

City of Philadelphia



(Bill No. 170504)

AN ORDINANCE

To amend Title 14 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Zoning and Planning,” by revising certain provisions of Chapters 14-200, entitled “Definitions,” and 14-900 “Signs,” all under certain terms and conditions.

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. Title 14 of The Philadelphia Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

Key:

1. In Tables that contain bracketed table notes, and in the table notes, deletions are indicated by { } rather than [].

TITLE 14. ZONING AND PLANNING.

* * *

CHAPTER 14-200. DEFINITIONS.

§ 14-203. Definitions.

For purposes of this Zoning Code, the following definitions shall apply; words, phrases, and terms not defined herein, but defined in Title 4 (The Philadelphia Building Construction and Occupancy Code), shall be construed as defined in Title 4.

* * *

[(279) Sign, Accessory Digital News Ticker.

A digital, illuminated horizontal sign band, with or without flashing images, that displays a scrolling stream of news and informational messages, including but not limited to stock prices, sports scores, headline news, and entertainment news.]

(279) Reserved

* * *

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[(281.1) Sign, Digital Display.

A sign that uses light emitting diodes (LEDs), charge coupled devices (CCDs), plasma or functionally equivalent technologies used to display a series of still images or full motion, usually remotely programmable and changeable. Digital displays do not include animated illumination signs or static illumination signs.]

* * *

(283) Sign, Free-Standing.

Any sign that is supported by a structure of one or more [columns, uprights, or braces] *frames, poles or other support structures permanently* erected in or upon the [ground, or affixed to outdoor business equipment or fixtures.] *ground*. Freestanding signs include monument signs, pylon signs, pole signs, and *other permanently affixed signs*. [A-frame signs.]

(284) Sign, Marquee.

A sign attached to or integrated into a marquee, which is an overhanging, substantially horizontal structure of permanent construction attached to a building, whether or not supported by the ground or sidewalk, that projects more than 18 in. over a sidewalk, *walkway*, or [other] right-of-way, but not including balconies or bay windows. The sign may be located on any face, top, or underside of the marquee.

* * *

(287) [Reserved.] *Sign, Portable*.

Any sign that is movable and not permanently attached to a structure or the ground. Portable signs include standing or upright, A-frame, feather flag, banner, pennant, inflatable, wind-activated, and other movable signs.

* * *

(289) Sign, Projecting.

A sign of any material, *including text, images, or both text and images*, that is in any manner affixed to, printed, or painted on any exterior wall of a building or structure such that the sign extends more than 12 in. from the face of the building or structure to which it is attached. *This includes signs on the side of an awning.*

* * *

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(295) Sign, Wall.

A sign, not including a window sign, that is in any manner affixed to, printed, projected, or painted on any exterior wall of a building or structure such that the sign extends forward of that wall by 12 in. or [less; or] *less*. [a] A sign attached to or integrated into the front or sloped panel of an awning or canopy *shall be considered a wall sign*. Wall signs include a sign that extends by 12 in. or less from the wall of a bay window parallel to the building façade.

* * *

(296.2) Sign Illumination, Animated.

Illumination of part or all of a sign drawing attention to a sign through an internal [or external] light source [or neon illumination] that exhibits changing [intensities] or *flashing colors, images, messages, or patterns, including the following types of Animated Sign Illumination:*

- (a) *Digital Sign. A type of illumination that uses light emitting diodes (LEDs), charge coupled devices (CCDs), plasma, or functionally equivalent technologies used to display a series of still images, usually remotely programmable and changeable.*
- (b) *Electronic Message Sign. A type of illumination that uses light emitting diodes (LEDs), charge coupled devices (CCDs), plasma, or functionally equivalent technologies to display a series of electronically changeable still messages consisting of alphanumeric text, such as those often used for gas price display signs and athletic scoreboards.*
- (c) *Accessory Digital News Ticker. A horizontal sign band that uses light emitting diodes (LEDs), charge coupled devices (CCDs), plasma, or functionally equivalent technologies to display a scrolling stream of messages, including but not limited to stock prices, sports scores, headline news, and entertainment news.*

(296.3) Sign Illumination, Static.

Illumination drawing attention to a sign through an internal or external light source or neon illumination that does not change intensities or colors. [Static illumination does not include digital displays.]

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CHAPTER 14-900. SIGNS.

* * *

§ 14-904. Accessory Sign Controls.

(1) Controls that Apply in All Zoning Districts.

These controls apply to specific types of signs in all zoning districts in addition to any other controls imposed by this Zoning Code.

(a) Signs on Awnings and Canopies and Marquee Signs.

(.1) Awnings, canopies, and marquees shall comply with the requirements set forth in §11-603 of the Philadelphia Code in addition to the requirements of this code.

(.2) External lighting is permissible under an awning, provided that the lighting is directed toward the area beneath the awning.

[(a.1)](b) Animated Sign Illumination.

* * *

[(b) Digital Display.

(.1) Location.

(a) Digital Displays are permitted in base zoning districts as set forth in Table 14-904-1.

(b) Digital displays are prohibited within 200 ft. of any intersection of any two or more streets.

(c) Digital displays are prohibited within 150 ft. of a residential district or facing any residential district within 300 ft. of the digital display.]

[.2] (.4) Sign Standards.

(a) Except for Accessory Digital News Tickers, the duration of *each message using animated illumination* [digital display] shall be no less

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than eight seconds. The change time between messages shall be no more than 0.25 seconds.

(.b) During daylight hours, luminance shall be no greater than 1500 nits for all signs incorporating animated illumination. At all other times, luminance shall be no greater than 150 nits. Automatic dimming is required to maintain the appropriate illumination levels at all times.

(c) Directional Signs.

* * *

(.4) Animated [illumination, digital displays] *illumination* and mechanical movement signs are prohibited.

* * *

(i) Window Sign.

(.1) Window signs shall be limited to the ground floor, except that in CMX-2, CMX-2.5, CMX-3, CMX-4, CMX-5, CA-1, and CA-2 districts, window signs for businesses that are not located on the ground floor shall also be permitted in second floor windows. The total area of *signs placed within a window or transparent glass door* [signs per floor] shall not exceed 20% of the total transparent glazed area of [all] *the window[s and] or transparent glass door[s on that floor] within which they are placed, as defined in §14-203 (Definitions).*

(.2) The amount of area [used] *permitted* for a window sign is [permitted] in addition to the maximum sign area permitted in § 14-902(2) (Controls Applicable to Specific Zoning Districts and Defined Areas).

[(.3) Digital displays are permitted on window signs in CMX-2, CMX-2.5, and CMX-3 districts, provided the digital displays do not exceed 4 sq. ft. total per building frontage.]

(.3) *Signs may be placed in no more than two windows; two transparent glass doors; or one window and one transparent glass door.*

(j) Portable Sign.

Portable signs shall be temporarily secured to resist rolling, blowing away, tipping over, or otherwise moving from their secured location.

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* * *

(2) Controls Applicable to Specific Zoning Districts.

(a) Sign Controls Table 14-904-1

Additional sign regulations applicable to specific zoning districts are shown in the following tables, collectively labeled Table 14-904-1.

* * *

(.3) Sign Characteristics

(.c) Digital [Display] *Sign*.

A “Yes” in the row labeled “Digital [Display]” *Sign*” indicates that digital [displays] *signs* are permitted for the sign type on the corresponding column. A “No” indicates that digital [displays] *signs* are prohibited.

(.e) *Electronic Message Sign*.

A “Yes in the row labeled “*Electronic Message Sign*” indicates that *electronic message signs* are permitted for the sign type in the corresponding column. A “No” indicates that *electronic message signs* are prohibited.

(.f) *Accessory Digital News Ticker*.

An accessory digital news ticker shall be permitted only in the Market Street East Advertising District, subject to the requirements of §14-906(6).

Table 14-904-1: Accessory Sign Controls for Specific Zoning Districts

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| RSD-1/2/3, RSA-1/2/3, RTA-1, RMX-1/2 | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| | | Permitted Sign Types | |
| | | Wall | Freestanding |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | N/A |
| | Maximum Area (sq. ft. {per} for each lot frontage) | Home Occupations (except as provided in § 14-604(10)(b)(.1)): 1 Non-Residential Uses: 15 | Home Occupations: Prohibited Non-Residential Uses: 15 |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill | 7 ft. |
| | Additional Requirements | N/A | Prohibited in required setbacks |
| Permitted Characteristics | Sign Static Illumination | Yes | Yes |
| | Animated Illumination (<i>all</i>) | No | No |
| | {Digital Display} | {No} | {No} |
| | Mechanical Motion | No | No |

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| RSA-4/5 and RM-1 | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| | | Permitted Sign Types | |
| | | Wall | Freestanding |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | N/A |
| | Maximum Area (sq. ft. {per} for each lot frontage) | Home Occupations (except as provided in § 14-604(10)(b)(1)): 1 Non-Residential Uses: 15 | Home Occupations: Prohibited Non-Residential Uses: 15 |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill | 7 ft. |
| | Additional Requirements | N/A | Prohibited in required setbacks |
| Permitted Sign Characteristics | Static Illumination | Yes | Yes |
| | Animated Illumination (<i>all</i>) | No | No |
| | {Digital Display} | {No} | {No} |
| | Mechanical Motion | No | No |

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| RM-2/3/4 and RMX-3 | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | Permitted Sign Types | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | N/A |
| | (sq. ft. {per} for each lot frontage) | Home Occupations (except as provided in § 14-604(10)(b)(1)): 1 Non-Residential Uses: 24 | Home Occupations: Prohibited Non-Residential Uses: 15 |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill | 7 ft. |
| | Additional Requirements | N/A | Prohibited in required setbacks |
| Permitted Sign Characteristics | Static Illumination | Yes | Yes |
| | Animated Illumination (<i>all</i>) | No | No |
| | {Digital Display} | {No} | {No} |
| | Mechanical Motion | No | No |

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| CMX-2 and CMX-2.5 | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|
| | | Permitted Sign Types | | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding | |
| Standards | Maximum Number | Wall: N/A Projecting: 1 per frontage | | 1 per building |
| | Maximum Area | Lots with one building frontage: Lots with more than one building frontage: | 3 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of building frontage Short side(s): 3 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of building frontage Long side: 2 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of building frontage | 100 sq. ft. total |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of roof line or second floor window sill | | 20 ft. |
| | Static Illumination | Yes, except that in the CMX-2.5 district internally-illuminated cabinet signs shall be prohibited. | | Yes |
| Permitted Characteristics | Sign Animated Illumination (<i>all</i>) | No | | No |
| | {Digital Display} | {No} | | {No} |
| | Mechanical Motion | Yes | | Yes |

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| CMX-3 | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| | | Permitted Sign Types | | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding | |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | | 1 per building |
| | Maximum Area | Lots with one building frontage: Lots with more than one building frontage: | 6 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of building frontage Short side(s): 6 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of building frontage Long side: 4 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of building frontage | 100 sq. ft. per face; up to 2 faces |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of roof line or second floor window sill | | 20 ft. |
| Permitted Sign Characteristics | Static Illumination | Yes | | Yes |
| | Animated Illumination <i>(all)</i> | No | | No |
| | {Digital Display } | {No} | | {No} |
| | Mechanical Motion | Yes | | Yes |

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| CMX-4/5 | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------------|
| | | Permitted Sign Types | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | 1 per frontage |
| | Maximum Area | 2 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of ground floor frontage; 100 sq. ft. per sign | 50 sq. ft./face; up to 4 faces |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill | 10 ft. |
| | Additional Requirements | Notwithstanding § 14-904(1)(d) , projecting signs shall not extend more than 24 in. over any public right-of-way | N/A |
| Permitted Sign Characteristics | Static Illumination | Yes | Yes |
| | { Animated Illumination } | { Wall: Yes Others: No } | { Yes } |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Digital Sign</i> | <i>Wall: Yes Others: No</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Electronic Message Sign</i> | <i>Wall: Yes Others: No</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Accessory Digital News Ticker</i> | <i>As provided in §14-906(6)</i> | <i>As provided in §14-906(6)</i> |
| | { Digital Display } | { Wall: Yes Others: No } | { Yes } |
| | Mechanical Motion | Yes | Yes |

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| | | CA-1 | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | | Permitted Sign Types: | | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding | <i>Portable</i> |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | 1 per lot | <i>1 per building frontage</i> |
| | Maximum Area | 10 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of ground floor frontage of the business or tenant with which the sign is associated | 200 sq. ft. / face, up to 2 faces | <i>10 sq. ft.</i> |
| | Maximum Height | {The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill} <i>The higher of the roof line or parapet wall, if applicable</i> | 40 ft. | <i>5 ft.</i> |
| Permitted Characteristics | Sign Static Illumination | Yes | Yes | <i>No</i> |
| | {Animated Illumination} | {No} | {No} | |
| | Animated Illumination: Digital Sign | Wall: Yes Others: No | Yes | <i>No</i> |
| | Animated Illumination: Electronic Message Sign | Wall: Yes Others: No | Yes | <i>No</i> |
| | Animated Illumination: Accessory Digital News Ticker | No | No | <i>No</i> |
| | {Digital Display} | {Wall: Yes Others: No} | {Yes} | |
| | Mechanical Motion | Yes | Yes | <i>No</i> |

| | | CA-2 | | |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | | Permitted Sign Types: | | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding | <i>Portable</i> |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | 1 per 15,000 sq. ft. of lot area | <i>1 per building frontage</i> |

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| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|------------|
| | Maximum Area | 10 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of ground floor frontage <i>of the business or tenant with which the sign is associated</i> | 150 sq. ft. / face, up to 4 faces | 10 sq. ft. |
| | Maximum Height | { The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill } <i>The higher of the roof line or parapet wall, if applicable</i> | 40 ft. | 5 ft. |
| Permitted Sign Characteristics | Static Illumination | Yes | Yes | No |
| | { Animated Illumination } | { Wall: Yes Others: No } | { Yes } | |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Digital Sign</i> | <i>Wall: Yes Others: No</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Electronic Message Sign</i> | <i>Wall: Yes Others: No</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Accessory Digital News Ticker</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>No</i> |
| | { Digital Display } | { Wall: Yes Others: No } | { Yes } | |
| | Mechanical Motion | Yes | Yes | No |

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| IRMX and ICMX | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| | | Permitted Sign Type | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | 1 per lot frontage |
| | Maximum Area | Lots facing one street line: 3 sq. ft./lin. ft. of building frontage Lots facing more than one street line: 3 sq. ft./lin. ft. of building frontage on the short side, 2 sq. ft./lin. ft. of building frontage on the long side | 100 sq. ft. / face, up to 4 faces |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill | 20 ft. |
| Permitted Sign Characteristics | Static Illumination | Yes | Yes |
| | {Animated Illumination} | {Wall: Yes Others: No} | {Yes} |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Digital Sign</i> | <i>Wall: Yes Others: No</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Electronic Message Sign</i> | <i>Wall: Yes Others: No</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Accessory Digital News Ticker</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>No</i> |
| | {Digital Display} | {Wall: Yes Others: No} | {Yes} |
| | Mechanical Motion | Yes | Yes |

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| I-1 | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| | | Permitted Sign Types | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding |
| Standards | Maximum Number | N/A | 1 per lot frontage |
| | Maximum Area | 100 sq. ft. per lot frontage | 100 sq. ft. / face, up to 4 faces |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill | 20 ft. |
| Permitted Characteristics | Sign | | |
| | Static Illumination | Yes | Yes |
| | { Animated Illumination } | { Wall: Yes Others: No } | { Yes } |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Digital Sign</i> | <i>Wall: Yes Others: No</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Electronic Message Sign</i> | <i>Wall: Yes Others: No</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Accessory Digital News Ticker</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>No</i> |
| | { Digital Display } | { Wall: Yes Others: No } | { Yes } |
| Mechanical Motion | Yes | Yes | |

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| I-2/I-3/I-P | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| | | Permitted Sign Types | |
| | | Wall, Projecting, and Marquee | Freestanding |
| Standards | Maximum Number | Others: N/A | 1 per lot frontage |
| | Maximum Area | 1 street front: 15 sq. ft./lin. ft. of building frontage 2+ street fronts: 15 sq. ft./lin. ft. on short side, 5 sq. ft./lin. ft. on long side | 100 sq. ft. / face, up to 4 faces |
| | Maximum Height | The lower of the roof line or second floor window sill | 20 ft. |
| | Additional Requirements | N/A | N/A |
| Permitted Sign Characteristics | Static Illumination | Yes | Yes |
| | { Animated Illumination } | { Yes } | { Yes } |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Digital Sign</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Electronic Message Sign</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| | <i>Animated Illumination: Accessory Digital News Ticker</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>No</i> |
| | { Digital Display } | { Yes } | { Yes } |
| | Mechanical Motion | Yes | Yes |

* * *

(3) Building Identification Signs in CMX-4, CMX-5, IRMX, ICMX, and I-1 Districts

* * *

(d) Building identification signs with animated illumination [or digital displays] shall require a special exception approval.

SECTION 2. This Ordinance shall take effect immediately.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Bill, Passed by the City Council on June 22, 2017. The Bill was Signed by the Mayor on July 11, 2017.



Michael A. Decker
Chief Clerk of the City Council