

ARTICLE 11 - SIGN STANDARDS

11.1 Purpose and Intent

The purpose and intent of this Article is to support and complement the various land uses allowed in the Town through the regulation of various signs. More specifically, the purpose of this Article is to:

- (1) Encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication in the Town;
- (2) To maintain and enhance the beauty and unique character and enhance the aesthetic environment of the Town by preventing and eliminating visual blight;
- (3) To enhance the Town's ability to attract sources of economic growth and development;
- (4) To protect pedestrians and motorists of the Town from damage or injury caused or partially attributed to the distractions and obstructions caused by improper size and location of signs;
- (5) To minimize the possible adverse effect of signs on nearby public and private property; and
- (6) To promote public safety, health, welfare, convenience, and enjoyment of travel and the free flow of travel within the Town.

11.2 Applicability

Unless exempted in accordance with Section 11.4, Exempt Signs, no sign allowed by this Article shall be constructed, erected, moved, enlarged, illuminated, altered, maintained, or displayed without first being issued a Zoning Permit.

11.3 Nonconforming Signs

(1) General Standards

No nonconforming sign shall be used, erected, altered, repaired, or relocated except in accordance with the standards of this section.

(2) Nonconforming Signs Protected

- (A) Any sign that was lawfully erected prior to the date of adoption of this Ordinance, but that does not conform in one or more respects with the requirements of this Ordinance may remain in use, subject to the requirements of this section and other applicable requirements of this Ordinance. No activity that increases the amount of nonconformity shall be permitted.
- (B) A nonconforming sign may not be moved or replaced except to bring the sign into complete conformity with this Ordinance. Once a nonconforming

sign is removed from the premises or otherwise taken down or moved, the sign may only be replaced with a sign which is in conformance with this Ordinance.

(3) Routine Repairs and Maintenance

- (A)** Repairs and maintenance of nonconforming signs, such as repainting and electrical repairs, shall be permitted, provided such activities are completed in accordance with the requirements in this Article and provided that the cost of repairs do not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the tax value of the sign.
- (B)** Nonconforming signs representing a danger to the public health or safety as determined by the Zoning Administrator shall be immediately replaced or removed, and replacement signage shall comply with all requirements of this Ordinance.

(4) Replacement Required

In the event there is a change in use to an existing building (except multi-tenant buildings), and there are one or more on-premise nonconforming signs which advertised the former or current business or use, the new occupant shall replace all existing nonconforming signs with new signs or new sign faces that meet all sign requirements for the district.

(5) Damage or Destruction to a Nonconforming Sign

- (A)** In the event that a nonconforming sign is subject to damage or destruction from natural causes to an extent that exceeds fifty percent (50%) of the sign's tax value, then the sign shall only be restored, repaired, or reconstructed in accordance with the standards of this Article. In no instance shall any remnants of the former nonconforming sign structure remain on the site.
- (B)** In the event a nonconforming sign is damaged to an extent less than fifty percent (50%) of the sign's tax value, the sign may be repaired in accordance with Section 11.3(3), Routine Repairs and Maintenance.

(6) Abandonment

- (A)** If a nonconforming on-premise sign which advertises a business, service, commodity, accommodation, attraction or other enterprise or activity that has for a period of at least one-hundred eighty (180) days not been operated, conducted or offered, that sign shall be deemed abandoned and shall be removed or brought into compliance by the sign owner, landowner, or other person having control over the sign.
- (B)** If a nonconforming sign remains blank for a continuous period of one-hundred eighty (180) days, that sign shall be deemed abandoned and shall, within thirty (30) days after such abandonment, be brought into compliance with this Ordinance or be removed by the sign owner, owner

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of the land where the sign is located, or other person having control over the sign. For purposes of this Ordinance, a sign shall be deemed "blank" if:

1. It advertises a business, commodity, accommodation, attraction service or other enterprise or activity that is no longer operating or being offered or conducted; or
2. The advertising message it displays becomes illegible in whole or substantial part; or
3. It does not contain an advertising message (for such purposes, the terms "Sign For Rent", "Sign For Lease", "Building For Rent", "Building For Lease", "Building for Sale", etc. shall not be deemed to be an advertising message).

- (C) Signs advertising a use or structure that has been demolished or moved to another site shall be removed within sixty (60) days following demolition or relocation. In the event an existing use or structure has been demolished or moved to facilitate new construction, all signage associated with the new construction shall comply with the standards in this Article.

11.4 Exempt Signs

The following types of signs shall be exempt from the requirement to obtain a Zoning Permit, and may be located on a lot within any base zoning district provided the sign is located outside the right-of-way and complies with all applicable requirements in this Section.

(1) Commercial Signs

- (A) Drive-through service menu boards which are not visible from a public right-of-way and do not exceed sixteen (16) square feet in area.
- (B) Internally-directed signage, including banners, placards, and scoreboards, located within athletic fields and stadiums.
- (C) Signs denoting a product being sold out of a vending machine or self-service container that distributes product(s) following deposition of money into the machine, provided that the sign does not exceed three (3) square feet in area and is not legible from a public right-of-way.

(2) Fuel Sales Signs

- (A) Gasoline price or self-service signs of one (1) square foot or less associated with a Retail Sales and Service use selling gasoline, provided the signs are secured to a gasoline pump.

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- (B) Up to one freestanding gasoline price sign less than four (4) square feet associated with a retail establishment selling gasoline provided the sign is located outside all street rights-of-way.
- (C) Up to one State of North Carolina Vehicle Inspection Station sign located outside street rights-of-way.

(3) Historical or Public Interest Signs

- (A) Public interest and incidental signs less than two (2) square feet in size, including “Warning” and “No Trespassing” signs.
- (B) Historical plaques mounted in accordance with the United States Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.
- (C) Temporary displays as part of a holiday or civic event.
- (D) Flags, pennants, insignia, or religious symbols of any government, non-profit, or not-for-profit organization provided:
 - 1. Such signs are not associated with commercial promotion; or used as an advertising device;
 - 2. No pole displaying such signage exceeds twenty-five (25) feet in height;
 - 3. Flags, except those representing United States government bodies, do not exceed twenty (20) square feet in size; and
 - 4. Signs are limited to a maximum of three (3) per site.

(4) Home Occupation Signs

No more than one (1) home occupation sign per residence shall be allowed. The sign shall not be illuminated, shall not exceed three (3) square feet in size and three (3) feet high if a ground sign, or as a window sign shall be allowed only on the first floor.

(5) Political Campaign Signs

Campaign and election signs provided:

- (A) No sign exceeds four (4) square feet in area;
- (B) No sign is erected more than sixty (60) days prior the election for which they are intended;
- (C) Signs are removed within seven (7) days following the election for which they are intended; and

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- (D) All signs are placed at least ten (10) feet behind the back of a curb or drainage swale (if no curb exists).

(6) Produce Stand Sign

Produce stand signs provided:

- (A) Signs are limited to a maximum of one per farm, and shall be located on the same site as the farm where products for sale are produced;
- (B) The sign is located outside the street right-of-way and at least ten (10) feet from any side lot line;
- (C) The sign has a maximum area of six (6) square feet; and
- (D) The sign is not illuminated.

(7) Real Estate Signs

Temporary real estate signs advertising a specific property for sale, lease, rent, or temporary construction signs provided:

- (A) There is no more than one (1) sign per street frontage;
- (B) Signs do not exceed a maximum of five (5) square feet in area per sign on a lot in a residential base zoning district and ten (10) square feet per sign on a lot in any other base zoning district;
- (C) Signs on corner lots are located at least one-hundred (100) linear feet apart as measured by the shortest straight line between them;
- (D) Signs are removed within seven (7) days after the property is sold, rented, leased, or construction has been completed; and
- (E) No sign is illuminated.

(8) Regulatory and Informational Signs

- (A) Regulatory signs (such as traffic control signage) and NCDOT signs.
- (B) Memorial signs or grave markers that are noncommercial in nature.
- (C) Integral decorative or architectural features of buildings or works of art, provided such features or works do not contain letters, trademarks, moving parts, or lights.
- (D) Up to two (2) wall-mounted incidental signs including tenant identification, historical markers, or bulletin boards not exceeding four (4) square feet in area.

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- (E) On-premise directional and instructional signs not exceeding four (4) square feet in area.
- (F) One (1) subdivision identification sign located at each entrance to the subdivision provided the sign area has a maximum height of four (4) feet above grade and does not exceed sixteen (16) square feet per face.
- (G) Single-family dwelling identification signs depicting an address or resident's name, provided the sign does not:
 - 1. Advertise a home occupation use;
 - 2. Exceed three (3) square feet in area; and
 - 3. Exceed one (1) per premises.

(9) Sandwich Board Signs

Sandwich board signs on lots within the General Business (GB) and Neighborhood Business (NB) zoning districts, provided the sign:

- (A) Is limited to a maximum area of five (5) square feet per side or less (including both sides up to ten (10) square feet);
- (B) Does not exceed three (3) feet in height;
- (C) Is located so as to maintain at least five (5) linear feet of clearance for pedestrian travel;
- (D) Is limited to a maximum of one (1) per establishment; and
- (E) Is removed each evening following the close of the business it serves.

(10) Window Signs

Window signs on the ground floor of a commercial use provided the window sign(s) occupies less than area specified in Appendix 4 in the building in which it is located.

(11) Yard Sale Signs

Yard sale signs, provided they are:

- (A) Limited to one on-premise and two (2) off-premise signs per yard sale;
- (B) No larger than three (3) square feet in area;
- (C) Not affixed to a utility pole or other sign; and
- (D) Removed within four (4) hours after the end of the yard sale.

11.5 Prohibited Signs

The following signs shall be prohibited, except as otherwise allowed in this Ordinance:

(1) Signs Interfering with Traffic Safety

Any sign that obstructs the view of pedestrians, bicyclists or motorists using any street, approach to any street intersection, or which interferes with the effectiveness of or obscures any traffic sign, device, or signal as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

(2) Signs Misconstrued as Regulatory

Signs which contain lights, rotating disks, words and other devices not erected by a public authority which may be erroneously construed as regulatory signs or emergency warning signs. An example of this is a sign which contains a picture of a traffic sign plus the word "Stop" or "Yield".

(3) Signs within the Right-of-Way

Any sign (other than a regulatory sign), banner, or display placed on any curb, sidewalk, post, pole, hydrant, bridge, tree, or other surface located on, over, or across any street or right-of-way, or any banner, placed on stakes on a property, unless specifically permitted herein.

(4) Signs Blocking Existing Signs

Any sign located in such a way as to intentionally deny visual access to another existing sign.

(5) Flashing Signs

Signs with flashing or reflective disks, signs with flashing lights or lights of changing degree of intensity or color (except regulatory signs).

(6) Signs on Stakes or Snipe Signs

On-premise or off-premise pole signs or signs on metal or wood stakes not affixed to a permanent foundation (excluding regulatory signs and temporary election signs).

(7) Portable Signs

Portable signs, including marquee signs with the wheels and axles that have been removed and placed on permanent foundations.

(8) Vehicular Signs

Vehicular signs placed or parked in such a manner to advertise a business or product from any street right-of-way. This also includes billboards or outdoor advertising signs mounted to the bed of a truck.

(9) Moving or Rotating Signs

Signs which rotate or have any mechanical or wind driven components that cause the sign to move or transform.

(10) Roof Signs

Roof signs that extend above the soffit of a pitched roof, or above the highest point of a mansard roof or parapet wall.

(11) Off-premise Advertising Billboards

Off-premise commercial billboard advertising signs of any size and in any area of the Town. On premise signs are regulated in this Article, including Section 11.7 and Appendix 4.

(12) Inflatable Signs

Inflatable signs, including inflated balloons with a diameter of greater than two (2) feet, except as allowed as part of a temporary display as part of a holiday or civic event.

11.6 General Sign Provisions

(1) General Standards

All permitted signs shall comply with the following general standards:

- (A)** The scale of a sign shall be appropriate for the building on which it is located.
- (B)** Signs shall be integrated with the design of the building and shall not obscure architectural features.
- (C)** Any structurally-unsafe sign that endangers the public safety shall be immediately removed or repaired and made otherwise compliant with the requirements of this Ordinance.
- (D)** No sign shall be located so as to impair traffic visibility.
- (E)** Each principal structure shall include street address numbers a minimum of three (3) inches in height that are visible from the street the structure faces.

(2) Computation of Sign Area

(A) General

- 1. The area of a sign face (which is also the sign area of a wall sign or other sign with only one face) shall be computed by means of the smallest rectangle that will encompass the limits of the writing,

emblem or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or structure against which it is placed, but not including any supporting framework, base, bracing or decorative fence or wall when such fence or wall otherwise meets the regulations of this Article and is clearly incidental to the display itself. Street address numbers are not included within the sign copy area.

2. For a single wall, all pieces of information or other graphic representations within a grouping on that wall shall be measured as though part of one sign, encompassed within one rectangle, which may not exceed the permitted total wall area to which the sign is affixed. For a single wall on a multi-occupant building, the area of signs shall be computed using these principles, and the aggregate copy of each.

(B) Authority to Remove Signs in the Right-of-Way

Except where authorized, signs within a public right-of-way shall be prohibited. The Town may remove and dispose of any sign located in the public right-of-way without providing prior notice to the sign's owner.

11.7 Signs Permitted with a Zoning Permit

This Section 11.7 includes the standards on the types of signs required to obtain a Zoning Permit prior to construction, erection, enlargement, display, alteration, or illumination.

(1) Permitted Signs by Base Zoning District

Appendix 4, Table of Permitted Signs by Base Zoning District, prescribes the allowable types, numbers, dimensions, maximum height (also Section 11.7(3)), locations, and configurations of permitted signs within the base zoning districts. All signs not exempt from regulation pursuant to Section 11.4 shall conform to the requirements therein.

(2) Temporary Signs

(A) Temporary on-premise special event signs and banners for religious, charitable, civic, fraternal, or similar non-profit or not-for-profit organizations provided:

1. Signs are erected no sooner than seven (7) days prior and removed no later than two (2) days after the event;
2. No sign exceeds sixteen (16) square feet;
3. Signs are not illuminated; and

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4. Signs are placed at least five (5) feet behind the right-of-way and out of any sight triangles.
- (B) On-premise pennants, flags, and streamers for special events and grand openings associated with nonresidential uses may be permitted for one consecutive thirty (30) day period per establishment per calendar year.
- (C) Temporary banners associated with a nonresidential use, provided they are:
1. Limited to a maximum of twenty-four (24) square feet in area;
 2. Attached to primary facade of a principal structure or set back fifty
 3. Not attached to a roof structure or an existing sign face;
 4. Not located above the second floor level;
 5. Limited to a maximum of two (2) special events per establishment
 6. Removed within two (2) days of the event's conclusion.

(3) Additional Sign Standards

The following standards shall apply in addition to the standards in Appendix 4, Table of Permitted Signs by Base Zoning District.

(A) Wall Signs

1. The maximum permitted aggregate area of wall signs includes the area of any windows or doorways.
2. The preferred location for wall signs is between the first floor window and window sill of second floor, or on the sign frieze area of building (if original to building). Building identification signs that are an integral part of the building's design and architectural character shall not be considered a sign for the purposes of this standard.
3. No wall sign shall project more than eighteen (18) inches from the building wall.
4. No wall sign or its supporting structure shall cover any window or part of a window.

(B) Monument and Freestanding Signs

1. Only buildings set back more than twenty (20) feet or more from the right-of-way may use a monument or freestanding sign.

2. The maximum height shall be measured from street grade or the sidewalk (where one exists), whichever is less. The maximum sign height is shown in Appendix 4.
3. All sign structures shall be self-supporting or set into and permanently attached to concrete foundations.

(C) Directory Signs

1. Directory signs shall not be illuminated.
2. All directory signs shall be monument signs.
3. The maximum height shall be measured from street grade or the sidewalk (where one exists), whichever is less. The maximum sign height is shown in Appendix 4.
4. The directory sign may contain the following:
 - a. Name of the development;
 - b. Map of the development;
 - c. Names of tenants within the development;
 - d. Directional arrows; and
 - e. Distance information.

(D) Mansard Roofs

Signage located on a mansard roof shall be located within a cabinet-style display.

(E) Electronic Message and Changeable Copy Signs

Electronic message and changeable copy signs are only permitted in these zoning districts General Business (GB), Light Industrial (LI), and Heavy Industrial (HI) provided they:

1. Do not move, scroll, or flash.
2. Do not change message more than once per minute; and
3. Are a freestanding or monument sign in accordance with the standards in Appendix 4, Table of Permitted Signs by Base Zoning District.