



CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

Colorado Springs Sign Ordinance Updates Effective 4/1/12

At the March 27th meeting, City Council voted unanimously to adopt a new sign code for Colorado Springs. The new ordinance features an easy-to-use format with helpful tables, narrative and graphics. Following is a primer for the use of this code to help users understand and implement the new regulations. This document is not intended to be use as a comprehensive list rather it is to be used by applicants as a quick reference guide for the significant changes for the old code. The full text of the sign code is attached separately. The highlights of the code are as follow:

1. **Allocation by Use Not Zone.** All signage, whether for walls or freestanding, is now allocated on the basis of property use, the zone of the property is no longer a factor. Per the City zoning code, the major uses are broken into land use types which are described briefly as follows:
 - a. **Residential** – Includes apartments, townhomes and retirement homes.
 - b. **Office** – Includes general offices, medical offices and banks.
 - c. **Commercial** – Includes automotive, bars, general retail, restaurants or fast food, hotels, pharmacies or any use located within a retail building that contains at least three businesses. Offices such as insurance agencies that are included within a retail center are considered commercial. Stand alone office buildings are considered office.
 - d. **Industrial** – Includes warehouses, business centers and manufacturing.
 - e. **Civic** – Includes churches, schools and places of public assembly such as the World Arena.

Additionally:

- Detailed use classifications can be found in the City zoning code Section 7.3.203 or online: http://www.sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=855. Look in Chapter 7, Article 3, Part 2, Section 203.

2. **Wall Signage.** For each of these uses wall signs are allocated per the table 7.4.409.A.1 in the Zoning Ordinance. A summary of wall sign allocation is as follows:
 - a. **Residential** – 40 sq. ft.
 - b. **Office** – 1 sq. ft. per linear foot of building
 - c. **Commercial** – 1.5 sq. ft. per linear foot of building. Buildings set back more than 200' from the public right-of-way get 2 sq. ft. per linear foot of building.
 - d. **Industrial** – 1.5 sq. ft. per linear foot of building
 - e. **Civic** – 1 sq. ft. per linear foot of building. No signage is allowed on frontages adjacent to residential.

Additionally:

- Roof signs are no longer permitted
- All tenants are entitled to at least 25 sq. ft. of wall signage
- Buildings over five stories are entitled to additional signage above the 5th floor

3. **Freestanding Signage.** There is no longer a distinction between freestanding signs and low profile signage, all are considered freestanding. Freestanding signs can be allocated on an individual basis calculated from the length of one property line or can be allocated on a project wide basis as part of a Coordinated Sign Plan (CSP). Freestanding signage is allowed per the table on Section 7.4.409.A.2. A summary of freestanding sign allocation is as follows:
- a. **Residential** – a maximum of 32 sq. ft. seven feet tall
 - b. **Office** – generally allowed an area of .25 x the street frontage and a height of .06 x the street frontage
 - c. **Commercial** – generally allowed an area of .35 x the street frontage and a height of .07 x the street frontage
 - d. **Industrial** – generally allowed an area of .25 x the street frontage and a height of .06 x the street frontage
 - e. **Civic** – a maximum of 64 sq. ft. seven feet tall

Additionally:

- Building dimensions and street frontages can be scaled online using the City's Springsview program: <http://gis.springsgov.com/springsview/>.
 - Low Profile signs no longer deduct from wall sign allocation since these are now considered freestanding.
 - The setback for freestanding signs has been reduced to 0', although conflicts with corner visibility and utilities still need to be considered.
 - The number of freestanding signs increases for office or commercial properties with frontages over 1,000' long
 - Commercial properties with frontages less than 160 feet are allowed a 42 sq. ft. freestanding sign up to 7' tall. A 32 sq. ft. sign is allowed for offices with similarly short frontages.
 - In order to permit or modify new freestanding signs, nonconforming freestanding signs must be brought into compliance. If no new freestanding signs are proposed, nonconforming signs can remain.
 - Coordinated Sign Plans (CSP) may be used for project signage in lieu of individual freestanding signs. CSP signage regulations apply as follow:
 - A CSP is required to advertise across property boundaries within a project.
 - Projects using a CSP may count two street frontages to determine the size and number of freestanding signs.
 - A bonus area or height of up to 15% may be awarded for the use of landscaping, materials or architecture within a sign.
 - A CSP may be initiated by contacting the DRE office.
4. **Electronic Message Centers (EMC).** Electronic message centers are now allowed, but only for commercial land uses. Churches and offices do not qualify. EMC's are permitted as follow:
- a. Shall only be allowed as part of a freestanding sign and may not exceed 50% of the total area being permitted.
 - b. Shall be limited to static messages only, changed only through dissolve or fade transitions not exceeding one second.

- c. Commercial messages displayed shall only direct attention to a business, product, service, activity or entertainment that is conducted, sold or offered on the premise on which the sign is located
 - d. Shall have automatic dimmer software or solar sensors to control brightness for nighttime viewing. The intensity of the light source shall not produce glare, the effect of which constitutes a traffic hazard. Lighting shall not exceed five hundred (500) NITS or 0.3 footcandles between dusk to dawn as measured from the face of the sign.
 - e. Documentation shall be required from the sign manufacturer which verifies compliance with auto dimming and brightness requirements.
 - f. Temporary signage, i.e., banners shall be prohibited on any property that has an approved EMC.
 - g. Any property that wishes to add an EMC component to an existing freestanding sign must comply with current sign code standards before the EMC is approved.
5. **Other Provisions.** Sign types such as awning, menu order boards and window signs are listed in code section 7.4.409.C. Temporary signage is in 7.4.409.E. Additional notable code changes include the following:
- a. Up to three geometric shapes may now be used to measure sign area.
 - b. Window signage no longer deducts from wall allocation, however, window signage may not exceed 25% of the overall window area on any given frontage. Window signage does not need to be permitted.
 - c. Banners are only allowed 90 days per calendar year. Unpermitted banners will be added to sign permits if possible. Sign plans will be denied if banners have been up longer than 90 days. Vertical banners up to 2' x 4' are now allowed on light poles, but count against the 90 day allowance. Light pole banners must be placed at least 8' above the ground (14' if over vehicle areas).
 - d. A-frame signs (4' x 2') are now allowed, but must be placed within ten feet of the doorway entrance to the business.