

Article 9 Sign Regulations

Section 9.01 Purpose

The purpose of these regulations is to ensure that persons and businesses desiring to exercise their rights, under the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution, by expressing commercial and non-commercial messages shall be treated uniformly while ensuring that the public health, safety and welfare are protected. These regulations for signs have the following specific objectives:

- A. To ensure that signs are designed, constructed, installed and maintained so that the public safety and traffic safety are not compromised;
- B. To allow and promote positive conditions for sign communications while at the same time avoiding nuisances to nearby properties and promoting an attractive environment;
- C. To reflect and support the desired character and development patterns of the various zoning districts;
- D. To allow for adequate and effective signs in commercial and industrial zones while preventing signs from dominating the appearance of the area; and
- E. To ensure that the constitutionally guaranteed right of free speech is protected.

Section 9.02 Applicability and Effect

Other than lawful nonconforming signs, no signs shall be permitted in any zoning district except in accordance with the provisions of this Article and shall require a sign permit in conformance with the provisions in **Article 2** of this Code.

A. Applicability

The provisions of this Chapter shall apply to the erection, alteration, reconstruction, construction and maintenance of all on-premise and off-premise signs and billboards within the City.

B. Restrictiveness

To the extent that any other provision of this Article shall be more restrictive than the provisions set forth in this Code, the more restrictive provision shall apply.

C. Severability

The sections, paragraphs, clauses, and phrases of this Article are severable and if any phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph or section of this Article shall be declared unlawful by the valid judgment, decree or injunction order of a court of competent jurisdiction, such ruling shall not affect any of the remaining phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs and sections of this Article. In the event that, contrary to the policies, interests, and values of the City, a court of competent jurisdiction issues a judgment, decree or injunction order that this Article is unlawful because of any omission or prohibition in this Article, then all provisions of this Article not specifically declared to be unlawful shall remain in full force and effect. In the event that a judgment, decree or injunction order declaring all or a portion of this Article to be unlawful is reversed or vacated by a court of competent jurisdiction, the provisions contained in this Article shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 9.03 Definitions

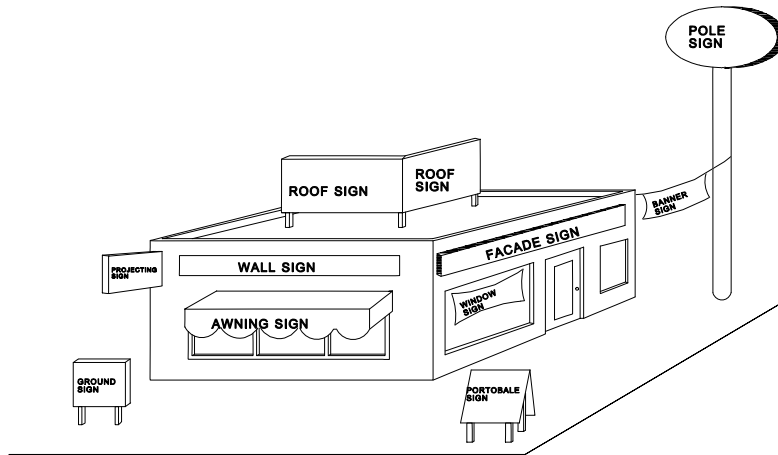
For the purposes of this article, the definitions contained in this zoning ordinance shall control. **Figure 9-1** illustrates several common sign types referred to in this Article. In addition, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings respectively ascribed to them below, unless the context clearly indicates a contrary meaning:

- (1) *Aggregate signable area*. The sum total of the signable area of any and all signs, for a given lot. Street numbers assigned by the United States Postal Service shall not be considered in calculating the aggregate signable area.
- (2) *Animated sign*. See flashing sign.
- (3) *Awning sign*. Any sign on a cloth, metal, plastic or other cover designed to shade a window or entrances and attached to any structure.
- (4) *Back to back sign*. A sign with two (2) sign faces that are parallel or within up to

- fifteen (15) degrees of being parallel and oriented in opposite directions.
- (5) *Banner sign.* See temporary sign.
- (6) *Beacon.* See temporary sign.
- (7) *Building frontage.* The linear feet of the exterior wall of a building that faces any road or street that provides a means of direct ingress and egress to the lot.
- (8) *Canopy sign.* See wall sign.
- (9) *Decal.* A picture, design or label made to be transferred (as to glass, wood, metal or any other hard object) from specially prepared paper.
- (10) *Eave.* The projecting lower edges of a roof overhanging the wall of a building.
- (11) *Entrance sign.* Any sign placed at the intersection of a public street and a public or private entryway into an apartment complex, condominium complex, office complex, industrial complex or other building or buildings with multifamily residential dwelling units or multiple commercial units.
- (12) *Erect.* To build, paint, construct, attach, hang, place, suspend, assemble or affix.
- (13) *Externally illuminated signs.* Any sign illuminated by an external light source directed primarily toward such sign.
- (14) *Fascia sign.* See wall sign.
- (15) *Flag.* A usually rectangular piece of fabric of distinctive design that is used as a symbol as of a nation, as a signaling device or as a decoration.
- (16) *Flashing sign.* Any sign whose message or appearance scrolls, flashes, rotates or changes, or whose illumination changes in intensity more often than once every fifteen (15) seconds, including but not limited to reader boards.
- (17) *Ground sign.* Any sign supported by uprights or braces which are permanently placed into the ground, and not supported by or suspended from any building.
- (18) *Hand held signs.* Any sign larger than six (6) inches by six (6) inches carried by a human appendage or prosthesis including but not limited to picket signs, shields or sandwich boards.
- (19) *Height.* The vertical distance measured from the lowest adjacent grade to the highest point of the sign or sign structure.
- (20) *Internally illuminated signs.* Any sign which has characters, letters, figures, designs or outlines illuminated by electric lights or luminous tubes located within the interior parts of the sign.
- (21) *Kiosk Sign Program.* A City sponsored program that gives direction to subdivisions, developers and homebuilders with the City.
- (22) *Mobile sign.* See temporary sign.
- (23) *Monument sign.* See ground sign.
- (24) *Non-combustible material.* Any material which will not ignite at or below a temperature of one thousand two hundred degrees Fahrenheit (1,200°F) and will not continue to burn or glow at that temperature.
- (25) *Nonconforming sign.* Any sign that does not conform to the provisions of this article.
- (26) *Pennant.* See temporary sign. *Pole sign.* See ground sign.
- (27) *Portable sign.* See temporary sign.
- (28) *Primary facade.* The exterior wall of the building that faces the main parking area or street and includes the primary entrance into the building. If the building faces more than one (1) parking area or street, the largest exterior wall of the building with a primary entrance which is most nearly parallel to the widest street or largest parking area to which the building faces.
- (29) *Projecting sign.* Any sign that is attached perpendicular to a building or other structure and extends more than twelve (12) inches horizontally from the plane of the building wall.
- (30) *Public Service signs.* Any erected and maintained by public officials, or public agencies, or approved and authorized for use by state or local governmental authorities, and located within public right-of-way. Such signs shall generally be for traffic control or public information purposes.
- (31) *Reflectors.* Any device created for the purpose of reflecting light directed at the device so as to render the device especially visible.
- (32) *Roof sign.* A sign that is attached to a building or structure and is displayed above the lowest horizontal line of a building's roof.
- (33) *Sandwich sign.* See temporary sign or hand held sign.
- (34) *Searchlight.* See temporary sign.

- (35) *Secondary facade.* Any exterior wall of a building, other than the primary facade.
- (36) *Sign.* Every device, item, product, frame, letter, figure, character, mark, plane, point, design, picture, stroke, stripe, trademark, or reading matter, which is used or intended to be used to attract attention or convey information when the same is placed in view of the general public. For the purpose of determining number of signs, a single display surface or a single display device containing different elements that are organized, related, and composed to form a unit shall be considered to be one (1) sign. Where different elements are displayed in a random manner without an organized relationship to each other, or where there is reasonable doubt as to the relationship of different elements to each other, each element shall be considered to be a single separate sign.
- (37) *Sign face.* See signable area.
- (38) *Signable area.* The total area upon which a message is displayed on any sign. For double-face signs, the side with the largest signable area shall be used in computing signable area. If the two (2) faces of a double-face sign are of unequal area, the signable area shall be the area of the larger face. For wall signs consisting entirely of products shaped in the form of letters or other figures attached directly to a wall or roof, the signable area shall consist of the net geometric area measured by the smallest possible single square or rectangle enclosing the display surface of the sign including the outer extremities of all letters, characters and delineations.
- (39) *Stake sign.* Any temporary sign supported by at least one (1) upright placed into the ground, and not supported by or suspended from any building with signable area not greater than four (4) square feet.
- (40) *Store front.* The primary facade of a single, undivided unit containing an area larger than seven hundred fifty (750) square feet.
- (41) *Streamer.* See temporary sign.
- (42) *Subdivision sign.* Any sign placed at the intersection of two (2) public roads where one of the roads is the main thoroughfare into and out of a single-family residential subdivision.
- (43) *Suspended sign.* See projecting sign.
- (44) *Temporary sign.* Any sign or device that is not permanently attached to the ground or other permanent structure, which is designed to be mobile or is designed to remain in place for a limited time. This includes, but is not limited to, signs which are designed to be transported regularly from one location to another, signs which are designed with wheels, regardless of whether the wheels remain attached to the sign, or signs tethered to an existing structure. These signs include, but are not limited to, (i) sky lights, (ii) balloons, (iii) streamers, (iv) flag strings, (v) inflatable displays, (vi) banners, (vii) beacons, (viii) searchlights, (ix) pennants, and (x) mechanical or animated figures.
- (45) *V formation sign.* A sign with two (2) sign faces, forming the shape of the letter "V" when viewed from above, with an angle between the two (2) faces of between fifteen (15) and sixty (60) degrees.
- (46) *Wall sign.* Any sign which is attached parallel to or painted on an exterior building wall, which may include a door.
- (47) *Window sign.* Any sign displayed to an outside observer on or through a window or covering a window, which may include a door.

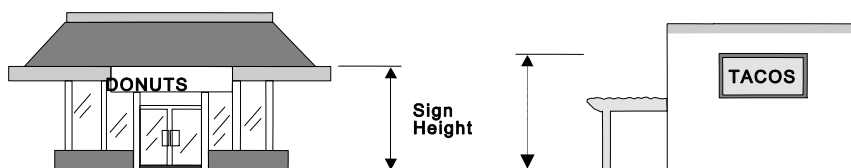
Figure 9-1 Common Sign Types



Section 9.04 Measurements

The height of a sign shall be measured from the ground, excluding berms, filling, mounding or excavations, at the base of the sign, or from the grade level of the adjacent street or highway centerline, whichever is higher, to the top of highest attached component of the sign. In cases where the normal grade cannot reasonably be determined due to multiple levels of the building or topography, the sign height shall be computed on the assumption that the elevation of the normal grade at the base of the sign is equal to the elevation of the nearest point of the crown of a public street or grade of the land at the principal entrance to the principal structure on the lot, whichever is lower. **Figure 9-2** shows the method for calculating sign height. Where topography neighboring buildings or existing landscaping would obscure a sign from the adjoining street, the applicant may request a variance in conformance with **Section 2.03.J**.

Figure 9-2 Sign Height



A. Maximum On-Premise Sign Area Per Lot, Tract or Parcel

The maximum allowable sign area permitted for on-premise signs for any lot or parcel shall be computed by applying the maximum sign area permitted in a Zoning District contained in **Section 9.15**.

B. Sign Face Area

On-premise signs shall be calculated by measuring from the extreme boundaries of the each sign face, as illustrated in **Figure 9-3**. The message area shall include any emblem, logo, trademark, representation 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 shall not include the supporting framework, bracing, poles, apron, supports, structural members, decorative fence or wall that is clearly incidental to the sign and not a part of the message. Billboards and off-premise sign area calculations shall include the border and trim.

1. Cabinet Signs

The sign area is determined by multiplying the width by the height. The sign area of round cabinet signs shall be calculated based on the formula: $\pi \times \text{radius} \times \text{radius}$.

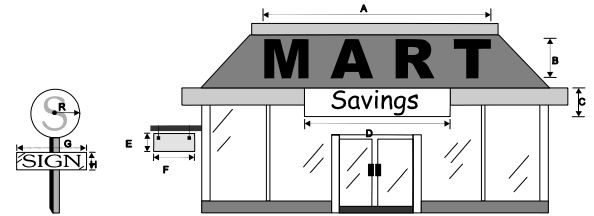
2. Back-to-Back Signs

The sign area of back-to-back signs shall be calculated by measuring only one sign face. If there is a separation of more than three (3) feet between faces or an angle greater than fifteen (15) degrees, then each sign face shall be calculated.

3. Multiple Signs

The sign area for multiple signs shall be calculated by taking the sum of the sign area for each individual cabinet.

Figure 9-3 Calculating Sign Area



C. Sign Setbacks

1. All signs shall be required to be located within the required front yard of a principal structure, and shall not be permitted to extend beyond the front property line into the street right-of-way. The location of signs shall not interfere with the view of a traffic signal or traffic vision.
2. A development must have frontage on two (2) publicly dedicated streets with each street including a legal curb cut to authorize a second freestanding sign. In addition, there must be a minimum lot area of one (1) acre to permit a second such sign to be erected. In those instances where one (1) of the street frontages is on a street serving a residential subdivision, a second sign shall be prohibited.
3. All signs shall be located five (5) feet from right-of-way and/or property line, whichever has the greatest distance, except for City sponsored Kiosk Sign Programs which can be located within City right-of-ways and Public Service Signs.

Table 9-1 Permitted Sign Standards by Zoning District

ON-PREMISE SIGNS – PERMANENT						
Zoning District	Type of Sign	Structural Type	Maximum Number of Signs	Maximum Sign Area	Maximum Height	Additional Regulations
RD, R-20, RT, R-14, DT	Subdivision Sign	Monument	1 per street entrance to subdivision		5 ft.	Permit required Must not interfere with sight triangle
	Church and public bulletin boards	Monument	1 per street frontage	20 sq. ft. per sign face	5 ft.	Permit required 10 ft. minimum setback from right-of-way
		Wall	No limit - see area and separation standards			Under eave of building
DT (Commercial or Mixed-Use Only)	All non-exempt	Monument	1 per street frontage, additional signs may be allowed at a rate of 1 per 600 feet of street frontage	20 sq. ft. per sign face	5 ft.	Permit required Must not interfere with sight triangle
	All non-exempt	Wall, awning, marquee, window, or projecting sign	Any number of signs not to exceed max, total sign area except not more than 1 projecting sign per business	Up to 10% of building façade for per tenant lease area for strip developments; and Up to 15% of building façade for a single development	Under eave or parapet for wall, awning, marquee, window or projecting sign	Permit required
		All non-exempt	Monument	1 per street frontage, additional signs may be allowed at a rate of 1 per 600 feet of street frontage	Single developments – 75 sq. ft. Multi-tenant developments with less than three (3) suites/units – 100 sq. ft. Multi-tenant developments with more than three (3) suites/units – 150 sq. ft.	8 ft.
OI, NC GC, LI, GI, HC	All non-exempt	Wall, awning, marquee, window, or projecting sign	Any number of signs not to exceed max, total sign area except not more than 1 projecting sign per business	Up to 10% of building façade for per tenant lease area for strip developments; and Up to 15% of building façade for a single development	Under eave or parapet for wall, awning, marquee, window or projecting sign	Permit required
		Per approval final PD plan / Requires Master Signage Plan If PD approval does not address signs, then sign regulations for equivalent district, as determined by the Community Development Director shall apply.				
All signs total on-premise shall not exceed an aggregate of 500 feet.						

TEMPORARY SIGNS						
Zoning District	Type of Sign	Structural Type	Maximum Number of Signs	Maximum Sign Area	Maximum Height	Additional Regulations
RD, R-20	Temporary	Pole / post or monument	1 per street frontage	8 sq. ft. per face	5 ft. for pole/post or monument	Permit required.
	Temporary	Wall	1 per street frontage	8 sq. ft. per face	Under eave	Permit required. Sign shall be removed within the lesser of 30 days of establishment or upon completion of event advertised by the sign.
RT, R-14, DT, OI, NC	Temporary	Pole / post or monument	1 per street frontage	16 sq. ft. per face	10 ft. for pole/post; 5 ft. for monument base;	Permit required.
	Temporary	Wall	1 per street frontage	16 sq. ft. per face	Under eave	Permit required. Sign shall be removed within the lesser of 30 days of establishment or upon completion of event advertised by the sign.
HC, GC, LI, GI	Temporary	Pole / post or monument	1 per parcel	32 sq. ft. per face	10 ft. for pole/ post	Permit required.
	Temporary	Wall	1 per parcel	32 sq. ft. per face	Under eave	Permit required. Sign shall be removed within the lesser of 30 days of establishment or upon completion of event advertised by the sign.

BILLBOARD AND OFF-PREMISE SIGNS - PERMANENT						
Zoning District	Type of Sign	Structural Type	Maximum Number of Signs	Maximum Sign Area	Maximum Height	Additional Regulations
GC, HC, LI, GI	Billboard	Billboard	1 per lot	Total sign area 672 sq.ft.; see Section 9.12	See Section 9.12	Sign permit required

(ORD-03-07)

Section 9.05 Permitted Sign Standards

The type of sign permitted, maximum number of signs, maximum size, maximum height, maximum projection, minimum setback, lighting method, and permit requirement shall be in conformance with **Section 9.15**. The requirements for sign standards are based on the zoning districts in which the signs are located. See **Article 3** of this Code for more detail on the zoning districts. In addition to the standards established in **Table 9-1**, the following standards shall apply:

A. Construction standards; all signs.

1. *Building code compliance.* All signs shall be constructed and maintained in accordance with the provisions of the City building code.
2. *Materials required.* All signs for which a permit is required by this article, except temporary signs, shall be constructed of non-combustible material.
3. *Reflectors.* Reflectors and lights shall be permitted on ground signs, roof signs, and wall signs; provided, however, that the reflectors and lights shall be provided with proper glass lenses so that no light there from creates a hazardous or dangerous condition.
4. *Internal illumination.* The illumination of internally illuminated signs shall not exceed twenty (20) foot-candles of incandescent light measured at a distance of ten (10) feet from such structure.
5. *External illumination.* Externally illuminated signs shall be lighted so that no lights are positioned in such a manner that light glares or shines into the eyes of motorists or pedestrians so as to create a hazardous or dangerous condition.
6. *Other code compliance.* All signs shall comply with building, and zoning requirements, except as expressly modified in this Article.

B. Special limitations.

In addition to the limitations set forth in the other sections of this article, the

following limitations shall apply to these specific types of signs:

1. *Wall signs.* No wall sign shall cover wholly or partially any wall opening, nor project beyond the ends or top of the wall to which it is attached.
2. *Projecting signs.*
 - a. No projecting sign may be placed over streets, alleys, or ways available for vehicular traffic.
 - b. Night illumination. Every projecting sign located at a commercial business shall be illuminated between sunset and 11:00 p.m. every night Monday through Saturday, on each side thereof, by at least five (5) watts per square foot of sign surface, but in no case less than sixty (60) watts for each sign surface.
 - c. All projecting signs must be installed at a ninety (90) degree angle to the building facade.
 - d. The bottom of projecting signs that extend over pedestrian areas must be at least eight (8) feet above the walkway.
3. *Awning signs.*
 - a. Awning signs must be painted or installed directly on the valances of the awning.
 - b. Awning signs shall not have lettering or graphics exceeding ten (10) inches in height.
 - c. No awning sign may be internally illuminated.
 - d. The signable area of any awning sign shall not exceed ten (10%) percent of the surface area of the awning.
4. *Entrance sign.* All entrance signs shall be placed on private property and may not be placed in the right-of-way, except that the City Council may allow an entrance sign to be placed in the right-of-way in a center median if:
 - a. the sign has two (2) faces;
 - b. the location has been approved in writing by the Community Development Director; and
 - c. the applicant agrees to be responsible for maintenance and repair of the entrance sign and ensures that the existence of the entrance sign is

documented on the final plat for the development.

5. *Subdivision sign.* All subdivision signs shall be placed on private property and may not be placed in the right-of-way.
6. *Hand-held signs.* All hand-held signs shall meet the following regulations:
 - a. Hand-held signs are permitted only in conjunction with temporary uses (see **Section 9.10**).
 - b. No hand-held signs shall be placed or carried which extend beyond the width of the carrier's body or that extend more than twenty-four (24) inches above the carrier's head.
 - c. All persons carrying any such signs, shields or sandwich boards shall remain at least ten (10) feet apart, shall not stand or loiter in front of any doorway, driveway or street intersection and shall not interfere with the general flow of traffic, whether pedestrian or vehicular.
 - d. All hand held signs are exempt from sign permitting requirements.
7. *Banners in City parks.*
 - a. City sponsored or operated events shall be exempt from sign regulations.
 - b. Banners shall be considered temporary signs.
 - c. All signs shall be permitted and approved by the Parks and Recreation Director or his designee.

B. Sign Separation

A ground-mounted sign (e.g., pole and monument signs) shall not be located closer to another ground mounted sign than fifty (50) feet, measured parallel to the right-of-way. In circumstances where existing signs would preclude the installation of a sign in conformance with these spacing standards on a lot or parcel legally existing on the date of the adoption of these regulations, one freestanding sign shall be authorized for the parcel.

Section 9.06 Prohibited Signs

The following signs shall not be permitted in any district:

- A. Signs with flashing, moving, rotating, pulsating or glaring parts;
- B. Signs which resemble traffic control signs or devices or use the words "stop", "slow", "danger", "caution" or the like which may confuse motorists and cause traffic hazards;
- C. Strings of lights, pennants, strings and loops of strings or ribbons, garlands, search lights, beacons, paper posters applied directly to a wall, pole, fence or building surface, and banners and streamers, except as allowed as a temporary sign in **Section 9.10** and for auto sales lots, where pennants shall be exempt in accordance with **Section 9.07**);
- D. Abandoned signs or signs advertising a business, service or product no longer offered on the premises;
- E. Signs containing obscene messages, scenes or graphics, or false or misleading advertising or information;
- F. Portable or temporary signs other than those specifically permitted herein;
- G. Billboards and off-premise signs except as allowed under **Section 9.12**
- H. Snipe signs or signs attached to trees, telephone poles, public benches, streetlights, utility poles, fences, or placed on any public property or public right-of-way, except as authorized by the City;
- I. Signs placed on vehicles or trailers that are parked or located for the primary purpose of displaying said sign;
- J. Signs placed on or extending over public right-of-way. Subdivision signs in medians may be authorized pursuant to **Section 9.05.B.5** of this Article.
- K. Any sign on which the illuminating or lighting device is so placed as to reflect or shine directly into the adjacent highways or streets in such a manner as to hamper the vision of a motor vehicle operator thereon;
- L. Roof signs;
- M. Business, company, or other non-governmental flags displayed on roof-mounted poles;

N. Mobile billboards or street blimps parked in any zoning district for more than one (1) hour in a twenty-four (24) hour period.

O. *Obstruction to doors, windows, or fire escapes.* No sign shall be erected, relocated, or maintained so as to prevent free ingress to, or egress from, any door, window, or fire escape; nor shall any sign be attached to any stand pipe or fire escape.

P. Home Occupations signs, except in RD districts as established in Section 5.13.C.

Section 9.07 Exempt Signs

Except as noted below, the following signs are excluded from regulation under this Section. Exemption from these sign regulations does not exempt property owners from duties and responsibilities established by private deed restrictions or covenants.

A. Residential Signs

Signs not exceeding one (1) square foot in area that are customarily associated with residential use, such as signs identifying names or numbers or signs on mailboxes, and are not of a commercial nature.

B. Governmental Signs

Signs erected by, or on behalf of, or pursuant to the authorization of a governmental body shall be exempt.

C. Flags

United States, State of Georgia, and/or local government flags shall be permitted in all zoning classifications, and shall have no number limitation and are excluded from the maximum allowable sign area. Business, company, institutional and any other non-governmental flags shall be included in the total allowable signage of a lot in accordance with Section 9.11.

D. Decorative/Architectural Features

Holiday season decorations and signage; historic plaques, corner stones and commemorative plaques; and integral decorative or architectural features of buildings or works of art, so long as such features or works do not contain letters, trademarks or moving parts, and when cut into any masonry surface or when constructed of bronze or other incombustible materials.

E. Directional Signs

On-premise, directional signs containing no commercial message visible from an abutting street, provided that they do not exceed six (6) square feet per sign face or four (4) feet in height.

F. Vehicular Signs

Signs painted on or otherwise permanently attached to currently licensed and operable motor vehicles, which vehicles are not stored in open areas or primarily used as signs.

G. Constitutionally Protected Speech

Signs expressing constitutionally protected speech not otherwise addressed herein.

H. Traffic Signs

Traffic signs authorized by act of the City Council or other public agency having authority over public use of right-of-way.

I. Warning Signs

Warning signs, no trespassing, no hunting and similar signs not exceeding four (4) square feet in area.

J. Political Signs

Political signs posted no more than thirty (30) days prior to an election and removed within seven (7) days after the election.

K. Small Wall Signs

Wall signs one (1) square foot and smaller.

L. Stake Signs

Stake signs located on-premise in districts zoned RD, R-20, RT, and R-14.

M. Small Projecting Signs

Projecting signs five (5) square feet and smaller in districts zoned RD, R-20, RT, and R-14

N. Hidden Signs

Signs that are not visible from any public right-of-way or any adjacent property.

O. Temporary Signs Required by Law

Temporary signs required to be posted by federal law, state law or by the Code of Ordinances of City of Villa Rica, Georgia.

P. Decals

Decals affixed to or signs painted on equipment, fuel pumps or other types of vending equipment used for dispensing retail products, provided that such decals or signs have a signable area not exceeding four (4) square feet on any single piece of equipment.

Q. Pennants at Auto Sales Lots

Strings of pennants totaling up to fifty percent (50%) of the length of the property frontage are exempt from these regulations for auto sales lots.

Section 9.08 Sign Permit Required

A. Purpose

The purpose of a sign permit is to ensure that signs are safely constructed and comply with the provisions of this Chapter.

B. Applicability

No person shall erect, change sign faces or alter a non-exempt sign until a sign permit has been issued by the Community Development Director.

C. Exemptions

The following signs and sign activities shall not require permits if no structural change is made to the sign or its support structure:

1. Replacing or altering changeable copy on theater marquees, billboards and similar signs.
2. Touching up or repainting existing letters, symbols and sign cases and poles.
3. Actions taken to ensure that the sign is safe and maintained.
4. Traffic or other municipal or informational signs; legal notices; railroad crossing signs; danger, warning and such temporary, emergency or non-advertising signs necessary for traffic control or as may be approved by the City Council.
5. Memorial signs or tablets, names of buildings and date of erection when cut into any masonry surface or when constructed of bronze or other metal.

D. Submittal Requirements**1. Materials and Application Deadlines**

Current application materials and schedules for submittal are available during normal business hours from the office of the Community Development Director.

2. Application Fees

Any action on an application for the erection, change of sign face or structure or display of a sign pursuant to this Article shall be subject to the required fee in the amount as established by the City Council.

3. Requirements

- a. A Master Signage Plan shall be required for shopping centers, office and business parks and industrial parks in conformance with **Section 9.09**.
- b. Written and graphic information shall be sufficient to demonstrate that the sign is in compliance with the City's adopted building and electrical codes.

E. Review Criteria

All signs shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the requirements of this Code and the City's adopted building and electrical codes.

F. Validity

The sign shall be completed within 6 months, or as otherwise indicated in the sign permit. If no construction of the sign has commenced within this time period, the permit shall be no longer valid and a new sign application shall be required. The sign permit shall be valid as long as the use and sign are in compliance with applicable codes.

G. Variances

This subsection supplements the standards for granting variances established in Article 2 of this Code.

1. Upon application by the property owner of a lot zoned OI, NC, GC, HC, LI, or GI covering more than ten (10) contiguous acres, the City Council may grant a variance to allow the aggregate signable area to exceed five hundred (500)

- square feet where the applicant has shown that:
- a. All signs and structures within the business development are in conformance with this article; and
 - b. The variance, if granted, would not cause substantial detriment to other property owners or tenants, or to the public good, nor would it impair the purpose and intent of this article; and
 - c. At least one (1) of the following factors applies to the property
 - i. The size of buildings constructed on the subject lot are larger enough to justify greater signage;
 - ii. Potential to subdivision of the will create the need for greater sign area to identify planned buildings; or
 - iii. The large number of different tenants occupying the buildings can not be effectively identified by allowable signage; and
 - d. That the applicable sign regulations would blight the property. However, such loss is not sufficient grounds, by itself, to justify a variance; and
 - e. The need for the variance was not the result of actions of the current or former owner(s) of the property covered by the application.
2. Upon application by the property owner of a lot zoned RT or R-14, covering more than ten (10) contiguous acres, the City Council may grant a variance to allow a ground sign where the applicant has shown that:
- a. All signs and structures within the business development are in conformance with this article; and
 - b. The variance, if granted, would not cause substantial detriment to other property owners or tenants, or to the public good, nor would it impair the purpose and intent of this article; and
 - c. The need for the variance was not the result of actions of the current or former owner(s) of the property covered by the application.
3. Upon application by the property owner, the City Council may grant a height variance where the applicant has shown that:
- a. All signs and structures within the business development are in conformance with this article; and
 - b. The variance, if granted, would not cause substantial detriment to other property owners or tenants, or to the public good, nor would it impair the purpose and intent of this article; and
 - c. The need for the variance was not the result of actions of the current or former owner(s) of the property covered by the application.

Section 9.09 Master or Common Signage Plan

A. Purpose

The purpose of a master signage plan is to ensure that signage for multi-tenant properties is coordinated and consistent with the standards of this code.

B. Applicability

All applications for new construction or reconstruction of shopping centers, business and industrial parks and other multi-tenant developments shall be accompanied by a master signage or common signage plan or amendments thereto. The owner of the property shall be responsible for allocating sign area to tenants of the property. The plan shall be approved the Community Development Director or his designee.

C. Master Signage Plan Contents

Any site plan application for applicable development projects shall include a master signage plan, signed by the property owners or their authorized agents, that includes the following information:

1. Plot plan at scale;
2. Location of buildings, parking lots, driveways and landscaped areas;
3. Computation of the total frontage of the lot, parcel or tract and maximum total sign area, maximum area of individual signs,

heights of signs, and number of pole / post signs;

4. Location and placement of all signs;
5. Setbacks and sign dimensions; and
6. Landscaping and other site improvements to be coordinated with the sign placement.

D. Sign Area Bonus for Master Signage Plans

The maximum total sign area allowed for a multi-tenant development may be increased by ten (10%) percent if the Master Signage Plan demonstrates the use of uniform wall signage, graphics, lettering, sizes, colors, materials, and placement. The plan may provide for design variations for colors and lettering that are part of a corporate logo or identification scheme. A single menu sign that incorporates and coordinates with these methods of signage shall be used rather than multiple signs for the property.

Section 9.10 Temporary Signs

Temporary signs shall be permitted in conformance with **Section 9.15** and the following regulations.

- A. Temporary signs are subject to the sign permitting process established in Article 2 of this Code. Permits for temporary signs are valid for thirty (30) days from the date of permit issuance, except for banners placed in City parks, which must be removed within seventy-two (72) hours after placement on the lot.
- B. Lots shall be required to be void of all temporary signs (except stake signs) for at least thirty (30) consecutive days prior to the City permitting a new temporary sign application for said lot.
- C. Stake signs are exempt from the application and permitting process. Permits for temporary signs can be renewed a maximum of two (2) times, without being subject to new application or permit fees, by reapplying at the planning and zoning department.
- D. All temporary signs shall be securely installed, and shall meet all applicable safety standards as prescribed by the building code, electrical code or as

promulgated by the building department with approval of the City Council.

- E. Temporary signs for special events may be approved provided the signs do not have moving parts, blinking or flashing lights, glaring lights, neon or extensive use of bright, offensive colors. All temporary signs shall be secured on at least two sides to the ground or a building or structure to prevent the sign from being moved by physical or weather forces.
- F. Before a permit may be issued for a temporary sign, the applicant must demonstrate that the sign will not adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, aesthetics or morality of the community.
- G. If any temporary sign is erected or maintained in such a manner so as to be in violation of this article or any other ordinance or law of the City, the City Council may give written notice to the owner thereof and to the owner of the property and premises upon which the sign is located that the sign must be removed within three (3) days. If the sign is not thereafter removed, the City Council may cause its removal and impose the cost of the removal as a lien upon the property upon which the sign sits.
- H. The Community Development Director may authorize the installation of street banners within the public right-of-way to advertise special events beneficial to the public and community.

Section 9.11 Flags

The design and construction of flagpoles shall comply with the provisions of this section. Business, company, institutional and any other non-governmental flags shall be included in the calculation of total allowable signage. No flagpole shall be erected or installed without first obtaining a permit. Up to two (2) decorative flags and banners such, such as birthday, holiday, crests and similar kinds used on residential dwellings, are exempt from these requirements.

- A. *In ground flags.* A flag may be flown from a metal pole permanently placed in the ground. The pole shall not exceed two and five-eighths (2 5/8) inches in diameter, nor twenty (20) feet in height. The flag flying

from such pole shall not exceed three (3) feet in width and five (5) feet in length.

- B. *Projecting flags.* A flag may be flown from a metal or wooden pole attached to a bracket projecting from the side of a building or door frame. The pole shall not exceed six (6) feet in length, nor one (1) inch in diameter. The flag flying from such pole shall not exceed three (3) feet in width and five (5) feet in length. Additionally, the flag displayed in such manner shall not impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
- C. *Hanging flags.* A flag may be hung in either the primary facade or secondary facade of a property appropriately zoned under this article. The flag shall count against the percentage of signage permitted for the zoned property (see **Section 9.15**).
- D. *Limit.* Only two (2) flags (either ground, projecting or hanging) shall be flown or displayed on each property. The flag shall count against the allocation of the ground, projecting or window signage permitted for each property (see **Section 9.15**).

Section 9.12 Signs Along Interstate Highways

- A. This section shall apply to all signs visible from I-20 and located within the following area: one thousand two hundred (1,200) feet long beginning five hundred (500) feet from the point where the pavement widens on the main traveled way to accommodate the longest entrance or exit ramp at every exit along I-20.
- B. No new sign shall be erected unless it is in compliance with the regulations of this section. Signs must be constructed of durable materials, maintained in good condition, and not permitted to become dilapidated.
- C. Nonconforming signs. Any legally erected sign which would become nonconforming as a result of this ordinance may be allowed to remain until purchased by the Georgia Department of Transportation provided that the sign meets the requirements of state laws and rules and regulations governing such signs.
- D. Appendix A. To aid in the greater understanding of the meaning of this section, a sketch is attached to this ordinance and incorporated herein by

reference as "Appendix A" and said appendix is hereby made an integral part of this section.

- E. New signs. New signs shall meet the following requirements:
 1. The outside measurement of all new signs shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet in height and forty eight (48) feet in length, with or without trim, except that existing factory manufactured metal signs, now located within the twelve-hundred-foot zones set out previously and if holding a conforming state permit on December 7, 1982, are considered to be conforming with respect to size requirements until such time as the sign is moved, enlarged, raised or otherwise physically altered with respect to dimensions or changes from its present configuration or sign type.
 2. The height of the sign may not exceed seventy (70) feet above the level of the surface of the pavement of the nearest lane of the main traveled way or seventy (70) feet from the ground at the base of the structure to the tallest part of the structure, whichever is greater. Upon the effective date of this section, no new permit applications shall be accepted for signs with the total height of the sign exceeding seventy (70) feet above the level of the surface of the pavement of the nearest lane of the main traveled way or seventy (70) feet from the ground at the base of the structure to the tallest part of the structure, whichever is greater. Permits for signs of this configuration, the applications for which were in effect prior to the effective date of this Code shall retain conforming status.
 3. Extrusions beyond the face of the sign, excluding aprons, are prohibited.
 4. Only one (1) sign shall be allowed to face the same direction per location. This allows either a back to back sign or a "V" formation sign but prohibits two (2) signs (side by side or stacked atop one another) facing the same direction.
 5. Sign locations shall be no less than five hundred (500) feet apart measuring from the two (2) closest points.

6. Sign structures shall be no less than ten (10) feet from any property or right-of-way line.

Section 9.13 Non-Conforming Signs

A. Purpose

The purpose of this Section is to provide for the regulation of signs and sign structures that legally existed prior to the effective date of this Code, but which fail to comply with one or more of the applicable regulations or standards. It is the intent of these regulations to specify those circumstances and conditions under which such nonconformities shall be permitted to continue.

B. Applicability

These regulations apply to nonconforming signs and sign structures that were originally allowed and have been maintained over time. These signs and sign structures have legal nonconforming status and may continue so long as they are legal otherwise. Nonconforming signs and sign structures that were not permitted when they were established and have been maintained over time have no legal right to continue and shall be terminated.

C. Nonconforming Sign Procedures and Standards

1. Status of Legal Nonconforming Signs

Any on-premise or off-premise sign or billboard which was lawfully established, erected or affixed prior to the adoption of this Article and which complied with all regulations in force at the time it was erected or affixed, but which fails to conform to all applicable regulations and restrictions of these regulations, shall be considered a legal nonconforming sign or billboard.

2. Continuation of Legal Nonconforming Signs

A legal nonconforming sign or billboard may be continued so long as it is in conformance otherwise with these standards and is maintained in good condition. The owner of the sign shall secure a permit for the continuation of the

sign subject to the restrictions of this section. Application for such permit must be filed within ten (10) days of the notice of nonconformance. There shall be no charge for this permit. Failure to apply for such permit within ten (10) days shall result in waiver of the protections afforded nonconforming signs by this section and the display of such sign shall be thereafter unlawful. Permit application documentation shall include:

- a. A dated receipt for sale or erection from a sign contractor or sign shop; or
- b. Dated utility bills for separate meter to service the sign or billboard; or
- c. Advertisements with a photograph of the sign or billboard in dated publications; or
- d. Other evidence showing that the sign existed prior to the adoption of this Code.

2. Determination of Legal Nonconforming Status Review

If the Community Development Director determines that the nonconforming sign was permitted at the time and has been legally maintained over time, the Community Development Director will issue a Certificate of Nonconforming Use to the applicant.

3. Conditions Under Which Legal Nonconforming Signs Shall Be Permitted to Continue

An existing non-conforming sign may continue to be used subject to the following conditions:

- a. The message displayed on a nonconforming sign or billboard may be changed and painted messages on a nonconforming sign or billboard may be repainted.
- b. A non-illuminated, nonconforming sign or billboard shall not be illuminated.
- c. A nonconforming on-premise sign may be changed or altered for the express purpose of making it a conforming sign.
- d. In order to eliminate an unsafe condition(s), the Community Development Director may order that repairs and/or alternations be made to a

nonconforming sign or billboard. Such ordered repairs shall be the minimal necessary to correct an unsafe situation(s).

e. The type of materials used in the construction of the structural elements of a sign or billboard shall not be changed after the date the sign or billboard becomes a nonconforming sign nor shall structural alterations be made to a nonconforming sign or billboard.

f. Nothing contained in this Section shall be construed so as to permit the enlargement of a nonconforming sign or billboard.

4. Conditions Under Which Nonconforming Signs and Billboards Shall Not Be Permitted to Continue

Under the following conditions, a nonconforming sign shall be removed or brought into conformance with these regulations.

a. Illegal Sign or Billboard

The sign or billboard was not established or expanded in conformance with the regulations of this Article or previous ordinances adopted by the City to regulate advertising and signs.

b. Destruction or Damage - Unintentional.

If any nonconforming sign or billboard is completely destroyed or damaged, due to circumstances beyond the control of the owner or his agents, to the extent of fifty (50%) percent or more of the replacement cost of the sign and its structure, as determined by a certified real estate appraiser, the sign or billboard shall not be replaced.

c. Destruction or Damage - Intentional.

A sign or billboard that has been intentionally damaged by fire or other causes within the control of the owner or his agents.

d. Value of Maintenance or Repairs Excessive

If the value of maintenance or repairs to ensure the safety and compliance of the

sign or billboard with the regulations of this Article, is fifty percent (50%) or more of the fair market value of the sign, as determined by a certified real estate appraiser, the sign or billboard shall be brought into conformance with the provisions of this Article.

e. Cessation of Use of Property for Which Sign or Billboard was Used

A nonconforming sign shall be removed or made to conform with the all the requirements of this Article if one of the following occurs:

(1) The use of the property for which the sign was intended to advertise is discontinued for a period of ninety (90) consecutive days.

(2) The products or services offered on the site for which the sign was intended are no longer offered for a period of ninety (90) consecutive days.

(3) The nonconforming sign or billboard ceases to be used for the purpose for which it was intended for a period of ninety (90) consecutive days.

f. Prohibited Nonconforming Signs and Billboards

Any sign that is prohibited under this Article shall be removed or made to conform to the current sign regulations within thirty (30) days of receipt of a notice of nonconformity.

Section 9.14 Maintenance

A. General Maintenance

Every on-premise and off-premise sign or billboard and its supporting structure shall be maintained in good repair and the premises surrounding the signs shall be maintained by the owner in a sanitary and inoffensive condition, free and clear of all weeds, rubbish, and debris. All structural members and all advertising copy shall be kept painted and clean so as to prevent deterioration, oxidation, paint fading, paint peeling or other unsightly conditions. Owners that are found to be improperly maintaining on- or off-premise signs or billboards shall be given written notice to

correct the condition with thirty (30) days. All electrical signs shall continuously conform to the electrical code adopted by the City.

B. Inspection

The Community Development Director or his designee shall inspect or cause to be inspected all signs and shall require the removal of any sign found to have been established in violation of this Article. The Community Development Director or his designee shall require the removal or repair of any sign that is:

1. Not securely affixed to a substantial structure or anchored to the ground.
2. Not in good repair.
3. Related to a business or product which is no longer in operation or available.
4. Unclean or faded to such an extent as to be unsightly.
5. Creating a dangerous or unsafe condition for traffic or pedestrians.

Section 9.15 Sign Standards by Zoning District

- A. Signs shall comply with the standards established in **Table 9-1** in addition to the other standards established in this Article.
- B. No sign shall be illuminated, either internally or externally, in any district zoned RD, R-20, RT, or R-14 except that entrance signs and subdivision signs may be illuminated from dusk until dawn.
- C. The following requirements shall be observed in the PD district, in addition to other standards of this Code and the conditions of PD approval:
 1. A uniform design scheme of signs shall be established for the development as a whole and/or for each building in the development and approved by the Planning Commission. Decals may be allowed provided they do not exceed four (4) inches in width and twelve (12) inches in length or forty-eight (48) square inches in size.
 2. Plans for the development shall include detailed descriptions of all signs, including but not limited to, size,

height, location, type, colors and materials to be used, lighting and ownership responsibility.

3. Plans for signs shall undergo the same review and approval process as is required of other aspects of the development; provided that the City Council may make no modification of these regulations which would permit a sign otherwise prohibited under this article.
4. All signs shall be designed, erected and maintained in accordance with an approved plan.

Section 9.16 Sign Standards by Highway Corridor

A. Purpose

The purpose of this article is to allow for an increase sign height and signable area for mixed use, commercial and/or industrial developments along the described highway corridor.

A. Highway 61 Corridor

The location of the corridor shall be from the intersection of U.S. Highway 78 and S.R. 61 south to the city limits. A development must have road frontage along Highway 61 or frontage road.

1. Height

Monument signs shall be no taller than twenty-five (25) feet in height, measured from the level of the crown of the adjacent road to the highest point on the sign structure.

2. Setback

Signs shall be setback at least five (5) feet from any property line.

3. Signable Area

- a. Single developments – 100 square feet.
- b. Multi-tenant developments with less than three (3) suites/units – 125 square feet.
- c. Multi-tenant developments with more than three (3) suites/units – 200 square feet.

B. Highway 78 Corridor

The location of the corridor shall be from the intersection of U.S. Highway 78 and S.R. 61

west to the city limits. A development must have road frontage along Highway 78.

1. Height

Monument signs shall be no taller than ten (10) feet in height, measured from the level of the crown of the adjacent road to the highest point on the sign structure.

2. Setback

Signs shall be setback at least five (5) feet from any property line.

3. Signable Area

- a. Single developments – 75 square feet.
- b. Multi-tenant developments with less than three (3) suites/units – 100 square feet.
- c. Multi-tenant developments with more than three (3) suites/units – 150 square feet.

(ORD-04-07)