

Standards for Signs in D Districts

18.55.190 “S” definitions.

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“Sign” means any outdoor device, structure, fixture or placard using graphics, symbols, and/or written copy designated for the purpose of advertising or identifying any establishment, product, goods, services, activities, or uses.

“Sign, animation” means the use of movement or some element thereof, to depict action or create a special effect or scene.

“Sign area” means the total area of the space to be used for advertising purposes, including the spaces between open-type letters and figures, including the background structure or other decoration or addition which is an integral part of the sign. Sign supports shall be excluded in determining the area of a sign. A double-faced sign shall have twice the total area of a single-faced sign.

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18.200.090 Design and appearance guidelines and sign standards.

(a) Within the D-1, D-2 and D-3 districts, all new development, including permitted commercial, office, institutional, multifamily residential, industrial uses, or combination thereof, or change of uses with exterior modifications shall be consistent with the following design guidelines. No building permit shall be issued unless it is in compliance with the downtown Topeka general design and appearance guidelines which are set forth in Exhibit A at the end of this section.

(b) Compliance shall be determined by the planning director by evaluating site plans and exterior elevations for conformity with the downtown Topeka general design and appearance guidelines.

(c) Decisions on conformity with the guidelines shall be made within 10 working days of submission.

(d) An appeal from the planning director’s decision as to compliance with the downtown Topeka general design and appearance guidelines may be made to the Topeka-Shawnee County metropolitan planning commission’s planning and policy committee board of zoning appeals pursuant to Chapter 2.45 TMC. Such appeal shall be heard at the next scheduled meeting of the committee.

(e) On-premise signs in the D-2 district shall comply with the standards for signs in the X (Mixed Use) districts pursuant to TMC 18.20.020 (e). Off-premise signs shall be regulated by TMC 18.25, Article IV.

(f) On-premise signs in the D-1 and D-3 districts shall comply with the following standards. Off-premise signs shall be regulated by TMC 18.25, Article IV.

(1) Wall Signs

(i) Each establishment is permitted one or more wall signs at the first floor on each building face occupied by said establishment. The accumulated area of wall signs on each building face shall be limited to 20 percent of the area of the exterior building elevation at the pedestrian level or 150 square feet, whichever is less.

(ii) Wall signage above the first floor shall be limited to no more than one sign ~~of no more than not exceeding~~ 150 square feet, for every 50 lineal feet of street frontage, on the exterior wall of the floor on which the signage is located. For buildings ~~of over in excess of~~ three floors or ~~of a height of exceeding~~ 40 feet ~~in height or more, on any level above the third floor or above 40 feet from grade,~~ one wall sign per building face is permitted no larger than 300 square feet and ~~such wall sign shall be~~ located above the third floor or above 40 feet, whichever is the least. For signage above the third floor, the Planning Director, or the Historic Landmarks Commission if the sign is located on a historic landmark or in a historic district, may approve signage of greater than 300 square feet to the extent the applicant demonstrates signage exceeding 300 square feet is necessary for visibility and legibility of the sign.

(2) Painted Exterior Wall Signs

(i) A painted exterior wall sign ~~is a sign identifying~~ identifies a use or on-premise establishment ~~within the building on which the sign is located~~ and consists entirely of copy that is painted directly on the exterior material of a building not including ~~any signs painted directly on~~ the exterior surface of a window, awnings, or other appurtenances.

(ii) Any painted exterior wall sign applied to the front or side of a building directly facing a street shall be regulated in the same manner as a wall sign. Any painted exterior wall sign applied to the side or rear of a building that does not directly abut a street is permitted ~~and provided~~ the area of all such signs ~~shall does~~ not exceed 300 square feet on the wall on which the signage is applied. ~~In determining the number of square feet, Only that part of the painted wall consisting of text or logos pertaining to the business, industry, or activity conducted on or within the premises shall constitute the area of the sign~~ be included. Art and graphic representations associated with the painted exterior wall sign that ~~do not constitute~~ are not text or logos shall not be subject to the area restriction ~~on area.~~⁴

(3) Awning and Marquee Signs

(i) Awning and marquee signs are ~~defined as~~ signs incorporated in the awning material or attached flat to the face of an awning or marquee. A marquee is a roof-like projection or shelter, typically over the entrance to an entertainment venue, and typically containing an illuminated flat area for static or changeable sign copy. Signage attached such that the sign face is parallel with, or at an angle between 0 and less than 45 degrees of the building façade, shall be regulated in the same manner as wall signs. Signs attached in such a way as to be at a 45 degree or greater angle to the

building façade shall be regulated in the same manner as projecting signs. For marquees electronic message centers (EMCs) may comprise 100 percent of the face of the marquee and 100 percent of the size allowed for marquee signs.

(4) Window Signs

(i) Window signs are ~~defined as those~~ signs on the inside or outside of the window ~~and that are~~ visible from the outside of the window. Window signs are permitted provided all window signs in aggregate constitute no more than 50 percent of ~~the area of~~ all windows ~~for each tenant and for on~~ ~~the each~~ side of the building on which ~~said the~~ window signs are located. ~~Window signs do not require a sign permit.~~

(5) Projecting Signs

(i) Each establishment is permitted a maximum of one projecting sign, visible from any single angle, mounted to the exterior of the first or second floors. The area of the projecting signs shall be limited to 10 percent of the building face at the level on which the establishment is located or 75 square feet, whichever is less.

(6) Ground Signs

(i) A “ground sign” is any sign placed upon, or supported by, the ground independently of any building or structure on the property. Ground signs permitted in the D-1 district include “monument” signs and “pylon” signs. A “monument sign” is a ground sign for which the width of the widest part of the base or pylon cover of the sign is at least ~~90~~75 percent of the width of the widest part of the sign face, and for which the total height of the sign does not exceed 5 feet. A “pylon sign” is a ground sign whose sign face or cabinet is above ground level and is supported by poles, pylons, or posts.

(ii) Any parcel of land located in the Downtown Topeka Historic District is allowed one monument sign ~~or pylon sign~~ per street frontage not to exceed two signs, to a height not to exceed 10 feet. For each sign the sign area shall not exceed .5 square feet per lineal foot of frontage on the street to which it is oriented or 50 square feet, whichever is less. A pylon sign located on a base that is within 2 feet of the exterior building wall may be mounted on a pylon or similar support structure and the dimensional standards for projecting signs shall apply.

(iii) All other parcels of land may be permitted one sign per street frontage not to exceed two signs, to a height not to exceed 20 feet. For each sign the cumulative sign area shall not exceed .75 square foot per foot of frontage on the street to which it is oriented or 120 square feet, whichever is less.

(iv) Parcels of land with frontage on two or more streets may utilize a single ground sign in lieu of two ground signs provided the total area of said sign ~~shall does not~~ exceed 150 percent of the sign area allowed for any of the ground signs and in no instance ~~be is~~ greater than 75 square feet in the Downtown Topeka Historic District and ~~no more than~~ 150 square feet in area outside of the historic district.

(v) The poles or pylons used to support the cabinet of a pylon sign shall be contained within ~~the~~ pole or pylon covers of a material and color compatible with the sign and adjacent buildings. Pole or pylon covers shall ~~be of~~ ~~have an outside a~~ diameter of one foot or more.

(vi) Legal nonconforming ground signs may be refaced or have cabinets replaced without being required to comply with the standards in paragraphs i-iii. Legal non-conforming signs shall comply with the standards in paragraphs i-iii in the event they are removed or pole, pylon, or base is replaced.

(7) Roof Signs

(i) Each building ~~of a height of that exceeds~~ three floors or 40 feet ~~or more~~ is permitted one roof sign no larger than 300 square feet. The height of a roof sign, measured from the top of the highest parapet to the top of the sign, shall not exceed 25% of the height of the building or 30 feet, whichever is most restrictive. Roof signs shall comply with all applicable engineering and construction code requirements. The Planning Director, or the Historic Landmarks Commission if the sign is located on a historic landmark or in a historic district, may approve signage exceeding the above dimensional standards to the extent the applicant demonstrates signage exceeding the dimensional standards is necessary for visibility and legibility of the sign.

(8) Electronic Message Centers (EMC)

(i) EMCs may be incorporated in whole or in part into any of the above sign types. One EMC sign is permitted per street frontage per establishment provided the size of the EMC is limited to 50 percent of the allowable sign area for the type of sign in which it is incorporated. EMCs that are part of a marquee are allowed 100 percent of the allowed sign area and may comprise 100 percent of the face of the marquee.

(9) Directional Signs

(i) A directional sign ~~is a sign designed to~~ provides direction to pedestrian or vehicular traffic into and out of a site, or within a site. In addition to the ground signs provided in paragraph ~~“6” (MF1)~~ “6”, up to two directional signs, constructed as ground signs, whether as a monument or pylon type, each not to exceed 6 square feet and 5 feet in height, are permitted for each 50 feet of street frontage not to exceed four per parcel. All other directional signs shall be regulated in accordance with paragraphs ~~“1” through “5”~~ and paragraphs ~~“7”, and “8”, and “10” (MF2)~~.

(10) Illumination

(i) Internal, flood illumination, or direct (i.e. neon) are permitted. Flashing, strobing, blinking, fluttering, chasing, and similar lighting features are prohibited unless they are determined by the Planning Director to contribute to or consistent with the historic character of the sign and building.
