

# Harford County, Maryland

# ZONING CODE



Chapter 267 of the Harford County Code, as amended

Effective December 22, 2008  
Amended thru February 8, 2016

*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	13-51	3/18/14
09-11	6/15/09	13-52	3/18/14
09-19AA	8/17/09	14-1	4/22/14
09-31AA	1/22/10	14-9	7/11/14
09-33AA	1/22/10	14-26AA	8/25/14
10-03	4/20/10	15-23AA	1/4/16
10-30	12/13/10	15-35AA	2/8/16
10-32AA	12/27/10		
11-04AA	5/23/11		
11-05AA	5/23/11		
11-03	5/31/11		
11-32	12/12/11		
11-44	12/19/11		
11-62AA	1/13/12		
12-07AA	5/14/12		
12-14	5/21/12		
12-44	1/26/13		
12-48AA	2/11/13		
13-4AA	5/6/13		
13-17	7/22/13		
13-35	1/21/14		
13-36	1/21/14		
13-50	2/18/14		

**§ 267-33. Signs. [Amended by Bill 13-17; Bill 14-1; and Bill 15-35 As Amended]**

## 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 base of the sign.

Electronic message Boards are permitted as freestanding signs and are limited to 1 single- or double-sided sign per road frontage. 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.

- (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. 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.

- (d) Construction signs. One sign shall be permitted for all construction contractors, 1 for all professionals and firms and 1 for all lending institutions on sites under construction. Each sign shall not exceed 16 square feet in area, and no more than 3 such signs shall be permitted on 1 site. The signs shall be confined to the construction site, construction shed or trailer and shall be removed within 15 days after the beginning of the intended use of the project.
- (e) Directional signs. One directional sign, not exceeding 6 square feet in sign area and no more than 6 feet above ground level, or 6 feet above road grade, whichever is higher, shall be permitted per business use or agricultural use, if set back 10 feet from the road right-of-way and located at either the nearest intersecting arterial road or the nearest intersecting road.
- (f) Home occupation signs. One lighted sign, not exceeding 2 square feet in area and attached flat against the building, is permitted in conjunction with approved professional or home occupations.
- (g) One temporary sign shall be permitted, provided that the sign shall not exceed 32 square feet or 6 feet in height and shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way.
- (h) Electronic message boards on properties that contain Institutional uses which are located on either a freeway/expressway or a principal urban arterial route, each as provided in Table 1, "Highway Functional Classification" to the 2010 Transportation Element Plan, as a Special Exception, subject to approval of the Board. Electronic message boards must be located at least 10 feet from the road right-of-way and at least 250 feet from the structural boundaries of any dwelling, shall not exceed 6 feet in height, and must not have a sign area exceeding 20 square feet.

(2) RR, R1, R2, R3 and R4 residential districts. In addition to the requirements set forth in this section, signs in the RR, R1, R2, R3 and R4 district must comply with the following standards:

- (a) Home occupation signs. One lighted sign, not exceeding 2 square feet in area and attached flat against the building, is permitted in conjunction with approved professional or home occupations.
- (b) Except for electronic message boards, freestanding signs may be permitted as a special exception, subject to approval of the Board, provided they are located at least 10 feet from the road right-of-way, shall not exceed 6 feet in height and must not have a sign area exceeding 4 square feet. Electronic message boards shall not be permitted within the RR, R1, R2, R3 and R4 districts.

Notwithstanding anything contained in this paragraph, electronic message boards displaying a message and content relating to public safety and designed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public shall be permitted, as a special exception, subject to approval of the Board, on properties that contain public safety facilities. Electronic message boards must be located at least 10 feet from the road right-of-way, shall not exceed 6 feet in height, and must not have a sign area exceeding 10 square feet. Only local and State law enforcement

agencies, emergency operation centers and fire companies shall constitute public safety facilities.

- (c) Permanent institutional signs. One lighted sign setting forth the name of places of worship, service clubs, civic organizations, public or service centers, public institutions, schools or other similar uses shall be permitted. These signs shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way, shall not exceed 32 square feet in area and shall not exceed 6 feet in height.
- (d) Permanent residential entrance or Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) signs are permitted pursuant to the provisions of Subsection B(8).
- (e) Construction signs. One sign shall be permitted for all construction contractors, 1 for all professionals and firms and 1 for all lending institutions on sites under construction. Each sign shall not exceed 16 square feet in area, and no more than 3 such signs shall be permitted on 1 site. The signs shall be confined to the construction site, construction shed or trailer and shall be removed within 15 days after the beginning of the intended use of the project.
- (f) One temporary sign shall be permitted, provided that the sign shall not exceed 16 square feet or 6 feet in height and shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way.
- (g) All permanent signs shall be compatible with the style, character and design of the residential neighborhood in which the sign is erected.

(3) RO Residential Office district. In addition to the requirements set forth in this section, signs in the RO district must comply with the following standards:

- (a) One freestanding sign per parcel, which shall have a maximum of 16 square feet in area, shall be no more than 6 feet in height, shall be placed perpendicular to the road and shall be no more than 20 feet from the right-of-way.
- (b) A wall sign for each use, which shall be attached only to the front of a building, shall be adjacent to the front entryway and shall be no larger than 4 square feet in area.
- (c) Freestanding and wall signs shall be constructed primarily utilizing the materials and colors of the primary structure on the site. They may be externally and internally illuminated.
- (d) Home occupation signs. One lighted sign, not exceeding 2 square feet in area and attached flat against the building, is permitted in conjunction with approved professional or home occupations.
- (e) Construction signs. One sign shall be permitted for all construction contractors, 1 for all professionals and firms and 1 for all lending institutions on sites under construction. Each sign shall not exceed 16 square feet in area, and no more than 3 such signs shall be permitted on 1 site. The signs shall be confined to the construction site, construction shed or trailer and shall be removed within 15 days after the beginning of the intended use of the project.

- (f) Permanent institutional signs. One lighted sign setting forth the name of places of worship, service clubs, civic organizations, public or service centers, public institutions, schools or other similar uses shall be permitted. These signs shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way, shall not exceed 32 square feet in area and shall not exceed 6 feet in height.
- (g) Permanent residential entrance or Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) signs are permitted pursuant to the provisions of Subsection B(8).
- (h) One temporary sign shall be permitted, provided that the sign shall not exceed 16 square feet or 6 feet in height and shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way.

(4) VR Village Residential district. In addition to the requirements set forth in this section, signs in the VR district must comply with the following standards:

- (a) Home occupation signs. One lighted sign, not exceeding 2 square feet in area and attached flat against the building, is permitted in conjunction with approved professional or home occupations.
- (b) Freestanding signs may be permitted as a special exception, subject to the approval of the Board, provided that they are located not less than 10 feet from the road right-of-way, do not exceed 6 feet in height and do not have a sign area exceeding 4 square feet.
- (c) Freestanding and wall signs shall be constructed primarily utilizing the materials and colors of the primary structure on the site. They may be externally and internally illuminated.
- (d) Permanent residential entrance or Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) signs are permitted pursuant to the provisions of Subsection B(8).
- (e) Construction signs. One sign shall be permitted for all construction contractors, 1 for all professionals and firms and 1 for all lending institutions on sites under construction. Each sign shall not exceed 16 square feet in area, and no more than 3 such signs shall be permitted on 1 site. The signs shall be confined to the construction site, construction shed or trailer and shall be removed within 15 days after the beginning of the intended use of the project.
- (f) Permanent institutional signs. One lighted sign setting forth the name of places of worship, service clubs, civic organizations, public or service centers, public institutions, schools or other similar uses shall be permitted. These signs shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way, shall not exceed 32 square feet in area and shall not exceed 6 feet in height.
- (g) One temporary sign shall be permitted, provided that the sign shall not exceed 16 square feet or 6 feet in height and shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way.

(5) VB Village Business district. In addition to the requirements set forth in this section, signs in the VB district must comply with the following standards:

- (a) One freestanding sign per parcel, which shall have a maximum of 18 square feet in area, shall be no more than 6 feet in height, shall be placed perpendicular to the road and shall be no more than 20 feet from the right-of-way.
- (b) A wall sign for each use, which shall be attached only to the front of a building, shall be adjacent to the front entryway and shall be no larger than 10 square feet in area.
- (c) Freestanding and wall signs shall be constructed primarily utilizing the materials and colors of the primary structure on the site. They may be externally and internally illuminated.
- (d) Home occupation signs. One lighted sign, not exceeding 2 square feet in area and attached flat against the building, is permitted in conjunction with approved professional or home occupations.
- (e) Construction signs. One sign shall be permitted for all construction contractors, 1 for all professionals and firms and 1 for all lending institutions on sites under construction. Each sign shall not exceed 16 square feet in area, and no more than 3 such signs shall be permitted on 1 site. The signs shall be confined to the construction site, construction shed or trailer and shall be removed within 15 days after the beginning of the intended use of the project.
- (f) Permanent institutional signs. One lighted sign setting forth the name of places of worship, service clubs, civic organizations, public or service centers, public institutions, schools or other similar uses shall be permitted. These signs shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way, shall not exceed 32 square feet in area and shall not exceed 6 feet in height.
- (g) Permanent residential entrance signs are permitted pursuant to the provisions of Subsection B(8).
- (h) One temporary sign shall be permitted, provided that the sign shall not exceed 16 square feet or 6 feet in height and shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way.

(6) B1 Neighborhood Business, B2 Community Business, B3 General Business, CI Commercial Industrial, LI Light Industrial and GI General Industrial districts. In addition to the requirements set forth in this section, signs in the B1, B2, B3, CI, LI and GI districts must comply with the following standards:

- (a) Signs erected on and attached to commercial, industrial or institutional buildings. The total area of all signs erected on and attached to commercial, industrial or institutional buildings shall not exceed 2 square feet per each linear foot of building width, measured along the front wall or entrance wall of a building. If a building is located on a lot having frontage on 2 streets, then the sign area for each side shall be calculated separately. The following types of signs shall be permitted: