

ARTICLE 9. SIGNS

9.1 General Provisions/Purpose

The following general provisions shall apply to signs within the jurisdiction of this Ordinance.

The purpose of these sign regulations are:

1. To encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication in the City.
2. To preserve Archdale as a community that is attractive to business.
3. To improve pedestrian and traffic safety.
4. To minimize the possible adverse effects of signs on nearby public and private property.

9.2 In General

The regulations in this Article specify the number, types, sizes, heights, and locations of signs which are permitted within the jurisdiction of this Ordinance. It shall be unlawful for any person to erect, place, alter, or maintain a sign in the jurisdiction of this Ordinance except in accordance with the provisions of this Article.

9.3 Determination of Sign Copy Area

In measuring the copy area of a sign permitted under this Article, the entire face of the sign shall be included. Where both sides of a double-faced sign contain lettering or other allowable display, one side only shall be used to compute the allowable copy area of the sign.

Where the sign consists of individual letters, numbers, characters, figures, or displays attached in some manner to a building or a sign face of irregular shape, the sign copy area shall include the area of the smallest circle, square, or rectangle that can encompass the total sign area composed of letters, numbers, characters, figures, or displays of the irregular shaped sign face.

Where signs have appendages or additions, such as "pop-ups" or "cutouts" that extend beyond the main sign copy area, the area of such appendages or additions shall be measured separately, but included in the total sign copy area.

Also, to be included in the total sign copy area shall be any area designed for changeable copy. Where allowed, portable signs shall be counted toward permitted maximum total aggregate sign copy area and maximum number of freestanding signs on each public street.

9.4 Determination of Sign Height

The height of a sign erected within 30 feet of a street right-of-way line shall be the distance from the grade level of the nearest edge of the street to the top of the sign or sign structure, whichever is greater. The height of all signs farther than 30 feet from a street right-of-way line shall be the distance from the grade level where the sign is erected to the top of the sign or sign structure, whichever is greater.

9.5 Determination of Sign Setback; Freestanding Sign Setback

In determining the setback, measurement shall be made from the nearest street right-of-way line. All freestanding signs shall setback a minimum of 5 feet from any street right-of-way.

9.6 Protection Under First Amendment Rights

Any sign, display, or device allowed under this Article may contain, in lieu of any other copy, any otherwise lawful non-commercial message that does not direct attention to a business operated for profit, or to a commodity or service for sale; provided that such sign complies with the size, lighting, spacing, setback, and other requirements of this Article. This includes signs requiring and not requiring a Zoning Permit.

9.7 Changeable Copy

Unless otherwise specified by this Article, any sign herein allowed may use manual, or electrically or mechanically activated changeable copy.

9.8 Illuminated Signs

Signs, which are illuminated from within or from an external source, must be illuminated in a manner that avoids glare or reflection which in any way or manner interferes with traffic safety. Any external source of illumination, such as spotlights or floodlights, shall be placed so that the source is not directly visible from any adjacent residential zoning districts.

9.9 Master or Common Signage Plan

After the effective date of this Ordinance, no Zoning Permit for new development and/or change of use shall be issued by the Zoning Administrator for an individual sign requiring a permit unless and until a Master Signage Plan or a Common Signage Plan for the lot on which the sign will be erected has been approved. A Master Signage Plan shall be prepared for developments containing a single principal building on a single zone lot, while a Common Signage Plan shall be

prepared for developments and/or multi-unit developments containing one or more principal buildings and/or more than one lot.

Signs presented on a Master Signage Plan and/or Common Signage Plan must be uniform in design and features. The same type of materials must be used for all wall signage on any single or multi-unit structure. All types and colors of signs, as long as they produce a unifying theme and meet all area and height requirements, will be considered by staff except for those expressly prohibited by this Ordinance.

9.9.1 Information required for a Master Signage Plan:

1. Specifications for each sign in sufficient detail to determine that the height and area requirements of the Ordinance have been met.
2. Accurate location(s) on a site layout plan for each existing and proposed sign.

9.9.2 Information required for a Common Signage Plan

A Common Signage Plan shall contain all of the information required of the Master Signage Plan, plus the following additional material:

1. Lighting Scheme.
2. Provisions for shared usage of freestanding sign(s).

9.9.3 Other Provisions:

1. A Master or Common Signage Plan shall be a part of any development plan, site plan, unified development plan, or other plan required for development and may be processed simultaneously with such plan(s). A Master or Common Signage Plan shall be approved prior to the issuance of any sign permit(s).
2. A Master or Common Signage Plan may be amended by filing a new plan, which complies with all the requirements of this Ordinance. The Enforcement Officer may approve minor changes to a Master or Common Signage Plan provided such changes comply with all requirements of this Ordinance.
3. After approval of a Master or Common Signage Plan, no sign shall be erected, affixed, placed, painted, or otherwise established except in conformance with such plan and such plan may be enforced in the same way as any other provision of this Ordinance. In case

of any conflict between the provisions of such a plan and any other provision of this Ordinance, the Ordinance shall control.

9.9.4 Types of signs prohibited.

1. Plywood signs
2. Sheet metal signs*

**Pan-aluminum signs having a minimum depth of 1½ inches are permitted.*

9.10 Zoning Permit Required

With the exception of those signs specifically exempt from requiring a permit, it shall be unlawful for any person to print, paint, stand, stain, engrave, construct, place, erect, illuminate, attach, suspend, enlarge, move, relocate, replace, or otherwise put into use or materially alter any sign or cause the same to be done, without first obtaining a Zoning Permit for such sign from the Zoning Administrator.

Notwithstanding the above, changing or replacing the permanent copy of an existing lawful sign shall not require a permit, provided the copy change does not change the nature of the sign such as to render the sign in violation of this Ordinance.

9.11 Construction Standards

All signs shall be constructed according to the requirements of the North Carolina State Building Code, as amended.

9.12 Maintenance Required

Every sign and its support, braces, guys, anchors, and electrical equipment shall be maintained in safe condition at all times. All signs shall be kept in a state of good repair and aesthetic condition, free from defective, rusting, or missing parts (i.e., broken sign facing, broken supports, loose appendages or struts, disfigured, cracked, ripped, or peeling paint or poster paper) or missing letters or numbers and shall be able to withstand the wind pressure as prescribed in the North Carolina Building Code. Illuminated signs shall not be allowed to operate with only partial illumination. The area within 10 feet in all directions of the base of a freestanding sign shall be kept clear of debris and undergrowth.

9.13 Dangerous or Unsafe Signs

If the Zoning Administrator shall find that any sign is a dangerous or is a menace to the public, he/she shall give written notice of such violations to the owner of the sign, or by leaving said notice with the manager or other person who is apparently in charge of the premises or by affixing a copy of the notice to the sign, sign structure, or building for a period of 5 days. The notice shall set forth the nature of the violation and order the violator to repair the sign in such a manner to be approved by the Zoning Administrator in conformance with the provisions of this Article or remove the sign forthwith in the case of imminent instability or immediate danger of falling, and in any case within 10 days of receipt.

If within 10 days the notice is not complied with, the Zoning Administrator shall have the authority to remove the sign at the recipient's expense and to destroy or otherwise dispose of same.

In cases of emergency, the Zoning Administrator may cause the immediate removal of a dangerous or unsafe sign without notice.

9.14 Removal and Disposal of Signs in Right-of-Way

The Administrator shall possess the authority to remove and otherwise dispose of any sign unlawfully placed within the right-of-way of any street with the exception of signs protected by state law.

9.15 Signs Expressly Prohibited

The following signs, components, and characteristics are expressly prohibited within all zoning districts

9.15.1 Simulated Public Safety, Warning, or Traffic Signs

Signs by their location, color, illumination, size, shape, nature, message, or appearance tend to obstruct the view of or be confused with official traffic, safety, or warning signs or lights or other devices erected by governmental agencies. This prohibition includes signs having no bona fide safety necessity, involving the terms "CAUTION", "DANGER", "SLOW", "STOP", OR "YIELD", or which utilize geometric figures, symbols, lights, location, or message not unlike official traffic, safety or warning signs, signals, or lights. Provided, however, this provision is not intended to prevent the placement on private property of signs with "stop", "yield", or other such wording or design where such is necessary for traffic control or other such legitimate notice to the public.

9.15.2 Snipe Signs

Signs placed upon or attached to any curb, sidewalk, utility pole, post, fence, hydrant, bridge, another sign or other surface, public bench, streetlight, or any tree, rock, or other natural object located on, over, or across any public street or public property. Provided, however, this provision shall not apply to the posting of public interest, security, and warning signs nor to street signs placed upon poles by governmental units for designating the names of streets.

9.15.3 Flashing Signs

Signs or devices with flashing, intermittent, animated, or changing intensity of illumination. Provided, however, traffic signals, railroad crossing signals, and other official warning or regulatory signs shall not be considered flashing signs.

9.15.4 Motion Signs

Signs or devices designed to attract attention, all or any part of which of their physical structure use movement or apparent movement by fluttering, revolving, rotating, spinning, swinging, animation, or moving in some other manner and are set in motion by movement of water or the atmosphere or by mechanical, electrical, or any other means. This shall not apply to authorized temporary signs.

9.15.5 Signs Below Minimum Vertical Clearance

Signs, marquees, canopies, and awnings with vertical clearance of less than 8 feet above sidewalks and pedestrian areas and less than 14 feet above parking or vehicular passage areas.

9.15.6 Vehicle Signs

Signs placed upon, painted on, attached to, or displayed on parked vehicles or trailers, where the primary purpose of the vehicle or trailer is to advertise a product or business or to direct people to a business or activity.

9.15.7 Signs Obstructing Motorist Visibility

Signs that substantially interfere with the view necessary for motorists to proceed safely through intersections or to enter onto or exit from public streets or private roads or driveways or that obstruct the motorists view of approaching, merging, or intersecting traffic including, but not limited to, signs in excess of 3 feet in sight visibility triangles.

9.15.8 Signs in Rights-of Way

Any sign erected in or over any public right-of-way except for major special event signs by special permit, governmental signs, and signs permitted by NCGS 136-32.

9.15.9 Signs Emitting Glare

Signs with light sources or reflectivity of such brightness that result in glare, blinding, or any other such adverse effect on motorist vision or into or upon any residential building not related to the signs; or which interfere with the effectiveness of, or obscures an official traffic sign, device, or signal.

9.15.10 Pennants or Streamers

Pennants, streamers, or flags consecutively strung together.

9.15.11 Obscene Signs

Signs containing words or graphics that are obscene, as defined in North Carolina General Statute 14-190.1.

9.15.12 Roof Signs (Above Roof Line)

Signs erected, in whole or in part on, upon or over the roof or parapet of a building or structure and which is wholly or partially dependent upon the roof of the building or structure for support.

9.15.13 All Other Signs not Specifically Permitted

Other signs not expressly allowed by this Article.

9.16 Signs Permitted Without A Zoning Permit

The following signs and devices shall be permitted without the issuance of a Zoning Permit.

9.16.1 Public (Governmental, Utility) Signs

Signs erected by, on behalf of, or pursuant to the authorization of a governmental body, including legal notices, identification and informational signs, and traffic warning, directional, or regulatory signs.

9.16.2 Warning (Health, Safety, Hazard) Signs

Temporary or permanent signs erected by government agencies, public utility companies, or construction companies to warn of danger or hazardous conditions, including signs indicating the presence of underground cables, gas lines, and similar devices or signs providing directions around such conditions.

9.16.3 Signs not legible off-premises

Signs that are not legible from the boundaries of the lot or parcel upon which they are located or from any public thoroughfare or right-of-way.

9.16.4 Flags

Flags bearing a non-commercial message flown on any premises, or flags bearing a commercial message when situated on the same premises as the commercial entity with which it is associated, when the pole(s) upon which flags are flown do not exceed 40 feet in height. Flags not meeting these standards shall be considered freestanding signs and subject to regulation as such.

9.16.5 Incidental Object or Product Signs

Small decals consolidated and affixed to window or door panes, such as indicating membership in a business group or credit cards accepted at the establishment, provided that such signs do not exceed 1 square foot in area.

9.16.6 Signs Required by Law

Legal notices and signs required by law, statute, or ordinance.

9.16.7 Transportation Facilities Signs

Informational signs indicating bus stops, taxi stands, train stations, and similar transportation facilities.

9.16.8 Political Signs

1. Political signs may be displayed at polling places provided they are displayed in compliance with general law only on the day of the election is held and must be removed within 72 hours of the close of voting.

2. Political signs located in rights-of-way, including both City and NCDOT maintained roads, shall adhere to standards set in North Carolina General Statute 136-32, including limitations on size, number, location, and period of display

9.16.9 Street Numbers

Display of street numbers on residential and non-residential buildings, structures, and mailboxes.

9.16.10 Handicapped Signs

Handicapped signs as required by the Americans With Disabilities Act.

9.16.11 Window Signs

Signs placed on or attached to the interior side of a window or door glass of a building by means of adhesive, paint, or manufacturing process intended for viewing from the exterior of such buildings; or a sign within a building, placed no more than 12 inches behind the window, which is visible through the window, provided that such signs shall not cover more than 50% of the glazed area on any frontage.

9.16.12 Temporary Signs

Temporary signs are subject to the following limitations:

Table 9.1: Temporary Sign Regulations

Type	Max. No.	Max. Copy Area (sq. ft.)	Max. Height Freestanding (vert. ft.)	Max. Display Time
Non-Residential	2	32	10	45 days in any consecutive 90-day period
Residential	2	8	6	No Limit

Temporary signs which do not meet the provisions of this Subsection shall be considered in violation of the Ordinance. No temporary sign shall be illuminated.

9.16.13 Miscellaneous Signs

Miscellaneous signs are subject to the following limitations:

Table 9.2: Miscellaneous Sign Regulations

Type	Max. No.	Max. Copy Area (sq. ft.)	Max. Height Freestanding (vert. ft.)
Public Interest, Security Warning (No trespassing, soliciting, hunting, or fishing/posted/private parking/danger/warning)	-	1	4
Home Occupation; Rural Home Occupation	1	3	4
Open/Closed/Hours	2	2	6
Permanent Professional or Business Announcement (Wall)	1	2	-
Building Memorial (Wall)	1	2	-
Philosophical, Religious, Educational, or other Non-Commercial	2	2	4
Occupant/Address (Ground or Wall)	2	2	6
Private Drive	1	2	6
Informational/Instructional (Traffic directions, restrictions or arrows, entrance, exit, location of restrooms, public telephones, parcel pick-up, freight or service entrances, parking/loading areas, and the like)	-	10	4
Sidewalk Sign	2	12	6

Miscellaneous signs which do not meet the provisions of this Section shall be considered in violation of the Ordinance. Only Private Drive signs shall be permitted off-premises. No miscellaneous signs shall be illuminated.

9.17 Signs Permitted with a Zoning Permit in All Zoning Districts

The following signs are permitted in all zoning districts upon issuance of a Zoning Permit provided that stated specific requirements, conditions, and stipulations are met:

1. All signs permitted without a Zoning Permit and signs permitted by special permit.
2. On-premises signs identifying a single-family residential subdivision, apartment, townhouse, condominium, or other multi-family residential complex; recreational facility

or manufactured home park not exceeding 32 square feet in area. There shall be a limit of 1 double-faced sign or 2 single-faced signs for each road or driveway entrance to the development named on the sign.

3. One on-premises sign for each road or driveway entrance for an institutional use, such as a school, hospital, religious institution, and similar non-commercial uses. An on-premises sign for such use may exceed 32 square feet through the approval of a Special Use Permit.
4. Signs not exceeding 32 square feet in an area advertising the sale of residential subdivision lots, with not more than 1 sign to be located on private property at each major approach to the subdivision; provided that the display of such signs shall be limited to a 6-month period or until 75% of the lots are sold, whichever comes first, and may not be illuminated.
5. One on-premises ground or wall sign not exceeding 32 square feet in area for a legal non-conforming non-residential use in a residential zoning district in which it is located. Illumination of such signs shall be permitted only between sunrise and 10:00pm.
6. On-premises signs not exceeding 32 square feet in copy area identifying private recreational uses, equestrian uses, lakes, cemeteries, and similar facilities operated on a profit or non-profit basis. There shall be a limit of 1 double-faced sign or 2 single-faced signs for each road or driveway entrance to the facility. Such signs may be directly or indirectly illuminated.
7. One on-premises sign not exceeding 20 square feet in copy area for a convalescent home, nursing home, home for the care of children, medical or dental office. Such sign may be directly or indirectly illuminated.

9.18 Signs for Permitted Non-Residential Uses in Residential Districts

Signs for permitted non-residential uses in residential districts, other than those permitted with a Zoning Permit in all districts under the provisions of Section 9.18, shall be permitted under the provisions of the most restrictive non-residential district in which the uses are permitted except that sign copy area may not exceed 75% of the maximum size allowed.

9.19 Signs Permitted in Nonresidential Zoning Districts

The following permanent signs are permitted, upon issuance of a Zoning Permit regarding the proposed sign(s), provided that stated requirements, conditions, and stipulations are met.

Where a parcel contains more than 1 principal establishment, the provisions below shall apply to the parcel as a whole, and the owner(s) of the parcel shall be responsible for allocating permitted signs and display areas among the individual's uses or establishments. The permit application submitted for such parcel shall show all signs located and proposed thereon and shall be designed so that all signs are designed and installed in a consistent manner.

Each sign and all its components shall be manufactured, assembled, and erected in compliance with all applicable city regulations, including the North Carolina State Building Code. All signs shall be maintained in a safe, clean, and legible condition at all times.

9.19.1 Freestanding Signs.

On-premises freestanding signs may be erected and displayed in compliance with the maximum dimension limitations stated below, provided:

1. The parcel on which a freestanding sign is located shall be the same as the use with which it is associated;
2. Freestanding signs shall be limited to 1 sign per street frontage for each parcel;
3. No freestanding sign shall be permitted on the same lot frontage along which there is a projecting sign;
4. Freestanding signs shall clear driveway and parking areas by a height of at least 14 feet and shall clear sidewalks and pedestrian paths by a height of at least 9 feet;
5. The maximum height of freestanding signs shall be 20 feet in the HB and B-1 zones;
6. Freestanding signs in the B-2 and OI zones shall be ground mounted

9.19.2 Projecting Signs.

Projecting signs may be erected and displayed in compliance with the maximum area per display surface limitations contained below, provided;

1. The building to which a projecting sign is attached shall be 20 feet or more in width;
2. Projecting signs shall be limited to one sign per street frontage, and shall not be located closer than 50 feet to any other projecting sign;
3. No projecting sign shall be permitted on the same street frontage along which there is a freestanding sign;

4. Projecting signs shall clear sidewalks and pedestrian paths by a height of at least 10 feet and shall project no more than 5 feet from the building to which they are attached, and shall not extend beyond the inner edge of the curb line;
5. No projecting sign shall extend above the soffit, parapet, or eave line, as appropriate, of the building to which it is attached;
6. Projecting signs shall not be located at the intersection of building corners except at right angles to a building façade

9.19.3 Wall Signs.

Wall signs may be erected and displayed in compliance with the requirements below:

1. Wall signs placed in the space between windows on different stories of a building shall not exceed in height two-thirds (2/3) of the distance between the top of a window and the sill of the window above;
2. A wall sign shall not protrude more than 12 inches from the wall to which it is attached nor exceed 10% of the total surface area of the wall on which the sign is located up to a maximum of 150 square feet;
3. No wall sign shall extend above the soffit, parapet, or eave line, as appropriate of the building to which it is attached;
4. Wall signs or portions thereof, placed between window spandrels shall not exceed in height two-thirds (2/3) the height of the spandrel;
5. In industrial zones, wall signs on the side of buildings adjacent to residentially zoned property are permitted only when the building is at least 50 feet from the side lot line of the residential property;

9.19.4 Marquee or Awning Signs

1. Signs hung below a marquee or awning shall conform in size and appearance to existing signs under the same marquee or awning. Where there are no such existing signs under a marquee or awning, signs being under them shall be no more than 10 inches high and 3 feet long.
2. Marquee and awning signs shall not be illuminated; and

3. Signs below a marquee or awning shall not be less than 9 feet above the ground or sidewalk.

9.19.5 Sign Area and Number.

The area of a display surface of a sign shall be computed as including the entire area, within a regular geometric form or combination of forms, comprising of all the display area of the surface and including all of the elements of the matter displayed and the sign frame. Structural members not bearing advertising matter shall not be included in the computation of a sign area.

For the purpose of determining number of signs, a sign shall be considered to be a single display device containing elements organized, related, and composed to form a unit.

9.19.6 Sign Area and Limitations.

Table 10.3: Free Standing Sign Regulations

District	Maximum Area Per Surface (sf)	Maximum Height to Top of Sign
HB	100	20
B-1	100	20
B-2	40	6
DT	PROHIBITED	
OI	40	6
CP	100	10
M-1	150	10
M-2	150	10

** Except as noted in 1.e above (when said sign is to be located within 400 feet of an interstate right-of-way or interchange).*

9.19.7 Permanent On-Premises Signs Permitted for Establishments on Adjacent Parcels or Lots Utilizing Shared Parking and Driveway Connections.

Other signs for each individual establishment shall be in accordance with this Subsection

Establishments on adjacent parcels or lots utilizing shared parking and driveway connections may exceed maximum copy area for freestanding signs in this Subsection by 25% for a combined or

common freestanding sign. Such combined or common freestanding sign shall not be considered to be an off-premises sign for any of the establishments advertising on the sign. Establishments participating in combined or common freestanding signs may not also have individual freestanding signs.

9.20 Signs Permitted by Special Permit

The following signs are permitted only by special permit issued by the City Council and shall conform to all stated regulations and to all conditions and requirements imposed by the Council in issuing the special permit.

9.20.1 Festival and Major Special Event Signs

For the purpose of giving directions and information, temporary on-premises and off-premises signs pertaining to festivals and other major special events are permitted with approval by the City Council subject to a special permit specifying size, location, lighting, design, display, and duration. The number of signs shall be set by the Council.

9.21 Outdoor Advertising (Billboard) Signs Prohibited

Upon adoption of this Section, all outdoor advertising (billboard) signs are prohibited within the City limits and extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction (ETJ).

9.22 Digital Signage Permitted

Digital sign displays are permitted in association with a permitted freestanding sign in any nonresidential zoning district, provided that the area of the digital display shall be limited to 75% of the permitted sign copy area allowed for such sign in the district in which it is located.