

**Article X.
Signage.**

10.1 Purpose and Scope.

This section is intended to regulate and control signs and their placement throughout the Town of North Wilkesboro for the following purposes:

- (A) To provide a pleasing overall environmental setting and good community appearance, which is deemed vital to the continued economic attractiveness of the town;
- (B) To create a more productive, enterprising, professional business atmosphere;
- (C) To allow signs appropriate to the planned character and development of each zoning district;
- (D) To ensure that permitted signs do not become a hazard or nuisance;
- (E) To promote traffic safety;
- (F) To prevent business and advertising signs from conflicting with public safety signs; and
- (G) To protect and enhance the value of properties.

10.2 Applicability.

- (A) It shall be unlawful to construct, enlarge, modify, move or replace any sign or cause the same to be done, without first obtaining a sign permit for such sign from the town or its designee.
- (B) Notwithstanding the above, changing or replacing the permanent copy on an existing lawful sign shall not require a permit, provided the copy change does not change the nature of the sign so as to render it in violation of this ordinance.

10.3 General Provisions.

The following regulations shall apply to all signs.

(A) Construction Standards.

- (1) All signs shall be constructed and installed in accordance with the applicable provisions of the North Carolina State Building Code.
- (2) All temporary signs shall be constructed of materials and printed on by inks capable of withstanding normal weather conditions.
- (3) All signs, except for banners, flags, temporary signs, and window signs conforming in all respects with the requirements of this ordinance shall be constructed of permanent materials and shall be permanently attached to the ground, a building, or another structure by direct attachment to a rigid wall, frame, or structure.

(B) Electrical Standards.

All illuminated signs shall be installed in accordance with the applicable provisions of the North Carolina State Electrical Code and all detached signs shall be illuminated by an underground electrical source.

(C) Maintenance of Signs.

All signs shall be maintained in good structural and aesthetic condition. Deficiencies such as chipped paint, broken plastic, missing letters and exposed light bulbs shall be evidence of a lack of maintenance.

(D) Obstructions Prohibited.

No sign shall be placed so as to obstruct the clear sight triangle at a street intersection nor shall any sign obstruct the view of motorists entering or leaving an off-street parking area.

(E) Relation to Other Building Elements.

(1) Signs shall relate in their placement and size to other building elements without obscuring building elements such as windows, cornices, or decorative details, except that signs may be placed on the inside of windows.

(2) Sign material, style and color shall complement the building facade in terms of design, scale, color, and materials.

(3) Individual shop signs in a single storefront shall relate to each other in terms of design, size, color, placement on the building, and lettering style.

(4) Signs placed on the inside of the window areas shall conceal no more than forty percent of the area of the window on which the signs are located.

(F) Sign Lighting.

(1) Neon, argon and similar lighting fixtures shall not be used anywhere on the exterior of a building; however, such signs if non-flashing and non-moving may be mounted on the inside of store windows.

(2) Signs shall be lighted with indirect light sources (e.g. backlighting); knockout signs are encouraged. Ground-mounted and/or wall-mounted floodlights may also be used if the light is directed only on the sign and not onto adjacent properties, roadways, and the night sky and the light fixtures are fully shielded from view through the use of landscaping.

(G) Sign Height Computation.

Signs shall be computed as the lower of: 1) existing grade prior to construction, or 2) the newly established grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign. The calculation of the height of any sign placed upon a berm or mound shall include the height of the berm or mound.

(H) Sign Area Computation.

The area of a sign face (which is also the sign area of a wall sign or other sign with only one face) shall be computed by means of the smallest 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 framework, bracing, or decorative fence or wall when such fence or wall otherwise meets zoning ordinance regulations and is clearly incidental to the display itself.

(I) Sign Area Computation for Multi-faced Signs. The sign area for a sign with multiple faces shall be computed by adding together the area of all sign faces visible from any one point. When a sign is composed of two or more sign faces, only one of which can be viewed from any one point, and when such sign faces are part of the same structure, the sign area shall be computed by the measurement of one of the faces.

(J) Forfeiture of Illegal Signs Placed On or Over Public Property. Any sign installed or placed on or over public property, except in conformance with the requirements of this section, shall be forfeited to the public and be subject to confiscation and disposal. In addition to other remedies provided by this section and the Town Code of Ordinances, the town shall have the right to recover from the sign owner and/or installer the full costs of removal and disposal of such sign(s). The town shall reserve the right at confiscation to hold the illegal signs for a period of 5 business days at the town garage, or other facility designated by the Town Manager, whereby the owner make receive them. After 5 business days, the signs may be disposed of.

(K) Digital/Electronic Reader or Message Boards. These signs shall not be allowed in any residential zone or in the CBD, NB and OI districts. However, they shall be allowed in all other commercial and industrial districts at a rate of one sign per establishment. Area computation for these signs shall be included in the total sign area permitted in the underlying zoning district. Message frequency shall be limited to one message every five minutes and shall be solid state and shall not flash, blink, scroll, or be animated in any way. Digital/electronic reader or message board signs that are less than 16 sq. ft. in area, however, shall be allowed to change a solid-state message every three seconds and be allowed to scroll as the only animation feature allowed.
(amended 3-4-08)

10.4 Sign Placement.

The following provisions shall apply to the placement of all signs in all districts.

(A) In General.

(1) Signs must be located entirely on private property, unless otherwise permitted by this section.

(2) No sign may be located so that it blocks the sight triangle at any driveway or public street intersection.

(B) Wall Signs.

(1) Wall mounted signs shall not extend above the eave or parapet of any building.

(C) Freestanding Signs.

- (1) All parts of freestanding signs must be set back behind the property line.
- (2) No freestanding sign shall be located closer than fifteen feet from another structure on the same zoning lot.
- (3) No portion of a freestanding sign, including projections, may extend into or over an existing public right-of-way, unless expressly permitted by this article or the Town Board on Town right-of-way.

(D) Temporary Signs.

- (1) Temporary signs shall be located on private property unless expressly permitted by this section to be posted on public property.
- (2) All temporary signs shall be anchored, attached, or otherwise affixed to a structure or support so that the sign cannot be easily dislodged by strong winds or heavy rains.

(E) Billboards Signs

- (1) Billboard signs are permitted only in the General Industrial, Light Industrial, and Highway Business Districts. In the Highway Business District, billboard signs are permitted only on property directly adjacent or adjoining Highway 421 Bypass, and such signs shall be directed toward traffic on Highway 421 Bypass.
- (2) No billboard sign shall be permitted closer than one hundred (100) feet to a lot zoned for residential purposes or to a residential use.
- (3) No billboard sign shall be placed or constructed within one thousand (1,000) linear feet of another billboard sign on the same side of the road.
- (4) Only one billboard sign shall be allowed for each two hundred (200) feet of lot frontage in single ownership.
- (5) Billboard signs attached to a building structure shall not be higher than the wall to which they are attached. Outdoor advertising signs shall not be mounted on the rooftop of any building.
- (6) Billboard signs may be illuminated, provided such illumination is placed and shielded so as to prevent the direct rays of illumination from being cast upon neighboring lots and/or vehicles approaching on a public way from any direction.
- (7) Billboard signs shall not be permitted within a five hundred (500) foot radius of the intersecting centerline within an interchange on a limited access highway.
- (8) Angled projections shall not exceed 30 degrees.

(9) Where digital billboard faces are to be used, the message shall change no more than once per hour and shall not be animated, flash, blink, or scroll in any way or manner. Illumination

(F) Multi-Tenant Signage.

- (1) Signs on the premises of multi-tenant developments (e.g. shopping centers, business parks, etc.) are regulated as follows. Multi-tenant developments include two (2) or more of any separate and distinct non-residential permitted establishments, which are located on the same premises. Multi-tenant signs are permitted only in the General Business, Highway Business, General Industrial, and Light Industrial Districts. Multi-tenant signs may be substituted for, but not in addition to other freestanding signs. Multi-tenant signs shall not be allowed on the same premises as billboard signs.
 - (a) Type: Freestanding on premise.
 - (b) Number: Freestanding one (1), except two (2) shall be permitted if the development has direct vehicular access from two (2) or more public streets. If two are allowed the said signs shall be freestanding signs and they shall be located at least one hundred (100) feet apart and front along the two separate streets and not along the same street.
 - (c) Maximum Area: The maximum total allowable sign area shall be determined by multiplying the total number of tenant spaces located on the premises times twenty-five (25) square feet. In no case shall any multi-tenant sign exceed one hundred twenty-five (125) square feet.
 - (d) Maximum Height: Multi-tenant signs shall not exceed fifteen (15) feet in height for signs with five tenant spaces or less. Multi-tenant signs with more than five tenant spaces shall not exceed twenty (20) feet in height.
 - (e) Multi-tenant signage must be coordinated in terms of colors and fonts with exception of trademark colors, fonts and logos.
 - (f) A multi-tenant sign plan shall be submitted at the time of application of a multi-tenant sign. The sign plan shall depict sign material, height, individual panel sizes, dimensions, and total sign area. Each tenant space used in computation of the maximum sign area shall be represented on the sign plan. No individual sign panel shall be larger than the maximum sign area allowed by the underlying zoning district.
 - (g) All signage on the premises, including building signage and billboard signs, must be in conformance with all current sign regulations upon installation of a multi-tenant sign.
- (2) Any sign not legible or easily noticeable from public property or a public right-of-way and obviously not intended to attract the attention of the public is exempt, however; for individual zoning lots greater than 25 acres consisting of exclusively multitenant usage, one ground-mounted sign may be allowed for each individual business provided that:

- (a) The maximum sign height shall be no more than 5 feet;
- (b) The maximum square footage shall be no more than 15 square feet; and
- (c) The sign shall be located in front of the front façade of the building and within the landscaped area.

10.5 Permanent Signs by Zoning District.

Signs shall be permitted and prohibited within certain zoning districts as follows:

Permanent Signs By Sign Type and Zoning District

SIGN TYPE	R-20	R-10	R-6	MF-CD	OI	NB	CBD	GB	HB	LI	GI
Canopy/Awning	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Directional/Incidental ¹	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Directory	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Flag	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Freestanding	S ²	S ²	S ²	P	-	-	-	S	S	S	S
Marquee	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-
Monument	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Billboard/Outdoor Advertising	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	S
Planned Development	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Portable	-	-	-	-	P	-	-	P	P	P	P
Projecting	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-
Suspended	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Wall	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Window	-	-	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

¹ Some signs in this category may be permitted without a permit

² Only permitted for nonconforming businesses zoned residential

P = permitted without a permit

S = Permitted only upon issuance of a valid sign permit

“-“ = not permitted

Sign types not specifically listed in this table are not permitted

10.6 Sign Height.

The following provisions shall apply to the height of all signs.

(A) Supporting elements of freestanding signs shall not extend above the sign face and shall be included in the measurement of sign height.

(B) Maximum sign height shall be limited by the type of sign and the zoning district in which it is located, as follows:

Maximum Sign Height by Sign Type (in feet)

SIGN TYPE	R-20	R-10	R-6	MF-CD	OI	NB	CBD	GB	HB	LI	GI
Canopy/Awning	-	-	-	-	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Directional/Incidental	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Directory	-	-	-	-	6	8	8	8	8	8	8
Flag	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Freestanding	5	5	5	5	5	-	-	15	15	15	15
Marquee	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	-	-	-	-
Monument	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	8	8	8	8
Billboard/Outdoor Advertising	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	30	30
Planned Development	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	15	15	8	8
Portable	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5	5	5	5
Projecting	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	-	-	-	-
Suspended	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	-	-	-	-
Wall	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Window	-	-	-	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

*Shall not exceed twice the maximum building height permitted or 40 feet, whichever is less.

10.7 Number of Signs Permitted.

The number of signs by sign type permitted on an individual zoning lot shall be as follows:

Maximum Number of Signs Per Sign Type Per Zoning Lot

SIGN TYPE	R-20	R-10	R-6	MF-CD	OI	NB	CBD	GB	HB	LI	GI
Canopy/Awning	-	-	-	-	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹
Directional/Incidental	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²	2 ²
Directory	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Flag	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Freestanding	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1
Marquee	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Monument*	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²
Billboard/Outdoor Advertising	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4
Planned Development	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²
Portable	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	1
Projecting	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 ¹	-	-	-	-
Suspended	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 ¹	1 ¹	1 ¹	-	-
Wall	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ²	1 ³	1 ³	1 ²	1 ²
Window	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

¹Per storefront.

²Per street front or development entrance.

³Up to three wall signs may be allowed if the total sign area of all wall signs combined does not exceed the maximum area requirements in Section 10.8 for wall signs.

⁴See Section 10.4(E).

* A maximum of one (1) freestanding sign may be substituted for one (1) monument sign in the GB, HB, LI and GI zoning districts provided the total number of monument and freestanding signs does not exceed the number of monument signs permitted for the site.

10.8 Sign Area by Zoning District.

The amount of sign area permitted for each sign on a zoning lot shall be as follows:

Maximum Sign Area Per Sign Per Zoning Lot (in square feet)

SIGN TYPE	R-20	R-10	R-6	MF-CD	OI	NB	CBD	GB	HB	LI	GI
Canopy/Awning	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Directional/Incidental	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Directory	-	-	-	-	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Flag	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Freestanding	36	36	36	36	36	-	-	40	50	50	50
Marquee	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Monument	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	60	75	60	60
Billboard/Outdoor Advertising	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	300	300
Planned Development	36	36	36	32	64	64	64	64	64	64	64
Portable	-	-	-	-	32	-	-	32	32	32	32
Projecting	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Suspended	-	-	-	-	-	-	#	-	-	-	-
Wall	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Window	-	-	-	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

¹Shall not exceed 75% of the size of the marquee.

²Shall not exceed 25% of the wall area of the facade on which it is located.

³Shall not exceed 40% of the window area.

*Shall not exceed 50% of the canopy or awning.

#Shall not exceed 1/2 the size of the nearest window or door on the same building or facade.

10.9 Permanent Signs Limited.

(A) Notwithstanding Section 10.5 and in addition thereto, the following permanent signs shall be permitted without a sign permit.

- (1) Historical markers, regulatory signs, public interest signs, and warning signs erected and maintained by the town or state or an agent of such.
- (2) On-premises directional signs not exceeding four feet in height nor four square feet in area.
- (3) Identification signs not exceeding two square feet in area nor two feet in height.
- (4) Incidental signs.
- (5) Flags on permanent poles.
- (6) Any sign not legible or easily noticeable from public property or a public right-of-way and obviously not intended to attract the attention of the public.
- (7) Any public notice or warning required by a valid and applicable federal, state, or local law, regulation, or ordinance.
- (8) Traffic control signs on private property, the face of which meets Department of Transportation standards and which contain no commercial message of any kind.
- (9) Portable changeable copy signs are subject to all dimensional requirements in 10.5-10.8. All signs need to be outside the right-of-way and be maintained in good order including being free of mold, cracks, and/or any material defects. All signs need to be actively used at all times for advertising the business on-site.

(B) Notwithstanding Section 10.5 and in addition thereto, the following permanent signs shall be permitted upon the issuance of a valid sign permit.

- (1) Any sign not expressly listed as permitted without a permit shall require the issuance of a valid sign permit prior to installation.

10.10 Temporary Signs Limited.

(A) Temporary signs permitted without a permit. The following temporary signs are permitted without a sign permit in all zoning districts, but shall be in conformance with all other requirements of this ordinance.

- (1) Campaign or election signs shall be permitted provided that:
 - (a) All signs shall be installed no more than 60 days before an election or campaign and removed within seven days after the election or campaign for which they were made.
 - (b) No signs shall be permitted in the public right-of-way or on public property; excluding on election or primary days.
- (2) Real estate signs, excluding temporary development signs provided that:

- (a) Signs advertising all residential lots, buildings, units, or spaces for sale or for lease shall not exceed six square feet in area nor five feet in height.
- (b) Signs advertising all non-residential lots, buildings, units, or spaces for sale or for lease shall not exceed a sign face area of thirty-two square feet or exceed a height of six feet.
- (c) Only one sign per street front of the advertised property shall be erected.
- (d) Signs shall not be illuminated.
- (e) Signs shall be removed within seven days after the sale is closed or rent or lease transaction finalized.

(3) Construction signs are permitted provided that:

- (a) Signs located on residential lots, excluding multi-family sites, shall not exceed six square feet in area. The maximum height of such signs shall be six feet.
- (b) Signs for all multi-family development sites and nonresidential uses shall not exceed a sign face area of thirty-two square feet or a height of six feet.
- (c) Signs are confined to the site of construction.
- (d) Only one sign per street front of the property under construction shall be erected.
- (e) Signs shall not be illuminated.
- (f) Signs shall be removed within seven days after the completion of the project.

(4) Temporary farm products signs are permitted provided that:

- (a) Signs are located on the premises where the products are sold.
- (b) Signs advertising products produced on-site only.
- (c) Signs shall not exceed twenty-four square feet in area nor five feet in height.
- (d) Only one sign shall be erected.
- (e) Signs shall be removed within seven days of the termination of sale activities.

(5) Temporary special event signs or banners for religious, charitable, civic, fraternal, or similar organizations, are permitted provided that:

- (a) Signs shall not exceed thirty-two square feet in area nor five feet in height unless approved by the Town Manager for signs located on public property.
- (b) Signs shall be erected no sooner than fourteen days before and removed seven days after the event.

(6) Holiday lights and decorations.

(7) Any sign not legible or easily noticeable from public property or a public right-of-way and obviously not intended to attract the attention of the public.

(8) Any public notice or warning required by a valid and applicable federal, state, or local law, regulation, or ordinance.

(B) Temporary signs requiring a permit. Temporary signs permitted upon issuance of a valid sign permit shall be limited as follows:

(1) Temporary banners in commercial districts, provided that:

- (a) Only one banner per establishment shall be allowed at a time.
- (b) All banners shall be attached in total to a building wall or permanent canopy extending from a building.
- (c) No paper banners shall be allowed.
- (d) Banners shall be erected for a period not to exceed two weeks.
- (e) No more than six such signs per establishment shall be erected within a calendar year.
- (f) No banner shall extend above the second occupiable floor level of a building.

(2) Temporary off-premise signs or banners for special community events, open to the general public and sponsored by non-commercial civic, charitable, community, or similar organizations, provided that:

- (a) Temporary signs shall be located outside of the public right-of-way or at least eleven feet from the edge of any public street if the right-of-way cannot be determined.
- (b) Every temporary off-premise sign or banner shall be separated by a distance of four hundred feet from any other such temporary off-premise sign on the same side of a street, and by a distance of two hundred feet from any other sign on the opposite side of a street.
- (c) Nothing in this provision shall be construed to authorize the posting of such signs or banners upon trees, utility poles, traffic control signs, lights or devices in any place or manner prohibited by the provisions herein, nor on private property without written consent of the owner.
- (d) Any temporary sign not expressly permitted without a permit

10.11 Prohibited Signs.

Notwithstanding Section 6.5 and in addition thereto, the following signs, both permanent and temporary, are prohibited in all zoning districts:

(A) Signs extending into the public right-of-way other than those expressly permitted by this article or otherwise approved by the Board of Commissioners, if placed along public streets.

(B) Roof signs.

(C) Flashing, fluttering, swinging, wind-activated, rotating, and animated signs.

(D) Any sign which obstructs the view of motorists, pedestrians, or cyclists using any street, sidewalk, bike path, or driveway, or which obstructs the approach to any street intersection or railroad crossing, or which interferes with the effectiveness of any traffic sign, device, or signal.

(E) Illuminated or highly reflective signs which hamper the vision of motorists or cyclists.

(F) Any sign that resembles traffic signals, traffic signs, or emergency vehicle lights and any other sign not erected by a public authority which may be erroneously construed as governmental signs or emergency warning signs.

(G) Beacons, pennants, and strings of lights not permanently mounted to a rigid background, except those permitted as temporary signs.

(H) Any sign that interferes with free passage from or obstructs any fire escape, downspout, window, door, stairway, ladder, or opening intended as a means of ingress or egress or providing light or air except for permitted window signs.

(I) Any sign placed on any curb, sidewalk, post, pole, hydrant, bridge, tree, or other structure or surface located on, over, or across any public street right-of-way or property unless expressly authorized by this article or the Board of Commissioners.

(J) Off-premises signs advertising adult establishments.

(K) Off-premises signs on parcels of land that are zoned residential, used primarily for residential purposes, or which do not include an active permitted use as established by this article.

(L) Inflatable devices; excluding balloons.

(M) High intensity searchlights.

(N) Any object displayed in a manner which is intended to attract attention to a site, product, or event.

(O) Any sign listed as not permitted in Section 10.5

(P) Any sign not expressly permitted by this article.

10.12 Enforcement of Regulations.

Any sign, structure, or other form of advertising defined as a sign herein that is erected or placed anywhere in North Wilkesboro after adoption of this ordinance that is not in compliance with the provisions of this section shall be subject to the enforcement provisions outlined in Article IV of the North Wilkesboro Zoning Ordinance.