



Summary of Proposed County Ordinance Amendments Related to Signs

Public Hearing, January 19, 2009

NOTE: Any revisions noted below related to Zoning Ordinance changes would apply only to the county-zoned areas of Chatham County.

TEMPORARY SIGNS ALLOWED

- The proposed changes would allow temporary signs on-site and off-site for limited periods through new provisions in Section 15 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- All temporary signs placed off the event site or owner's property would require written permission of the landowner. Signs could not be placed on public property or public rights-of-way without authorization.
- Temporary signs are limited to one per parcel.
- NOTE: Sign height is measured from the top of the sign to ground level.

Nonprofit Events: Temporary signs would be allowed on-site and off-site for nonprofit groups (civic, charitable, educational, religious, community recreational and other nonprofits) to promote special events.

- Signs can be erected up to two weeks prior to event, but must be removed within two days afterwards.
- Sign size limited to 32 square feet total or 10 feet high.

Real Estate Open Houses: Off-site or on-site signs promoting open houses for real estate could be erected up to two days in advance and would have to be removed within 24 hours after the open house ends.

- Signs are limited to four square feet in size and no more than five feet high.
- No more than three signs per open house.

Banners: Banners would be allowed on-site only and would be limited to a total of 30 days per calendar year. Size is capped at 32 square feet total.

Construction Signs: These provisions already existed, but were moved to the new Temporary Sign Section (15.10).

Other: Other temporary signs would have to be on-site and could not be erected for more than 30 days per calendar year. Size would be limited to 32 square feet and no higher than 10 feet.

NEW FLEXIBILITY FOR NON-CONFORMING SIGNS

- The proposed changes provide more flexibility in replacing, moving or repairing signs that do **NOT** comply with existing sign regulations, but only when the signs existed prior to the adoption of county provisions. These are called "grandfathered" signs because they only became "non-conforming" when the rules were adopted.
- For "grandfathered" non-conforming signs, the proposed revisions to the county Zoning Ordinance (Section 9) would allow replacement, repair or relocation of any such sign located on the owner's property **as long as the height of the sign or its overall size is not increased.**
- Similarly, the Off-Premise Sign Ordinance would be revised to allow the replacement, repair or relocation of a non-conforming sign located off-site **as long as the sign's height or total size is not increased.**

SIGNAGE IN OFFICE & INSTITUTIONAL ZONED AREAS

The proposed changes would reduce the maximum size allowed for signs in areas zoned Office & Institutional to a maximum of 10 feet high and a total of 50 square feet.

CLARIFICATION ON INTERNALLY-LIT SIGNS

Proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance (Section 13) and the Countywide Lighting Ordinance clarify that signs with internal illumination are prohibited, unless they are "grandfathered" because they were erected prior to the ban. Many such of the existing internally-lit signs are "grandfathered" and do not have to be removed.

REVISED SIGN DEFINITIONS

Proposed changes to Section 4 of the Zoning Ordinance clarifies the definition of certain types of signs, including adding definitions for these signs: Temporary, Awnings, Canopies, Off-Premise, and Informational.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For detailed information on the proposed ordinance changes, visit: www.chathamnc.org/planning. Or call 919-542-8204.