

# Harford County, Maryland

## ZONING CODE



Chapter 267 of the Harford County Code, as amended

Effective December 22, 2008

Amended thru February 24, 2025

*DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING*

Harford County, Maryland

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, Chapter 131  
*and*  
 SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS, Chapter 268  
 of the Harford County Code, As Amended  
 are included at the end of  
 The Development Regulations.

ZONING CODE AMENDMENT INFORMATION:

<u>Bill Number</u>	<u>effective date</u>	<u>Bill Number</u>	<u>effective date</u>
09-01	4/6/09	18-04AA	6/18/18
09-11	6/15/09	18-33	12/10/18
09-19AA	8/17/09	18-34	12/10/18
09-23AA	10/13/09	18-35	12/10/18
09-31AA	1/22/10	18-36	12/10/18
09-33AA	1/22/10	19-04AA	5/13/19
10-03	4/20/10	19-15AA	8/12/19
10-30	12/13/10	19-16AA	8/20/19
10-32AA	12/27/10	19-29AA	1/2/20
11-04AA	5/23/11	19-28	1/13/20
11-05AA	5/23/11	19-30	2/14/20
11-03	5/31/11	20-01	4/20/20
11-32	12/12/11	20-11	8/10/20
11-44	12/19/11	21-01AA	5/10/21
11-62AA	1/13/12	21-03AA	8/6/21
12-07AA	5/14/12	21-14	8/16/21
12-14	5/21/12	21-19	11/22/21
12-44	1/26/13	21-20AA	12/20/21
12-48AA	2/11/13	21-23	1/10/22
13-4AA	5/6/13	22-06	7/19/22
13-17	7/22/13	22-08	7/25/22
13-35	1/21/14	22-14	8/22/22
13-36	1/21/14	22-11	10/5/22
13-50	2/18/14	22-24	10/19/22
13-51	3/18/14	23-06AA	6/5/23
13-52	3/18/14	23-10AA	8/21/23
14-01	4/22/14	23-23	8/25/23
14-09	7/11/14	23-24	8/28/23
14-26AA	8/25/14	23-26AA	12/12/23
15-17	12/7/15	23-27AA	1/8/24
15-23AA	1/4/16	23-37	4/9/24
15-35AA	2/8/16	24-23	9-9-24
15-36AA	2/16/16	24-25AA	12/10/24
15-39AA	2/16/16	24-34	2/24/25
16-02AA	5/17/16		
16-07	7/5/16		
16-20	8/22/16		
16-28	2/13/17		
16-29AA	2/13/17		
17-02	4/24/17		
17-04	6/5/17		
17-08AA	8/14/17		
17-15AA	12/26/17		
17-18AA	1/16/18		

**§ 267-33. Signs.** [Amended by Bill 13-17; Bill 14-1; Bill 15-35 as amended; Bill 16-28; Bill 17-04; Bill 19-16 as amended; Bill 21-14; Bill 24-23 as amended; and Bill 24-34]

A. Zoning certificates; fees.

- (1) Zoning certificate requirement. It shall be unlawful for any person to erect, alter or relocate any sign or other advertising structure, as defined in this Part 1, without first obtaining a zoning certificate and making payment of the required fee.
- (2) Application. Application for a zoning certificate for a sign shall be signed by the property owner or authorized agent. The zoning certificate application shall require the name and address of the sign owner or the sign erector, drawings showing the copy design, dimensions, height and location of the sign and such other pertinent information as the Department may require to ensure compliance with the laws of Harford County, Maryland. Whenever an application for a zoning certificate is filed for the erection of a sign on property designated as an Historic Landmark, the application shall be subject to the approvals of the Historic District Commission and the Department.

B. General provisions. Signage shall be constructed in an unobtrusive manner which compliments the architectural elements of quality, style, color and material of the building, and the architectural period of the building(s). The following broad categories of sign types are regulated by this section unless otherwise provided herein:

- (1) Canopy signs. A canopy sign must have its lowest point no closer than 8 feet to the ground.
- (2) Freestanding signs. The maximum area of any freestanding sign shall not exceed 120 square feet. The setback measured to the edge of the sign shall be equal to 1/3 of the required building setback. Unless otherwise provided herein, the maximum height allowed for any freestanding sign is 20 feet measured from the road grade. If the elevation of the property where the sign is to be located is above the road grade, the maximum height of the sign may be increased 1 foot in height for every 1 foot of elevation above the road grade. In no instance shall the height of a freestanding sign exceed 30 feet above the road grade.

Except as otherwise provided for herein, electronic message boards are permitted as freestanding signs in the B1, B2, B3, C1, LI and GI zoning districts. Temporary or portable electronic message Boards are not permitted. Electronic message Boards shall not exceed 60 square feet in size, and shall display only on-premises messages, or time and/or temperature displays. An electronic message Board shall consist only of alphabetic or numeric characters and shall not include any graphic, pictorial or photographic images or videos. The appearance of any animation, motion, flashing, blinking or shimmering is not permitted. A single message, or segment of a message, shall have a display time of at least 2 seconds, including the time needed to move the message onto the sign Board, with all segments of the total message to be displayed within 10 seconds. A display traveling horizontally across the message Board shall move between 16 and 32 light columns per second. Requirements for display times do not apply to time and/or temperature displays.

- (3) Wall signs. Wall signs shall include all flat signs which are placed against a building or other structure and attached to the exterior front, rear or side wall of any building or other structure. Flat wall mounted signs may be located on any wall of a building and may extend not more than 8 feet above the parapet wall

or roofline of the building to which they are attached. However, no window, or part of a window, shall be covered by the sign area or its supporting structure. Except as otherwise provided for herein, electronic message boards are permitted as wall signs in the B1, B2, B3, CI, LI and GI zoning districts. Electronic message boards shall not exceed 20 square feet in size, and shall display only on-premises messages, or time and/or temperature displays. An electronic message board shall consist only of alphabetic or numeric characters and shall not include any graphic, pictorial or photographic images or videos. The appearance of any animation, motion, flashing, blinking or shimmering is not permitted. A single message, or segment of a message, shall have a display time of at least 2 seconds, including the time needed to move the message onto the sign board, with all segments of the total message to be displayed within 10 seconds. A display traveling horizontally across the message board shall move between 16 and 32 light columns per second. Requirements for display times do not apply to time and/or temperature displays.

- (4) Temporary signs. The maximum number of temporary signs a property may have in any 1 calendar year is 2. Temporary signs may be displayed for periods not exceeding 30 consecutive calendar days and not exceeding 60 calendar days in any 1 year.
- (5) Projecting signs. Projecting signs may not extend over public rights-of-way, or project more than 4 feet from the wall of a building. Projecting signs may not have less than 10 feet clearance, as measured vertically from the ground to the bottom of the sign or supporting structure, and shall not exceed a height of 25 feet, as measured vertically from the ground to the top of the sign or supporting structure. Projecting signs shall have a maximum sign area of 60 square feet.
- (6) Directional signs. Unless otherwise provided herein, the maximum area of any directional sign shall not exceed 6 square feet. Directional signs can be located at the nearest intersection of any major collector or arterial road and set back 10 feet from the property line. Unless otherwise provided herein, the maximum height allowed for any directional sign is 6 feet above the nearest public road grade.
- (7) Billboards.
  - (a) General. Billboards shall be permitted in the General Industrial (GI) district only. New billboards may not be constructed within the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor or the Edgewood Neighborhood Overlay District (ENOD).
  - (b) Location. Billboards shall be limited to 1 per parcel. Billboards shall not be permitted to be erected within 750 feet of any residence, historic structure or building as defined in §267-4 (Definitions), public square or the entrance to any public park, public, private or parochial school, library, church or similar institution. All such signs shall be set back from the front property line the distance required for a principal building in the zoning district in which located. No billboard shall be permitted to be erected within 100 feet of a road intersection unless the base of the sign is not less than 10 feet above ground level or road surface, whichever is higher. No billboard shall be erected within 660 feet of any highway which is part of the interstate highway system.
  - (c) Height. A billboard shall be no more than 30 feet in height from road grade.

- (d) Area. The maximum area of any billboard shall not exceed 300 square feet.
    - (e) Illumination. Illumination shall be in accordance with the provisions of this section.
  - (8) Permanent residential entrance, and Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) signs. Residential entrance, development project identification and CCRC signs, with letters or advertising area not to exceed a total area of 48 square feet, shall be permitted on the property, provided that it is located not less than 10 feet from the road right-of-way. In addition, the height of the sign or structure shall not exceed 6 feet. If the parcel or lot has a multiple frontage of at least 50 feet, additional signs with letters or advertising area, not to exceed a total of 48 square feet, shall be permitted. Such sign or structure shall not exceed 6 feet in height and shall not be located less than 10 feet from the road right-of-way. Said signs may be split entrance signs; however, the overall advertising area may not exceed 48 square feet.
  - (9) Electronic message boards shall be limited to one sign, of any permitted type, per property.
- C. Exemptions. The following types of signs are exempt from all the provisions of this section, except for construction and safety regulations and the following standards:
- (1) Public signs. Public signs, erected by, or on the order of, a public official in the performance of duty, such as directional signs, regulatory signs, warning signs, informational signs and legal notices.
  - (2) Integral signs. Integral signs that are carved into stone, concrete or similar material or made of bronze, aluminum or other permanent type construction and made an integral part of the structure, as well as signs forming an integral part of or attached to pumps dispersing fuels, vending machines and service appliances.
  - (3) Political campaign and public issue signs, except for billboards, signs announcing candidates seeking public office and advocating the support or defeat of public issues shall be permitted, provided that the total area of the signs does not exceed 16 square feet for each premises in a residential district and 32 square feet in an agricultural, business or industrial district. These signs shall be confined to private property. No sign shall be placed within 60 feet of the center of a road intersection or in such a manner as to impede vision.
  - (4) Agricultural identification signs. Agricultural identification signs not to exceed 32 square feet in area and not to be located less than 35 feet from the center line of the road or 10 feet from the road right-of-way, whichever is greater.
  - (5) Directional signs. Directional signs for any public, charitable, educational or religious function to be set back 10 feet from road right-of-way. These signs shall not exceed 2 square feet in sign area and shall not exceed 4 feet in height above the road grade.
  - (6) Private traffic control. Signs directing traffic movement onto a premises or within a premises, not exceeding 4 square feet in area for each sign. Illumination of these signs shall conform to the provisions of this section.

- (7) Real estate signs. Real estate signs not exceeding 6 square feet in area and located on the subject property tract. They shall be removed within 7 calendar days after execution of a lease or transfer of the property.
- (8) Noncommercial flags. On-site flags of a nation, state, political subdivision, educational institution or noncommercial organization, provided that any flagpole utilized to display such flag is not more than 30 feet in height above the ground.
- (9) Ballpark signs. Signs installed on public property, with the permission of the Department of parks and recreation, at ball fields owned or operated by the County Department of Parks and Recreation. Said signs shall not exceed 6 square feet in size and shall be erected for no longer than 4 months.
- (10) Project development sign. Temporary signs for undeveloped parcels to be set back at least 10 feet from the road right-of-way and not to exceed 10 feet in height above the road grade. One sign shall be permitted for each road frontage of at least 50 feet. The maximum sign area shall not exceed 32 square feet.

D. Calculation of advertising or sign area.

- (1) Double-faced signs. One face of a sign having obverse and reverse faces shall be considered in calculating the advertising area. In the event that the faces of a sign are of a different area, the face having the larger area shall determine the advertising area of the sign.
- (2) Multi-faced or curved surface signs. The advertising area of a multi-faced or curved surface sign shall be calculated from dimensions derived from its greatest plane projection.
- (3) Modular signs. The advertising area of signs consisting of 2 or more individual letters, characters, numbers or figures shall be determined by the area of a described rectangle completely enclosing the extremities of all of the individual letters, characters, numbers or figures, provided, however, that if individual modules are mounted on a background, other than an integral structure component of a building, the entire area of such a background shall be calculated as advertising area.
- (4) Cylindrical signs. The advertising area of cylindrical signs shall be computed by multiplying  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the circumference by the height of the sign.

E. Illumination.

- (1) The light from any illuminated sign, including those on the interior of a building, shall be so shaded, shielded or directed so that the light intensity or brightness shall not interfere with the vision of motor vehicle operators or directly reflect onto adjacent residential lots or buildings.
- (2) No sign shall have blinking or flashing lights. With the exception of electronic message boards, as defined in §267-4 (Definitions), no sign shall have illumination devices which have a changing light intensity, brightness or color or which are so constructed and operated so as to create an appearance or illusion of writing. Nothing contained in this section shall be construed as preventing the use of lights or decorations commemorating religious and patriotic holidays.