

**YOLO COUNTY ZONING CODE  
TITLE 8 LAND DEVELOPMENT**

**CHAPTER 2: ZONING REGULATIONS**

**Article 12: Sign Standards**

**Sec. 8-2.1201 Purpose**

The purpose of this article is to establish standards for the uniform regulation of signs and related structures to ensure the adequate identification of businesses and other activities, while also maintaining and improving the quality of the visual environment within the unincorporated area. Accordingly, this Section is adopted to:

- (a) Ensure that signs erected within the unincorporated area are compatible with their surroundings and are consistent with the Countywide General Plan and related land use ordinances;
- (b) Aid in the identification of properties, land uses, and businesses;
- (c) Promote commerce, traffic safety, and community identity while also promoting and enhancing the quality of the visual environment;
- (d) Protect and enhance property values;
- (e) Lessen the objectionable effects of competition in the placement and size of signs;
- (f) Reduce hazards to motorists and pedestrians;
- (g) Avoid visual clutter;
- (h) Provide clear procedures and standards to control the location, size, type, number, and
- (i) All other matters pertaining to signs within the unincorporated area.

**Sec. 8-2.1202 Definitions**

For the purpose of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

**A-frame sign**

A temporary sign which has two sides, the frame or support structure of which is hinged or connected at the top of the sign in such a manner that the sign is easily moved or erected.

**Abandoned**

A sign is “abandoned” where, for a period of 90 days or more, there is no sign copy appearing on the sign or where the establishment to which the sign is attached has ceased operation and it is clear that the sign has been forsaken and deserted.

**Agricultural sign**

A sign advertising the sale of agricultural products grown or produced in the agricultural areas of the County, or advertising others uses allowed in the agricultural zones.

**Amortization period**

The term “amortization period” refers to the period of time set forth in Section 8-2.1204, below.

**Animated sign**

A sign with action, motion, sound, or changing colors, including signs that blink or flash with fluctuating lights or other illuminating devices which have a changing light intensity, brightness or color.

**Directional and information signs**

Signs that are necessary to direct or inform the public as to the location of publicly-owned facilities or institutions, business districts or historic locations or districts, not including commercial information such as advertising for specific businesses or products.

**Effective date**

The term “effective date” refers to the date on which the Ordinance substantially revising this section became effective.

**General business sign**

An on-premise sign, other than a monument, wall, or pole sign, which identifies a business or which advertises or promotes a commodity or service offered on the premises where such sign is located.

**Home occupation sign**

A sign used in conjunction with a home occupation.

**Identification sign**

A sign used to identify publicly-owned facilities or institutions, business districts or historic locations or districts, as well as individual communities, and may include a community’s name and logo, data, and the identification of community service organizations.

**Monument sign**

A “monument” sign is a sign which is completely freestanding and has its base on the ground on the same or adjacent parcels for the businesses that are being identified or advertised where the project utilizes common facilities, such as driveways and parking areas.

**Nonconforming sign**

Any sign that lawfully existed on the effective date of this ordinance but which does not conform to the provisions of this ordinance.

**Off-premises sign**

A sign which directs attention to a business, profession, commodity, service or entertainment conducted, sold, or offered elsewhere than upon the same lot or parcel on which said sign is located. This definition shall include billboards, posters, panels, painted bulletins, and similar advertising displays.

**Pole sign**

A permanent freestanding sign which is supported by one (1) or more poles in or upon the ground on the same or adjacent parcels for the businesses that are being identified or advertised where the project utilizes common facilities, such as driveways and parking areas.

**Political sign**

A temporary sign used in connection with a local, state, or national election or referendum.

**Projecting sign**

A "projecting" sign is a type of wall sign that extends horizontally from a building.

**Real estate sign**

A temporary sign pertaining to the sale or lease of the premises, or a portion of the premises, on which the sign is located.

**Sign**

A "sign" shall mean anything whatsoever placed, erected, constructed, posted, painted, tacked, nailed, glued, stuck, carved, grown, or otherwise fastened, affixed, constructed, projected, produced, or made visible, including billboards, and signboards, for out-of-door advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever.

**Suspended**

A "suspended" sign is a type of wall sign that is attached to and located below any permanent eave, roof or canopy.

**Wall sign**

A permanent sign which is painted on or attached directly to a building surface and identifies or advertises businesses located within the building.

**Sec. 8-2.1203 Prohibited signs**

In order to achieve the purposes of this section, the following types of signs and devices are prohibited:

- (a) Abandoned signs;
- (b) Animated signs, including electronic message display signs, and variable intensity, blinking, or flashing signs with the exception of time and temperature displays posting of gasoline or other regulated prices, and information provided by public agencies;

- (c) Any sign illuminated by strobe, or flashing light;
- (d) Moving signs or signs that emit sound in order to attract attention;
- (e) Roof signs;
- (f) Signs that simulate in color, size, or design, any traffic control sign or signal, or that make use of words, symbols, or characters in a manner that interferes with, misleads or confuses pedestrian or vehicular traffic;
- (g) Signs on a natural feature such as rock, tree, mound, hill or mountain;
- (h) Signs on inoperative vehicles and vehicles (including vehicle trailers) parked for the primary purpose of displaying a sign to passing pedestrian or vehicular traffic;
- (i) Signs for home occupations that do not comply with subsections (f) and (h) of Section 8-2.1207.

### **Sec. 8-2.1204 Nonconforming signs**

- (a) Any sign lawfully erected and maintained prior to the effective date, but which does not conform to the provisions of this Section, is a legal nonconforming sign during the amortization period. A lawfully erected and maintained sign that exceeds the area or height regulations, as set forth in the provisions of this Section, by five percent or less shall not be deemed nonconforming on the basis of area or height.
  - (1) Every on-site sign that becomes legally non-conforming upon the effective date shall not be required to be removed, except as provided for in California Business & Professions Code sections 5492, 5493 5495, and 5497. Such signs will be allowed within the amortization period, subject to subsections (c) and (d), below.
  - (2) Every off-site sign that becomes legally non-conforming upon the effective date shall not be required to be removed, except as provided for in California Business and Professions Code sections 5412, 5412.1, 5412.2, and 5412.3. Such signs will be allowed within the amortization period, subject to subsections (c) and (d), below.
- (b) Any sign that was not lawfully erected prior to the effective date is an illegal nonconforming sign. An illegal nonconforming sign must be removed in accordance with the provisions of this Section that apply to legal nonconforming signs that have exceeded the authorized amortization period.
- (c) No legal nonconforming sign shall be altered, relocated, replaced, enlarged or reconstructed, except in such a manner as to cause the sign to conform fully to this Section. A legal nonconforming sign may be maintained or the advertising copy changed without violating this provision.

- (d) A legal nonconforming sign destroyed or damaged to the extent of fifty percent or greater of its value as of the date of such destruction or damage ceases to be nonconforming and shall be replaced, removed or repaired in full conformance with the provisions of this Section.
- (e) Unless a longer period is required by California law, all legal non-conforming signs shall have a useful life and legal life of fifteen years, calculated from the effective date. Upon expiration of the amortization period, or the occurrence of any of the events set forth in subsections (c) and (d), above, the property owner shall remove the sign within thirty (30) days without compensation. If a property owner fails to remove the nonconforming sign following the expiration of the amortization period, the county may proceed with abatement procedures or other legal methods to ensure the prompt removal of the sign, and the County's removal and enforcement costs may be charged against the owner. Nothing in this section precludes a property owner from voluntarily conforming a nonconforming sign at any time before the end of the amortization period.

### **Sec. 8-2.1205 Signs and sign changes allowed without Site Plan Review**

The following signs and activities related thereto are allowed "by right" without a Site Plan Review in all zoning districts, provided that they comply with the general standards of Section 8-2.1207, below, and any required building permit is obtained:

- (a) Nonstructural modifications, including modifications to sign copy and routine maintenance;
- (b) Legal notices, identification, informational or directional/traffic controlling devices erected or required by governmental agencies;
- (c) Flags of national, state, or local governments, or nationally recognized religious, fraternal, or public service agencies, provided that the length of the flag shall not exceed one-fourth the height of the flagpole. The maximum allowed height of a flagpole in a residential zoning district shall be twelve (12) feet; the maximum height of a flagpole in a nonresidential zoning district shall be twenty (20) feet;
- (d) Street address numbers not exceeding an aggregate area of two square feet;
- (e) Holiday or seasonal decorations that are intended to be displayed for a short period of time not to exceed sixty (60) days. No holiday or seasonal decorations shall be placed within the right-of-way of any street, road, or highway located within the unincorporated area of Yolo County. No holiday or seasonal decorations shall have lights that interfere in any manner with the operation of motor vehicles on any street, road, or highway; and
- (f) Temporary signs of any nature, including temporary event and/or political signs, that are posted for a duration of not more than 90 days. Temporary event and/or political signs shall be placed no sooner than 90 days prior to the scheduled event or election, and shall be removed within 10 days after such event or election, as

required by the State Outdoor Advertising Act. Such signs shall not be larger than thirty-two (32) square feet and be limited to one (1) per parcel, in addition to other signs allowed in this Section. No such sign shall be placed within the right-of-way of any street, road, or highway located within the unincorporated area of Yolo County or have lights that interfere in any manner with the operation of motor vehicles on any street, road, or highway.

### Sec. 8-2.1206 Sign application and approval requirements

- (a) No sign shall be installed, constructed, or altered without prior approval by the County in accordance with the permit requirements set forth in Table 8-2.1206, below, and this section, with the exception of those signs allowed by right without Site Plan Review pursuant to Section 8-2.1205, above.

**Table 8-2.1206  
Allowed Signs and Permit Requirements  
for All Zones**

<b>A = Allowed use, subject to zoning clearance*</b> <b>SP = Site Plan Review</b> <b>UP (m) = Minor Use Permit</b> <b>UP (M) = Major Use Permit</b> <b>N = Use Not Allowed</b>	<b>Land Use Permit Required by Zones <sup>(1) (2)</sup></b>					<b>Specific Use Requirements or Performance Standards <sup>(3)</sup></b>
	A-N, A-X, A-R	R-R, R-L	R-M, R-H	A-C, C-L, C-G, C-H, DMX	A-I, L-I, H-I, OPRD	

<b>Sign Type</b>						
Real estate signs	A	A	A	A	N	See Sec. 8-2.1207(b)
Directional and information signs	SP/UP(m)	SP/UP(m)	SP/UP(m)	SP/UP(m)	SP/UP(m)	See Sec. 8-2.1207(c) and (d)
Identification signs	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	See Sec. 8-2.1207(e)
Agricultural signs	SP/UP(m)	N	N	N	N	See Sec. 8-2.1207(f) and (g)
General business signs	N	SP	SP	SP	SP	See Table 8-2.1207, Sec. 8-2.1207(h) (i), and (j), and Sec. 1208.
Monument signs	N	N	SP	SP	SP	
Wall signs	N	N	SP	SP	SP	
Pole signs	N	N	N	N/SP/ UP(m) <sup>(4)</sup>	N	
Off-premises signs	N	N	N	N	N	

- Notes: 1. For all other zone districts not listed here (PR, OS, overlay zones), see Section 8-2.1207(k).  
2. All signs must be appurtenant to the use allowed in the zone district.  
3. General and design standards for all signs are set forth in Sections 8-2-1207 and 1208.  
4. Pole signs are only allowed in the C-H zone

- (b) Unless an application for a Minor Use Permit is required, an application for a Site Plan Review shall be filed and processed with the Community Services Department and fees shall be paid. The application shall include architectural elevations and plans of all proposed signs drawn to scale, with all dimensions noted, and include illustrations of copy, colors, materials, and samples of the proposed colors and materials. The required architectural elevations shall show both the proposed signs, and any structures on which they will be placed. All applications under this section shall be processed and decided in a time and manner consistent with applicable requirements of the Permit Streamlining Act or within 180 days after the application is complete, whichever is greater.
- (c) The Zoning Administrator shall be the authority for all sign Site Plan Review applications, and may approve only those that comply with the general standards and design standards required in Sections 8-2.1207 and 8-2.1208, below. The Zoning Administrator may impose additional conditions of permit approval as are reasonably necessary to achieve the purposes of this section. The Zoning Administrator may approve monument signs that are larger in area or height than the normal standards under the circumstances described in Section 8-2.1207(i). All other deviations from these sign standards shall be through the Minor or Major Variance process, as outlined in Sections 8-2.216 and 8-2.218.
- (d) In his or her sole discretion, the Zoning Administrator may require a public hearing, or may refer the application to the Planning Commission, if specific issues warrant an opportunity for public notice and an opportunity to comment on a proposed sign and a public hearing is not otherwise required by law, as allowed under Section 8-2.206(e).
- (e) Appeals of decisions of the Zoning Administrator or Planning Commission shall be conducted according to Section 8-2.225.

### **Sec. 8-2.1207 General standards for signs**

- (a) Signs are allowed in the various zones in the unincorporated area, subject to the design standards set forth in Section 8-2.1208, and subject to the general standards and limitations set forth in this Section and in Table 8-2.1207, below.
- (b) Real estate signs advertising the sale, lease or exchange of real property are allowed subject to the following requirements: not more that twenty-four (24) square feet in area and eight (8) feet in height; not illuminated; and not more than one such sign per parcel of land.
- (c) Directional and information signs necessary to direct or inform the public as to the location of publicly-owned facilities or institutions, business districts or historic locations or districts, not including commercial information such as advertising for specific businesses or products. Such signs shall not exceed forty (40) square feet in area or ten (10) feet in height and shall be limited to one per parcel.

**Table 8-2.1207**

**Sign Standards in Each Zoning District<sup>(1) (2)</sup>**

Zoning Districts	Maximum Size of Ag or General Signs Allowed	Maximum Size and Height of Monument Signs Allowed <sup>(3)</sup>	Maximum Size of Wall Signs Allowed	Maximum Size of Pole Sign Allowed
A-N, A-X	32 sf in size 10 feet in height	n/a	16 sf in overall size	n/a
A-R, RR, R-L <sup>(4)</sup>	24 sf in size 8 feet in height	n/a	n/a	n/a
R-M, R-H <sup>(4)</sup>	24 sf in size 8 feet in height	24 sf in size 8 feet in height	1 sf size per 2 feet of building frontage	n/a
A-C, C-L, C-G, DMX <sup>(5) (6)</sup>	12 sf in size 4 feet in height	48 sf in size 15 feet in height	1 sf size per 1 foot of building frontage	n/a
C-H <sup>(5)</sup>	12 sf in size 4 feet in height	75 sf in size 15 feet in height	1 sf size per 1 foot of building frontage	200 sf in size 60 feet in height (75 feet with UP)
A-I, I-L, I-H, OPRD <sup>(5)(7)</sup>	n/a	48 sf in size 15 feet in height	1 sf size per 2 feet of building frontage	n/a

- Notes: 1. For all other zone districts not listed here (PR, OS, overlay zones), see Section 8-2.1207(k).  
 2. All signs must be appurtenant to the use allowed in the zone district.  
 3. The Zoning Administrator may approve an increase in the size and height for monument signs, see Sec 8-2.1207(j).  
 4. For signs in residential zones, see Sec. 8-2.1207(h).  
 5. For signs in commercial and industrial zones, see Sec. 8-2-1207(i).  
 6. For signs in the DMX zone, see Sec. 8-2.1208(f).  
 7. The regulation of signs in the Office Park/Research and Development (OPRD) zone district may be defined in an overlaying Planned Development zoning district that is unique to the project.

sf = square feet of area  
 n/a = not allowed in zone district

- (d) Directional and information signs exceeding the size limitations set forth in subsection (c), above, may be allowed with the issuance of a Minor Conditional Use Permit. Such signs shall be no more than seventy-five (75) square feet in area and twenty (20) feet in height.
- (e) Identification signs for a community may include the community’s name and logo, data (elevation or population), and the identification of community service organizations with meeting dates and places. Such signs shall be no more than seventy-five (75) square feet in area and twenty (20) feet in height.
- (f) Agricultural signs advertising the sale of agricultural products grown or produced on lands within Yolo County shall not be illuminated, and are limited to one per



road frontage per parcel. Signs appurtenant to a licensed home occupation shall be limited to a single non-illuminated free-standing or wall-mounted sign that is not more than six (6) square feet in area and four (4) feet in height.

- (g) Agricultural signs not located on the same parcel that is selling the agricultural products shall be no more than six (6) square feet in area and ten (10) feet in height, are limited to one per road frontage per parcel, shall not be illuminated, and shall be located no more than two (2) miles from the main parcel. Agricultural signs not located on the same parcel exceeding these size or geographic limitations may be allowed with the issuance of a Minor Use Permit. Such signs shall be no more than thirty-two (32) square feet in area and ten (10) feet in height, shall not be illuminated, and are limited to one per road frontage per parcel, and shall be located no more than four (4) miles from the main parcel.
- (h) Signs allowed in the residential zones are limited to the following:
  - (1) One identification sign on the road frontage(s) of a subdivision, mobile home park, apartment or condominium complex, group quarters, or permitted institutional use.
  - (2) For non-residential uses or structures permitted or conditionally permitted In the R-M and R-H zones, one general or one monument sign on the road frontage(s) of each parcel, and one wall sign for each business or tenant on each frontage or building face having a public entrance.
  - (3) Signs appurtenant to a licensed home occupation shall be limited to a single non-illuminated wall-mounted sign that is not more than two (2) square feet in area.
- (i) Signs allowed in the commercial and industrial zones are limited to the following:
  - (1) One monument sign on the road frontage(s) of each parcel.
  - (2) One wall or one general sign (not both) for each business or tenant on each frontage or building face having a public entrance.
  - (3) In the C-H zone only, one pole sign on the road frontage(s) of each parcel.
- (j) The Zoning Administrator may approve an increase of up to twenty-five percent (25%) in the allowed size and/or height of monument signs in return for an applicant or applicants combining multiple individual tenant signs on several frontages or on adjacent parcels in one shared monument sign.
- (k) Any deviation (increase) of up to 25% of these sign standards may be approved by the Zoning Administrator through the discretionary Minor Variance process. Any deviation of greater than 25% from these standards shall be approved through a Major Variance process by the Planning Commission.
- (l) Signs allowed in the Parks and Recreation (P-R), Public Open Space (POS) Public and Quasi-Public (PQP), Specific Plan (S-P), Planned Development (PD), and the overlay zones are limited to the following:
  - (1) In the P-R, POS, and PQP zones, directional and information signs of any size or number necessary to direct or inform the public as to the location, history, and purpose of publicly-owned facilities, publicly-owned natural or

recreational resources, or other appurtenant uses or structures, provided that the signs are consistent with all other regulations and standards included in Article 8.

- (2) In the P-R, POS, and PQP zones, general signs necessary to direct or inform the public as to the quasi-public services offered on a privately-owned property, including religious, educational, and other allowed quasi-public uses, provided that the general signs are no more than 32 square feet in size and 10 feet in height, and are consistent with all other regulations and standards included in Article 8.
- (3) In the S-P zone, signs that are consistent with the interim agricultural or other uses prior to the adoption of a Specific Plan, or signs that are consistent with the adopted Specific Plan, provided that any sign is consistent with all other regulations and standards included in Article 9.
- (4) In the Planned Development (PD) zone, signs that are consistent with the adopted PD zoning or are consistent with the sign regulations for the zone or zones that are associated with the PD zoning.
- (5) In the overlay zones (SP-O, NH-O DP-O, MR-O, and A-O zones), signs that are consistent with the underlying zoning district, provided that any sign is consistent with all other regulations and standards included in Article 9.

## **Sec. 8-2.1208 Design standards for signs**

The following design standards apply to permitted signs located in all zone districts:

- (a) Proposed signs shall not unreasonably block the sight lines of existing signs on adjacent properties from nearby public right-of ways and paths of travel. The placement and size of a sign shall not impair pedestrian or vehicular safety.
- (b) The design, height, location, and size of the sign should be visually complementary and compatible with the scale and architectural style of the primary structures on the site, the natural features of the site, and structures and prominent natural features on adjacent properties on the same street.
- (c) Illuminated Signs: Lighting for illuminated signs shall be so arranged that it will not create a hazardous glare for pedestrians or vehicles on either a public street or on any private premises.
- (d) Monument Signs: Monument signs shall be placed so as not to obstruct visibility necessary for safe vehicular and pedestrian circulation, but may be placed in required street yard and/or setback areas.
- (e) Wall signs: All wall signs, including but not limited to projecting and suspended signs, shall conform to the following requirements:
  - (1) The placement and height of the sign on the site shall be appropriate to the size of buildings and other features on the site, whether the sign is freestanding or projecting;

- (2) A proposed suspended, projecting, or wall sign shall be consistent with the architectural design of the structure. Signs that cover windows, or that spill over and/or cover architectural features are not allowed;
  - (3) The minimum clearance between the lowest point of a sign and the grade immediately below shall be eight (8) feet;
  - (4) The minimum horizontal setback between a sign and the curb line shall be two feet. The maximum projection over a public sidewalk shall be two-thirds the width of the sidewalk or six feet, whichever is less;
  - (5) The top of a projecting sign shall not exceed the height of the face of the building by which it is supported.
- (f) In addition to the design standards described above, the following additional design standards shall be applied in the Downtown Mixed Use (DMX) zone. If there is a conflict between the general or design standards for all signs and these sign regulations specifically adopted for the DMX zone, the DMX zone regulations shall apply:
- (1) Signs shall be provided for commercial uses and buildings along Yolo Avenue and Woodland Avenue that are appropriate in scale and location, and shall be architecturally integrated with the surroundings.
  - (2) Signs shall be clearly integrated and consistent in design and materials with the architecture of the building. Signage in the business district should support the district's character and not detract from the area.
  - (3) Monument signs are preferred. Pole signs are prohibited.
  - (4) Ground signage shall be limited in height of five (5) feet.
  - (5) Attached signs shall be flat against the facade, or mounted projection from the facade.
  - (6) Window signage shall be limited to twenty (20) percent of the total window frontage per storefront.
  - (7) The maximum area of any single sign mounted perpendicular to a given facade shall not exceed ten (10) square feet.
  - (8) Signs shall maintain a minimum clear height above sidewalks of eight (8) feet.
  - (9) Signs shall not extend beyond the curb line.
  - (10) Signs located on the interior of a structure, but visible from the exterior of the building, are permitted and are not charged against the maximum allowable signage area if such signs are not physically attached or painted to the window and do not obscure more than 10% of ground floor street side building transparency. The 10% is not to exceed total glass area calculated for both unattached and temporary window signs.
  - (11) Temporary signs can take the form of banners, window graphics, or as placards integrated with a window display. Temporary signs are permitted on the interior of the business establishment only and shall be no more than 5 square feet of text and shall not exceed 10 square feet in size and no more than 10% of ground floor street side building transparency. Temporary signs shall not be displayed more than thirty days in a calendar year.
  - (12) One menu or sandwich board shall be allowed per street address. Menu boards shall not exceed eight (8) square feet in size (sign and copy area is calculated on one side only) and shall be positioned so as to be adjacent to that restaurant or business listed on the board and information on that

board shall be placed in a manner which is clearly visible to pedestrian traffic. All signs shall be removed at the end of each business day. All signs shall be securely anchored to the ground.

- (13) Murals are allowed and shall be reviewed for design by the Esparto Citizens Advisory Committee.

### **Sec. 8-2.1209 Substitution of non-commercial speech**

Any non-commercial message or speech may be substituted for the copy of any commercial sign allowed under this section.