

**Part A. Purpose**

Signs are herein regulated in the interest of promoting traffic safety, safeguarding public health and comfort, facilitating police and fire protection, preventing adverse community appearance and the overcrowding of land, and protecting and promoting the character of the area in which they are located. In general, it is intended that signs of a general commercial nature be prohibited in areas where commercial activities are prohibited and that signs in less restrictive business and industrial areas be regulated to the extent necessary to protect or improve the character of the area and to conserve property values. Further, that because aesthetic value of the total environment does affect economic values of the community, and the unrestricted proliferation of signs can and does detract from the economic value of the community, it is the intent of this chapter to provide limiting controls, where necessary, to preserve or improve and upgrade community scenic, economic, and aesthetic values.

**Part B. Permit Required for Signs**

- 1) Except as otherwise provided in Part C (Signs Excluded from Regulation) and Part D (Certain Temporary Signs: Permit Exceptions and Additional Regulations), no sign may be constructed, erected, moved, enlarged, illuminated or substantially altered except in accordance with the provisions of this section. Mere repainting or changing the message of a sign shall not, in and of itself, be considered a substantial alteration.
- 2) Signs exempted under the provisions referenced in paragraph (1) above may be constructed, erected, moved, enlarged, illuminated or substantially altered only in accordance with a sign permit issued by the zoning administrator.
  - a) Sign permit applications and sign permits shall be governed by the same provisions of this chapter applicable to zoning permits.
  - b) In the case of a lot occupied or intended to be occupied by multiple business enterprises (e.g., a shopping center), sign permits shall be issued in the name of the lot owner or his agent rather than in the name of the individual business enterprise requesting a particular sign.
- 3) Additional permit requirements that are applicable for billboard permits are specified in Part J (Billboards) of this Section.

**Part C. Signs Excluded From Regulation**

The following signs are exempt from regulation under this chapter except for those stated in Part O (Miscellaneous Restrictions and Prohibitions).

- 1) Signs not exceeding four square feet in area that are customarily associated with residential use and that are not of a commercial nature, such as (I) signs giving property

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identification names or numbers or names of occupants, (ii) signs on mailboxes or newspaper tubes, and (iii) signs posted on private property relating to private parking or warning the public against trespassing or danger from animals.

- 2) Signs erected by or on behalf of or pursuant to the authorization of a governmental body, including legal notices, identification and informational signs, and traffic, directional, or regulatory signs.
- 3) Official signs of a noncommercial nature erected by public utilities.
- 4) Flags or insignia of any governmental or nonprofit organization when not displayed in connection with a commercial promotion or as an advertising device.
- 5) Integral decorative or architectural features of buildings or works of art, so long as such features or works do not contain letters, trademarks, moving parts, or lights.
- 6) Signs directing and guiding traffic on private property that do not exceed four square feet each.
- 7) Church bulletin boards, church identification signs, and church directional signs that do not exceed one per abutting street and 15 square feet in area and that are not illuminated.
- 8) Signs painted on or otherwise permanently attached to currently licensed motor vehicles that are not primarily used as signs.
- 9) Signs proclaiming religious, political, or other noncommercial messages (other than those regulated by Part D (1)(e)) that do not exceed one per abutting street and 15 square feet in area and that are not illuminated.
- 10) Sign face replacement utilizing an existing frame/sign.

### **Part D. Certain Temporary Signs: Permit Exemptions and Additional Regulations**

1) The following temporary signs are permitted without a zoning, special-use, or sign permit. However, such signs shall conform to the requirements set forth below as well as all other applicable requirements of this chapter except those contained in Part H (Total Sign Surface Area) and Part J (Number of Freestanding Signs).

- A. In residential zoning districts, temporary signs erected for the purpose of sale, lease, or rent of the real estate on which the sign is located (including buildings), may not exceed six (6) square feet in area. In non-residential districts, such signs may not exceed 15 square feet in area. All such signs shall be removed immediately after sale, lease, or rental of the property on which the sign is located and where applicable, before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued for the subject structure. For lots of less than five (5)

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acres, a single sign on each street frontage may be erected. For lots of five (5) acres or more in area and having a street frontage in excess of 400 feet, a second sign may be erected.

- B. Temporary construction site identification signs may be erected during the construction period of a structure in all zoning districts, for the purpose of identifying the project, the owner or developer, architect, engineer, contractor and subcontractors, funding sources and related information including but not limited to sale or leasing information. Such signs may not exceed 32 square feet in area. All such signs shall not be erected prior to the issuance of a building permit, and must be removed from the subject site before the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
- C. Temporary signs attached temporarily to the interior of a building window or glass door. Such signs, individually or collectively, may not cover more than 75 percent of the surface area of the transparent portion of the window or door to which they are attached.
- D. Displays, including lighting, erected in connection with the observance of holidays. Such signs shall be removed within 10 days following the holidays.
- E. Signs erected in connection with elections or political campaigns. Such signs shall be removed within three (3) days following the election or conclusion of the campaign.
- F. Signs erected in connection with festivals, special events, and fund-raising campaigns for civic clubs and other bona-fide non-profit organizations. Such signs shall be removed within three (3) days following the conclusion of the event or fund-raising campaign.
- G. Banner signs and advertising inflatables (balloons) indicating that a special event such as a grand opening, fair, carnival, circus, festival, or similar event is to take place on the lot where the sign is located. No more than two (2) such signs may be displayed per lot or business premises at any given time.
- H. Banner signs indicating "Welcome Home" or similar signs pertaining to the return of military forces from deployment elsewhere. Such signs may not be erected more than five days before and must be removed within five days after the return of the specified military unit.
- I. Flags, other than those described in Part C (4), of a commercial or non-commercial nature. Such flags may be displayed for indefinite periods of time provided that they remain in good physical condition and are not tattered, torn or otherwise deteriorated to the point that they become aesthetically detrimental by virtue of their poor physical condition. In no case may such flags extend over or otherwise encroach upon public rights-of-way.

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J. Temporary signs not covered in the foregoing categories, so long as such signs meet the following restrictions:

- I. Not more than one such sign may be located on any lot.
- II. No such sign may exceed four square feet in surface area.
- III. Such sign may not be displayed for longer than three consecutive days nor more than 10 days out of any 365-day period.

2) Other temporary signs not listed in subpart (1) above shall be regarded and treated in all respects as permanent signs, except that (as provided in Part H) temporary signs shall not be included in calculating the total amount of permitted sign area.

### **Part E. Special Provisions for Certain Signs**

#### 1) Schools and Church Signs

- a) Signs located within residential zoning districts.
  - i. Freestanding signs: Shall be a monument type sign not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in area and eight (8) feet in height. The maximum number of signs allowed shall be one (1) per street frontage.
  - ii. Wall signs: Shall be in accordance with Part H. of this ordinance.
- b) Signs located within nonresidential zoning districts shall not be subject to (a) above.

#### 2) Shopping Center and Associated Outparcel Signs

- a) Freestanding signs:
  - (1) At the primary entrance to a shopping center, one 80 square foot (maximum) monument style sign, comprised of no more than 6 panels is allowed. The square footage distribution between the 6 panels shall be as follows:
    - a) First (top) panel shall not exceed 30 square feet and shall be used to identify the name of the development;
    - b) Second through Sixth panel shall not to exceed 10 square feet each and may be used for individual tenant identification.
    - c) In no case may any portion of supporting structural elements of the sign exceed 20 feet in width nor be erected to a height greater than fifteen (15) feet. Sign height is measured from ground level at the base of the sign structure.

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- (2) At any secondary entrance to a shopping center, no more than two, one sided monument signs are allowed. This identification sign may be constructed in lieu of the 6 panel sign at the primary entrance if an owner/developer so chooses.
  - a) These signs are only allowed to identify the name of the development. The single side of such sign face may not exceed 32 square feet.
  - b) In no case may any portion of supporting structural elements of the sign exceed 20 feet in width nor be erected to a height greater than eight (8) feet. Sign height is measured from ground level at the base of the sign structure.
- (3) For outparcels, one (1) fifty-five (55) square foot monument style sign, comprised of no more than four (4) panels, is allowed. Each sign located on an out parcel shall be subject to the following restrictions:
  - a) No panel shall be less than ten (10) square feet;
  - b) Other restrictions in this Part notwithstanding, if an outparcel is bordered by two (2) or more public streets, the outparcel may have one (1) monument style sign along each side of the outparcel bordered by such street(s), provided each sign shall be subject to the other requirements set forth herein. In no case, shall any such sign be less than one hundred and fifty (150) feet from any other such sign; and
  - c) In no case may any portion of the supporting structural elements of any outparcel sign exceed fifteen (15) feet in width nor be erected to a height of greater than ten (10) feet. Sign height is measured from ground level at the base of the sign structure.
  - d) No more than seventy-five percent (75%) of the total sign surface area allowed may consist of an electronic message board.
- (4) All shopping center and outparcel signs located near street intersections shall be situated outside of the “site triangle” as depicted in the Manual of Standard Specifications and Design (MSSD) for the purpose of ensuring traffic safety.
  - b) Wall signs:

Subject to Part H below.
- 3) College and University Signage when located on 30 or more acres housing 10 or more buildings.
  - a) Signs shall be coordinated in terms of design features.
  - b) Freestanding Signs:

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- 1) Primary entrance(s)/driveway(s) are allowed to have a monument sign(s) on one or both sides of the entrance/driveway.
  - a. These signs identify the college or university. A single side of such sign face may not exceed two hundred fifty (250) square feet.
  - b. In no case may any portion of supporting structural elements of the sign exceed a height greater than 15 feet. Sign height is measured from ground level at the base of the sign structure.
- 2) Secondary entrance(s)/driveway(s) are allowed to have a monument sign(s) on one or both sides of the entrance/driveway.
  - a. These signs identify the college or university. A single side of such sign face may not exceed one hundred fifty (150) square feet.
  - b. In no case may any portion of supporting structural elements of the sign exceed a height greater than 15 feet. Sign height is measured from ground level at the base of the sign structure.
- c. Wall Signs:

Subject to Part H below
- d. Signs Excluded from Regulation:
  - 1) Signs directing and/or guiding traffic on private property that do not exceed 16 square feet.
  - 2) Interior campus and/or directional signs.
  - 3) Alphanumeric parking lot identification that does exceed 8 square feet.

### **Part F. Determining the Number of Signs**

- 1) For the purpose of determining the number of signs, a sign shall be considered to be a single display surface or display device containing elements organized, related, and composed to form a unit. Where matter is displayed in a random manner without organized relationship of elements, each element shall be considered a single sign.
- 2) A two-sided or multi-sided sign shall be regarded as one sign so long as:
  - a. With respect to double face (back to back) signs, the distance between the backs of each face of the sign does not exceed three feet.

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### **Part G. Computation of Sign Area**

1) The surface area of a sign shall be computed by including the entire area within a single, continuous, rectilinear perimeter of not more than eight straight lines, or a circle or an ellipse, enclosing 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 or bracing that is clearly incidental to the display itself.

2) If the sign consists of more than one section or module, all of the area, including that between sections or modules, shall be included in the computation of the sign area.

3) With respect to two-sided, multi-sided, or three-dimensional signs, the sign surface area shall be computed by including the total of all sides designed to attract attention or communicate information that can be seen at any one time by a person from one vantage point. Without otherwise limiting the generality of the foregoing:

- a. The sign surface area of a double faced, back to back sign shall be calculated by using the area of only one side of such sign, so long as the distance between the backs of such signs does not exceed three feet.
- b. The sign surface area of a double faced sign constructed in the form of a "V" shall be calculated by using the area of only one side of such sign (the larger side if there is a size difference), so long as the angle of the "V" does not exceed 30 degrees and at no point does the distance between the backs of such sides exceed five feet.

### **Part H. Wall Sign Surface Area**

- 1) Subject to the other provisions of this Section, the maximum wall sign surface area permitted on any building in a non-residential district shall be determined as follows:
- 2) Front Primary Elevation: The maximum sign surface area permitted on the front elevation of an individual building shall not exceed two (2) square feet of sign surface area per linear foot of building frontage. In the case of a multi-tenant building the store front shall be used as building frontage.
- 3) Secondary Elevations (side and rear): The maximum sign surface area permitted on the side and rear elevations of a building shall not exceed one (1) square feet of sign surface area per linear foot of building frontage.
- 4) Electronic message boards are not permitted as wall signs.
- 5) The provisions of this Part shall not apply to billboards. The placement and dimensional requirements of billboards shall be governed by Part K of this Section.

**Part I. Freestanding Sign Surface Area**

- 1) For purposes of this Section, a side of a freestanding sign is any plane or flat surface included in the calculation of the total sign surface area as provided in Part G. For example, wall signs typically have one side. Freestanding signs typically have two sides (back to back), although four-sided and other multi-sided signs are also common.
- 2) A single side of a freestanding sign may not exceed 0.75 square feet in surface area for every linear foot of street frontage along the street toward which such sign is primarily oriented. In addition, the maximum total surface area for a single side of a freestanding sign shall not exceed 150 square feet. Maximum percentage of the total allowed sign area for an electronic message board shall not exceed 30 percent. A recent survey (within 3 years), most current deed or other acceptable method as determined by the Development Services Director will be utilized for determining the amount of street frontage.
- 3) Whenever a lot is situated such that it has no street frontage on any lot boundary and an applicant desires to install on such a lot a freestanding sign that is oriented toward a street, then the total freestanding sign surface area permitted on that lot shall be the sign surface area that would be allowed if the lot boundary fronted on such street. The applicant shall be restricted to using only one street for determining the total permitted sign surface area. The applicant shall be given the opportunity to determine the one street used in this calculation.
- 4) With respect to freestanding signs that have no discernible sides, such as spheres or other shapes not composed of flat planes, no such freestanding sign may exceed the maximum total surface area allowed for a single side of a freestanding sign.
- 5) The provisions of this Part shall not apply to billboards. The placement and dimensional requirements of billboards shall be governed by Part K of this Section.

**Part J. Number of Freestanding Signs**

- 1) Except as authorized by this Part, no development may have more than one freestanding sign.
- 2) If a development is located on a corner lot that has at least 100 feet of frontage on each of the two intersecting public streets, then the development may have not more than one freestanding sign along each side of the development bordered by such streets.
- 3) If a development is located on a lot that is bordered by two public streets that do not intersect at the lot's boundaries (double front lot), then the development may have not

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more than one freestanding sign on each side of the development bordered by such streets.

- 4) For developments that have more than 300 linear feet of frontage along a single right-of-way boundary, a second freestanding sign may be established. For developments that have more than 500 feet of frontage, a maximum of three freestanding signs may be established. Multiple freestanding signs established in the same development must be separated by a minimum of 100 feet. The total amount of area for all freestanding signs erected for a single development may not exceed 0.75 square feet in surface area for every linear foot of street frontage along the street toward which such sign is primarily oriented. In no case may any such freestanding sign exceed 150 square feet in size.
- 5) Freestanding signs are prohibited in all residential districts, except as otherwise provided by this section.
- 6) The provisions of this Part shall not apply to billboards. The placement and dimensional requirements of billboards shall be governed by Part K of this Section.

### **Part K. Billboards**

Billboards shall be permitted only in the Billboard Overlay Zone as shown on the Official Zoning Map for the City of Jacksonville and its extraterritorial jurisdiction. For the purposes of this Chapter, Billboards constitute a separate and distinct land use due to their size and prominence upon the landscape, and are therefore subject to the following separate regulatory provisions. It is recognized that billboards provide the opportunity to advertise products, services, and ideas; however, because of their sheer size, location in proximity to buildings, and potential for storm damage these signs can be aesthetically undesirable, create traffic hazards, and present dangers to adjoining properties. Therefore, it is the purpose of this ordinance to allow for the establishment of billboards under specific, limited circumstances.

- 1) No two billboards shall be spaced less than 2000 feet apart on the same side of the roadway on all streets and rights-of-way where they are allowed. In addition, no two billboard structures shall be placed within 1000 feet in either direction of the nearest point on the opposite side of the same right-of-way from an existing billboard. When determining the distance between signs the measurement shall be from the nearest points of the respective signs (including braces, overhang, etc.).
- 2) No billboards shall be allowed within 750 feet of the center point of an intersection where both roads allow billboards nor within 750 feet of the interior apex of an angle intersection, where both roads allow billboards.
- 3) All billboard structures, including overhangs and all other components, shall be set back at least 20 feet from the nearest road right-of-way.
- 4) The maximum allowable height for a billboard shall be 40 feet.

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- 5) No one copy area of any billboard structure shall exceed four hundred square feet, and there shall be no more than one copy area facing any one side of the traveled roadway on any sign structure.
- 6) All billboards shall be plainly marked with the name of the person, firm, or corporation erecting and maintaining such sign and shall have affixed the firm number issued for said sign by the building inspector.
- 7) All owners of billboards are required to obtain and maintain an annual billboard permit in order for the billboard to be considered a conforming use. Billboard permits shall only be issued for billboards that are in complete conformance with the requirements of this ordinance. If a billboard permit expires, the billboard shall be deemed non-conforming until a new permit is obtained. For the purposes of this subsection, a billboard shall be considered “destroyed” if damaged to an extent that the cost of repairing the billboard to its former stature or replacing it with an equivalent billboard equals or exceeds 50 percent of the tax value, as listed in the Onslow County Tax Office, of the billboard so damaged.

### **Part L. Development Entrance Signs**

At any entrance to a residential subdivision multifamily development, office park, or industrial park there may be no more than two signs at each entrance identifying such subdivision or development. A single side of any such sign may not exceed 32 square feet, nor may the total surface area of all such signs located at a single entrance exceed 64 square feet. In addition, no part of such development entrance sign(s) shall be of a height greater than six feet as measured from ground level at the base of the sign structure. All such development entrance signs located near street intersections shall be situated to provide a minimum of 10 feet by 70 feet vehicular sight triangles for the purpose of ensuring traffic safety.

### **Part M. Location and Height Requirements**

- 1) No sign or supporting structure shall be established within an existing right-of-way boundary or future right-of-way boundary as depicted on the amended City of Jacksonville Thoroughfare Plan or other officially adopted plan; unless the sign is attached to a structural element of a building and an encroachment permit has been obtained by the appropriate agency or agencies. The property owner is responsible for ensuring this standard is met. If it is determined that a sign has been placed within an existing or future right-of-way, it shall be the property owner’s responsibility to remove such sign within 90 days of an official notice.
- 2) No sign or supporting structure may be located within or over any easement unless an encroachment has been obtained from the easement holder.
- 3) No sign attached to a building may project more than 18 inches from the building wall.

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- 4) No part of a freestanding sign may exceed a height, measured from ground level at the base of the sign, of 35 feet in the B-1, B-2 and Industrial districts and 15 feet in all other districts where they are allowed.

### **Part N. Sign Illumination and Signs Containing Lights**

- 1) Unless otherwise prohibited by this chapter, signs may be illuminated if such illumination is in accordance with this Part.
- 2) No sign within 150 feet of a residential zone (including those within) may be illuminated beyond 0.5 footcandles at the property line.
- 3) Lighting directed toward a sign shall be shielded so that it illuminates only the face of the sign and does not shine directly into a public right-of-way or residential premises.
- 4) Subject to subpart (6) below, illuminated tubings or strings of lights that outline property lines, sales areas, roof lines, doors, windows, or similar areas are prohibited.
- 5) Subject to subpart (6) below, no sign may contain or be illuminated by flashing or intermittent lights or lights of changing degrees of intensity.
- 6) Subparts (4) and (5) above do not apply to temporary signs erected in connection with the observance of holidays.

### **Part O. Miscellaneous Restrictions and Prohibitions**

Where applicable, all signs shall be constructed in accordance with the requirements of the North Carolina State Building Code, as amended. The following signs and situations are specifically prohibited within the City of Jacksonville and its extra-territorial jurisdiction.

- 1) No sign may be located so that it substantially interferes with the view or vision necessary for motorists to proceed safely through intersections or to enter onto or exit from public streets or private roads.
- 2) Signs that revolve or are animated or that utilize movement or apparent movement to attract the attention of the public are prohibited. Signs that only move occasionally because of wind are not prohibited if their movement (i) is not a primary design feature of the sign, and (ii) is not intended to attract attention to the sign. The restriction of this subpart shall not apply to signs specified in Part C (4), Part D (1)(h), or to signs indicating the time, date, or weather conditions.

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- 3) No sign may be erected so that by its location, color, size, shape, nature, or message it would tend to obstruct the view of or be confused with official traffic signs or other signs erected by governmental agencies.
- 4) Freestanding signs that are not securely fastened to the ground or to some other substantial supportive structure so that there is virtually no danger that either the sign or the supportive structure may be moved by the wind or other forces of nature and cause injury to persons or property are prohibited.
- 5) Portable signs are prohibited.
- 6) Flashing signs are prohibited.
- 7) Painted-on-building signs are prohibited.
- 8) Signs located within public rights-of-way (except governmental and informational signs as exempted per Part C) are prohibited.
- 9) Signs that are posted on any telegraph pole, telephone pole, electric light pole, or any tree along any street are prohibited.
- 10) Signs that obstruct ingress or egress to any window, door, fire escape, stairway, ladder, or opening intended to provide light, air, ingress, or egress for any room or building as required by law are prohibited.
- 11) Strings of lighting, pennants and similar devices are prohibited.

### **Part P. Maintenance of Signs**

- 1) All signs and all components thereof, including without limitation supports, braces, and anchors, shall be kept in a state of good repair. With respect to freestanding signs and billboards, components (supporting structures, backs, etc.) not bearing a message shall be constructed of materials that blend with the natural environment or shall be painted a neutral color to blend with the natural environment.
- 2) If the message portion of a sign is removed, leaving only the supporting "shell" of a sign or the supporting braces, anchors, or similar components, the owner of the sign or the owner of the property where the sign is located or other person having control over such sign shall, within 30 days of the removal of the message portion of the sign, either replace the entire message portion of the sign or remove the remaining components of the sign. This subsection shall not be construed to alter the effect of Part R (3), which prohibits the replacement of a nonconforming sign. Nor shall this subsection be construed to prevent the changing of the message of a sign.

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- 3) The area within 10 feet in all directions of any part of a freestanding sign shall be kept clear of all debris and all undergrowth more than eight (8) inches in height. This requirement shall not apply to well maintained landscaping that may include decorative shrubs, bushes, flowering plants and other managed types of flora.

### **Part Q. Unlawful Cutting of Trees or Shrubs**

No person may, for the purpose of increasing or enhancing the visibility of any sign, damage, trim, destroy, or remove any trees, shrubs, or other vegetation located:

- 1) Within the right-of-way of any public street or road, unless the work is done pursuant to the express written authorization of the City of Jacksonville.
- 2) On property that is not under the ownership or control of the person doing or responsible for such work, unless the work is done pursuant to the express authorization of the person owning the property where such trees or shrubs are located;
- 3) In any area where such trees or shrubs are required to remain under a permit issued under this ordinance.

### **Part R. Nonconforming Signs and Billboards**

Refer to Section 96. Nonconformities

### **Part S. Amortization of Painted-On-Building Signs**

Subject to other applicable provisions of this ordinance, all painted-on-building signs as defined by this ordinance existing at the time of adoption of this Section shall, within five years after the effective date of this Section, be altered to comply with the provisions of this Section or be removed.

### **Part T. Applicability**

The regulations stipulated in this section shall apply to all signs that are constructed, erected, moved, enlarged, illuminated, substantially altered or otherwise maintained within the City of Jacksonville's jurisdiction except for signs expressly or implicitly regulated elsewhere in this ordinance.

## **Sections 110-111. Reserved**