

# ATLAS TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE

## ARTICLE XXI – SIGNS

### Proposed Sign Ordinance Amendments

Prepared by Wade Trim

July 7, 2025 DRAFT

As Recommended for Adoption by the Atlas Township Planning Commission on June 18, 2025

Key:

Text Proposed to be Added

~~Text Proposed to be Deleted~~

*[Wade Trim commentary, as necessary]*

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### Section 21.10. Purpose, scope and intent.

It is the purpose of this Article to ~~encourage sound practice in the regulation of advertising and outdoor signs of all types in all zoning districts. The ordinance is intended to enhance the physical appearance of the township, preserve the scenic and natural beauty of designated areas, create attractive business districts by encouraging compatible designs within a given area, reduce hazards to motorists and pedestrians traveling on public thoroughfares, promote aesthetic values, and thus to promote the health, safety and welfare of this community.~~ regulate outdoor signs designed to be visible to the public in a manner which does not restrict the content while recognizing the mass communications needs of businesses and other parties. The number and size of signs may be distracting to motorists and pedestrians and can create a traffic hazard. The number and size of signs can also reduce the effectiveness of signs needed to direct the public and may mar the appearance of the landscape. The provisions of this section are intended to apply the minimum amount of regulation in order to protect property values, preserve the desirable character and personality of Atlas Township; create a more attractive business environment, and promote pedestrian and traffic safety. The use and erection of all outdoor signs and media shall be subject to the following provisions. It is further the intent of this Ordinance to encourage eventual elimination of signs that are nonconforming. *[This revised intent statement references that this ordinance does not intend to restrict. It also expands the intent statement to further establish that the regulation of signs is a legitimate governmental interest.]*

**Section 21.20. Summary matrix of allowance and requirements by sign type.**

Sign Type	Allowance for Sign Type	Requirements
Add-on signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Animated signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Banners	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Beacon lights	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Changeable copy signs	Allowed with permit	Section 21.90
Festoons	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Flashing signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Freestanding nonaccessory signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Illuminated signs	Allowed with permit	Section 21.90
Incidental signs	Allowed without permit	Section 21.110
Inflatable signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Marquee signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Monument signs	Allowed with permit	Sections 21.80 and 21.90
Moving signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Neon signs (outline tubing signs)	Allowed with permit	Section 21.90
Nonconforming signs	Allowed to remain under certain conditions	Section 21.120
Obsolete signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Outline tubing signs	Allowed with permit	Section 21.90
Painted wall signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Pennants	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Pole signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Projecting signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Public signs	Allowed without permit	Section 21.110
Roof signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Sandwich board signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Signs accessory to parking areas	Allowed with permit	Sections 21.80 and 21.90
Snipe signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Temporary signs	Allowed without permit	Section 21.110
Temporary vehicle signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Under-canopy signs	Prohibited	Section 21.60
Wall signs	Allowed with permit	Sections 21.80 and 21.90
Window signs	Allowed without permit	Section 21.110

**Section 21.30. Definitions – Sign Types.**

The following **sign type** definitions shall apply in the interpretation of this Ordinance.

1. **Add-on sign** is a secondary sign that is attached to another sign, including a building sign, or to a sign support for another sign.
2. ~~**Agricultural sign** is a sign advertising the sale of agricultural products or services as produced or provided on the property.~~ *[Content based and unnecessary, as an agricultural property owner is given the opportunity to install various other types of signs.]*

3. ~~**Ancillary sign** is a sign that is secondary to the use of the building or business that advertises specific goods or services available on the premises. [Content based. Also, it is not clear what or why this sign type is being regulated.]~~
4. **Animated sign** is a sign that uses movement or change of lighting, including a flashing sign, to depict action or create effect of scene. Such a sign does not include changeable copy signs (see "flashing sign" and "changeable copy sign").
5. **Banner** is a sign that is produced on a non-rigid surface with no enclosing network and is draped or spans an area between two rigid supports or components.
6. **Beacon light** is any light with one or more beams, capable of being directed in any direction.
7. **Billboard** (see "freestanding non-accessory sign").
8. **Changeable copy sign** is a sign with a changeable message, including electronic message displays, ~~provided the message not change during a one minute period. [Regulations for changeable copy signs are proposed later in this draft.]~~
9. ~~**Community/special event sign** is a sign, banner, decoration or display for a holiday with no advertisement content, or for a special municipal, charitable, or school activity. [Content based. This will be merged with and regulated as any other type of temporary sign.]~~
10. ~~**Construction sign** is a sign identifying an architect, designer, contractor, subcontractor or material supplier participating in construction on the property on which the sign is located. [Content based. This will be merged with and regulated as any other type of temporary sign.]~~
11. ~~**Directional or informational sign** is a sign giving directions or instructions, such as warnings of danger, no hunting/no trespassing, parking, entrance and exit and restrooms. [Content based. This will be deleted and regulated as either signs accessory to parking areas or incidental signs.]~~
12. **Festoon** is a string of ribbons, tinsel or small flags.
13. **Flashing sign** is a sign that contains an intermittent or sequential flashing light source, but does not include signs which through reflection or other means, create an illusion of flashing or intermittent light (see "animated sign").
14. **Freestanding nonaccessory sign** is a sign structure, including a billboard, advertising an establishment, business, merchandise, service, or entertainment which is not sold, produced, manufactured, or furnished on the property on which said sign is located.
15. ~~**Garage or auction sale sign** is a temporary sign that advertises the date and location of a garage, auction, yard, moving, estate or similar sale. [Content based. This will be merged with and regulated as any other type of temporary sign.]~~
16. ~~**Identification sign** is a non-electric sign that has any of the following: name, street number, activity carried on by the occupant, dates of erection or reconstruction, monument citations, commemorative tablets or the like in a nonresidential zoning district or the name and/or address in a residential zoning district. [Content based. This will be deleted and regulated as incidental signs.]~~
17. ~~**Illumination illuminated sign** is a sign with an artificial light source incorporated internally or externally.~~
18. ~~**Incidental sign** is a sign which is incidental, accessory and subordinate to a permitted use and which is attached to a building or structure. A stand-alone monument sign or other type of sign affixed to the ground shall not be considered an incidental sign. Examples include but are not limited to an entrance/exit sign, street numbers/address, open/closed sign, days/hours of operation sign, restroom sign, establishment affiliation signs, and gas station pump island signs. [This is a new content neutral term and will be regulated separately from other sign types.]~~
19. **Inflatable sign** is a temporary sign consisting of a bag or balloon inflated with gas or air.

20. **Marquee sign** is a sign hanging from, or written on, a canopy or similar structure supported by and extending from the facade of a building.
21. **Monument sign** is a sign ~~with a slab base that is not attached to a building but relates to the business located in the building.~~ extending upward from grade, which is attached to a permanent foundation for a distance not less than 75 percent of its length, and which may be attached or dependent for support from any pole, posts, or similar uprights, provided that such supports are concealed within the sign structure. *[Proposed revisions to eliminate content based language.]*
22. **Moving sign** is a sign in which the sign itself or any portion of the sign moves.
23. **Neon sign** (see "outline tubing sign").
24. **Nonconforming sign** is a sign that was erected legally, but which does not comply with subsequently enacted sign ordinances or amendments.
25. **Obsolete sign** is a sign that identifies or advertises a product that is no longer made, a service that is no longer offered, a business that is no longer in operation, or an activity or event that has already occurred.
26. **Outline tubing sign** is a sign consisting of glass tubing filled with neon or other material, which glows when ~~electric~~ electricity is passed through it.
27. **Painted wall sign** is any sign that is applied with paint or similar substance on the wall of a building.
28. **Pennant** is a small flag, either unadorned or with graphic or verbal material, displayed from a pole, rope, or other support.
29. **Pole sign** is a sign with one or more poles as its support or base that is not attached to a building but relates to the business located in the building.
30. ~~**Political sign** is a sign used in connection with a local, state or national election, initiative, referendum or ballot proposal.~~ *[Content based. This will be merged with and regulated as any other type of temporary sign.]*
31. **Projecting sign** is a sign, other than a flat wall sign, which is attached to and projects from, a building wall or other structure not specifically designed to support the sign.
32. **Public sign** is a sign erected by or on behalf of a government entity.
33. ~~**Real estate sign** is a sign advertising property for sale or lease, and may include up to two riders one above and one below the sign, such as "Open House", "Sold", "Sale Pending", and/or agent's information and flyers describing the property.~~ *[Content based. This will be merged with and regulated as any other type of temporary sign.]*
34. ~~**Real estate development sign** is a sign designed to promote the sale or lease of lots, homes or building spaces in a real estate development that is under construction.~~ *[Content based. This will be merged with and regulated as any other type of temporary sign.]*
35. ~~**Real estate development directional sign** is an off-site temporary sign that indicates the location of a real estate development.~~ *[Content based. This will be merged with and regulated as any other type of temporary sign.]*
36. ~~**Residential identification sign**~~ **Residential development entranceway sign** is a monument sign that ~~identifies the name of a residential development~~ is placed on property occupied by, and which is designed to attract general public attention to, a subdivision, apartment complex, condominium development, or other residential development complex. *[This proposed amendment turns this content based definition into a content neutral definition.]*
37. **Roof sign** is any sign erected over or on the roof of a building.

38. **Sandwich board sign** is a sign that consists of two boards upon which a message is posted, which is hinged at the top and open at the bottom so that the boards can lean against each other when placed on the ground or can be worn by a person.
39. **Sign** is ~~a structure and material that displays letters, words, numerals, figures, designs, symbols, trademarks or illumination devices or insignia.~~ any device, structure, fixture, figure, banner, pennant, flag, balloon, poster, handbill, flyer, painting, streamer, placard, or similar object consisting of written copy, symbols, logos and/or graphics, designed for the purpose of identifying or bringing attention to an establishment, product, goods, services or other message to the general public. This definition of sign shall not include: legal notices, including but not limited to signs required for proposed zoning changes or variance requests; decorative displays in connection with a recognized holiday; signs required by law (e.g. fire, traffic code); and, flags of any country, state, municipality, university, college or school. *[This proposed amendment expands the definition of sign and makes several distinctions on what is not considered a sign.]*
40. **Snipe sign** is a sign affixed to a tree, fence, utility pole, light pole or similar structure, or a ground sign with a wire support or base.
41. **Temporary or movable sign** is a ~~sign not attached to a permanent supporting structure on the real estate on which the sign is located.~~ display sign, banner, or other advertising device constructed of cloth, canvas, fabric, plastic, or other light temporary material, with or without a structural frame, or any other sign intended for a limited period of display. A temporary sign shall not be used as a substitute for a permanent on-premise sign, except as permitted within this ordinance. A temporary sign is one that is not affixed to the ground permanently and can be easily moved. *[This is a content neutral definition that is intended to apply to all subtypes of temporary signs that were previously separately defined.]*
42. **Temporary vehicle sign** is a sign not attached permanently to an automobile, truck, trailer, or other vehicle.
43. **Under-canopy sign** is a sign suspended beneath a canopy, ceiling, roof or marquee.
44. **Wall sign** is a sign that is attached to the wall of a building.
45. **Window sign** is a sign installed on a window.

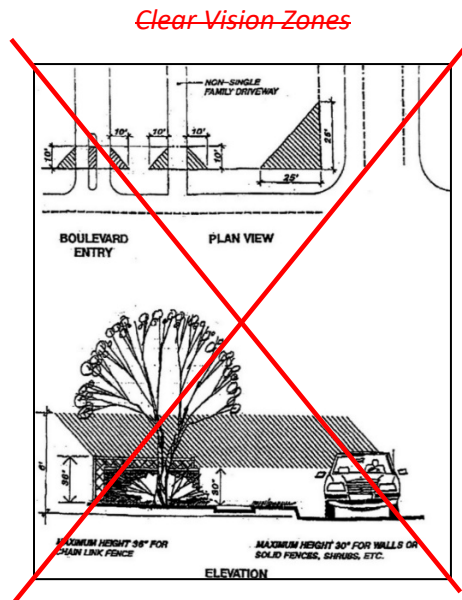
#### Section 21.40. Definitions – Related Terms.

The following terms shall apply in the interpretation of this Ordinance.

1. **Area of a sign** is ~~the advertising display surface of a sign. In the case of a multiple-faced sign, the area of all faces shall be considered as one surface.~~ is the entire area within the smallest circle, triangle, parallelogram, or other regular geometric shape that encloses the extreme limits of any writing, picture, logo, representation, emblem, or figure of similar character, together with any frame or other material or color forming an integral part of the display or used to differentiate such sign from the background against which it is placed, excluding the necessary supports or uprights on which such sign is placed. Where a sign has two (2) or more faces, the area of all faces shall be included in determining the area of the sign, except that where two (2) such faces are placed back to back and are at no point more than two (2) feet from one another, the area of the sign shall be taken as the area of one (1) face if the two (2) faces are of equal area, or as the area of the larger face if the two (2) faces are of unequal area. *[This is an improved definition that clarifies how to measure sign area. It also addresses how to measure the area of signs with two or more faces and does not penalize signs where the two faces are placed back-to-back.]*

2. **Building frontage** is the portion of the side of a building occupied by a single business where the main entrance of the business is located. Only one entry can be considered the main entrance for the business.
3. **Business center** is a group of two or more stores or businesses that share a parking lot.

~~4. **Clear vision zone.** All corner shall maintain a clear vision zone free of buildings, fences, walls, signs, structures and landscaping. The clear vision zone shall be provided vertically between a height of thirty (30) inches and six (6) feet above the centerline elevation of the intersecting streets. A nonobscuring fence may have a minimum height of thirty-six (36) inches in a clear vision zone. [This definition is not necessary. Clear vision zones are regulated in Section 3.110 of the zoning ordinance.]~~



4. **Copy** is the words, letters, numerals, figures, designs, symbols, insignia, trademarks, and background on a sign surface in either permanent or changeable form.
5. **Copy area** is the area of a sign that contains the copy, excluding any framing.

~~7. **Double-faced sign** is a sign with two (2) faces. [This is now addressed in the new definition for “area of a sign” and therefore this definition is no longer necessary.]~~

6. **Erect** is to build, construct, attach, hang, place, suspend, or affix, including the painting of walls.
7. **Height of sign** is the vertical distance as measured from the bottom of the sign base to the highest point of the sign including its framing structure.
8. **Maintenance** is the cleaning, painting, repairing or replacing of defective parts of a sign in a manner that does not alter the copy, design, or structure of the sign.
9. **Parapet** is the extension of a building wall above a roofline.
10. **Projection** is the distance by which a sign extends beyond a building.
11. **Responsible person** is the owner and/or lessee of real property upon which a sign is located or any person with an ownership, license or contractual interest in the sign itself.

12. **Sign base** is a structure that supports a sign and is constructed of solid material, such as brick, concrete, stone or treated lumber, or a pole(s) that is enclosed in a structure covered with durable materials.

### Section 21.50. General.

Only signs ~~specifically provided for~~ explicitly allowed in this Ordinance are permitted.

#### ~~Section 21.40. Signs requiring a permit: listing of types.~~

*[This entire section is unnecessary. This is merely a listing of signs requiring a permit. The actual regulations for these “signs requiring a permit” are outlined later in this sign ordinance.]*

~~The following signs are allowed with a permit and must adhere to the restrictions set forth in this Ordinance:~~

- ~~1.—Business center signs.~~
- ~~2.—Changeable copy signs~~
- ~~3.—Illuminated signs.~~
- ~~4.—Monument signs.~~
- ~~5.—Signs on property adjacent to interstate highways.~~
- ~~6.—Outline tubing signs~~
- ~~7.—Residential identification signs Residential development entranceway sign.~~
- ~~8.—Street banners advertising community/special events.~~
- ~~9.—Temporary or movable signs, including inflatable signs.~~
- ~~10.—Wall signs.~~

#### ~~Section 21.50. Signs requiring registration: listing of types.~~

*[This entire section is unnecessary. The sign types listed below are now covered and regulated under temporary signs.]*

- ~~1.—Community/special event signs.~~
- ~~2.—Real estate development directional signs.~~

#### ~~Section 21.60. Signs not requiring a permit: listing of types.~~

*[This entire section is unnecessary. This is merely a listing of signs not requiring a permit. The actual regulations for these “signs not requiring a permit” are outlined later in this sign ordinance.]*

~~The following signs do not require a permit, but must adhere to the restrictions set forth in this Ordinance:~~

- ~~1.—Agricultural signs.~~
- ~~2.—Construction signs.~~
- ~~3.—Directional/informational signs.~~
- ~~4.—Flags of any country, state, municipality, educational institution, non-profit organization, business entity.~~
- ~~5.—Garage, open house and auction sale signs.~~
- ~~6.—Identification signs.~~
- ~~7.—Political signs.~~

- ~~8.—Public signs.~~
- ~~9.—Real estate signs.~~
- ~~10.—Real estate development signs.~~
- ~~11.—Window signs.~~

**Section 21.60. Prohibited signs.**

The following signs are prohibited:

- 1. Add-on signs.
- ~~2.—Ancillary signs. [Content based. Also, it is not clear what or why this sign type is being regulated.]~~
- 3. Animated signs.
- 4. Beacon lights.
- 5. Banners ~~(except street banners advertising community/special events).~~ *[Content based]*
- 6. Festoons.
- 7. Flashing signs.
- 8. Freestanding nonaccessory signs.
- 9. Inflatable signs.
- 10. Marquee signs.
- 11. Moving signs.
- 12. Obsolete signs.
- 13. Painted wall signs.
- 14. Pennants.
- 15. Pole signs ~~(except real estate, real estate development signs, and agricultural product signs).~~ *[Content based]*
- 16. Projecting signs.
- 17. Roof signs.
- 18. Sandwich board signs.
- 19. Scrolling copy.
- 20. Signs containing statements, words, or pictures of an obscene, indecent, or immoral character such as will offend public morals or decency. *[This was added at the request of the Planning Commission to ensure that signs with obscene content are prohibited.]*
- 21. Snipe signs ~~(except as permitted herein).~~
- 22. Temporary vehicle signs.
- 23. Under-canopy signs

**Section 21.70. General provisions.**

- 1. A clear vision zone as defined in Section 3.110 shall be free of all signs except public safety signs.
- 2. No sign shall interfere with, obstruct the view of, or cause confusion with any authorized public sign, signal or device.
- ~~3.—Except as otherwise provided in this ordinance, no property shall have both a wall sign and a monument sign. [This is overly restrictive and unnecessary – certain uses may be allowed both a wall sign and a monument sign in accordance with Sections 21.80 and 21.90.]~~
- 4. All signs shall comply with the requirements of the Atlas Township Building Code.

5. ~~Letters, words, numerals, figures, designs, symbols, trademarks and insignia and other identifying marks on an otherwise conforming sign shall be removed within 30 days of the date that a product is no longer made, a service is no longer offered, a business is no longer in operation, or an activity or event has already occurred. If the letters cannot be removed from their surface, the panel(s) must be replaced with a new panel(s) that is blank on both sides.~~ *[It is unclear if Atlas Township enforces this provision. The Township may wish to delete this. Also, nonconforming signs are dealt with later in this sign ordinance.]*
6. If a property line, easement or right-of-way line is altered in a manner that affects the setbacks required by this Ordinance, a new sign permit or variance must be obtained.
7. A sign requiring a permit may be relocated on the same premises provided that a new sign permit is obtained.
8. ~~No sign (except as otherwise permitted herein) is allowed where the business that the sign is advertising is not an occupant of the premises where the sign is located.~~ *[Content based. Also, unnecessary as "freestanding nonaccessory sign" is already defined and prohibited.]*
9. All letters, figures, characters, insignia or representations upon any sign shall be safely and securely attached.
10. No sign shall be located in or project into a public right-of-way or private road or dedicated easement, except public signs and signs installed by the applicable road agency or utility company.
11. Paper sheets shall not be applied in any manner to any sign or any building, except any allowed window signs and except as otherwise permitted in this Ordinance.
12. ~~No flags or permitted banners shall be allowed in a setback area.~~ *[This is an unclear, overly restrictive, and likely unenforced provision.]*
13. Nothing in this Ordinance shall be construed to prohibit noncommercial messages on signs that are otherwise allowed herein.
14. All signs shall be maintained in good condition.

**Section 21.80. Signs requiring a permit: ~~specific requirements~~ Agricultural and Residential Districts.**

*[It is appropriate to regulate signage differently based on the underlying district. Section 21.80 would regulate signage within an agricultural or residential district, while Section 21.90 would regulate signage within a non-residential district.]*

The following signs may be permitted within the agricultural and residential districts (RA, RSA, RU-1, RU-2, MHP, HV, and SH):

1. **Monument signs.**
  - a. Monument signs must be set back at least ten feet from the property line, or the edge of the right-of-way line, whichever is closest to the principal building.
  - b. Monument signs shall be sited parallel or perpendicular to the principal street frontage. In the case of a corner lot, the sign may be placed at an equivalent angle from both street frontages.
  - c. The height of a monument sign includes any portion of a berm above grade on which the sign is placed.
  - d. Monument signs shall not exceed 24 square feet per side, including framing.
  - e. Monument signs shall not exceed four feet in height, including a minimum 12-inch high base, constructed of durable materials or skirting that complements the architecture, color and material of the principal building.

- f. Not more than one monument sign may be erected on any property. However, residential development entranceway signs may be placed on one or both sides of each entrance to a residential development.
- g. The length of the base of monument signs shall be not less than 50 percent nor more than 150 percent of the length of the copy area.
- h. Monument signs are not allowed on property used for single-family or duplex residences.
- i. Monument signs shall not be illuminated.

**2. Wall signs.**

- a. Not more than one wall sign shall be allowed on any building.
- b. Wall signs shall be flush-mounted, shall not be mounted on the roof of any building and shall not project above the roofline.
- c. Wall signs shall be safely and securely attached to structural members of a building by means of metal anchors, bolts, or expansion screws. All wall sign anchoring devices shall meet the standards of the Township Building Code.
- d. No nails, tacks, or wires shall be permitted to protrude from the front of any sign.
- e. Wall signs shall not project beyond the top or ends of the wall to which they are attached. Letters may extend beyond the top and in front of the advertising structure.
- f. Letters, designs, insignias shall not exceed 24 inches in height.
- g. Wall signs shall not exceed one square foot for each lineal foot of building frontage, up to a maximum of 24 square feet including framing.
- h. Wall signs shall not cover any portion of a wall opening.
- i. Wall signs shall not protrude more than 12 inches measured from the wall to which it is attached.
- j. Wall signs are not allowed on property used for agricultural, single-family, or duplex residential purposes, except a home occupation in accordance with Section 3.180.
- k. Wall signage for bed and breakfast operations shall be in accordance with Section 6.30,(10).

- 3. Signs accessory to parking areas.** Traffic control signage designating parking area entrances or exits shall be limited to one sign for each such exit or entrance, and to a maximum size of four square feet each. Other parking lot and traffic control signs shall be permitted within or adjacent to the parking area as determined during site plan review. Traffic control signage shall not be permitted for property used for agricultural, single-family, or duplex residential purposes.

**Section 21.90. Signs requiring a permit: Non-Residential Districts.**

*[It is appropriate to regulate signage differently based on the underlying district. Section 21.80 would regulate signage within an agricultural or residential district, while Section 21.90 would regulate signage within a non-residential district.]*

The following signs may be permitted within the non-residential districts (ORA, C-1, C-2, C-3, M-1, M-2, and C/I):

**1. Monument signs.**

- a. Monument signs must be set back **at least** ten feet from the property line, or the edge of the right-of-way line, whichever is closest to the principal building.
- b. Monument signs shall be sited parallel or perpendicular to the principal street frontage. In the case of a corner lot, the sign may be placed at an equivalent angle from both street frontages.

- c. The height of a monument sign includes any portion of a berm above grade on which the sign is placed.
- d. Monument signs shall not exceed 32 square feet per side, including framing.
- e. Monument signs shall not exceed six feet in height, including a minimum 12-inch high base, constructed of durable materials or skirting that complements the architecture, color and material of the principal building.
- f. ~~Monument Signs must contain the street number of the property. The street number may be in the copy area of the sign, on the base, or on the framing of the sign. [It is unclear if Atlas Township enforces this provision. The Township may wish to delete this.]~~
- g. Not more ~~that than~~ one monument sign may be erected for any single building, structure or business center regard less of the number of parties, tenants or uses contained therein.
- h. The length of the base of monument signs shall be not less than 50 percent nor more than 150 percent of the length of the copy area.
- i. ~~Monument signs are not allowed on property used for single-family or duplex residences. However, residential identification signs may be placed on one or both sides of each entrance to a residential development. [This language is not pertinent to non-residential districts.]~~

**2. Illuminated signs.**

- a. The light for any illuminated sign shall be so shaded, shielded or directed downward to prevent glare, and be primarily confined to the property.
- b. Signs shall not have scrolling, blinking, flashing or fluttering lights or other illuminating devices which have a changing light intensity, brightness or color.
- c. No sign illumination shall create a traffic hazard.
- d. Illuminating devices for signs shall comply with the Atlas Township or State Electrical Code.

**3. Outline tubing sign.** Outline tubing signs are limited to one sign ~~which states the words "open" and/or "closed" only~~, which shall be limited to two square feet, and a single band of one color at the base of a roof line on buildings in commercial districts. *[Revise to eliminate content based language.]*

~~**4. Street banners advertising community/special events.** Street banners on a public road advertising a community or special event must have the approval of the Genesee County Road Commission, the Michigan Department of Transportation or any other responsible road agency.~~

~~**5. Temporary or movable signs.** *[We presume that the Township does not want to require permits for temporary signage; therefore, this can be moved to the later section "signs not requiring a permit."]*~~

- a. ~~Temporary or movable signs not otherwise addressed in this Ordinance shall be erected so that no movable or mechanical parts shall be exposed. Those portions of the sign shall be enclosed by a non-combustible, durable material with a minimum thickness of one-quarter inch.~~
- b. ~~Temporary or movable signs shall be located ten feet from the property line, the edge of the right-of-way line, or any easement, whichever is closest to the principal building.~~
- c. ~~Temporary or movable signs shall not exceed 18 square feet per side with a maximum height of six feet from ground level.~~
- d. ~~The height of a temporary or movable sign includes any portion of a berm above grade on which the sign is placed.~~
- e. ~~Temporary or movable signs may be erected for no more than 60 days in a calendar year. No more than 15 days shall be consecutive. The time between issuance of permits for temporary or movable sign(s) shall be at least 30 days.~~

- ~~f. Businesses with permanent changeable copy signs are not eligible for a temporary or movable sign permit.~~
- ~~g. Only one temporary or movable sign is allowed per business center.~~

4. **Wall signs.**

- a. Wall signs shall be flush-mounted, shall not be mounted on the roof of any building and shall not project above the roofline.
- b. Wall signs shall be safely and securely attached to structural members of a building by means of metal anchors, bolts, or expansion screws. All wall sign anchoring devices shall meet the standards of the Township Building Code.
- c. No nails, tacks, or wires shall be permitted to protrude from the front of any sign.
- d. Wall signs shall not project beyond the top or ends of the wall to which they are attached. Letters may extend beyond the top and in front of the advertising structure.
- e. Letters, designs, insignias shall not exceed 24 inches in height.
- f. Wall signs shall not exceed one square foot for each lineal foot of building frontage, up to a maximum of 32 square feet including framing.
- g. Wall signs shall not cover any portion of a wall opening.
- h. Wall signs shall not protrude more than 12 inches measured from the wall to which it is attached.
- i. ~~Wall signs are not allowed on property used for single family or duplex residential purposes.~~ *[This language is not pertinent to non-residential districts.]*
- j. Each store or business within a business center, ~~place of worship, and institutional uses (civic buildings, museums, etc.)~~ shall be allowed one wall sign ~~in addition to a monument sign,~~ provided the requirements of this Subsection 4 are met. *[Within the non-residential districts where multiple businesses are within a single building, it is appropriate to allow a wall sign for each business storefront.]*

5. **Signs accessory to parking areas.** Traffic control signage designating parking area entrances or exits shall be limited to one sign for each such exit or entrance, and to a maximum size of four square feet each. Other parking lot and traffic control signs shall be permitted within or adjacent to the parking area as determined during site plan review. *[This is intended to be content neutral language allowing for parking lot directional and informational signage.]*

6. **Changeable copy signs.** *[These are new regulations proposed for changeable copy signs.]* Changeable copy signs shall be permitted when incorporated into a permitted monument sign, provided that the area devoted to changeable copy does not exceed eighty percent (80%) of the monument sign area. Electronic changeable copy signs shall be further subject to the following:

- a. Sign displays shall contain static messages only, changed through dissolve or fade transitions or the use of other suitable transitions and frame effects that do not otherwise have the appearance of moving text and images caused by flashing, scrolling, or varying light intensity levels. Full animation or video broadcasting is expressly prohibited.
- b. Each message must be displayed for a minimum of twelve (12) seconds, with no more than one (1) second of message change interval or "off-time" between messages. The intent of this regulation is to limit motorist confusion by requiring a sufficient amount of time for the static message to be read and by requiring a minimal transition time between messages.
- c. The nighttime level of illumination produced by an electronic changeable copy sign shall not exceed 0.3 footcandles over ambient (i.e., naturally illuminated environment) lighting

conditions. Measurement of sign brightness shall be in accordance with the then-current methodology, sign area, and measurement distances recommended by the International Sign Association.

- d. The sign shall be equipped with, and shall use, photocell technology, a programmable dimmer or a similar mechanism to automatically adjust brightness and contrast based on ambient light conditions.
- e. The sign shall incorporate security technology or devices to prevent unintended changes to sign messages or images by other than the sign operator.
- f. Any sign permit application shall include a certification from either the owner, operator and/or manufacturer of the sign stating that the sign shall at all times be operated in accordance with the operational and performance requirements of this section. Any electronic changeable copy sign found to be in violation of the operational and performance requirements shall be turned off until such time as the Building Official determines the sign is in full compliance with such requirements.
- g. All electronic changeable copy signs shall be designed to achieve a default status during periods of sign malfunction that will turn off the sign entirely.
- h. Electronic changeable copy signs shall be installed in a manner that does not unreasonably interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring residentially zoned property. No electronic changeable copy sign shall be located closer than 100 feet to any property zoned RSA, RU-1, RU-2, MHP, HV, or SH District.

#### **Section 21.100. Sign permit application requirements.**

1. Sign permits shall be issued by the building inspector or his/her designee upon approval of a written application. Where electrical permits are required, they shall be obtained at the same time as the sign permit.
2. The permit application shall identify the following:
  - a. Name and address of the sign owner and the property owner.
  - b. Name and address of the person who will erect the sign.
  - c. Location of the sign.
  - d. Drawing in color showing design, size, height, materials.
  - e. Topography of land in the parcel.
  - f. Any other pertinent information the Building Inspector may require to ~~insure~~ ensure compliance with the ordinances of the Township.
3. Fees for sign permits shall be set by the Township Board.
4. ~~In addition to the permit fee, a deposit shall be required for all temporary or movable signs in an amount sufficient to compensate the Township to remove and store the sign.~~ *[It is doubtful that Atlas Township enforces this provision.]*
5. A sign permit shall expire if the sign for which the permit was issued has not been erected within six months of issuance of the permit.
6. The following operations shall not require a sign permit:
  - a. Changing advertising copy or message on an approved sign.
  - b. Painting, repainting, cleaning and other normal maintenance and repair of a sign or a sign structure.

**Section 21.110. Signs requiring registration: specific requirements.**

*[This entire section is unnecessary, as the two sign types previously listed as requiring registration are no longer defined separately. They are now regulated like any other temporary sign.]*

- ~~1.—Signs which advertise of community/special events and directional signs for real estate developments may have a wire or stake base and shall be registered with the Township.~~
- ~~2.—Signs requiring registration are limited to an area up to three square feet per side, are limited to two signs per development or event located near major road intersections and must have a minimum separation of 1,000 feet between sets of signs.~~
- ~~3.—Real estate development directional signs are limited to the hours of Friday at 6 P.M. through Monday at 7 A.M.~~
- ~~4.—The applicant must complete a registration form provided by the Township, which includes at a minimum, an explanation of the necessity for the signs, the location where the signs will be placed, the total number of signs and dates of the event(s).~~

**Section 21.110. Signs not requiring a permit: specific requirements.**

- ~~1.—**Agricultural sign.** A sign advertising agricultural product/service shall not exceed 32 square feet in size, or be higher than six feet from grade. *[Content based and unnecessary.]*~~
- ~~2.—**Community/special event signs.** Community/special event signs may be erected on the location of the event no more than 14 days prior to the event, except holiday signs may be erected no more than 60 days prior to the holiday. All community/special event signs must be removed within 14 days after the event occurs. The signs may not exceed eight square feet and must be located two feet back from the property line, the edge of the right-of-way line, or any easement, whichever is furthest from the centerline of the road. *[Content based and now regulated as temporary signs.]*~~
- ~~3.—**Construction signs.** Construction signs are limited to one sign per development. The size shall not be more than 32 square feet per side in all zoning districts. The sign shall not be erected until a building permit has been obtained for the project, if required, or until actual work has begun, whichever is later. The sign shall be confined to the site of the construction and shall be removed at the time any certificate of occupancy is issued, or the work is completed, whichever is earlier. *[Content based and now regulated as temporary signs.]*~~
- ~~4.—**Directional and information signs.** Directional and informational signs shall not exceed two square feet per side and shall not have advertising copy, logos or other identifying graphics. *[Content based and unnecessary.]*~~
- ~~5.—**Flags.** Flags of any country, state, municipality must be respectfully displayed on a flagpole or similar support. Other flags are limited to the business or institution name, logo, and slogan. The total number of flags on any lot shall not exceed four. *[No longer considered a sign based on the revised definition of sign. No need to mention or regulate.]*~~
- ~~6.—**Garage, open house or auction sale signs.** Garage, open house or auction sale signs, which may have a wire or stake base, are limited to an area up to three square feet per side, provided one of said signs is located on the same parcel as the sale and one at each entrance to the subdivision where the sale is to take place or the nearest major street intersection to the parcel. The signs shall be erected only on the day of the sale and up to two days prior to the sale and must be removed at the end of the day of the sale or open house. *[Content based and now regulated as temporary signs.]*~~

- ~~7. **Identification signs.** Identification signs may not exceed two square feet, and are limited to one for each occupant at each entrance and one general sign at any location on the building. *[Content based and now regulated as incidental signs.]*~~
- ~~8. **Political signs.** Political Signs up to three square feet in copy area with a wire or stake base are allowed. Signs larger than three square feet may be no larger than 32 square feet per side, five feet in height, and limited to one per lot. No political signs shall be located in the street right-of-way or easement. All political signs must be erected no sooner than eight weeks prior to the election and must be removed within seven days after the election, unless the election is a primary, in which case signs for primary winners must be removed within seven days after the general election.~~

Political signs at the Polling Places on election days are subject to the following additional regulations:

- ~~a. No more than one sign per candidate or ballot issue~~
  - ~~b. No sign shall exceed 16 square feet total area.~~
  - ~~c. No part of any sign shall exceed four feet above the existing grade.~~
  - ~~d. Signs may be located no closer than 100 feet from the nearest point of the Polling Place structure, nor closer than four feet from the travelled surface of the Polling Place driveway, nor within the road right-of-way in front of the Polling Place property.~~
  - ~~e. Signs may be placed no earlier than 6:00 A.M. on the day of the election, and must be removed no later than 11:00 P.M. on the day of the election.~~
- ~~9. **Real estate signs.** Real estate signs in all single-family residential zoning districts shall be a maximum of six square feet per side and a maximum height of six feet from grade to the top of the sign. Real estate signs in all other zoning districts shall be no greater than 16 square feet per side for properties with road frontage up to 300 lineal feet, and no greater than 32 square feet per side for properties with more than 300 lineal feet of road frontage. Nonresidential real estate signs shall be a maximum height of six feet from grade to the top of the sign. Real estate signs are limited to one per property, and confined to the property for sale, rent or lease. The sign shall be removed within 14 days after the sale, rental or lease of the property. *[Content based and now regulated as temporary signs.]*~~
  - ~~10. **Real estate development signs.** Real estate development signs are limited to one sign per development. The size shall not be more than 32 square feet per side in all zoning districts. The sign shall not be erected until a building permit has been obtained for the project, if required, or until actual work has begun, whichever is later. The real estate development sign shall be removed upon issuance of a permit for the residential identification sign/monument sign, or any other sign intended to permanently identify the development. *[Content based and now regulated as temporary signs.]*~~
1. **Window signs.** Window signs on a building side shall not exceed ten percent of the total glass area on that side of the building.
  2. **Incidental signs.** Incidental signs are allowed but shall not exceed two (2) square feet in size, unless otherwise approved by the Planning Commission during site plan review.
  3. **Temporary signs.** *[These are the proposed regulations for all types of temporary signs.]*
    - a. Temporary signs shall be located at least three feet from the property line, the edge of the right-of-way line, or any easement, whichever is closest to the principal building.
    - b. Temporary signs in residential districts shall not exceed six square feet in area. Temporary signs in non-residential districts shall not exceed 32 square feet in area.
    - c. Temporary signs shall not exceed a height of 4 feet. The height of a temporary sign includes any portion of a berm above grade on which the sign is placed.

- d. Temporary signs in residential districts shall be separated at least 25 feet from any other temporary sign on the property. Temporary signs in non-residential districts shall be separated at least 100 feet from any other temporary sign on the property.
  - e. Temporary signs shall be allowed for a maximum of 90 days. There is no time limit for temporary signs located on a property which is actively listed for sale. *[The Township may consider this time limitation, but should note that it may be difficult to enforce, especially if no permits are required to be obtained.]*
  - f. Temporary signs shall not be located within the clear vision zone as defined in this Article.
  - g. Prior to the erection or placement of a temporary sign, the permission of the property owner where the sign is to be located must be secured.
  - h. Temporary signs shall not be illuminated.
  - i. All temporary signs must be made of durable water resistant materials and shall be well maintained. Frayed, torn, broken or illegible signs will be deemed unmaintained and required to be removed.
4. **Public signs.** *[This clarifies that public signs, as defined, are allowed without a permit and with no restrictions.]*

#### **Section 21.120. Nonconforming signs.**

1. A nonconforming sign may remain as long as the sign is properly maintained and not detrimental to the health, safety and welfare and complies with the requirements of this section, and is not an obsolete sign.
2. If a nonconforming sign becomes an obsolete sign, the entire sign (including above-ground base, height, poles, size, wires, panels and any other element) shall be removed within 30 days of the sign becoming an obsolete sign.
3. A nonconforming sign shall not:
  - a. Be relocated, expanded or changed, except as to periodic message changes.
  - b. Be structurally altered so as to prolong the life of the sign or to change the shape, size, type, placement or design of the sign.
  - c. Be altered or repaired after being damaged if the repair or the re-erection of the sign would cost more than 50 percent of the cost of a similar sign.
4. For the purpose of this section of the Ordinance, the terms "altered", "repaired", "changed" and "expanded" shall not include normal maintenance, reducing the copy area, changing copy, changing ornamental molding, frames or other such features or landscaping below the copy area, installing or changing electrical wiring.
5. If a property line, easement or right-of-way line is altered that affects the setbacks required by this Ordinance, the owner of the sign, building or property shall either:
  - a. Remove the nonconforming sign;
  - b. Conform with this Ordinance; or
  - c. Apply for a variance.

#### **Section 21.130. Appeals.**

Any person aggrieved by any decision of the building inspector may appeal to the Township Board of Zoning Appeals by serving written notice to the building inspector. All provisions of the Zoning Ordinance

regarding appeals shall govern sign appeals, provided that unsafe signs that present an immediate and serious danger to the public may be removed by the Township in accordance with [Section 21.160](#) herein.

### **Section 21.140. Variances.**

An applicant may apply to the Board of Zoning Appeals for a variance. All provisions of the Zoning Ordinance regarding variances shall govern sign variances.

### **Section 21.150. Enforcement and penalty.**

1. The building department code enforcement office, police department or agent(s) designated by the Township shall remove a sign immediately and without notice if the condition of the sign presents an immediate threat to public health, safety or welfare, with all costs to remove assessed against the responsible person.
2. The building department code enforcement officer, police department or agent(s) designated by the Township shall **have the authority to remove** temporary ~~or movable~~ signage if it violates the terms of this Ordinance. ~~The applicant shall forfeit the deposit required under Section 21.110, Subsection 4.~~
3. In addition, the enforcement and penalty provisions of the Zoning Ordinance apply to signs.
4. A violation of this Ordinance is considered a misdemeanor and shall carry a penalty of up to a \$500.00 fine and/or up to 90 days in jail. Further, the Township may enforce any provision of this ordinance by seeking injunctive relief.

### ~~Section 21.170. ——— Effective date.~~

*[This section is unnecessary, as the new amendment will be assigned its own effective date.]*

~~The provisions of this Ordinance are ordered to take effect 30 days following publication by the Township of Atlas Board of Trustees in a newspaper of general circulation.~~

### ~~Section 21.180. ——— Adoption.~~

*[This section is unnecessary, as the new amendment will have its own adoption date.]*

~~This Ordinance is declared to have been adopted by the Township of Atlas Board of Trustees at a meeting thereof duly called and held on the 20th day of March, 2006 and ordered to be given publication in the manner prescribed under the laws and ordinances of the Township.~~

**Additional Amendments Related to Signage**  
Prepared by Wade Trim

July 7, 2025 DRAFT

As Recommended for Adoption by the Atlas Township Planning Commission on June 18, 2025

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**Section 2.20. Definitions.**

~~Sign. Any device designed to inform or attract the attention of persons not on the premises on which the sign is located. See Atlas Township Sign Ordinance.~~

*[This definition is unnecessary, as definitions are included within the signs Article XXI.]*

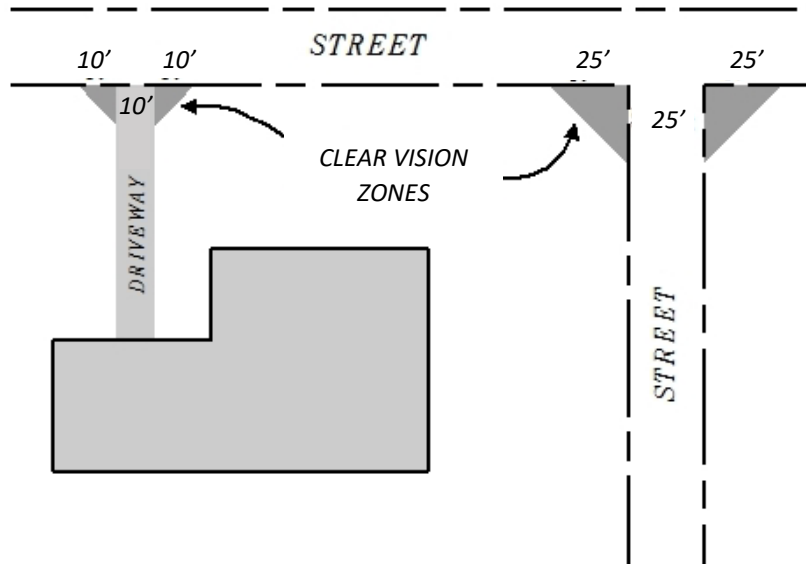
**Section 3.110. Clear vision zone.**

~~There shall be a clear vision zone at all corners of intersecting roads, or road junctions, consisting of a triangular area defined by the point of intersection of the right-of-way lines and the two points extended along such lines a distance of 25 feet from the point on intersection, and within which area no obstruction to vision, excluding existing topography, shall be permitted from a height of two feet to eight feet above the centerline elevation of abutting streets, except that not more than two trees with trunks of not more than 30 inches in diameter each, and clear of any branches for such heights may be located within such area; provided, however, that this section shall not prohibit the requirement of a greater clear vision area where such is necessary in view of permitted traffic, anticipated traffic volumes, or geographic conditions.~~

1. All corner triangular areas described below shall maintain a clear vision zone free of buildings, fences, walls, signs, structures and landscaping. The clear vision zone shall be provided vertically between a height of thirty (30) inches and six (6) feet above the centerline elevation of the intersecting streets. A non-obscuring fence may have a minimum height of thirty-six (36) inches in a clear vision zone. The corner triangular areas referred to above are:
  - a. The area formed at the corner intersection of a public right-of-way or edge of a private road easement and a driveway, two (2) sides of the triangle area being ten (10) feet in length measured along the right-of-way or easement line and driveway line and the third side being a line connecting these two sides.
  - b. The area formed at a corner intersection of two (2) public rights-of-way and/or private road easement lines, the two (2) sides of the triangular area being twenty-five (25) feet in length measured along the abutting public rights-of-way lines and the third side being a line connecting these two (2) sides.

*[This amendment corrects the duplication and inconsistency between Section 3.110 of the Zoning Ordinance and the definition of clear vision zone within the Sign Article. Only one is necessary.]*

*Clear Vision Zones*



**Section 11.20. Uses permitted. (Mobile Home Park District MHP)**

~~2.—On-site signs in accordance with the requirements of Section 11.80, Subsection 15.~~

*[This reference is unnecessary.]*

**Section 11.80. Public health, safety and miscellaneous provisions. (Mobile Home Park District MHP)**

~~15. There shall be a maximum of one mobile home park development sign per road frontage with an entrance which shall bear only the name of the mobile home park. Such a sign shall be located not less than 50 feet from the road right-of-way line demarcated by a Clear Vision Zone. The Clear Vision Zone is an unobstructed triangular area described as follows: The area formed at the intersection of two road right-of-way lines where the two sides of the triangular area are 25 feet long measured along abutting public right-of-way lines, and the base of the triangle is a line connecting the two end points of the triangle's sides; also, the area formed at the intersection of a road right-of-way and a driveway where the two sides of the triangle are ten feet long measured along the abutting public rights-of-way line and the edge of the driveway, and the base of the triangle is a line connecting the two end points of the triangle's sides. The sign may be lighted, provided that the source of light is not visible and is not of the flashing or intermittent type. One sign, not exceeding 50 square feet in area shall be permitted for the first entrance provided to the community. For multiple entrances, a 32 square foot sign shall be permitted at each entrance after the first. Signs may be double faced but each side of the sign shall have identical copy and be flush with the other side, if comparable to sign regulations in other developments.~~

*[This language is unnecessary, as a mobile home park development would be allowed a monument sign in accordance with Section 21.70,(1).]*

**Section 12.20. Uses permitted. (Local Commercial District C-1)**

2. Business activities of a local or neighborhood character, conducted within an enclosed building only, providing necessary services for day-to-day operation of a household, and which can be supported economically by a small neighborhood including the following:
  - a. Bakery shop where no baking is done on the premises.
  - b. Barber and beauty shop.
  - c. Cigar shop.
  - d. Cleaning and dyeing distribution shop (no processing).
  - e. Dressmaker, custom.
  - f. Drugstore.
  - g. Florist, retail sales.
  - h. Laundry, collecting shop, self-service laundry, hand laundry.
  - i. Newsstand.
  - j. Shoe repair.
  - k. Stationery store.
  - l. Tailor shop catering to custom tailoring and minor cleaning and pressing activities.
  - ~~m. Signs as allowed in the Atlas Township Sign Ordinance.~~
  - n. State-licensed tattoo artist establishments

*[This language is unnecessary.]*