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### **SECTION 12.1            GENERAL PROVISIONS**

#### **12.1.1            PURPOSE**

The purposes of these sign regulations are:

- A. To encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication.
- B. To maintain and enhance the pleasing look of the City.
- C. To preserve the City as an attractive place to do business.
- D. To improve motorist, bicyclist and pedestrian safety.
- E. To minimize the possible adverse affects of signs on nearby public and private property.
- F. To ensure that signs placed in the City are compatible with the high quality image that the City seeks.



### **12.1.2 APPLICABILITY**

#### **A. APPLICABILITY**

A sign may be erected, placed, established, painted, created or maintained in the City only in conformance with the standards, procedures, exemptions and other requirements of this Chapter and Ordinance.

#### **B. EFFECT**

The effects of these regulations as herein set forth are:

1. To establish a system to allow a variety of types of signs in the various zoning districts, subject to the standards and permit requirements herein contained.
2. To allow certain signs that are small, unobtrusive and incidental to the principal use of the lot upon which they are located, and without having to seek a permit.
3. To provide for temporary signs of a limited nature.
4. To prohibit all signs that are not expressly permitted by this Chapter.
5. To provide for the enforcement of the provisions of this Chapter.

### **12.1.3 SIGN AREA AND HEIGHT MEASUREMENTS**

#### **A. SIGN AREA COMPUTATIONS**

The Administrator shall employ the following principles when determining the area of sign:

1. The area of a sign face shall be computed by using up to three (3) of the smallest basic geometric shapes (i.e. square, circle, triangle) that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, 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. Such measurement shall not include any supporting framework, bracing or decorative fence or wall when



such fence or wall is clearly incidental to the display itself and does not contain any sign copy. For pole signs, poles covered with corporate logos or with more than one (1) corporate color will be considered part of the sign area.

2. For a single wall (i.e., the entire wall that shares the same architectural elevation as shown on the approved sign permit) all pieces of information or other graphic representations on the wall that are logically related shall be measured as part of one (1) sign. If multiple signs on a single wall share a frame or other material of color forming an integral part of the display or used to differentiate the signs from the background against which they are placed, such area will be measured as part of one (1) sign.
3. Regardless of whether a single wall has wall sections that project, recess or otherwise vary from the predominate wall plane, the sign area measurement shall include the area of all sign faces that can be viewed from a single vantage point. Signs may be placed back-to-back, side-by-side, or in V-type construction.
  - a. Side-by-side signs must be structurally tied together and considered as one (1) sign.
  - b. V-type and back-to-back signs must be considered as two (2) signs if the angle between the faces is forty-five (45) degrees or more.
  - c. In all other cases, the areas of each face of a multi-faced sign shall be added together to compute the sign area. Sign area of multi-faced signs is calculated based on the principle that all sign elements that can be seen at one (1) time or from one (1) vantage point should be considered when measuring the area of such sign.

**Examples Of How Sign Area Is To Be Computed Are Indicated Below:**

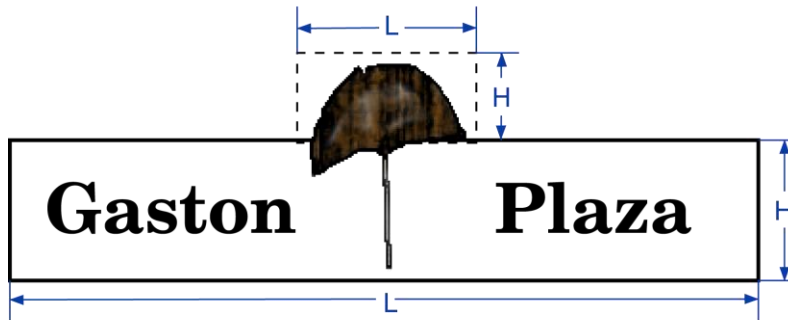




Wall Sign - Separate Letters  
Calculated & Permitted as One Sign



Sign with Embellishments  
Area Measured as the Sum of the Rectangles



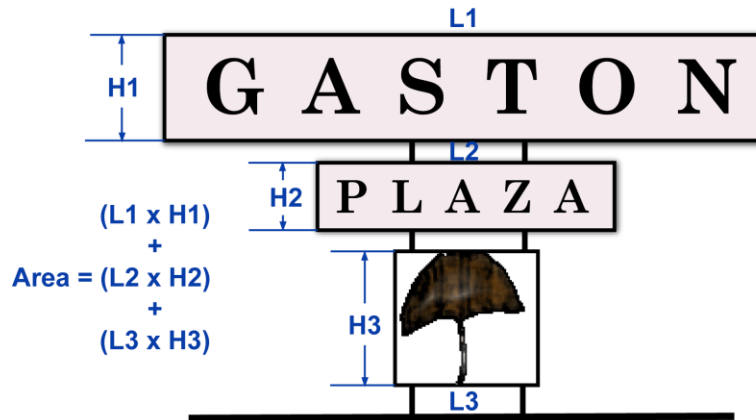
Sign - Area Measured as a Circle

$$\text{Area} = \pi \times r^2$$



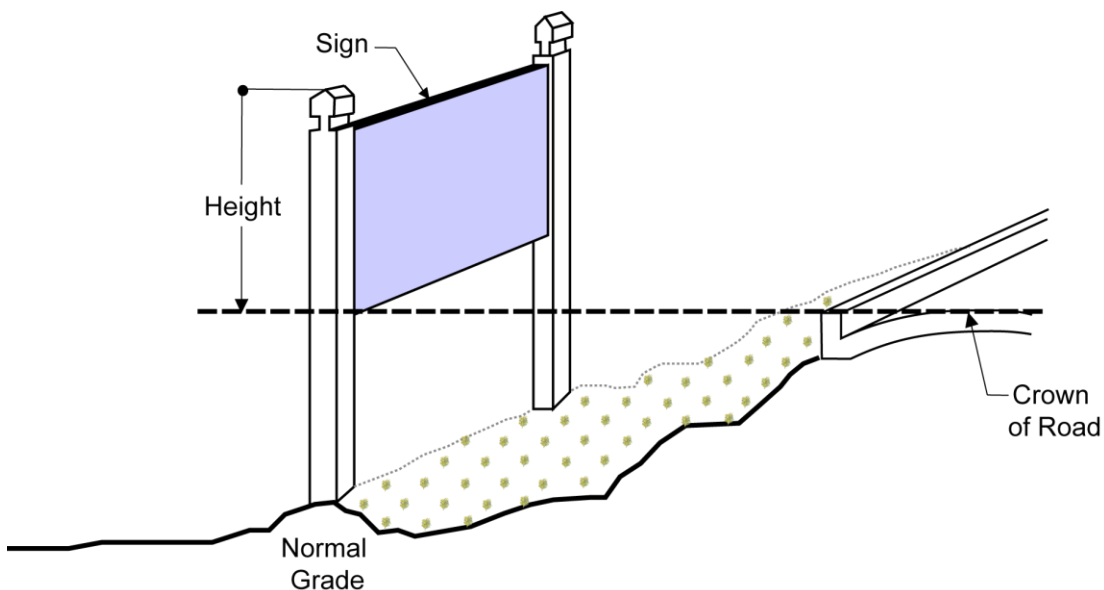


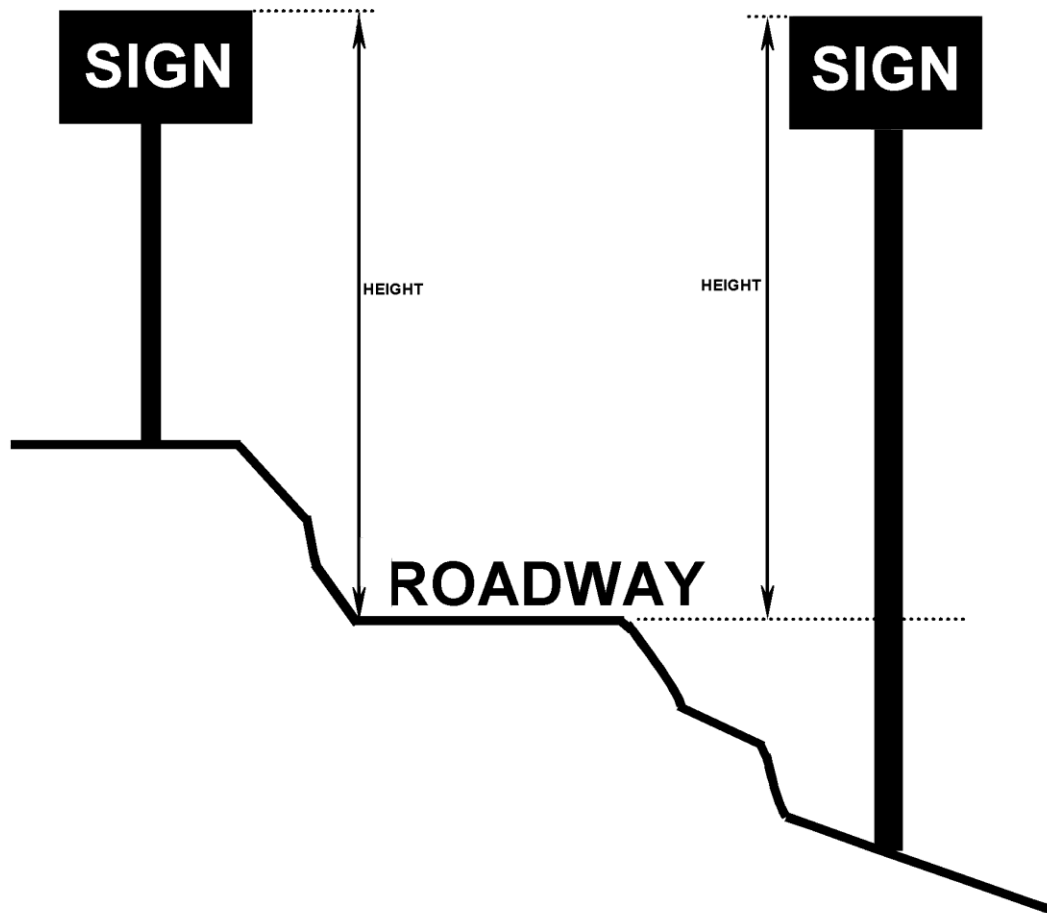
## Sign Area Calculation of a Multi - Faced Sign



### B. SIGN HEIGHT COMPUTATION

The height of a sign shall be computed to be the distance from the base of a sign at “normal grade” to the top of the highest attached component of the sign. “Normal grade” shall be construed to mean the newly established grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign. In cases where the normal grade is below the grade at street level, the height of a sign shall be computed from the crown of the public or private street closest to the sign. Examples of how sign height is computed are included below:







## **SECTION 12.2            SIGNS NOT REQUIRING A PERMIT**

The following signs shall be exempt from the regulations contained in this Chapter and shall not be required to have had a permit issued from the Administrator for their placement. Unless otherwise specified (e.g., signs specifically allowed to be located off-premises or placed in a street right-of-way), such signs shall not fall into any of the “prohibited sign” categories contained in Section 12.3. See Section 5.7 for procedures for obtaining a sign permit. Notwithstanding, any sign shown herein, except as where noted shall be placed outside of a street right-of-way or required sight distance triangle, unless specific authorization for such placement is granted by the City or NCDOT.

- A. Any official or public notice or warning sign required by a valid or applicable federal, state, or local law; by a public utility company; or by a court of competent jurisdiction.
- B. Building marker signs that include the building name, date of construction, or historical data, if such sign is cut or etched into the building masonry, bronze or similar material.
- C. On-premise Decorational, Seasonal, or Corporate Logo Flags. Decorational, seasonal flags, or corporate logo flags (that may include the company name, insignia or symbol) may be up to twenty-four (24) square feet.
- D. Governmental Signs.
- E. On-premise Public Interest Signs. Signs indicating vehicular entrances and exits, parking areas, one-way traffic, “no trespassing”, “no loitering”, etc. Such signs may be illuminated, shall not exceed four (4) square feet in area and shall not be located at the driveway entrance or where other instruction is required.
- F. Memorial signs, plaques or grave markers that are noncommercial in nature.
- G. Flags, pennants, insignia, or religious symbols of any government, nonprofit or not-for-profit organization when not displayed as an advertising device for commercial purposes.
- H. On-premise (ground or wall) identification signs for residential uses that show the name and may also include the street address, with a maximum aggregate area of six (6) square feet.
- I. Incidental signs. Such on-premise signs shall be displayed for the convenience of the general public and includes such signs as signs for



public rest rooms; automobile inspection; hours of operation; credit cards accepted, etc. Such signs may be illuminated and contain no other sign copy other than service information, trade names, and logos. Such signs shall be a maximum of six (6) square feet apiece.

- J. Political Signs. Such signs shall be allowed if the following conditions are met:
1. If placed within the street right-of-way:
    - a. Sign area shall not exceed five (5) square feet;
    - b. Sign height shall not exceed thirty-six (36) inches above the street level surface nearest to said sign; provided however, if said sign is located within twelve (12) feet of the point of intersection of the edges of pavement of two (2) intersection streets, no such sign shall exceed thirty (30) inches in height above said street level. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Administrator shall remove any such sign or group of signs that he deems to be an obstruction to the safe vision of motorists.
    - c. Such signs shall not be put up more than thirty (30) days prior to Election Day and must be removed within ten (10) days following Election Day; provided however, signs of candidates in a runoff election may remain up until ten (10) days after said runoff election.
    - d. No such sign shall be placed over any curb, street surface or sidewalk; or on any utility pole, government sign or signpost, bridge, tree, rock, fence, or guardrail; or within fifteen (15) feet of any fire hydrant.
    - e. The tenant or other person entitled to possession of the property fronting along the street right-of-way on which such sign is placed may remove such sign at any time.
    - f. Such signs shall not be placed on right-of-way fronting public facilities (e.g., government office or operations center, post office, Public Park, public cemetery, courthouse, public safety station, public library, public museum, public school, etc.) except on Election Day where said public facility is a polling place and placed in accordance with the rules of the Gaston County Board of Elections.





2. If placed on private property, outside the street right-of-way;
  - a. Sign area shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet.
  - b. Sign height shall not exceed ten (10) feet or two and one-half (2.5) times the vertical dimension of the sign face, whichever is less.
  - c. Such signs shall be removed within ten (10) days following election day; provided however, signs of candidates in a runoff election may remain up until ten (10) days after said runoff election.
  - d. No such sign shall obstruct the safe vision of motorists.
  - e. Irrespective of location, no campaign or election sign shall be lighted or luminous, nor shall it have any flashing lights or moving or windblown parts.
  
- K. Temporary real estate signs advertising a specific property for sale, lease, rent or development, or “open houses” shall be located as follows:
  1. For Lease, For Rent, For Sale Signs
    - a. One (1) sign per street frontage advertising real estate "For Sale," "For Rent," "For Lease," or "For Development." The maximum area of such sign shall be as follows:
      - i. Six (6) square feet in a residential district. A maximum area of sixteen (16) square feet shall be allowed in all residential districts for any lot with an area of three (3) acres or more and having over three-hundred (300) feet of linear frontage along a thoroughfare, provided said sign is located along said thoroughfare;
      - ii. Sixteen (16) square feet in any Office, or UMU District;
      - iii. Thirty-two (32) square feet in area in all other districts.
      - iv. Such area allowances shall be followed provided that the sign is located on the property being advertised and so long as said sign is located behind the street right-of-way line.
      - v. If the property so advertised lies on a corner lot or



through lot, then a second sign may be permitted along the second street so long as the two (2) signs are at least two-hundred (200) linear feet apart as measured by the shortest straight line.

- b. Reserved
- c. Two (2) off-premise directional signs per residential dwelling for sale; provided, each is no larger than two (2) square feet in size and two and a half (2.5) feet in height, and is attached to its own support anchored in the ground.

2. “Open House” Signs

- a. No greater than four (4) such off-premise signs shall be allowed per open house event.
- b. No greater than two (2) such signs shall be located per event shall be located at any one (1) intersection that points motorists in the same direction.
- c. Such signs shall be in place from 6:00 PM on Fridays until 6:00 PM on Sundays only.
- d. Such signs shall not exceed four (4) square feet in area apiece.
- e. No sign allowed under this subsection shall be illuminated.
- f. Any real estate sign located in the public right-of-way shall be deemed a violation of this Ordinance and may be removed by the Administrator and destroyed without notice.
- g. No signs shall be located within fifteen (15) feet of any fire hydrant.

L. Signs providing agricultural products for sale shall be allowed provided that:

- 1. On properties where agricultural products for sale are grown, one (1) such ground sign shall be allowed on roads upon which the property has frontage.
- 2. On other private properties, with the permission of the property owner, provided that:
  - a. No more than two (2) such signs shall be allowed on any



such piece of property.

- b. No person, entity, or family shall be allowed more than eight (8) such signs for any sale location.
  - c. Such signs may be erected and in place only during the season where agricultural products are actually being sold.
  - d. Such signs shall not exceed four (4) square feet in area apiece. Such signs shall not be illuminated.
- M. Other on-premise temporary banners for nonresidential uses located in a nonresidential district provided that:
1. For a continuous advertising period not to exceed fourteen (14) days, on-premises banners, balloons less than two (2) feet in diameter, pennants, and flags for special events and grand openings are permitted so long as said sign objects are not located in a street right-of-way.
  2. Within any calendar year, any use may be permitted temporary signs of this nature for no greater than three (3) fourteen (14) day periods.
  3. No such banners or balloons shall be placed on a roof. Any banner or flag shall have a maximum area of twenty-four (24) square feet.
  4. No more than three (3) on-premise banners and/or flags shall be allowed during each advertising period.
  5. Requirements for other signs (that require sign permits) relating to “grand openings” are found in Section 12.5.6.
- N. Off- premise directional signs for public, quasi-public and not-for-profit uses provided that:
1. Such signs shall be permanent ground signs. Portable signs shall not be allowed.
  2. No greater than two (2) directional signs shall be allowed at any street corner.
  3. No greater than two (2) directional signs per use shall be allowed.
  4. No two (2) directional signs shall be located within five (5) linear feet of each other.
  5. All directional signs shall be constructed of durable wood or non-



reflective metal or plastic materials.

6. Directional signs shall not be illuminated.
  7. More than one (1) sign may be placed on the same sign support. The maximum area of any one sign shall be two (2) square feet. However, the maximum aggregate area of all signs on any sign structure shall be four (4) square feet.
- O. Special event signs for public, quasi-public or not-for-profit organizations. Such signs may be erected by organizations (e.g., schools, churches, etc.) without a permit under the following conditions:
1. The sign is in association with a special event (e.g., barbeque, rummage sale, fair, etc).
  2. Such signs shall be non-illuminated and may not be of a sign variety that is “prohibited” as shown in Section 12.3.
  3. Such signs shall have a maximum area of thirty-two (32) square feet.
  4. Ground or wall signs only shall be allowed.
  5. For scheduled events such as rummage sales, barbeques, etc, on-premise signs only (including portable signs) shall be allowed. Each such sign may remain in place for not greater than seven (7) days prior to the date of the event and removed no greater than twenty-four (24) hours after the termination of the event.
  6. For events such as parades, fairs and festivals, such signs may be erected (both on and off-premises) within fourteen (14) days of the event and shall be removed within seventy-two (72) hours of the termination of the event.
- P. Commercial signs placed in an athletic field and other enclosed outdoor space where such signs are intended to be visible by persons attending such events at such facilities.
- Q. Holiday decorations, with no commercial messages. Such decorations may be placed in a street right-of-way and may be displayed between November 15 and January 15.
- R. Noncommercial copy signs provided that such signs are ground signs and are no greater than sixteen (16) square feet in area apiece and provided that such signs do not fit under any of the categories of “prohibited signs”



as set forth in Section 12.3.

- S. Yard Sale Signs (except for special event signs for public, quasi-public not-for profit uses as set forth in Subsection O herein).
  - 1. Such signs may not be illuminated and may be placed within twenty-four (24) hours prior to the yard sale, and removed within twenty-four (24) hours after the yard sales event.
  - 2. Each such sign may have a maximum area of six (6) square feet. Such signs may be placed on or off-premises, the latter with the permission of the property owner.
  - 3. A maximum of three (3) off-premise signs and one (1) on-premise sign is allowed per yard sale.
- T. Internal window signs, irrespective of whether the sign face can be seen by pedestrians or motorists from an adjoining street.
- U. Other internal building signs, such that if a sign is inside a building and cannot be seen by a person of ordinary eyesight who is outside the building.
- V. Breezeway or entryway signs, such that if a sign is located inside a breezeway or entranceway, under the roof and within the foundation line of the building but outside the actual entrance door and such sign cannot be seen by a person of ordinary eyesight who is not under the roof of the building or is outside the building.
- W. Construction / Improvement signs (including financing signs and future development signs) are allowed under the following conditions:
  - 1. Signs in conjunction with any residential use shall not exceed four (4) square feet each.
  - 2. Signs in conjunction with all other uses shall have a maximum area of thirty-two (32) square feet each.
  - 3. One (1) sign per premises shall be allowed.
  - 4. Such signs shall not be illuminated.
  - 5. Such signs shall appear only at the construction site.
  - 6. Such sign shall be allowed only after the building permit for such construction has been issued and is in effect. Such sign shall be



removed within seven (7) days after a certificate of occupancy for any portion of the project has been issued.

- X. Subdivision / Multi-family Development / Planned Residential Development Identification Signs shall be allowed under the following conditions:
1. Such signs may be placed at each principal entrance to the development.
  2. Such signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area apiece.
  3. Such signs shall not exceed four (4) feet in height, unless integrated into a wall or column in which the sign is encased.
  4. Such signs shall contain no commercial messages.
  5. Such signs may be placed in a street median (i.e., in a street right-of-way), if specific permission for such is first given by the NCDOT and meets the requirements of Section 12.7.

Y. MAILBOX SIGNS

Signage on mailboxes shall be limited to that allowable under U.S. Postal Service Provisions, and shall also be limited to individual name(s) and the address of the property served by the mailbox. Commercial messages and directional information shall be prohibited.

Z. BULLETIN BOARDS

External bulletin boards for any government, nonprofit or not-for-profit organization, provided that the bulletin board does not exceed sixteen (16) square feet in area and is located on-site to be readily accessible to the public.

AA. SIDEWALK CAFÉ / UMBRELLA

Sidewalk cafes, restaurants and other outdoor eating and social venues shall be allowed to have tables, chairs, umbrellas and similar objects normally associated with commercial signage.

**SECTION 12.3 PROHIBITED SIGNS**

All signs not expressly addressed under this Chapter (or elsewhere in this Ordinance) are prohibited. Any permitted or non-permitted sign shall not violate



this Section. Such signs include, but are not limited to:

- A. Any sign that obstructs the view of 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 shall be prohibited.
- B. Signs, other than traffic regulatory signs, which contain lights, rotating disks, words and other devices not erected by a public authority that may be erroneously construed as government signs or emergency-warning signs shall be prohibited. An example of this is a sign that contains a picture of a traffic sign plus the word "Stop," "Yield", etc. Any sign located outdoors that interferes with free passage from or physically obstructs any fire escape, downspout, window, door, stairway, ladder, or opening intended as a means of ingress or egress or providing light or air shall be prohibited. **(NOTE:** Signs painted onto windows shall not be prohibited, nor shall neon and similar signs attached to windows.)
- C. Any sign placed on any curb, sidewalk, post, pole, hydrant, bridge, tree, or other surface located on, over, or across any public street or right-of-way, (with the exception of certain projecting / suspended signs and sandwich board signs per Sections 12.5.7 and 12.5.8 of this Ordinance and/or other signs specifically listed as being allowed for placement within a street right-of-way) unless otherwise authorized by the NCDOT shall be prohibited. Signs placed in a required sight distance triangle without having first received approval for such placement from the City or NCDOT shall also be prohibited. **(NOTE:** The Administrator shall have the authority to remove and may discard without notice any such prohibited sign illegally placed within a street right-of-way or sight triangle and, at local discretion, may immediately destroy such sign.)
- D. Any sign located in such a way as to intentionally deny an adjoining property owner visual access to an existing sign shall be prohibited.
- E. Flashing signs, signs with flashing or reflective disks, signs with flashing lights or lights of changing degree of intensity or color or signs with scrolled messages (except light emitting diode (LED) signs with electronically scrolled messages, government traffic signs and signs which give time and temperature information) shall be prohibited.

LED signs with electronically scrolled signs shall be allowed under the following conditions:

- 1. Each scrolled message shall remain static for a minimum period of eight (8) seconds;



2. There shall be a transition time period of no greater than two (2.0) seconds between sign messages;
  3. The scrolled message area shall constitute no greater than fifty (50) percent of the sign area face.
- F. Portable signs, excluding temporary signs otherwise permitted as set forth in Section 12.2. A sign originally constructed as a portable sign may not be converted into a permanent sign by chaining or bolting it to the ground, or by other means or alterations.
- G. Vehicular signs.
- H. Rotating signs.
- I. Electric signs which are not installed and/or wired in accordance with the National Electric Code.
- J. Signs not installed in accordance with the North Carolina Building Code.
- K. Roof signs.
- L. Signs that contain language and/or pictures deemed obscene per NCGS 14-190.1.
- M. Signs that advertise an activity or business no longer conducted on the property upon which the sign is located.
- N. Off-premise advertising signs.
- O. Inflatable objects, including balloons with a diameter of two (2) feet or greater.
- P. Any other sign not expressly permitted by this Chapter shall be prohibited.

#### **SECTION 12.4 PERMITTED SIGNS: LOCATION, SIZE, NUMBER**

Signs requiring the issuance of a sign permit by the Administrator shall be permitted in accordance with Table 12.4-1 to 12.4-6 and shall also be subject to any conditions placed on a particular development through the issuance of a CUP, PCUP or CD Zoning District. Any allowed sign shall also be subject to the design and construction standards for such type of sign as set forth in Section





12.5.



**TABLE 12.4-1  
TABLE OF SIGNS REQUIRING A SIGN PERMIT**

<b>SIGN TYPE</b>	<b>Residential Districts</b>	<b>TMU District</b>	<b>Office Districts</b>	<b>CBD District</b>	<b>UMU District</b>	<b>Commercial Districts (except CBD)</b>	<b>Industrial Districts</b>	<b>Conditions</b>
<b>FREESTANDING SIGNS</b>								
- Directory	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12.5.2
- Menu Board		X	X	X	X	X	X	12.5.3
- Ground / Pole	X (ground only)	X (ground only)	X (ground only)	X (ground only)	X (ground only)	X (ground/pole)	X (ground/pole, except ground only in I-U))	12.5.4
<b>BUILDING SIGNS</b>								
- Canopy/Awning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12.5.1
- Menu Board		X	X	X	X	X	X	12.5.3
- Projecting / Suspended		X	X	X	X	X	X	12.5.7
- Temporary Use / Grand Opening	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12.5.6
- Wall	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12.5.5
<b>OTHER SIGNS</b>								
- Permanent On premise Banners,						X		12.5.9
- Sandwich Board Sign		X	X	X	X	X	X	12.5.8

**NOTE:** An “X” indicates that the sign will be permitted with an approved sign permit, as outlined in Section 5.7.



**TABLE 12.4-2  
DIMENSIONAL AND LOCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT  
USES IN THE R-1, R-2, R-3, RLD, RS-20, RS-12, RS-8 AND R-MF ZONING DISTRICTS**

<b>SIGN TYPE</b>	<b>SUPPLEMENTAL REGULATIONS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SIGNS ALLOWED**</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN AREA (sq. ft.)**</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN HEIGHT (ft.) **</b>	<b>SIGN LOCATION***</b>
<b>Ground Signs*</b> Multi-family dwelling; Maternity Home; Nursing home; Continuing care facility; Assisted living center. (NOTE: A WALL SIGN MAY SUBSTITUTE FOR PART OR ALL OF THE ALLOWED SIGNAGE)	12.5.4	One (1) per street front*	Twenty-four (24) sq. ft.	Four (4) feet	Outside of street right-of-way and required sight triangle*
<b>Ground or Wall Signs*</b> Single-family dwellings; Two-family dwellings; Individual manufactured homes; Private Residential Quarters; Rooming Houses; Day Care Center, Class A; Family Care Home; Group Home; Mixed-Use Dwelling; Bed and Breakfast Inn	Refer to Section 12.2 (H)	One (1) per street front*	Six (6) sq. ft.	Four (4) feet	Outside of street right-of-way and required sight triangle*
<b>Wall Signs*</b> Customary home occupation; Rural Home Occupation	Refer to Sections 8.1.14 or 8.1.15	One (1)	Four (4) sq. ft.		On wall of home
<b>Ground Signs* / **</b> All Other Allowed Uses  (NOTE: A WALL SIGN MAY SUBSTITUTE FOR PART OR ALL OF THE ALLOWED SIGNAGE)	12.5.4	One (1) per street front*	For uses with 0-9,999 square feet total gfa- sixteen (16) sq. ft. per sign  For uses with 10,000+ sq. ft. total gfa- thirty-two (32) sq. ft. per sign	4 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and required sight triangle*

\* Refer to supplemental regulations for additional specifications

\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.10 regarding “Master Sign Plans”, approvals of which may allow for deviations from the standards shown herein

\*\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.4 (F) for sign setback requirements



**TABLE 12.4-3  
DIMENSIONAL AND LOCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT  
IN THE TMU AND UMU ZONING DISTRICTS**

<b>SIGN TYPE</b>	<b>SUPPL. REG.</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SIGNS ALLOWED**</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN AREA (sq. ft.)**</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN HEIGHT**</b>	<b>SIGN LOCATION ***</b>
<b><u>Ground Signs*</u></b> Individual Business	12.5.4	One (1) per street front*	Local Street (2-3 lanes): twenty-four (24) sq. ft. Other Street (4+ lanes): forty-eight (48) sq. ft.	Six (6) feet	12.5.4G
<b><u>Ground Signs*</u></b> Multi-Tenant Development Identification	12.5.4	One (1) per street front*	A. For developments with a gfa of 0-19,999 sq. ft: Local Street (2-3 lanes): twenty-four (24) sq. ft. Other Street (4+ lanes): forty-eight (48) sq. ft.  B. For developments with a gfa of 20,000+: Forty-eight (48) sq. ft.	Six (6) feet	12.5.4G
<b><u>Wall Signs*</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.5	Three (3) per building wall.	Ten (10) percent of individual wall area up to an aggregate of fifty (50) sq. ft per building wall*	No higher than the wall upon which the sign is mounted	N/A
<b><u>Canopy / Awning Signs*</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.1	One (1) per exterior customer entrance	Fifty (50) percent of canopy/awning area, up to a maximum of twenty-four (24) sq. ft	N/A	N/A
<b><u>Projecting / Suspended Signs *</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.7	One (1) per exterior customer entrance	One (1) sq. ft per linear foot of public street frontage, up to a maximum of sixteen (16) sq. ft	N/A	N/A

\* Refer to supplemental regulations for additional specifications

\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.10 regarding “Master Sign Plans”, approvals of which may allow for deviations from the standards shown herein

\*\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.4 (F) for sign setback requirements



**TABLE 12.4-4  
DIMENSIONAL AND LOCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT  
IN THE OLC, O-1, and O-M ZONING DISTRICTS**

<b>SIGN TYPE</b>	<b>SUPPL. REG.</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SIGNS ALLOWED**</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN AREA (sq. ft.)**</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN HEIGHT **</b>	<b>SIGN LOCATION***</b>
<b>Ground *</b> Individual Business	12.5.4	One (1) per street front*	Two hundred (200) sq. ft-hospital; otherwise: If structure 0-25,000 sq. ft. gfa= fifty (50) sq. ft If structure over 25,000 sq ft gfa= sixty-four (64) sq. ft	Ten (10) feet, except Twenty-four (24) feet for a hospital	12.5.4 G
<b>Ground *</b> Multi-Tenant Development Identification	12.5.4	One (1) per street front*	Sixty-four (64) sq. ft, plus six (6) sq ft for each tenant within the development up to one hundred (100) sq ft	Ten (10) feet	12.5.4 G
<b>Wall Signs*</b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.5	Three (3) per building wall.	Ten (10) percent of individual wall area up to an aggregate of sixty-four (64) sq ft per building wall*	No higher than the wall upon which the sign is mounted	N/A
<b>Canopy/ Awning Signs*</b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.1	One (1) per exterior customer entrance	Fifty (50) percent of canopy/awning area, up to a maximum of fifty (50) sq ft	N/A	N/A
<b>Projecting/ Suspended Signs*</b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.7	One (1) per exterior customer entrance	One (1) sq ft per linear foot of public street frontage, up to a maximum of sixteen (16) sq ft	N/A	N/A

\* Refer to supplemental regulations for additional specifications

\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.10 regarding “Master Sign Plans”, approvals of which may allow for deviations from the standards shown herein

\*\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.4 (F) for sign setback requirements



**TABLE 12.4-5  
DIMENSIONAL AND LOCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT  
IN CBD ZONING DISTRICT**

<b>SIGN TYPE</b>	<b>SUPPL. REG.</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SIGNS ALLOWED**</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN AREA (sq. ft.)**</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN HEIGHT **</b>	<b>SIGN LOCATION***</b>
<b><u>Ground/Pole Signs*</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-Tenant Development Identification	12.5.4	One(1) per street front	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b><u>Wall Signs*</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.5	Two (2) signs per premises for uses located on ground floor; one (1) sign per premises on uses located on upper floors	Ground floor uses- two (2) sq ft per linear foot of public street frontage up to an aggregate of fifty (50) sq ft per building wall. Signs may appear on no greater than two (2) wall faces.  Upper story uses- Nine (9) sq ft.	No higher than the wall upon which the sign is mounted	N/A
<b><u>Canopy/ Awning Signs*</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.1	One (1) per exterior customer entrance	Fifty (50) percent of canopy/awning area up to a maximum of twenty-four (24) sq ft	N/A	N/A
<b><u>Projecting/ Suspended Signs*</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.7	One (1) per exterior customer entrance One (1) per exterior customer entrance	One (1) sq ft per linear foot of public street frontage up to a maximum of sixteen (16) sq ft	N/A	N/A

\* Refer to supplemental regulations for additional specifications

\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.10 regarding “Master Sign Plans”, approvals of which may allow for deviations from the standards shown herein

\*\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.4 (F) for sign setback requirements



**TABLE 12.4-6  
DIMENSIONAL AND LOCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT  
NON-RESIDENTIAL USES IN THE GPX, NBS, C-1, C-2, C-3, I-1, I-2, I-3 and I-U ZONING DISTRICTS**

<b>SIGN TYPE</b>	<b>SUPL. REG.</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SIGNS ALLOWED***</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN AREA (sq. ft.)***</b>	<b>MAXIMUM SIGN HEIGHT ***</b>	<b>SIGN LOCATION</b>
<b><u>Ground / Pole *</u></b> Individual Business (Pole signs only allowed where fronting roads with 6+ lanes)	12.5.4	One (1) per street front*	A. For all uses except certain industrial uses: Local Street (2-3 lanes): thirty-two (32) sq. ft. Other Street (4-5 lanes): forty-eight (48) sq. ft. Other Street (6+ lanes): sixty-four (64) sq. ft.	A. 6' height max  B. On roads with 6+ lanes the maximum height allowed is 15'	Outside of street right-of-way and required sight triangle*
<b><u>Ground / Pole*</u></b> Multi-Tenant Development Identification (Pole signs only allowed where fronting roads with 6+ lanes)	12.5.4	One (1) per street front*	A. For developments with a GFA of 0 - 49,999 sq. ft: Local Street (2-3 lanes): thirty-two (32) sq. ft. Other Street (4-5 lanes): sixty-four (48) sq. ft. Other Street (6+ lanes): sixty-four (64) sq. ft.  B. For developments with a GFA of 50,000-199,999 sq. ft: one hundred (100) sq ft  C. For developments with a GFA of 200,000+ sq. ft: two hundred (200) sq ft	A. 6' height max  B. On roads with 6+ lanes the maximum height allowed is 15'	Outside of street right-of-way and required sight triangle*
<b><u>Wall Signs*</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.5	No limit	Ten (10) percent of individual wall area up to an aggregate of one hundred (100) sq. ft. per building wall*	No higher than the wall upon which the sign is mounted	N/A
<b><u>Canopy/ Awning Signs*</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.1	One (1) per exterior customer entrance	Fifty (50) percent of canopy/awning area	N/A	N/A
<b><u>Projecting/ Suspended Signs*/**</u></b> Individual Business and Multi-tenant Developments	12.5.7	One (1) per exterior customer entrance	One (1) square foot per one (1) linear foot of public street frontage	N/A	N/A

\* Refer to supplemental regulations for additional specifications

\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.9 for special regulations for permanent on-premise banners for automobile, truck, boat, manufactured home and recreational vehicle sales and rental facilities

\*\*\* Refer to Section 12.5.10 regarding "Master Sign Plans", approvals of which may allow for deviations from the standards shown herein



## **SECTION 12.5 DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS**

Any sign shown herein (except canopy/awning signs per Section 12.5.1, projecting / suspended signs per Section 12.5.7, and sandwich board signs per Section 12.5.8) shall be placed outside of a street right-of-way or required sight distance triangle, unless specific authorization for such placement is granted herein and/or by the NCDOT.

### **12.5.1 CANOPY / AWNING SIGNS**

Awning signs shall be allowed provided that:

- A. Awning signs may be used in lieu of or in addition to any other wall sign.
- B. The total of all awning signage area, together with all other canopy or wall signage, shall not exceed the maximum allowable wall signage area for such use.
- C. Awning signs may be illuminated only with direct surface lighting and not with any form of backlighting.
- D. All canopy / awning signs attached to the underside of a canopy / awning shall maintain a clearance of at least eight (8) feet from the ground beneath it.
- E. A canopy or awning sign may not extend into a street right-of-way, except with prior approval from the NCDOT.

### **12.5.2 DIRECTORY SIGNS**

Directory signs shall be allowed where a particular site includes more than one (1) principal use and shall not be counted towards meeting the maximum allowable sign area for the site or development, provided that:

- A. Directory signs shall be allowed in multi-tenant developments provided that such signs are: (i) located at least fifty (50) feet from any external public street right-of-way, and (ii) placed at internal street intersections within the development.
- B. Such signs shall each have a maximum area of twenty-four (24) square feet and be no greater than six (6) feet in height.
- C. Such signs may contain business names or logos along with arrows and similar directional information.
- D. Such signs shall not contain any other commercial messages.





- E. In lieu of a ground-mounted directory sign, such sign may be placed on a building wall. If so placed, such sign shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the allowable wall signage for such use.

### **12.5.3 MENU BOARDS**

Menu boards shall be allowed only with a restaurant having a drive-through window provided that:

- A. Such signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area and five (5) feet in height.
- B. Reserved
- C. The color of such sign shall have ties to the main building or other signage for the project.

### **12.5.4 GROUND / POLE SIGNS**

(NOTE: Certain uses may exceed the sign area and height requirements shown herein using the “Master Sign Plan Flexibility Option Shown in Section 12.5.10).

Ground / pole signs shall be allowed provided that:

- A. A pole sign may only be installed if allowed in the underlying zoning district (refer to Table 12.4-1). There shall be no commercial copy or other advertising sign copy on the poles of the sign; if such copy is provided, it will be counted towards part of the allowable sign area. Refer to Section 12.1.3(A)(1) for additional information on sign area computation. Otherwise, freestanding signs shall be limited to ground signs.
- B. For a single-occupant property, there shall be only one (1) ground mounted or pole sign per street frontage. Signage on a second street shall be allowed so long as there is at least one hundred fifty (150) feet of lot frontage on such street. In no case, however, shall there be any two (2) such signs on the same lot located within two-hundred (200) linear feet of each other.
- C. For a multi-tenant development, there shall be only one (1) ground mounted or pole sign plus one (1) additional ground mounted sign for each street that the development fronts, provided that the frontage on that street is at least one-hundred fifty (150) feet in length and that an actual entrance to the development is permitted on such street. In no case, however, shall any two (2) signs advertising the same development be located within two-hundred (200) linear feet of each other.



- D. In no instance shall uses located in outparcels in shopping centers or similar multi-tenant developments be allowed to have a ground mounted or pole sign.
- E. On any parcel where two (2) or more ground mounted or pole signs may be placed, the property owner may choose to place only one (1) sign on the parcel. If only one (1) such sign is placed, the sign area for that sign (with the largest permitted area) may exceed that which is normally allowed by a factor of up to twenty-five percent (25%).

For example, if a use on a corner lot were allowed to have two (2) signs, one (1) with an allowable ground mounted sign area of sixty-four (64) square feet and the other, a pole sign of thirty-two (32) square feet, the property owner may elect to place one (1) sign on the property. That one (1) sign, if it were a pole sign, could be up to forty (40) square feet in area; if the one (1) sign were a ground mounted sign, it could be up to eighty (80) square feet in area.

- F. Any ground / pole sign erected shall be located no closer than ten (10) linear feet from any adjacent side lot line, or twenty (20) feet if that side lot line abuts a residentially developed or vacant lot in a Residential zoning district. A ground / pole sign shall be located no closer than thirty (30) feet from a pre-existing ground / pole sign on an adjacent lot.
- G. Any ground / pole sign shall be placed no closer than ten (10) feet from the edge of the adjoining street right-of-way. Notwithstanding the above, the Administrator shall have the authority to modify or waive this setback requirement when, in his opinion, such stringent requirement would serve no meaningful purpose or would not impede visibility for motorists or pedestrians on such street. Furthermore, the Administrator shall also have the authority to require a setback of up to twenty (20) feet from the adjoining street right-of-way line when such sign setback is deemed necessary to yield a reasonable amount of safety for both pedestrians and motorists on the adjoining street.
- H. Irrespective of the regulations shown above, the height of a free-standing pole sign for certain uses in the C-2 and C-3 districts shall be a minimum of fifty (50) feet and a maximum of eighty (80) feet and the area of such pole sign may be increased to two-hundred (200) feet under the following conditions:
  - 1. The lot is located within a one-thousand (1,000) foot linear radius of the centerline of a grade-separated intersection of a four-lane, divided, limited access highway.



2. The use being advertised is a restaurant (all varieties), automobile service station, motel, hotel, convenience store, hospital, urgent medical care facility or medical office.
3. Said sign may exceed the normal height and area requirements that otherwise would be allowed for this use if the sign is oriented so as to be viewed by motorists traveling on the four lane, divided, limited access highway.
4. If such a larger and/or higher pole sign is erected, a maximum of one (1) other on-premise freestanding sign may be erected on-site for the use in question. Said sign may only be a ground sign (as opposed to a pole sign) and shall have a maximum area of thirty-two (32) square feet.

#### **12.5.5 WALL SIGNS**

The following regulations shall apply to on-premise wall signs:

- A. Permitted wall signage for a use may be placed on walls that may or may not front a public street.
- B. Wall signs may not extend above the wall upon which the sign is mounted.
- C. Reserved



- D. A retail store in the C-1, C-2 or C-3 zoning district and exceeding forty-thousand (40,000) square feet gross floor area may add a business name identification sign to its front building wall for any in-store adjunct business located within said retail store. Said adjunct business identification signage shall be allowed in addition to wall signage permitted pursuant to this section but no such adjunct business identification sign shall exceed twenty-five (25) square feet in area and no retail store shall display more than a total of seventy-five (75) square feet of adjunct business signage.

As used in this section, the term "in-store adjunct business" shall mean a small store or service located inside a larger retail store, but not associated by name or patron transaction with the main retail store.

Examples of such businesses include a financial institution, fast food restaurant chain, or "postal store and contract station" located in a separate area within a department store and operating under a different name. Leased specialty departments (e.g., shoes, jewelry) within a retail store, cosmetic counters with or without their own personnel, pharmacies, lunch counter, or eye care departments, either of which operate under the main store's name and/or conduct patron transactions through the main store transaction system are examples of store departments which shall not be deemed an in-store adjunct business.

Any such retail store housing inside said store an automatic teller machine (ATM) operated by a financial institution, but not associated with an adjunct business within the store, may display on the front wall an identification sign for said ATM. The ATM sign shall not exceed eight (8) square feet and shall be counted within the maximum seventy-five (75) square feet for adjunct business signs.

- E. Wall signs on designated historic buildings shall be placed within the sign frieze, or distinct place within which a wall sign was intended to be placed. No wall sign shall extend beyond such space. If there is no such sign frieze, the wall sign shall be placed below the typical second floor window area.
- F. If no on-premise ground mounted or pole signs are used where otherwise a ground mounted or pole sign would be allowed per Table 12.4-1 and Section 12.5.4, the aggregate allowable wall sign area may be increased by a factor of twenty-five (25) percent.
- G. Signs attached to a mansard portion of a roof shall be considered to be a wall sign.



### **12.5.6 TEMPORARY USE / GRAND OPENING SIGNS**

Signs for temporary uses and “grand openings”, permitted under Section 5.4, shall be allowed provided that:

- A. Such signs shall be located only on private property.
- B. Sign permits shall be limited to the duration of the temporary use as stated on the temporary use permit.
- C. Reserved
- D. Except as may be permitted by the temporary use permit, temporary use signs shall be attached to and parallel with a wall of the building on which wall signs are permitted and shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in surface area.
- E. Where a temporary use permit specifically authorizes the use of a temporary ground sign, such sign shall not exceed four (4) feet in height and sixteen (16) square feet in area.
- F. There shall be only one (1) temporary ground sign, plus one (1) additional ground sign for street frontage on a second public street, provided that the frontage on that street is at least one-hundred fifty (150) feet in length and that an actual entrance to the site is permitted on such street. A minimum distance of two-hundred (200) linear feet shall separate such two (2) signs.
- G. Sign permits for new business “grand openings” shall be issued only upon the initial opening of a business for a period that shall end not later than sixty (60) days after issuance of the first business license for that business in that location or from the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for that location.

### **12.5.7 PROJECTING / SUSPENDED SIGNS**

- A. A projecting or suspended sign shall not project more than five (5) feet from the wall.
- B. The bottom of the projecting or suspended sign shall be at least eight (8) feet above the ground immediately below it.
- C. In no case may a projecting or suspended sign extend more than three (3) feet into the street right-of-way, unless otherwise approved by the NCDOT.
- D. The height of the top edge of the signboard or bracket shall not exceed the height of the wall from which the sign projects.



### **12.5.8 SANDWICH BOARD SIGNS**

Sandwich board signs shall be allowed provide the following requirements are met:

- A. The total area of the signboard shall not exceed ten (10) square feet per side. Such signs shall not be used in calculating maximum allowed square footage for the use.
- B. The sign shall have a maximum height of five (5) feet and a maximum width of two (2) feet.
- C. The sign must be constructed of materials that present a finished appearance. Rough-cut plywood and similar unfinished surfaces shall not be used for such signs.
- D. Signs may be placed in a sidewalk or within a street right-of-way (but outside a vehicular travel way) but such signs shall not interfere with pedestrian or vehicular movement and circulation.
- E. Signs shall be removed by the end of the business day.

### **12.5.9 ON-PREMISE BANNERS FOR AUTOMOBILE, BOAT, MANUFACTURED HOME ETC. SALES USES (PERMANENT)**

Special sign requirements regarding the provision of permanent on-site banners shall prevail for automobile, truck, boat, motorcycle, manufactured home and recreational vehicle sales and rental facilities. Such banners may be allowed under the following conditions:

- A. The banners may consist of any color, design, copy or logo;
- B. The banners shall be placed in a manner that does not obstruct or impair motorists' vision, particularly at ingress and egress points;
- C. The banners shall be affixed, connected to three (3) or more corners, and shall be no more than sixteen (16) square feet in area;
- D. The banners may consist of cloth, fiberglass, vinyl, or any non-rigid material. Banners shall not consist of any reflective and / or shiny-related material;



- E. The banners may have up to two (2) flags for the first one-hundred (100) feet of street frontage, plus a maximum of one (1) flag for each additional fifty (50) feet of frontage along a thoroughfare, plus up to one (1) flag for every fifteen-thousand (15,000) square feet of outdoor display area;
- F. The banners shall not have an on-site flag within fifty (50) feet of another flag; and,
- G. All banners and flags shall be located outside all right-of-ways.

**12.5.10 MASTER SIGN PLAN FLEXIBILITY OPTION**

**A. PURPOSE**

For the purpose of providing flexibility and incentives for coordinated signage design for certain planned multi-tenant developments, recreation uses, and for other uses that, by their nature, draw persons from beyond the greater Lowell area, provisions are hereby made to allow the Administrator to approve certain flexibility options in the amount and size of signs such uses may ordinarily have.

**B. APPLICABILITY**

The planned development flexibility option is available to the following uses:

1. Planned unit developments and traditional neighborhood developments;
2. Office parks, shopping centers, and industrial parks and similar multi-tenant developments with two-hundred thousand (200,000) sq. ft. or greater of gross leasable area;
3. Continuing care facilities;
4. Stadiums; amusement parks; amphitheaters; auditoriums, and similar large-scale civic or recreational facilities.
5. Indoor movie theaters.

**C. APPROVAL PROCEDURE**

1. If the use being proposed requires the issuance of a conditional use permit or is in association with a conditional district rezoning, the



Administrator may recommend to the Board of Adjustment, Planning Board, or City Council that the sign flexibility option be applied as proposed by the applicant or as otherwise recommended by the Administrator.

2. The Administrator may otherwise administratively approve the signage flexibility option. In making such approval, the Administrator shall have the authority to attach fair and reasonable conditions to the approval, upon making a determination that such conditions: (i) enhance the public safety and welfare; and (ii) are otherwise in keeping with the sign package being proposed.

#### D. SUBMITTAL AND REVIEW PROCESS

1. A master sign program shall be submitted to the Administrator. This shall include, as a minimum, the following information:
  - a. All information required for issuance of a sign permit per Section 5.7 of this Ordinance;
  - b. Detailed designs of all proposed exterior signs including their size, height, copy, materials, and color;
  - c. Proposed locations and number of signs;
  - d. Sign illumination plans; and
  - e. Landscaping plans to be used in conjunction with the signs.
2. The Administrator shall have a maximum of twenty-one (21) days to review the sign program submitted and by the end of such period shall either: (i) approve the sign package as submitted; (ii) approve the sign package with modifications; (iii) disapprove the sign package, or (iv) make a recommendation to the CUP, PCUP or CD zoning review and approval bodies when the use being proposed requires the issuance of a CUP, PCUP or is subject to CD rezoning.

#### E. SIGN SPECIFICATIONS

1. All signs must be coordinated in terms of design features.
2. All on-premise freestanding signs in association with the use shall be ground mounted sign, except pole signs shall be allowed if permitted in the underlying zoning district (refer to Table 12.4-1). Up to three (3) such signs per street front shall be allowed. The maximum height of the sign shall be fifteen (15) feet.





3. The maximum area of any sign, or the aggregate amount of sign area, may be increased by up to twenty-five (25) percent above that which normally is allowed in the underlying zoning district.
4. The amount of changeable copy on any sign may not exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the sign area. All changeable copy shall be static (i.e., LED signs shall not be allowed. Segment technology signs, however, shall be allowed.)
5. All freestanding signs shall be located at least ten (10) feet from the edge of any abutting street right-of-way line or property line.

#### **SECTION 12.6 SIGN LIGHTING STANDARDS**

- A. No sign for which a sign permit is required (other than ground mounted signs) located within one-hundred (100) linear feet of a pre-existing residential structure or a Residential zoning district may be illuminated between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 6:00 AM. A residence shall be deemed to be pre-existing for purposes of this subsection if a building permit had been issued for construction prior to the issuance of a sign permit for that sign. Any residential structure constructed prior to the effective date of this subsection shall also be considered to be “pre-existing”.
- B. All externally illuminated signs shall have their lighting directed in such a manner as to illuminate only the face of the sign.
- C. LED signs with electronically scrolled messages shall be allowed as called for in Section 12.3(E).

#### **SECTION 12.7 SIGNS IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY**

- A. No signs shall be allowed in the public right-of-way, except for the following:
  1. Government signs;
  2. Bus stop signs erected by a public transit company;
  3. Informational signs of a public utility regarding its poles, lines, pipes or other facilities;
  4. Signs appurtenant to a use of public property permitted under a



franchise or lease with the City;

5. Canopy / Awning signs per Section 12.5.1;
  6. Projecting / suspended signs per Section 12.5.7;
  7. Ground signs with the name of the residential or non-residential subdivision or multi-family development shall comply with Section 12.2(X) and may be located on one (1) or both sides of the principal roadway entrance into the development or the roadway median under the following guidelines:
    - a. The sign shall be a ground sign and not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area.
    - b. The sign shall have a maximum height of four (4) feet.
    - c. The sign shall not contain a commercial message.
    - d. If located within the public street right-of-way, specific approval for such location must be granted by the City and NCDOT.
  8. Political signs per Section 12.2(J).
- B. Unless otherwise specifically allowed per this Chapter, all other signs placed in the street right-of-way shall be prohibited and shall be subject to removal per Section 12.3(C).

## **SECTION 12.8 NONCONFORMING SIGNS**

Refer to Section 3.5.10 for regulations dealing with nonconforming signs.

## **SECTION 12.9 SIGN MAINTENANCE**

All signs and all components thereof, including supports, braces, anchors, etc. shall be kept in a good state of repair, in compliance with all building and electrical codes and in conformance with the requirements of this Ordinance.