

# **NORTH CHICAGO SIGN ORDINANCE**

**(Updated August 17, 2015)**

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**NORTH CHICAGO SIGN ORDINANCE**

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of North Chicago, Illinois deems it desirable to prepare a comprehensive amendment to the Sign Ordinance for the City of North Chicago, Illinois.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**, as follows:

## **ARTICLE 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

### **1.1 TITLE**

This Ordinance shall be known, cited and referred to as the “North Chicago Sign Ordinance”.  
(Amended 01/21/14)

### **1.2 INTENT AND PURPOSE**

The regulations of this Ordinance are intended to coordinate the use, placement, physical dimensions, and design of all signs within the City. The purpose of these regulations is to promote the public health, safety and welfare, and develop a satisfactory visual appearance within the City by:

- A. Promoting the objectives, principles and standards identified in the Comprehensive Plan for residential, commercial and industrial development; and
- B. Protecting the public from damage or injury caused by signs which are poorly designed or maintained and from distractions or hazards to pedestrians or motorists caused by the indiscriminate placement or use of signs; and
- C. Conserving the taxable value of land and buildings; and
- D. Creating the legal framework necessary to regulate signage in North Chicago; and
- E. Ensuring that all signage is compatible with City plans, policies and ordinances; and
- F. Maintaining property values by eliminating signs that are incompatible with surrounding land uses; and
- G. Encouraging a viable economic environment through uniform control of signs; and
- H. Encouraging quality sign design to promote a better visual environment; and
- I. Enhancing the physical appearance of the City through a program which ensures the removal of inadequately maintained illegal and nonconforming signs within a reasonable time period.

### **1.3 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INCORPORATION**

This Ordinance is hereby incorporated as part of the North Chicago Comprehensive Plan and North Chicago Zoning Ordinance. (Amended 01/21/14)

#### **1.4 APPROVALS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

- A. All interpretations of this Ordinance are reserved to the administrative agencies and bodies referenced herein.
- B. Words used in the present tense shall include the future tense
- C. Words used in the singular number include the plural number. Words used in the plural number shall include the singular number.
- D. The word “shall” is mandatory and not discretionary. The word “may” is permissive.
- E. The term “used for” shall include “arranged for”, “designed for”, “intended for”, “maintained for”, and “occupied for”.
- F. Words, terms and phrases used in this Ordinance, unless defined in Article 2, shall have the applicable meaning or meanings ascribed to them in Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary.

## **ARTICLE 2 DEFINITIONS**

### **ABANDONED SIGN**

A sign no longer correctly advertising a bonafide business, institution, lessor, owner, product or activity available or located on the premises where the sign is displayed.

### **ANIMATED SIGN**

A sign which includes action or motion.

### **AREA OF DISPLAY**

The geometric area enclosing the extreme limits of the sign. Sign structures and supports shall not be included in the area of display.

### **AUXILIARY SIGNAGE *(Amended 01/21/14)***

Information providing supplementary or additional help and support when incorporated into a permitted wall or freestanding sign.

### **BANNER**

A temporary sign made of a lightweight material either enclosed or not enclosed in a rigid frame and secured or mounted in such a way that it may move with a movement of air.

### **BILLBOARD *(Amended 01/21/14)***

A sign, sign board, wall or other framework, device or other structure erected and maintained for the purposes of outdoor display of an offsite commercial message or other non-commercial message for hire.

### **CANOPY SIGN**

A sign attached to or constructed in, on, or under a canopy, awning or marquee.

### **CHANGEABLE MESSAGE SIGN**

A sign designed so that copy may be changed electronically, mechanically or manually, without altering the face or surface of the sign.

### **COPY AREA**

The geometric area in square feet enclosing the extreme limits of sign messages, illustrations and decorations.

### **CONSTRUCTION SIGN**

A sign identifying the designers, contractor and financiers of projects on the site where the sign is located.

### **DIRECTIONAL SIGN**

A sign designating the location or direction of any place or area.

### **DOUBLE-FACED SIGN**

A sign with copy on two (2) back-to-back, parallel faces.

#### ELECTRIC SIGN

A sign containing internal electrical wiring attached or intended to be attached to an electrical energy source.

#### FAÇADE

All window and wall area in the front plane or elevation of a building.

#### FLASHING SIGN

A sign containing, or providing the illusion of containing, an internally or externally mounted intermittent light source.

#### FRONTAGE

The length of the property line of a parcel parallel to and along each public street the parcel borders.

#### GRADE

A ground elevation established for the purpose of regulating the height of a building or structure. The grade shall be the level of the ground adjacent to the walls of a building or the base of a structure if the finished grade is level. If the ground is not level, the grade shall be determined by averaging the minimum and the maximum ground elevations within ten feet (10'-0") of the sign.

#### GROUND SIGN

A sign erected on one or more free standing supports or structures and not attached to a building.

#### HEIGHT

The vertical distance from grade to the highest point of a sign.

#### IDENTIFICATION SIGN

A sign identifying a building, business, institution, person or activity on the premises where the sign is located.

#### NONCONFORMING SIGN

A sign lawfully erected prior to the adoption of this Ordinance which does not conform to this or other city ordinances.

#### OFF-PREMISE SIGN

A sign identifying or advertising a building, business, institution, person or activity located on a different site than the sign.

#### ON-PREMISE SIGN

A sign identifying or advertising a building, business, institution, person or activity located on the same site as the sign.

#### PENNANT

Any lightweight plastic, fabric, or other material, whether or not containing a message of any kind, suspended from a rope, wire, or string, usually in series, designed to move in the wind.

#### PORTABLE SIGN

A temporary sign not permanently attached to the ground or a building.

#### PROJECTING SIGN

A sign which extends more than twelve inches (12") from a building.

#### ROOF SIGN

A sign erected and principally supported by a roof.

#### SIGN

A display or structure intended to convey information regarding or direct attention to a building, business, institution, person or activity.

#### SIGN STRUCTURE

A structure which supports, has supported or is capable of supporting a sign.

#### SWINGING SIGN

A sign suspended by chains or other means, allowing lateral movement.

#### TEMPORARY SIGN

A sign which is not permanently affixed, including all devices, such as banners, pennants, flags (not including flags of any nation), portable signs, and signs painted on the interior of a window or constructed of paper, cloth or other like material and attached to the interior of or so displayed from the interior in order to direct attention of persons outside the building to a sale of merchandise or a change in the status of business.

#### WALL SIGN

A sign extending not more than twelve inches (12") from a building, with the area of display and building façade parallel planes.

#### WINDOW SIGN

Any permanent sign or similar device displayed inside the window or a doorway in such a way as to be clearly visible from the outside.

## **ARTICLE 3 SIGN APPROVAL PROCEDURES**

### **3.1 PERMIT REQUIRED**

Except as provided elsewhere in this Ordinance, no sign shall be erected, constructed, moved or altered without first obtaining a permit from the Building and Community Development Director or his authorized representative. No permits shall be issued without the approval of the Building and Community Development Director or his authorized representative. Permits shall not be required for copy changes, repainting, cleaning and normal maintenance and repairs. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

### **3.2 PERMIT APPLICATION**

Application for a sign permit, subject to the provisions of this Ordinance, shall be submitted to the Building and Community Development Director. Two complete sets of drawings, plats and plans, showing the following information, shall accompany the information: *(Amended 01/21/14)*

- A. Name, address, telephone number of the sign owner.
- B. Name, address, telephone number of the sign contractor.
- C. Name, address, telephone number of the property owner.
- D. A clear and legible drawing showing the proposed sign, its dimensions, and the materials to be used in its construction.
- E. A site plan, drawn to scale, showing the proposed location of the sign, location of other signs, buildings, structures, drives and property lines, and a summary of sizes and types of existing signs on the site.
- F. Property zoning.
- G. Calculations or evidence that the sign and sign structure will withstand the required wind pressure load.
- H. Such other information as the Building and Community Development Director may require to show full compliance with this and all other applicable city ordinances. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

### **3.3 PERMIT ISSUANCE AND DENIAL**

The Building and Community Development Director shall issue a permit for the erection, construction, relocation or alteration of a sign upon payment of required fees, after determining that the sign complies with this and other city ordinances. Should the permit request be denied for reasons related to these ordinances, the Building and Community Development Director shall provide the applicant a written notice of denial together with a statement of the reasons for the denial. Notice of permit issuance or denial shall be provided to the applicant by the Building and Community Development Director within thirty (30) days of the application filing. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

### **3.4 EFFECT OF PERMIT ISSUANCE**

No sign permit issued pursuant to this Ordinance shall constitute permission to maintain an unlawful sign or constitute a defense against an action to abate an unlawful sign. The Building and Community Development Director may at any time revoke a permit issued pursuant to this Ordinance if the permit was issued on the basis of a misrepresentation of fact by the applicant, or if the sign poses a threat to the public health, safety, morals, comfort or welfare. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

### **3.5 APPEALS**

#### **A. Scope of Appeals**

An appeal may be taken to the Zoning Board of Appeals by a person, firm or corporation, or by an officer, department, board or bureau aggrieved by an order, requirement, decision or determination of the Building and Community Development Director or other city official acting within the authority of this Ordinance. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

#### **B. Stay of Proceedings**

An appeal shall stay all proceedings in furtherance of the action appealed from, unless the Building and Community Development Director certifies to the Zoning Board of Appeals after the notice of appeal has been filed that, by reason of facts stated in the application, a stay would in his opinion, cause imminent peril to life or property. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

#### **C. Procedure for Appeals**

##### **1. Zoning Board of Appeals Public Hearing**

- a. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall hold a public hearing on a petition for an appeal within forty-five (45) days of its complete written filing.
- b. Public notice shall be given as follows:

(1) By Petitioner

The petitioner shall provide notification of the public hearing by certified mail to each owner of property within two hundred fifty feet (250'-0") of the subject property and the alderman of the ward in which the property is located. The petitioner shall provide notification by regular first class mail to residents of property within two hundred fifty feet (250'-0") of the subject property. Such notice shall be given not more than thirty (30) days and not less than fifteen (15) days before said hearing. Evidence that the notice required herein has been given shall be presented at the public hearing. The petitioner must post not less than fifteen (15) days from the hearing a notice on the property no smaller than 4 feet by 2 feet. Said notice shall contain the date of the hearing, proposed sign use, and petitioner's name and phone number for inquires. Notice shall be clearly visible from the public right-of-way. The petitioner shall be responsible for re-notifying parties identified above in the prescribed manner should the hearing be rescheduled for any reason.

(2) By Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals shall publish notice of the public hearing at least once, not more than thirty (30) days and not less than fifteen (15) days before said hearing, in a newspaper of general circulation in North Chicago.

(3) Content

The public notice provided by the applicant and published by the Zoning Board of Appeals shall contain, at a minimum, the following:

- (a) Date of public hearing.
- (b) Place of public hearing.
- (c) Time of public hearing.
- (d) Purpose of public hearing, including proposed sign use.
- (e) Legal description of subject property.
- (f) Common description of subject property and/or address of property.

- (g) Name of petitioner and/or owner or beneficiary and contact phone number.

2. Zoning Board of Appeals Determination

Within thirty (30) days after the close of the required public hearing of an appeal of an order, requirement, decision or determination of the Building and Community Development Director or other city official acting within the authority of this Ordinance, the Zoning Board of Appeals shall, upon the majority vote of its entire membership, grant, deny or modify said order, requirement, decision or determination from which the appeal was taken. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

D. Effect of Denial

No appeal which has been denied wholly or in part in accordance with the provisions herein established shall be resubmitted for a period of one (1) year from the date of said order of denial, except on grounds of new evidence or proof of changed conditions found to be valid by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**3.6 VARIATIONS**

A. Purpose

It is the intent of this Ordinance to use variations only to modify the application of the it to achieve a parity among properties similarly located and classified. Specifically, it is to be used to overcome some exceptional physical condition which poses practical difficulty or particular hardship in such a way as to prevent an owner from using his or her property as intended by this Ordinance. Such practical difficulty must be clearly exhibited and must be a result of an external influence; it may not be self-imposed. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

B. Authorized Variations

Variations from the regulations of this Ordinance shall be granted by the City Council upon receipt of written findings and recommendations of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

1. Standing

Petition for a variation from any provision of this Ordinance may be made by the owner of the subject property or any other person having a proprietary interest in said property. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

2. Filing

Petitions for variation shall be filed in writing on forms provided by the Department of Building and Community Development, and shall be accompanied by such documents and information as the Zoning Board of Appeals may by rule require. Such documents and information shall include, but are not limited to, the following: *(Amended 01/21/14)*

- a. The name, address and telephone number of the petitioner.
- b. Disclosure of all beneficial interests, officers and directors in a land trust, corporation or partnership involved.
- c. Description of proposed or requested action.
- d. Legal description of subject property.
- e. Common description of subject property.

3. Zoning Board of Appeals Public Hearing

a. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall hold a public hearing on a petition for a variance within forty-five (45) days of its complete written filing.

b. Public notice shall be given as follows:

(1) By Petitioner

The petitioner shall provide notification of the public hearing by certified mail to each owner of property within two hundred fifty feet (250'-0") of the subject property and the alderman of the ward in which the property is located. The petitioner shall provide notification by regular first class mail to residents of property within two hundred fifty feet (250'-0") of the subject property. Such notice shall be given not more than thirty (30) days and not less than fifteen (15) days before said hearing. Evidence that the notice required herein has been given shall be presented at the public hearing. The petitioner must post not less than thirty (30) days from the hearing a notice on the property no smaller than 4 feet by 2 feet. Said notice shall contain the date of the hearing, the proposed variance, and petitioner's name and phone number for inquires. Notice shall be clearly visible from the public right-of-way. The petitioner shall be responsible for re-notifying parties identified above in the prescribed manner should the hearing be rescheduled for any reason.

(2) By Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals shall publish notice of the public hearing at least once, not more than thirty (30) days and not less than fifteen (15) days before said hearing, in a newspaper of general circulation in North Chicago.

The Zoning Board of Appeals shall post the public notice not more than thirty (30) days and not less than fifteen (15) days before said hearing.

### (3) Content

The public notice provided by the applicant and published by the Zoning Board of Appeals shall contain, at a minimum, the following:

- (a) Date of public hearing.
- (b) Place of public hearing.
- (c) Time of public hearing.
- (d) Purpose of public hearing, including proposed variance.
- (e) Legal description of subject property.
- (f) Common description of subject property and/or address.
- (g) Name of petitioner and/or owner or beneficiary, and contact phone number.

### 4. Standards for Variation

The Zoning Board of Appeals may recommend to the City Council that a variation be granted when and only when, it shall have determined from evidence presented to it, that all of the following standards have been complied with:

- a. That special circumstances apply to the property for which the variation is sought and that these conditions are not applicable generally to other property located within the same zoning district.
- b. That the special circumstances or conditions which apply to the property have not resulted from any act of the applicant, or associated parties, subsequent to the adoption of this Ordinance, regardless of whether or not it is in violation of the provisions thereof.

- c. That the requested variation is the minimum adjustment necessary for a reasonable use of the property.
- d. That the requested variation is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of this Ordinance, and will not be detrimental to the public welfare or to other property or improvements in the neighborhood, and will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood.
- e. That the requested variation will not impair an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent properties, substantially increase congestion on public roads, increase the potential damage of fire, flood, or otherwise endanger the public safety.

5. Zoning Board of Appeals Recommendation

Within thirty (30) days after the close of the required public hearing, the Zoning Board of Appeals shall prepare and submit to the City Council written findings and recommendations to grant, deny or modify said variation.

6. Conditions of Variation

The City Council, acting upon the recommendations of the Zoning Board of Appeals, may impose such conditions and restrictions upon the premises benefitted by a variation as may be necessary to reduce or minimize the injurious effect of such variation upon other property in the neighborhood and to better carry out the general intent of this Ordinance.

7. City Council Determination

Within thirty (30) days of receipt of the written findings and recommendations of the Zoning Board of Appeals, the City Council, upon the majority vote of its entire membership, may grant, deny or modify said variation.

C. Effect of City Council Denial

No requested variance which has been denied wholly or in part by the City Council shall be resubmitted for a period of one year from the date of said order of denial, except on grounds of new evidence or proof of changed conditions found to be valid by the City Council.

### 3.7 SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

- A. Signs which identify architects, engineers, contractors, and other individuals and firms involved with the construction, but not including any advertisement of any product or service, and not including any other informational signs which indicate the intended purpose of the building, sale or leasing information. Construction signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet of area per side and shall be confined to a construction site. Such signs shall be removed within seven (7) days of the date when the building is turned over to the owner or the date when the construction is completed, whichever shall occur first.
- B. On-premise directional signs with area of display not exceeding twelve (12) square feet.
- C. Flags, emblems, plaques or insignia of any political subdivision, corporation, religious institution or organization. *(Amended 01/21/14)*
- D. Signs with area of display less than six (6) square feet erected by units of government for traffic control and other regulatory purposes.
- E. Railroad and utility company signs with an area of display less than six (6) square feet.
- F. Signs of a primarily decorative nature associated with national, local or religious holidays.
- G. House numbers and name plates with an area of display not exceeding two (2) square feet. One name plate per dwelling unit or office is permitted.
- H. Signs located within the interior of a building or structure not visible from the public right-of-way.
- I. Signs cut into a masonry surface or constructed of non-combustible material and inlaid.
- J. On-premise bulletin boards at medical, educational, charitable, religious and public institutions.
- K. On-premise "No Trespassing" and "No Dumping" signs with area of display not exceeding four (4) square feet.
- L. Plaques with area of display not more than six (6) square feet.
- M. Public notices posted by public officials or employees in the performance of their duties.
- N. Signs required or specifically authorized for a public purpose by law, statute or ordinance.
- O. Political and campaign signs, provided:

1. The signs are erected not more than thirty (30) days prior to the applicable election and are removed not more than seven (7) days following the election.
  2. No sign shall be located within or project over the public right-of-way.
  3. For each candidate, no more than a total area of six (6) square feet per face (may be double-faced) of all such signs is on display at any residential property. In multi-family districts, these signs are not to exceed six (6) square feet per dwelling unit. For all places with uses other than residential, these signs are not to exceed thirty-two (32) square feet per unit.
  4. A person placing such signs in multi-family districts shall indicate his/her name on all signs placed by him/her. These signs shall be confined within private property only, and shall not be attached to fences, mail boxes or other accessory structures, shall not be placed within public or private rights-of-way and shall be removed within seven (7) days after the political event for which they were displayed. Political signs must not be installed more than thirty (30) days prior to an election to which they apply.
- P. On-premise, non-illuminated real estate sales and leasing signs, provided the area of display of such signs does not exceed six (6) square feet in residential zones and thirty-two (32) square feet in all other zones, and that all signs are removed within seven (7) days of sales or lease.
1. Real estate open house signs are permitted to be placed on public property in rights-of-way on Saturdays and Sundays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (*Amended 01/21/14*)
  2. Such signs shall not exceed six (6) square feet in area, shall have a professional appearance and may be double-faced. The information provided by such signs shall be limited to the company identification words, the property address, a directional arrow, and the words "Open House".
  3. When placed in a cluster, there shall not be more than four (4) signs in a cluster at any location at the same time. All corners of an intersection are considered to be a single location. If an enforcement officer observes more than four (4) signs at a location, all signs at that location will be summarily removed.
- Q. Signs in a window display of merchandise, when incorporated with such displays, including signs displayed from the interior of a building in order to direct attention of persons outside of the building to a sale of merchandise within or to a change in the status of the business.

1. Such signage may not obscure entry areas or prevent the general public safety personnel from viewing the interior or exterior activity at the location. Window signs shall not have a total area in excess of twenty percent (20%) of the window in which it is located. In the event that a permanent decorative border appears on a window the area of the decorative border shall be included when calculating the total area of the window.
  2. Any temporary or permanent window sign constructed of permanent materials such as paper, cloth, or other like materials shall be subject to the twenty percent (20%) requirement as described in section 1. Any temporary or permanent window sign painted or drawn on the interior of the window with easily removable paint or markers shall be subject to the twenty percent (20%) requirement as described in section 1. Any temporary or permanent lighted window sign shall be subject to the twenty percent (20%) requirement as described in section 1.
  3. Signs visible through the window that identify the nature of the establishment's business, names of professionals, hours of operation, etc., are not to exceed six (6) square feet in total area and four (4) square feet for individual signs.
  4. Shelving, clothing or products on display shall not cover a total area in excess of twenty percent (20%) of the window in which it is located. *(Amended 07/19/10)*
- R. Temporary on-premise signs, not exceeding six (6) square feet, relating to events or activities of civic, philanthropic, educational or religious institutions, provided such signs are removed not more than ten (10) days after the event or activity.
- S. Garage sale signs (also yard or any similar sale);
1. Not to exceed six (6) square feet in area, located only on the premises where the sale is being held, for a period of three (3) days. Signs shall be immediately removed the day the sale ends.
  2. Directional signs guiding persons to the sale must not be placed on any public right-of-way and must be removed the date the sale ends. Such directional signs may be placed off the premises where a sale would be conducted, however may only be placed off the premises where a sale would be conducted, however may only be placed on private property and with the express permission of them property owner, whose name and phone number shall be given to an enforcement officer upon request. If this information is not available, such signs will be summarily removed.

- T. Signs intended for seasonal messages, such as religious and national holidays or events, so long as such signs are approved by the Building and Community Development Director. Such signs shall be limited to thirty-two (32) square feet in area and only for the locations approved by the Building and Community Development Director. Such seasonal signs shall be removed within thirty (30) days after the event. Strings of lights, religious scenes and symbols, and other similar decorations and ornaments shall not be included in computation of the sign area. *(Amended 01/21/14)*
- U. Signs intended for seasonal messages, such as religious and national holidays or events, shall be permitted in residential districts. Such seasonal signs shall be removed within thirty (30) days after the event.

### **3.8 PROHIBITED SIGNS**

The following listed signs, of whatsoever type or size, illuminated or not, are prohibited.

- A. Permanent signs which are abandoned, as defined in this Ordinance, for a period of not less than three (3) months.
- B. Animated and flashing signs, except that such prohibition shall in no way be construed to prohibit the use of changeable message signs.
- C. Signs that contain statements, words or pictures of an obscene, indecent, or immoral character, which will offend public morals and decency;
- D. Signs that contain or are an imitation of an official traffic sign or signal, or contain the words "Stop", "Go Slow", "Caution", "Danger", "Warning", or similar words;
- E. Signs that are of a size, shape, location movement, content, coloring or manner of illumination which may be confused with or construed as a traffic control device, or which hides from view any traffic or street sign or signal;
- F. Portable signs being used for uses other than a temporary nature;
- G. Projecting signs, unless the bottom of the sign is over eight (8) feet above grade and not obstructing pedestrian or vehicular traffic;
- H. Signs that advertise an activity, business, product or service no longer conducted on the premises upon which the sign is located;
- I. Signs that move in any manner or have a major moving part;
- J. Signs that contain or consist of banners, posters, pennants, ribbons, streamers, string of light bulbs, spinners, balloons or other similar devices. These devices when not part of any sign are similarly prohibited unless they are specifically permitted by other legislation or by other sections of this chapter;

- K. Signs that may swing or otherwise noticeably move due to wind or appear to be moving or flickering as a result of optical illusion;
- L. Signs that are located within one thousand feet (1,000'-0") of an official traffic signal, sign or device or intersecting, merging, or approaching traffic so as to obscure or interfere with the view of these by a motorist or a pedestrian;
- M. Neon decorative borders that appear on the inside or outside of any transparent window, doorway or translucent surface. This also includes the areas immediately adjacent to these surfaces, in which the neon light is visible from the exterior of the building;
- N. Signs (including billboards) that direct attention to a business, commodity, service, entertainment or attraction sold, offered, or existing elsewhere than upon the same lot where such sign is displayed. Such signs shall include outdoor advertising signs on which space is leased or rented by the owner thereof to others for the purpose of conveying a commercial or non-commercial message. Billboards shall only be an allowable use in Sign Zone "B", as defined in Section 4.5 of this Ordinance. *(Amended 01/21/14)*
- O. Any illumination of signs on a property in which the business is no longer operational due to their business license being withheld or denied, or revoked due to nuisance.

## **ARTICLE 4 STANDARDS FOR DESIGN AND LOCATION**

### **4.1 CODE COMPLIANCE**

All signs erected, constructed, altered, relocated or maintained within the City of North Chicago shall comply with the North Chicago Building Code, the National Electrical Code, and all other city ordinances.

### **4.2 DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION**

#### **A. Design Standards**

1. All signs shall be designed and constructed to withstand wind loads of at least thirty (30) pounds per square foot on all parts of the sign face and structure.
2. Angle irons, chains, wires, supports and braces shall be hidden from public view to the extent technically feasible.
3. All signs shall comply with the construction standards of the most recently adopted edition of the International Code Council Building Code and the National Electric Code.
4. Electrical equipment or apparatus causing interference with radio and television reception are prohibited.
5. All signs shall have permanently attached a clearly legible plate identifying the owner of the sign, the person, firm or corporation responsible for erecting the sign, and the date of erection.
6. All structures and poles supporting ground signs shall be self-supporting and erected on or permanently anchored to concrete foundations.
7. No signs shall be suspended by chains or other means that could allow lateral movement.

#### **B. Area Computation and Height Limitations**

1. The area of building wall, fascia, or canopy (marquee) sign shall consist of the entire sign area within a single continuous perimeter composed of a square, rectangle or other geometric configuration which encloses the extreme limits of the advertising message announcement or decoration of a sign. When individual letters are used, the sign area shall be determined by the above procedure and shall include all of the blank space, as well as the individual letters, in the square foot area thus determined. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

2. The area of the ground mounted sign shall consist of the entire sign area within the single continuous perimeter composed of a square, rectangle, or other configuration which encloses the extreme limits of the sign including any supports and embellishments which form an integral part of the display. If the sign consists of more than one (1) section or module, all area will be totaled.
3. Maximum height above the centerline of the street or parking lot as determined by Table 1.

C. Illumination

1. The light from any illuminated sign shall be so shaded, shielded or directed that the light intensity or brightness will not be objectionable to the surrounding areas.
2. Signs relating to business, not including approved home occupations, in any residential district, shall be illuminated only during those hours when the establishment is open for business.
3. No sign shall have blinking, flashing, or fluttering lights or other illuminating device which has a changing light intensity, color or brightness. Beacon lights are prohibited.
4. No colored lights shall be used at any location or in any manner so as to be confused with or construed as traffic control devices.
5. Neither the direct nor reflected light from primary light sources shall create a traffic hazard to operators of motor vehicles on public and private thoroughfares.
6. No exposed reflective type bulbs or incandescent lamps which exceed fifteen (15) watts shall be used on the exterior surface of any signs so as to expose the face of the bulb, light or lamp to any public street or adjacent property.
7. No strobe lights shall be permitted on any signs or to light any sign. Spotlights and floodlights directed toward any sign, that may reflect off such sign toward public ways, are prohibited.
8. No exposed, gas-filled, discharge tubing (neon or similar) shall be used on the exterior surface of any sign or be visible through the face of any sign, if it is clear in color, without the sign concept and colors being first reviewed and approved by the City Council.
9. Within the limitations imposed above, signs may be directly illuminated by providing artificial light either through exposed lighting on the sign face, or through transparent or translucent material from a light source within the sign.

10. Liquid Crystal Displays (LCDs) or equivalent products shall also be permitted as auxiliary signage so long as: *(Amended 01/21/14)*
  - a. they convey only text messages (numbers, letters and punctuation);
  - b. they do not display any running or scrolling messages;
  - c. the number of text characters on display at one time is limited to thirty (30);
  - d. the display time of individual messages are at least five (5) seconds in length;
  - e. the minimum individual character size on a messaging screen oriented to pedestrians is at least one (1) inch in height, but no greater than (3) inches in height;
  - f. the minimum individual character size on a messaging screen oriented to automobiles is at least three (3) inches in height on local or collector streets, but no greater than one (1) foot in height;
  - g. the minimum individual character size on a messaging screen oriented to automobiles is at least six (6) inches in height on secondary or major arterial streets, but no greater than three (3) feet in height;
  - h. the auxiliary signage may not exceed more than thirty five percent (35%) of the overall sign area; and
  - i. the Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) or equivalent product conforms to the requirements of section 4.2C.1-9.

D. Banners

Written notice shall be made to the Building and Community Development Director, stating the type, size, material, attachments and specific location of all such attraction devices. Banners applied to paper, plastic or fabric used to decorate or attract attention to a business establishment, provided: *(Amended 01/21/14)*

1. The signs are displayed in conjunction with a grand opening celebration for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days, or
2. The signs are displayed in conjunction with a special sale for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days, or
3. The signs are displayed no more than four (4) times per calendar year per establishment.

4. The banner shall be securely attached to the wall of the establishment, freestanding signs or light poles on private property.
5. One banner, per street frontage, per establishment shall be permitted.
6. A public entertainment or specific event message may not be displayed not more than fourteen (14) days before the event and shall be removed within three (3) days after the event.
7. Banners shall be limited to fifty (50) square feet in area and all attraction devices shall not obstruct the passage of pedestrian or motor vehicles in any way, at any time.
8. Search lights and portable signs shall not be permitted, except those displayed in conjunction with a grand opening and following Article IV, Section 4.2F standards.
9. Except for public bodies, all attraction devices shall be confined to the private property and the premises being advertised. No attraction devices shall be erected, installed or placed without written permission of the Building and Community Development Director. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

E. Changeable Copy Signs *(Amended 01/21/14)*

Manual changeable copy signs shall be permitted as auxiliary signage subject to all applicable standards.

1. They convey only text messages (numbers, letters and punctuation).
2. The number of text characters on display at one time is limited to thirty (30).
3. The minimum individual character size on manual changeable copy signs oriented to pedestrians is at least one (1) inch in height, but no greater than (3) inches in height.
4. The minimum individual character size on manual changeable copy signs oriented to automobiles is at least three (3) inches in height on local or collector streets, but no greater than one (1) foot in height.
5. The minimum individual character size on manual changeable copy signs oriented to automobiles is at least six (6) inches in height on secondary or major arterial streets, but no greater than three (3) feet in height.
6. The auxiliary signage may not exceed more than thirty five percent (35%) of the overall sign area.

7. The manual changeable copy sign conforms to the requirements of section 4.2C.1-9.

F. Special Event/Grand Opening Signs:

1. A temporary special event sign (balloon or searchlight device) shall be permitted for a total of four (4) events per year.
2. Ground/roof secured balloons shall be permitted provided they do not exceed forty (40) feet maximum height from grade and twenty (20) feet maximum diameter, and are limited to spheroid shapes only. Such temporary balloon display shall be limited to a maximum period of thirty (30) consecutive days.
3. Ground/vehicle mounted searchlights may be displayed on private property for a maximum period of seven (7) days.
4. Hours of operation. Illumination of balloons and searchlight devices shall be turned off between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

G. Development Identification Signs

1. Size
  - a. Single family (attached and detached) subdivision signs shall be a maximum of thirty five (35) square feet in area.
  - b. Business and multi-family residential signs shall be a maximum of seventy five (75) square feet in area.
2. Height
  - a. Single family subdivision and multi-family residential signs shall be a maximum of eight feet (8') in height from established grade.
  - b. Business signs shall not exceed twelve feet (12') in height from established grade nor nine feet (9') from finished grade.
3. Location
  - a. Single family subdivision and multi-family residential signs shall be located a minimum of five feet (5') from any property line.
  - b. Business signs shall be located a minimum of twelve feet (12') from any property line.

H. Landscaping

1. Freestanding Signs

Freestanding signs shall be landscaped at their base in a method harmonious with the landscape concept for the whole site. Landscaping shall form an attractive, dense cluster at the base of the sign that is equally attractive in winter and summer. A minimum of two (2) square feet of landscaping will be required for every one square foot of sign face. The landscape area shall be curbed at the perimeter when the sign is incorporated into a hard-surfaced parking area.

**4.3 LOCATION AND PLACEMENT**

- A. No sign shall obstruct a fire escape, exit, door or window intended as a means of ingress and egress.
- B. No sign shall obstruct an opening required for ventilation.
- C. Signs shall maintain clearance from all surfaces, above ground and underground utilities and facilities, and shall not interfere with drainage. *(Amended 01/21/14)*
- D. No sign shall interfere with or obstruct the view to or from traffic control devices, intersections, driveways, roadways, sidewalks, alleys or crosswalks.
- E. No sign shall interfere with or obstruct the circulation and flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- F. No roof sign shall be placed so as to interfere with movement on or access to a roof.
- G. No sign shall project over a public right-of-way.
- H. Sign locations accessible to vehicles shall have a minimum vertical clearance of sixteen feet (16'-0") above grade.
- I. No sign facing a residential district shall be located closer than twenty-five feet (25'-0") to that district.
- J. Canopy signs and other signs located over pedestrian ways shall have a minimum vertical clearance of eight feet (8'-0") above grade.
- K. No roof sign shall extend more than ten feet (10'-0") above the highest point of the roof on which it is installed.
- L. Signs should comply with the restrictions established in Table 1, Sign Standards by Zoning District, as illustrated below.

**TABLE 1**

**SIGN STANDARDS BY ZONING DISTRICT**  
*(Amended 05/04/15)*

<b>ZONE "A"</b>					
<b>GROUND SIGNS</b>					
	<b>R1/R2/R3/R4/R5 DISTRICT</b>	<b>B1/B2 DISTRICT</b>	<b>CW DISTRICT</b>	<b>M1/M2/M3/OR DISTRICT</b>	<b>PL DISTRICT</b>
<b>Maximum Area of Display per Sign</b>	100 sq. ft.	1 sq. ft. per 2 linear ft. frontage	1 sq. ft. per 2 linear ft. frontage	1 sq. ft. per 4 linear ft. frontage	NOT ALLOWED
<b>Maximum Height</b>	6'-0"	8'-0"	25'-0"	8'-0"	-
<b>Minimum Setback from Right-of-Way</b>	5'-0"	5'-0"	5'-0"	5'-0"	-
<b>Number of Sign Structures</b>	1 per development or neighborhood entrance	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	-
<b>WALL, ROOF, CANOPY AND OTHER SIGNS</b>					
<b>Maximum Area of Display per Sign</b>	NOT ALLOWED	10% of façade area	10% of façade area	10% of façade area	NOT ALLOWED
<b>Number of Signs</b>	-	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	-
<b>ZONE "B"</b>					
<b>GROUND SIGNS</b>					
	<b>R1/R2/R3/R4/R5 DISTRICT</b>	<b>B1/B2 DISTRICT</b>	<b>CW DISTRICT</b>	<b>M1/M2/M3/OR DISTRICT</b>	<b>PL DISTRICT</b>
<b>Maximum Area of Display per Sign</b>	100 sq. ft.	200 sq. ft.	200 sq. ft.	200 sq. ft.	NOT ALLOWED
<b>Maximum Height</b>	6'-0"	40'-0"	40'-0"	40'-0"	-
<b>Minimum Setback from Right-of-Way</b>	5'-0"	5'-0" IDOT permit required	5'-0" IDOT permit required	5'-0" IDOT permit required	-
<b>Number of Sign Structures</b>	1 per development or neighborhood entrance	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	-
<b>WALL, ROOF, CANOPY AND OTHER SIGNS</b>					
<b>Maximum Area of Display per Sign</b>	NOT ALLOWED	20% of façade area	20% of façade area	20% of façade area	NOT ALLOWED
<b>Number of Signs</b>	-	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	-

#### **4.4 INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE**

- A. Signs including, but not limited to, those requiring a permit pursuant to this Ordinance shall be maintained in a safe, presentable and good material condition at all times. The Building and Community Development Director shall have the authority to inspect, declare unlawful, and order the repair, alteration or removal of signs which are dilapidated, dangerous, defective, abandoned, in violation of this Ordinance, or otherwise constitute a threat to the public health, safety, comfort, morals or welfare. *(Amended 01/21/14)*
- B. All administrative orders shall cite explicitly the reason for declaring a sign unlawful and the corrective action required of the sign owner. All administrative orders shall be sent by certified mail to the sign owner, if known. In all other cases, the administrative order shall be sent by certified mail to the owner of the property on which the sign is located.
- C. Within ten (10) days of receipt of certified mail of the administrative order, the sign or property owner, as applicable, shall either take the corrective action or file an appeal with the Zoning Board of Appeals pursuant to Section 3.5 of this Ordinance. Failure on the part of the sign or property owner, as applicable, to either take the required corrective action or file an appeal with the Zoning Board of Appeals within the specified time may cause the Building and Community Development Director to order the repair, alteration or removal of the subject sign. Costs of such repair, alteration or removal incurred by the City of North Chicago shall be considered a debt owed to the City by the sign or property owner, as applicable, and may be recovered by the City through court action, assessment or other appropriate means. Costs of repair, alteration or removal shall include incidental expenses incurred by the City in connection with sign repair, alteration or removal. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

#### **4.5 SIGN ZONE *(Amended 07/19/10)***

Sign Zone "A" and Sign Zone "B" are hereby created. Sign Zone "B" refers to all businesses, residents, and signage adjacent to Skokie Highway (U.S. Route 41) or Buckley Road (Illinois Route 137) west of Skokie Highway. Sign Zone "A" refers to all other areas in the City. It is the intent of this Ordinance that all land within the corporate limits of the City shall be located in Sign Zone "A" or Sign Zone "B".

## **ARTICLE 5 NONCONFORMING SIGNS**

### **5.1 NOTIFICATION OF NONCONFORMITY**

Upon the enactment of this Ordinance, the Building and Community Development Director shall inventory all signs in the City of North Chicago. Upon determining that a sign is nonconforming, the Building and Community Development Director shall make a reasonable effort to notify the sign or property owner, as applicable, of the sign's nonconformity. The Building and Community Development Director should also determine whether the sign is considered a legal nonconforming sign. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

### **5.2 LEGAL NONCONFORMING SIGNS**

Signs located within the corporate boundaries of the City of North Chicago on the date of adoption of this Ordinance, or annexed to the City of North Chicago thereafter, not conforming to the provisions of this Ordinance shall be considered a "Legal nonconforming" sign, provided:

- A. The sign is covered by a properly granted permit or variance prior to the date of adoption of this Ordinance; or
- B. If not permit or variance was properly granted, the sign was in all respects in compliance with applicable law on the date of adoption of this Ordinance.

### **5.3 LOSS OF LEGAL NONCONFORMING STATUS**

- A. Signs designated legal nonconforming lose that status upon the occurrence of at least one of the following:
  - 1. The sign is altered in any way except for normal maintenance and repair.
  - 2. The sign is relocated.
  - 3. The sign is replaced.
  - 4. The sign is accessory to a nonconforming use or building terminated pursuant to the provisions of the North Chicago Zoning Ordinance.
- B. Within ten (10) days of loss of nonconforming status, the subject sign shall be brought into full compliance with the provisions of this Ordinance or shall be removed.
- C. In accordance with Article 7.3.4 of the North Chicago Zoning Ordinance, all nonconforming signs, billboards and outdoor advertising structures shall be removed within two (2) years from the effective date of this Ordinance, or any amendment thereto, which causes the signs, billboards and outdoor advertising structures to be nonconforming. *(Amended 01/21/14)*

#### **5.4 MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF NONCONFORMING SIGNS**

Nothing in this article shall relieve the owner of a nonconforming sign or the property on which the sign is located from the provisions of this Ordinance regarding safety, maintenance and repair.

## **ARTICLE 6 FEES, VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES**

### **6.1 FEES**

Fees for sign permits and inspections shall be as established from time to time by separate ordinance. In the event a proposed sign requires the review services of an outside consultant in the areas of planning, design, engineering or electronics, an additional fee for the amount of such services shall be assessed. All fees shall be paid to the Comptroller.

### **6.2 VIOLATIONS**

Failure to comply with any of the requirements of this Ordinance shall constitute a violation, and any person upon conviction thereof shall be subject to the penalties set forth below. Each day that a violation continues shall be considered a separate offense. The owner or tenant of any building, structure, sign, premises or part thereof, any architect, builder, contractor, agent or other person who commits, participates in, assists in, or maintains a violation may each be found guilty of a separate offense and subject to the penalties set forth below. The City may also take other lawful action as is necessary to prevent or remedy any violation.

### **6.3 PENALTIES**

Any person who violates this Ordinance upon conviction thereof shall be fined not less than \$50.00, nor more than \$750.00. Each day that a violation continues shall be deemed to be a separate offense and subject to additional fines.

## **ARTICLE 7 SEPARABILITY**

The several provisions of this Ordinance shall be separable, in accordance with the following:

If any court or competent jurisdiction shall adjudge invalid the application of any provision of this Ordinance to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect the application of the provisions to any property, building or other structure not specifically included in the judgment. If any court or competent jurisdiction shall adjudge invalid the application of any provision of this Ordinance to a particular property, building or other structure, such judgment shall not affect the application of the provisions to any property, building or other structure not specifically included in this judgment. This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after the date of its passage by the City Council.

## **ARTICLE 8 REPEALS** *(Amended 01/21/14)*

All ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

**ARTICLE 9 APPROVAL** *(Amended 01/21/14)*

This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect after passage, approval and publication in pamphlet form according to law.

APPROVED BY:

Leon Rockingham Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:

Lori Collins, City Clerk

AYES: \_\_\_\_\_

NAYS: \_\_\_\_\_

ABSENT and/or

NOT VOTING \_\_\_\_\_

PASSED: May 5, 2008

AS AMENDED, July 19, 2010

AS AMENDED, January 21, 2014

AS AMENDED, May 4, 2015

AS AMENDED, August 17, 2015