

Article VII. Sign Regulations

157.103. PURPOSE

The purpose and intent of these regulations is to protect the dual interests of the public and the advertiser. The regulations herein are designed to protect public safety and ensure the maintenance of an attractive physical environment, while satisfying the needs of sign users for adequate identification, communication and advertising.

157.104. APPLICABILITY AND CONFORMANCE

- A. A sign may be erected, placed, established, created, installed or maintained in the city only in conformance with the requirements of this Article. From and after its adoption, no sign may be enlarged, erected, modified or replaced unless it conforms to the requirements of this Article.
- B. All signs located in a Historic Overlay District shall be subject to additional requirements as provided in Chapter 158.

157.105. STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ALL SIGNS

A. Location.

1. No sign shall be located within the visual clearance areas as defined in § 157.191.
2. 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 where permitted by and according to such standards set forth in this ordinance.

- B. Pedestrian area clearance. When a sign extends over a sidewalk, walkway or other spaces accessible to pedestrians, the bottom of the sign structure shall be at least eight feet above the ground.

- C. Vehicle area clearance. When a sign extends over an area where a vehicle travels or is parked, the bottom of the sign shall be at least 14 feet above the ground. Vehicle areas include driveways, alleys, parking lots, and loading and maneuvering areas.

D. Construction. All signs must:

1. Be constructed in compliance with all applicable provisions of the Building Code and the Electrical Code;
2. Consist of durable all-weather materials;

3. Be maintained in good condition; and
4. Not be permitted to fall into disrepair.

E. Signs shall not have light-reflecting backgrounds, but may use light-reflecting lettering.

F. Illumination.

1. Light sources used to externally illuminate signs shall only use white lights, must be shielded and shall be directed so that all direct light falls entirely on the sign face.
2. Light sources used to illuminate signs shall neither be visible from any street right-of-way nor cause a glare hazardous to pedestrians or vehicle drivers, and shall not create a nuisance to adjacent properties.
3. No illumination simulating traffic control devices or emergency vehicles shall be used; nor shall lights that are intermittently switched on and off, changed in intensity or color, or otherwise displayed to create the illusion of flashing or movement be permitted.
4. Illumination using exposed bulbs is prohibited.
5. Lights used to illuminate signs must remain at a constant intensity.
6. Neon lights or strip lights are not allowed on the exterior of a building unless they are used as an internal light source of translucent panels or signs.
7. Signs for permitted nonresidential uses in residential zoning districts may be internally or externally illuminated.
8. In the Corridor Overlay District lettering and logos on a sign may be internally illuminated using silhouette lighting.

G. Colors.

1. No fluorescent colors shall be used.
2. The only colors allowed for the background of signs are white, grey or any pastel color except as follows:

- a. In CBD, GBD, IND, and CMU zoning districts, the background of freestanding signs that do not exceed 40 square feet in area and six feet in height shall be any non-fluorescent color.
- b. The background of flush-mounted building signs may be black, blue or green; if the background color is used as a highlighting color on the exterior wall areas.

H. Sign measurement.

- 1. The area of a sign enclosed in frames or cabinets is determined by measuring the outer dimensions of the frame or cabinet surrounding the sign face.
 - a. Sign area does not include foundation or supports.
 - b. Only one side of a double-faced or V-shaped freestanding sign is counted in the calculation of total sign area. The height of a sign shall be measured from the natural grade to the top of the sign face or sign structure, whichever is higher.
- 2. Sign height shall be measured according to the procedures set forth in § 157.192(B)(2).
- 3. For signs on a base material and attached without a frame, such as wood board or polycarbonate panel, the dimensions of the base material are to be used in the measurement, unless it is clear that part of the base contains no sign-related display or decoration.
- 4. For sign structures consisting of individual pieces attached to a building wall, sign area is determined by the smallest perimeter that can be drawn around all sign elements.
- 5. For sign structures containing multiple modules oriented in the same direction, sign area is determined the smallest perimeter that can be drawn around all sign elements.
- 6. For signs incorporated into awnings, the entire panel containing the sign is counted as the sign face, unless it is clear that part of the panel contains no sign-related display or decoration.

Article VII. Sign Regulations

157.106. SIGNS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

Signs shall be allowed on private property in accordance with the following table

SIGN TYPE	ZONING DISTRICT					
	RE, R-15, R-10, R-6	CBD	GBD	OI, LBD	IND	CMU
A = Allowed without a permit P = Permit required N = Not allowed						
Freestanding Signs						
Principal	N	P	P	P	P	P
Incidental	N	P	P	P	P	P
Sidewalk	N	P	N	N	N	N
Subdivision	P	N	N	N	N	P
Building Signs						
Awning	N	P	P	N	P	P
Canopy	N	P	P	P	P	P
Identification	A	P	P	P	P	P
Incidental	N	P	P	P	P	P
Integral Roof	N	N	P	N	P	P
Marquee	N	N	P	N	P	P
Projecting	N	P	P	P	P	P
Wall	P	P	P	P	P	P
Window	N	A	A	A	A	A
Copy and Illumination						
Changeable Copy	P	P	P	P	P	P
Illumination, External	P	P	P	P	P	P
Illumination Internal	A	A	A	A	A	A

157.107. REQUIREMENTS FOR PERMANENT SIGNS

A. Freestanding signs.

1. Freestanding signs are allowed on lots with at least 50 feet of street frontage and must be placed a minimum of five feet from the property line. Where permitted, freestanding signs may be installed in required buffers.
2. All freestanding signs shall have a maximum width of eight feet.
3. Freestanding signs must meet the following requirements:
 - a. One freestanding sign per street frontage is allowed.
 - b. In the OI and LBD zoning districts, principal signs shall have a maximum sign area of 20 square feet and a maximum height of six feet.

- c. In the CBD, GBD, IND and CMU zoning districts, principal signs shall have a maximum sign area of 40 square feet and a maximum height of six feet, except that multi-tenant developments on lots with 400 feet or more of street frontage may have one freestanding sign with a maximum sign area of 100 square feet and a maximum height of 15 feet. Sign area and height for lots with street frontage less than four 400 feet shall be prorated.
 - d. Pole signs shall only be internally illuminated.
 - e. Monument signs may be internally or externally illuminated.
4. Free-standing signs. Free-standing signs are permitted in all required yards, and front yard buffer areas (only).
5. Incidental signs shall have a maximum sign area of three square feet and a maximum height of two and one-half feet.
6. Sidewalk signs shall meet the following requirements:
 - a. One sidewalk sign is allowed per business.
 - b. A maximum height of four feet and a maximum width of two and one-half feet are allowed.
 - c. The sign shall only be displayed when the business is open.
 - d. Illumination of any type is prohibited.
 - e. Signs must be placed on the sidewalk in front of the building, no further than 12 feet from the building.
 - f. Signs shall be placed to allow a minimum passable space on the sidewalk of six feet, may not otherwise impede pedestrian movements, or create a conflict with any provision of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - g. Signs shall be placed where they will not obstruct the swing radius of vehicle doors legally parked in the right-of-way.
 - h. The sign shall not be attached to the ground or building, and must be constructed and weighted to prevent overturning and splaying.
7. Subdivision signs shall meet the following requirements:
 - a. One subdivision sign per entrance is allowed.

- b. A maximum sign area of 20 square feet and a maximum height of six feet are allowed.
- c. Subdivision signs shall only be externally illuminated.

B. Building signs.

1. The total area of all building signs shall not exceed the following allowances:
 - a. One square foot per linear foot of building frontage for a building set back less than 20 feet from the front property line.
 - b. Two square feet per linear foot of building frontage for a building set back 20 feet or more from the front property line.
 - c. The total area of all building signs shall not exceed 300 square feet per building.
2. Buildings containing multiple building signs shall be required to submit a common signage plan meeting the requirements of § 157.108.
3. Only the following types of building signs are allowed for permitted, nonresidential uses in all residential zoning districts: identification, incidental, and wall signs. A permit is required for such sign and will only be issued upon compliance with all requirements for each applicable specific sign type.
4. Canopy, awning and marquee signs must conform to the following requirements:
 - a. Only one canopy sign is allowed per street frontage.
 - b. Only one marquee sign is allowed per street frontage.
 - c. Signs on an awning, canopy or marquee shall not exceed 20 percent of the total area of the awning, canopy or marquee and shall be limited to the name of the business inside.
 - d. Awnings, canopies and marquees shall only have signage on those surfaces that face a public street or which are oriented towards pedestrians on the sidewalk in front of the building. No part of a canopy sign shall extend above, below or beyond any portion of the canopy.
 - e. Illumination.
 - 1) Marquees shall only be internally illuminated.

- 2) Lights may be installed underneath awnings, canopies and marquees only if they are directed to point toward the ground, and are not used to illuminate the awning, canopy or marquee.
- f. A minimum clearance of eight feet is required between the bottom edge of an awning, canopy or marquee and the sidewalk, pavement or ground surface.
5. Identification signs shall be limited to one per building, with a maximum sign area of two square feet and a maximum height of eight feet.
6. Incidental signs attached to a building shall have a maximum sign area of three square feet.
7. Integral roof signs shall conform to the following requirements:
 - a. One integral roof sign is allowed per street frontage.
 - b. The maximum sign area allowed for an integral roof sign is 20 square feet.
 - c. An integral roof sign shall not extend more than four feet from the building.
8. Projecting signs must conform to the following requirements:
 - a. One projecting sign is allowed per street frontage.
 - b. The maximum sign area allowed for a projecting sign is 10 square feet.
 - c. A minimum clearance of eight feet is required between the bottom of the sign and the sidewalk, pavement or ground surface.
 - d. The maximum distance a projecting sign shall project from a building is four feet.
 - e. Signs hanging over sidewalks shall not project from the building wall to an extent that they obstruct the view of pedestrians, bicyclists or motorists, or of street intersections, traffic signs, devices or signals.
 - f. Projecting signs shall not be mounted higher than 12 feet.
 - g. All projecting signs shall be mounted at right angles to the building wall.
 - h. Projecting signs shall only be externally illuminated as specified in the illumination provisions of this section.
9. Wall signs must conform to the following requirements:

- a. Wall signs may be externally or internally illuminated as specified in the illumination provisions of this section.
 - b. No wall sign shall project more than 12 inches from the wall to which it is mounted, nor shall it extend beyond any point of the wall, a roof line, parapet wall, or mansard roof; except that signs shall not project beyond the face of the building a maximum of three inches in the Corridor Overlay District.
 - c. If a building is located on a corner lot, a wall sign on the side of the building may not exceed 50 percent of the maximum size allowable in that zoning district.
 - d. Permitted nonresidential uses in residential zoning districts (i.e. churches, schools, etc.) shall have a maximum of one wall sign, with a maximum sign area of 20 square feet and a maximum height of 15 feet.
 - e. In the OI zoning district, a maximum of one wall sign, with a maximum sign area of 30 square feet and a maximum height of 15 feet, shall be allowed.
 - f. The maximum sign area allowed in the CBD, GBD, LBD, IND, and CMU zoning districts is as follows:
 - 1) One square foot per linear foot of building frontage for a building set back less than 20 feet from the front property line.
 - 2) Two square foot per linear foot of building frontage for a building set back 20 feet or more from the front property line.
 - 3) No individual sign shall exceed 100 square feet unless the building is set back at least 100 feet from the front property line.
 - g. The maximum sign height allowed in the CBD, GBD, LBD, IND and CMU zoning districts is as follows:
 - 1) In the CBD and LBD zoning districts, the maximum sign height is 20 feet.
 - 2) In the GBD, CMU and IND zoning districts, wall signs may extend to the height of the building.
10. The size of any window sign or cumulative size of all window signs shall not exceed 30 percent of the size of the individual window on which they are located. This requirement shall apply to windows fronting any public street. The total accumulated size of window signs on all windows of a building shall not exceed 300 square feet.

C. Changeable copy signs.

1. Changeable copy shall be permitted only on permanent principal and institutional freestanding signs, marquee signs, canopy signs and wall signs, and shall comply with all of the regulations of such signs as applicable, and as outlined in this section.
2. The portion of a sign that includes changeable copy letters shall not exceed 50 percent of the total area of the sign.
3. Changeable copy by electronic or automated means is allowed; however copy cannot be changed more than three times per day.

157.108. COMMON SIGNAGE PLAN REQUIRED

- A.** A common signage plan shall be required to issue a permit involving any of the following:
1. Two or more contiguous lots or parcels under the same ownership developed as a coordinated site.
 2. A single lot or parcel with more than one principal use or building (not including accessory structures) or qualifying on the basis of street frontage for more than one freestanding sign; and
 3. A Planned Development District (PDD).
- B.** The plan shall contain all information required for sign permits as stated in § 157.114, and shall specify standards for consistency among all signs on the lot or parcel affected by the plan with regard to:
1. Lettering or graphic style;
 2. Lighting;
 3. Location of each sign on the building;
 4. Materials; and
 5. Sign proportions.
- C.** For all lots or development tracts in all zoning districts containing multiple uses or buildings, the common signage plan shall limit the number of freestanding signs to a total of one for each street in which the lots included in the plan have frontage, and shall provide for shared or common usage of such signs.
- D.** Once approved by the Zoning Administrator, the common signage plan shall become binding on all businesses and uses occupying the affected lots, but may be amended by filing a new or revised plan that complies with all the requirements of this subchapter.

- E. If any new or revised common signage plan is filed for a property on which existing signs are located, it shall include a schedule for bringing into conformance, within 18 months, all signs not conforming to the proposed amended plan or the requirements of this subchapter in effect on the date of submission.

157.109. TEMPORARY SIGNS

The following conditions shall apply to temporary signs.

- A. Temporary signs shall not exceed three square feet in residential zoning districts and 32 square feet in nonresidential zoning districts.
- B. Temporary signs shall be removed or replaced every 30 days, unless otherwise stated in this section.
- C. Temporary signs are prohibited in the public right-of-way or on any public property, utility poles, or street signs.
- D. Temporary signs shall be limited to one per street frontage.
- E. Temporary signs shall not be illuminated.
- F. Political signs are temporary signs that are also subject to the following restrictions:
 - 1. Political signs must be removed by the candidate or his designee within seven days after the election to which they apply.
 - 2. Political signs shall not be placed within 200 feet of any polling place as required by *S.C. Code of Laws Section 7-25-180*.
- G. Banners are allowed with a permit only in the CBD, GBD, LBD, OI, IND and CMU zoning districts.
 - 1. Banners must be attached to a building and cannot exceed 32 square feet.
 - 2. Only one banner shall be allowed per building.
 - 3. Banners are allowed only if the combined square footage of the banner and all other signs does not exceed the maximum square footage allowed for building signs.

157.110. FLAGS

- A. No permit shall be required to display a flag.
- B. Each business shall be allowed a maximum of three flags, with each flag being a maximum of five feet by eight feet.

- C. All flags must be displayed from a permanent mounting on the building or on a flag pole.
- D. Only one flag can advertise the business.
- E. The area of the advertising flag shall not exceed the maximum sign area allowed for building signs.
- F. The flag of the United States shall be flown in accordance with the United States Flag Code, and the flag of the State of South Carolina shall be flown in accordance with protocols established by the State of South Carolina.

157.111. EXEMPT SIGNS

The following signs, or alterations or repair to such signs, shall be exempt from the requirements of this section:

- A. An official sign or notice issued by any court, public agency or office;
- B. Directional, warning, traffic or informational signs authorized by the City of Camden, Kershaw County or any agency of the State of South Carolina;
- C. 911 address signs, provided such signs are limited to one per lot and do not exceed two square feet in area; and
- D. Official historic plaques and markers as well as memorial signs and grave markers which are noncommercial in nature.
- E. One onsite temporary real estate sign per street frontage provided that no sign measures more than six square feet in area.

157.112. PROHIBITED SIGNS

All signs not expressly permitted by this ordinance are prohibited. Such signs include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

- A. Any sign that does not meet the requirements of this ordinance;
- B. Off-premise signs;
- C. Signs that contain any moving, flashing or animated lights, visible moving or movable parts, give the appearance of motion or the illusion of blinking, alternating, chasing, contracting, expanding, flashing, fading, repeating, oscillating, pulsating, rotating, rolling, running, scrolling, strobing or twinkling, or that simulate moving video images;
- D. Neon signs, except for “Open” or “Closed” signs that do not exceed two square feet in area;

- E. Inflatable signs, including balloons;
- F. Roof signs;
- G. Any sign that is attached to or painted on a vehicle that is parked on or adjacent to any property, the principal purpose of which is to attract attention to a product sold or business located on or off the property, and any sign that is pulled by a vehicle;
- H. Any sign that emits a sound, odor, steam, bubbles, particulates or similar device that attracts attention;
- I. Any sign which 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, provides light or air, or impedes stormwater;
- J. Any sign and/or sign structure that may be confused with or mimics a governmental or traffic direction/safety sign;
- K. Any sign which interferes with the effectiveness of or obscures any traffic sign, device, or signal;
- L. Signs using the words “stop”, “danger” or any other word, phrase, symbol or character in a manner that might reasonably mislead, confuse or distract a vehicle driver;
- M. Signs painted, tacked, nailed, posted, pasted, glued or otherwise attached to trees, rocks, or other natural features, fences, telephone or utility poles or painted on the roof of any building visible from any public thoroughfare;
- N. Abandoned or unsafe signs. Any sign which is determined by the Zoning Administrator as being insecure, in danger of falling, or otherwise endangering the public safety shall be immediately removed by its owner unless it is repaired and made to otherwise comply with the requirements of this ordinance.
- O. Any sign that exhibits statements, words or pictures of a pornographic or obscene nature;
- P. Signs that use mechanical devices to create wind pressures in order to cause movement or swirling in order to attract attention to the sign;
- Q. Portable signs, except sidewalk signs that comply with the requirements in § 157.107(A)(6);
- R. Strobe lights;
- S. Pennants, moving signs and motorized signs;

- T. Any spot light or laser, moveable or non-moveable, for the purpose of attracting attention to or otherwise advertising a location;
- U. Illuminated highly reflective signs that hamper the vision of motorists, pedestrians or cyclists;
- V. Any sign (other than a government sign), banner or display placed on any curb, sidewalk, post, pole, hydrant, bridge, tree, or other surface located on, over, or across any public street or right-of-way, unless otherwise permitted herein; and
- W. Any sign that the Zoning Administrator determines obstructs the view of bicyclists or motorists using any street, or approach to any street intersection.

157.113. SIGNS IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Signs shall not extend into or be installed within the public right-of-way, except for the following:

- A. Public signs erected by or on behalf of a governmental body to post legal notices, identify public property, convey public information, and direct or regulate pedestrian or vehicular traffic;
- B. Bus stop signs erected by a public transit agency and bench and bus shelter signs in association therewith;
- C. Informational signs of a public agency or utility regarding its facilities;
- D. Emergency signs;
- E. Directional signs of a temporary nature for such events as yard sales, auctions, public gatherings, and the like may be erected 48 hours before such events, must be removed within 48 hours after such an event, which shall not exceed 72 total hours in duration;
- F. Church signs in accordance with state law;
- G. Canopy and marquee signs that comply with the requirements of this subchapter;
- H. Projecting signs that comply with the requirements in § 157.107(B)(8);
- I. Sidewalk signs that comply with the requirements in § 157.107(A)(6); and
- J. Awning signs in the CBD zoning district, provided they comply with the requirements in § 157.107(B)(4).

157.114 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SIGN PERMITS

- A.** Each application for a sign permit shall contain the following information:
1. Identification of ownership and/or leaseholder of property on which the sign is to be erected, including street address;
 2. Name and address of the owner of the sign;
 3. Site sketch plan, with dimensions showing the location of the sign with respect to the property and right-of-way lines, building and setback lines, buildings, parking areas, existing freestanding signs, and buffer yards;
 4. Correct size, shape, configuration, face area, height, nature, number and type of sign to be erected, including the size of letters, graphics, clearances, connection and support methods;
 5. The value of sign and sign structure;
 6. Colors of awning, if applicable, and a sketch of how the sign will affix and relate to the awning; and
 7. Colors of sign background.
- B.** The Zoning Administrator may waive any of the information requirements listed above if they are deemed unnecessary to process an application.
- C.** For a freestanding sign exceeding 36 square feet in area, the applicant shall include a drawing by a qualified professional and a written certification from such that the sign is structurally sound and safe, does not constitute a hazard to persons or property on the premises, on adjoining property, or in the vicinity of its location, and the sign is in compliance with all building and other construction codes and the requirements of this chapter.

157.115. SIGNS FORFEITED

Any sign installed or placed on public property or within a public right-of-way, except in conformance with the requirements of this section, shall be forfeited to the public and subject to confiscation. In addition to other remedies in this subchapter, the city shall have the right to recover the costs of removal and disposal of the sign from the owner or person placing the sign.

157.116. NONCONFORMING SIGNS

Nonconforming signs shall be subject to the requirements set forth in § 157.193(C)(9) – *Nonconforming Signs*, subject to the requirements set forth in § 157.212 – *Enforcement*.

157.117 ABANDONED SIGNS

Any existing sign that is abandoned or advertises a business no longer operating shall be removed.