

# **NONCONFORMING SIGN COMPLIANCE PROGRAM**

## **WHAT IS THE NONCONFORMING SIGN COMPLIANCE PROGRAM?**

Since incorporation the citizens of University Place have been asking the City Council to reduce the sign clutter to enhance the City's appearance, promote economic development, and increase the quality of life. To accomplish this, the City Council adopted a Sign Code in 1996 reducing the size, height and number of signs allowed prior to incorporation. The City Council also set dates by which all signs that did not meet the new standards would have to be replaced with signs that do.



## **THE SCOOP**

Although the City Council originally set a deadline of December 31, 2001, they extended the deadline to 2004 and created provisions to inventory all signs and notify nonconforming sign owners of the approaching deadline. In 2002, the City conducted an inventory of all signs and identified 818 regulated signs of which 299 were nonconforming. (A nonconforming sign is a sign or sign structure erected prior to the effective date of this Sign Code that does not conform to the Sign Code's provisions.)

In March 2002, the City began sending letters to all property owners and their tenants informing them where nonconforming signs were located. These letters indicated that nonconforming signs would need to be brought into compliance by March 4, 2004. Overall three notices were sent to all sign owners, and 104 sign owners obtained nonconforming sign permits.

As you can well imagine, the City was flooded with phone calls from people wanting to know more about the Sign Code. In turn the City Council re-examined the Sign Code and deadline for conformance. Ultimately the City Council amended the Sign Code on May 12, 2003, extending the deadline for compliance to March 4, 2009.

## **WHAT'S GOING ON NOW?**

Since 2002, the owners of 117 nonconforming signs have brought their signs into compliance with the Sign Code as a result of past efforts and time extensions provided by the City Council. However, in January 2008, there were still 139 signs that remain non-compliant despite numerous notifications and repeated deadline extensions.

To help bring the remaining signs into conformance by the new deadline, the City contracted with Tierra Right-of-Way Services, Inc. to conduct an updated sign inventory and notify nonconforming sign owners of the requirement to replace their nonconforming signs with conforming ones by March 4, 2009.

In March 2008, Tierra sent out the first introductory letter (180 day notice) to nonconforming sign owners and followed up the letter with one or more phone calls. In September, Tierra sent a second letter (90 day notice). The City will send out a third letter in January (30 day notice) and a fourth (15 day notice) letter will be sent in February 2009.



## **WHAT ABOUT GRANDFATHERED SIGNS?**

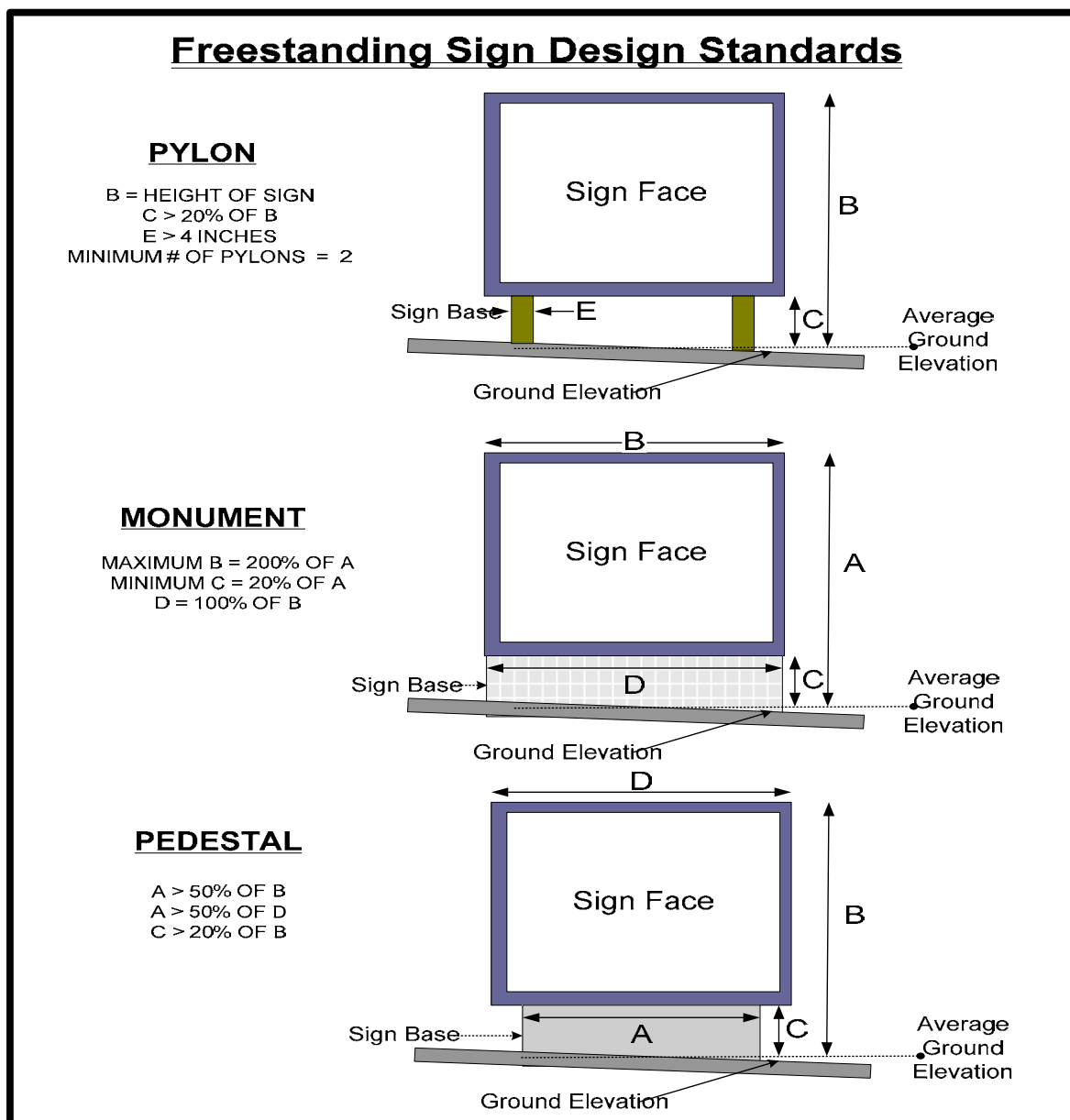
There are no grandfathered signs. Rather than grandfathering nonconforming signs, the City Council provided ample time and notification for signs to be brought into conformance. In 1996, when the first Sign Code was adopted, owners of

non-conforming signs were given seven years to conform. In 2000 and 2003, the deadline was extended by two years and 5 years respectively. Altogether, nonconforming sign owners have had 13 years to bring their signs into conformance.

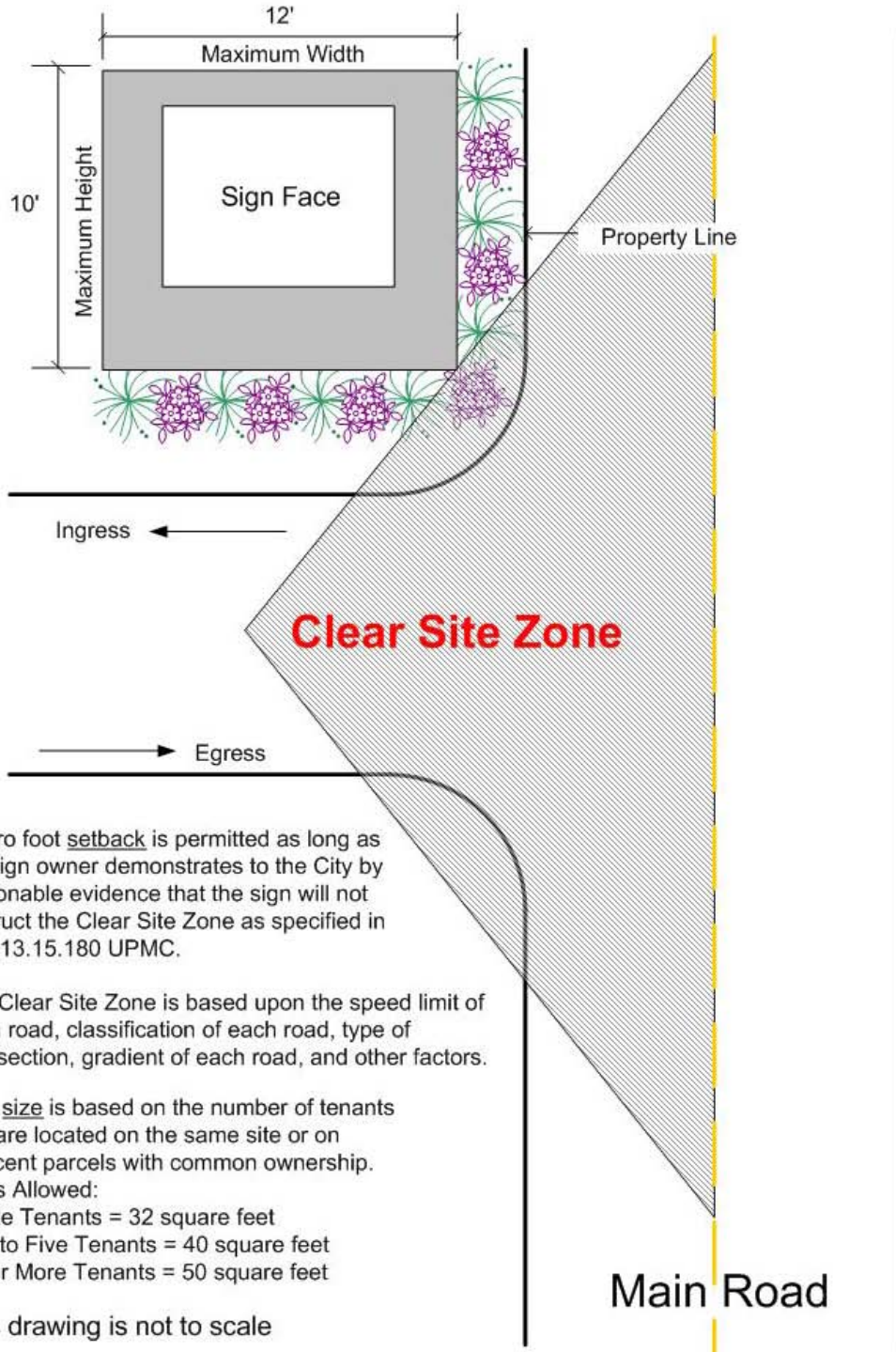
## ARE THERE ANY EXTENSIONS?

Yes. The owner of a nonconforming sign in a commercial zone may obtain a nonconforming sign permit granting an extension until March 4, 2011. In order to obtain an extension the sign must be modified in three of the following ways:

- Paint the sign;
- Install landscaping in accordance with the Sign Code;
- Reduce height of sign to 10 feet;
- Replace sign face with a dark background and light lettering;
- Add paneling to single poles (create a pylon or monument look);
- Change illumination in accordance with the Sign Code.



**COMMERCIAL SIGN SETBACKS, HEIGHT, WIDTH AND SIZE**



A zero foot setback is permitted as long as the sign owner demonstrates to the City by reasonable evidence that the sign will not obstruct the Clear Site Zone as specified in Title 13.15.180 UPMC.

The Clear Site Zone is based upon the speed limit of each road, classification of each road, type of intersection, gradient of each road, and other factors.

Sign size is based on the number of tenants that are located on the same site or on adjacent parcels with common ownership.

Sizes Allowed:

Single Tenants = 32 square feet

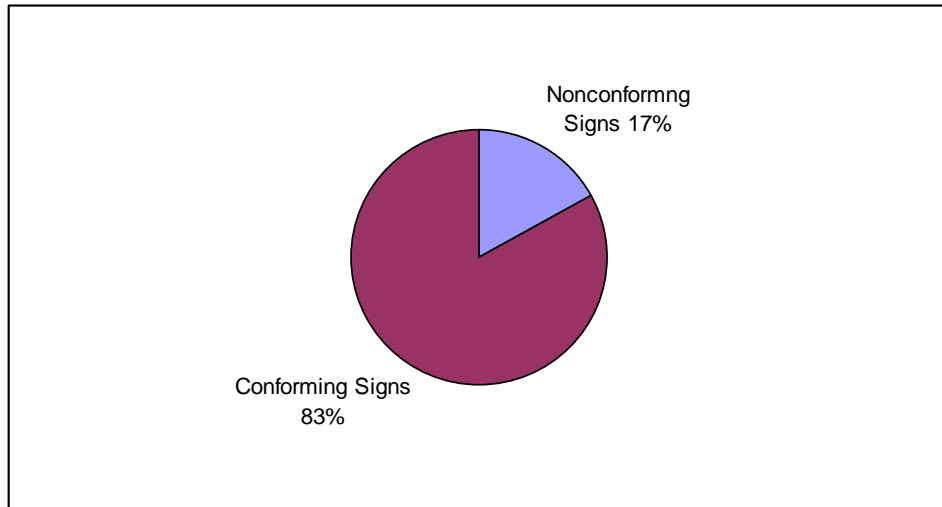
Two to Five Tenants = 40 square feet

Six or More Tenants = 50 square feet

This drawing is not to scale

## WHAT'S THE STATUS?

After thirteen years and several notifications, change of businesses and voluntary compliance, 670 of 818 regulated signs in University Place comply with the Sign Code.



For more information on the Nonconforming Sign Compliance Program, contact; The City of University Place's Permits Division at (253) 460-5406; or send an email to [signinfo@cityofup.com](mailto:signinfo@cityofup.com).

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