

**//Culpeper County, Virginia/CODE OF ORDINANCES COUNTY OF CULPEPER, VIRGINIA  
Codified through Ordinance of November 7, 2007. (Supplement No. 3)/APPENDIX A ZONING  
ORDINANCE\*/ARTICLE 11. NAMEPLATES AND SIGNS**

**ARTICLE 11. NAMEPLATES AND SIGNS**

Strict limitation of all display of signs, billboards and other displays of devices to direct, identify, inform, persuade, advertise or attract attention, herein called "signs", is required to protect property values, protect the character and the economic stability of property, encourage the most appropriate use of land, secure safety on the streets, achieve a more desirable future, living environment, protect and enhance the desirability of the County as a place of residence, employment, commerce, industry and civic activity, or investment and protect the public welfare.

Any sign placed on land or on a structure for the purpose of identification, protection or for advertising a product or service available on the premises, or a use conducted thereon, shall be deemed to be an accessory use. It is the purpose of this ordinance to place such limitations on the display of all said signs as will assure that they will:

- (a) Be appropriate to the land, building, or use to which they are appurtenant, and
- (b) Be adequate but not excessive for the intended purpose of identification, protection, or advertisement.

Signs advertising business uses are specifically intended, amount other things, to avoid excessive competition among sign displays in their demand for public attention.

It is intended by this ordinance that all signs erected for directional purposes, or for public information, shall be confined to those of general public interest and limited to the giving of information.

All other signs, commonly referred to as outdoor advertising, are deemed to constitute a separate use, unique among all uses in the County in that they are essentially a use of the streets and highways. Outdoor advertising is deemed to be inappropriate to the character and sound development of the County and it is intended by this ordinance that the streets and highways in the County shall not be made available for said display. Outdoor advertising shall be confined to locations in industrial districts in which it is compatible with other uses permitted therein.

**11-1. Signs in all districts.**

The following signs shall be permitted and sign regulations shall apply in all districts unless otherwise expressly specified herein, and the area of any sign permitted in all districts shall not be included in computing the amount of sign area used or the aggregate sign area permitted for the purpose of said provisions.

*11-1-1 Sign placement:*

Every sign shall be placed flat against a building, projecting not more than twelve (12) inches therefrom and not extending more than three (3) feet above the height of the actual roof line of the building, measured from the actual roof line in the case of a flat roof or the eaves line in the case of a hip or gable roof; provided that, in buildings constructed with a parapet wall the sign shall not be more than three (3) feet above the parapet wall. Free standing signs shall be permitted to the height permitted in the district. Any projecting sign, which is otherwise permitted

to project horizontally more than eight (8) inches from any building or other permitted support, shall not project more than 42 inches therefrom, nor more than 42 inches into any street right-of-way, nor shall said projecting sign be located less than ten (10) feet above finished grade beneath said sign. Freestanding signs permitted in A, R, and RA Districts shall be located fifteen (15) feet from all street lines.

(Ord. of 6-12-1996)

*11-1-2 Signs adjacent to residential districts:*

No sign shall be permitted on that part of the side or rear wall of a building within one hundred (100) feet from any residence in A, R, or RA districts.

(Ord. of 6-12-1996)

*11-1-3 Sign removal:*

Every sign pertaining to a particular use shall be deemed to be accessory to that use, and, if such use ceases, shall be removed not more than six (6) months thereafter, provided that:

*11-1-3.1* Real estate "sold" signs shall be removed thirty (30) days after their placement on the property;

*11-1-3.2* Temporary signs, such as official notices and those related to temporary uses such as a fair or carnival, shall be removed within ten (10) days after the last day of the event to which they pertain.

Signs hereafter erected on public lands contrary to the provisions of this ordinance are subject to immediate removal.

*11-1-4 Sign illumination:*

Unless otherwise expressly prohibited, signs may be illuminated, provided that illumination of any sign by other than direction lighting shall be shielded in such a manner so as to illuminate only the face of the sign.

*11-1-5 Signs permitted without permits:*

No permit shall be required for any of the following signs and the same may be displayed as free standing signs, unless otherwise noted, in any district.

*11-1-5.1* Official notices or advertisements posted by any public or Court officer or any trustees under Deeds of Trust, or other similar instruments.

*11-1-5.2* One (1) church, school or library bulletin board, or bulletin board for other public or semi-public buildings not exceeding twenty-four (24) square feet in area.

*11-1-5.3* "No Trespassing" signs, not exceeding one and one-half (1 1/2) square feet in area, which may be located at the periphery of the property.

*11-1-5.4* Signs warning the public of the existence of a clear and present physical danger, posted at the location of the danger, but not containing any advertising material in addition thereto, of whatsoever size as may be necessary.

*11-1-5.5* Informational or directional signs or historic markers, erected by a public agency or under authorization by a public agency, which shall not be restricted as to their location.

*11-1-5.6* Any flag, badge, or insignia customarily displayed by any government or governmental agency or by any charitable, civic, fraternal, patriotic, religious or similar organization, and customary temporary lighting and displays as part of holiday decoration.

*11-1-5.7* One "For Sale, Rent, or Lease" sign not exceeding a total area of three (3) square feet which may not be illuminated.

11-1-5.8 Directional signs, for the purpose of giving only directions and distances to public and quasi-public institutions, churches, community buildings, tourist houses and hotels located in A, R, and RA districts and unlighted directional real estate "For Rent" or "For Sale" signs, not exceeding one and one-half (1 1/2) square feet in area, provided that said real estate directional signs are displayed only on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, and that not more than one sign for each real estate agency shall be displayed in any one street intersection, but not on utility poles or trees, nor on or adjacent to any other public lands, such as school sites, recreation fields, parks, parkways and median strips. Every said directional "For Rent" or "For Sale" sign posted on public rights-of-way shall contain the name of the real estate company or agency which caused the sign to be posted.

(Ord. of 6-12-1996)

11-1-5.9 One name plate identifying a single family dwelling, its occupant, or its location, or a home professional office (but not a home occupation) not exceeding one and one-half (1 1/2) square feet in area.

11-1-5.10 Lettered window signs in "C" and "M" districts, not exceeding twenty percent (20%) of the area of the window.

11-1-5.11 One "Entrance" or "Exit" sign at each vehicular entrance to and exit from a parking lot, not to exceed six (6) square feet.

11-1-5.12 One sign not to exceed twenty-four (24) square feet in area and non-illuminated for farm identification.

#### *11-1-6 Sign permits:*

A sign permit shall be obtained from the zoning administrator before any sign or advertising structure is erected, displayed, replaced, or altered so as to change its overall dimension (except any sign listed 11-1-5). Every application for a sign permit shall be accompanied by plans showing the area of the sign, the size, character, and color of letters, and design proposed; and the method of illumination, if any; and the exact location proposed for the sign. Every sign for which a permit is issued shall have the permit number and the date of issuance affixed thereon in letters one inch high at the bottom right hand corner. A fee, in such amount as may be set, from time to time, by the Board of Supervisors, shall be paid for any sign permit.

(Ord. of 10-6-1981)

#### *11-1-7 Signs permitted by sign permits:*

11-1-7.1 One larger for sale sign advertising the prospective sale, rental, lease, or trade of land and buildings (including dwelling units therein) may be erected as a free standing sign not exceeding twelve (12) square feet in area.

11-1-7.2 One subdivision development sign not exceeding twenty (20) square feet in area and located therein adjacent to one street bounding said development; provided that no said sign shall be displayed for a longer period than one year after the first offering for sale of property in the subdivision to which said sign pertains.

11-1-7.3 Neighborhood signs giving the place name and established neighborhood or community, and direction to the location of features in said neighborhood or community, may be displayed in said neighborhood or community or at not more than one entrance thereto on each street bounding the same. No said sign shall exceed an overall height of six (6) feet nor have an area exceeding twenty (20) square feet. The overall area of the sign structure shall not exceed fifty (50) square feet.

11-1-7.4 One "Opening", "Going Out of Business" or similar sign advertising the opening of a new place of business or the change in management or ownership of an established place of business whether said sign is displayed from the exterior or interior of a building,

not exceeding twenty (20) square feet in area. Any said sign shall be displayed for a period not exceeding thirty (30) days.

11-1-7.5 One building name sign may be displayed for buildings permitted in A, R, or RA districts, other than one-family dwellings, as follows: A sign area for residential buildings to be computed on the basis of one-quarter square foot per dwelling unit, with a maximum sign area for any permitted building of twenty-four (24) square feet, provided that no sign identifying a boarding house or a rooming house shall exceed three (3) square feet in area.

(Ord. of 6-12-1996)

11-1-7.6 Construction signs, including "for rent" or "lease" signs, for buildings other than one-and two-family dwellings not exceeding 32 square feet of sign area for each two hundred (200) feet of street frontage or part thereof. Said signs shall be of a temporary nature and no said sign shall be displayed following one year after the issuance of any occupancy permit for buildings on the premises.

11-1-7.7 Other signs specifically authorized herein or regulated by the governing body as a part of any required use permit.

11-1-7.8 Real estate directional signs, and unlighted directional real estate "For Rent" or "Sale" signs, not exceeding one and one-half (1 1/2) square feet in area, not limited as to the day of the week displayed, provided that not more than one sign for each real estate agency shall be displayed in any one street intersection, but not on utility poles or trees, [and] not on or adjacent to any other public lands, such as school sites, recreation fields, parks, parkways and median strips. Every said directional "For Rent" or "Sale" sign posted shall not be placed in such a fashion as to constitute a "vision obstruction" at street intersections.

11-1-7.9 Signs identifying permitted produce or wayside stands from each direction may be placed to identify wayside stands. Such signs must be placed at least five hundred (500) feet, but no more than two thousand five hundred (2,500) feet, from the entrance to the wayside stand. Such signs may not be lighted and may not be placed in R Districts. Additionally, the signs must designate whether the stand is open or closed; or they must be hinged or designed in such a way that they can be closed, covered or removed so that a message is displayed only during operating hours of the wayside stand. Such signs may require a permit from the Virginia Department of Transportation and must be located outside of the VDOT right-of-way.

(Ord. of 11-3-1993)

**Editor's note:** Amendment of 11-3-1993 added Subsection 11-1-7.9 to allow for limited off-site signs advertising produce stands.

## 11-2. Prohibited signs.

The following types of signs are prohibited:

### 11-2-1 *Moving signs or devices:*

Any moving sign or device to attract attention whether or not any said device has written message content, of which all or any part moves by any means, including fluttering, rotation or otherwise moving devices, or set in motion by movement of the atmosphere (including but not limited to pennants, flag, propellers, discs, etc); provided, however, that moving signs associated with the opening of new or different business may be permitted for a period not exceeding fifteen (15) days; a sign permit shall be required for any said sign.

### 11-2-2 *Flashing signs or devices:*

Any flashing sign or device displaying flashing or intermittent lights or lights of changing degrees of intensity, except a sign indicating time and/or temperature, with changes alternating on not less than a five (5) second cycle.

*11-2-3 Signs on public land:*

Any sign on public land, other than those erected at the direction of a public authority and those otherwise authorized herein, any sign that obscures a sign displayed by public authority for the purpose of giving traffic instructions or direction or other public information.

*11-2-4 Illuminated tubing or strings of lights:*

Any illuminated tubing or strings of lights outlining property lines or open sales areas, roof lines, doors, windows, or wall edges of any buildings, provided that perimeter shielded down lighting may be used to illuminate open sales areas.

*11-2-5 "Stop" or "Danger" signs:*

Any sign that uses the word "Stop" or "Danger" or otherwise presents or implies the need or requirement of stopping or caution of the existence of danger or which is a copy of, imitation of, or which for any reason is likely to be confused with, any sign displayed or authorized by public authority.

*11-2-6 Obstructive signs:*

Any sign that obstructs or substantially interferes with any window, door, fire escape, stairway, ladder, or opening intended to provide light, air, ingress or egress for any building.

*11-2-7 Non-shielded illumination:*

Any non-shielded illumination of a sign within two hundred (200) feet of an A, R, or RA District. (Ord. of 6-12-1996)

*11-2-8 Portable signs:*

Any portable sign, including any sign displayed on a vehicle when used primarily for the purpose of such display.

*11-2-9 Signs in violation of Virginia law:*

Any sign that violates any provision of any law of the Commonwealth of Virginia relating to outdoor advertising.

*11-2-10 Others:*

Any other sign not expressly permitted by this Ordinance.

### **11-3. Signs in all Commercial and Industrial Districts.**

The limitations as to number and area of signs in Commercial and Industrial districts shall apply separately to separate establishments, with the area of signs computed on the basis of the actual width of building frontage occupied by the particular establishment. Commercial signs identifying products or services available on the premises or advertising a use conducted thereon may be displayed in Commercial and Industrial districts under the conditions and to a maximum aggregate area of all signs as follows:

*11-3-1 Sign area:*

The maximum aggregate area of all signs shall be three (3) square feet for each foot of width of the front wall of the building.

### *11-3-2 Secondary entrance signs:*

In addition, one sign, not exceeding six (6) square feet in area, may be erected to identify secondary entrances to a building from a pedestrian way, from an alley, or from an automobile parking space.

### *11-3-3 Unified shopping center:*

In addition, in a unified shopping center in single ownership or control, where business establishments have common walls, one place name sign for each establishment, not exceeding a sign area of three (3) square feet per sign may be suspended from a common canopy ceiling, and one shopping center name sign may be displayed not exceeding a maximum area of one-quarter square foot for each foot of common building width.

### *11-3-4 Automobile service stations:*

In addition, an automobile service station may display signs on a group of pumps not exceeding an aggregate area of twelve (12) square feet for each pump island; cloth or paper signs relating to price may be displayed without permit. Authorized establishments may display not more than one sign not exceeding nine (9) square feet in area per face indicating state inspection service.

### *11-3-5 Maximum area where use of lot is use of land:*

The maximum aggregate area of all signs on any lot, the use of which consists primarily of the use of land, shall be two (2) square feet for each foot of frontage of the lot with a maximum of fifty (50) square feet conforming to the following free standing sign regulations.

### *11-3-6 Free-standing signs:*

One free standing sign not exceeding fifty (50) square feet may be located on a lot with a front of one hundred (100) feet or more, not to exceed two (2) display faces, with the interior angle between them not exceeding forty-five (45) degrees. In the case of a corner or a through lot with a minimum frontage of twenty-five (25) feet, a free standing sign may be erected for each street frontage, the area of which shall not exceed fifty (50) square feet. The total sign area of such free standing sign or signs shall be included in the maximum area of sign display permitted on the lot. No more than seventy-five percent (75%) of the maximum sign area allowed shall be used for free standing signs.

### *11-3-7 Side-or rear-wall signs:*

On that side or rear wall of commercial buildings which abuts a public street or parking lot. For buildings located on corner lots or lots abutting streets at both the front and rear, or for buildings served by an abutting parking lot of not less than sixty (60) feet in width located to the side or rear of the main buildings:

*11-3-7.1* On side walls in all Commercial and Industrial districts, the maximum aggregate area of all signs, including signs which may be "projecting" signs (as permitted and regulated under Subsection 11-3-1) shall be one-half ( 1/2) of the maximum aggregate area of signs permitted on the front wall of that building.

*11-3-7.2* On rear walls in Business and Industrial districts, one sign for each establishment as follows:

a. If said sign is within one hundred (100) feet or across a street from an A, R, or RA District, the area of each sign shall not exceed one-half ( 1/2) square foot for each foot of width of said wall.  
(Ord. of 6-12-1996)

b. If situated other than as specified in the preceding paragraph, the area of each sign shall not exceed one square foot for each foot of width of said wall.

## **11-4. Signs in industrial districts.**

### *11-4-1 Outdoor advertising signs, billboards and poster panels as separate uses:*

*11-4-1.1* Maximum area of any one sign structure: Not to exceed three hundred (300) square feet on each sign face; said sign structures may be single or double faced.

*11-4-1.2* Maximum length of any sign structure: not to exceed thirty (30) feet.

*11-4-1.3* Maximum height: Fifteen (15) feet measured from the nearest street grade line. There shall be no required minimum height.

*11-4-1.4* Minimum distance from lot lines: No part of any structure shall be located nearer than a distance of two hundred (200) feet from:

a. Any lot line of any lot in any A, R, or RA District.  
(Ord. of 6-12-1996)

b. Any right-of-way line of any street having a right-of-way width of one hundred (100) feet or more.

*11-4-1.5* There may be no more than 150 square feet of sign structure on each one hundred (100) feet of lot front with one additional 150 square feet of sign structure allowed for each additional one hundred (100) feet of lot.

## **11-5. Sign replacement, renovation and repair.**

No sign heretofore approved and erected shall be repaired, altered or moved, nor shall any sign, or part thereof, be reerected, reconstructed, rebuilt or relocated unless it is made to comply with all applicable requirements of this section. This section shall not be construed to prevent the repair or restoration to a safe condition of any part of an existing sign when damaged by storm or other accident. This section shall not be construed to prevent the replacement, renovation or repair (but not the relocation) of a sign of the same size depicting the same use of the premises that existed immediately prior to the replacement, renovation or repair.