

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY ZONING ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE, AS IT PERTAINS TO ELECTRONIC MESSAGE CENTER SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING ON PROPERTIES AND UPDATE THE MADISON STREET URBAN DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICT.

WHEREAS The Common Design Review Board was asked to consider an Electronic Message Center in the Madison Street Corridor Urban Design Overlay District and requested the Regional Planning Commission to consider studying and returning an ordinance to allow some use of Electronic Message Centers in the design districts, AND

WHEREAS, The Regional Planning Commission, on December 21, 2023, voted to initiate a City of Clarksville Zoning Ordinance update “relative to the use of LED/Digital Bulletin Boards for Schools and Churches within the Madison Street Corridor per the Common Design Review Board request”, AND

WHEREAS, This motion was further clarified to look after all businesses on Madison Street, AND

WHEREAS, the RPC staff has conducted research of other Tennessee cities and best practices for LED signs and determined that while limited LED signage on Madison Street should be allowed, overall guidelines for LED / Electronic Message Centers, as well as site and advertising lighting citywide, are lacking, AND

WHEREAS, this ordinance permits limited use of Electronic Message Centers in the Clarksville Design Districts and also provides for reasonable restrictions on Electronic Message Centers and Property Lighting citywide to reduce visual clutter and contribute to improved driver safety.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE,

The following amendments are hereby made to the Clarksville City Zoning Ordinance:

Change the title of Chapter 8 to the following:

“Sign and Lighting Regulations”

Replace the first paragraph in Section 8.1.1 with the following:

“These conditions are established as a reasonable method of regulating advertising structures in order to ensure light, air, and open space; to reduce hazards at intersections; to avoid visual clutter and distracted driving; to prevent accumulation of trash; to preclude the establishment of structures which would afford hiding places for activities characterized as criminal; and to protect property values of the entire community.”

Replace 8.1.2 D. with the following:

D. Holiday signs and decorations, and signs with no commercial message; and

Replace B. in Section 8.2 24. Minimum requirements for Development Directory Signs shall meet the following requirements with the following:

B. Any building with multiple tenants must utilize a Development Directory Sign. One Development Directory Sign shall be allowed per parcel. No additional signage for tenants in a multiple tenant building are permitted on site. If another building or tenant on the property exists outside a multiple tenant building they are permitted one on-premise low profile sign.

Add the following at the end of Section 8.2

25. Electronic Message Center requirements:

- A. Electronic Message Centers may not be used in place of wall signs.
- B. The Electronic Message Center portion of pylon signs shall not exceed 75% of the maximum sign area allowed within the district.
- C. The Electronic Message Center portion of a Development Directory Sign shall not exceed 25% of the proposed sign area.
- D. As of January 1, 2026 all Electronic Message Center signs within the Clarksville City Limits shall be compliant with the following:
 - I. New electronic message centers are permitted in all commercial districts except C-1 and CBD, and for institutional uses (Chart 3.4.8). Some overlay districts may have additional requirements or restrictions.
 - II. No new electronic message centers may be installed within 100 feet of a single-family residence unless oriented away from the residence, in which case a 25-foot distance may be used.
 - III. Only one free-standing Electronic Message Center sign is permitted per property; any additional road frontage may request an additional electronic message center per frontage through a Permitted Upon Review application with the Clarksville Board of Zoning Appeals.
 - IV. Minimum height of an electronic message center shall be 2 feet.
 - V. The transition time between images or messages shall be limited to no more than 3 seconds. Transitions may animate or move; however, inappropriate transitions such as flashing, spinning, or other distracting techniques shall be prohibited.
 - VI. All images or messages must remain static and unchanged for a minimum of 6 seconds before transitioning or displaying the next image or message.
 - VII. The image or text shall be static after the initial transition. There shall be no movies, GIFs, or other flashing or moving images on the sign.
 - VIII. The images or messages shall be associated with the services, goods, or products offered on the property.
 - IX. No audio is permitted with signage
 - X. No chasing, sequential, or running messages shall be used (i.e. content or words that continue to the next image or message).
 - XI. All Electronic Message Center signs shall utilize automatic dimming to adjust brightness based on ambient lighting conditions. At no time shall the brightness of the sign exceed 0.3 footcandles above ambient light levels as measured with a light meter perpendicular to the sign face at a horizontal distance of 100 feet. During periods of low visibility or inclement weather (including overcast skies, fog, rain, or snow), the sign shall dim accordingly to prevent glare and maintain safe visibility in proportion to the ambient light conditions.
 - XII. When the sign is off or malfunctioning, it shall display a solid black background.

26. Lighting on properties

- A. Lighting on properties includes security lights, parking lights, advertising lighting, rope lighting, etc.
- B. Lighting shall be directed downward and shall not cast light pollution on adjacent properties.
- C. In no instance shall lighting be projected directly into the public right-of-way.
- D. Lighting on properties shall not strobe, chase, or flash.

Add the following under 8.6 Historical Districts

- 3. Electronic message centers are prohibited.

Under 9.4.2 DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (E.) Sign Design Standards and Guidelines 1.6

Permitted Signs: Free-Standing Signs Add new 1.6.7 and 1.6.8 as follows:

1.6.7 A portion of one free-standing sign per property may contain an electronic message center not to exceed 50 percent of the total sign area. The free-standing sign may not be exclusively an electronic message center.

1.6.8 Any changeable copy sign (signs with individual manually moveable letters and numbers) legally permitted prior to the adoption of this ordinance (September 4, 2025) may apply to convert the changeable copy sign (or portion thereof) to an electronic message center, provided that: the electronic message center is no larger than the area of the existing changeable copy sign and the electronic message center does not exceed the maximum size permitted in the design district (Section 1.6.7).

Under 9.4.2 DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (E.) Sign Design Standards and Guidelines 1.7

Permitted Signs: Monument Signs Add new 1.7.2 as follows:

1.7.2 A portion of one monument sign per property may contain an electronic message center not to exceed 60 percent or 18 square feet. The monument sign may not be exclusively an electronic message center.

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