

ORDINANCE NO. 2896 AS AMENDED

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING TITLE 17, CHAPTER 60, OF THE OFFICIAL CODES OF THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, MONTANA, PERTAINING TO THE SIGN CODE AND REPEALING ANY AND ALL PREVIOUS ORDINANCES OR INTERIM ORDINANCES

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, MONTANA:

Section 1 That Title 15, Chapter 11 OCCGF is hereby repealed.

Section 2 Title 17, chapter 60, as depicted in Amended EXHIBIT A, is hereby adopted.

PASSED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, MONTANA, this 5th day of April , 2005.

Randall H. Gray, Mayor

ATTEST:

Carolyn M. Horst, Deputy City Clerk

(SEAL OF CITY)

APPROVED FOR LEGAL CONTENT:

David V. Gliko, City Attorney

State of Montana)
County of Cascade : ss.
City of Great Falls)

I, Carolyn M. Horst, Deputy City Clerk of the City of Great Falls, Montana, do hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance No. 2896 was placed on its final passage and passed by the Commission of the City of Great Falls, Montana, at a meeting thereof held on the 5th day of April, 2005, and approved by the Mayor of said City on the 5th day of April, 2005.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of said City on this 5th day of April, 2005.

Carolyn M. Horst, Deputy City Clerk

(SEAL OF CITY)

State of Montana)
County of Cascade : ss.
City of Great Falls)

Carolyn M. Horst, being first duly sworn, deposes and says: That on the 5th day of April, 2005, and prior thereto, she was the Deputy City Clerk of the City of Great Falls, Montana; that as said Deputy City Clerk she did publish and post as required by law and as prescribed and directed by the Commission, Ordinance No.2896 of the City of Great Falls, in three conspicuous places within the limits of said City to-wit:

On the Bulletin Board, first floor, Civic Center Building;
On the Bulletin Board, first floor, Cascade County Court House;
On the Bulletin Board, Great Falls Public Library

Carolyn M. Horst, Deputy City Clerk

(SEAL OF CITY)

ORD. 2896 EXHIBIT "A" AMENDED

**Chapter 60
SIGN CODE**

Articles:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. General Provisions | 6. Design/Construction Requirements |
| 2. Prohibited Signs and Signs Exempt from Permit | 7. Permit, Inspections and Licenses |
| 3. Temporary Signs | 8. Enforcement |
| 4. On-Premise Signs | |
| 5. Off-Premise Signs | |

**Article 1
GENERAL PROVISIONS**

Sections:

- 17.60.1.010 Title
- 17.60.1.020 Intent and Purpose
- 17.60.1.030 Definitions

17.60.1.010 Title.

This chapter is known as the Great Falls Sign Code, may be cited as such and is referred to in this chapter as "this Code."

17.60.1.020 Intent and Purpose.

The intent of this Code is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Great Falls; to provide for a well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing appearance of the community; and to provide adequate business identification and advertising communication. The purpose of this Code is to establish parameters for size, location, type, maintenance and construction of signs and sign structures within the City of Great Falls in order to:

- A. Promote a positive economic and business climate through distinctive and effective signage.
- B. Improve Great Falls' community image by eliminating sign clutter.
- C. Encourage signage of a scale and character consistent with building, site, streetscape and neighborhood.
- D. Ensure protection of pedestrians and motorists from injury and/or damages attributable to distractions and obstructions caused by improperly placed signs.
- E. Provide a comprehensive and cohesive code that is readily understood and consistently applied.
- F. Provide effective and binding code implementation and enforcement measures.

17.60.1.030 Definitions. See 17.8.140

THESE DEFINITIONS WILL BE CODIFIED IN 17.8.140. HOWEVER, FOR THE PURPOSES OF SIMPLYFYING ADOPTION OF THIS ORDINANCE, THE DEFINITIONS ARE PROVIDED.

A-type sign: See sandwich board sign.

Abandoned sign: a sign that has not advertised a bona fide business, product or service for a period of one hundred eighty (180) consecutive days; a sign that is damaged, in disrepair or vandalized and not repaired within thirty (30) days from the onset of damages.

Approved plastic: slow-burning plastic of no greater combustibility than that approved for sign use by Underwriter Laboratories, Inc.

Awning or canopy: a material or structure intended to provide protection from the weather that is mounted on the exterior of a building. Signage placed on an awning or a canopy is calculated as wall signage.

Balloon: a lighter-than-air or gas-filled inflatable object attached by a tether to a fixed object.

Banner: fabric, plastic, paper or other light, pliable material not enclosed in a rigid frame.

Bench/Transit Shelter sign: an off-premise sign attached to a bench or transit shelter.

Billboard: a sign larger than two hundred (200) square feet in area, mounted on a permanent structure, designed to advertise products, services or businesses not available on the premise upon which the sign is located.

Boulevard banner: a decorative sign constructed of cloth, canvas or vinyl that contains upper and lower pole pockets and is secured by a pole banner bracket system.

Changeable Copy Sign: a sign whose content is changed by manual, electric, electro-mechanical or electronic means. Examples include electronic message boards, time and temperature boards or manually changed reader boards.

Central Business District: the area of the City enclosed by Park Drive, Ninth Street, Third Alley North and Third Alley South.

Comprehensive Sign Plan: a plan submitted for Design Review Board approval in conjunction with an application for a building or sign permit. The plan must show all signage for a planned or existing multi-tenant development.

Curb line: the line at the back of the curb nearest to the lot line. In the absence of a curb, the curb line is established by the City Engineer. (See Figure 2)

Directional Sign: a sign that designates the location or direction of a place or area.

Display surface: the area of a sign structure that displays the advertising message.

Electronic Message Board: see changeable copy signs

Electric sign: a sign containing electrical wiring.

Flag: a piece of fabric that is mounted along one side upon a pole, cable or rope.

Freestanding sign a.k.a. pole sign: a sign supported wholly by a pole or poles, I-beam or a structure in the ground and not a part of or attached to a building at any point.

Frontage: a side of a building that faces a public right-of-way or provides off-street parking, or provides a customer entrance, or any side of a lot or parcel that borders on a public right-of-way.

Height: a line of measurement between two given points contained in a plane that is perpendicular to ground level.

Incidental Sign: a sign indicating services, credit cards, hours of operation, or other similar information that pertains to the premises where the sign is located.

International Building Code: the current, adopted edition of the International Building Code published by the International Codes Council.

Logo: a graphic design representing an activity, service or business.

Low-profile sign: a freestanding pole or monument sign with a height limit of eight (8) feet from finished grade of the lot to the top of the sign structure. (See Figure 3)

Marquee: a permanent, roofed structure that projects over public property and is attached to and supported by a building.

Marquee sign: a sign attached to a marquee.

Monument sign: a low-profile, freestanding sign whose entire structure consists of solid material. Monument signs, in their entirety, are limited to a height of eight (8) feet.

Noncombustible material: material that does not ignite at or below a temperature of twelve hundred (1200) degrees Fahrenheit during a five-minute exposure and that does not continue to burn or glow at that temperature, as specified in the current, adopted edition of the International Building Code.

Nonstructural trim: molding battens, caps, nailing strips, latticing, walkways, cutouts or letters attached to a sign structure.

Occupancy: the purpose for which a building, or part thereof, is used or intended to be used.

Off-premise sign: a sign that directs attention to a business, commodity, service, activity or product not sold, conducted or offered for sale on the premise upon which the sign is located.

On-premise sign: a sign that directs attention to a business, commodity, service, activity or product sold, conducted or offered for sale on the premise upon which the sign is located.

Parapet: a low protective wall or railing along the edge of a raised structure such as a roof.

Pole sign a.k.a. freestanding sign: a sign supported wholly by a pole or poles, I-beam or structure in the ground and not a part of or attached to a building at any point.

Portable sign: a sign that is not permanently affixed to a building, structure or the ground.

Premise: a single tract of land, whether described by metes and bounds, certificate of survey, and/or by lot or lots and block designation as in a recorded plat, which at the time of application for a building permit or for taxation is designated by its owner or developer as the tract to be used, developed or built upon as a unit of land under single ownership or control.

Projecting sign: a wall sign that projects from and is supported by a building or structure.

Projection: the distance by which a sign extends over public property or beyond the building.

Real Estate Sign: a sign pertaining to the sale, lease or rental of land or buildings.

Right-of-way: a strip of land dedicated to or acquired for public use.

Riverfront Corridor: the area along both banks of the Missouri River:

1. On the east and south sides of the river, the Corridor is the area bordering River Drive and Giant Springs Road, running from the southernmost limits of the City to the northernmost limits.

2. On the west and north sides of the river, the Corridor includes the east side of Bay Drive and the east side of Third Street NW between Central Avenue West and the NorthWest Bypass.

Roof sign: a sign attached to roof structure -including parapet, fascia and rake framing, walls and/or columns of a building so that a portion of the advertising display is at or above roof level. Refer to Figure 4 for further clarification.

Rotating Sign: a sign or portion of a sign that revolves or rotates.

Sandwich board sign a.k.a. A-type sign: a portable sign that rests on the ground and is not permanently attached to anything.

Sign: a notice bearing a name, direction, warning or advertisement that is displayed or posted for public view.

Sign structure: the supports, uprights, braces and framework of a sign.

Special event: a promotional or community event, e.g. a bazaar, street fair, show, exhibition, sporting event, fair, auction, charity event or fun run.

Temporary sign: a sign, banner, pennant, valance or advertising display constructed of cloth, canvas, light fabric, cardboard, wallboard, plywood or other light material, with or without frames, intended for display during a limited period of time.

Transit shelter sign: an off-premise sign painted on or posted within a transit shelter.

Wall sign: a sign attached to the wall of a building or structure with the exposed face of the sign in a plane parallel to the plane of the wall. Wall signs include signs painted on awnings or canopies and the exterior walls of buildings.

Window sign: a sign affixed to a window.

Article 2

PROHIBITED SIGNS AND SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMIT

Sections:

17.60.2.010 Prohibited Signs and Exceptions

17.60.2.020 Signs Exempt From Permit

17.60.2.010 Prohibited Signs and Exceptions. The following signs are prohibited within the City of Great Falls:

A. Temporary signs located on public property, except light pole banners for community events and authorized Central Avenue banners. Sandwich boards are allowed on public property in the Central Business District only.

B. Portable changeable-copy signs, balloons, whirligigs and other ~~fluttering~~, flashing, spinning, rotating or similar motion-based signs or devices. This includes signs with moving parts, flashing lights of any kind and/or sound, but does not prohibit electronic message boards or electronic changeable copy signs. Light beams, holograms and rotating beacons or signs that simulate traffic signals or emergency response equipment or cause a traffic distraction are prohibited.

C. Roof signs which extend more than half way up the roof to the ridge line. (See Figure 4.)

D. Signs advertising a product, service or business that are carried, worn or otherwise supported by a person or animal except during licensed parades and community events. This does not apply to uniforms and corporate wear.

E. Signs on City trees, utility poles, street lights, traffic control boxes or other public property. This does not apply to official government signs.

F. Vehicles used as on-premise or off-premise signs. Vehicles and trailers existing for the primary purpose of advertising are prohibited. Such vehicle-signs are not permitted in public rights-of-way, on public property or on private property where such objects are visible from the public right-of-way. This restriction is intended to prohibit the use of vehicles for the singular purpose of on-premise or off-premise advertising. This restriction shall not be construed to prohibit normal advertising on commercial vehicles, e.g. firm name, telephone number, business address, major enterprise, principal products or services. This restriction shall not be construed to limit political signs mounted on vehicles. Commercial transportation vehicles that are licensed, self-propelled, in compliance with State and City statute and/or ordinance requirements and are operating in the function for which they are intended are not subject to this prohibition.

17.60.2.020 Signs Exempt From Permit. The following signs do not require sign permits. However, signage must be in compliance with this Code in all other respects.

A. Flags, emblems, crests or insignia of any nation, political subdivision, corporation or any other entity or business.

B. Government and Public Utility Signs. This includes traffic regulatory, warning signs, information or directional signs, temporary special event signs, public notices and identification signs for public buildings and grounds that are erected, installed or placed by or on behalf of any federal, state, county or city government. Public utility signs showing locations of underground facilities or public telephones, and safety signs on construction sites, are included within this exemption.

C. Real estate signs. Each premise that is for sale, lease or rent is allowed two (2) real estate signs no larger than six (6) square feet in area and six (6) feet in height in residential zoning districts or thirty-two (32) square feet in area and six (6) feet in height in commercial and industrial districts. A separate open house sign may be displayed during open house hours only.

D. Construction signs displaying the names of general and sub-contractors, architects, designers, financial underwriters, etc. provided that such signs do not exceed sixteen (16) square feet in area and four (4) feet in height in residential zoning districts or thirty-two (32) square feet in area and ten (10) feet in height in commercial and industrial districts. Larger on-premise signs promoting a new development would be allowed by permit as a temporary sign.

E. Ideological signs no larger than six (6) square feet in area and four (4) feet in height.

F. Ground level window signs that are no larger than one-third (1/3) of an architecturally distinct window. Signs in windows above ground level are allowed for business identification purposes only and must not exceed one-fourth (1/4) of the area of a given window. (See Figure 2)

G. On-premise directional or incidental signs not exceeding four (4) square feet in area that are not designed to be legible from an off-premise position.

H. Political signs no larger than sixteen (16) square feet in area and four (4) feet in height. Signs may be placed no earlier than sixty (60) days prior to any election. Signs must be removed within seven (7) consecutive days after an election. When a primary election is held in September, successful candidates may leave signs up through the general election. Political signs must be placed at least twelve (12) feet from the back of the curb. Vehicular and pedestrian sight distances must be unobstructed.

I. Non-illuminated temporary signs for civic, charitable, educational, religious events/celebrations or special non-profit community events/celebrations are allowed without permit but placement must comply with provisions of this Code. (See Figure 6.) One (1) off-premise special event sign is allowed per premise. The sign is limited to

thirty-six (36) square feet. The sign display is limited to ten (10) days before the event and must be removed within seventy-two (72) hours of the close of the event.

J. Special community event light-pole banners are allowed in the public right-of-way.

K. Home occupation signs and nameplates in residential districts, provided such signs are not illuminated, do not exceed two (2) square feet in area and are attached to the residence.

L. Street number signs not exceeding four (4) square feet

M. Garage Sale signs not exceeding four (4) square feet displayed on the day of the sale only. Signs placed on public property as well as signs not removed at the end of the sale will be subject to citation.

Article 3 TEMPORARY SIGNS

Sections:

17.60.3.010 On-Premise Temporary Signs

17.60.3.020 Central Avenue Banners

17.60.3.010 On-Premise Temporary Signs. Each commercial or industrial premise may receive a permit for one (1) temporary sign of up to sixty-four (64) square feet. . Banners, wind signs and sandwich board signs are considered temporary. The permit may be granted for up to sixty (60) days. For a fee of one hundred (100) dollars, an annual permit may be issued for one (1) temporary sign per premise for a period of one year. The following restrictions apply:

A. Temporary signs must be located totally on private property and no closer to the public right-of-way than one-half (1/2) the distance between the right-of-way and the closest building. (See Figure 6)

B. Temporary signs must be well-maintained and secured. Signs may not be tattered or torn.

C. Temporary signs may not be displayed in place of permanent signage. Businesses must display permanent signage no later than forty-five (45) days after commencement of commercial operations or show proof that signage is on order.

D. Temporary signs must be of professional quality.

E. Large inflatables are considered temporary signs. Permits must be obtained before they are displayed. Inflatables may not be higher than twenty-five (25) feet above the ground as measured from the top of the inflatable.

17.60.3.020 Central Avenue Banner This section applies only to off-premise banners displayed across Central Avenue.

- A. Banners may be no larger than one hundred (100) square feet.
- B. One Banner permit may be issued at a time for a maximum of thirty (30) consecutive days. Time allowances are exclusive, i.e. only one sign may be displayed at a time. The entire time allowance for a given Banner permit must expire before another Banner may be displayed.
- C. Permission to connect a banner must be received from the owners of the banner-anchoring buildings.

ON PREMISE SIGNAGE TABLE

	NEIGHBORHOOD/ COMMERCIAL M-1, C-1, C-5, PLI, B-1, B-1L	COMMERICAL/ INDUSTRIAL C-2, C-3, I-1, I-2	CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT C-4, C-5, B-3	RIVERFRONT CORRIDOR M-2, PLI	PREMISES EXCEEDING 50,000 S.F. IN AREA
TOTAL ALLOWANCE PER PREMISE (S.F.)	50	Wall signage allowance plus 200 sf	Wall signage allowance plus 100 sf	Wall signage allowance plus 100 sf	Wall signage allowance plus 300 sf
WALL Signs per Frontage Area	1 (max 2 signs) 32 S.F. per sign	10% of building wall area per frontage	10% of building wall area per frontage	10% of building wall area per frontage	10% of building wall area per frontage
FREE-STANDING POLE) Signs per Frontage Area (S.F.)	1 32 /sign	1 1 S.F./linear foot of premise frontage Max. 200	1 1 S.F./linear foot of premise frontage Max. 100	1 1 S.F./ linear foot of premise frontage Max.100	1 1 S.F./ linear foot of premise frontage Max. 300
Height (FT)	6	25	20	20	25
PROJECTING Signs in Place of Wall or Free-standing Sign Maximum Area (S.F.)	32	32	32	32	32

Article 4 ON-PREMISE SIGNS

Sections:

- 17.60.4.010 Residential Commercial Districts
- 17.60.4.020 Commercial and Industrial Districts
- 17.60.4.030 Central Business District
- 17.60.4.040 Riverfront Corridor
- 17.60.4.050 Premises Exceeding 40,000 Square Feet
- 17.60.4.060 Montana Expo Park, Multi-Sports Park, Legion Ball Park and the Soccer Park

17.60.4.010 Residential/Neighborhood Commercial Districts. The following on-premise signs are authorized for commercial-approved uses in residential neighborhoods subject to a sign permit. Home occupations regulated by Section 5.02.220K of OCCGF are not included in this section. Each commercial premise is limited to a maximum of fifty (50) square feet of total signage. If the premise houses multiple tenants, the owner is responsible for allocating signage amongst the separate tenants/businesses.

A. Wall signs.

1. One (1) wall sign per premise frontage. No more than two (2) wall signs per premise.
2. Maximum area per sign: thirty-two (32) square feet.
3. Maximum projection – excluding awnings: twenty-four (24) inches.
4. Wall signs may be placed no higher than six (6) inches below the top of the wall or parapet.
5. Wall signs may not obstruct required windows and/or required exits.

B. Freestanding signs including pole signs, monument signs and low-profile signs.

1. One (1) freestanding sign per premise frontage is allowed as long as there is a perimeter separation of 250 feet between any two signs. No more than two (2) signs per premise are allowed.
2. Maximum area per sign: thirty-two (32) square feet.
3. Height limit is six (6) feet above finished grade. (See Figure 8)
4. Freestanding signs must be located entirely on private property.
5. When a free standing sign structure is installed, the base of the sign must be landscaped. If the freestanding sign is located within a vehicular use area, the landscaped area must be designed to protect sign base supports from vehicular incursion. Support protection examples include bollards, stones or curbing. Such protection must be integrated with the landscaping. Landscaping may contain trees, shrubs, groundcovers, perennial or annual flowers, turf and organic or inorganic mulches. Living plant materials must cover at least seventy-five (75) percent of the landscaped area.

C. Projecting signs. Each business with frontage on a public right-of-way is allowed one (1) projecting sign along the public right-of-way.

1. A projecting sign may be used instead of, but not in addition to, a freestanding sign; no projecting sign is permitted on any building frontage that contains a wall sign advertising the same business.

2. Projecting signs and wall signs advertising the same business may not occupy the same building frontage.

3. Projecting signs are limited to sixteen (16) square feet plus one (1) additional square foot for each three (3) feet of linear building footage in excess of fifty (50) feet. Maximum allowance: thirty-two (32) square feet. (See Figure 9)

4. Projecting signs must not project over public property.

17.60.4.020 Commercial and Industrial Districts. The following on-premise signs are authorized on property zoned commercial, industrial or transitional subject to a sign permit. Property contained within the Central Business District is regulated by Section 17.60.4.030 of this chapter. The Riverfront Corridor District is regulated by Section 17.60.4.040. Premises exceeding 50,000 square feet are regulated by Section 17.60.4.050.

Maximum sign allocation for each commercial and/or industrial premise under this section equals the standard wall signage allocation plus two hundred (200) square feet maximum freestanding signage. If the premise houses multiple tenants, the owner is responsible for allocating signage amongst the separate tenants/businesses.

A. Wall signs. (See Figure 7)

1. A maximum of ten (10) percent of each frontage building wall, excluding service delivery areas and parapets, may be covered with wall signage.

2. Each premise is allowed a minimum of twenty-four (24) square feet of wall signage.

3. Maximum projection – excluding awnings: twenty-four (24) inches.

4. Wall signs may be placed no higher than six (6) inches below the top of the wall or parapet.

4. Wall signs may not obstruct required windows and/or required exits.

B. Freestanding signs including pole signs, monument signs and low-profile signs. (See Figure 8)

1. One (1) freestanding sign per premise street frontage. A perimeter separation of two hundred and fifty (250) feet is required between any two freestanding signs on the premise.

2. No more than two (2) signs are allowed per premise.

3. A maximum area of one (1) square foot per linear foot of premise frontage facing one street or avenue is allowed. A maximum of two hundred (200) square feet of total freestanding signage per premise is allowed.

4. Height limit is twenty-five (25) feet above finished grade of the lot

5. Freestanding signs must be located entirely on private property.

6. Signs may not project over public property.

7. When a freestanding sign structure is installed, the base of the sign must be landscaped. If the freestanding sign is located within a vehicular use area, the landscaped

area must be designed to protect sign base supports from vehicular incursion. Support protection examples include bollards, stones or curbing that are integrated with the landscaping. Landscaping may contain trees, shrubs, groundcovers, perennial or annual flowers, turf and organic or inorganic mulches. Living plant materials must cover at least seventy-five (75) percent of the landscaped area.

8. A twenty (20) percent increase in maximum freestanding sign area is granted when signage is entirely low-profile.

C. Projecting signs. Each business with frontage on a public right-of-way is allowed one projecting sign along the public right-of-way. A sign permit is required. (See Figure 9)

1. A projecting sign may be used instead of, but not in addition to, a freestanding sign.

2. Projecting signs and wall signs advertising the same business may not occupy the same building frontage.

3. A projecting sign is limited to sixteen (16) square feet plus one (1) additional square foot for each three (3) feet of linear building footage in excess of fifty (50) feet to a maximum of thirty-two (32) square feet.

4. Projecting signs must not project over public property.

17.60.4.030 Central Business District. The following on-premise signs are authorized on property within the Central Business District. A sign permit is required.

A maximum of two (2) square feet of total signage for each linear foot of building frontage is permitted per premise to a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet. If the premise houses multiple tenants, the owner is responsible for allocating signage amongst the separate tenants/businesses. The following types of signs are allowed:

A. Wall signs.

1. A maximum of ten (10) percent of frontage building wall, excluding service delivery areas and parapets, may be covered with wall signage.

2. Each premise is allowed at least twenty-four (24) square feet of wall signage.

3. No single wall sign may exceed one hundred (100) square feet.

4. Maximum projection – excluding awnings: twenty-four (24) inches.

5. Wall signs may be placed no higher than six (6) inches below the top of the wall or parapet.

6. Minimum vertical clearance allowances.

a. Alley: fourteen (14) feet.

b. Other public property: eight (8) feet.

7. Wall signs may not obstruct required windows and/or required exits.

B. Freestanding signs - including monument signs and other low-profile signs.

1. One (1) freestanding sign per premise street frontage. A perimeter separation of two hundred and fifty (250) feet is required between any two freestanding signs. No more than two (2) signs per premise will be permitted.

2. Area may not exceed one hundred (100) square feet.

3. Height limit is twenty (20) feet from finished grade of the lot.

4. Freestanding signs must be located entirely on private property and must not overhang public property.

5. A twenty (20) percent increase in maximum freestanding sign area is granted when signage on the premise is entirely low-profile.

6. When a freestanding sign structure is installed, the base of the sign must be landscaped. If the freestanding sign is located within a vehicular use area, the landscaped area must be designed to protect sign base supports from vehicular incursion. Support protection examples include bollards, stones or curbing that are integrated with the landscaping. Landscaping may contain trees, shrubs, groundcovers, perennial or annual flowers, turf and organic or inorganic mulches. Living plant materials must cover at least seventy-five (75) percent of the landscaped area.

C. Projecting signs. Businesses with frontage on a public right-of-way are allowed one projecting sign along the public right-of-way. (See Figure 10)

1. Projecting signs may be used instead of, but not in addition to, a freestanding signs.

2. Projecting signs and wall signs advertising the same business may not occupy the same building frontage.

3. A projecting sign is limited to sixteen (16) square feet plus one (1) additional square foot for each three (3) feet of linear building footage in excess of fifty (50) feet to a maximum of thirty-two (32) square feet.

4. Projecting signs may extend no farther than six (6) feet over public property or more than two-thirds ($2/3$) the distance to the curb line, whichever is less.

5. Signs may project no farther than one (1) foot into an alley.

8. Minimum vertical clearance allowances.

a. Alley: fourteen (14) feet.

b. Other public property: eight (8) feet.

E. Sandwich board signs. Temporary sandwich board signs may be placed on public property within the Central Business District only. This is the only district in which sandwich boards are allowed on public property. Such signs require an annual permit to occupy the public right-of-way. (See Figure 10)

1. Sandwich board signs are limited to one (1) sign per business frontage and must conform to the following design standards:

a. Each sign may have a maximum of two (2) faces, not to exceed an aggregate total of twelve (12) square feet per sign.

b. Each sign must be secured in place by no less than two (2) weights of not less than ten (10) pounds each, placed upon the base material.

c. Sign permits are issued only to holders of insurance equal to that required for a sign contractor Class B license.

d. The permit fee for each sandwich board sign is established by City Commission resolution.

e. A sandwich board sign must be placed so that the middle third of the sidewalk is clear. A minimum of five (5) feet of sidewalk width must be unobstructed. (See Figure 10)

2. Sandwich board signs must be placed adjacent to or upon the permit-holding premises, may only be displayed during business hours of the advertised business and must be removed from public property during all other times.

3. Sandwich board signs may not be illuminated or energized.

4. The sign permit may be revoked at any time for lack of adequate maintenance or safety. The sandwich board sign will be removed by the sign owner upon notice of permit revocation. If not removed, the City may remove the sign. The sign becomes City property. The sign owner may reclaim the sign by paying a fifty (50) dollar fee.

17.60.4.040 Riverfront Corridor. The following on-premise signs are authorized on property zoned commercial, industrial or transitional within the Riverfront Corridor. A sign permit is required. The Riverfront Corridor is the area on both banks of the Missouri River:

1. On the east and south sides of the river, the Corridor is the area bordering River Drive and Giant Springs Road, running from the southernmost limits of the City to the northernmost limits.

2. On the west and north sides of the river, the Corridor includes the east side of Bay Drive and the east side of Third Street NW between Central Avenue West and the NorthWest Bypass.

The maximum sign allowance for each premise equals the standard wall signage allocation plus one hundred (100) square feet maximum freestanding signage. If the premise houses multiple tenants, the owner is responsible for allocating signage amongst the separate tenants/businesses.

A. Wall signs. (See Figure 7)

1. A maximum of ten (10) percent of each frontage building wall, excluding service delivery areas and parapets, may be covered with wall signage.

2. Each premise is allowed at least twenty-four (24) square feet of wall signage.

3. Maximum projection – excluding awnings: twenty-four (24) inches.

4. Wall signs may be placed no higher than six (6) inches below the top of the wall or parapet.

5. Wall signs may not obstruct required windows and/or required exits.

B. Freestanding signs including monument signs and other low-profile signs.

1. One (1) freestanding sign per premise street frontage. A perimeter separation of two hundred and fifty (250) feet is required between any two freestanding signs on the premise. No more than two (2) signs per premise.

2. Total area for all freestanding signs on the premise a may not exceed one hundred (100) square feet.
3. Height limit is twenty (20) feet from finished grade of the lot.
4. Freestanding signs must be located entirely on private property.
5. Freestanding signs may not project over public property.
6. A twenty (20) percent bonus for freestanding signs may be granted to premises that display signs no taller than eight (8) feet.
7. When a freestanding sign structure is installed, the base of the sign must be landscaped. If the freestanding sign is located within a vehicular use area, the landscaped area must be designed to protect sign base supports from the vehicular incursion. Support protection examples include bollards, stones or curbing that are integrated with the landscaping. Landscaping may contain trees, shrubs, groundcovers, perennial or annual flowers, turf and organic or inorganic mulches. Living plant materials must cover at least seventy-five (75) percent of the landscaped area.

C. Projecting signs. Businesses with frontage on a public right-of-way are allowed one projecting sign along the public right-of-way. (See Figure 9)

1. A projecting sign may be used instead of, but not in addition to, a freestanding sign;
2. Projecting signs and wall signs advertising the same business may not occupy the same building frontage.
3. A projecting sign is limited to sixteen (16) square feet plus one (1) additional square foot for each three (3) feet of building linear footage in excess of fifty (50) feet to a maximum of thirty-two (32) square feet.
4. Projecting signs must not project over public property.

17.60.4.050 Premises Exceeding (50,000) Square Feet. The following on-premise signs are authorized on premises zoned commercial, industrial, transitional or public lands and institutions that exceed 50,000 square feet. Montana ExpoPark, Multi- Sports Park, Legion Ball Park and the Soccer Park are covered under section 17.60.4.060.

The maximum sign allocation for each premise under this section equals the standard wall sign allocation plus three hundred (300) square feet maximum freestanding signage. If the premise houses multiple-tenants, a Comprehensive Signage Plan must be submitted to the Design Review Board. The owner of the premise is responsible for allocating signage amongst the separate tenants/businesses.

- A. Wall signs.
 1. A maximum of ten (10) percent of frontage building wall, excluding service delivery areas and parapets, may be covered with wall signage.
 2. Each premise is allowed at least twenty-four (24) square feet of wall signage.
 3. Maximum projection – excluding awnings: twenty-four (24) inches.
 4. Wall signs may be placed no higher than six (6) inches below the top of the wall or parapet.

5. Wall signs may not obstruct required windows and/or required exits.

B. Freestanding signs, including monument signs and other low profile signs.

1. A maximum of three hundred (300) square feet is allowed per premise.
2. One freestanding sign of no more than two hundred (200) square feet is allowed per street frontage. A perimeter separation of two hundred and fifty (250) feet is required between any two freestanding signs on any premise.
3. Height limit is twenty-five (25) feet from the finished grade of the lot, except in the Central Business District, Riverfront Corridor or a residential area where height is limited to twenty (20) feet, twenty (20) feet and six (6) feet, respectively.
4. Freestanding signs must be located entirely on private property.
5. Freestanding signs may not project over public property.
6. A twenty (20) percent increase in maximum freestanding sign area is granted when all freestanding signage is entirely low-profile.
7. When a freestanding sign structure is installed, the base of the sign must be landscaped. If the freestanding sign is located within a vehicular use area, the landscaped area must be designed to protect sign base supports from vehicular incursion. Support protection examples include bollards, stones or curbing that are integrated with the landscaping. Landscaping may contain trees, shrubs, groundcovers, perennial or annual flowers, turf and organic or inorganic mulches. Living plant materials must cover at least seventy-five (75) percent of the landscaped area.

C. Projecting signs. Each business with frontage on a public right-of-way is allowed one projecting sign along the public right-of-way. (See Figure 9)

1. A projecting sign may be used instead of, but not in addition to, a freestanding sign.
2. Projecting signs and wall signs advertising the same business may not occupy the same building frontage.
3. A projecting sign is limited to sixteen (16) square feet plus one (1) additional square foot for each three (3) feet of linear building footage in excess of fifty (50) feet to a maximum of thirty-two (32) square feet.
4. Projecting signs must not project over public property.

17.60.4.060 Montana ExpoPark, Multi Sports Park, Legion Ball Park and the Soccer Park. Montana ExpoPark, Multi Sports Park, Legion Ball Park and the Soccer Park are unique public properties that may conduct some commercial operations within the City of Great Falls. The following regulations apply to these properties:

A. Signs internal to the Montana ExpoPark, Multi Sports and Legion Ball Park that are not intended to be visible from public rights-of-way are exempt from all requirements of this chapter.

B. Permanent Freestanding signs are permitted at each primary entrance.

1. Montana ExpoPark: 3rd Street NW, the Northwest Bypass, 6th Street NW and the corner of 3rd Street and the Northwest Bypass.
 - a. Height limit: twenty-five (25) feet
 - b. Area limit: two hundred (200) square feet per sign.
2. Legion Ball Park: the corner of 25th Street N and River Drive.
 - a. Height limit: twenty (20) feet.
 - b. Area limit: one hundred (100) square feet.
3. Multi Sports Park: one (1) sign not to exceed ten (10) feet in height.
4. Soccer Park: one (1) sign not to exceed ten (10) feet in height per frontage.

C. Temporary Event Banners are allowed by permit.

1. Montana ExpoPark – temporary event banners not exceeding forty-eight (48) square feet, may be displayed on the fence, even if the fence is located in the public-rights-of-way, on 3rd St. NW, the Northwest Bypass and 6th St. NW. The Montana ExpoPark will pay an annual permit fee of five hundred (500) dollars to cover the temporary banners.
2. Legion Ball Park, Multi Sports and Soccer Park – one (1) temporary event banner not exceeding sixty (60) square feet is allowed per frontage.
3. Temporary banners must be well maintained. Banners that become torn, ripped or damaged must be removed or replaced immediately.
4. Banners must be of professional quality.

D. Wall Signage maximum: ten (10) percent of the wall area per frontage, excluding service delivery areas and parapets.

Article 5
OFF-PREMISE SIGNS

Sections:

- 17.60.5.100 Directional Free-Standing Signs
- 17.60.5.200 Billboards Signs
- 17.60.5.300 Bench/Transit Shelter Signs

17.60.5.100 Directional Free-standing Signs. An off-premise directional sign directs attention to business located on a separate premise. Off-premise directional signage is allowed in commercial and industrial districts with the following restrictions:

A. The sign area of the off-premise directional sign must be included in the total signage allotment for the premise upon which the sign is erected. Maximum size of an off-premise directional sign is two hundred (200) square feet. or

B. One (1) off-premise directional sign may be allowed for a business whose location is not visible and accessible to motoring public from a major arterial street and who cannot meet the requirements of part A. above. In these special situations, the Board of Adjustment may grant a Special Exception under the following conditions:

1. The location of the business precludes placement of a sign that is visible from a major roadway.
2. Other factors:
 - a. Off-premises signs are not allowed within residential zoning districts.
 - b. Special Exception signs are limited to the height allowed in the district the sign is erected and to thirty (30) square feet in area.

C. If a business qualifies for a Special Exception off-premise sign and elects to combine its allowable signage area with that of the premise, the total square footage of the resulting freestanding sign identifying the two businesses may equal the on-premise maximum freestanding sign allocation plus the thirty (30) square feet for the special exception off-premise sign.

17.60.5.200 Billboards - Purpose. The intent of this section is to regulate the visual impact of billboard signs; to improve the appearance of designated entryways and scenic corridors; and to encourage compatibility between billboard signs and neighboring property, e.g. parks, schools, places of worship, and residential areas.

17.60.5.210 Billboard Signs – Prohibited Locations. A billboard is an off-premise sign and may not be located on the same premise as that of the business advertised by the billboard. Billboard signs erected after the effective date of this ordinance shall comply with the following location limitations:

A. Billboard signs may only be erected in C-2, C-3, I-1 and I-2 zoning districts (general commercial and industrial).

B. Billboard signs may not be erected within two hundred (200) feet of the edge of a roadway surface along the following entry and scenic corridors known as Billboard-free Areas:

1. 10th Avenue South from I-15 Exit #278 to the intersection of 10th Avenue South and 2nd Street South
2. Along 10th Avenue South between 54th and 57th Streets
3. River Drive from the southernmost city limits to 38th Street North
4. Central Avenue West from 6th Street to the east bank of the Missouri River
5. Along the Old Havre Highway from the intersection of 15th Street to Smelter Avenue.

C. Billboard signs are prohibited in the following areas:

1. Zones C-5, C-6 and C-7.
2. Within three hundred (300) feet in any direction of a public park, public or private school, college or university, church, cemetery, courthouse, Civic Center, or public museum.
3. Within one hundred and fifty (150) feet in any direction of any lot or parcel that is zoned residential or used as a primary residential use of any kind.
4. Within one thousand (1000) feet of any other billboard sign, measured on the same side of the street. (See Figure 12)
5. Within three hundred (300) feet of any other billboard sign on a crossing street located on the same side of the street. (See Figure 12)

D. Minimum spacing requirement shall not apply to two faces that share a support structure and face different directions.

17.60.5.220 Billboard Standards. Billboards established after the effective dates of this Code shall conform to the following standards:

A. The maximum sign display area for any one billboard face shall be two hundred and fifty (250) square feet. Billboards located within the interstate corridor are exempt from this standard. (See Figure 12)

B. In the Interstate Corridor within the City of Great Falls, the maximum display area for any billboard face shall be four hundred and thirty-two (432) square feet.

C. Billboards may be single-faced or double-faced, but no billboard shall contain more than one face on each side of the display. The surface display area may not exceed a total area of five hundred (500) square feet per structure.

D. Billboard sign face limitations exclude border, trim, base or apron supports or other structural members, but include cut-outs, extensions or protrusions. Size limits apply to each sign face of a structure. Sign faces may be placed back-to-back with no more than one display per face.

E. The maximum overall height of a billboard sign shall not exceed thirty (30) feet above the grade of the roadway to which the sign is oriented. However, if the sign is located in the Riverfront Corridor, it is limited to twenty (20) feet above the grade of the roadway to which the sign is oriented.

F. Billboard structures must be located entirely on private property. No portion of any structure or sign face may overhang the public right-of-way.

17.60.5.230 Installation, Appearance and Maintenance. All billboards must be kept in good repair and maintained according to the following standards:

A. During periods of repair, alteration or copy change the facing may be removed for a maximum of forty-eight (48) consecutive hours.

B. All billboard signs must have the owner's name firmly attached to the sign structure.

C. Billboard structures must be single pole.

D. Billboard structures may not be placed on the roof or wall of a building or structure.

E. Sign structures must be painted, anodized or otherwise finished in earth tones of brown and green, including beige, mocha, forest and hunter green; but not teal or any fluorescent color. The paint or finish must not be peeling or obviously worn.

17.60.5.240 Maintenance and Repair Requirements.

A. If the Director of Community Development finds that any billboard, except one that is nonconforming, is not maintained in good repair and has not deteriorated more than fifty (50) percent of its replacement value, the Director of Community Development will notify the owner and order him to repair the billboard within a specified time allowing at least ten (10) calendar days.

B. If the Director of Community Development finds that the billboard has deteriorated more than fifty (50) percent of its replacement value, or is not repaired with the time specified in the repair notice, the Director will notify the owner of the billboard and the owner of the real property that the billboard is to be removed from the property within a specified time.

17.60.5.250 Legal Nonconforming Billboards. Billboard signs that do not conform to the provisions of this code, but that were legally constructed and permitted at the time of its installation are considered legally nonconforming and may remain subject to the following:

A. Downsizing required. Nonconforming billboards exceeding height and area limitations specified in the code must be downsized to meet requirements of area and height specified in this code by December 31, 2015, or be removed by the sign owner or the property owner. This does not apply to existing side-by-side faces.

B. Any nonconforming billboard sign destroyed or damaged beyond fifty (50) percent of its replacement value for any cause whatsoever will be reconstructed in compliance with all provisions of this code or be removed by the sign owner or property owner.

C. In no case may a billboard be repaired or maintained by substantially upgrading or replacing its structural supports. Substantial upgrading may include, but is not limited to, converting from wood to steel structure or a change from a multi-pole to a single-pole structure.

D. A non-illuminated billboard may be illuminated provided the subject billboard is not nonconforming because of its proximity to a residential area or its location within an entry or scenic corridor pursuant to 17.60.5.210.B.

E. Property annexed to the City of Great Falls after the effective date of this chapter is subject to all the provisions of this code.

17.60.5.300 Bench/Transit Shelter Signs.

A. Bench signs are defined as off-premise signs placed upon benches that are located on public property including sidewalks, surfaced boulevards and immediately adjacent private property. After the date of this ordinance bench signs in newly annexed areas will be limited to two per intersection.

B. Transit shelter signs are defined as off-premise signs placed upon transit shelters. They are located upon public property including sidewalks, surfaced boulevards and immediately adjacent private property.

C. Bench sign designs must be submitted in triplicate to the Community Development Department. Designs must be approved prior to permit issuance. Benches may be no longer than six (6) feet. They must be placed on concrete pads. A one-time design review fee of twenty-five (25) dollars for each bench design must be paid prior to permit issuance. (See Figure 14)

D. Bench signs in the Central Business District are limited to a total of fifty-six (56) and must be approved by the Community Development Department for compatibility with the streetscape program. A one-time design review fee of twenty-five (25) dollars for each bench sign design must be paid prior to permit issuance.

E. Transit shelter signs are limited to a maximum of fifty (50) percent of the square footage of walls exposed to vehicular traffic.

F. Bench/transit shelter sign permits are issued only to holders of insurance equal to that required for a sign contractor Class B license.

G. The permit fee for occupancy of public space by the bench/transit shelter sign is established by a resolution of the City Commission. The annual fee per sign is payable one year in advance and is due prior to permit issuance. The permit fee may be renewed annually by the permit holder by January 15th for the current year. Fees may be pro-rated for periods less than one year.

H. The location of each bench/transit shelter sign must be approved by the Community Development Director or designee. The bench may not be located closer than three (3) feet to a fire hydrant. A minimum of five (5) feet of sidewalk width must be left unobstructed. (See Figure 14)

I. The owner, leaseholder of private property or authorized agent located nearest to the public property upon which the bench/transit shelter sign is proposed must approve the location by signing the permit application prior to permit issuance. The approval may be withdrawn at any time by contacting the Community Development Department.

J. Bench/transit shelter signs are not permitted in districts of the City zoned residential unless the property has received an approved Conditional Use for offices, hospitals, medical clinics or colleges.

K. Bench signs are permitted in the PLI district only with approval of the appropriate City department head or adjacent property owner if not a city owned parcel.

L. Bench/transit shelter signs placed in City parks by the Park and Recreation Department are exempt from the provisions of this section.

M. The bench/transit shelter sign permit may be revoked at any time for lack of adequate maintenance or safety, after which the bench sign will be removed by the owner within seven days. If not removed, the City may remove the sign which becomes City

property. The sign owner may reclaim the sign by paying removal costs plus a recovery fee.

N. Bench/transit shelter signs are limited to one bench or shelter per city block face not to exceed one bench or shelter per adjoining premise.

Article 6 DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Sections:

- 17.60.6.010 Electrical Signs
- 17.60.6.020 Wind and Seismic Forces
- 17.60.6.030 Material Requirements

17.60.6.010 Electrical Signs. All sign structures to which electrical components are attached must be erected, repaired and maintained in accordance with the specifications outlined in Chapter 6, Article 600, of the current adopted edition of the National Electrical Code.

A. Illumination. Signs may be illuminated subject to the following restrictions:

1. Incandescent lamps may not exceed forty watt level, unless protected by a sun screen.
2. Reflector lamps must have sun screens except for indirect flood lighting.
3. Signs that cast beams or rays of light directly onto any portion of public streets or avenues, or that create glare, or impair the vision of the driver of any motor vehicle, or otherwise interfere with operation of a motor vehicle are prohibited.
4. Transformers may not exceed sixty (60) milliamperes on exposed tubing and animated portions.

17.60.6.020 Wind and Seismic Forces. Signs and sign structures must be designed and constructed to resist wind and seismic forces as specified in the current adopted edition of the International Building Code.

17.60.6.030 Material Requirements. Sign structure and construction material must conform to the specifications of the current adopted edition of the International Building Code for quality and grade.

A. Restrictions and combustible materials. All structural members must comply with the specifications of the current adopted edition of the International Building Code.

B. Nonstructural trim. Nonstructural trim may be wood, metal, approved plastics or any combination thereof.

C. Fastenings. Fastenings must conform to the Engineering Regulations of the current adopted edition of the International Building Code.

Article 7
PERMIT, INSPECTIONS AND LICENSES

Sections:

- 17.60.7.010 Permit Required
- 17.60.7.020 Sign Permit – Application
- 17.60.7.030 Owner-Erected Sign Permit
- 17.60.7.040 Fees and Payment
- 17.60.7.050 Inspection
- 17.60.7.060 Sign Certificate Required
- 17.60.7.070 License
- 17.60.7.080 Insurance and Bond
- 17.60.7.090 Maintenance
- 17.60.7.100 Abandoned/Moribund Signs

17.60.7.010 Permit Required. No sign may be erected, re-erected, constructed, altered or refaced until a sign permit has been issued by the Community Development Director or an authorized representative. For exemptions to this section, see Section 17.60.2.020 of this Code.

17.60.7.020 Sign Permit-Application

- A. The Community Development Department takes applications for sign permits.
- B. Each application must contain the location by street address of the proposed sign structure as well as the name and address of the sign owner and sign contractor or erector.
- C. The Community Development Director or designee may require submittal documents prepared and designed by a structural engineer licensed by the State when in his/her opinion such information is necessary to insure compliance with the Building Code for the following:
 - 1. Freestanding signs
 - 2. Billboard signs
 - 3. Awning signs
 - 4. Projecting signs
- D. A sign permit shall be issued only to a licensed sign contractor except as provided in Section 17.60.7.030.

E. Posting requirements. It is the responsibility of the sign erector/contractor or owner of the sign to attach to the sign, in a manner visible from the ground, the owner's name and/or the name of the sign erector company, the date of installation and the permit number.

17.60.7.030 Owner-Erected Sign Permit. Business-owner-erected signs may not be electrical. A business owner must obtain a permit for an owner-erected sign for the following unless the sign is exempt under section 17.60.2.020:

A. A freestanding sign no larger than twelve (12) square feet and no taller than six (6) feet above grade

B. A wall sign that does not project over public right-of-way and is no larger than twelve (12) square feet;

C. A temporary sign of non-rigid material or a sandwich board sign.

17.60.7.040 Fees and Payment. Sign Permit fees are established by City Commission resolution. If a sign requires re-inspection to verify compliance with this Code, a re-inspection fee will be assessed.

17.60.7.050 Inspection. All signs requiring a permit are subject to the inspection of the Community Development Director or designee:

A. All signs containing electrical wiring are subject to the provisions of the current adopted edition of the National Electrical Code.

1. All electric signs must be inspected prior to installation.

2. All signs, including neon signage and neon tubing, must be inspected while they are on the ground for compliance with Article 600 of the National Electric Code.

3. Signs erected without the required inspection will be taken down until the required inspection is complete at the cost of the sign installer.

B. All electric signs must be inspected during sign face replacement or sign face redecoration. Inspections will be performed on site and in place with the sign face removed. All electric signs must meet current specifications in chapter 6, Article 600 before sign faces are reinstalled.

C. All signs may be reinspected at the discretion of the Community Development Director or designee when in his/her opinion inspection is required to ensure compliance with this Code.

17.60.7.060 Sign Certificate Required

A. Any person engaged in the installation or repair of electrical signs, including outline and accent lighting commonly known as neon must have an individual sign

electrician/journeyman's certificate, or be currently licensed as a master or journeyman electrician by the State of Montana and the City of Great Falls.

B. A sign erector certificate is required for persons doing work with non-electrical signs requiring permit except under section 17.60.7.030.

C. Examination. Community Development Director, or designee, will arrange for examination of the applicant's knowledge of sign installation, erection and/or wiring.

1. A person desiring a sign electrician/journeyman's certificate must request, in writing, a qualification examination from the department.

a. Written requests must include proof of two (2) years experience prior to application and include the application fee.

b. Successful applicants must receive a score of seventy-five (75) percent on the examination.

c. Unsuccessful applicants will be required to wait ninety (90) days before applying for re-examination.

2. Examination is required for each initial application. Examination is not required for license renewal unless more than thirty (30) days have passed since the expiration.

3. The Community Development Director will authorize issuance of the appropriate certificate upon the applicant's successful completion of the examination.

D. Certificate fees for sign electrician/journeyman, sign erector and examination fees are established by City Commission resolution.

E. All certificates or special licenses expire on December 31st of the year in which the certificate or special license is issued, unless otherwise specified.

F. Renewals may be obtained on or before the expiration date.

17.60.7.070 License. A person or a firm engaged in the business of installing, altering, maintaining or repairing signs in the City of Great Falls must adhere to the following requirements regarding sign contractor licensing:

A. Sign contractor's Class A license. A sign contractor's Class A license is required for the fabrication, installation, repair, alteration and/or modification of electrical wires, apparatus, raceways, conduit or any other portion of electrical signs. An applicant for a Class A Contractor's license must show evidence that he/she, or at least one member of the firm or corporation, holds a current sign electrician/journeyman certificate issued by the City of Great Falls.

B. Sign contractor's Class B license. A sign contractor's Class B license is required for the installation, erection and/or maintenance of non-illuminated signs. The applicant must employ an individual with a current sign erector's certificate issued by the City of Great Falls.

C. License fees are established by City Commission resolution.

D. Certificates and/or special licenses expire on December 31st of the year in which they are issued, unless otherwise specified. Renewal licenses may be obtained on or before the expiration date.

17.60.7.080 Insurance and Bond.

A. Sign contractor's Class A license. Prior to receiving a Sign contractor's Class A license, an applicant must file a current commercial general liability insurance policy or written certificate issued by an insurance carrier authorized to do business in the State with the Community Development Department.

B. Sign contractor's Class B license. An applicant for a Sign contractor's Class B license must file with the Community Development Department a commercial general liability insurance policy or written certificate with limits established by City Commission resolution and issued by an insurance carrier authorized to do business in the State.

C. Insurance must be kept in full force as a condition of licensure. In the event of insurance cancellation, the sign contractor's license automatically terminates.

D. Payment is required of a license bond in an amount established by City Commission resolution.

17.60.7.090 Maintenance and repair. All signs, together with all types of supports including steel poles and structures, braces, guy wires, anchors, sign faces, sign cabinets, wood surfaces, plastic or sheet metal decorative trims and fasteners must be properly repaired and maintained.

A. All painted surfaces must be free of rust, worn, loose and peeling paint.

B. If the Community Development Director finds that any sign is not maintained in good repair and has not deteriorated more than fifty (50) percent of its replacement value, he/she shall notify the owner and order him to repair the sign within a specified time allowing at least ten (10) calendar days.

C. If the Community Development Director finds that the sign has deteriorated more than fifty (50) percent of its replacement value, or is not repaired within the time specified in the repair notice, the official will notify the owner of the sign and the owner of the real property on which said sign is located to remove the sign from the property within a specified time

D. Upon receipt of proper notification, sign removal is the responsibility of the sign owner or the property owner.

E. Failure by the sign owner to comply with a removal/repair notice will result in removal of the sign by the direction of the Building Official. Removal costs will be assessed against the property.

17.60.7.100 Abandoned/Moribund Signs. A sign that no longer advertises a bona fide business, product or service must be removed within one hundred and eighty (180) days. If the sign structure is conforming the structure may remain with a blank face unless the face advertises the premise for sale or lease. If the sign structure is nonconforming the structure must be made conforming or be removed.

Responsibility for removal lies with the owner of the sign or the owner, agent, or person upon whose premises the sign is located. If the sign owner or agent fails to remove the sign, the Community Development Director or designee is authorized to remove the sign and assess the costs against the property.

Article 8 ENFORCEMENT

Sections:

- 17.60.8.010 Enforcement
- 17.60.8.020 Violations and Penalties
- 17.60.8.030 Appeal

17.60.8.010 Enforcement.

A. Authority. The Community Development Director or designee is authorized and directed to enforce all the provisions of this Code.

B. Right-of-entry is defined by the current adopted edition of the International Building Code.

17.60.8.020 Violations and Penalties. It is unlawful for anyone to place, construct, enlarge, alter, move or convert any sign or sign structure in the City, or cause or permit the same to be done, contrary to or in violation of the provisions of this chapter. Anyone convicted of violating the provisions of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor. Penalty for first conviction is a minimum fine of fifty (50) dollars; penalty for the second conviction is a minimum fine of one hundred and fifty (150) dollars. Subsequent convictions will incur a fine of three hundred and fifty (350) dollars but not more than five hundred dollars (500) dollars, or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, or both. Each day an offense continues constitutes a separate offense.

17.60.8.030 Removal of signs by the City. The Community Development Director will remove signs and sign structures that endanger the public. Examples of such signs and sign structures include abandoned, dangerous, and defective signs, as well as those for

which permits have not been procured. The director will prepare a notice that describes the location, specifies the violation involved and states that if the sign is not removed or the violation is not corrected within ten (10) days, the sign will be removed in accordance with the provisions of this section.

All notices mailed by the City will be sent by regular mail and service of notice shall be deemed complete when the notice has been placed in the mail. Notification time periods in this section commence on the date notices are postmarked. A notice will be mailed to the owner of the property upon which the sign is located. When known, the owner of the sign and the occupant of the property will receive a written notice in the mail.

Temporary signs are specifically excluded from the ten (10) day notice requirement. Violators of the sections of this code that pertain to temporary signs may be cited if noncomplying signs are still displayed twenty-four (24) hours after verbal notice to remove has been given.

The City may, without notice, cause immediate removal of a dangerous or defective sign or a temporary sign placed in the public right-of-way if the owner is not easily identified. Any sign removed by the City, may be claimed by the owner within seven (7) days by paying a pick-up fee of fifty (50) dollars.

For purposes of removal, the term “signs” means sign faces and structures.

17.60.8.040 Appeal. Any person or persons, jointly or separately, aggrieved by any decision, order, or action of the Community Development Director or a duly authorized representative as a result of the enforcement of this Code, may appeal to the Board of Adjustment/Appeals as provided for in Title 2, Chapter 28.

The following sections will be included in Title 17 Chapter 64 – Non-conformities

17.64.050 Nonconforming signs

A. Compliance

1. Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, all signs and supporting structures which do not conform to the provisions of this Code, but were constructed in compliance with previous regulations, shall be regarded as nonconforming. Nonconforming signs may remain until December 31, 2015, if such signs are properly repaired and maintained as required by Section 17.60.7.090.

2. The copy face of a sign may be changed or altered in any manner which does not require structural alteration, subject to the permit requirements of this Code, until December 31, 2012. After December 31, 2012, any sign change, including copy change, shall require compliance with the provisions of the Sign Code.
3. Any sign user may file for an exemption as set forth in subsection B below (“grandfather” exemption), and the provisions of that subsection B shall govern. However, neither this subsection nor subsection B provides any right of continuance after the adoption of the Sign Code of those types of signs specifically prohibited in Section 17.60.2.010, with the exception of roof signs.

B. Grandfather Exemption.

1. Signs for which an exemption has been filed as set out below may remain in perpetuity, provided the sign is properly maintained and is not changed in any manner, either structurally or copy changes. Any sign which is so changed shall be brought into immediate compliance with all provisions of this Code. This code would allow a change in the name of a tenant on a multi-tenant identification sign without loss of the grandfather exemption.
2. A grandfather exemption may be obtained by the sign owner or user by filing for such an exemption with the Community Development Department on or before July 1, 2006, or as provided in subsections C below. Each application for exemption must be accompanied with a color photograph, dimensions and location of each sign for which the exemption is sought, and in such form as may be prescribed by the department. A three hundred (300) dollar fee for each sign to be exempted, shall be levied for each application to help cover processing costs. No application shall include more than one sign.

C. Change of Nonconforming Sign

Any nonconforming sign which is structurally altered, relocated (on the same or another lot) or replaced shall immediately comply with all provisions of this Code. Any signs, which is accidentally damaged or destroyed may be repaired or replaced within sixty (60) days to the sign’s original condition subject to the permit requirement of this Code.

D. Administrative authority. The Director of Community Development is granted authority to perform an administrative review and make appropriate decisions to allow some flexibility in individual nonconforming situations where the strict interpretation and application of the code will be unworkable for the property owner and/or tenants. All decisions must be consistent with the overall goal of bringing nonconforming signage closer to compliance and should be consistently applied to similar circumstances.

E. Removal. The Director of Community Development may order the removal of any sign, or sign structure, that is not in compliance with the provisions of this chapter.

1. Removal is the responsibility of the owner of the sign or the property owner.
2. Failure of the property owner or sign owner to comply with the removal notice will result in the removal of the sign by the City. Removal costs and administrative fees will be assessed against the property.

17.64.060 Nonconforming Billboards Billboard signs that do not conform to the provisions of this code, but were legally constructed and permitted at the time of their installation shall be considered legally nonconforming and allowed to remain subject to the following:

A. Downsizing required. Nonconforming billboards exceeding height and area limitations specified in this code must be downsized to meet requirements of area and height specified in this code by December 31, 2015, or be removed by the sign owner or the property owner. This is not intended to eliminate legally sanctioned side-by-side billboards.

B. Any nonconforming billboard sign destroyed or damaged beyond fifty (50) percent of its replacement value for any cause whatsoever shall be reconstructed only in compliance with all provisions of this chapter or be removed by the sign owner or property owner.

C. In no case may a billboard be repaired or maintained resulting in substantial upgrading or replacement of the structural support of the billboard that would extend the life of the structure. Substantial upgrading may include, but is not limited to, conversion from wood to steel support structure or a conversion from a multi-pole to a single-pole structure.

D. A non-illuminated billboard may be illuminated provided it is not nonconforming because of its proximity to a residential area or its location within an entry or scenic corridor pursuant to 17.60.5.210.

E. Any signs on property annexed to the City of Great Falls after the effective date of this chapter are subject to all the provisions of this code.