

How To Develop A Good Sign Design

- ⇒ Fit your sign to the site or building so that it enhances rather than competes with the site or building.
- ⇒ The shape, scale, proportion and texture of the sign should relate to the building's architectural style, such that architectural details and ornamental features are not concealed, but enhanced.
- ⇒ A sign should be clear and simple in order to communicate its message quickly and effectively.
- ⇒ Select lighting when appropriate to create the desired effect. The type of lighting chosen should draw attention to the sign, window display, building or site.
- ⇒ Coordinate your sign's color, shape and style with your neighbor's signs. The visual continuity achieved will help customers to orient themselves, locate services and move about with ease.

What is a Non-Conforming Sign?

A sign that exceeds the height or size limitations of the sign ordinance by more than 10%, or a sign that fails to meet any other requirement of the ordinance is a non-conforming sign. Generally, a non-conforming sign cannot be moved, reconstructed, or replaced except to bring the sign into complete conformity with the sign ordinance.

Removal & Amortization of Non-Conforming Signs

If non-conforming signs are allowed to remain in place indefinitely, they hamper a primary function of the sign ordinance - improving the community through sign control. Amortization ensures that non-conforming signs are brought into compliance. One aspect of amortization is that it equalizes over time the amount of signage allowed for older and new businesses. All non-conforming signs must be altered to conform to the requirements of this ordinance by no later than March 1, 1995 or be removed.

Most Often Cited Sign Violations

- ⇒ **Failure To Obtain Sign Permit Prior To Erecting Signage** - All signs including banners, portable signs and temporary signs must be issued a sign permit before being displayed. If in doubt, contact the Zoning Enforcement Office at (252) 639-7582 for signage requirements.
- ⇒ **Excessive Number and Size of Portable Sidewalk Signs** - Any portable sidewalk sign must be issued a sign permit. The sign may not exceed a total of six square feet for any business and may be displayed only during normal working hours of the business being advertised. (Must be taken in at closing)
- ⇒ **Illegal Trailer Signs** - Trailer signs require a temporary sign permit and may only be used for new or relocated businesses for a 30-day period. Trailer signs with removed wheels and permanently mounted prior to February 29, 1992 in accordance with building code requirements must be removed by no later than March 1, 1995.
- ⇒ **Illegal Banners and Pennants** - Banners, pennants, streamers, festoons of lights, balloons, flags and similar devices may not be used more than 30 days during a one-year period, pursuant to a sign permit. Banners may not exceed 32 square feet of sign surface areas.

A Final Word Regarding Signage

All signs should be clean, neatly painted and in a state of good repair. As much as an individual sign indicates the strength of a business, the location, size and design of all signs together in a community provide an indication of the condition of the business community. Through joint cooperation of private citizens, businesses and government we can have a visual environment compatible with the quality of life that we work so hard to provide in our city.

This pamphlet is provided as an aid to businesses and individuals. It does not supersede the ordinance and in cases where there is a conflict, the ordinance shall be followed.

Sign permit fees:	Temporary - \$33.00 (banners, etc.)
	Permanent - \$33.00 (plus building permit fees)
	Shopping Center Master Plan - \$214.00



NEW BERN

NORTH CAROLINA

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SIGN GUIDELINES

A questions and answers guide to
ARTICLE XVII SIGNS
of the
New Bern Land Use Ordinance

Development Services

252.639.7582-phone

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What Is A Sign?

Of all the design elements used in commercial developments, signs can have the strongest impact on the quality and appearance of individual buildings and the street scape as a whole. The appearance of a sign, including how well it fits the character of the area, the appearance of the building or development, and a sign's impact on existing neighboring signs can have an immediate impact on property values. By investing in a well designed sign that both fits the building and enhances the neighborhood, businesses can make an important contribution to the visual quality of our city.

The New Bern Land Use Ordinance defines a sign as, "Any surface, fabric, or device bearing letter, pictorial, or sculptured matter designed to convey information visually and exposed to public view; or any structure (including billboard or poster panel) designed to carry the above visual information."

Follow These Important Steps Before Installing a Sign:

1. Read this booklet. Get the facts!
2. Determine the total signage allowed.
3. Develop a sign design that fits the building and site.
4. Apply for a Sign Permit and a Building Permit.
5. Install your approved sign.

What Signs Require a Sign Permit?

Generally, all signs to be erected, moved, enlarged, or substantially altered require the issuance of a sign permit by the Zoning Administrator and a building permit by the Chief Building Inspector.

What Signs Do Not Require a Sign Permit?

In accordance with Sections 15-323 and 15-324 of the ordinance, the following types of signs are exempt from regulation **except** for certain size, location, and time restrictions:

- ⇒ Residential signs not of a commercial nature such as parking, directional and no trespassing signs.
- ⇒ Signs authorized by a government body including legal notices, identification and informational signs, political

campaign signs and flags when not displayed in connection with a commercial promotion.

- ⇒ On-site real estate and construction signs.
- ⇒ Signs indicating that a special event such as a circus or festival is to take place on the lot where the sign is located.
- ⇒ Signs erected or applied on the interior of buildings.

What Information is Needed to Apply For a Sign Permit?

- ⇒ A plat or drawing including the dimensions of the property and building where the sign will be located.
- ⇒ The height, dimensions, messages, types and number of all existing and proposed signs.

What is the Maximum Signage Allowed For a Business?

- ⇒ The maximum total signage allowed is .5 square feet (s.f.) of sign surface area for each linear foot of street frontage up to 200 ft. of frontage. Lot frontage in excess of 200 ft. is allowed .25 s.f. of additional sign surface area for each linear foot.
- ⇒ If a lot has frontage on more than one street, the owner can receive 50% of the surface area calculation for the secondary street frontage. The owner must designate which frontage is primary and/or secondary.
- ⇒ In the downtown or a shopping center consisting of 3 or more units that may share common party walls, the owner may determine the maximum sign surface area by using the above calculations or by using a building frontage calculation in which one s.f. of signage is allowed for each linear foot of building frontage.

What are the Maximum Sized For Freestanding Signs?

- ⇒ The sign surface area of a freestanding sign may not exceed 0.5 s.f. for each linear foot of lot frontage along the street it primarily faces. However, in no case may a single side of a freestanding sign exceed

50 s.f. if the sign faces a street with less than 200 ft. of lot frontage, 75 s.f. if lot frontage is great than 200 ft. but less than 400 ft. and 100 s.f. if the lot frontage is great than 400 ft.

- ⇒ Developments are limited to no more than one freestanding sign. However, if a development is located on a corner lot, it may have one freestanding sign on each street that has at least 200 ft. of lot frontage.
- ⇒ The maximum height of freestanding signs measured at their uppermost point is 20 ft.
- ⇒ Internal illumination of freestanding signs in excess of one hour before or after normal operating hours of the business is not permitted.

What are the Regulations on the Size and Location of Wall Signs?

Generally, wall signs may not exceed 25% of the total wall surface area, extend above any parapet, or be placed upon any roof surface.

Are There Additional Sign Regulations for the Historic District?

Signs are an important visual element in the Historic District. The size and proportion of any sign should reflect the proportions and dimensional relationships of the building to which it belongs. The following dimensional relationships apply as maximum sizes related to the scale of buildings.

Wall Signs must be no larger than 5% of the façade area of a building minus the area of any projecting signs(s).

Projecting Signs are limited to a maximum size of 2% of the building façade and may not extend more than six feet beyond the façade.

Freestanding Signs may not exceed 32 s.f. in area and 20 ft. in height. In a C-5A District, the maximum size is 16 s.f. and the maximum height is 10 ft.

Signs on Awnings should cover no more than 20% of the awning.

Internally Illuminated Signs are not permitted on structures built prior to 1920.