

# SIGN CODE COMPARISON

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Issue	May 2010 Draft	Section	Old (Current) Code	Previous Draft (if different)
Definitions	Expanded and updated over previous draft.	22.02	Very few definitions.	Expanded and updated.
Sign application process	Require written consent of the property owner or lessee upon which the sign is to be placed.	22.04	No such requirement. Sign companies could obtain sign permits on speculation (to angle for business).	
Application review	All permanent signs conforming to an approved Comp. Sign Plan may be approved administratively.	22.04	All permanent signs over 6 sf. require committee review and approval.	Not adequately clarified.
Permit fees	Distinguish between initial installation of permanent signs, temporary signs (including business opening and portable signs), and change of copy/location. Also, failure to obtain permit = penalty of double fee.	22.04	Permit fee for Permanent signs: \$25 plus \$1/sf.; Temporary signs: \$10 flat fee	
General sign regs.	Expanded regulations pertaining to location, placement, setback, construction quality, etc.	22.06	Basic requirements.	
Sign Illumination	Must comply with new Outdoor Lighting Code (Chapter 33), including use of full-shielded fixtures designed to minimize light spill and glare. Sign brightness reduced to 50 footcandles (near face of sign) with 3 fc at front lot line, 1 fc at all other lot lines.	22.06(7)	General language stating 3 footcandles at lot line.	Previous draft stated 75 footcandles near face of sign.
Attention-attracting objects	If displayed longer than 10 days, they require design review approval.	22.06(9)	Not specified.	
Multiple-frontage lots	An additional sign allowed for each additional frontage ADJACENT to a public right-of-way.	22.06(10)	No allowance.	Previous draft stated "visible or accessible from." It also did not specify that add'l sign must face the add'l frontage.
Residential uses / occupancies	Added condominium and subdivision signs.	22.07(1)	Variance required for an "identification sign" located on a development perimeter	Draft was incomplete.
Institutional uses / occupancies	Allowed to display wall and ground signs subject to special standards, as well as temporary signs.	22.07(2)	Required a variance to display signs identifying an institution.	Not specified; draft was incomplete.
Commercial or Industrial uses / occupancies	Allowed to display most sign types subject to standards in 22.08.	22.07(3)	Allowed to display two signs (1 wall, 1 ground) as well as signs allowed in R1 zoning districts.	Draft was incomplete.
PDD (Planned Development Districts)	Signs allowed in accordance with Specific Implementation Plan as approved by Plan Cmsn. Temporary signs allowed in commercial areas unless prohibited by the SIP.	22.07(4)	Similar approval process, but didn't mention temporary signs.	
Conservancies, Parks, Agric. areas	Requires PRFC or CLC approval.	22.07(5)	Didn't mention CLC.	

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Wall Sign: Number	1 per building occupant; buildings with no front setback (i.e., room for a ground sign) allowed an additional "flat" sign. Up to 3 ancillary signs if façade length is at least 100 ft.	22.08(1)	One wall sign per business, plus one additional, "flat" sign in B4 district.	Up to 2 wall signs per frontage.
Wall Sign: Surface Area	1 sf. for every 1 lineal foot of building façade, up to 100 sf.	22.08(1)	Table lists area based on applicable façade length. Area applied to both wall and ground signs.	10% of total building façade area with additional area based on certain criteria.
Ancillary wall signs	Allowed for facades over 100 linear feet. (e.g., CVS, Walgreens)	22.08(1)	Not allowed; required variance.	
Wall Sign: Location	Contiguous to occupancy unless altered by Comp. Sign Plan.	22.08(1)	Contiguous to bldg. occupancy.	
Ground Signs	New name.	22.08(2)	Referred to as "detached" signs.	Referred to as "free-standing" signs.
Ground Signs: Number	One per zoning lot per street frontage; an additional sign is allowed if over 1,000 ft. street frontage. Directory sign required for multi-occupant buildings, with no variance necessary.	22.08(2)	One ground sign per zoning lot. Directory signs allowed only through a sign variance.	Lacked 1,000 ft. provision.
Ground Signs: Surface Area	Based on land use (zoning), number of traffic lanes, and speed limit.	22.08(2); Table 22.08-1	Table lists area based on applicable façade length. Area applied to both wall and ground signs.	Intended to be based on table in old sign code. Max. of 80 sf. per sign. Directory signs capped at 120 sf.
Ground Signs: Type	Only monument signs; no pole signs.	22.08(2)	Allowed both pole and monument signs.	Lacked clear definition of a pole sign.
Ground Signs: Height.	Based on land use (zoning), number of traffic lanes, and speed limit; no sign base may exceed 4 feet.	22.08(2)	Max. ht. = 18 ft., although City hadn't approved signs at that height in years. Airport Road corridor limited to 10 ft.	Max. ht. = 12 ft.
Window signs	"Permanent" signs not to exceed 20% of total ground-floor window area, and counted against wall sign allocation; Temporary signs exceeding 30% of same area require a sign permit and must follow temporary sign regulations.	22.08(3); 22.10(4); 22.11(24)	If permanent, counts against wall sign allocation. No size limitations for temporary signs.	Temporary signs allowed to cover up to 50% of ground-floor window area.
Changeable Copy Signs	Specific standards for Electronic / Variable Message signs (e.g., size, length of cycle, color, brightness).	22.08(4)	Electronic signs allowed by variance only.	
Canopy and Awning signs	Reduces max. area of allowed wall sign by half. Must adhere to specific design standards. Exempt in certain cases.	22.08(5); 22.11(3)	If awnings contain signage, they count against wall sign allocation.	
Hanging Signs	One up to 4 sf. and located at least 8 ft. over a walkway.	22.08(6)	None allowed.	
Projecting Signs	Allowed in lieu of a wall sign. Must adhere to specific design standards. Max. size based on wall sign allowance.	22.08(7)	Not specifically mentioned other than to maintain 8' height over sidewalk.	Not mentioned.
Directional signs	Up to 3 signs per zoning lot, not including one per driveway. Area <= 4 sf. Height <= 5 ft.	22.08(8)	Allowed one sign per driveway. Area <= 3.5 sf. Height <= 3 ft (7 ft.)	

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Community information signs	Considered problematic by the city attorney's office; therefore this provision is now removed from the new ordinance.	n/a	Not addressed.	Identified as a conditional use in all zoning districts; must follow zoning ordinance procedures; does not count against signs allowed for the premises.
Flags / Decorative Banners	Added minimum height clearances. Corporate flags count against ground sign allowance, and require a sign permit.	22.08(9)	Not specifically addressed.	Language based on other sign codes. Minimum heights not specified.
Comprehensive Sign Plans	Allowed and encouraged for all multi-tenant properties. Analogous to a "PDD process" for signage.	22.09	Concept didn't exist.	Purpose statement was incomplete.
Temporary signs	May be displayed up to 21 days, once per calendar quarter. Aggregate total area limited to 24 sf. Two temporary signs per zoning lot at any one time. Larger signs (banners) may be displayed up to 10 days.	22.10(1)	Temporary signs up to 9 sf. for up to 21 days, once per calendar quarter. Allowed banners, balloons, etc. for up to 10 days, once per calendar quarter.	Did not accommodate larger banners.
Business opening sign	Identifies specific standards; may be displayed up to 30 days from the date the business opened, or changed names or ownership.	22.10(2)	Concept didn't exist.	Concept didn't exist.
Portable sign	Allows the display of 3' x 2' sandwich board signs subject to specific design and placement standards. Sign limited to display during business hours. Must be on premise in most circumstances. Requires annual permit.	22.10(3)	Allowed as a temporary sign (21 days, 9 sf.) or banner (10 days, no size limit) once per calendar quarter.	Didn't mention hand-carried portable signs nor language pertaining to trailer/vehicle signs. Originally said 4' x 3' sandwich boards, but that's not a standard size and Madison only allows 3' x 2'.
Exempt signs (no permit required)	Expanded / updated list, including athletic signage / scoreboards, awning signage less than 6 inches high, City signs on City property (24 sf.), etc.	22.11	Limited list of exempt signs.	
Athletic Field signage.	Only requires approval of Parks, Recreation and Forestry Commission.	22.11(2)	Plan Commission approval. Variance often necessary.	
Construction signs	Doesn't specify number of signs. Limits area to 32 sf. per frontage in residential & conservancy areas; 64 sf. on other lots < 100K sf., 96 sf. on larger lots	22.11(5)	One sign per property limited to 32 sf.	
Garage sale signs	Up to 3 signs may be displayed for up to 72 hours, no more than 2x/year, and no more than 2 may be off-premise, although those may be on the street terrace.	22.11(7)	Up to 48 hours, private property only (which almost never happens in practice).	Didn't explicitly allow such signs on street terrace.
Holiday decorations	May not contain any commercial message.	22.11(9)	Didn't mention commercial message issue.	
Home occupation signs	Must be flush-mounted to a wall.	22.11(10)	Location not specified.	
Menu board signs	Allowed up to 15 sf. and 6 ft. high, as long as within 15 ft. of a commercial building and not readily viewable from a street or residence.	22.11(13)	Concept not defined.	

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Political signs	References Wis.Stats., limits size to 12 sf., and prohibits an electrical, mechanical, or audio component.	22.11(18)	Limits size to 11 sf.; must be removed within 7 days after the election.	
Real estate signs: Residential areas	Maintains 6 sf. size limitation for residential uses, and allows "open house" signs in street terrace. For lots with 4-15 units, sign may be 12 sf. For lots with 16+ units, sign may be 32 sf.	22.11(19)	Signs limited to 6 sf.; open house signs must be on private property. (This almost never happens in practice.)	
Real estate signs: Single occupant commercial lot	One sign up to 12 sf. If lot is over 5 acres, then 32 sf.	22.11(20)	Signs limited to 6 sf.; If lot is over 5 acres, then 32 sf.	
Real estate signs: Multi-occupant commercial lot	Two signs (one per street frontage) up to 32 sf. each.	22.11(21)	Signs limited to 6 sf. unless lot is over 5 acres, in which case 32 sf.	
Roof signs	Not allowed.		Allowed in B3 and I zones upon issuance of a variance.	
Inflatable signs	Not allowed.	22.12(3)	Not specifically addressed; considered as a temporary sign.	