

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Interested Parties

FROM: James C. Smith, Jr.
Assistant Land Use Manager

DATE: April 18, 2007

RE: **Sign Permits in Claymont**

Please be advised that Substitute No. 3 to Resolution 07-041 as Amended by Floor Substitute No. 1 (incorporated below) was adopted by County Council, on April 10, 2007. This Resolution, which added sign guidelines to the previously approved Claymont Community Manual of Design Guidelines, applies to all signs within the area delimited as the Claymont Hometown Overlay District.

Under the terms of this legislation, a sign permit is required from the New Castle County Department of Land Use for ALL new signs on properties situated within the Claymont Hometown Overlay, including for the refacing of existing signs. New billboard and roof signs are now prohibited within this Overlay District. Special provisions govern such things as the architecture, appearance, size and materials of signs. Lastly, any sign that is relocated, replaced, removed, altered, or modernized in any way, including through a refacing (except refacing of billboards), must comply with all provisions of the approved Claymont Sign Guidelines.

The new signage provisions for the Claymont Hometown Overlay District are as follows:

VI. SIGNAGE¹

Signs do more than identify a business; collectively they contribute to the image- good or bad- of an entire district. They are an indicator of the economic vitality of a community. An overabundance of signs results in a chaotic appearance and becomes self-defeating as it becomes difficult to read and comprehend them.

An orderly and properly regulated sign program ensures that all businesses have an equal opportunity to identify and promote themselves without the need or expense of more, larger or brighter signs in an attempt to out do their neighbors. Signs should be as large as needed considering the travel mode (auto or pedestrian) and the average speed of vehicles passing by.

In achieving the goal of identifying a business, signs should be unique and attractive as well as functional. As new businesses are established and buildings are constructed and renovated in Claymont, signs too are an integral part of and should reflect the spirit of the renaissance.

¹ Excerpt from Substitute No. 3 to Resolution No. 07-041 as Amended by Amendment #1.

General Guidelines:

1. All signs shall be architecturally integrated with their environment in terms of size, shape, color, texture, and lighting so that they complement and enhance the building without competing with their surroundings.
2. Signs should not obscure architectural details of the building, but look proportional to the building, giving the appearance of being framed by the structural elements of the building.
3. Signage can employ shapes, colors, and typefaces which are designed to complement the unique character of a storefront and the goods or services provided. Creativity in color and style is always encouraged.
4. Stark white and extremely bright colors should be used only as accent colors. Large surfaces, especially if illuminated, and primary design colors should be subdued in nature.
5. Signs should be designed to have a clearly defined edge or border.
6. Materials used in sign construction should be weather resistant and vandal proof. Wood and metal are the preferred materials. Plastic is permitted if it is a high quality, sturdy material, but should not shine or produce glare.
7. Signs should identify a business succinctly and simply, repetition of message from the same viewpoint should be avoided even if excess square footage is permitted. Multiple signs shall be coordinated to present a cohesive message and design.
8. Lettering should combine easy readability with good visibility. Contrast is important in lettering: for example, light letters on a dark background.
9. The size of the sign and the copy thereon should be scaled for the intended viewer. Signs intended to be viewed by passing vehicles may be appropriately larger but should have less copy for safety and ease of reading. Signs oriented to pedestrians will be smaller and sized to read at a closer distance but may have additional information.
10. Temporary signs placed on a lot for a limited period of time for the purpose of advertising a sale, grand opening, going out of business, special event and the like shall be permitted for a maximum period of one month. Any decorative flag, banner, or paper sign not permanently affixed to a building shall be considered a temporary sign. Temporary signs require a permit from the Department of Land Use.
11. No new billboard structures or roof signs are permitted. Existing structures and signs are encouraged to be eliminated. Such signs and structures destroyed for any reason, or removed as part of a renovation (except refacing of billboards) or new construction, may not be replaced.
12. All signs require a permit from New Castle County prior to installation. The definition of sign area and type shall be in accordance with those found in 40.06.020 of the UDC.
13. If any legal nonconforming sign is hereafter relocated, replaced, removed, altered, or modernized in any way, including through a refacing (except refacing of billboards), the sign loses all nonconforming protection afforded under County law and must fully comply with these sign guidelines to remain on the property.

Guidelines by Sign Type:

The standards within these guidelines may be modified with positive recommendation from the Claymont Community and Design Review Advisory Committee, and the approval of the New Castle County Department of Land Use in order to encourage creativity in sign design.

1. **Window signs** shall cover no more than 20% of the window on which it is located with letters measuring between 4" and 8" high. Interior hung panels are permitted, but no sign

should block the view of merchandise or store interior. Handwritten and paper signs are highly discouraged.

2. **Projecting signs** shall have a maximum size of 15 square feet in area with a clearance of at least 8 feet from grade. The bracket should be sturdy and simple in design. These signs may project over a setback or property line or sidewalk under the condition that DelDOT approval is received as needed. One projecting sign is permitted per business per street frontage.
3. **A-Type signs** shall not exceed 2 feet in width by 42 inches in height. These signs are temporary in nature and not permanently affixed, but should appear sturdy in construction and shall not be attached to any building, tree, street furniture, etc. They may be located in a setback or on a sidewalk if adequate pedestrian access is provided.
4. **Wall signs** shall not exceed 2 square feet for every lineal foot of building façade frontage to which it is attached. A maximum of 100 square feet is permitted for each wall sign. Letters should generally fill up no more than 60% of the sign area.
5. **Ground signs (monument signs, pylon/pole signs, etc.):**
 - a. The maximum height and area of ground signs is related to the setback from the property line.
 - b. Ground signs located within 10 feet of the property line shall have a maximum height of 4 feet and maximum sign area of 20 square feet. Ground signs with a setback of more than 10 feet shall have a maximum height of 6 feet and maximum sign area of 50 square feet. The base shall be constructed of permanent, durable materials such as concrete, brick, or stone. Signs placed near an intersection or driveway must have DelDOT approval ensuring safe visibility.
 - c. Pylon signs must be at least 8-1/2 feet above grade and no higher than 18 feet, with a street setback of 15 feet and maximum sign area of 50 square feet.
 - d. One freestanding sign is permitted per street frontage.

Lighting:

1. Bare bulbs (other than neon), unshielded flood lamps, internally lit box signs, and internally illuminated awnings are prohibited.
2. Individually back lit (halo-lit or reverse pan channel) letters are encouraged.
3. Freestanding signs shall be externally lit and the light source shielded from view by landscaping or other screening.

Awnings:

1. Awnings shall be made of durable, weatherproof materials such as an acrylic based canvas. Avoid plastic and vinyl construction.
2. The shape and color of the awning should reflect the architecture and design of the building. Avoid wild colors and trendy shapes.
3. Awnings should be designed to be proportional to the size of window and door openings. An awning should never be sized to fit from building corner to building corner.
4. Letters on the awning should be no more than 12" tall.
5. Awnings may project beyond the property line, street yard line or over the sidewalk.