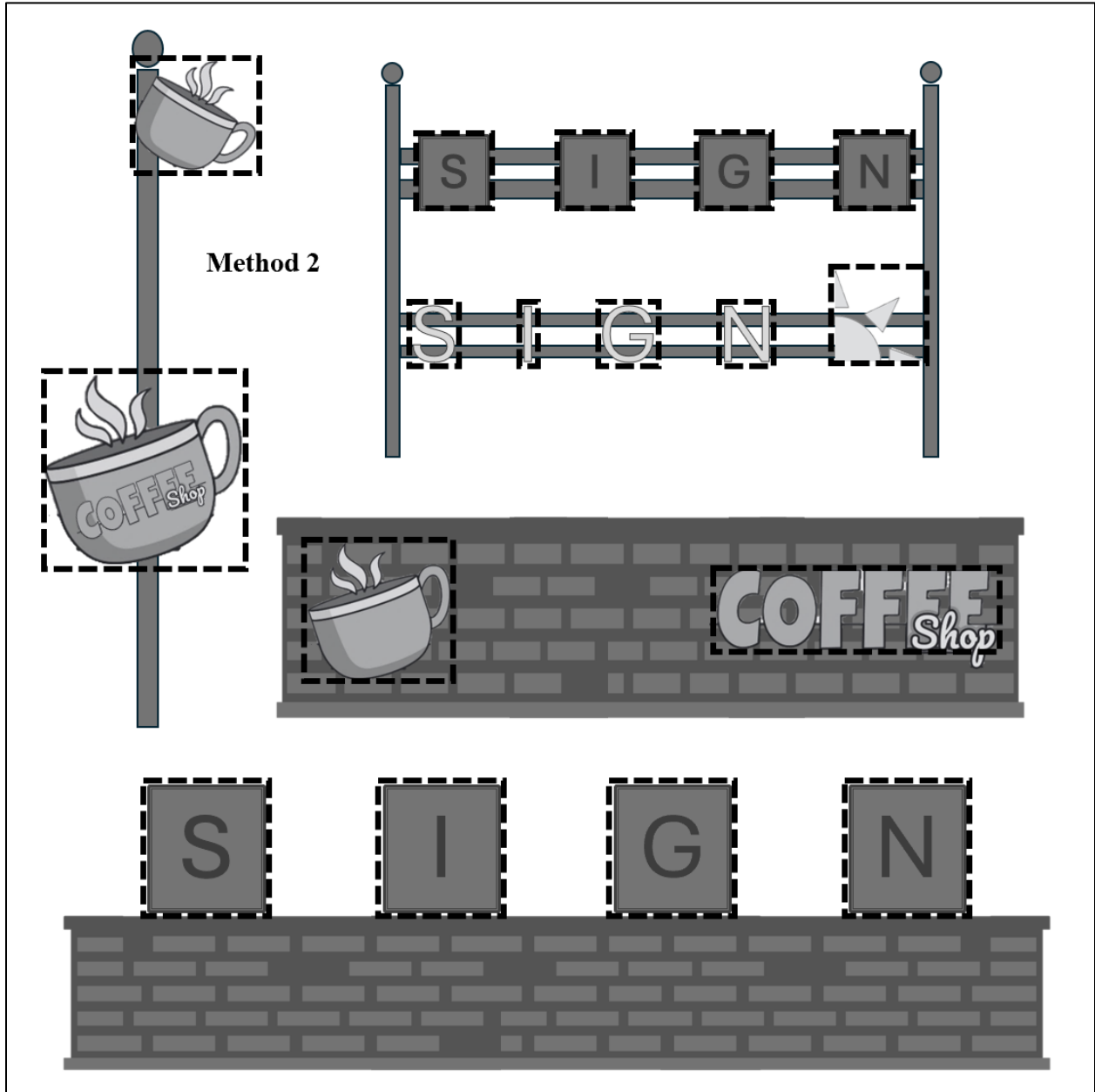


Figure T. Freestanding sign measurement Method 2 (§ 18-3-308(c)(2)). Note that decorative walls and support structures are not included as sign area unless they constitute a display surface. For freestanding signs, the entire sign face is considered a display surface and the spacing between sign elements is measured from sign face to sign face.

Multi-faced Signs

Sign Area = A

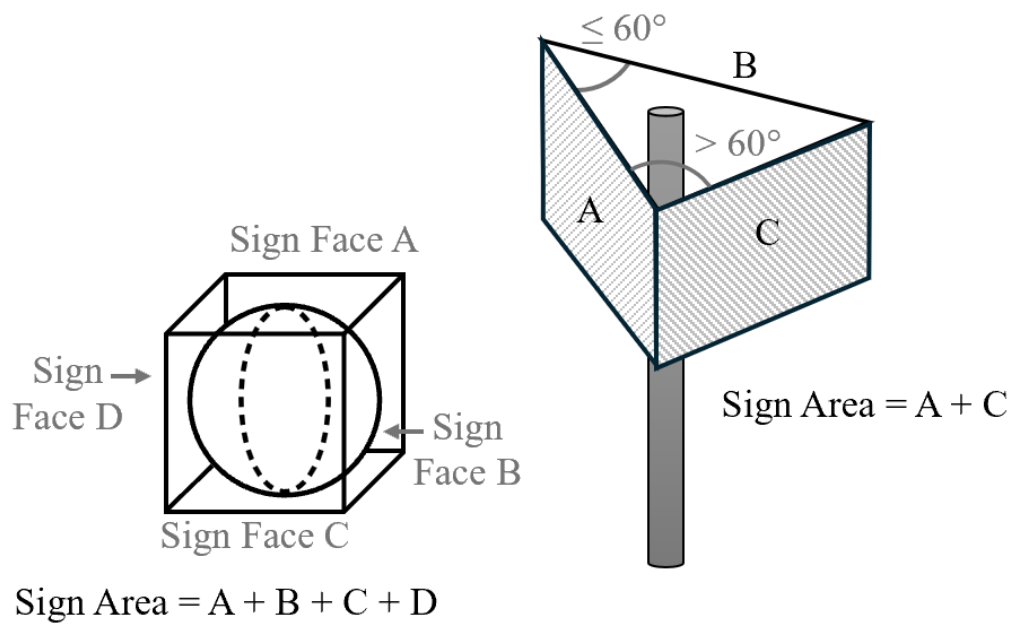
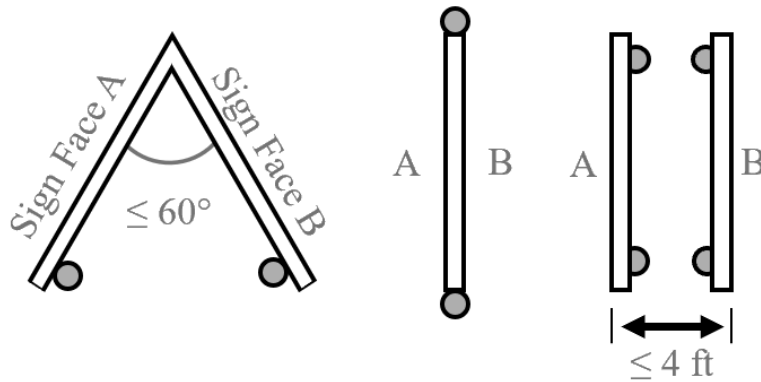


Figure U. Sign area measurement applied to multi-face signs.

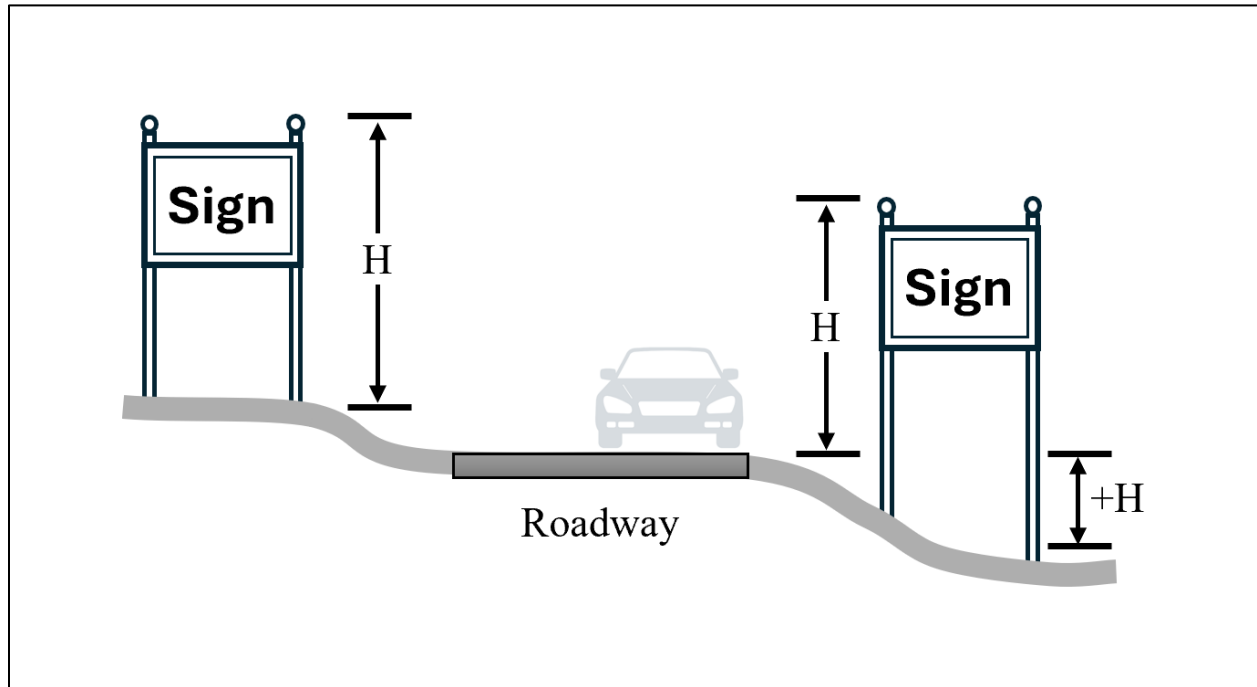


Figure V. Height measurement. This illustration demonstrates how height is measured from grade level to the top of the sign structure. Additional height is permitted when an adjacent roadway has a higher grade level than the sign grade level.

Picture and Graphic Sources for this User Guide:

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