

Division 5. Signs

Section 25.1 General

All signs shall be erected or altered in accordance with the following requirements:

Section 25.2 Purpose

The purpose of this section is:

- 1) To enhance and protect the physical appearance of the City while promoting the economic well being of the community by creating a favorable physical image.
- 2) To promote public safety and traffic safety by ensuring that signs are properly designed, constructed, installed, and maintained.
- 3) To minimize distractions and/or obstruction of view that contribute to traffic hazards and endanger public safety.
- 4) To promote high standards of quality development by encouraging appropriately designed, placed, and sized signage.
- 5) To provide an effective guide for communicating identification through signage while preventing signs from dominating the visual appearance of the areas in which they are located.
- 6) To afford businesses, individuals and institutions an equal and fair way to use signs as an effective form of communication or promotion of products and services.
- 7) To prohibit signs of a commercial nature from districts in which commercial activities are barred.

Section 25.3 Administration

25.3.1 The building inspector or zoning enforcement officer shall order the immediate removal of any signs that are not constructed or maintained in accordance with the provisions of this section or in accordance with applicable provisions of the North Carolina State Building Code. All advertising structures, together with any supports, braces, guys and anchors, shall be kept in good repair or ordered removed by the building inspector and/or zoning enforcement officer.

State law reference – Unlawful posting of advertisements, G.S. § 14-45; authority to remove unauthorized signs from highway right-of-way, G.S. § 105-86(d).

25.3.2 In the event that special site conditions exist, such as topography, the planning director shall have the authority to grant approval for signage so long as the subject signage meets the intent of the ordinance.

Cross Reference - § 312.5.1.1

Section 25.4 Location

No sign or structure shall be erected or constructed as to interfere with vision clearance as defined in Section 22.5 along any street or at any intersection or junction of two (2) or more traffic arteries.

Section 25.5 Illumination

No flashing, scrolling or intermittent illumination shall be used on any advertising sign or structure. Any illuminated signs allowed by this ordinance shall be downcast and placed so as to prevent the undiffused light rays from being cast upon adjacent properties, upon the public right-of-way or the night sky. Any digital, LED (Light Emitting Diode), or similar signs are permitted, provided that the screen or type shall change no more than one (1) time per day (24-hour period); this does not include time or temperature units. Signs located in the P-1 or B-3 zoning districts shall be limited to those lighted from behind to silhouette letters and figures, and internally illuminated signs.

Section 25.6 Nonconforming signs

Nonconforming signs will be allowed to remain, in good repair. If a nonconforming sign is altered, removed, moved, or changed in any way the sign shall be brought into complete compliance with the regulations of this ordinance. Nonconforming on-site signs shall be completely removed within thirty (30) days of the discontinuance of a business use. Property owners shall be responsible for removal of nonconforming signs.

Section 25.7 Sign Types**25.7.1 Wall Mounted Signs**

- (a) The total area of an individual wall sign shall be limited to one square foot in area for each linear foot of the building wall on which the sign is located up to a maximum of one hundred twenty-eight (128) square feet.
- (b) One or a combination of the permitted wall sign types may be used on a building wall, as long as the total area of the signs does not exceed the maximum permitted.
- (c) No building façade area shall contain more than two separate wall signs, except as provided for multiple-occupancy buildings.
- (d) On multiple-occupancy buildings, each occupant with a separate individual outside entrance serving the general public may have a separate wall sign subject to the conditions stated in subsection (a) above.
- (e) In addition to other permitted signs, but subject to the total sign area limits applicable to all wall signs, a theater may install one or more back-lighted or internally illuminated "poster boxes", provided that:
 - (1) Such boxes shall not exceed 36 by 54 inches each in area;

- (2) The top of such boxes shall not be more than ten (10) feet above ground; and
- (3) Such boxes shall be permanently mounted to a wall.

25.7.1.1 Flush Wall Mounted Signs

Definition - A flush wall mounted sign is attached or painted directly on the building wall, generally on the façade, with the exposed display surface of the sign in a plane parallel to the plane of the wall. A flush wall sign may project no more than eighteen (18) inches from the building wall.



Flush Wall-Mounted Sign

25.7.1.2 Projecting Signs

Definition - A hanging sign, blade sign or any sign that is mounted to and projects out from a building wall.



Wall-Mounted Suspended Blade Sign

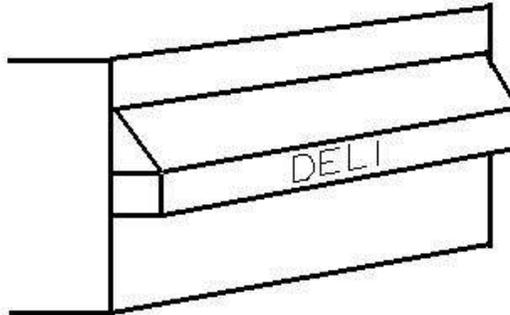


Wall-Mounted Marquee Sign

- (a) Any projecting sign must have nine (9) or more feet of vertical clearance from the ground or sidewalk level.
- (b) A hanging/blade sign may project no more than three (3) feet from the building wall and shall be no more than eight (8) square feet in area per display surface.
- (c) A marquee sign shall be allowed at theaters only, must be in compliance with the maximum percentage of façade coverage limitations for wall signs and may project no more than six (6) feet from the building wall.

25.7.1.3 Canopy/Awning Sign

Definition - A canopy or awning sign is a wall sign in which the lettering is applied directly onto a canopy or awning. The lettering on a canopy/awning shall be counted as sign face area.



Canopy/Awning Sign

- (a) Maximum of eight (8) square feet in signage area on canopy/awning.
- (b) No backlit awnings are permitted.
- (c) No neon is allowed on awnings.
- (d) On single-occupant property, one awning sign may be allowed only in lieu of all other signage otherwise permitted on the wall to which the awning is attached.
- (e) On multi-occupant property, one awning sign may be allowed over each occupant entrance only in lieu of other wall signage.
- (f) No metal bar or framing or other solid shall be less than eight (8) feet above the ground or sidewalk and that a flexible cloth, canvas or similar skirt may hang twelve (12) inches below the horizontal frame supporting the awning, but in no case shall the skirt be less than seven (7) feet above the ground or sidewalk at the lowest point.

25.7.2 Freestanding Signs

- (a) Only one (1) freestanding sign may be erected per building, regardless of the number of tenants.
- (b) Outparcels for shopping centers shall not be allowed principal ground signs.
- (c) The leading edge of all freestanding signs shall be a minimum of five (5) feet behind the existing and/or future public right of way and shall not be located as to obstruct any sight triangle at a street or driveway.
- (d) PUD-R, Subdivision, and Manufactured Home Parks shall be allowed only one monument style freestanding or arm sign on one side, or in the median, of each principle entrance.
- (e) PUD-B greater than 5 acres shall be allowed to have one freestanding sign at the principal entrance and a second freestanding sign at the

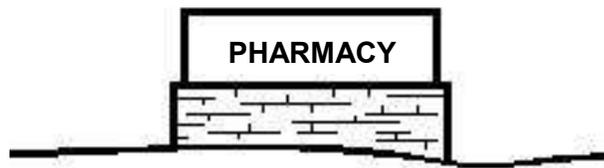
secondary entrance, provided that the secondary entrance does not share frontage with the principle entrance and that the secondary sign is no larger than eight (8) feet in height and forty (40) square feet in display area.

- (f) Freestanding monument style signs are the only freestanding signs permitted in the B-3 district.
- (g) Freestanding signs shall not be permitted for zero setback buildings.
- (h) Freestanding Monument Style signs are the only freestanding signs permitted in the Commercial Corridor District (CC).
- (i) All on-site freestanding signs shall meet the following requirements:

Zoning District	Maximum Height	Maximum Size
P-1, PUD-R, Subdivisions, Manufactured Home Parks	6'	8 square feet
MX, NC, OS, B-3, All Civic Buildings, Institutional Signs	6'	26 square feet
CC, B-1, B-2, B-4, M-1, EM-1, COI	8'	40 square feet
PUD-B < 5 acres	8'	40 square feet
PUD-B ≥ 5 acres	10'	80 square feet

25.7.2.1 Monument Signs

Definition - A monument sign is mounted generally flush with the ground plane and may not be mounted on a pole, pylon, raised on a man made berm, wall, or similar structure.

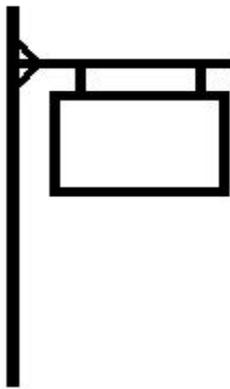


Freestanding Monument Sign

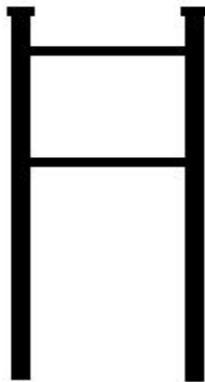
- (a) The supporting structure (base) shall be included in the measurement of a sign height, but not included in the calculation of sign area. The supporting structure (base) material shall be constructed with materials architecturally consistent with the principal structure.

25.7.2.2 Elevated Signs

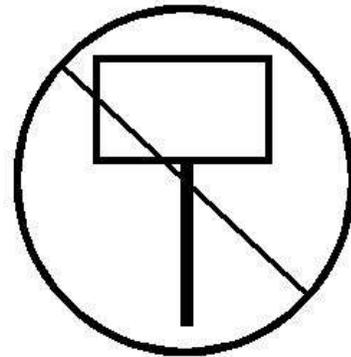
Definition - An elevated freestanding sign hung from a pole and beam frame or placed within a frame mounted on up to two supporting poles.



Freestanding Arm Sign



Freestanding Frame Sign



Freestanding Pole Sign

- (a) Single pole signs are not permitted, except as provided in Section 25.7.3.

25.7.3 Off-Premises Billboard Signs

Off-Premises billboard signs or other large off-premises outdoor advertising structures shall only be allowed in the interstate Highway I-40 corridor in the highway business (B-2), general business (B-4), general manufacturing (M-1), and the exclusive manufacturing districts (EM-1), and shall be subject to the following regulations:

- (a) The maximum permitted area shall be 380 square feet.
 - (b) The maximum height shall be fifty (50) feet above normal elevation of the ground at base of the sign.
 - (c) Signs shall be separated from other structures by a minimum of twenty (20) feet.
 - (d) The leading edge of the sign must be setback not less than one (1) foot from the right-of-way and not more than two hundred fifty (250) feet.
The sign must be placed a minimum of four hundred (400) feet from any residential district, or park, school, hospital, rest home, or nursing home.
 - (e) Roof mounted signs are prohibited.
 - (f) Sign support structures shall be limited to one per lot. Back-to-back or V-shaped signs shall be permitted, provided the interior angle between signs does not exceed fifteen (15) degrees.
 - (g) The distance between off-premises signs shall be one thousand (1000) feet between signs on the same side of the right-of-way and five hundred (500) feet for signs on opposite sides of the right-of-way. The off-premises sign shall be a minimum of five hundred (500) feet from the use, product or service to which it refers. All distances shall be measured along the center line of the street adjacent to the sign.
 - (h) On corner lots, no part of any advertising structure shall be located closer than fifty (50) feet to the point of intersections of the rights-of-way of the two (2) streets forming the corner.
 - (i) All sign structures must be designed and certified by a licensed engineer and constructed to withstand thirty (30) pounds per square foot wind load.
 - (j) Any off-premises sign made nonconforming by this ordinance, abutting I-40 and possessing a valid permit from NCDOT shall be permitted to remain in place, However, if such signs are structurally altered, removed, moved, or changed in any way such signs shall comply with all regulations of this ordinance.
 - (k) The above standards A through K shall apply to the erection and maintenance of all off-site, outdoor advertising structures in Conover, North Carolina and its extraterritorial planning area, along the I-40 corridor. Whenever a sign is subject to requirements of the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the more stringent rules shall apply.
- (Ord. Of 6-14-76, § A; Ord. No. 40-89, § 1, 12-4-89; Ord. No. 6-95; Ord. No. 21-95, 12-4-95; Ord. No. 16-99, §§ 2, 3, 5-3-99; Ord. No. 5-01, § 1, 3-5-01)

25.7.4 Signs Exempt From Regulation

The following signs are exempt from permit requirements under this Division provided such signs comply with the provisions stated below and that neon tube and other illumination shall be prohibited.

- (a) Sandwich boards and sidewalk signs are allowed in the B-3 and MX zoning districts provided that:
 - (1) Any such sign shall not be illuminated or have moving parts.

- (2) Any such sign shall be no larger than eight (8) square feet, shall not be more than two (2) feet wide nor more than four (4) feet tall.
 - (3) The sign shall be constructed of materials that present a finished appearance, e.g. rough cut plywood is not acceptable.
 - (4) One (1) sign allowed per building and shall be permitted in addition to any other allowable signage.
 - (5) The sign shall be displayed during business hours only.
 - (6) Any such sign shall be located directly in front of the building.
 - (7) The sign shall provide five (5) feet of clearance for the passage of pedestrians between the sign and other obstacles such as signs, poles, fire hydrants, street furniture, landscaping, etc. and ten (10) feet of clearance between any intersection or driveway.
 - (8) No sign shall block visibility-vehicular or pedestrian at any time.
 - (9) Any person erecting a sandwich board or sidewalk sign shall indemnify and hold harmless the City and its officers, agents and employees from any claim arising out of the presence of the sign on City Property or any right of way.
- (b) Construction site identification signs are allowed on an active construction site and must not exceed four (4) square feet in area per display surface and three (3) feet in height for single family or duplex construction; and thirty-two (32) square feet and eight (8) feet in height for multi-family or non-residential construction. Such signs must be removed within seven (7) days of the completion of the project, and must not interfere with pedestrian or vehicular circulation or sightlines.
 - (c) One real estate sign per street frontage is permitted on the property for sale and shall be a maximum of four (4) square feet in size in residential zoning districts and thirty-two (32) square feet in commercial/industrial zoning districts.
 - (d) Signs advertising multi-family residential (PUD-R) and multi-tenant commercial (PUD-B) property for lease or sale shall be limited to four (4) square feet in size, constructed of materials that present a finished appearance consistent with and affixed to the existing approved permanent signage.
 - (e) Building directory signs, identifying occupants of a building, must be wall-mounted, must be located next to the entrance, must be a maximum of four (4) square feet, and must not project more than six (6) inches from the wall.
 - (f) Service entrance signs or signs directing traffic may not exceed two (2) square feet in area and three (3) feet in height and shall bear no advertising matter.
 - (g) Parking directional signs may be either wall-mounted or freestanding, are limited to two (2) square feet in area and three (3) feet in height and shall bear no advertising matter. If freestanding, the leading edge of the signs must be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the right-of-way.
 - (h) Political signs shall not be erected more than thirty (30) days prior to the date of election and must be removed within seven (7) days after the date of election. Any political sign over four (4) square feet requires an

- approved zoning permit. Political signs shall not be located on public property; within any right of way, including utility poles, medians, traffic control devices; or attached to trees, fences, rocks, telephone poles or any other sign.
- (i) Window signs shall be allowed provided that they cover no more than twenty-five (25) percent of the gross glass area.
 - (j) Temporary signs or banners shall be allowed with an approved zoning permit for a maximum duration of ten (10) days, four (4) times annually. Temporary signs or banners shall be removed no more than two (2) days after the event.
 - (k) Service stations pumps may have one or two signs attached to the top of the pumps and are limited to four (4) square feet per display area. Additional pump top signs may be permitted by transferring wall signage display area for each such additional sign.
 - (l) Service station canopy signs may be painted or affixed to the pump canopy, but may not be located on top or bottom of the canopy. Such signage shall have a maximum letter or trademark height of eighteen (18) inches and may not exceed four (4) square feet on each side of the canopy, up to a maximum of 3 sides. The message of the canopy sign shall be limited to the name and registered trademark of the establishment or one gas price display.

25.7.5 Prohibited Signs

- (a) Signs located in or extending into the public right-of-way, other than approved signs installed by the City of Conover for City maintained streets and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for State maintained streets.
- (b) Signs that are dilapidated or in disrepair.
- (c) Signs on roofs, chimneys, or balconies.
- (d) Flashing or blinking signs, signs with flashing or reflective disks or signs with flashing lights or lights of changing degree of intensity or color.
- (e) Animated, rotating or other moving or apparently moving signs.
- (f) Portable signs, except those specifically permitted in Section 25.7.4.
- (g) Signs that are similar in color, design or appearance to traffic control signage.
- (h) Windblown or inflatable devices, including balloons, streamers, giant animals or any other forms or shapes.
- (i) Posters, streamers or similar devices used to attract attention.
- (j) Off-site signs, except for those specifically permitted in Section 25.7.3.
- (k) Vehicular Signs. Vehicles containing business names or logos, including delivery trucks, may not be stored or parked between the public right of way and the normal building line for the principle structure.
- (l) Pole Signs.
- (m) Any sign associated with a home occupation.
- (n) All other signs not expressly permitted in this ordinance.

Section 25.8 Unlawful Cutting of Trees or Shrubs

No person shall destroy, trim, or remove any trees, shrubs or other vegetation for the purpose of increasing or enhancing the visibility of any sign if the subject vegetation is located:

- (a) Within the public right-of-way, unless the work is done by an agency having jurisdiction over the streets.
- (b) On property that is not under the ownership or control of the person responsible for such work, unless authorization is provided by the property owner where the subject vegetation is located.
- (c) Any trees or shrubs that are required landscaping under the Conover Zoning Ordinance.