

Rockbridge County

706.00 SIGNS

706.01 Purpose and Intent. These regulations are intended to accomplish the following goals while not unduly restricting the freedom of expression; to protect property values and the public investment in the creation, maintenance, safety and appearance of its streets and highways; to enable the public to locate goods, services and facilities without difficulty and confusion; to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety by avoiding saturation and confusion in the field of vision; to enable businesses to promote and identify their establishments; to protect and enhance the County's attractiveness to businesses, tourists and other visitors as sources of economic development; to assure that business signs are appropriately taxed; and, to implement the Comprehensive Plan and Corridor Study goals of creating an attractive and harmonious environment.

706.02 Scope. This Sign Ordinance is adopted under the Zoning Authority of the County. These regulations shall apply to all existing signs and their modifications and to all new signs. All signs not otherwise exempt shall comply with these regulations in addition to applicable State and Federal regulations, and it shall be unlawful for any person to erect or maintain a sign that is not expressly permitted by this Ordinance.

706.03 General Requirements.

706.03-1 Except as provided in Section 706.04 below and in Section 33.1-3512 through Section 33.1-370, Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, no outdoor advertising sign or structure shall be erected, altered, replaced or relocated without a Zoning and Building Permit issued per Section 802.00 and 1302.00 of the County of Rockbridge Land Development Regulations and shall comply with applicable requirements of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.

706.03-2 For the purpose of computing sign area, both sides of a "V-type" where the interior angle between the faces exceeds 45 degrees or one side of a double-faced sign shall be considered by measuring the sign face or lettered area to include any logo.

706.03-3 Unless otherwise indicated, no freestanding sign structure over the height of fifteen (15) feet may be erected and signs shall be combined on a single sign structure where possible in accordance with this Ordinance. In determining the highest point of the sign and structure, the normal grade from which to measure the bottom of the sign height shall be that which is either existing prior to construction, or newly established after construction depending on which is more consistent with the surrounding elevation of the lot on which it is located. Any fill or excavation which serves primarily to elevate the sign shall be included in the height of the sign. If, due to unusual circumstances such as topography,

vegetation, distance off the primary road, or safety reasons, a fifteen (15) foot tall sign cannot be seen from an appropriate distance on the fronting road, the height may be increased up to ten (10) feet by approval of the Zoning Administrator. Each request for an increased height shall be reviewed by the Tourism Corridor Overlay Review Board prior to approval.

706.03-4 All signs shall be subject to a setback requirement of at least fifteen (15) feet from the paved surface of the fronting highway or roadway, unless otherwise regulated by State or Federal regulations and five (5) feet from adjoining property lines.

706.03-5 Roof signs or roof sign structures shall not extend above the roof line and shall not extend beyond or overhang any exterior wall of the building upon which secured except by a special exception permit approved by the Board of Supervisors.

706.03-6 All on-premises signs shall be assessed and taxed as real property in combination with the other improvements on the property.

706.03-7 All off-premises signs shall be reported by the owner to the Commissioner of Revenue as personal property as required by Chapter 25 of the Code of the County of Rockbridge and shall be taxed accordingly. An acre of land upon which an off-premises sign is situated may not qualify for Land Use Taxation and may be reassessed by the Commissioner of Revenue in accordance with its value as an advertising site.

706.03-8 Certain advertisements or structures are prohibited per Section 33.1-351 et seq. of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended. No advertisement or advertising structure shall be erected or maintained:

(a) Off-premises advertising signs within six hundred sixty (660) feet of nearest edge of the right-of-way of the Blue Ridge Parkway, any Interstate, national highway system or federal-aid primary highway, public cemetery, public park, public playground, National Forest, and State Forest;

(b) Within fifteen (15) feet of the nearest edge of the pavement of any highway without written findings from the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Transportation, that the structure is anchored outside of the right-of-way, and that it does not constitute a safety hazard or conflict with any other restrictions contained in Section 33.1-351 et seq. of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended;

(c) Which advertise activities which are illegal under State or Federal laws or regulations.

706.03-9 No sign or sign structure shall be placed at any public road intersection in such a manner as would obstruct the clear vision in either direction between a point on the center line of the side road twenty (20) feet from the nearest edge of the

pavement of the main road and points on the main road four hundred (400) feet distant, measured along the nearest edge of the pavement of the main road.

706.03-10 No sign or sign structure shall be placed at any grade intersection of a public road and a railroad in such a manner as would obstruct the clear vision in either direction within triangular areas formed by:

- (a) A point at the center of the railroad-public road intersection;
- (b) A point on the public road four hundred (400) feet from the center of the railroad-public road intersection as measured along the center of the public road;
- (c) A point on the railroad five hundred (500) feet from the center of the railroad-public road intersection as measured along the center of the public road.

706.03-11 No sign or sign structure shall be placed at or near any curve in a road in such a manner as to obstruct the clear vision of traffic from any one point on such curve to any other point not more than four hundred (400) feet apart, as measured between each point from the nearest edge of the pavement.

706.03-12 No sign shall be erected, relocated or maintained so as to prevent free ingress and egress from any door, window, or fire escape.

706.03-13 All signs coming within the jurisdiction of State and Federal laws along Interstate Highway and Federal-aid primary highway systems shall conform to said laws in addition to any other sign regulations in this Ordinance.

706.03-14 All on and off-premises permanent advertising signs legally in existence at the time of the passage of this Ordinance, not otherwise in conformance with this Ordinance, shall be classified as non-conforming and are grandfathered and may be continued provided they meet all other requirements of this Ordinance.

706.03-15 Off-premises informational signs of a public or quasi-public nature identifying or locating a town, hospital, community center, public building, or historic place situated in Rockbridge County, Virginia, and also signs identifying or locating a school, college, YMCA, church or similar place of worship, board of trade, service club, soil conservation activity, 4-H Club, Isaac Walton League, Chamber of Commerce, or similar public or quasi-public activity for religious, civic, educational or cultural purpose, and signs drawing attention to public parking lots, rest rooms, or to other public convenience relating to such places or activities are permissible and do not require permits. Such signs shall not exceed an area of six (6) square feet, shall not be illuminated, shall contain no advertising matter and be combined where possible. Nothing contained herein shall be construed to limit the effect of Section 706.03-14.

706.03-16 Official notices or signs posted or displayed by or under the direction of any public or court officer in the performance of official or directed duties or by

trustees under deeds of trust, deeds of assignment or other similar instruments are also permitted. Such signs shall not exceed an area of two (2) square feet and shall contain no advertising matter other than that which may be required by law.

706.03-17 The light from any illuminated sign shall be shaded, shielded and directed so that the light intensity or brightness shall not adversely affect surrounding or facing premises nor adversely affect safe vision of operators of vehicles moving on public or private roads, highways, and parking areas. The light shall not shine or reflect in an offensive manner on or into residential structures or motels.

706.03-18 Proposed signs in the TCO districts shall be reviewed for aesthetic compatibility with the proposed architecture by providing details of the proposed fixture, proportions, color, texture, materials, text and base.

706.04 Permissible Signs in All Districts. The following signs are allowed in all zoning districts and shall be exempt from permit regulations:

Temporary Signs.

(a) Real estate signs in a residential district, six (6) square feet in area and three (3) feet in height; in business districts, industrial districts and agricultural districts thirty-two (32) square feet in area and fifteen (15) feet in height. Also a temporary real estate sign, not exceeding two (2) square feet in area and three (3) feet in height, directing the way to premises which are for sale or rent with the express permission of the owner of the land on which the sign is placed;

(b) One construction sign confined to the site of construction not exceeding twelve (12) square feet in area and eight (8) feet in height. Such sign shall not be illuminated;

(c) Temporary political signs per 15.2-109 of the Code of Virginia which allows them per the same standards as real estate signs in (a) above.

(d) One temporary sign advertising the sale of farm products grown or produced on the premises; provided that the sign shall not exceed twelve (12) square feet in area and eight (8) feet in height. The sign shall not be illuminated, shall be neatly painted and maintained, and shall be removed at the end of the season;

(e) In general, any other temporary sign not covered above, banner, pennant, valance or advertising display designed for temporary use, with or without wheels, not permanently affixed to a foundation in the ground or a building, shall only be used as a special decorative display for purposes of advertising the opening of a new store, business or profession or for a going out of business sale. Such displays shall not exceed a period of thirty (30) days in a twelve (12) month period and shall not exceed thirtytwo

(32) square feet. The date of installation shall be noted on such sign or banner. Temporary signs attached to the inside of a businesses window are permitted.

Permanent Signs

(a) Directional signs for parks, playgrounds and other uses of a noncommercial nature erected by a government agency. Such signs shall not exceed four (4) square feet in area and eight (8) feet in height.

(b) Farm signs relating solely to farm or horticultural produce, livestock, or services sold, produced, manufactured or furnished on such farm and cottage industries as defined. There shall be only one such sign not exceeding a total area of twelve (12) square feet and eight (8) feet in height.

(c) Bed and Breakfast and Country Inn. There shall be permitted only one such sign not to exceed a total area of twelve (12) square feet in area and eight (8) feet in height in an agricultural and business district and two (2) square feet in area and six (6) feet in height in a residential district. Such signs may be illuminated by white lights only.

(d) Home occupation signs shall not exceed two (2) square feet in area and six (6) feet in height, shall not be illuminated and shall contain only the name of the business and/or business owner. These signs may be located on an exterior wall, window or door of the premises.

(e) Name signs and professional name plates not exceeding an area of two (2) square feet. Such signs shall not exceed six (6) feet in height, shall not be illuminated and shall contain no advertising material. (Mail box lettering is addressed in the 911 guidelines).

(f) For any church, school, park, fire department, rescue squad or other public or semi-public institution, a name sign up to fifteen (15) square feet or up to thirty-two (32) square feet to include a manually lettered bulletin board.. Such signs must be set on a single monument base, shall be landscaped and in character with the surrounding area and may be illuminated with white lights only. The height may not exceed eight (8) feet.

(g) Memorial signs or tablets, including the names of buildings and date of erection when cut into masonry, bronze or other materials.

(h) On premises security and warning signs, such as no hunting, no fishing, no trespassing, used by a private landowner, not to exceed two (2) square feet. This type of sign is allowed on trees, fence posts and other such devices.

706.05 The Following Signs Require a Building and Zoning Permit.

706.05-1 For subdivisions, multi-family dwellings, manufactured home parks and campgrounds; one sign not exceeding twenty-four (24) square feet in area

indicating only the name and/or address of the premises and the name of the management. Such signs may be illuminated with white lights only.

706.05-2 Individual businesses not part of a shopping center are allowed one freestanding sign, sixty (60) square feet in area. Service stations shall be allowed 75 square feet to include fuel prices. Individual business may also place a sign on their building per Section 706.05-4 below.

706.05-3 For shopping centers, collectively assembled in one area, sharing a parking lot, are in the same building, or are in a relatively small area; one freestanding sign is allowed not to exceed seventy-five (75) square feet in area for two to five tenants and one hundred (100) square feet in area for six and greater tenants. Such signs may include the collective establishment name and the names of each business in the collective area. Each business within the multi-business complex may also place a sign on their building per Section 706.05-4 below.

706.05-4 Wall Signs - individual businesses shall be allowed to attach signage to the building below the roof line. Each business shall be allowed one square foot of signage per linear foot of building frontage. Corner lots on public streets may calculate the frontage towards the two streets. The corresponding square footage shall be applied to the respective building fronts or as approved by the Planning Commission or TCO Review Board during site plan review. Individual businesses within a shopping center shall be considered to have frontage towards the primary parking area of the shopping center and signage shall be placed only on that corresponding wall or as approved by the Planning Commission or TCO Review Board during site plan review. Corner units within a shopping center may have an additional 30 square feet of signage on the wall facing a public street. Detached service station canopies shall be considered a separate building under this Section and shall be allowed thirty (30) square feet of signage attached to such canopy. Such signs may be illuminated with white lights only.

706.05-5 Community directional signs placed at appropriate highway intersections advertising individual businesses, sites and attractions shall be consolidated on posts or ground bases. The freestanding sign may be built with County funds and accessory signs leased to the individual businesses. Any such lease will be set by the County.

706.05-6 Directional signs up to four(4) square feet and four (4) feet tall containing only the logo of the business and an arrow for the purpose of directing traffic to the proper entrance off of a main road and through the parking area. Only two such signs shall be allowed on an individual lot.

706.05-7 For industrial parks and business parks or other similar groups of business establishments serviced by one entrance, on separate parcels and generally separate parking lots; one freestanding sign is allowed not to exceed seventy-five (75) square feet in area for two to five tenants/owners and one hundred (100)

square feet in area for six and greater tenants/owners. Such signs may include the collective establishment name and the names of each business in the collective area. Each business/industry within the park may also place signage per Section 706.05-2 and 706.05-4.

706.06 Raphine Interstate Signage. The Raphine interchange has been recognized as unique from other interchanges and business districts in the County due to the influence of the trucking industry which has dominated the services in this area and has been well established for many years. In order to support the special needs of this industry, services within the B-1 and I-1 district who's properties are located up to .5 miles from the Raphine interstate interchange as measured from the center of the overpass and within 500 feet of the right-of way of the interstate may be allowed one additional on-premise, freestanding sign and an Electronic Message Center (EMC) as described below as approved during the site plan review process. It is the intent of this section to assure that these interstate businesses draw the maximum possible customers while abiding by the overall spirit and other requirements of this ordinance.

706.06-1 The additional on-premise, freestanding sign shall not exceed an area of two hundred and fifty-eight (258) square feet with the height and square footage to be determined during the site plan review process but not to exceed one hundred (100) feet tall. The proportionality of the sign's height to square footage shall be considered during the review process.

706.06-2 Information Required. Each applicant requesting such a sign during the site plan review process shall submit the following information.

- (a) A scaled site plan showing location, height and square footage of the proposed sign on the property and other improvements.
- (b) A USGS 7.5 minute series quad map showing the location of the proposed sign and its elevation or other comparable elevation maps.
- (c) An elevation plan for the proposed sign showing the proposed height from the fronting road grade and from sixteen hundred (1600) feet prior to the gore of the appropriate exit ramp. Photographic simulation may be submitted to supplement this information.

706.06-3 Height and Square Footage Justification. The allowable sign height and square footage shall be determined by its visibility at a distance of sixteen hundred (1600) feet from the gore of the appropriate interstate exit ramp. The maximum height allowed shall be that which is necessary for the sign message to be visible ten (10) feet above any obstruction, not to exceed one hundred (100) feet. If the sign message cannot be viewed at this distance for reasons such as topography, surrounding vegetation or road alignment, the maximum height for this additional on-premise, freestanding sign shall be twenty-five (25) feet and fifty (50) square feet.

706.06-4 Electronic Message Center. An EMC as defined in Section 302-183A may be

allowed under the following conditions:

1. The sign shall fit within the allowable height and square footage for the business or used as a means to reduce non-conforming square footage. In no case shall the sign exceed 20 feet in height and 50 square feet.
2. Displays shall be limited to messages that appear or disappear from the display and remain static with no movement or scrolling. In no case shall the display use the flash mode of operation.
3. Each message on the sign shall be displayed for a minimum of four seconds.
4. The EMC shall only be in operation during the hours of operation of the business.
5. The EMC percentage of the overall square footage shall not exceed 75 percent of the sign structure.
6. The background of a message or area not associated with a product logo displayed on the EMC shall remain unlit.
7. Nighttime illumination shall be limited to 1000 NITs.
8. The display may only be used to advertise goods and services sold on the property, time and temperature and public service announcements. The owner must register with Amber Alerts.
9. For purposes of this Section 706.06-4, electronic fuel pricing signs shall be exempt from the height and square footage requirements imposed on other EMCs and may be used to replace existing manual fuel pricing signs or may replace existing non-conforming signage. The pricing numbers shall remain static except when updated for new prices.

706.06B Interstate 64/81 Signage. Services within the B-1 and I-1 districts whose property is located within Interstate Commerce Overlay District as defined by the zoning map that are not eligible for a Virginia Logo or Tourist Oriented Directional Sign (TODS) or other such programs may be allowed a freestanding sign in addition to the sign allowed under Section 706.05 as approved during the site plan review process. It is the intent of this section to assure that these interstate businesses draw the maximum possible customers while abiding by the overall spirit and other requirements of the Comprehensive Plan and this ordinance.

706.06B-1 The additional on-premise, freestanding sign shall not exceed an area of one hundred and fifty (150) square feet with the height and square footage to be determined during the site plan review process but not to exceed seventy-five (75) feet tall. The proportionality of the sign's height to square footage shall be considered during the review process.

706.06B-2 Information Required. Each applicant requesting such a sign during the site plan review process shall submit the following information.

- (d) A scaled site plan showing location, height and square footage of the proposed sign on the property and other improvements.
- (e) An elevation plan for the proposed sign showing the proposed height from

the fronting road grade and from approximately one thousand (1000) feet prior to the gore of the appropriate exit ramp. Photographic simulations shall be submitted to supplement this information and a crane test shall be required to demonstrate the visibility requirements.

706.06B-3 Height and Square Footage Justification. The allowable sign height and square footage shall be determined by its visibility at a distance of approximately one thousand (1000) feet from the gore of the appropriate interstate exit ramp. The maximum height allowed shall be that which is necessary for the full face of the sign to be visible above any obstruction, not to exceed seventy-five (75) feet. If the sign face cannot be viewed from this distance at this height for reasons such as topography, surrounding vegetation or road alignment, no additional sign will be allowed.

706.06B-4 Sign Standards. Signs permitted under this Section shall meet the following standards.

1. Only the name of the business and the logo shall be allowed on the sign.
2. The sign shall be mounted on a single pole painted black.
3. The sign shall be setback from adjoining property lines a minimum of one (1) foot for every foot of height and a minimum of five (5) feet off of the edge of the interstate right-of-way.

706.07 Prohibited Signs in all Districts.

706.07-1 New billboards or any business or outdoor advertising sign which is not located on the premises that it identifies or advertises except as provided in Section 706.03-14.

706.07-2 Any sign which is fastened, placed, painted, or attached in anyway to, in or upon any tree, fence, public utility pole, rock, curbstone, sidewalk, lamp post, hydrant, bridge, highway marker or another sign, except as may be required by law, or placed by a duly authorized governmental agency or otherwise permitted in this ordinance. (See Section 706.04-1 and 706.04-2)

706.07-3 Strings of lights which include lights that outline property lines, sales area, or any portion of a structure, and are intended to advertised or draw attention to a business or commercial activity, except lights which are part of a holiday decoration, illuminate a Christmas tree sales lot or recreational resorts.

706.07-4 Any sign which uses the word "stop" or "danger" prominently displayed or which is a copy or imitation of official traffic control signs or conflicts with traffic safety needs due to location, color, movement, shape or illumination.

706.07-5 Signs with animated, blinking, chasing, flashing, or moving effects excluding time and temperature messages, to include Electronic Message Centers except where specifically allowed. Also prohibited are rotating or revolving signs and fluttering, spinning, windblown or inflated devices including pennants, propeller

discs, flags or banners which do not conform with the requirements of this Ordinance.

706.07-6 Searchlights, beacons or strobe lights, moored balloons or other tethered floating signs unless authorized by special exception for special events.
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706.07-7 Any sign which is manufactured and is designed to and effectively does distract the attention of passing motorists on any highway or roadway by any means or which is sound-producing and intended to attract attention regardless of whether or not the sign has a written message content.

706.07-8 Obsolete signs (on or off-premises) identifying a business or activity which no longer exists shall be removed at the owner's expense within thirty (30) days of notice.

706.08 Non-Conforming Signs.

706.08-1 Non-conforming signs shall be treated as a non-conforming structure per Section 708.02 of these regulations except as noted below.

706.08-2 The owner of any property on which there is located a non-conforming sign shall, upon notice from the Zoning Administrator, submit the name of the sign owner, the owner's address and verification that the sign was lawfully in existence at the time of adoption of this Ordinance. Such information and verification shall be submitted within sixty (60) days of notification. Failure to report these signs shall result in their removal at the owner's expense.

706.08-3 A non-conforming sign which is deteriorating, destroyed or damaged other than by accident or acts of natural disaster, to any extent exceeding twenty-five (25) percent of its appraised value based on an assessment by the Commissioner of Revenue with assistance from the Virginia Department of Transportation and any other available sources, shall not be altered, replaced, repaired, or reinstalled unless it is in conformance with this Ordinance. If the damage is twenty-five (25) percent or less of the appraised value, the sign may be restored within ninety (90) days of notification of the damage, but shall not be enlarged in any manner.

706.08-4 A non-conforming on-premises sign shall be removed within ninety (90) days if the structure, business, building, or use which it advertises is abandoned, destroyed, demolished or remodeled to an extent exceeding fifty (50) percent of the appraised value of the principal structure. If a business changes but does not require remodeling in excess of the fifty (50) percent threshold, the new business will be allowed to change existing non-conforming sign faces.

706.09 Sign Maintenance and Removal. All signs and sign supports shall be maintained in good repair and in operating condition, including the replacement of defective parts, paint, repainting, refacing, cleaning and other acts of required maintenance. Should the signs not be properly maintained and become deteriorated or structurally unsafe, the Zoning Administrator shall notify the person, firm or

corporation owning or leasing the sign or the owner of the building or premises on which the sign is located to perform the required maintenance within ninety