Article 14. Sign Regulations

30-14-1 Purpose

The sign regulations of this article are intended to achieve balance among the following differing, and at times, competing goals:

- **30-14-1.1** to encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication for businesses, organizations and individuals;
- **30-14-1.2** to provide a means of way-finding, thus reducing traffic confusion and congestion;
- **30-14-1.3** to provide for adequate business identification, advertising, and communication;
- **30-14-1.4** to prohibit signs of such excessive size and number that they obscure one another to the detriment of the economic and social well-being of the city;
- **30-14-1.5** to protect the safety and welfare of the public by minimizing hazards to pedestrian and vehicular traffic;
- **30-14-1.6** to preserve property values by preventing unsightly and cluttered development that has a blighting influence upon the community;
- **30-14-1.7** to differentiate among those signs that, because of their location or type, may distract drivers on public streets and those that may provide information to them while they remain in their cars but are out of active traffic and;
- **30-14-1.8** to minimize the possible adverse effect of signs on nearby public and private property.

30-14-2 Substitution of Messages

The sign regulations of this article are not intended to favor commercial speech over constitutionally-protected political or noncommercial speech. A sign containing a noncommercial message may be substituted for any sign containing a commercial message that is allowed by the regulations of this article.

30-14-3 Applicability

No sign may be placed, erected, altered, rebuilt, enlarged, extended or relocated except in conformity with this article. The repainting or changing of the sign face and/or message and preventative maintenance of signs are not considered alterations.

30-14-4 Prohibited Signs and Prohibited Sign Characteristics

Unless otherwise expressly permitted under this ordinance, the following signs and sign characteristics are prohibited in all zoning districts:

- **30-14-4.1** windblown signs (e.g., pennants, streamers, spinners, balloons, gas-filled figures and other similar devices), except that temporary windblown signs are allowed in association with a temporary event or special promotion if a temporary sign permit is obtained in accordance with 30-4-26.5(B);
- **30-14-4.2** moving signs, except that temporary moving signs are allowed in association with a temporary event or special promotion, provided that a temporary sign permit is obtained in accordance with 30-4-26.5(B);
Commentary: The preceding "moving" sign provision is not intended to prohibit electronic message boards (See 30-14-7.2) or signs on vehicles (See 30-14-5.6);

30-14-4.3 portable signs, but not including signs that are not legible from the public right-of-way or sandwich board signs as permitted in 30-14-10.3; also temporary portable signs are allowed in association with a temporary event or special promotion if a temporary sign permit is obtained in accordance with 30-4-26.5(B);

30-14-4.4 signs attached to or painted on an inoperable or unlicensed vehicle (motorized or non-motorized) located in view of the right-of-way;

30-14-4.5 signs attached to or painted on a licensed vehicle that is located in view of the right-of-way when in a location or for a period of time that indicates that the primary intended use of the vehicle is for displaying the sign to passing motorists or pedestrians, except that such signs are allowed on a temporary basis in association with a temporary event or special promotion if a temporary sign permit is obtained in accordance with 30-4-26.5(B);

30-14-4.6 signs that are affixed to trees, rocks, or other natural features;

30-14-4.7 signs of any type that imitate or interfere with traffic control devices;

30-14-4.8 signs (including roof signs) that extend vertically above the highest portion of the roof of the structure to which the sign is attached;

30-14-4.9 strobe lights and similar flashing lights;

30-14-4.10 search lights, beacons and similar moving lights, except that such devices are allowed on a temporary basis in association with a temporary event or special promotion, provided that a temporary sign permit is obtained in accordance with 30-4-26.5(B);

30-14-4.11 signs on roadside appurtenances, including but not limited to, roadside benches, bus stop shelters, planters, utility poles, and refuse containers, with the exception of warning signs or governmental signs;

30-14-4.12 a series of 2 or more signs placed in a line parallel to a public or private street, or in similar fashion, all carrying a single commercial message, part of which is contained on each sign; and

30-14-4.13 signs that cause a sight obstruction at any public/private street, private drive or private driveway.

30-14-5 Signs Exempt from Regulation

The following signs are exempt from regulation under this ordinance except that illuminated signs require an electrical permit:

30-14-5.1 governmental signs;

30-14-5.2 works of art with no commercial message;

30-14-5.3 lights and decorations with no commercial message temporarily displayed on civic, patriotic or religious holidays;

30-14-5.4 hand-carried signs;

30-14-5.5 signs located inside buildings, courts, lobbies, stadiums, or other structures that are not attached to a window or door and that are not intended to be seen from the exterior of the building or structure;

30-14-5.6 signs affixed to vehicles or trailers (e.g., signs on contractor’s vehicles, signs on semi-trailers and mobile billboards) except for those specified in 30-14-4.5;
30-14-5.7 signs affixed to windows of vehicles displaying information on the terms of sale of the subject vehicle;

30-14-5.8 signs not legible from a public or private street; and

30-14-5.9 flags of the United States, North Carolina, local governmental jurisdictions, foreign nations having diplomatic relations with the United States, and similar flags, subject to U.S. Congressional protocol.

### 30-14-6 Signs Allowed Without a Permit

#### 30-14-6.1 Types

The following signs are permitted in all zoning districts and may be installed without obtaining a permit provided they comply with the standards of 30-14-6.2.

A. directional, instructional or warning signs provided they contain no commercial message except a business logo or name;

B. flags, emblems, or insignia of corporate, political, professional, fraternal, civic, religious, or educational organizations;

C. temporary signs, including:
   1. temporary real estate, and construction signs that are removed within 7 days of the end of the event, completion of construction, or sale or lease of property;
   2. temporary yard sale signs that are posted on the subject property for no longer than 3 days per sale;
   3. temporary campaign signs (candidate for elective office or official ballot issue) located on private property with the property owner’s permission; provided the signs are removed within 7 days after the election; and
   4. Signs announcing temporary events or special promotions that do not involve the closing of a public street.

**Commentary:** Other types of temporary signs may be allowed by permit (See 30-14-10)

D. historical or memorial plaques, tablets, or markers;

E. identification signs including:
   1. name and address plates;
   2. directory signs in developments with multiple occupants so long as the signs are not legible from a public street;
   3. building markers (cornerstones or plaques); and
   4. signs identifying home occupations and tourist homes (bed & breakfast) in residential districts provided such signs are mounted flat to the front wall of the building;

F. signs painted or attached to vending machines, gas pumps, ice machines, or similar devices that indicate the contents of the machine, the name or logo of the supplier, the price, or operating instructions;

G. window signs painted on, attached to, or inside a window; and

H. philosophical, personal, religious, educational, or other noncommercial signs.
30-14-6.2 Standards for Signs Allowed Without a Permit

A. All signs must be located outside the public street right-of-way and outside any required sight triangle except for temporary off-site real estate directional signs, which are subject to the standards of Table 14-1, below.

B. An electrical permit is required if a sign will be illuminated.

C. Compliance with the following standards is required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 14–1: Standards for Signs Allowed Without a Permit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signs Allowed in All Districts Without a Sign Permit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Directional

A sign with no commercial message and located offsite that indicates the direction to religious assembly uses, hospitals, colleges, and similar institutional uses. Directional signs adjacent to an existing or planned greenway (as shown on the adopted BiPed Plan) may contain the name, address, logo or other identifying symbol for the adjacent use(s).

**Standards**

1. Directional signs may not exceed 4 square feet in area or 6 feet in height.
2. Only external illumination is allowed.

*(Ord. 13-51 on 5/7/13)*

### Instructional

A sign with no commercial message that provides assistance, with respect to the premises on which it is maintained, for the direction, safety, or convenience of the public such as "entrance", "exit", "one way", "telephone", "parking", "no parking", and similar instructions.

**Standards**

1. Instructional signs may not exceed 6 square feet in area or 8 feet in height.
2. Colleges, universities, hospitals, coliseums, and convention centers may have instructional signs that exceed the allowable area limit if approved by the Board of Adjustment as a special exception.
3. Instructional signs may be internally or externally illuminated.

### Warning

A sign with no commercial message that displays information pertinent to the safety or legal responsibilities of the public such as signs warning of high voltage, "no trespassing", and similar directives.

**Standards**

1. Warning signs may not exceed 6 square feet in area or 8 feet in height.
2. Warning signs may be internally or externally illuminated.

### Window

A sign which is painted on, affixed to, or designed to be visible through a window, excluding displays of merchandise.

**Standards**

1. Window signs are permitted in nonresidential districts only.
2. The aggregate area of all window signs is limited to 25% of the window area.
3. Window signs may be internally or externally illuminated.

### Historical or Memorial Sign

A sign that commemorates or identifies an historical person, structure, place, or event

**Standards**

1. Only 1 historical or memorial sign is permitted per lot.
2. Historical or memorial signs may not exceed 4 square feet in area or 6 feet in height.
3. Only external illumination allowed.
### Table 14–1: Standards for Signs Allowed Without a Permit

#### Flags, Emblems, Insignia

A piece of fabric or other flexible material containing only distinctive colors, patterns, standards, words, or emblems used as a symbol of corporate, political, professional, fraternal, civic, religious or educational organizations.

**Standards**
1. Only one flag, emblem or insignia is allowed per lot frontage.
2. The flag, emblem or insignia may not exceed 60 square feet in area or 40 feet in height.
3. Only external illumination is allowed.

#### Temporary Real Estate, Yard Sale and Construction

**Real Estate Sign**
A sign displayed for the purpose of offering for sale, lease, or rent the property on which such sign is erected, affixed, or otherwise established.

**Construction Sign**
A sign which identifies the architects, engineers, contractors, and other individuals or firms involved with construction on the property, the name of the building or development, the intended purpose of the building or development, and/or the expected completion date.

**Standards**
1. Only one temporary real estate, yard sale or construction sign is allowed per lot frontage.
2. Temporary real estate, yard sale or construction signs in RM and nonresidential zoning districts may not exceed 100 square feet in area or 12 feet in height.
3. Temporary real estate, yard sale or construction signs in all other zoning districts may not exceed 36 square feet in area or 6 feet in height.
4. Such signs may not be illuminated.

#### Temporary Off-Site Real Estate Directional Signs

A temporary sign displayed for the purpose of directing attention to a property or development that is being offered for sale, lease or rent that is not erected, affixed or otherwise established on zoning lot being offered for sale, lease or rent.

**Standards**
1. No more than one off-site directional real estate sign per direction and per property, development or company may be placed at a street intersection where a prospective client must make a turn to travel to the subject property.
2. Signs for the same developer/builder/company must be spaced at least 600 feet from all other signs unless they are placed at a street intersection where a prospective client must make a turn to travel to the subject property.
3. Signs shall not be placed on lands within the public rights-of-way that are entirely surrounded by public streets, such as roadway medians and traffic islands.
4. Signs shall be placed so as not to interfere with or obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic or obstruct sight distances at intersections.
5. Except with the permission of the property owner or occupant, signs shall not be located in front of or abutting a lot containing a single-family detached dwelling.
6. Signs shall only be displayed from 12:00 P.M. (noon) on Friday to 12:00 P.M. (noon) the following Monday.
7. Signs shall be freestanding, may not be anchored to a sidewalk or attached to utility poles or other structures or appurtenances.
8. Additional devices, including balloons, may not be attached to or otherwise made part of any sign.
9. Such signs may not exceed 6 square feet in area.

*(Ord. 11-41 on 3/1/11)*

**Temporary Campaign**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Temporary campaign signs may not exceed 6 square feet in area or 6 feet in height.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Such signs may not be Illuminated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporary Event Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Temporary event signs in RM and nonresidential zoning districts may not exceed 100 square feet in area or 12 feet in height.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Temporary event signs in all other districts may not exceed 36 square feet in area or 6 feet in height.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Such signs may not be Illuminated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Only one identification sign is allowed per building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identification signs may not exceed 4 square feet per tenant or 24 square feet whichever is less.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identification signs may not exceed 6 feet in height.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Only external illumination is allowed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vending Machine Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Vending machine signs may not exceed 18 square feet in area or 6 feet in height.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Vending machine signs may be internally or externally illuminated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophical, etc. Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Only one such sign is allowed per lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Such signs may not exceed 6 feet in area or 6 feet in height.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Such signs may not be Illuminated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Amended by Ord. 11-41 on 3/1/2011)

**30-14-7 Signs that Require a Permit**
30-14-7.1 Permit Required

Signs that require a permit must be erected, affixed, or otherwise established only in accordance with the requirements in this section and a duly-issued and valid sign permit (see 30-4-26.5). The requirements of this section apply to permanent signs. For temporary signs that require a permit see 30-14-10.

30-14-7.2 Signs Allowed with a Permit

The following signs are allowed with a permit, subject to all applicable regulations of this section:

A. Attached sign
B. Canopy sign
C. Development entrance sign
D. Electronic message board
E. Freestanding sign
F. Ground surface sign
G. Information boards
H. Landmark sign (See 30-4-12.2)
I. Marquee sign
J. Monument sign
K. Playbill
L. Pole-mounted banner sign
M. Projecting sign
N. Suspended sign
O. Wall sign

30-14-7.3 Freestanding Signs

A. Description
   A freestanding sign is any sign located on the same lot or parcel as the principal use that is placed on or anchored in the ground with one or more supports that are not part of a building or other (non-sign) structure.

B. General Standards
   1. Signs are allowed only as accessory structures to an allowed principal use.
   2. All signs may be internally or externally illuminated. In CN districts, internal illumination is limited to cut-out letter lighting.
   3. Signs over 6 feet in height may not be located within 100 feet of a residential zoning district (measured along the fronting street).
   4. All signs under 6 feet in height must be monument signs.
   5. Poles or pylons used to support freestanding signs are subject to the following standards:
      a. When 2 or more supports are used to support a freestanding sign no covering or special design is required.
b. When a single pole is used to support a freestanding sign, the pole must be square or rectangular and have the same depth as the sign cabinet or the pole must be wrapped or covered with materials comparable to materials fused on principal buildings on the site. Such covering must be at least 25% of the width of the sign face.

c. Single poles over 30 feet in height are not required to be covered or wrapped.

d. Single "I" beams may not be used as freestanding sign supports unless they are wrapped or covered with materials comparable to materials fused on principal buildings on the site. Such covering must be at least 25% of the width of the sign face.

C. Specific Standards
In addition to the general standards applicable to all freestanding signs, the following specific standards apply:

1. Temporary banners (see 30-14-10)
2. Auditoriums, coliseums and stadiums (see 30-8-10.2(B))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 14–2: Standards for Freestanding Signs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zoning District</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI, MU-L, CN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O, MU-M, MU-H, NS, UMU, BP, C-L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO, C-M, LI, HI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outparcel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playbill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development (8) Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Residential Districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM &amp; Nonresidential Districts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14–2: Standards for Freestanding Signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Sign Type</th>
<th>Max. Number</th>
<th>Max. Area (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>Min. Area (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>Setback (feet)</th>
<th>Height (feet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Notes:

1. “Min Area” refers to the minimum sign area allowed for any lot, regardless of the area that would be allowed by strict compliance with the area computation formula. Signs may be smaller than the stated “minimum area.”
2. Signs must be located outside public street right-of-way and outside any sight triangle area. However, development entrance signs may be erected in the public right-of-way provided that such signs have been permitted by an approved encroachment agreement in accordance with 30-14-7.3(D).
3. One additional freestanding sign may be allowed if: A) the lot frontage exceeds 250 linear feet; B) the minimum area referred to in footnote (1) does not apply to the additional sign; C) the sign allocation may be apportioned between the 2 signs, but in no case may the maximum area for either sign exceed 200 square feet, unless the provisions of footnote (4) below are applicable; D) the additional signs may not be located closer than 100 feet to any other freestanding sign on the same zone lot; and E) the additional sign may not be located closer than 100 feet to any freestanding sign on an adjoining zone lot that contains more than one freestanding sign (See illustration on p. 14-11).
4. The maximum sign area may be increased by 75 square feet if the sign is within 400 feet of the right-of-way of an Interstate Highway. For sites with buildings in excess of 200,000 square feet, the maximum size of a sign within 400 feet of the right-of-way of an Interstate Highway may be increased by both 75 square feet and an additional 25%.
5. The height of a sign may be increased to 50 feet if the sign is within 400 feet of the right-of-way of an Interstate Highway.
6. Height may be increased to 15 feet if the sign is a monument sign.
7. Height may be increased by 5 feet and maximum area may be increased by 50 square feet if a permitted freestanding playbill is not separately installed, but is combined with the shopping center identification sign.
8. Permitted only in (A) major subdivisions, (B) developments of over 15,000 square feet of gross floor area, (C) multi-family developments with more than 8 dwelling units in a single building, or (D) developments with more than 40,000 square feet in open-air uses.
9. Internal illumination is limited to cut-out letter lighting only.

D. Encroachment Agreements for Development Entrance Signs
Development entrance signs are allowed to encroach into a public right-of-way only so long as there is an encroachment agreement in effect between the owner of the sign and the city in a form to be determined by the City Attorney. At minimum, this agreement must provide that:

1. the sign owner will not be compensated by the city for any loss of or damage to the sign from any cause;
2. the sign owner must remove the sign at the sign owner’s expense if the city determines at any time that the sign interferes with the public use of the right-of-way;
3. the sign owner must maintain the sign; and
4. if the sign projects or is suspended over the public right-of-way, the sign owner must agree to provide insurance or satisfactory indemnification of the city against liability for injury to persons or property resulting from the position or maintenance of the sign.
E. Pole-Mounted Banners

1. Applicability
   
   See 30-4-26.5.

2. Purpose
   
   The installation of pole-mounted banners is designed to contribute to the aesthetic enhancement of designated areas. For this purpose, they should provide dynamic and colorful displays that unify the area in which they are to be placed. Pole-mounted banners must have a unifying theme in their design and will be permitted as follows:

   a. Along streets in the Central Business District (bounded by Fisher Street, Spring Street, Gate City Boulevard and Murrow Boulevard); along streets in the Downtown National Register Historic District; and along streets adjacent to government buildings or complexes, adjacent to college or university campuses, or adjacent to any city-initiated streetscape improvement project, or along streets located within a designated reinvestment corridor as defined in the Comprehensive Plan.

   b. Along Coliseum Boulevard, Gate City Boulevard, Patterson Street, Ellington Street from Gate City Boulevard to Coliseum Boulevard, and Hanner Street from Patterson Street to Ellington Street in recognition of the Coliseum Complex and its tenants.

   c. Along Murrow Boulevard from East Market Street to Lindsay Street, East Friendly Avenue from Dudley Street-Bennett Street to Church Street, and East Market Street from Church Street to English Street to recognize the East Market Street redevelopment effort.

   (Amended by Ord. 16-12 on 1/19/16)

3. Standards
a. **Maximum Copy Sizes**
   i. The maximum area for a pole-mounted banner is 24 square feet.
   ii. Commercial messages allowed on banners is limited to business name, logo, or trademarks. Such commercial message may occupy no more than 10% of the banner’s surface area.

b. **Repair and/or Removal**
   i. The Planning and Community Development Director or Fire Chief is authorized to require the immediate repair and/or removal of any banner deemed unsafe.
   ii. Any banner that becomes worn or tattered must be removed immediately and may be replaced with a banner that complies with the terms of the approved sign permit.

c. **Construction Material**
   Banners must be constructed of durable fabrics intended for outdoor use.

d. **Mounting Devices**
   Banner mounting devices must have structural integrity, be weather-resistant, and be crafted of a durable, non-corroding material. Attachment hardware and mounting devices must meet the North Carolina Building Code specifications and have the approval of the utility company or pole owner (if applicable). If poles have built-in mounting brackets, the banner must be hung from the existing pole hardware and the banner must be sized to fit such hardware.

4. **Liability**
   The city is not responsible for any damage incurred while banners are displayed, or while they are being installed or removed. The city assumes no liability in the event that property damage or personal injury results from the installation, removal, or other activities associated with pole-mounted banners.

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### 30-14-7.4 Attached Signs

A. **Description**
   An attached sign is any sign located on the same lot or parcel as the principal use that is affixed to or integrated into the building or structure.

B. **General Standards**
   1. Attached signs may be internally or externally illuminated. In CN districts, internal illumination is limited to cut-out letter lighting.
   2. Signage oriented towards an existing or planned greenway (as shown on the adopted BiPed Plan), shall follow the requirements of the C-N zoning district.

C. **Specific Standards**
   In addition to the general standards applicable to attached signs, the following specific standards apply:
   1. temporary banners (see 30-14-10)
   2. auditoriums, coliseums and stadiums (see 30-8-10.2(B))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Attached Sign Type</th>
<th>Max. Number</th>
<th>Max. Area (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>Min. Area (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>Height (feet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PI, MU-L, C-N</td>
<td>Wall Sign</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>5% of wall area</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>top of wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O, MU-M, MU-H, NS, UMU, BP, C-L</td>
<td>Wall Sign</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>7.5% of wall area</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>top of wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO, C-M, CB, LI, HI, C-H (3)</td>
<td>Wall Sign</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>10% of wall area</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>top of wall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14–3: Standards for Attached Signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Attached Sign Type</th>
<th>Max. Number</th>
<th>Max. Area (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>Min. Area (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>Height (feet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All nonresidential districts</td>
<td>Awning, Canopy, and Marquee Signs</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>25% of the canopy, awning, or marquee face (6)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>top of canopy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CN, MU-M, MU-H, CB</td>
<td>Projecting Sign (7)</td>
<td>1 per wall (1 per business in multi-tenant building)</td>
<td>10% of wall area (2) (5)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>25 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All nonresidential districts</td>
<td>Suspended Sign</td>
<td>1 per entrance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM &amp; nonresidential districts</td>
<td>Banner (8)</td>
<td>1 per 500 ft street frontage</td>
<td>0-100 ft. = 12 sq. ft. 101-200 ft. = 16 sq. ft. &gt;200 ft. = 20 sq. ft.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
(1) “Min Area” refers to the minimum sign area allowed for any lot, regardless of the area that would be allowed by strict compliance with the area computation formula.
(2) Based on the first 30 feet of height of the wall on which the sign is located. Buildings over 30 feet in height may have additional sign area based on 5% of the wall area above 30 feet in height, provided the sign is located at or near the top of the building.
(3) Including outparcels.
(4) Minimum 9-foot clearance above pedestrian walkways; minimum 15 feet clearance above vehicular drives.
(5) In multi-tenant buildings, the area computation must be based on the individual wall area of each separate occupant and not based on the entire facade of the building.
(6) When an awning, canopy, or marquee is attached to a multi-tenant building or an indoor theater, the area computation for all attached signs affixed to the wall, awning, canopy, or marquee must be based on 10% of the wall area. All or any portion of this sign allocation may be affixed to the wall, awning, canopy, or marquee provided that no part of the sign projects above the top of said structures.
(7) Projecting signs are subject to the supplemental standards of Sec. 30-14-7.4(D).
(8) For banners as temporary signs see 30-14-10.

D. **Projecting Signs**

1. No part of a projecting sign may project more than 4 feet from the building wall.
2. No part of a projecting sign may project horizontally within 3 feet of the curb face.
3. Projecting signs may not extend vertically above the roof line or parapet wall.
4. Projecting signs must have a minimum clearance of 9 feet above sidewalks and 14 feet above alleys or driveways.
5. Projecting signs must be separated from other projecting signs by a distance of at least 25 feet.
6. Sign supports for projecting signs must appear to be an integral part of the sign.
7. Projecting signs may be internally or externally illuminated, provided that front-lit channel letters and plastic box (cabinet) signs are prohibited.
   a. If externally illuminated, the light source must be directed toward the sign face in a way that does not cause light trespass onto other property or cause glare for motorists or pedestrians.
   b. Back-lit, halo illumination, reverse channel letters with halo illumination, and cut out lettering are permitted. Exposed neon tubing is permitted if it does not blink or flash.
8. Building permits and sign permits are required for projecting signs. If illuminated, electrical permits are also required.

(Amended by Ord. 10-156 on 10/19/10, Ord. 13-51 on 5/7/13, and Ord. 14-13 on 1/21/14)

**30-14-8 Electronic Message Boards**

All electronic message boards are subject to the regulations of this section.
30-14-8.1 Area, Hold Time, Hours and White Area

Standards governing maximum area, minimum message hold time, hours of operation and the maximum percentage of a sign face that may be comprised of white or very bright colors vary by zoning district, as shown in Table 14-4, below. Separate standards may apply to sites with major buildings (see Footnote 6 below) and major auditoriums, stadiums and coliseums, see in 30-8-10.2(B).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Max. Area (1)</th>
<th>Min. Hold Time (2)</th>
<th>Off Hours (3)(6)</th>
<th>Max. White/Bright (4)(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CB, C-M, C-H, LI, HI</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>3 seconds</td>
<td>Midnight–7 a.m.</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP, MUH, MUM, C-L</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1 minute</td>
<td>10 p.m.–7 a.m.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI, O, CN (5)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1 minute</td>
<td>10 p.m.–7 a.m.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-, RM</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
<td>8 p.m.–7 a.m.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
(1) Maximum percentage of sign face comprised of electronic message board.
(2) Minimum hold time for message. Does not apply to message that include only time/temperature information.
(3) Hours that electronic message board must be turned off. Automatic timers are required.
(4) Maximum percentage of electronic message board displaying white or similar very bright colors.
(5) Electronic message boards in PI, O and CN districts that are within 200 feet of an R zoning district, measured along the nearest street frontage, are subject to the electronic message board regulations that apply in R and RM zoning districts.
(6) For sites with buildings in excess of 200,000 square feet in area and located within 400 feet of the right-of-way of an interstate highway, there shall be no off-hour requirement and the maximum white/bright standard shall be 33%.

30-14-8.2 Brightness

Electronic message boards may not exceed a maximum illumination of 5,000 nits (candelas per square meter) during daylight hours or more than 500 nits during nighttime hours (between dusk and dawn), as measured from the sign’s face at maximum brightness. Electronic message boards must be equipped with automatic dimming technology that automatically adjusts the display’s brightness based on ambient light conditions.

30-14-8.3 Transition

The transition from one image to the next must be accomplished in one second or less. Fading, flashing, scrolling, spinning or other animated effects may not be used as part of the transition.

30-14-8.4 Sequential Messages

No sequential messages are allowed; messages displayed must be complete in themselves, without continuation in content to the next image or message or to any other sign.

30-14-8.5 Permits

Permits are required for all new electronic message boards and for conversions from static signs to electronic message boards.

30-14-8.6 Special Overlay Regulations

The standards that apply to electronic message boards may be modified by the regulations that apply in overlay zoning districts. In the CB district, for example, all electronic message boards are subject to the regulations of the –DDO, Downtown Design Overlay district, as applicable. In the NC 68 Scenic Corridor...
Overlay, electronic message boards are prohibited except when they are not visible from the right-of-way of NC 68.

### 30-14-9 Outdoor Advertising Signs (Billboards)

#### 30-14-9.1 Permit Required

Outdoor advertising signs may be erected, affixed, or otherwise established only in accordance with the requirements in this section and a duly-issued and valid sign permit (see 30-4-26.5).

#### 30-14-9.2 Districts Allowed

Outdoor advertising signs are allowed in C-M, LI, and HI districts.

#### 30-14-9.3 Size

The maximum sign area of an outdoor advertising sign, including any extension, is 450 square feet.

#### 30-14-9.4 Height

The maximum allowable height of an outdoor advertising sign is 40 feet, provided that the maximum allowable height may be increased to 50 feet if the sign is within 400 feet of the right-of-way of an Interstate Highway.

#### 30-14-9.5 Spacing Requirements

A. **Between Signs**
   
   No outdoor advertising sign may be erected, affixed, or otherwise installed within 500 feet of another outdoor advertising sign.

B. **Adjoining Residential District or Religious Assembly Use**
   
   No outdoor advertising sign may be erected, affixed, or otherwise installed within 300 feet of any residential zoning district or property containing a religious assembly use. If the residential zoning boundary runs along the near edge of a street right-of-way, the width of the right-of-way does not count in computing the separation requirement.

#### 30-14-9.6 Relationship to Freestanding Signs

A. **Lots with One Street Frontage**
   
   On zone lots with frontage on a single street, outdoor advertising signs may not be erected, affixed, or otherwise installed if the subject zone lot contains more than one freestanding sign. If the zone lot already contains one freestanding sign, then an outdoor advertising sign may be installed only if the lot has more than 250 feet of street frontage and only if it is separated from the freestanding sign by a minimum distance of 100 feet.

B. **Lots with Two or More Street Frontages**
   
   On zone lots with frontage on 2 or more streets, outdoor advertising signs may not be erected, affixed, or otherwise installed if the subject zone lot contains more than 2 freestanding signs. If the zone lot already contains 2 freestanding signs, then an outdoor advertising sign may be installed only along a street frontage that is more than 250 feet in length and only if is separated from all freestanding signs by a minimum distance of 100 feet.

C. **Setback**
The support posts of any outdoor advertising sign must meet the minimum principal building setbacks of the zoning district in which it is located. In addition, no sign portion of an outdoor advertising sign may project closer than 15 feet to a street right-of-way or closer than 5 feet to any other property line, measured horizontally.

D. **Mounting Back-to-Back**
   Outdoor advertising sign structures may be mounted back-to-back when they share a common support. The total sign area of any such outdoor advertising structure will be considered a single sign.

E. **Design, Construction, and Maintenance**
   All outdoor advertising signs must meet the standards of 30-14-12.

### 30-14-9.7 Overlay Districts

New outdoor advertising signs are prohibited in the Central Business Overlay District and Visual Corridor Overlay Districts in accordance with 30-7-8.4, 30-7-8.11, and 30-7-8.5, Downtown Design Overlay District.

### 30-14-9.8 Electronic and Digital Displays

A. The maximum brightness of digital or electronic displays may not exceed 1,000 lumens at night and 7,500 lumens during the day. When sign is not located along an interstate highway, shielded cut-off fixtures to prevent light spillover must be used.

B. No more than 33% of the electronic display may use white (or similar very bright) colors.

C. An electronic display sign message may change no more frequently than once every 8 seconds when located within 400 feet of an interstate highway. In all other areas the sign must comply with the electronic message board standards of Table 14-4 (See 30-14-8), based on the zoning district in which the sign is located. All messages must be static with no flashing or transitional animation of any kind between messages. Sequential messaging is prohibited.

D. When located within 300 feet of a building containing a principal residential use in a residential zoning district, the replacement sign must be turned off between midnight and 7 a.m., and a Special Use Permit is required before replacement and conversion. In addition, the conversion to an electronic display in the – DDO, Downtown Design Overlay is allowed only if approved as a Special Use Permit. Electronic displays are prohibited in the -DDO Historic Core.

### 30-14-9.9 Nonconforming Outdoor Advertising Signs

Outdoor advertising signs are subject to the nonconforming sign regulations of 30-2-5 including the nonconforming outdoor advertising sign regulations of 30-2-5.5.

(Amended by Ord. 13-139 on 11/12/13)

### 30-14-10 Temporary Signs Requiring a Permit

#### 30-14-10.1 Permit Required

Except for signs that do not require a permit pursuant to 30-14-6, temporary signs may be erected, affixed, or otherwise established only in accordance with the requirements in this section and with a duly-issued and valid sign permit (see 30-4-26.5).
30-14-10.2 Temporary Special Event Signs

Signs, including banners, in conjunction with temporary events, may be placed in the right-of-way of a public street that has been officially closed for the purposes of conducting the temporary event, or on private property used in conjunction with the temporary event, subject to the following requirements:

A. General Requirements
   1. No temporary sign may be erected until a permit has been issued by the Engineering and Inspections Director (see 30-4-26.5).
   2. Temporary signs advertising the name and/or date of an event may be erected up to 4 days prior to the event.
   3. All signs located above vehicle travel lanes in the public right-of-way must have a minimum clearance of 15 feet. Signs located above pedestrian walkways must have a minimum clearance of 9 feet.
   4. Signs must be properly designed and engineered to withstand the average prevailing winds during the month of the event and to meet the minimum wind load requirements of the North Carolina Building Code, Chapter 2300.
   5. Steel cables, wires, or similar materials may not be used as guys or supports for any sign erected in the street right-of-way or on private property.
   6. Signs must be constructed of a fire-retardant material or be treated to be fire retardant.
   7. Signs must not obstruct any fire escape, window, or door, or be placed in such a manner so as to interfere with any openings required for ventilation, nor offer hindrance to fire department equipment or personnel in the performance of any required duties in fire protection.
   8. The Engineering and Inspections Director or Fire Chief may require the immediate repair or removal of any sign or banner deemed to be unsafe.

30-14-10.3 Temporary Sandwich Board Signs

A. Applicability
   1. Sandwich board signs may be approved for use in conjunction with ground-floor retail stores or shops, and eating or drinking establishments within pedestrian-oriented commercial areas in commercial zoning districts.
   2. A pedestrian-oriented commercial area consists of buildings that abut a sidewalk that is wide enough to allow for at least 5 feet of unimpeded width (clear space) for pedestrian movement with the sandwich board sign in place.

B. Standards
   1. Permit Required
      A valid temporary sign permit is required prior to the use or installation of a sandwich board sign on a sidewalk (see 30-4-26.5(B)).
   2. Number of Signs
      One sandwich board sign may be allowed per establishment.
   3. Area, Width and Height
      The maximum area of a sandwich board sign is 8 square feet per side of sign. The maximum sign width is 2 feet, and the maximum sign height is 4 feet.
   4. Sign Placement and Installation
a. Sandwich board signs may be placed on a sidewalk directly in front of the associated establishment. The sign must be placed on that part of the sidewalk closest to the associated use and the nearest part of the sign structure must be within one foot of the wall of the associated building.

b. The sign must be placed so as not to interfere with or obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic and must be in compliance with the provisions of Section 16-8 (Obstructions to Cross-Visibility at Intersections) of the City Code; however, in any event, a minimum of 5 feet of clear passage must be maintained on the sidewalk between the street edge and the sign.

c. Signs may not be anchored to the sidewalk, or attached or chained to poles, newspaper vending boxes, or other structures or appurtenances.

5. **Letter Size**

Lettering on sandwich board signs must be small enough to not be legible from automobile traffic on the street.

C. **Lighting and Display Hours**

Sandwich board signs may not be internally illuminated. Signs must be removed from the sidewalk and be placed indoors or in a secured and locked area at the close of business each day.

D. **Design**

The sign frame must be painted or made of stained wood or anodized aluminum or metal. Plastic framed signs are prohibited. Stenciled or spray painted signs are prohibited. Windblown devices, including balloons, may not be attached or otherwise made part of the sign.

E. **Indemnification**

Any person erecting a sign must indemnify and hold harmless the city and its officers, agents, and employees from any claim arising from the presence or placement of the sign on city property or rights-of-way. The person placing the sandwich board sign must sign an indemnification agreement, approved by the City Attorney, prior to the issuance of a temporary sign permit. The indemnification agreement must be accompanied by evidence of insurance covering the liability assumed in this subsection and the agreement.

**30-14-11 Master Sign Plans and Common Sign Plans**

No permit may be issued for a sign that requires a permit until a master sign plan or a common sign plan has been approved for the subject lot.

**30-14-11.1 Applicability**

A. A master sign plan is required for developments containing a single principal building on a single zone lot.

B. A common sign plan is required for developments containing more than one principal building or more than one zone lot.

**30-14-11.2 General Provisions**

A. A master sign plan or common sign plan is a required component of and may be processed concurrently with any development plan, site plan, Unified Development Plan, or other plan required for development. Master sign plan or common sign plan approval must be obtained before any sign permit is issued.

B. A master sign plan or a common sign plan may be amended by filing a new plan that complies with all requirements of this ordinance. The Planning and Community Development Director may approve minor changes to an approved master sign plan or common sign plan in accordance with the Type 1 Modification procedures of 30-4-11.
C. Signs must be erected, affixed, placed, painted, or otherwise established in conformance with the approved master sign plan or common sign plan and such plan may be enforced in the same way as any other provision of this ordinance. In case of any conflict between the provisions of such a plan and any other provision of this ordinance, this ordinance governs.

30-14-11.3 Information Required for a Master Sign Plan

Master sign plans must include:

A. a site plan and

B. specifications for each sign in sufficient detail to determine that the sign standards of this article have been met.

30-14-11.4 Information Required for Common Sign Plan

A common sign plan must include all of the information required for a master sign plan plus the following additional material:

A. lighting scheme; and

B. provisions for shared usage of freestanding signs.

30-14-12 Design, Construction, and Maintenance

All signs must be designed, constructed, and maintained in accordance with the following standards:

30-14-12.1 Other Codes

All signs must comply with applicable provisions of the North Carolina Building Code and the North Carolina Electrical Code.

30-14-12.2 Installation and Materials of Construction

A. Except for banners, flags, temporary signs, and window signs conforming with the requirements of this ordinance, all signs must be constructed of permanent materials and must be permanently attached to the ground, a building, or another structure by direct attachment to a rigid wall, frame, or structure.

B. Banners and flags must be constructed of a fire retardant material or treated to be fire retardant.

30-14-12.3 Maintenance

All signs must be maintained in good structural condition at all times, in compliance with all building and electrical codes, and in conformance with this ordinance.

30-14-12.4 Obstruction

Signs must not obstruct any fire escape, required exit, window, door opening, or wall opening intended as a means of ingress or egress.

30-14-12.5 Ventilation Interference

Signs must not interfere with any opening required for ventilation.
30-14-12.6 Above Ground Clearance

Sign location and installation must maintain horizontal and vertical clearance from all electrical power lines and communication lines in accordance with the applicable provisions of the North Carolina Life Safety Code.

30-14-12.7 Ground Clearance

All signs and their supporting structures must maintain clearance from surface and underground utilities, conduits, or easements for water, sewage, gas, electricity, or communication equipment. In addition, the placement of signs and their supporting structures may not interfere with natural or artificial drainageways.

30-14-12.8 Interference with Certain Signs

Sign location and installation may not interfere with the viewing of any existing warning, governmental, or instructional sign.

30-14-12.9 Minimum Wind Loads

All signs, except those attached flat against the wall of a building, must be constructed to withstand minimum wind loads as specified by the North Carolina Building Code.

30-14-13 Removal of Signs

30-14-13.1 General

The provisions of this section describe a variety of circumstances in which signs are required to be removed. For purposes of these provisions, sign removal means removing the entire sign and any or all supporting structures or elements, as specified below in 30-14-13.4(B).

30-14-13.2 Revocation of Sign Permit

Any sign for which a sign permit has been revoked must be removed by the owner.

30-14-13.3 Signs in Right-of-Way

Any sign installed or placed on public property or rights-of-way, except in compliance with this article or under an encroachment agreement with NCDOT or the city, will be forfeited to the public and are subject to confiscation.

30-14-13.4 Obsolete or Abandoned Signs

A. Any sign that advertises a business no longer conducted on the premises must have the original sign face replaced with a blank face, or other similar, secure covering, by the owner within 90 days of cessation of such business. The covering must be of similar material as the original sign face. The sign structural supports and cabinets may remain beyond the 90 days if:
   1. Evidence is provided indicating the property is being actively marketed for lease or sale; or
   2. The property is under construction or renovation, with an active building permit

B. In all cases, the sign structure must be kept in good repair at all times, with adequate painting and secure structure. If the provisions of this subsection are not met, all portions of the sign and support structures
must be removed. However, concrete foundations or footings may remain. Both the owner of the property on which the sign is located and the owner of the sign, if different, are separately responsible for the removal.

30-14-13.5 Unsafe Signs

Any sign that is deemed by the city to be unsafe or unsecured, or a menace to the public shall be considered a violation of this ordinance and must be removed by the owner after due notice has been given by the Planning and Community Development Director.

30-14-13.6 Signs Installed Without Permit

Any sign that has been installed in violation of the NC Building Code or in violation of this ordinance must be removed by the owner after due notice has been given by the Planning and Community Development Director.

30-14-13.7 Responsibility for Removal

When removal of a sign is required, both the owner of the property on which the sign is located and the owner of the sign, if different, are separately responsible for removal.

30-14-14 Variances

The Board of Adjustment is authorized to grant a variance to the sign height and setback provisions of this article. The Board of Adjustment may not grant a variance to the number, size, illumination, or spacing provisions of this article unless the request is for a sign attached or proposed to be attached to a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

30-14-15 Replacement Signs for Nonconforming Uses

The Planning and Community Development Director may approve a Type 1 Modification allowing replacement signs for nonconforming uses in accordance with 30-2-3.5).

30-14-16 Rules of Measurement

30-14-16.1 Sign Area

A. Box or Cabinet Signs
The area of a sign enclosed in frames or cabinets—whether the sign is attached or freestanding—is determined based on the outer dimensions of the frame or cabinet surrounding the sign face. However, when a sign framed in a box or cabinet uses screened, raised (push-through), or routed out letters and an opaque background, such signs must be measured as described in Paragraph B, below.
B. **Individual Letter Signs**

The area of an attached or freestanding sign comprised of individual letters or elements without a cabinet or frame is determined by calculating the area of the smallest geometric figure (e.g. square, rectangle, circle, polygon, etc) that can be drawn around the letters and/or elements. Signs consisting of individual letters and/or elements will be measured as one sign when the distance between the letters and/or elements is less than the largest dimension of the largest sign letter.
C. **Multi-Sided Signs**

When the sign faces of a multi-sided sign are parallel or within 30 degrees of parallel, only one side is counted. If the sign faces are not parallel or within 30 degrees of parallel, all sign faces are counted.

### 30-14-16.2 Height

**A.** Sign height is the vertical distance from the top of the highest component of the sign to the higher of:

1. the base of the sign at the finished grade; or
2. the nearest adjacent street grade to which the sign is oriented and on which the lot has frontage.
B. Finished grade is the grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign.

**Figure 14-5, Calculation of Sign Height**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calculation of Sign Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram of sign height calculation" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**30-14-16.3 Sign Clearance**

Clearance is measured from the highest point of the ground directly below the sign to the lowest point on the sign structure enclosing the sign face.

**30-14-16.4 Lots with Multi-frontage**

Unless otherwise expressly stated in this ordinance, lots fronting on 2 or more streets are allowed the permitted sign area for each street frontage. When sign area is calculated based on building frontage or street frontage, the total sign area allowed on each frontage must be calculated separately (and sign area derived from one frontage may not be transferred to another frontage).