



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

ZOA-2019-04

**(Increase in Maximum Height
for Large Media Screen Signs)**

Adopted April 23, 2019

Effective April 23, 2019

At the County Board regular meeting on April 23, 2019, on a motion duly made by County Board member Libby Garvey and seconded by County Board member Katie Cristol, the Arlington County Board unanimously adopted the following ordinance, effective immediately, to amend, reenact and recodify §13.13.4 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance to permit an increase in the maximum sign height of up to 55 feet for large media screens when compliant with the sign height standards associated with urban regional shopping centers, to make other editorial changes to improve clarity, to facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive, and harmonious community, to encourage economic development activities that provide desirable employment and enlarge the tax base, and for other reasons required by public necessity, convenience, general welfare, and good zoning practice.

* * *

Approved amendments are shown with **bold underline** to denote new text, and **~~bold strikethrough~~** to denote deleted text.

Where paragraphs are added or deleted, all subsequent paragraphs are renumbered accordingly, and all references throughout the Ordinance are updated accordingly.

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Article 13. Signs

§13.13. Flashing, Moving and Changeable Copy Signs

§13.13.4. Large media screens

~~In order to promote public health, safety and welfare by providing opportunities to disseminate emergency broadcast information and public service messages; to promote economic development; and to create a convenient, attractive and harmonious community in accordance with the vision for public spaces identified in master plans in the County and with the vision in adopted sector or small area plans for the subject area, the County Board may approve on buildings governed by site plan as specified in §15.5 or on buildings governed by use permit in P-S districts, and subject to other conditions as the County Board may require, large media screens.~~

A. Purpose

The purpose of §13.13.4 is to promote public health, safety and welfare by providing opportunities to disseminate emergency broadcast information and public service messages, to promote economic development, and to create a convenient, attractive and harmonious community in accordance with the vision for public spaces identified in master plans in the County and with the vision in adopted sector or small area plans for the subject area.

B. Action by County Board

The County Board may approve large media screens that do not otherwise meet the standards for automatic changeable copy signs specified in §13.13.2. and §13.13.3 in the following instances:

1. On buildings governed by site plan as specified in §15.5; or,
2. In P-S districts, on buildings governed by use permit as specified in §15.4.

C. Approval criteria

~~A.~~ Large media screens that do not otherwise meet the standards for automatic changeable copy signs specified in §13.13.2 and §13.13.3, may be approved when the County Board finds, consistent with the purposes outlined in §13.13.4.A and the standards specified in §13.13.4.D, that the large media screen is in accordance with the following criteria:

1. The large media screen ~~is~~ is oriented for viewing by pedestrians ~~at an appropriate height below 40 feet;~~
2. The large media screen ~~is~~ is placed in a location consistent with the vision in County master plans and adopted design guidelines for the area to which it is oriented, where pedestrian activity is ~~encouraged desired,~~ and that the presence of the large media screen in that location will contribute positively to the pedestrian experience and further realization of that vision;
3. The large media screen ~~do~~ does not unreasonably interfere with or create a distraction that poses a hazard to drivers' operation of a motor vehicle on streets

abutting or fronting the building on and/or plaza in which the sign is placed; and

4. **The large media screen** is located not closer than 2000 feet from another approved large media screen, or in a location where it is visible from another large media screen; and
5. **The large media screen** does not unreasonably impact the monumental core of the District of Columbia or other sites of historic or national interest.

B.D. Approval Use standards

~~Under no circumstances shall the County Board approve a large media screen that does not meet all of the following standards:~~ **Large media screens shall comply with the following requirements:**

1. Location and siting

- (a) Large media screens shall be allowed only:
 - (1) In P-S districts; or
 - (2) In commercial/mixed-use (C) districts within one-quarter mile of a metro station, major bus transfer station or street car station:
- (b) Large media screens shall be wall signs, and may be placed only on commercial or public buildings;
- (c) Proximity to residential districts and uses
 - (3) The video screen of a large media screen shall not be placed within 200 feet of the common lot line of an R or RA district, and shall be designed to not be visible from an R or RA district;
 - (4) A large media screen shall not be located within 600 feet of any residential dwelling unless the applicant demonstrates that the video screen will not have substantial visual impact on any dwelling unit within 600 feet of the large media screen;
- (d) Large media screens in parks and plazas:
 - (5) A large media screen designed to be viewed from a park or plaza shall be allowed only on elevations of buildings that immediately abut the park or plaza, or that are not separated from the park or plaza by streets identified as other principal or minor arterial streets on the Master Transportation Plan.
 - (6) A large media screen in a park or plaza shall face inward into the park or plaza such that it is designed to be viewed by persons using the park or plaza as opposed to persons outside of the park or plaza;
- (e) A large media screen shall function as an element separate from the building, such that the architectural design of the building is not derived primarily from the large media screen nor does it depend on the presence of the large media screen for architectural merit; and the media screen shall not substitute for fenestration on the building;

- (f) No large media screen shall be designed to be viewed from within a restaurant or outdoor café or placed in windows of a restaurant;

2. Sign area

No large media screen shall be larger than 750 sq. ft.

3. Sign height

(a) Large media screens shall have a maximum sign height of 40 feet.

(b) Notwithstanding the maximum sign heights specified above and specified in §13.7.1.G.5., large media screens at urban regional shopping centers that have also chosen to have their signs regulated under the regulations set forth in §13.8 may have a maximum sign height in accordance with the placement standards specified in §13.8.3.E.

~~3.4.~~ Messages

Commercial messages shall not be permitted on any large media screen.

~~4.5.~~ Lighting and sound

(a) The sign shall meet all standards for lighted signs as set forth in §13.12 and shall incorporate automatic level controls to reduce light levels at night and under cloudy or other darkened conditions by inclusion of an ambient light monitor that allows automatic adjustment of the brightness level of the sign based on ambient light conditions;

(b) Sound shall be permitted only when associated with a scheduled Special Event open to the public, as permitted in §13.13.4.~~DF~~, below, such as, but not limited to movies, art displays or other live programming such as concerts and special events of a national and/or community interest. Volume level of the large media screen during such events shall be in accordance with the noise ordinance.

~~C.E.~~ Large media screens shall not be subject to aggregate sign area limitations in the zoning ordinance, and may be approved by the County Board independently of a Comprehensive Sign Plan;

~~D.F.~~ Large media screens located in parks or plazas that are publicly-owned or have a public access easement and are a minimum of 12,000 square feet in size, may be used for special events associated with a special event permit issued by the County, and for special events sponsored by the County;

~~E.G.~~ The zoning administrator may approve a large media screen located in a park that is publicly-owned or has a public access easement, where such sign meets all standards in §13.13.4.~~BD~~, provided the sign is located such that the face of the sign is not visible from any street or residence on the perimeter of the park;

~~F.H.~~ Operation of any approved large media screen shall be commenced within one year from the date of County Board approval, or the approval becomes null and void.

~~G.I.~~ All wall-mounted large media screens approved and installed in the approved location as of **December 17, 2013**~~[date of adoption]~~ shall be deemed to have been approved under this §13.13.4, but shall be required to operate in compliance with all conditions that govern size, location, sound and operation of the large media screen under which they

were initially approved, and with all provisions for lighting in §13.13.4.B.45.(a), above. Such signs may be replaced consistent with this §13.13.4.61 and any amendments to the original approval that were approved prior to December 17, 2013.

H.J. Signs at athletic fields as permitted by §13.9.3.C.4(b) or §13.10.7.D.3 shall not be considered a large media screen.