
ARTICLE 13: SIGN REGULATIONS

Section 13.1 Purpose

The purpose of these sign regulations is to:

- 13.1.1 Encourage the use of signs as an effective means of communication;
- 13.1.2 Maintain and enhance the aesthetic appearance of the community;
- 13.1.3 Promote the economic vitality of the town;
- 13.1.4 Minimize the adverse affect of signs on nearby properties;
- 13.1.5 Enable the fair and consistent enforcement of these sign regulations.

Section 13.2 Applicability

All signs erected, placed, established, painted or repainted, created, or maintained within the planning jurisdiction of the Town shall comply with the standards, procedures, exemptions, and other requirements of this Article.

Section 13.3 Sign Definitions

The following definitions shall apply to the types of signs.

ADVERTISING SIGN: A sign that advertises a business, product, service, activity, or event.

ANIMATED SIGN. A sign that flashes, revolves, rotates, or swings by mechanical means or that uses a change of lighting to depict action or to create a special effect or scene.

BANNER SIGN: A temporary sign of lightweight fabric or similar material that is rigidly mounted to a pole or a building by a rigid frame at 2 or more opposite sides. This definition excludes national, state or municipal flags, or the official flag of any institution or business.

BILLBOARD SIGN: An off-premise advertising sign pertaining to a business, product, service, or activity not available on the premises on which the sign is located.

BUSINESS IDENTIFICATION SIGN: An on-premise sign that identifies the name, address, and nature of a business establishment on the site.

CANOPY SIGN: An attached sign that is incorporated into or attached to a canopy, awning, or other protective cover over a door, entrance, or window.

BULLETIN BOARD SIGN: A sign that changes copy through manual, mechanical, or electrical means, including time and temperature.

CONSTRUCTION SIGN: A temporary sign that identifies the owners, financiers, contractors, architects, or engineers of a project under construction.

DEVELOPMENT SIGN: A sign that identifies a shopping center, commercial or industrial park, other developments that contain a cluster of residents, offices, industries, or businesses.

DIRECTORY SIGN: A sign that lists the names, uses, or location of business or activities conducted within a building or group of buildings on a site.

FREESTANDING SIGN: A sign permanently anchored to the ground or supported by one or more poles, columns, or other vertical supports, and not attached to any building.

(A) Monument sign: A freestanding sign supported primarily by an internal structural framework or other solid structural frame other than support poles. The bottom of the structure is no higher than 6 feet to the ground or is integrated into landscaping.

(B) Pole sign: A freestanding sign that is mounted on a pole or other support so that the bottom edge of the sign face is 6 feet or more above grade.

GOVERNMENT SIGN: A sign erected and maintained by the Town of Princeton, Johnston County, the State of North Carolina, or the federal government.

HOME OCCUPATION SIGN: A sign listing only the name or occupation of a permitted home occupation.

ILLUMINATED SIGN: A sign illuminated by electricity, gas, or other artificial light source.

INCIDENTAL SIGN: An on-premise sign that provides only incidental information about the site and contains no commercial message visible from the street other than an identifying logo.

(A) Directional sign: A sign that is limited to directing the movement of pedestrian or vehicular traffic on the site upon which the sign is located. These include parking and entrance and exit signs.

(B) Nameplate sign: A sign identifying only the name and address of a building or the occupant thereof or the practice of a permitted activity conducted within the building.

MEMORIAL SIGN: A sign, tablet, or plaque that memorialize a person, event, structure, or site.

OBSOLETE SIGN: A sign that no longer advertises or identifies a bona fide business or activity conducted or product available.

OFF-PREMISE SIGNS: A sign pertaining to a business, product, service, event, or entertainment not offered on the premises upon which the sign is located.

ON-PREMISE SIGN: A sign pertaining to a business, product, service, event, or entertainments that is offered on the premise upon which the sign is located.

POLITICAL SIGN: A temporary sign announcing or supporting candidates or issues in connection with any national, state, or local election or referendum.

PORTABLE SIGN: A sign that is easily moved and not permanently attached to the ground, a structure, or building.

PROJECTING SIGN: A sign attached to a building or other structure and extends more than 12 inches beyond the building or wall.

REAL ESTATE SIGN: A temporary sign that advertises the sale, rental, or lease of the premises upon which the sign is located

ROOF SIGNS: A sign erected above the roofline and is supported by the roof structure.

SIGN AREA The entire face of a sign including advertising surface and any framing, trim, or molding, but not including the supporting structure. In computing the area, only one (1) side of a double-faced sign shall be considered.

SIGN: A device or structure displaying words, letters, pictures, figures, numerals, phrases, sentences, emblems, devices, design, trade names, or trademarks that is designed to attract attention or convey a message, and is visible from any public way.

SIGNAGE PLAN: A graphic representation showing a comprehensive detailed presentation showing a presentation of all signage proposed for a particular lot.

SPECIAL EVENTS SIGNS: Temporary signs containing messages concerning special events occurring on the site or in the area where the event is to occur.

SUSPENDED SIGN. A sign that is suspended from the underside of a horizontal plane surface and is supported by such surface.

TEMPORARY SIGN: A sign not permanently attached to the ground, a structure, or a building, and is to be displayed for a limited period of time. Temporary signs may include banners, pennants, and portable signs.

WALL SIGN: A sign attached to the exterior wall of a building and not projecting more than 12 inches from the exterior wall of a building.

WINDOW SIGN: A sign affixed to the interior of a window or placed immediately behind a windowpane so as to attract the attention of persons outside the building.

Section 13.4 General Sign Regulations

The regulations in this section apply to all signs regulated by this Article regardless of whether a permit is required.

13.4.1 Sign placement:

- A.** The minimum setback of signs from a existing or planned public right-of-way shall be 5 feet. Signs shall not be suspended over a street right-of-way except as permitted in this Article.
- B.** The Board of Adjustment may require that an existing sign that is setback less than 5 feet from the street right-of-way after a street widening project is complete be moved to at least 5 feet from said right-of-way if the Board of Adjustment determines its is necessary for the safe and free movement of traffic.
- C.** No sign shall interfere with surface and underground utilities; conduits for water, sewage, gas, electricity or communications equipment or lines; natural or manmade drainage areas.
- D.** No sign shall obstruct any fire escape, fire hydrant, windows, door or wall opening intended as a means of ingress or egress, or interfere with any opening required for ventilation.

13.4.2 Design, construction, and maintenance standards:

Signs shall be designed, constructed, and maintained to comply with the applicable provisions of the NC Building Code, NC Electrical Code, Uniform Manual of Traffic Control Devices, this ordinance, and other applicable standards at all times. Signs shall be painted or constructed of non-corrosive material

13.4.3 Obsolete signs:

- A.** Signs shall become obsolete when located on property that becomes vacant or unoccupied, pertains to a time, event, or purpose that no longer applies, is related to a business that has been discontinued, or fails to meet the maintenance requirements of this Section within 30 days of the Town notifying the sign owner of such failure.
- B.** The owner shall remove an obsolete sign within 30 days from the date the sign becomes obsolete. If the sign is not removed within the 30-day timeframe, the Zoning Enforcement Officer may have the sign removed and all associated costs will be assessed to the sign owner.

13.4.4 Nonconforming signs: Nonconforming signs are subject to the provisions of *ARTICLE 4: (Nonconformities)*.

13.4.5 Computation of sign area:

- A.** The area of a single faced sign shall be computed by means of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or combination thereof 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, but not including any supporting structure.
- B.** The area of a sign with more than one face shall be computed by adding together the area of all sign faces visible from any one point. When two identical sign faces are placed back to back, so that both faces cannot be viewed from any point at the same time, and when such sign faces are part of the same sign structure, the sign area shall be computed by the measurement of face with the largest area.

13.4.6 Illumination of signs:

- A.** Illuminated signs shall be lighted from behind to silhouette letters and figures. Spotlighted signs are permitted if no glare is cast that is disturbing to motorists or reflects on any property under separate ownership. Illumination shall be placed to prevent light rays from being cast directly on any dwelling.
- B.** Other than time and temperature units, animated signs are prohibited.

Section 13.5 Prohibited Signs

The following signs are prohibited in all zoning districts:

- (a) Windblown signs. Including pennants, streamers, spinners, balloons, and gas-filled figures except as a permitted temporary special events sign.

- (b) Abandoned or obsolete signs
- (c) Portable signs other than permitted temporary signs;
- (d) Signs within the public right-of-way except as permitted in this Article.

Section 13.6 Procedural Requirements

- 13.6.1** Permits required: No sign shall be constructed, located, or placed until a permit is issued as required under *Section 13.12: Table of Permitted Signs*. Applications shall be filed, processed, reviewed, and acted upon pursuant to *ARTICLE 15: Administrative Procedures*.
- 13.6.2** Signage plan: For any lot for which the owner or tenant proposes to erect 1 or more signs requiring a permit, the owner or tenant shall submit with the application for approval a signage plan containing the following:
 - A.** An accurate plot plan of the lot at such scale as the Town may reasonably require.
 - B.** Location of lot lines, buildings, parking lots, driveways, and landscaped areas in relation to all signs.
 - C.** An accurate illustration of the design, dimensions, and location of each existing and proposed sign of any type, whether requiring a permit or not. Incidental signs, temporary signs, and signs not regulated by this Ordinance need not be shown.
 - D.** Computation of the maximum total sign area, the maximum area for individual signs, the height of signs, and the number of freestanding signs allowed on the lots included in the plan under this Ordinance.
 - E.** The name of the property owner and sign owner.

Section 13.7 Exempted Signs:

The following signs are exempted from the permitting requirements of this Article:

- 13.7.1** Signs not visible from the exterior of a building or structure;
- 13.7.2** Temporary holiday decorations with no commercial message;
- 13.7.3** Hand carried signs;
- 13.7.4** Flags sanctioned by the federal, state, or local government.
- 13.7.5** Government signs posting legal notices, identifying public property or regulating traffic.
- 13.7.6** Warning signs for authorized work within a public right-of-way.
- 13.7.7** Information signs of utilities regarding poles, lines, or facilities.
- 13.7.8** Temporary yard sale, estate sale, open house and similar signs provided that:
 - A.** The sign does not exceed a sign area of 4 square feet.
 - B.** The sign is placed at least 5 feet from the street pavement.
 - C.** The sign is displayed no more than 7 days before to the event and is removed within 24 hours following the event.

Section 13.8 Signs permitted in the public right-of-way

No sign is permitted in public right-of-way except:

- (a) Government signs.
- (b) Informational signs of a public utility regarding poles, lines, pipes, or facilities.
- (c) Warning signs for authorized work within the public right-of-way.
- (d) Temporary special event banners if approved by the Town and NCDOT if required.
- (e) Other signs as permitted by the Town of Princeton⁴

Section 13.9 Regulations For Temporary Signs

Temporary signs may be permitted as provided for under *Section 13.12: Table of Permitted Signs*, subject to the restrictions of this Section.

13.9.1 Construction signs: Temporary construction signs that comply with the following:

- A.** Signs shall be located on the building site where construction is actively taking place.
- B.** The maximum number of signs permitted on a site is 1 sign per street frontage.
- C.** The maximum area of the sign shall be 32 square feet, and the maximum height shall be 8 feet.
- D.** The minimum setback shall be 15 feet from all property lines.
- E.** The sign shall be non-illuminated.
- F.** The sign shall be removed within 7 days after a certificate of compliance or final plat approval is issued.

13.9.2 Special events sign:

- A.** Special events signs may be permitted as required by this article.
- B.** Signs shall pertain to special events such as grand openings, business closing, special observances, functions, and the like.
- C.** Banners, pennants, and steamers must be securely attached to a building or other permanent structures.
- D.** The maximum sign area of each sign is 40 square feet.
- E.** Signs shall be displayed for no more than 10 days in any 3-month period, and shall be removed within 48 hours of the conclusion of the special event being advertised.

- 13.9.3** Real estate signs: Temporary real estate signs shall meet the following standards:
- A.** The maximum sign area shall be 12 feet, and the maximum sign height shall be 4 feet.
 - B.** Real estate signs shall be nonilluminated
 - C.** The sign shall be displayed only while the property upon which it is placed is available for lease or sale. Signs shall be removed no later than 7 days after the close of sale or lease.

- 13.9.4** Political signs: Temporary political signs are subject to the following requirements:
- A.** The sign shall be displayed for no more than thirty (30)¹ prior to a primary election or referendum.
 - B.** The maximum sign area shall be 4 feet and the maximum height shall be 6 feet.
 - C.** The maximum number of signs per lot shall be 1 per political office or issue.
 - D.** All signs shall be removed within 5 days after the election or referendum.

Section 13.10 Regulation For On-Premise Signs

- 13.10.1** Home occupation signs: Home occupation signs are subject to the following restrictions:
- A.** The maximum number of signs shall be 1 per dwelling in which a home occupation is conducted.
 - B.** The sign shall contain only the name of the permitted occupation.
 - C.** The maximum sign area is 6 square feet. The sign shall be mounted flat on the wall of the house facing the street

- 13.10.2** Bulletin Boards: Billboard signs are subject to the following restrictions:
- A.** Bulletin boards are permitted on the premises of religious and public institutions.
 - B.** The maximum number of signs permitted shall be 1 per religious or public institution.
 - C.** Signs shall not exceed an area of 15 square feet, and placed not less than 15 feet from any property line.
 - D.** The information contained on the sign shall be of general interest to the public. The sign shall contain no commercial message.

- 13.10.3** Memorial signs: Memorial signs, where permitted, are subject to the following restrictions.
- A.** Shall only provide information pertaining to the name of buildings and date of construction.
 - B.** Shall be cut into masonry surface or constructed of metal and affixed flat against a building.

13.10.4 Nameplate signs: Nameplate signs where permitted, are subject to the following restrictions

- A.** Each principal building shall be permitted 1 nameplate sign per street frontage.
- B.** The maximum sign area per sign shall be 3 square feet.
- C.** Sign shall be mounted flat against a wall or door, or hung from a mailbox or lamppost.

13.10.5 Subdivision and development signs:

- A.** Shall be subject to the approval of the Town or NCDOT.
- B.** Sign displays only the name of the subdivision.
- C.** The maximum number of signs per entrance is 1 sign with a maximum sign area of 12 square feet, or 2 signs with a maximum sign area of 9 square feet per sign.
- D.** The maximum sign height is 8 feet.
- E.** The minimum setback from street pavement is 5 feet.
- F.** The signs shall be maintained by a homeowners association, merchants association, or other parties identified as the sign owners.

13.10.6 Directional signs:

- A.** The maximum sign area shall be 6 square feet, and the maximum height shall be 4 feet.
- B.** Other than an identifying logo, contents shall be limited to information providing directions on the site that the sign is located, including entrance and exit signs and parking. These signs shall contain no commercial message.

13.10.7 On-premise advertising signs:

- A.** Ground sign:
 - 1. The maximum number of ground signs per lot shall be 1 sign per street frontage.
 - 2. The maximum sign area for signs not fronting on Highway 70 shall be 200 square feet, and the maximum height is 35 feet.
 - 3. The maximum area of signs located in a C3, I1, or I2 zoning district and fronting on Highway 70 is 600 square feet, and the maximum height shall be 100 feet.
- B.** Attached signs:
 - 1. Wall signs shall be mounted against the wall of buildings but not painted directly on the walls; shall not exceed an area of 2 square feet of area per lineal foot of the wall; and shall not project more than 12 inches from the face of the wall.

2. Each establishment is allowed 1 projecting sign per street frontage. Projecting signs shall not exceed a sign area of 24 square feet, the height shall not exceed the height of the building upon which the sign is attached, and shall have a vertical clearance of at least 9 feet from the sidewalk or ground.
3. Window signs shall be placed on the inside of the window, and shall cover no more than 25 percent of the glass area or pane on which the sign is displayed.

C. Canopy or Awning signs:

1. The sign shall cover no more than 30 percent of face of the awning or canopy on which the sign is affixed.
2. Letters shall be no more than 12 inches in height.
3. The height of the sign shall not extend above the top of the face or valance of the awning or canopy upon which the sign is located.

Section 13.11 Regulation Of Billboards

13.11.1 Repeal of Conflicting Ordinances: All ordinances or parts of the zoning ordinance that conflict or are inconsistent with the provisions of this Section are hereby repealed.

13.11.2 Districts Allowed: Billboards are allowed under a special use permit within 75 feet of the US 70 Highway right-of-way in C3-H, I-1, and I-2 zoning districts, and are subject to the requirements of this Section.

13.11.3 Expiration of Existing Certificates: If construction has not begun on billboards permitted prior to the effective date of this Ordinance, the permit shall expire within 6 months from the date of issuance unless an application for extension is filed and is approved by the Town Board.

13.11.4 Billboard Size:

- A.** The maximum sign area of any billboard, including extensions, shall be 400 square feet.
- B.** The maximum height of all billboards shall be 35 feet *above adjoining pavement*⁵.

13.11.5 Spacing Requirement:

- A.** No billboard shall be located within 750 *linear*⁵ feet *on the same side of the road*⁶ from another billboard or off-premise advertising sign.
- B.** *The minimum distance between outdoor advertising signs and existing churches, schools, public institutions or residence shall be no less than 300 feet; however, if written permission is obtained from the owner of affected residence within the 300 foot minimum distance, allowing the outdoor advertising sign to be placed closer than 300 feet, then such permission to place the sign may be granted by the county as long as all other requirements of this article have been met*⁵.
- C.** No part of any billboard shall be located within 25 feet from any property line.

¹ Adopted October 1, 2017

13.11.6 Design, construction, and maintenance:

- A.** All billboard signs shall comply with applicable provisions of the NC Building Code and the NC Electrical Code.
- B.** Illuminated billboards shall be limited to billboards lighted from behind to silhouette letters and figures or illuminated internally. Spotlited billboards are permitted if no glare is cast that is disturbing to motorist, or that reflects on property in separate ownership. Except for time or temperature units, no flashing or neon billboards shall be permitted. Illuminated billboards or structures shall be placed to prevent illumination from being cast directly on any dwelling.
- C.** Billboard structures shall be constructed of metal or steel permanent materials and shall be permanently attached to the ground. Banners and flags shall be of a fire retardant material or treated to be fire retardant.
- D.** All signs shall be maintained in good structural condition, in compliance with all building and electrical codes, and in conformance with this Ordinance at all times⁵.
- E.** Automatic Changeable Facing Signs as defined and regulated by NCDOT under applicable NC Administrative Code 2E.0200 are permitted.⁵

13.11.7 Nonconforming billboards: If a nonconforming billboard is damaged more than 50 percent of its replacement costs, the replacement or repaired billboard shall comply with all ordinance requirements.

Section 13.12 Table Of Permitted Signs

The following table established districts in which a specific sign may be permitted pursuant to *ARTICLE 15: Administrative Procedures*. The letter “X” indicates districts in which a particular sign is a use by right and does not require a permit. The letter “P” indicates districts in which particular signs are a permitted use requiring only a zoning permit. The letter “S” indicates districts in which particular signs are permitted as a special use upon approval of the Board of Commissioners. A dash (-) indicates districts in which a particular sign is prohibited.

⁵ Adopted December 7, 2015

TYPE OF SIGN	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	C1-N	C2-D	C3-H	I1	I2	P
Signs within Public Right-of-way											
Government signs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Utility information sign	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Warning signs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subdivision signs and development signs	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Temporary Signs											
Construction signs	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Special events signs	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	X	X	X	X
Real estate signs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Political signs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
On-premise signs											
Home occupation signs	X	X	X	X	X	--	--	--	--	--	--
Bulletin board signs (For public or institutional uses only)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Memorial signs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nameplate signs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Directional signs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Advertising signs											
Ground sign for agricultural products not exceeding 20 square feet in area.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ground sign	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	P
Wall sign	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	P
Canopy or awning	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	P
Projecting sign	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	P
Window sign	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	P
Off-premise signs											
Billboard signs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	C	C	C	C

Section 13.13 Signs specific to designated downtown area⁴

- (a) A business may apply for a permit to lease wall space on the side or rear of the business for advertisement by other businesses, *located within the jurisdiction of this ordinance*, using signs mounted flat to the building.
- (b) The maximum size of each sign shall not exceed 15 total square feet in area.
- (c) The total space available for advertisement of other businesses shall not exceed one-third (1/3) of the total wall space the signs are mounted upon.
- (d) No permit shall be issued to any business that erects or attaches a new wall when it appears the sole purpose of the addition or attachment is to advertise for other businesses.

