

## Community Development Division



200 W. Oak Street  
Suite 3100  
P.O. Box 1190  
Fort Collins, CO  
(970) 498-7683

# Signs in Larimer County

Revised June 7, 2007

## History of Sign Regulations

**1963** Larimer County has had land use and zoning regulations, including sign regulations, dating back to 1963. These regulations, which set the rules for land uses in the unincorporated area of the County, are intended to protect both landowner rights and the interests of the community.

**2005** Sign regulations formerly identified under individual zoning districts were incorporated into Section 8.7 of the original Larimer County Land Use Code. In 2005, the Commissioners adopted Section 10 of the Larimer County Land Use Code regulating all signs in the unincorporated areas of the County. As with other city and county jurisdictions across the country, these sign regulations are intended, in part:

- To provide the public with an opportunity for safe and effective identification of uses and locations within the County; and
- To avoid clutter and protect and maintain the visual appearance and property values of agricultural, residential, business, commercial and industrial areas in the County.

## Section 10: SIGNS

### Larimer County Land Use Code

The full text of the Sign Code is available at [\Htdg.##k k k "Uf\]a Yf"cf\[ #d`Ubb\]b\[ #UbX!i gY! V&XY](#) [click on MCC Online Version, scroll to Part II, Land Use Code, Section 10 Signs].

Citizens who do not have access to the internet may request a copy of the Sign Code from the Planning Department at a cost of \$2.00.

Call 970-498-7683 to order a copy or stop by the Larimer County Planning Department located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 200 W. Oak Street, Fort Collins.

### Did you know? Signs are prohibited in rights-of-way and on utility poles.

Except for official signs regulating or directly related to authorized uses of public rights-of-way, it is unlawful to erect or post any sign on a public street, road right-of-way, or on utility poles.



## Do all signs need a permit?

Generally, a permit is required for all signs, with a few exceptions listed in Section 10.5 of the Larimer County Land Use Code. Certain signs may be erected without a sign permit due to their small size, limited time duration, limited aesthetic impact, etc., but must meet all applicable standards of the sign regulations and other County and/or State requirements. We recommend you call the Planning Department at (970) 498-7683 prior to erecting or placing any signs on your property.

## Whom do I talk to about signs?

### 1. Sign Code Questions and Permits Planning Department

In Person 200 W. Oak Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
Fort Collins, CO 80522

By Phone (970) 498-7683

Via Email [planningoncall@larimer.org](mailto:planningoncall@larimer.org)

Please call the Larimer County Planning Department at the number shown above for answers to specific sign questions.

### 2. Sign Code Violations

#### Code Compliance Section

In Person 200 W. Oak Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
Fort Collins, CO 80522

By Phone (970) 498-7683

Website: [www.larimer.org/codecompliance](http://www.larimer.org/codecompliance)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. What is an off-premise sign?

**A.** An off-premise sign is defined in Section 10 of the Land Use Code as:

*"a sign which is used or intended for use to advertise, identify, direct or attract the attention to a business, institution, product, organization, event or location offered or existing elsewhere than upon the same property where such sign is displayed."*

Business signs must be placed on the property where the business exists except for directional signs as noted above.

### Q. Why are 'off-premise signs' prohibited?

**A.** In part, to prevent and relieve distraction and clutter resulting from excessive and confusing sign displays.

Since 1963, County regulations have prohibited off-premise signs in all zoning districts, except as follows:

O-Open	since 1973
C-Commercial	since 1992
I-Industrial	since 1992

An exception to this regulation is that one, temporary '*off-premise directional sign*' is allowed for *home occupations* that meet specific criteria.

For example, a temporary '*off-premise directional sign*' is allowed during retail sales events connected to the home occupation. Home occupation related retail sales events cannot exceed 30 days in any calendar year.

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### Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. What is the standard process for identifying and removing non-compliant (illegal) signs?**

- A.** Illegal signs located in road right-of-ways are removed, without notice by the Road and Bridge Department or Code Compliance staff.

Signs are either returned to the owner or the owner is notified where the sign may be picked up.

Signs are not removed from private property unless the owner of the property gives permission to do so (i.e., in the case of off-premise signs), or the removal has been authorized by the Larimer County Commissioners through a hearing process or by court order.

**Q. Why is the Sign Code being enforced now?**

- A.** Sign code regulations have been enforced since the first county zoning resolution was adopted in 1963, however, due to limited staff time and resources violations were not given a high priority.

With the reorganization of the Code Compliance Section at the end of 2005, staff was directed to start enforcing Land Use Code violations, including sign violations. Enforcement is carried out on a consistent basis according to priorities set by the Larimer County Commissioners.

### Directional Signs for Tourists (TODS Tourist Oriented Directional Signs)

In May 2007, Larimer County established a signing program that provides identification and directional information within the public right-of-way for public entities and/or private businesses providing services to tourists, travelers and visitors not residing in the immediate area. The program is comprised of two components:

- The Colorado State Department of Transportation's TODS (Tourist Oriented Directional Sign) Program for use along State highways.
- A similar, but slightly more flexible program for use along mainline County roads (major collectors and arterials) in rural Larimer County.

Directional signs are not meant for advertising per se, but rather to help direct visitors and tourists to their destinations. The program is administered by the same private company that oversees the State program: Colorado Logos, Inc. The program is funded by the businesses and/or entities participating in the program.

Privately owned businesses, groups, or public institutions wishing to participate must meet certain criteria. For example, the destination must be open to the general public; the business must derive the major portion of its income from patrons not residing in the immediate area; the destination must be located within 10 miles of a major County collector or arterial roadway, etc.

There is no stipulation on the type of businesses or use that can qualify for the program—any business use that meets the required criteria is eligible. For those businesses eligible to participate in both the CDOT program and the County program, the applicant needs to identify which program to utilize.

The full code language for the Larimer County signing program, including established criteria, and rules and regulations for the State's signing program can be viewed at:

[http://www.larimer.org/depts/pubwor/engin/Transportation/Transportation%20Updates/Directional\\_Signing.htm](http://www.larimer.org/depts/pubwor/engin/Transportation/Transportation%20Updates/Directional_Signing.htm)

**Cost for the County Program:** Cost for a sign is \$250.00 per year. This includes administration, site review, sign construction, initial installation, maintenance, and up to one trailblazer sign (if needed). Additional Trailblazer signs are \$120.00 per year. Signs denoting seasonal closures are \$100.00 per season.

**How To Apply:** Contact Colorado Logos at (303) 462-2320 or (888) 634-5646. A representative will help you with the paperwork and begin the approval process. Please note requests for signs in new locations require site visits and an engineering determination of sign location, which takes some time.

Additional information, program specifics and applications for directional signs are available by contacting:

Colorado Logos, Inc.  
7177 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite H  
Lakewood, CO 80214  
1-888-634-5646

Or

Larimer County Engineering Department  
(970) 498-5731  
[www.larimer.org/engineering](http://www.larimer.org/engineering)