

**ORDINANCE NO. Introduction (CM)**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF  
WATSONVILLE REPEALING CHAPTER 6 (SIGNS) OF TITLE 8  
(BUILDING REGULATIONS) IN ITS ENTIRETY AND ADDING A NEW  
CHAPTER 14-21 (SIGNS) OF TITLE 14 (ZONING) OF THE  
WATSONVILLE MUNICIPAL CODE**

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**WHEREAS**, the City of Watsonville’s (“City”) sign regulations in Chapter 8-6 (Signs) is intended to regulate signs located on property over which the City has regulatory authority; and

**WHEREAS**, the Sign ordinance in Chapter 8-6 dates back to 1967 and does not comply with federal law and does not meet the current needs of business owners in the City; and

**WHEREAS**, the Sign Ordinance maintains and enhances the City's appearance by regulating the design, character, location, number, quality of materials, size, illumination, and maintenance of signs; and

**WHEREAS**, the Sign Ordinance also minimizes the possible adverse effects of signs on nearby public and private property, including streets and public rights-of-way; and

**WHEREAS**, without adequate regulation signage can endanger the public, distract drivers, create confusion and foster a negative image of the City on the part of the public; and

**WHEREAS**, excessive signage can damage view corridors, diminish property values and detrimentally affect the quality of life of City residents, businesses and property owners, visitors and the traveling public; and

**WHEREAS**, the City's current sign regulations should be enhanced with respect to the design, location, materials, construction and maintenance of signs, as well as the types of signs permitted, while respecting and protecting the right of free speech; and

**WHEREAS**, textual and procedural clarifications and amendments to the City's current sign regulations should be made so that they are easier for the public to review and for staff to administer; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed amendments are consistent with and further implement the goals and policies of the City's General Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, on November 1, 2022, the Planning Commission of the City of Watsonville adopted Resolution No. 17-22 (PC), recommending the City Council adopt an Ordinance amending the Watsonville Municipal Code by repealing Chapter 6 (Signs)

of Title 8 (Building Regulations) and adding Chapter 14-21 (Signs) of Title 14 (Zoning);  
and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council desires to implement modern and objective sign regulations to enhance the character of the City; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council has reviewed Chapter 14-21, held a public hearing thereon, and found the request to be consistent with the Findings required for a zoning text amendment pursuant to Section 14-12.807 of the Watsonville Municipal Code, attached hereto and marked as Exhibit "A".

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1. ENACTMENT.**

Chapter 6 (Signs) of Title 8 (Building Regulations) of the Watsonville Municipal Code is hereby rescinded in its entirety and Title 14 (Zoning) is hereby amended by adding a new Chapter 14-21(Signs) to read in words and figures as follows:

**CHAPTER 14-21 SIGNS**

**Sec. 14-21.010 Purpose and applicability.**

(a) Purpose. This chapter establishes standards relating to the permitted type, size, height, placement, number, and design of signs. The intent of these standards is to:

(1) Support economically viable businesses serving city residents, workers, and visitors.

(2) Allow for signage that identifies businesses in a fair and equitable manner.

- (3) Protect and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the city.
- (4) Minimize hazards to motorists and pedestrians resulting from excessive, confusing, and distracting signs.
- (5) Allow for a simple and streamlined sign permitting process.

(b) Applicability. This chapter applies to all signs in Watsonville, except for city-installed signs and signs required by a governmental agency to carry out its responsibility to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.

**Sec. 14-21.020 Definitions.**

The following definitions apply to this chapter:

(a) “Awning sign” means a sign incorporated into, attached, or painted on an awning.

(b) “Awning face sign” means a sign located on the sloping plane face of an awning.

(c) “Awning valance sign” means a sign located on the valance of an awning perpendicular to the ground.

(d) “Beacon Sign” means any light with one or more beams directed into the atmosphere or directed at one or more points not on the same lot as the light source; also, any light with one or more beams that rotate or move.

(e) “Canopy Sign” means any sign that is part of or attached to an awning, canopy, or other material, or structural protective cover over a door, entrance, window, or outdoor service area.

(f) “Center Identification Sign” means a sign identifying the name of a Shopping Center and that does not include the name of any business within the center.

(g) “Commercial message” means any sign that directly or indirectly names, draws attention to, or advertises a business, product, good, service, or other commercial activity, or which proposes a commercial transaction.

(h) “Commercial sign” means a sign with a commercial message.

(i) “Construction site sign” means an on-premises sign for an approved construction project that publicizes the future building and occupants as well as the architects, engineers and construction organizations involved in the project.

(j) “Directory sign” means an on-premises sign which shows the direction to or location of a customer entrance to a business.

(k) “Election period” means the period beginning one hundred twenty days before and ending one day after any national, state, or local election in which city electors may vote.

(l) “Flags” means fabric, textile, or material with colors and/or patterns which display a symbol of a nation, state, company, or idea.

(m) “Marquee Sign” means any sign attached to or supported by a marquee, which is a permanent roof-like projecting structure attached to a building.

(n) “Monument sign” means an independent, freestanding structure supported on the ground as opposed to being supported on the building. Monument signs may contain center identification in addition to business identification.

(o) “Projecting sign” means any sign permanently attached to a building or wall such that the sign face or faces are perpendicular to the building or wall.

(p) “Roof sign” means any sign that is mounted on a roof or a parapet of a building.

(q) “Sandwich sign” means movable or permanent business identification signs placed in front of a business, located on private property.

(r) “Shopping Center” means a commercial building or group of buildings operated as a unit on a single parcel, sharing common parking areas or commonly owned adjacent parcels.

(s) “Sign” means any device, fixture, placard or structure that uses any color, form, graphic, illumination, symbol or writing to advertise or announce the purpose of a business or entity, or to communicate information of any kind to the public.

(t) Sign Area. See Section 14-21.040 (A) (Calculation of Sign Area).

(u) “Sign copy” means the area of a sign occupied by letters, numbers, graphics, or other content intended to inform, direct, or otherwise transmit information.

(v) “Sign face” means the area of a sign where Sign copy is placed.

(w) “Wall sign” means a sign which is attached to or painted on the exterior wall of a structure with the display surface of the sign approximately parallel to the building wall.

(x) “Window sign” means a sign posted, painted, placed, or affixed in or on a window exposed to public view or within one foot and parallel to a window exposed to public view.

**Sec. 14-21.030 Permit requirements.**

(a) Level 1 Sign Permits. A Level 1 Sign Permit (Chapter 14-12) is required to install, construct, or enlarge any sign, except for:

(1) Signs exempt from the permit requirements of this chapter as specified in Section 14-21.050 (Signs allowed without permits).

(2) Signs requiring a Special Sign Permit as identified in subsection B of this section.

(3) Signs requiring a Special Sign Permit as identified in subsection C of this section.

(b) Level 2 Sign Permits. A Level 2 Sign Permit (Chapter 14-12) is required for the following types of signs:

(1) Exterior neon signs.

(2) Monument signs for more than four commercial tenants.

(c) Level 3 Sign Permits. Planning Commission approval (Chapter 14-12.1200) is required for the following types of signs and approvals:

(1) Auto dealership signs in the CT zoning district (Section 14-21.080(A)) that are not otherwise allowed with an administrative sign permit.

(2) Adjustments to sign standards in low visibility areas in commercial zoning districts (Section 14-21.120(E)).

(3) Signs that do not conform with permitted sign types and standards in Section 14-21.080 (Standards for specific types of signs).

(4) Master sign programs (Section 14-21.130).

(d) Noncommercial Signs. Noncommercial signs are allowed wherever commercial signs are permitted and are subject to the same standards and total maximum allowances per site or building of each sign type specified in this chapter.

(e) Message Neutrality.

(1) It is the city's policy to regulate signs in a constitutional manner that does not favor commercial speech over noncommercial speech, and is content

neutral as to noncommercial messages which are within the protections of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the corollary provisions of the California Constitution.

(2) Where necessary, the Zoning Administrator will interpret the meaning and applicability of this chapter in light of this message neutrality policy.

(f) Message Substitution.

(1) Subject to the property owner's consent, a message of any type may be substituted, in whole or in part, for the message displayed on any legally established sign.

(2) Message substitutions are allowed by right without a permit.

(3) This message substitution provision does not:

(i) Create a right to increase the total amount of signage beyond that otherwise allowed or existing;

(ii) Affect the requirement that a sign structure or mounting device be properly permitted, when a permit requirement applies;

(iii) Allow a change in the physical structure of a sign or its mounting device;

(iv) Allow the establishment of a prohibited sign as identified in Section 14-21.060 (Prohibited signs); or

(v) Nullify or eliminate any contractual obligation through a development agreement or similar agreement that specifies the allowable content of a sign.



(g) City-Installed Signs. City-installed signs in all zoning districts do not require a permit.

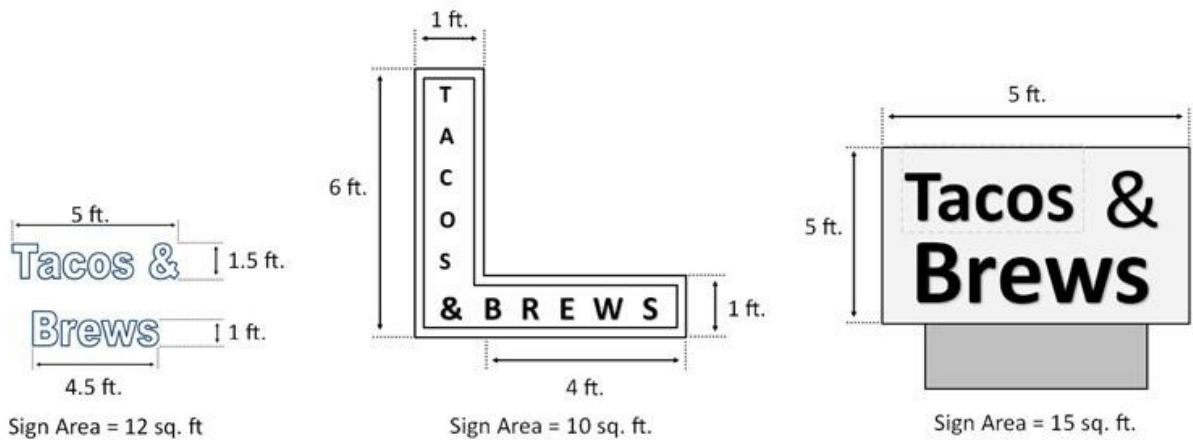
(h) Other Government-Installed Signs. Governmental agency-installed signs to carry out its responsibility to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare in all zoning districts do not require a permit.

**Sec. 14-21.040 Rules of measurement.**

(a) Calculation of Sign Area.

(1) Sign area is measured as the area of all sign copy, framing, or other display enclosed within a continuous perimeter forming a single geometric shape with no more than six sides. See Figure 14-21-1.

**Figure 14-21-1: Measurement of Sign Area**

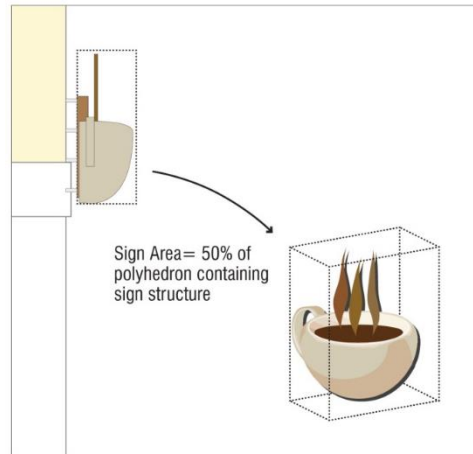


(2) Supporting framework or bracing that is clearly incidental to the display itself shall not be calculated as sign area.

(3) The area of a double-faced (back-to-back) sign shall be calculated as a single sign face when the two faces are parallel with each other.

(4) The area of spherical, free-form, sculptural or other nonplanar signs are measured as fifty percent of the sum of the area enclosed within the four vertical sides of the smallest four-sided polyhedron that will encompass the sign structure. See Figure 14-21-2.

**Figure 14-21-2:**



**Nonplanar Sign Area**

(b) Monument Sign Height Measurement. The height of a monument or other freestanding sign is measured as the vertical distance from the sidewalk or top of curb nearest the base of the sign to the top of the highest element of the sign.

**Sec. 14-21.050 Signs allowed without permits.**

(a) Types of Signs. The following signs are allowed without a planning permit and shall not be counted towards the allowable sign area or number of signs on a parcel:

(1) On-site directional signs which do not include commercial messages or images, not to exceed three feet in height and six square feet in area.

(2) Informational signs which do not include commercial messages or images, displayed for the safety and convenience of the public, providing

information such as “restrooms,” “danger,” “impaired clearance,” “no smoking,” “parking in rear,” “coastal access,” and other signs of a similar nature.

(3) Flags bearing noncommercial messages or graphic symbols.

(4) One commemorative plaque identifying a building name, date of construction, or similar information that is cut into, carved, or made of stone, concrete, metal, or other similar permanent material.

(5) One bulletin board on a parcel occupied by a noncommercial organization, with a maximum area not to exceed the provisions of this Chapter.

(6) Political signs during an election period located outside of a public street, path, or right-of-way except to the extent such signs are prohibited by state or federal law.

(7) Constitutionally protected noncommercial message signs, with a maximum area not to exceed the provisions of this Chapter.

(8) Signs within a building, or on the premises of a building, that are not visible from the public right-of-way and are intended for interior viewing only.

(9) Murals on the exterior of a building that do not advertise a product, business, or service, are subject to the procedures outlined for Public Art in WMC Chapter 8-20.

(10) Official or legal notices required by a court order or governmental agency.

(11) Signs installed by a governmental agency within the public right-of-way.

(12) Signs, postings, or notices required by a governmental agency to carry out its responsibility to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.

(13) Restaurant menu signs and menu boxes attached to a building, with a maximum area not to exceed the provisions of this Chapter. Such signage shall not extend more than six-inches from the exterior wall to which it is attached.

(14) Real estate listings posted in the window of a real estate office, with a maximum area not to exceed the provisions of this Chapter.

(15) Residential signs not requiring a building permit as specified in Section 14-21.100 (Residential signs – Multi-unit properties).

(16) Temporary signs allowed without a permit as provided in Section 14-21.110 (Temporary signs).

(17) Vacation rental signs up to twelve inches by twelve inches.

(18) Garage sale signs limited to the day of the garage sale.

(b) Building Permit Review. Planning staff shall review all proposed signs listed in subsection A of this section that require a building permit to verify compliance with all applicable standards.

(c) Changes to Sign Face. Changes to a sign face that do not structurally alter or enlarge a legally established sign and utilize similar materials shall not require a planning permit.

(d) Routine Maintenance. The painting, cleaning, repair, and normal maintenance of a legally established sign shall not require a planning permit.

#### **Sec. 14-21.060 Prohibited signs.**

(a) Prohibited Sign Types. The following types of signs are prohibited:

- (1) Signs or sign structures which have become a public nuisance or hazard due to inadequate maintenance, dilapidation, or abandonment.
- (2) Portable signs placed in the public right of way.
- (3) Roof signs.
- (4) Signs painted on buildings.
- (5) Signs emitting odors, gases, or fluids.
- (6) Signs that feature a flag, pennant, whirligig, or any device which is designed to wave, flutter, rotate or display other movement under the influence of wind, excluding flags and insignia of any government.
- (7) Digital display and electronic reader-board signs which allow the image on a sign to be changed by electronic control methods, except for digital gas and service station signs consistent with Section 14-21.080(H) (Gas and Service Station Signs) and parking garage signs consistent with Section 14-21.080(I) (Parking Garage Signs).
- (8) Animated signs, with the exception of clocks and barber poles.
- (9) Signs that emit sound.
- (10) Signs which simulate in size, color, lettering, or design a traffic control sign or signal.
- (11) Signs which flash, blink, change color, or change intensity placed on the exterior of a property, and/or when visible from outside the premises.
- (12) Beacon Signs.
- (13) Signs mounted or attached to a vehicle parked for the purpose of calling attention to or advertising a business establishment.

(14) Signs that have been abandoned, or whose advertised use has ceased to function for a period of ninety days or more.

(15) Signs adversely affecting traffic control or safety.

(16) Signs with exposed raceways.

(17) Signs attached to trees.

(18) Signs erected or maintained with horizontal or vertical clearance from overhead utilities less than required by federal, state and/or local agencies.

(19) Signs erected for the dominant purpose of being seen by travelers on a freeway, except for parcels located within 700 feet of Highway 1.

(20) Inflatable signs and balloons greater than fifteen inches in diameter, except for temporary auto dealership signs.

(21) Signs on or affecting public property (e.g., "tenant parking only") not placed there by the public entity having the possessory interest in such property.

(b) Prohibited Sign Content.

(1) The following sign content is prohibited:

(i) Obscene or indecent text or graphics.

(ii) Text or graphics that advertise unlawful activity.

(iii) Text or graphics that constitute defamation, incitement to imminent lawless action, or true threats of violence or harm.

(iv) Text or graphics that present a clear and present danger due to their potential confusion with signs that provide public safety information (for example, signs that use the words "Caution," or "Danger," or

comparable words, phrases, symbols, or characters in such a manner as to imply a safety hazard that does not exist).

(2) The content prohibited by subsection (B)(1) of this section is either not protected by the United States or California Constitution or is offered limited protection that is outweighed by the substantial governmental interests in protecting the public safety and welfare. It is the intent of the city council that each subsection of subsection (B)(1) of this section be individually severable in the event that a court of competent jurisdiction were to hold one or more of them to be inconsistent with the United States or California Constitution.

**Sec. 14-21.070 General sign standards.**

(a) Maximum Permitted Sign Area. Table 14-21-1 identifies the maximum cumulative/total sign area permitted on a property in each zoning district. Each business may have a mix of the sign types allowed by Section 14-21.080 (Standards for specific types of signs) provided the area of all signs on the property does not exceed the maximum established in Table 14-21-1.

**Table 14-21-1: Sign Area Standards**

<b>Zoning District</b>	<b>Area per Linear Foot of Building Frontage</b>
DWSP Area	0.5 sq. ft. per linear foot 36 sq. ft. max
IG, IP, CT, CV,CNS, CC,CO, CN Zoning	2 sq. ft. per linear foot 300 sq. ft. max
PF, N	As determined through sign permit
PD	As determined through the development plan

(b) Maintenance. Signs, including all supports, braces, and anchors, shall be maintained in a state of good repair at all times. Damage to signs, including cracked sign faces, frayed or weathered fabric, and broken lighting shall be repaired promptly.

(c) Building Surface Repair. When an existing sign is replaced or modified, any newly exposed portions of a building surface on which the sign is displayed shall be repaired and repainted to restore a uniform appearance to the surface. Compliance with this requirement includes the removal of any excess conduit and supports, and the patching or filling of any exposed holes.

(d) Illumination.

(1) Nonresidential signs may be internally or externally illuminated except where specifically prohibited. Internal illumination is permitted only when the portion of the sign that appears illuminated is primarily the sign lettering, registered trademark, or logo. Internally illuminated boxes are prohibited, except that the copy of an existing internally illuminated box sign may be replaced with a change of business.

(2) The light source for externally illuminated signs shall be positioned so that light does not shine directly on adjoining properties or cause glare for motorists or pedestrians.

(3) Exposed bulbs are not permitted.

(4) Internal illumination is prohibited in the Downtown Core and Downtown Gateway

(5) Where sign lighting is permitted, only indirect illumination or low-intensity interior illumination shall be used. It is preferred that lighted signs be



designed with light-colored translucent letters and logos, on a semi-opaque dark background. Any permitted sign lighting shall be unobtrusive to adjacent properties and any glare shall be directed onto the site.

(e) Materials and Design.

(1) Except for interior window signs, all permanent signs shall be constructed of wood, metal, plastic, glass, or similar durable and weatherproof material.

(2) The design of signs, including its shape, features, materials, colors, and textures, shall be compatible with the design character of the development or use it identifies and will not have an adverse effect on the character and integrity of the surrounding area.

(f) Location and Placement.

(1) All signs shall be located on the same parcel as the business or use that it serves, except as otherwise allowed by this chapter.

(2) Signs shall not obstruct the ingress to, or egress from, a door, window, fire escape, or other required access-way.

(3) Signs shall not interfere with visibility at an intersection, public right-of-way, driveway, or other point of ingress/egress. The city may require sign setbacks greater than specified in this chapter as needed to maintain adequate visibility for motorists and pedestrians. See Section 14-40.060 (Clear Corner Triangles).

(g) Signs in the Public Right-of-Way.

(1) No sign shall be permitted in the public right-of-way, except for:

(i) Signs installed or required by a governmental agency.

(ii) Awning, Canopy, Marquee, Projecting, or suspended signs attached to a building wall subject to the requirements in Section 14-21.080 (Standards for specific types of signs).

(iii) Shared auto dealership signs consistent with Section 14-21.080(A) (Auto Dealership Signs).

(2) Any sign illegally installed or placed on public property shall be subject to removal and disposal as specified in Section 14-21.150 (Violations and enforcement). The city shall have the right to recover from the owner or person placing such a sign the full costs of removal and disposal of the sign.

**Sec. 14-21.080 Standards for specific types of signs.**

Signs consistent with the standards in this section are allowed with an administrative permit unless planning commission approval of a sign permit is specifically required. Signs that deviate from the standards in this section may be allowed with planning commission approval of a sign permit in accordance with Section 14-21.120 (Adjustment to sign standards).

(a) Auto Dealership Signs.

(1) In addition to signs allowed with an administrative sign permit (Section 14-21.030(A)), the planning commission may allow special auto dealership signage in the CT zoning district with approval of a sign permit subject to the following standards:

(i) Location: on or adjacent to an auto dealership land use.

(ii) Placement: ten-foot minimum setback from property line abutting the public right-of-way.

(iii) Maximum height: at or below roof line.

(iv) The planning commission shall review the sign permit application if the total combined sign area on the site exceeds one hundred square feet.

(v) The planning commission may allow one shared sign used by multiple auto dealerships at the entry of Auto Center Drive which extends into or above the public right-of-way. If sign extends into public right of way, an encroachment permit is required.

The planning commission may allow temporary auto dealership signage, such as signage on light poles, flags, and pennants that deviate from temporary sign standards in Section 14-21.110 (Temporary signs) with the approval of a sign permit.

(b) Awning Signs.

(1) Standards for awning signs in each zoning district are as shown in Table 14-21-2.

(2) Awning signs shall be located on the awning above a display window or the entrance to the business it serves.

(3) An awning sign that projects over any public walkway or walk area shall have an overhead clearance of at least eight feet.

Note: In the planned development (PD) zoning district, standards for awning signs shall be established by the city council in the development plan.

(c) Monument Signs.

**Table 14-21-2: Awning Sign Standards**

Zoning District	Awning Face Sign		Awning Valance Sign		
	Maximum Area	Maximum Number	Maximum Area	Maximum Letter Height	Maximum Number
Downtown Specific Plan Area	Sign permit required (Chapter 14-12.1200)		75 percent of valance	Two-thirds of valance height	1 sign per awning located on either the awning face or the awning valance
All other non-residential zoning districts	30 percent of awning face	1 sign per awning located on either the awning face or the awning valance			

(1) Standards for monument signs in each zoning district are as shown in Table 14-21-3.

**Table 14-21-3: Monument Sign Standards**

Zoning District	Maximum Area	Maximum Height	Maximum Number
DWSP Downtown Core, Downtown Gateway	Not permitted		
DWSP Neighborhood and Industrial Flex	16 sq. ft.	4 ft.	1 per property
CT, CNS, CV	200 sq. ft.	15 ft.	1 per building frontage
CC, CN	100 sq. ft.	4 ft.	
IG, IP			

Note: In the P/QP and N zoning districts, standards for monument signs shall be established by the planning commission through a sign permit. In the planned development (PD) zoning district, standards for monument signs shall be established by the city council in the development plan.

(2) Monument signs shall be placed on the property of the business associated with the sign.

(3) Where two monument signs are allowed on a corner parcel, each sign shall be placed at least one hundred feet from the intersection corner.

(4) A monument sign for up to four tenants may be approved with an administrative sign permit. Monument signs listing more than four tenants require planning commission approval of a sign permit.

(5) The area surrounding the base of a monument sign shall be landscaped with a minimum three-foot wide planter area (on each side of the sign) to include drought-tolerant species.

(6) Monument signs shall be placed at least 10 feet away from any public or private driveway.

(7) Monument signs shall be placed at least five feet behind sidewalk or property line, whichever is greater.

(8) The height of a monument sign is measured as the vertical distance from the sidewalk or top of curb nearest the base of the sign to the top of the highest element of the sign.

(9) Monument signs are not allowed in conjunction with wall signs on a property with three or fewer businesses.

(10) The placement of monument signs shall meet the requirements of Chapter 14-40.060 (Clear Corner Triangles)

(d) Center Identification Signs.

(1) Standards for Center Identification Signs in each zoning district are as shown in Table 14-21-4.

(2) Center Identification Signs shall identify the name of the Shopping Center but may not include the name of any business or businesses within the Shopping Center.

(3) No more than one freestanding sign is permitted per Shopping Center street frontage. If a monument sign is located along the Shopping Center frontage, an additional Center Identification Sign is not permitted.

**Table 14-21-4: Center Identification Sign Standards**

Zoning District	Maximum Area	Maximum Height	Maximum Number
DWSP Core and Gateway districts	Not permitted		
CT, CNS, CV	60 sq. ft.	5 ft.	1 per shopping center
CC, CN, CO	35 sq. ft.		
I	Not permitted		

Note: In the planned development (PD) zoning district, standards for Center Identification Signs shall be established by the city council in the development plan.

(e) Directory Signs.

(1) Standards for Directory Signs in each zoning district are as shown in

Table 14-21-5

(2) Directory Signs may not be legible from adjacent public rights-of-way.

(3) Directory Signs shall identify the names of the occupants of the building or complex.

**Table 14-21-5: Directory Sign Standards**

Zoning District	Maximum Area	Maximum Height
DWSP Gateway and core	12 sq. ft.	4 ft.
DWSP neighborhoods flex	16 sq. ft.	
CT, CNS, CV	30 sq. ft.	5 ft.
CC, CN, CO	25 sq. ft.	

**Table 14-21-5: Directory Sign Standards**

Zoning District	Maximum Area	Maximum Height
IG/IP	25 sq. ft.	4 ft.

Note: In the P/QP and N zoning districts, standards for Directory Signs shall be established by the planning commission through a sign permit. In the planned development (PD) zoning district, standards for Directory Signs shall be established by the city council in the development plan.

(f) Wall Signs.

(1) Standards for Wall Signs in each zoning district are as shown in Table 14-21-6

(2) Wall Signs shall be attached parallel to the exterior wall of the business associated with the sign and may not extend above the top of building wall.

(3) Wall Signs may be in cabinets, on wood, or on similar material attached to the wall or painted directly on the wall.

(4) Any portion of a Wall Sign that projects over any public walkway or walk area shall have an overhead clearance of at least eight feet.

(5) Wall Signs are not allowed in conjunction with a monument sign on a property with three or fewer businesses.

(6) On a corner lot, one Wall Sign is allowed per street frontage.

**Table 14-21-6: Wall Sign Standards**

Zoning District [1]	Maximum Area	Maximum Projection from Wall	Maximum Number
DWSP core and gateway	0.5 sq. ft. per linear foot of shopfront, not to exceed 36 sq. ft. max	4 in.	1 per shopfront
DWSP flex neighborhoods			

**Table 14-21-6: Wall Sign Standards**

Zoning District [1]	Maximum Area	Maximum Projection from Wall	Maximum Number
All other non-residential zoning districts	2.0 sq. ft. per linear foot of shopfront, not to exceed 300 sq. ft.	12 in.	1 per shopfront

Notes:[1] In the P/QP and N zoning districts, standards for wall signs shall be established by the planning commission through a sign permit. In the planned development (PD) zoning district, standards for wall signs shall be established by the city council in the development plan.

(g) Projecting Signs.

(1) Standards for Projecting Signs in each zoning district are as shown in Table 14-21-7

(2) Projecting Signs shall be attached to the ground-floor exterior wall of the business associated with the sign and may not extend above the top of the second-story finished floor.

(3) Projecting Signs shall maintain a minimum two-foot horizontal clearance from a driveway or street curb.

(4) An encroachment permit must be obtained for all signs projecting over a public right-of-way.

(5) A Projecting Sign that projects over any public walkway or walk area shall have an overhead clearance of at least eight feet.



**Table 14-21-7: Projecting Sign Standards**

Zoning District	Maximum Area	Maximum Projection from Wall	Maximum Number
Downtown Core and Gateway	4 sq. ft.	4 ft.	1 per business entryway or storefront
All other non-residential zoning districts	8 sq. ft.	4 ft.	1 per business entryway or storefront

Note: In the P/QP and N zoning districts, standards for projecting signs shall be established by the planning commission through a sign permit. In the planned development (PD) zoning district, standards for projecting signs shall be established by the city council in the development plan.

(h) Gas and Service Station Signs. In addition to signs allowed with an administrative sign permit (Section 14-21.030(A)), the planning commission may allow special gas and service station signs that comply with the following standards:

- (1) A maximum of two signs, not exceeding four square feet, shall be allowed on each pump island to denote either full service or self-service.
- (2) No other signs will be allowed to be attached to pumps or islands other than required by state law. (See Business and Professions Code Section 13530.)
- (3) A six-foot-high monument sign which displays prices charged, credit cards accepted or special services rendered shall be allowed on each street frontage.
- (4) Digital changeable copy signs for gasoline pricing are permitted.

(5) Two additional signs up to a maximum of one square foot are permitted to advertise ancillary services such as ATMs and propane. Such signs must be attached to another sign or structure and may not be a portable freestanding sign.

(i) Parking Garage Signs. A maximum of one digital display sign not exceeding four square feet on each street frontage is permitted to show the number of available parking spaces.

(j) Window Signs.

(1) Standards for window signs in each zoning district are as shown in Table 14-21-8.

(2) Window signs may be attached only to the inside of a ground-floor window of the business associated with the sign.

(3) Window signs must be professionally fabricated. No hand-written signs are allowed.

(4) Interior signs within one foot of a window and publicly visible from outside of the building shall be included in the calculation of sign area for the property.

**Table 14-21-8: Window Sign Standards**

Zoning District	Maximum Area
DWSP area	25 percent of window
All other non-residential zoning districts	30 percent of window

Note: In the P/QP and N zoning districts, standards for window signs shall be established by the planning commission through a sign permit. In the

planned development (PD) zoning district, standards for window signs shall be established by the city council in the development plan.

(k) Sandwich Signs.

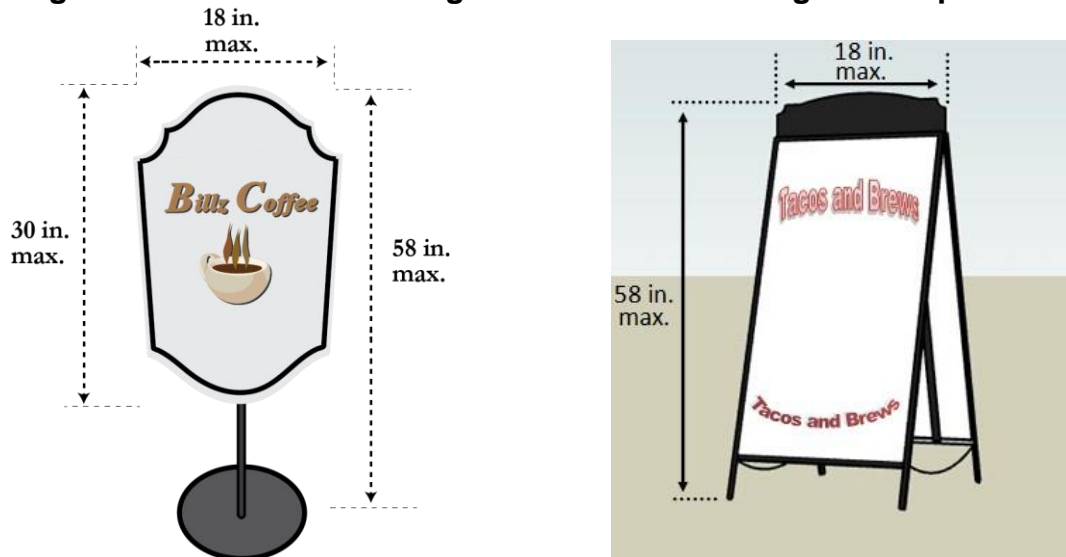
(1) Where Allowed. Sandwich signs are permitted only in the CT, CNS, CN, CV and CO Zoning Districts

(2) Permits Required.

(i) Sandwich signs consistent with this section and as illustrated in Figure 14-21-3 can be issued a temporary sign permit by the community development director.

(ii) All sandwich signs shall be located with 5-feet of the main entrance to the business, and shall leave a minimum 78-inch clearance for pedestrians. Sandwich signs are not allowed adjacent to the roadway or in the public-right-of-way.

**Figure 14-21-3: Sandwich Sign Standards and Design Concepts**



(3) Dimensions. Sandwich signs shall comply with the dimension standards in Table 14-21-9.

**Table 14-21-9: Sandwich Sign Standards**

Zoning District	Sign Face			Entire Sign
	Maximum Area	Maximum Width	Maximum Height	Maximum Height [1]
CT, CNS, CN, CV and CO Zoning Districts	3.75 sq. ft.	18 in.	32 in.	58 in.
All Other Zoning Districts	Not permitted			

Note: [1] Measured from ground to top of sign.

- (4) Number of Signs.
  - (i) Only one two-sided sandwich sign per business establishment is permitted.
  - (ii) Multi-tenant developments are permitted one sandwich sign per each common exterior public business entrance.
- (5) Materials and Design.
  - (i) Lights, banners, flags or similar objects shall not be placed on or adjacent to sandwich signs.
  - (ii) Sign faces shall be constructed of solid wood, metal, or similar durable and weatherproof material.
  - (iii) No sandwich sign may contain lights of any kind.
- (6) Sandwich Clearance.
  - (i) Sandwich signs shall leave a minimum 48-inch clearance for pedestrians.
  - (ii) Sandwich signs shall not interfere with pedestrian ingress or egress as required by the building code or obstruct vehicular traffic sight

distance requirements. A forty-eight-inch level clear path of travel on concrete or similar material must be maintained where the sign is located.

(7) Separation from Other Sandwich Signs. Sandwich signs shall be spaced a minimum of thirty linear feet from all other permitted sandwich signs.

(8) Display During Open Hours. Sandwich signs may be used only during the hours when the business is open to the public. At all other times the sign must be stored within the business premises.

(9) Advertising Multiple Businesses. Individual signs may advertise more than one business.

(10) Other Business Signage.

(i) No other temporary advertising signs (Section 14-21.110) may be used at the same time as the sandwich sign is in use.

(ii) All other signs on the property must be in conformance with the city's sign regulations prior to a sandwich sign permit being issued.

**Sec. 14-21.090 Design standards.**

(a) Design Standards for the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan Area. The following design standards apply to all signs in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan Area:

(1) Signs shall preserve, complement, or enhance the architectural composition and features of the building to which it is attached. Signs may not cover or obscure significant architectural details of the building to which it is attached.

(2) Signs shall be coordinated with the overall facade composition, including ornamental details and other signs on the building to which it is attached.

(3) Signs shall be mounted to fit within existing architectural features. The shape of the sign shall be used to reinforce the relationship of moldings and transoms seen along the street.

(4) Signs shall be located and designed so that they are legible when viewed from the sidewalk. Sign letter styles and sizes shall be designed for legibility from the sidewalk, not the street.

(5) To the extent possible, sign attachment parts shall be reused in their original location (holes in the facade or fixing positions) to protect the original building materials.

(6) Internally illuminated signs are prohibited.

(7) Wiring conduit for sign lighting shall be carefully routed to avoid damage to architectural details and to be concealed from view as much as possible.

(8) Sign materials and colors shall be compatible with the period and style of building to which it is attached. Sign panels shall avoid the extensive use of primary colors or significant areas of white or cream.

(9) Letters and logos shall be raised, routed into the sign face, or designed to give the sign variety and depth.

(10) The sign will not have a significant adverse effect on the character and integrity of the surrounding area.

(b) Design Standards for Commercial Zoning Districts. The following design standards apply to all signs in the CC, CT, CV, CNS, CO, IP and IG zoning districts:

(1) Sign design shall conform to and be in harmony with the architectural character of the building.

(2) Signs shall be symmetrically located within a defined architectural space.

(3) Internally illuminated signs are permitted only when the portion of the sign that appears illuminated is primarily the sign lettering, registered trademark, or logo. Large panel internally illuminated signs are prohibited.

(4) The design of monument and other freestanding signs shall relate to the architecture of the building or development they serve. Exterior materials, finishes and colors shall be the same or similar to those of the building or structures on site.

(5) Letters and logos shall be raised, routed into the sign face, or designed to give the sign variety and depth.

**Sec. 14-21.100 Residential signs – Multi-unit properties.**

Multi-unit properties may display one or more master signs subject to the following requirements:

(a) A master sign program (Section 14-21.130) has been approved for the multi-unit property.

(b) Maximum allowable sign area: twenty square feet per property.

(c) A master sign for a multi-unit property requires an administrative sign permit.

**Sec. 14-21.110 Temporary signs.**

(a) Permitted Temporary Signs. Table 14-21-10 (Temporary Sign Standards) identifies temporary signs permitted either by right or with the approval of an administrative sign permit. The planning commission may allow other types of temporary signs or temporary signs that do not comply with the standards in Table 14-21-10 with approval of a sign permit.

**Table 14-21-10: Temporary Sign Standards**

Sign Type	Permit Required	Use Restriction	Maximum Number	Maximum Area/Size	Maximum Duration
Auto Dealership Signs – Flags – Pennants – Balloons	None	Auto dealerships on Auto Plaza Drive only	No maximum	0.5 sq. ft. per linear business frontage; 30 sq. ft. max; 1/3 of window max	Year-round; must be maintained in good condition
Commercial Banner Signs	Administrative Sign Permit	Nonresidential uses only	1 per 500 ft. of linear building frontage; 2 signs maximum	30 sq. ft.	60 continuous calendar days; no more than 60 days each calendar year
Construction Site Signs – Residential	None	Residential uses only	1 per 500 ft. of linear building frontage; 2 signs maximum	Height: 5 ft. Area: 12 sq. ft.	From issuance of building permit to certificate of occupancy
Construction Site Signs – Nonresidential	None	Commercial and industrial uses only	1 per 500 ft. of linear building frontage; 2 signs maximum	Height: 8 ft. Area: 40 sq. ft.	From issuance of building permit to certificate of occupancy
For Sale, Lease, and Rent Signs, Nonresidential	None	Commercial and industrial uses only	1 per property	Height: 8 ft. Area: 40 sq. ft.	1 year; director may approve extension
For Sale, Lease, and Rent Signs, Residential	None	Residential uses only	1 per property	Height: 4 ft. Area: 6 sq. ft.	180 days; director may approve extension
Open House or Model Home	None	None	1 per property and 1 on other property with owner consent	Height: 4 ft. Area: 6 sq. ft.	Limited to day of open house
Special Event	None	Special events	1 per property and 1 on other property with owner consent	Height: 4 ft. Area: 6 sq. ft.	Limited to day of special event
Residential Subdivision	Administrative Sign Permit	Residential subdivisions and condominiums located in the city	1 per subdivision	Height: 10 ft. Area: 40 sq. ft.	180 days or upon the sale of the last unit, whichever comes first



**Sec. 14-21.120 Adjustment to sign standards.**

This section establishes procedures to allow the planning commission to approve signs that deviate from certain standards to provide reasonable flexibility in the administration of the sign ordinance.

(a) Permit Required. Adjustments to sign standards allowed by this section require planning commission approval of a sign permit.

(b) Permitted Adjustments. The planning commission may allow adjustment to the following sign standards:

(1) The type of sign allowed in nonresidential zoning districts (e.g., awning signs, monument signs).

(2) Requirements for temporary signs.

(3) The maximum permitted sign area up to a twenty-five percent increase.

(4) The maximum permitted sign height up to a twenty-five percent increase.

(c) Excluded Adjustments. The planning commission may not use the sign standards adjustment process to approve deviations to the following sign standards:

(1) Prohibited signs (Section 14-21.060).

(2) Maximum number of signs allowed per property, except as provided in Section 14-21.120(E) below.

(3) Residential signs (Section 14-21.100).

(d) Findings. The planning commission may approve an adjustment to sign standards as allowed by this section if the following findings can be made in addition to findings required to approve sign permit applications:

(1) The sign will be compatible with adjacent structures and uses and is consistent with the character of the neighborhood or district where it is located.

(2) The sign will not adversely impact neighboring properties or the community at large.

(3) The adjustment is necessary due to unique characteristics of the subject property, structure, or use.

(4) The sign will be consistent with the purpose of the zoning district, the general plan, and any adopted area or neighborhood plan.

(e) Low Visibility Commercial Properties.

(1) In addition to adjustments allowed by subsections A through D of this section, the planning commission may allow additional adjustments to sign standards for low visibility properties in a commercial zoning district. A low visibility property means a property where signage consistent with applicable standards would not be easily visible from the street or sidewalk due to the width of street frontage, parcel depth or configuration, placement of buildings on the property, topography, vegetation, or other physical characteristic of the property.

(2) Adjustments to sign standards for low visibility properties require planning commission approval of a sign permit.

(3) Adjustments are allowed to required sign types, height, size, placement, and number. Adjustments may not allow for prohibited signs or monument signs.

(4) The planning commission may approve additional or variations to any type of signage upon making the following findings:

(i) The special signage, as designed and conditioned, is necessary and appropriate for the subject commercial site, in order to allow the site and the businesses located within it to be competitive with other businesses of a similar nature located elsewhere, and/or to be competitive with industry standards governing sale of the merchandise offered at the site.

(ii) The special signage, as designed and conditioned, will not have a significant adverse effect on the character and integrity of the surrounding area.

**Sec. 14-21.130 Master sign program.**

(a) Purpose. The purpose of the master sign program is to provide a coordinated approach to signage for multifamily development and multi-tenant commercial developments.

(b) Applicability. A master sign program is required for multifamily uses with more than one permanent sign proposed, and any nonresidential development with four or more tenants. A master sign program is required for new development and any substantial modifications to existing development.

(c) Permit Required. A master sign program requires planning commission approval.

(d) Applications. Applications shall be filed with the planning department on the appropriate city forms, together with all the necessary fees, deposits, exhibits, maps, and other information required by the department to clearly and accurately describe the proposed master sign program.

(e) Master Sign Program Contents. All master sign programs shall identify the materials, color, size, type, placement and general design of signs located on a project or property.

(f) Design Standards.

(1) Master sign programs shall feature a unified and coordinated approach to the materials, size, type, placement and general design of signs proposed for a project or property. Master sign programs may allow for variety in the design of individual signs.

(2) A master sign program may deviate from standards contained in this chapter relating to permitted sign height, number of signs, sign area, and type of sign. A master sign program may not allow prohibited signs as identified in Section 14-21.060 (Prohibited signs).

(g) The planning commission may approve variations to any type of signage upon making the following findings in addition to the findings listed in Chapter 14-12.1206:

(1) The variation to sign standards, as designed and conditioned, is necessary and appropriate for the subject commercial site, in order to allow the site and the businesses located within it to be competitive with other

businesses of a similar nature located elsewhere, and/or to be competitive with industry standards governing sale of the merchandise offered at the site.

(2) The variation to sign standards, as designed and conditioned, will not have a significant adverse effect on the safety, character and integrity of the surrounding area.

(h) Effect of Master Sign Program.

(1) All subsequent signs proposed for a development or property subject to an approved master sign program shall comply with the standards and specifications included in the master sign program.

(2) Signs consistent with an approved master sign program are allowed with an administrative sign permit.

(3) Approval of a master sign program shall supersede the regulations of this chapter. Any aspect of the proposed signs not addressed by the master sign program shall be in compliance with this chapter.

**Sec. 14-21.140 Nonconforming signs.**

This section applies to all legally established signs that do not conform to current requirements in this chapter.

(a) Continuation.

(1) Except as required by subsection (A)(2) of this section, a nonconforming sign may continue its use as a sign if it was legally established in compliance with all applicable regulations in effect at the time it was established. It is the applicant's responsibility to demonstrate that the sign was legally established.

(2) At time of review of a design permit application for a property with a nonconforming sign on the site, the Zoning Administrator shall review the existing nonconforming sign in conjunction with the design permit. The Zoning Administrator may allow the continuation of the nonconforming sign only upon finding the sign is compatible with the design character and scale of the surrounding area and does not adversely impact the public health, safety, or general welfare.

(b) Allowed Changes.

(1) Changes to sign copy/face and repainting of legal nonconforming signs are permitted as long as there is no alteration to the physical structure or support elements of the sign.

(2) A legal nonconforming sign that sustains less than fifty percent damage to its structure may be repaired to its original pre-damaged condition; provided, that such repair is completed within one hundred eighty days after the date of the damage.

(c) Required Compliance. A legal nonconforming sign shall be removed or brought into compliance with this chapter in the following situations:

(1) The use advertised by the sign has ceased to function for a period of ninety days or more.

(2) The sign has sustained more than fifty percent damage to its structure.

(3) The sign is located on a remodeled building facade.

(4) The sign is relocated to a different lot or building.

**Sec. 14-21.150 Violations and enforcement.**

(a) **Illegal Signs.** It is unlawful for any person to install, place, construct, repair, maintain, alter or move a sign in a manner that does not comply with the requirements of this chapter.

(b) **Removal of Illegal Signs.**

(1) The city may immediately remove or cause the removal of any sign that places the public in immediate peril or that is located within the public right-of-way.

(2) For illegal signs that do not place the public in immediate peril and are located on private property, the city shall serve the business owner, property owner, or person responsible for the sign a written certified notice that:

(i) Describes the physical characteristics of the subject sign.

(ii) Explains the nature of the violation.

(iii) States that the sign shall be removed or brought into compliance with this chapter within a specified number of days after the notice is received.

(iv) States that the city will remove the sign if the business owner or person responsible for the sign does not correct the violation within the specified number of days after the notice is received.

(v) States that the city may destroy the illegal sign if it is not retrieved within twenty days of removal by the city.

(vi) States that the business owner or person responsible for the sign is liable for all costs associated with the removal, storage, and destruction of the sign.

(3) If an illegal sign is not removed or brought into compliance within the specified number of days after a notice is received, the city may issue a citation to the business owner or person responsible for the sign as provided in Chapter 2 of Title 1 (Penalty Provisions) and may remove or cause the removal of the sign.

(4) Any accessory structures, foundations, or mounting materials which are unsightly or a danger to the public health, safety, and welfare shall be removed at the time of the sign removal.

(5) A sign removed by the city shall be stored for a minimum of twenty days. If the sign is not retrieved by the business owner or person responsible for the sign within this twenty-day period, the city may destroy the sign

## **SECTION 2. RECITALS.**

The City Council finds and determines the foregoing recitals to be true and correct and hereby makes them a part of this Ordinance.

## **SECTION 3. CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT.**

The City Council finds that this Ordinance is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to Section 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, because it will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and is not a "project," as defined in Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines.



**SECTION 4. SEVERABILITY.**

If any section, subsection, subdivision, paragraph, sentence, clause or phrase of this Ordinance, or its application to any person or circumstance, is for any reason held to be invalid or unenforceable, such invalidity or unenforceability shall not affect the validity or enforceability of the remaining sections, subsections, subdivisions, paragraphs, sentences, clauses or phrases of this Ordinance, or its application to any other person or circumstance. The City Council declares that it would have adopted each section, subsection, subdivision, paragraph, sentence, clause or phrase hereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more other sections, subsections, subdivisions, paragraphs, sentences, clauses or phrases hereof be declared invalid or unenforceable.

**SECTION 5. PUBLICATION.**

This ordinance shall be published in the Watsonville Register-Pajaronian and/or Santa Cruz Sentinel in compliance with the provisions of the Charter of the City of Watsonville.

**SECTION 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

This ordinance shall be in force and take effect thirty (30) days after its final adoption.

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