

Sign Ordinance

12-1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Notwithstanding any other section of this Article, to the contrary, the regulations set forth in this section shall govern signs.

- (a) No sign over twelve (12) square feet shall be erected, altered or relocated without a permit issued by the Zoning Administrator, except as otherwise provided herein. Where electrical permits are required, they shall be obtained from the Building Official.
- (b) The permit application shall be obtained from the Zoning Administrator.
- (c) Fees for sign permits shall be as fixed from time to time by the governing body.
- (d) A sign permit shall become null and void if the work for which the permit was issued has not been completed within a period of six (6) months after the date of the permit approval by the Zoning Administrator or the Commission.

- (e) The height of signs shall be the vertical distance measured from the average finished grade ground elevation from where the sign is located to the highest point of the sign. The maximum allowable height of signs shall be as specified by the regulations established herein.
- (f) No sign, unless herein approved exempted, shall be erected, constructed or altered until a permit has been issued by Mecklenburg County.
- (g) No sign, other than a sign approved or installed by the Virginia Department of Transportation, shall be located within or over any public right-of-way.
- (h) On-site signs, to advertise a business, whether temporary or permanent shall be no taller than or above the ridgeline of any roof.
- (i) Off-site signs and monopole billboard signs may not be erected within one (1) mile of another off-site or monopole billboard sign.
- (j) Non-illuminated realty signs, not exceeding six (6) square feet in area or four (4) feet in height in all single family residential districts and thirty-two (32) square feet and six (6) feet in height in all multi-family, business and industrial zoning districts are limited to one (1) sign per parcel of land and displayed on the premises to which such sign

refers.

- (k) No sign shall be installed, erected, or displayed on any recreational field to include, although not exclusively soccer, baseball, football and softball fields, so as to be observed from any main highway without prior approval from Mecklenburg County.

12-2 SIGNS EXEMPT FROM REGULATION

The following signs are exempt from regulations under this article but are not exempt from any other applicable regulation (Building Code, Virginia Department of Transportation Regulations).

- (a) Signs of a duly constituted governmental body, such as traffic signs, street or road signs, legal signs, historic markers, etc;
- (b) Memorial tablets or signs;
- (c) Signs required to be maintained by law or governmental order, rule, or regulation with a total surface area not exceeding ten (10) square feet;
- (d) Signs displayed for the direction of convenience of the public including signs which set forth the name of any public, charitable, educational or religious institution (up to twenty-four (24) square feet and located on premise), signs which identify rest rooms, location of public telephones, freight entrances, no trespassing and posted signs.
- (e) Signs directing traffic on private property, but bearing no advertising matter;
- (f) Signs placed by a public utility showing the location of underground facilities; and
- (g) Signs on a truck, bus, trailer or other vehicle, while in use in the normal course of business. This is not intended to permit the parking for display purposes of a vehicle to which signs are attached.
- (h) Only one (1) non-illuminated realty sign that is no larger than twenty-four (24) inches by twenty-four (24) inches per parcel of land and displayed on the premises to which sign refers.

12-3 PROHIBITED SIGNS

No sign shall be constructed, erected, used, operated or maintained which:

- (a) Contains any imitation of an official traffic sign or signal;
- (b) Displays intermittent lights resembling or seeming to resemble the flashing lights customarily associated with danger or such as

- are customarily used by police, fire, ambulance or rescue vehicles or for navigation purposes;
- (c) Is so located and illuminated as to provide a background of colored lights blending with traffic signal lights to the extent of confusing a motorist when viewed from a normal approaching position of a vehicle at a distance of twenty-five (25) to three-hundred (300) feet;
 - (d) Moves in any manner or contain banners, posters, pennants, ribbons, streamers, strings or light bulbs or other similarly moving devices;
 - (e) Flashes or contains exposed gas filled or illuminated tubing such as neon; and
 - (f) Abandoned signs in all districts (see 12-9(c))

12-4 TEMPORARY SIGNS

The following signs shall be permitted anywhere within the County and shall not require a permit:

- (a) Construction signs are permitted which identify the architects, engineers, contractors and other individuals or firms involved with the construction, but not including any advertisement of any products and signs announcing the character of the building, enterprise or the purpose for which the building is intended, during the construction period, to a maximum area of sixteen (16) square feet for each firm. The signs shall be confined to the site of the construction projects and shall be removed within fourteen (14) days after the completion of the project.
- (b) Street banners, advertising a public entertainment or event, are permitted if specially approved by the Planning Commission and only for locations designated by the Planning Commission during and for fourteen (14) days before and fourteen (14) days after such event.
- (c) All signs involving an election or its candidates are exempt, but they shall be removed within fourteen (14) days after the election for which they were made.
- (d) Temporary signs as defined in Article 1 of this Ordinance, but they shall be removed within fourteen (14) days after the activity for which they advertise has taken place.
- (e) Banners when used in conjunction with the opening of a new business or an establishment going out of business in any business or commercial district. The duration of such

- permit shall not exceed thirty (30) days and shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet.
- (f) Banners when used to announce the grand opening and initiation of sales of lots and/or dwelling units within a newly developing residential project having at least ten (10) lots or units. Such banner shall not exceed forty (40) feet square feet. Such banners shall be removed within thirty (30) days concluding the grand opening.
 - (g) Signs attached directly to the interior or exterior of the windows of an establishment are permitted in business and commercial districts provided, that such signs shall not occupy more than twenty-five (25) percent of the total area of the window in which they are displayed and shall not be legible from any public road.

12-5 ILLUMINATED SIGNS

The following regulations apply to the illuminating of signs:

- (a) No temporary signs shall be illuminated;
- (b) The light from any illuminated signs shall be so shades, shielded or directed that the light intensity or brightness will not be objectionable to surrounding areas or to operators or motor vehicles on public thoroughfares.

12-6 OPERATIONS EXEMPT

The following operations are not considered as creating a sign and are exempt from this article:

- (a) The changing of the advertising copy or message on an approved painted or printed sign or on a theater marquee or similar approved signs, which are specifically designed for the use of replaceable copy.
- (b) Painting, repainting, cleaning and other normal maintenance and repair of a sign or sign structure unless a structural change is made.

12-7 SITING REGULATIONS

- (a) No permanent sign shall be located in any side or rear yard.
- (b) On-site signs may be approved by the Zoning Administrator with the following conditions: The sign is no larger than 4' x 8'; the sign is no higher than 16' from the ground. A zero setback shall be allowed.

- (c) Off-site signs which are located fifteen feet or more from the front property line shall require approval of the Zoning Administrator.
- (d) Off-site signs which are located less than fifteen (15) feet from the property line shall require approval of the Planning Commission.
- (e) All off-site signs to include monopole billboard signs shall not be erected within one (1) mile of another off-site or monopole billboard sign.
- (f) No off-site signs are allowed on scenic routes that are designated as such by the Virginia Department of Transportation to include Highway Forty-Seven and Highway Nine-O-Three.
- (g) No off-site monopole billboard may be higher than sixty (60) feet.
- (h) The Commission may approve an increase in sign area and height if unusual topography, vegetation or the distance from the road right-of-way would impose substantial hardship by making a sign otherwise permitted by the terms of this article ineffective and unreadable from vehicles or adjoining roadways.
- (i) When the nature of the individual project, size of the parcel being developed, in relationship to existing adjacent development would accommodate a sign of greater area or height.
- (j) In authorizing signs, the Commission shall limit the area, height and location of such signs to that which, in its opinion, is reasonably in keeping with the provisions of this article.
- (k) Only one (1) monopole sign shall be allowed at the main entrance of a shopping center or a strip mall.

12-7 HOME OCCUPATION SIGNS

Home occupation signs will be permitted in the Zoning Districts as follows:

- (a) Agriculture and Residential Districts; signs shall not exceed eight (8) square feet.
- (b) Commercial and Industrial Districts; signs shall not exceed ten (10) square feet.

12-9 Maintenance, removal and non-conforming signs.

- (a) All signs and sign structures shall be kept in good repair and in proper state of preservation. All unsafe signs must adhere to the provisions of the building code. All signs deemed unsafe must be repaired or brought into compliance with the provisions of the building code.
- (b) An on-site or off-site sign advertising a business that has moved or abandoned, signs advertising such business shall be removed

within thirty (30) days following such abandonment.

- (c) Notwithstanding the requirement set forth in subsection (b) above, a sign shall be considered abandoned if the business for which the sign was erected has not been in operation for a period of one (1) year or more. Upon expiration of the one (1) year period, any such abandoned sign shall be removed by the owner of the property on which the sign is located after notification to removed such sign. The Zoning Administrator shall make a reasonable attempt to notify the owner of the property to remove the sign.
- (d) Existing signs which do not conform to the specific provision of the Ordinance may be eligible for the designation "legal non-conforming" provided that:
 - (1) The Zoning Administrator determines such signs are properly maintained and do not in any way endanger the public;
 - (2) The sign was installed in conformance with valid permits or complied with all applicable laws on the date of adoption of this Ordinance;
 - (3) The business advertised is still in legal operation.
- (e) A legal non-conforming sign may loose designation if:
 - (1) The sign is relocated or replaced;
 - (2) The structure or size of the sign is altered in any way except toward compliance with the Ordinance. This does not refer to change of copy or normal maintenance.
- (f) The legal non-conforming sign is subject to all requirements of the code regarding safety, maintenance and repair. However, if the sign suffers more than fifty (50) percent damage or deterioration, it must be brought into conformance with the code or removed.