

**PART 2 – DIAGNOSTIC REPORT:  
SIGN ORDINANCE ANALYSIS**

**CITY OF HIGH POINT, NORTH CAROLINA**

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# Part 2 – Diagnostic Report: Sign Ordinance Analysis

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# Part 2 – Diagnostic Report: Sign Ordinance Analysis

## City of High Point

### Introduction

#### Overview

The City of High Point’s Sign Ordinance was originally drafted 27 years ago, in 1992, and over the years has undergone several amendments to respond to evolving changes in sign types, sign technology, and special sign needs that have arisen over the years. It has also been affected by the creation of overlay districts that contain distinctive sign provisions ensuring developing corridors have appropriate sign regulations.

“Part 1 – Diagnostic Report: Legal Issues in Regulating Signs,” is a companion report prepared as a separate document. It addresses the legal foundation for Constitutionally-appropriate sign regulations, particularly ensuring that in drafting new sign regulations the City does not, inadvertently or otherwise, infringe on its citizens’ First Amendment’s right to freedom of speech. Local governments are empowered to regulate signs under the police power – the capacity to regulate behavior and enforce order for the betterment of the health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the communities’ inhabitants; the First Amendment, however, provides some limits on that power.

“Part 2 – Diagnostic Report: Sign Ordinance Analysis,” is an in-depth analysis of the City’s existing Sign Ordinance as well as other sign provisions found throughout the Development Ordinance. The Report is accompanied by recommendations, observations and remaining questions the Consultant Team has on regulatory nuances within the current Sign Ordinance, as well as a summary of business and citizen viewpoints on issues related to signs.

#### Purpose of this Report

The purpose of Part 2: Sign Ordinance Analysis is to fully analyze the City’s current sign provisions in context of prevailing legal opinions related to sign issues that have been litigated in the courts. Equally important, the Report provides a detailed analysis of current sign regulations that we recommend be revised, deleted or added as a part of drafting a new Sign Ordinance for the City. This report and the upcoming April workshops with elected officials and appointed boards, staff, business interests and citizens will form the framework for confirming how the City wishes to retool and recreate how it regulates signs going forward with the City’s new Sign Ordinance.

#### Consultant Team

Connie B. Cooper, FAICP and Eric Damian Kelly, J.D., PhD., FAICP, are nationally-recognized planning consultants. Kelly is a planner/lawyer, known across the country for his expertise in drafting Constitutionally-defensible sign ordinances and has written extensively on the regulation of signage. Kelly drafted the High Point’s current Sign Ordinance (since amend) in 1992. Cooper is a city and county professional planner with a lengthy and successful track record of drafting comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, sector plans, and conducting public engagement forums, as well as having 15-years of public-sector service as a planning director.

## **Development Ordinance Sign Regulations**

### **Section 5.7 Signage**

The Development Ordinance regulates Signs in Chapter 5, Development Standards, Section 5.7 Signage. The section is organized under the following 14 major subsections:

- 5.7.1. Purpose and Intent
- 5.7.2. Applicability
- 5.7.3. Variances
- 5.7.4. General Standards
- 5.7.5. Design, Construction, and Maintenance
- 5.7.6. Prohibited Signs
- 5.7.7. Exempt Signs
- 5.7.8. Signs not Requiring a Sign Permit
- 5.7.9. Freestanding Signs Requiring a Sign Permit
- 5.7.10. Attached Sign Requiring a Sign Permit
- 5.7.11. Sign for Historic Structures or Properties
- 5.7.12. Common Signage Plan
- 5.7.13. Encroachment Agreement for Entrance Sign
- 5.7.14. Savings Clause

One of the key challenges with the current Sign Ordinance is that it is organized by sign types – prohibited signs, exempt signs, signs not requiring a permit, freestanding signs requiring a permit, attached signs requiring a permit, historic signs, and a host of other regulations related to specific sign types placed in various locations throughout the Sign Ordinance.

### **Additional Sign Provisions**

In addition to Section 5.7 Signage, there are other sign-related standards in other sections of the Development Ordinance as well as within other regulatory documents which are:

- Chapter 2 – Administration: Section 2.2.10 Planning and Development Director
- Chapter 2 – Administration: Section 2.4.15 Variances
- Chapter 3 – Zoning Districts: Section 3.7.3. Standards Applied to All Planned Development Zoning Districts, Subsection I. Signs
- Chapter 3 – Zoning Districts: Section 3.8.7.F. Eastchester GCO District Standards, Subsection 6. Signage
- Chapter 4 – Uses: Section 4.3.2.B.3. Live/Work Dwelling
- Chapter 4 – Uses: Section 4.3.3.B. Day Care
- Chapter 4 – Uses: Section 4.3.4.H. Visitor Accommodations
- Chapter 4 – Uses: Section 4.4.5.H. Home Occupations

Chapter 8 – Nonconformities: Section 8.2.2.D. Cessation

Chapter 8 – Nonconformities: Section 8.5. Nonconforming Signs

Chapter 10 – Measurement and Definitions: Section 10.2.10 Signage (Measurements)

Chapter 10 – Measurement and Definitions: Section 10.4 Definitions

Development Guide (Build High Point) – Common Sign Plan

Sign Permitting Process

## Diagnostic Report Organization

The Diagnostic Report is organized under the following major headings:

- Introduction
- Planning Context for Regulation of Signage
- Exempt Signs
- Signs Not Requiring a Permit
- Signs Requiring a Permit - Temporary
- Specific Sign Issues
- Enforcement of the Sign Ordinance
- New Sign Ordinance Format and Illustrations/Graphics
- Miscellaneous Sign Ordinance Issues
- Viewpoints Related to Sign Issues – Business/Civic Interest Groups, Citizenry, City Staff and Elected/Appointed Officials

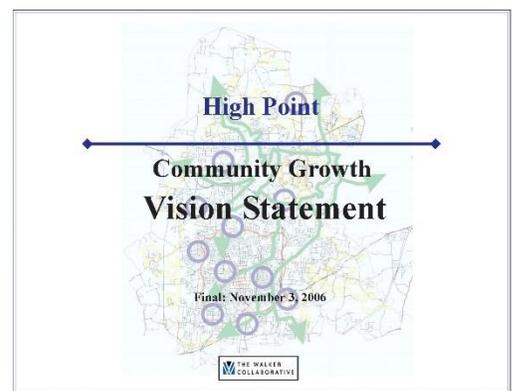
Within each of the major headings specific sign issues are addressed in alphabetical order, not in numerical order by section numbers, for each of locating particular subject matter. Upon completion of a review of this draft document, illustrations will be added to better explain the subject matter.

## Planning Context for Regulation of Signage

This section reviews major planning documents that support the overall goals and intent of sign regulations.

### Community Growth & Vision Statement

The City of High Point’s “Community Growth and Vision Statement” adopted in 2006, established a vision for future development of the City in addressing natural and cultural resources, neighborhoods, mixed use centers, downtown, transportation and the economy. Regulation of signage within the City is a key element of the City’s vision which provides general guidance for the update of the City’s Sign Ordinance. The document has six general goals, with a number of specific objectives, those most pertinent to the Sign Ordinance update are highlighted below:



*GOAL 1 (and Objectives): Preserve and enhance High Point’s most important natural and cultural resources ... explore a variety of regulatory tools to preserve both commercial and residential historic areas ... promote development and infrastructure that reflects and reinforces High Point’s culture and history.*

- Takeaway for Sign Ordinance: Sign regulations need to be context-sensitive and should respect rather than detract from natural and cultural resources.

*GOAL 2 (and Objectives): Improve High Point’s older urban neighborhoods, while ensuring better future neighborhoods ... develop an extensive network of sidewalks throughout all neighborhoods ... provide retail, service and dining opportunities within a walkable distance to most residents.*

- Takeaway for Sign Ordinance: Reinforces the necessity for context-specific regulations; suggests the need for pedestrian-oriented signage.

*GOAL 3 (and Objectives): Create more mixed use areas, while reinforcing existing ones, to minimize traffic, maximize the utilization of infrastructure, and so people can live, work and play in one location ... establish new or redeveloped mixed use areas ... attract commercial tenants that will offer daily goods and services to nearby neighborhoods ... include high-density residential development ... apply development standards to ensure that mixed use areas are human scaled, pedestrian friendly ... encourage mixed use centers as an alternative to “strip commercial” corridors.*

- Takeaways for Sign Ordinance: Commercial uses in mixed-use projects need good signs to remind people that they exist in an area that may not appear to be very commercial. They also need signs for wayfinding. In allowing such signs, however, it is important to be sensitive to the residential uses that make such an area “mixed.”

*GOAL 4 (and Objectives): Make Downtown High Point and its environs a vibrant, diverse and mixed use environment ... develop North Main between the main library and Eastchester as “Uptown” to function as a traditional downtown ... make the High Point Market more competitive by enhancing pedestrian access, transit and other services ... establish more retail shops, services, restaurants, and entertainment ... introduce new uses and creative industries, including artist studios and living space, small business incubators, and live/work units ... improve Downtown High Point’s streetscapes by providing buildings with human-scaled facades ... create public spaces with a variety of scales, designs and functions, coupled with uses that will help to activate them.*

- Takeaway for Sign Ordinance: See takeaways under “Mixed Use,” immediately above. These objectives reinforce the need for pedestrian-oriented signage

*GOAL 5 (and Objectives): Balance the efficient movement of vehicles with the needs of pedestrians, alternative transit modes, and aesthetic quality ... transform major thoroughfares from barriers into attractive and user-friendly corridors ... focus particular attention on the appearance of key gateways into High Point to convey to visitors a positive first and last impression of the community ... develop new streets and retrofit existing streets in accordance with design standards such as creating pedestrian-friendly environments ... limit extremely large-scaled stores - “big box retail” - to key street intersections to best accommodate their potentially high traffic volumes.*

- Takeaways for Sign Ordinance: The objective on gateways requires serious consideration about the role of signs, balancing the need to provide information to visitors about places to go and things to do with the desire to create a quality environment. These objectives also call for pedestrian-friendly signage as well as consideration of signage directed to bike riders. Putting big box stores at “key street intersections” requires balancing the sign demands that go with such stores against the desire to maintain a quality appearance on the streetscape.

*GOAL 6 (and Objectives): Keep High Point's economy strong and make it more diversified ... recruit new industries that complement or leverage the furniture industry ... recruit new industries that are unrelated to the traditional furniture and textiles industries to achieve greater diversification ... avoid "retail leakage" to other communities by keeping retail centers viable with strong anchor tenants.*

- Takeaways for Sign Ordinance: Design and furniture industries share some of the characteristics of retail stores; although their patrons are designers, dealers and retailers, they, like retailers, will use signage as one of the tools to bring people into their showrooms

## Land Use Plan for the High Point Planning Area

The City of High Point's 30-page "Land Use Plan for the High Point Planning Area" adopted April 6, 2000, broadly addresses land-use issues in the City. The Land Use Plan serves as the City's statement of long-term policy issues, goals, and principles to guide the future development of residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and recreational/open space activities. The five goals and objective 11 of the Land Use Plan provides useful guidance for implementation of land-use controls, including the regulation of signs.

*Goal 1: Ensure That Development Respects the Natural Environment;*

*Goal 2: Encourage Development That Enhances and Preserves Established Neighborhoods;*

*Goal 3: Provide a Wide Range of Housing Opportunities for Families of All Income Levels;*

*Goal 4: Ensure That All Required Public Services and Facilities Are Sequenced to Meet Demands of Development; and*

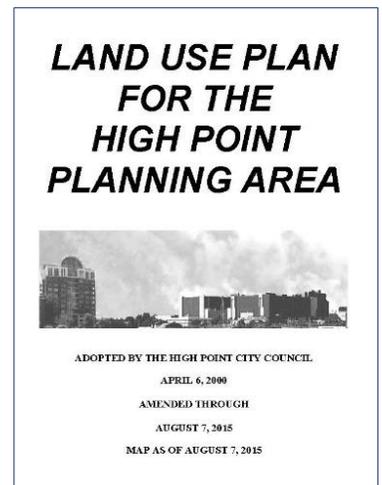
*Goal 5: Promote an Urban Growth Pattern That Occurs in an Orderly Fashion and Conserves the Land Resources of the City and Its Planning Area.*

*Objective 11. Enhance the aesthetic appearance of High Point by preserving the scenic quality of its major gateway streets and travel corridors and by providing appropriate landscaped buffers and transitional uses between low and high-intensity land uses.*

- Takeaways for the Sign Ordinance: As in the growth policy, there is an emphasis on neighborhood preservation. Here there is also a clear statement of the objective to enhance the city's aesthetic appearance by "preserving the scenic quality of its major gateway streets and travel corridors." It will be important to maintain sign regulations that preserve that scenic quality while also addressing the interest of some local organizations to provide more information to visitors and residents about specific activities and venues. Sometimes retailers and representatives of the sign industry push for bigger, brighter and busier signs as the best way to do that, but it is also possible to accomplish that purpose with signs of moderate size and limited brightness and motion.

## Eastchester NC/68 Corridor Plans and Gateway Corridor Overlay District

One of the major recommendations of the 1986 Eastchester NC/68 Plan was the establishment of a Scenic Corridor Zoning Overlay for Eastchester Drive for the purpose of creating higher standards for development through new trees planted along Eastchester Drive and the requirement of ground signs (vs. pole signage) and smaller freestanding signs. In 1994, three updates to the 1986 Eastchester Drive



Corridor Plan, were adopted (Eastchester Drive Plan, Phases I, II and III) and reaffirmed the commitment to corridor aesthetics. The Eastchester Gateway Corridor Overlay District (formerly the Scenic Corridor Overlay District) continues this commitment by requiring landscaped setbacks, buffer yards, and more appropriate signage in the corridor to benefit the aesthetic quality of this important gateway into the City and enhancing the compatibility of adjoining land uses.

- Takeaway for the Sign Ordinance: The significant amount of planning studies and the long history of the overlay district for the Eastchester Corridor confirms that protecting the aesthetic quality (including limiting the impact of signage) of this scenic corridor and major gateway into High Point is a major commitment of the City.

## West Wendover Avenue / Guilford College Road Corridor Plan

### Visual Quality Issues

*The West Wendover Avenue/Guilford College Road Corridor is an important and exceptionally visible gateway between Greensboro, High Point and Jamestown. ... The public interest can best be served if that visual experience is a pleasant one. Visual quality in land development is usually enhanced through three avenues: buffering and landscaping requirements; sign control; and development standards or design guidelines.*

- Takeaway for the Sign Ordinance: Visual quality is important in the West Wendover Avenue Corridor.

## Business Interstate 85 Corridor Plan

Planning Issues – Corridor Appearance: Controlling billboards (off-site signs) and communication towers and maintaining existing trees along the length of the corridor are key elements necessary to keep the Business I-85 Corridor as attractive as possible.

Policies – Corridor Appearance: Conditional use zoning should be used in future rezoning cases in the corridor to prevent the erection of additional billboards in the Heavy Industrial (HI) Zoning District and to encourage the location of communication towers as far from Business I-85 as possible.

- Takeaway for the Sign Ordinance: Limit additional billboards in the Business I-85 Corridor.

## Exempt Signs

### List of Exempt Signs

Section 5.7.7 Exempt Signs, identifies signs that are exempt from the Sign Ordinance, except for lighting standards required for an electrical permit. Listed below, in alphabetical order, are all exempt signs:

- Flags (non-commercial) of not more than 60 square feet
- Governmental sign
- Hand carried sign
- Interior building, court, lobby, athletic field, stadium, etc.
- Lights and decorations
- Public water tower painted sign (active tower)

- Sign not legible from street
- Vehicle or trailer sign used on a regular basis
- Vehicle window sign
- Window signs on buildings ≤25%

## Flags

Section 5.7.7. Exempt Signs, exempts flags with no commercial message to a certain size in the following Subsection:

*H. A flag without a commercial message with an area of not more than 60 square feet.*

Table 5.7.8.B. Requirements for Signs Not Requiring a Permit, allows flags and other sign types in all districts limited to no more than 60 square feet and 40 feet in height which is confusing language due to mixing of “flags” with other sign types some of which have a commercial message as shown below:

*Flags, emblems, insignia of corporate, political, professional, fraternal, civic, or educational organization*

Section 5.7.7. Exempt Signs, exempts flags without a commercial message but does not reference Table 5.7.8.B. that limits number and height of flags. Additionally, Table 5.7.8.B. permits flags in all districts and allows them to be 40 feet in height which is quite high in residential districts.

### **Recommendation:**

Resolve conflict between Section 5.7.7.H. pertaining to flags without a commercial message and Table 5.7.8.B. that allows without permits “flags, emblems, insignia of a corporate, political, professional, fraternal, civic, or educational organization permitted in all districts” some of which could be deemed “commercial” messages.

## Governmental Signs

Section 5.7.7. Exempt Signs, exempts governmental signs under this Subsection:

*A. Governmental Signs*

The Sign Ordinance exempts a governmental sign from the regulation. We view the exemption of governmental signs such as speed limits, road and street names, place names as governmental signs that should remain as exempt signs. As to building signs on government buildings these should remain subject to the respective sign provisions of the zoning district in which the building is located. In addition, franchise utilities (telephone/cable, etc.) often have signage that is legible from the street but are not included in the definition of a “governmental” sign.

### **Recommendations:**

- a. Revise the current definition of a “Governmental Sign” to clarify that the exemption pertains to governmental signage typically used to direct or inform pedestrian and vehicular traffic and convey other information important to the public as well as signage of franchise utilities.
- b. Clarify that signage related governmental properties (buildings and lots) is subject to the same sign standards that apply to non-governmental buildings and properties within the same zoning district, including land owned by the State of North Carolina (state-owned

property is not subject to sign standards that are a part of an overlay district or special or conditional use district, per N.C.G.S. 160A-392).

### Interior Building and Public Space Signs

Section 5.7.7. Exempt Signs, exempts signs in the following locations under this Subsection:

- D. A sign located on the interior of a building, court, lobby, athletic field, stadium, or other structure which is not intended to be seen from the exterior of the building or structure.*

This is really an “applicability” section, indicating the general applicability of the Sign Ordinance. In addition, with the use of the phrase “not intended.” Determining the “intent” of a sign or its installer is almost impossible. We prefer a legibility standard (see discussion under “intent” and “legibility”).

#### Recommendations:

- a. Move from “exempt sign” to a section in the new ordinance related to applicability of the Sign Ordinance related to interior spaces, etc.
- b. Eliminate the concept of intent and switch to a description based on the “legibility” of the sign from a public way or from other property or the physical location of the sign such as within a courtyard.

### Vehicle Window Signs

Section 5.7.7. Exempt Signs, includes exemptions for signs affixed to windows of vehicles under this Subsection:

- F. A sign affixed to the window of a vehicle which does not exceed the size of the window.*

The 2019 Sign Ordinance amendments revised the vehicle window signs provision eliminating “displaying information on the terms of sale for the vehicle” but added a proviso that the sign could “not exceed the size of the window.” If this exemption were interpreted as applying to signs on car windows in a new or used car lot, then these businesses would be allowed to have much greater signage than other commercial businesses.

#### Recommendations:

- a. Revisit issue as to whether or not signs on vehicle windows should remain exempt; if the issue of exemption is based on car window signs that are not legible from the street, then these signs are already exempt under Subsection G. “a sign not legible from a public or private street.”
- b. If vehicle windows signs remain an exempt sign, then the definition of a vehicle window sign should be amended to better define a vehicle window sign to include “not legible from a public or private street and does not extend past the window.”

### Window Signs on Building Windows

Section 5.7.7. Exempt Signs, exempts window signs on building windows under this Subsection:

- I. A window sign painted on or attached to a window, covering a maximum of 25% of the window area.*

The 2019 Sign Ordinance amendments added the size limit of 25% of the window area to this exemption; however, there remains the question as to whether window signs should be counted toward

the overall permitted building signage. In addition, there is the issue as to what is a “window” and “what is a sign on a window.” High Point has gas stations that create “fake windows” and self-storage businesses that have windows where a film is applied that mimics the inside of the business (grocery shelves or storage unit doors).

**Recommendations:**

- a. Revise definition of a “sign” and a “window” as it pertains to the Sign Ordinance.
- b. Review whether window signage should be counted toward a building’s overall permitted signage and/or whether windows are part of the square footage of a vertical wall (current ordinance is unclear).
- c. Revisit the question of legibility and window signs in view of the fact some signs are not legible from the street, but they may entirely cover the stores windows.

## **Signs Not Requiring a Permit (not exempt)**

### **List of Signs Not Requiring a Permit**

Section 5.7.8. Signs Not Requiring a Sign Permit, includes signs that do not require a permit, except for lighting standards required for an electrical permit. It should be noted that these signs do not require a permit but many of them have specific restrictions as to number, size, location and duration. The following is a list of all signs that do not require a sign permit under the City’s Sign Ordinance (listed alphabetically in groupings of “temporary” and “permanent” signs) not all of which are discussed here:

#### Temporary Signs

- Construction signs in AGR and R residential (6 sf);
- Construction signs in RM and nonresidential (100 sf)
- Educational signs (6 sf)
- Philosophical signs (6 sf)
- Political signs (6 sf)
- Real estate signs in AGR and R residential (6 sf)
- Real estate signs in RM and nonresidential (100 sf)
- Religious signs (6 sf)
- Yard sale signs in AGR and R residential (6 sf)

#### Permanent Signs

- A-Frame signs in CB, MX and MS-B (6 sf)
- Flags, emblems, insignia of corporate, political, professional, fraternal, civic, or educational organizations (≤60 sf)
- Historical or memorial markers (4 sf)
- Identification signs: address plates, home occupation signs and building markers (2 sf/unit)
- Vending machine, gas pump, ice machine, (n/a sf)
- Warning signs (4 sf residential / 6 sf non-residential)

Table 5.7.8.B. Requirements for Signs Not Requiring a Sign Permit, contains standards for temporary signs not requiring a permit and includes primarily non-commercial temporary signs (political, religious, educational, philosophical, yard signs, etc.) but also includes commercial signs such as real estate signs.

### Flags (not Exempt)

Table 5.7.8.B. Requirements for Signs Not Requiring a Sign Permit, includes the following language related to flags:

*Flags, emblems, insignia of corporate, political, professional, fraternal, civic, or educational organization*

#### **Recommendation:**

Resolve conflict between Section 5.7.7.H. pertaining to flags without a commercial message and Table 5.7.8.B. that allows without permits “flags, emblems, insignia of a corporate, political, professional, fraternal, civic, or educational organization permitted in all districts” some of which could be deemed “commercial” messages. (See previous discussion and recommendations under “Exempt Signs – Flags”)

### Historical or Memorial Markers

In Section 10.4 Definitions, the Development Ordinance defines “historical or memorial markers” as follows:

*A sign which commemorates a historical person, structure, place, or event or which denotes, honors, celebrates, or acknowledges an historical person, structure, place, or event.*

Under Section 5.7.8.B Signs Not Requiring a Permit, these signs are permitted in all districts and may be up to 4 square feet and 6 feet tall and limited to one sign per property.

In addition, the Sign Ordinance has a dedicated section, Section, 5.7.11 Signs for Historic Structures or Properties, related to reconstructing, restoring, replicating or replacing historic sign structures that are not otherwise permitted by the Sign Ordinance. This Section places the review and approval of these sign structures under the High Point Historic Preservation Commission (HPHPC) and specifies in great detail the procedures to be followed.

#### **Recommendations:**

- a. The entirety of Section 5.7.11 addressing restoration of nonconforming historic signs/sign structures may be better located in Chapter 8: Nonconformities or listed as an exempt sign/sign structure having Local Historic Landmark status or individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- b. Move Section 5.7.11, that outlines the process for approving the reconstructing, restoring, replicating or replacing these nonconforming historic signs or sign structures to Section 2.2.5. Historic Preservation Commission of the Development Ordinance.
- c. Add definitions and clearer standards related to an historic or a memorial plaque, marker and sign structure.
- d. Require permits for historical and memorial markers, plaques to confirm these signs have been approved by the High Point Historic Preservation Commission.

## Non-Commercial Signs on Private Property

Table 5.7.8.B. Requirements for a Sign Not Requiring a Permit allows:

Temporary religious, philosophical, or educational signs in all districts [1 per frontage, 6 square foot maximum size, 6 foot maximum height]

Temporary political signs in all districts [6 per lot, 6-square-foot maximum size, 6-foot maximum height]

Section 5.7.8.B.(2)(e). A separate section provides:

(e) Temporary religious, philosophical, educational, real estate, yard sale, construction, and political signs shall comply with the following standards:

1. Be located outside the street right-of-way, or at least 6 feet from the back of curb or edge of pavement where no curb exists;
2. Not be placed in public street medians or traffic islands;
3. Not interfere with or obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic, or obstruct safe sight distances at intersections;
4. Not be placed on private land without the consent of the landowner or occupant; and

### **Recommendations (see also Recommendations under “Political Signs” and “Real Estate, Yard Sale and Construction Signs”):**

- a. Implement a more content neutral Sign Ordinance that will categorize signs under commercial and non-commercial signage.
- b. Treat “political,” “educational,” “religious,” “opinions” signage in residential districts the same under one definition for “non-commercial” temporary yard signs with a standard size limit for these signs based on the size similar to real estate for sale/rent signs.
- c. In residential districts adopt a limit on the number of “non-commercial” temporary yard signs allowing a minimum of at least three per property.
- d. Although we recommend separate approaches to number and size limits for residential and non-residential properties, we recommend that in both land use categories, all “political,” “educational,” “philosophical” and “religious” be treated as non-commercial signs which avoids a lot of definitional problems and limits problematic content-neutral constitutional issues.
- e. Address the problem that temporary commercial signage is allowed to be larger than temporary non-commercial signage (see Table 5.7.8.B. Requirements for Signs Not Requiring a Sign Permit).

## Political Signs

Section 5.7.8.B Standard for Signs Not Requiring a Permit, allows temporary political signs in all districts with the following limitations:

*Temporary political signs in all districts [6 per lot, 6-square-foot maximum size, 6-foot maximum height]*

In Subsection 5.7.8.B.2.(e) Additional Specific Standards, includes additional standards for temporary political signs as well as temporary religious, philosophical, educational, real estate, yard sale, and construction signs allows these signs to:

- (1) *Be located outside the street right-of-way, or at least 6 feet from the back of curb or edge of pavement where no curb exists;*

Neither “political” signs nor philosophical, educational or religious are defined terms. Presumably a “political” sign relates to a campaign or election and a “philosophical” sign may address issues more generally. These words must be defined.

The 6-square-foot size limit for temporary political signs in all districts appears problematic, because it limits these non-commercial signs to a significantly smaller size than the 100 square feet allowed for “temporary real estate and construction” signs in RM and nonresidential districts (see Table 5.7.8.B.). Nonetheless, we understand that the provision for off-site temporary signs in the right-of-way came out of a hard-fought political compromise.

**Recommendations (see also Non-Commercial Temporary Signs):**

- a. It is recommended that the City of High Point go toward a strong content neutral Sign Ordinance as practically possible, including political signs which should be regulated similarly to other temporary non-commercial yard signs.
- b. Treat political signs the same as other non-commercial signage such as “educational,” “religious,” “opinions,” and “yard” signs in residential districts regulating them consistently as to size and number.
- c. In non-residential districts a different approach should be taken given the currently permitted 100 square foot temporary real estate signs. In these districts, it may make sense to limit the total square footage of temporary signs displayed at one time on a single lot which would reduce the incidence of clutter which has been a frequent comment by the public during our outreach efforts. ((See also discussion and recommendations on “Real Estate, Yard Sale and Construction Signs (Temporary)”)).
- d. Reconcile the regulation of political signs with North Carolina General Statutes (N.C.G.S. §136-32), which deals with political signs in the right-of-way.

**Real Estate, Yard Sale and Construction Signs (Temporary)**

Table Section 5.7.8.B Signs Not Requiring a Permit, allows without a permit:

*Temporary real estate, yard sale and construction signs in AGR and R Districts [6 square feet, 6-foot height limit]*

*Temporary real estate and construction signs in RM districts, nonresidential districts, and major subdivisions in R districts (100 square feet and 12-foot height limit)*

Temporary commercial real estate and construction signs are allowed to be much larger (100 square feet) than temporary non-commercial signs (6 square feet). If the City is serious about maintaining neighborhood character, there is an argument for prohibiting most commercial signs in all residential areas with a content-based exception for real estate signs.

**Recommendations (see also Non-Commercial Temporary Signs):**

- a. Address temporary commercial signage that is allowed to be larger than temporary non-commercial signage.

- b. Treat “yard sale” signs in residential districts under a new definition for “non-commercial” temporary signs with a standard size limit for these signs based on the size typical real estate for sale/rent signs in residential districts.
- c. Incorporate “real estate” signage in non-residential districts into the current allotment of signage permitted in these districts.
- d. Include space for contact information for prospective tenants for multi-tenant property on permanent signage; for a single-tenant property, a “for-sale” or “for-lease” sign can replace (or cover part of) a permanent sign.
- e. Reconcile construction sign provisions with the preemption of regulation of messages on fencing around construction sites by the state, as provided in §160A-381(j).
- f. Prohibit additional construction signs on any site with construction fencing – which, by state law, must allow commercial messages.
- g. For sites under construction that do not have construction fencing, require temporary real estate/construction signs over a certain square footage to be required to have a permit.
- h. Revisit the size and height of temporary construction signs with a stronger consideration of size of sign to lot and/or development.

### **Vending Machines, Gas Pumps, Ice Machines or Similar Device Signs**

Section 5.7.8.B. Table, Signs Not Requiring a Permit, has no limitation on square footage of signs on vending machines, gas pumps, ice machines kiosks or similar devices and allows them to be located at the right-of-way. A recent sign type appearing in High Point is the UPS pickup boxes with large lettering across the box face. These do not appear to be regulated as part of the primary or accessory use sign standards.

#### **Recommendations:**

- a. Establish maximum sign sizes and square footage for signs on accessory uses such as vending machines, ice machines and parcel drop-off/pick-up boxes, etc.
- b. Address signage on freestanding kiosks in locations such as shopping center parking lots.
- c. Determine whether these uses are a primary or accessory use for regulation under the Sign Ordinance.

### **Time Limits and Conditions for Signs Not Requiring a Permit**

Section 5.7.8.B.2. Additional Specific Standards, contains an extensive list of conditions under which religious, philosophical, educational, real estate, yard sale, construction, political and warning signs are permitted:

#### **Time limits:**

- Real estate or construction sign – removed within 7 days after construction, sale, or lease of land
- Yard sale sign – no longer than 3 days
- Political sign – removed 7 days after election.

**Locations:**

- Outside street right-of-way, or at least 6 feet from the back of curb or edge of pavement
- Not in public street medians or traffic islands
- Not interfere with or obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic, or obstruct safe sight distances
- Not be placed on private land without consent of landowner or occupant

**Other:**

- A warning sign shall not contain a commercial message, but it may contain a business logo or name.
- A-frame signs have a lengthy list of conditions.

**Recommendations (see also additional discussion on temporary signs):**

- a. Organize the new Sign Ordinance in a manner that makes it easier to locate conditions under which respective sign types may be erected and remain – regardless of whether they require a permit.
- b. Identify conditions that pertain globally to all signs such as “obstructing sight distances” or “placing signs on a property without an owner’s permission” and locate these in one place.
- c. Restrict logos on “warning” signs to those used for governmental or franchise utilities signage.
- d. Create a section containing performance standards related to certain types of signage such as those related to A-frame signs.
- e. Make it clear that a sign that remains up after a certain number of days after an event has past, is in violation of the sign ordinance. (See also recommendations related to “political signs” and other “temporary signs”)

## **Signs Requiring a Permit – Temporary Signs**

### **List of Temporary Signs Requiring a Permit**

This section of the Diagnostic Report specifically addresses temporary signs requiring a permit; however, the preceding discussion of temporary signs not requiring a permit touches on many of the same issues as these temporary signs that require a sign permit. As a point of reference, the following is a list of all temporary signs that require a sign permit under the City’s Sign Ordinance (listed alphabetically):

- a. Banners (freestanding or attached)
- b. Portable Signs for Special Events
- c. Special Promotion Signs (freestanding or attached)

### **Banners for Special Events and Special Promotion Signs**

The City requires temporary use permits for banners for special events and special promotions signs; however, the proliferation of the banners and special promotions signs seen around High Point are often signs that have not obtained permits, have exceeded their time limits, or do not meet the criteria for permitted banners and special promotion signs.

Table 5.7.9.B., Free-Standing Signs Requiring a Permit, special promotion signs are listed in the table but it simply says “n/a” under each category of standards – number of signs, height and size limits; however, under Subsection 5.7.9.B.3., the ordinance provides:

- d. *Special Promotion Sign (All Districts) Sign shall be limited in duration to a maximum of 30 continuous days and not more than 3 occurrences in a calendar year.*

Section 10.4 Definitions, defines “special promotion sign” as:

*An advertising activity or circumstance of a business which is not part of its daily activities or normal routine and in which the display and/or sale of merchandise, ware, or other tangible items is the sole purpose for the promotion.*

Table 5.7.9.B., Free-Standing Signs Requiring a Permit, allows “banners for special events” signs of 1 per 500 feet of frontage, having a maximum area of 25 square feet and a maximum height of 20 feet, and under Section 5.7.10.B. Specific Standards for Attached Signs Requiring a Permit, Subsection 6., includes this specific provision:

*Temporary Banners Serving Market Showrooms (All Nonresidential Districts) – Banners shall be limited in duration to a maximum of 30 continuous days and not more than 2 occurrences in a calendar year.*

This language leaves a lot of judgment in the hands of permitting officials.

Table 5.7.10.B. Requirements for an Attached Sign Requiring a Sign Permit, indicates that banners for temporary identification for market showrooms are permitted in any non-residential district and may cover 50% of the wall but no square footage limitation. This contains an unclear provision related to “height” which is described as “top of wall.”

**Recommendations:**

- a. Need to simplify and clarify regulations related to “banners for special events” and “special promotion signs,” including improving the definition for these sign types and differentiating between these signs and those used for market showroom temporary signage.
- b. Increase enforcement of the City’s Sign Ordinance related to requiring permits for signs that meet the definition of “banners for special events” and “special promotion signs” that are not obtaining these permits or exceeding the time limits.
- c. Enforce Sign Ordinance provisions related to banners that do not meet the definition of “banners for special events” or “special promotion signs.”
- d. If the City wishes to allow such signs, consider allowing each business to be permitted a specific number of these temporary banners under the non-commercial temporary signs in non-residential districts.
- e. Create a system for effective follow-up on the length of time temporary signage remains; one way to accomplish that is to increase the fee for these signs by a modest amount (probably \$25 to \$50), with the extra fee to pay for an outside contractor to visit the site on the first day after the permitted time period ends for the sign.
- f. Reexamine banner size standards and limits, particularly the provisions related to banners permitted to cover 50% of a wall in any non-residential district.
- g. Establish size, number and height standards for special promotional signs.

## Specific Sign Issues

### Large, Multi-Lot Campus-Type Uses

There are a number of large land uses such as High Point University, GTCC, High Point Regional Health System, and large industrial uses for which it would make sense to create an overall program of sign standards for their specific uses that are often spread over multiple lots. Such uses have different sign needs and opportunities than individual businesses on individual lots.

#### **Recommendation:**

Add provisions in the new Sign Ordinance that address sign standards for large, multi-lot campus-type land uses.

### Common Signage Plan

Section 5.7.12. Common Signage Plan, is a dedicated section devoted to general requirements for the “Common Signage Plan,” but the regulatory details are found elsewhere in the Development Ordinance or in the Development Guide. There are eight other locations where common signage plans are referenced with some containing specific conditions as to how the common signage plan should be applied or standards for preparing a common signage plan.

- 3.7.3. Standards Applied to All Planned Development Districts, Subsection I. Signs
- 3.8.7.F. Eastchester Gateway Corridor Overlay, Subsection 6. Signage
- 5.7.4.C.2. Multiple-Lot Development
- 5.7.10.A.1.(b)(1.) Attached Signs for Multi-tenant Buildings
- 5.7.10.A.1.(b)(2) Attached Signs for Tenant-Shared Entrance
- 5.7.14 Savings Clause
- Development Guide (Build High Point)
- Sign Permitting Process

#### **Recommendations:**

- a. Review Section 5.7.12 and other sections related to the common signage plans to determine if most if not all of the provisions related to common signage plans can be contained within one section, with other provisions simply referencing the appropriate section addressing common signage plans.
- b. Revise this section to improve the clarity as to what triggers the requirement for a common signage plan and components that should be contained in this section.
- c. Handle future changes deemed significant under standards governing approved Common Signage Plans through amendments to the Common Signage Plan; the Sign Ordinance should be modified to allow such a modification after notice to (but not necessarily consent by) all property owners affected by the plan.
- d. Review the contents of the Development Guide and Sign Permitting process for common signage plans to see if there are relevant provisions that would be better found within the common signage section.

## Community Events Signs

One issue that has arisen that goes somewhat beyond the scope of the Sign Ordinance update but one that should be addressed, is the need for “community events” signs. Several people at the October/November stakeholder sessions talked about the need for signs that would not only help people find community attractions but also help them to know what is happening – such as community theatre, baseball games, and citywide special events. Representatives of the High Point Rockers, the new minor league baseball team, and of High Point Theatre were particularly vocal about this issue. Representatives of Fairway Outdoor Advertising at these same meetings suggested that new, electronic, changeable copy billboards would serve this need.

As a point of information, in 2012, City staff undertook extensive research on the issue of outdoor advertising signs, that identified use of community-events signage in the study’s survey of other governmental jurisdictions:

*City-Owned Digital Sign: None of the cities surveyed lease city-owned property for the erection of billboards. Only one, Roanoke, Virginia, has a city-owned billboard-type community sign. That sign is visible from U.S. 220 and is located next to the civic center. It is used to advertise community events, concerts at the center, and other city-related items. This sign is distinguished from other community-owned digital signs by its size, which is approximately 400 square feet. Two other communities, Morganton and Wilson, have smaller digital signs that they use for the same purposes. These signs are located on public property or right-of-way. Roanoke and Morganton are among 8 cities, including High Point, that exempt governmental signs from sign regulations. However, there are differences in the way this type of sign is defined. All communities make exceptions for required traffic safety signage, street signage, etc. that are placed within the right-of-way of a public street, but others extend the exemption to signs on any publicly-owned property. [See “Outdoor Advertising Signs (Billboards) in High Point,” p. 12]*

Because of the interest expressed in community events signage, we included a question about these signs in an informal survey of High Point citizens (summary near end of this report). An overwhelming majority of respondents supported the idea of having electronic signs displaying community events in High Point. Several respondents even suggested possible locations for such signs:

*Parks, Senior Center, Library, City Hall, Buy Back Center, HPU, Compost Center, New Events Center, Ball Park, Chamber of Commerce, large shopping areas, entryways into High Point, Main Street Corridor, Westchester, Palladium Area, Eastchester by Wendover, Centennial, etc.*

*Others suggested that, in siting such signs, the City avoid high traffic areas and other areas that would either distract and/or take away views; these signs would add one more hazard to High Point's busy streets; okay as long as there is height restriction of 20 feet and does not impede a homeowner's view.*

As noted above, community events signage is somewhat beyond the scope of Sign Ordinance update but here are some specific recommendations:

### **Recommendations:**

- a. Consider community events signage as an exempt governmental sign.
- b. Appoint a small committee comprised of entities that have a strong interest in publicizing community-wide events.
- c. Identify the types of community events that would be appropriate for the signs; one source might be the federal guidelines for “recreational and cultural interest” signage available to

- institutions for display along federal highways based in part on annual number of visitors (limiting messages to ones of more common interest and prohibiting political signs).
- d. Identify potential locations and associated costs by reaching out to companies that specialize in community events signage or to other sign companies located in High Point and nearby communities.
  - e. Determine what kind of cost recovery, if required, might be expected from advertising of such events.
  - f. Confirm a policy that community events signs should be controlled by the City and not contracted out to a private entity; a contract with a non-profit organization might be workable, but not a for-profit organization.
  - g. Regarding the installation and physical operation of the community events signs, consider contracting out to a private sign company, based on a competitive proposal process, but with complete City-controlled content.
  - h. If community event signage contains any digital copy, the operation should conform to standards applied to private signs in the same zoning district, with a particular emphasis on the brightness, operating hours, and frequency of changing messages.
  - i. The City may want to consider a small contract with a consultant with expertise in dealing with community events signs to help establish standards and guidelines.

### **Development Entrance Signs**

Section 5.7.9. Freestanding Signs, B.3. Specific Standards by Sign Type, contains restrictions as to what a “development entrance sign” may contain – name of the development, the management, or developer or address or location of the development. This provides great latitude with what can be on the sign. This section also allows these signs in subdivisions, developments of over 15,000 square feet of gross floor area, multi-family developments of more than 8 units in a single building, or developments with more than 40,000 square feet in open air uses of land.

#### **Recommendations:**

- a. Simplify and clarify the regulations pertaining to development entrance signs.
- b. Add definition that clearly defines the intent of a development entrance sign (see recommendation on “missing definitions”).
- c. Review the threshold for which a development entrance sign is permitted (appears to be a low threshold and consideration should be given to raising the bar).

### **Electronic Changeable Copy Signs**

Section 5.7.9.B.3.(e) Electronic Changeable Copy Signs Requiring a Permit, addresses issues related to these signs. They are currently allowed only in the CB, MS, GB, RC and LB districts and are limited in size to 33% of the sign area of the freestanding sign. Brightness is specifically limited.

Section 5.7.B.3.(e)(4) Additional Standards in the CB District, permits wall signs with changeable copy limited to 25% of the permitted sign area or 50% of a marquee sign area.

Section 5.7.B.3.(e)(5) Additional Standards in the GB, MS, RC and LB Districts (per a pending amendment correcting a codification error), has specific limits on how an electronic message is displayed and how frequent the message can change (every 8 seconds). This Subsection also mentions electronic

changeable copy signs shall be located as a portion of and on the same support structure with a legal conforming accessory freestanding sign.

Included in the informal citizens survey (see survey summary at end of this report), were questions about electronic changeable copy signs in:

- High Point Rockers stadium area
- Eastchester Overlay District
- Schools, places of worship, parks located in residential

Respondents overwhelmingly supported having electronic changeable message signs in the Downtown and High Point Rockers stadium areas; however, in the Eastchester corridor there was significantly less support for such signage. This was a somewhat similar response to changeable copy signs in residential areas for schools, parks and places of worship but with a larger share saying “no” to those sign types, with a number commenting they would not want these in parks.

**Recommendations:**

- a. Revisit the issue as to whether changeable copy signs are only permitted on freestanding signs except for the CB where they can be wall signs.
- b. Create separate sign standards for marquee signs and revisit the standards that limit changeable copy on marquee signs to 50%; marquee sign should also be better defined.
- c. Delete “accessory” from reference to only permitting electronic changeable copy signs on legal conforming “accessory: freestanding signs.

## Electronic Video Signs

The use of electronic technology in signs involve significant policy issues which will require thoughtful consideration by the City.

**Recommendations:**

Explore the use of video signage within the CB and MX districts

## Identification Signs

Section 10.4 Definitions, defines identification signs as:

*A sign used to display the name, address, logo or other identifying symbol of an individual, family, business, institution, service, or organization occupying the premises; the profession of the occupant; the name of the building on which the sign is attached; or directory information in group developments or buildings with multiple tenants.*

The Sign Ordinance contains conflicting provisions related to “identification” signs which need to be addressed. There are at least four places where “identification signs” are regulated with conflicting names for the signage and a wide range of standards:

- Table 5.7.8.B: Requirements for a Sign Not Requiring A Sign Permit – allows identification signs having name and address plates, home occupations, and building markers in all districts with a maximum of 1/building, 2 square feet/unit, and a maximum height of 6 feet (no districts specified).

- Table 5.7.9.B: Requirements for a Freestanding Sign Requiring A Sign Permit – allows “identification signs” in all districts of 1/building entrance, 20 square feet and 10 feet in height; and “development identification” signs in the RC district of 1/street frontage, 200 square feet, and 30 feet in height.
- Table 5.7.10.B. Requirements for an Attached Sign Requiring a Permit – allows “temporary identification signs for market showrooms” in all nonresidential districts to cover 50% of the wall area and a height of top of wall; an additional provision for 1 “identification sign” in all nonresidential districts and all nonresidential uses in residential districts when average wall height is >35 feet based on 1% of wall area (minimum of 6 square feet and a maximum of 75 square feet with a height of top of wall).
- Section 5.7.9.B.3.(b) – regulates “development identification signs” but this sign type is not defined anywhere in the ordinance.

**Recommendations:**

- a. Fully revise definitions and standards related to “identification” signs to clarify what these signs are and where they are allowed, since given the current definition of an “identification sign” almost any sign could fall under this definition.
- b. Change name “development identification sign” to “development entrance sign” and add a definition to Chapter 10.4 Definitions (also revisit standards for such signs).
- c. Require existing multi-tenant or multi-parcel developments such as retail centers to submit a common sign plan at a point when they apply for a new sign permit for signage erected on their periphery if there is no common sign plan on file with the City or it is not consistent with the plan.
- d. Need to determine an improved approach to addressing signage for multi-parcel or multi-tenant properties whether it be “identification” signs or other freestanding signs for these properties.

**Illumination**

Section 5.7.9. Freestanding Signs Requiring a Sign Permit, Subsection A. General Standards, includes a list of districts where “indirect” and “direct” illumination may occur and requires a special use permit for direct illumination of a sign for nonresidential use in a residential district.

Section 5.7.10 Attached Sign Requiring a Permit, Subsection A.2. Illumination Standards, allows direct or indirect illuminated signs in all nonresidential districts except signs in the TO, OI, I, PNR and EC districts are required are limited to cut-out letter and shielded silhouette lighting.

**Recommendation:**

- a. Move illumination standards into a section on “Sign Lighting” rather than in section related to freestanding or attached signs.
- b. Identify type of illumination by zoning district in a table format rather than by describing in it in narrative form under sign type.
- c. Change the terminology from “indirect” and “direct” illumination, to “internal” and “external” illumination.
- d. Create performance standards for when direct (internal) illumination may be used such as requiring cut-out letters when fronting on a thoroughfare which is already a part of the Sign

Ordinance in the Eastchester Overlay, and eliminate the special use permit for sign illumination.

- e. Create brightness standards for internal illumination.

## Instructional Signs

Section 10.4 Definitions, the ordinance defines “instructional signs” as follows:

*A sign that provides assistance, with respect to the premises on which it is maintained, for the direction, safety, or convenience of the public such as "entrance," "exit," "one way," "telephone," "parking," "no parking," and similar instructions.*

Table 5.7.9.B. Requirements for Freestanding Signs Requiring a Permit, includes standards for instructional signs that allow signs up to 6 square feet and 8 feet in height but there is no limit on the number of signs and they are permitted in any district. Provisions related to the use “instructional” signs are unclear and size and height standards appear excessive.

### Recommendations:

- a. Need to simplify and clarify where and how instructional signs are used and decide if the signs are not legible from the street whether they should be exempt from regulation.
- b. Reduce the number, size and height permitted for instructional signs.
- c. Require instructional signs to be approved as overall approval of proposed sign plan when lot is developed.
- d. Limit the number of instructional signs permitted in residential districts.
- e. Delete reference to “telephone.”

## Multiple-Lot Development Signs, Outparcels and Multi-Tenant Buildings

Section 5.7.4.C. Multiple-Lot Development, contains the following provisions related to signage on multiple-lot development. They are:

1. *A multiple-lot development shall be considered as a single lot for the purposes of sign review and permitting;*
2. *Signage in a multiple-lot development shall be configured in accordance with Section 5.7.12, Common Signage Plan;*
3. *Signage associated with a multiple-lot development shall be permitted in accordance with the regulations governing outparcels and lease lots in the RC district; and*
4. *A development entrance or development identification sign shall be permitted in accordance with the zoning district where it is located.*

This section is within the introductory provisions of the Sign Ordinance, yet instead of simply stating that a multiple-lot development shall be considered as a single lot it includes numerous other provisions, one referencing a specific zoning district. This is problematic.

Table 5.7.9.B. Requirements for a Freestanding Sign Requiring a Sign Permit, contains special provisions for signs on outparcels or leased lots located in the GB and RC Zoning Districts. Chapter 10, Section 10.4 Definitions, defines an “outparcel” as:

*“A subdivided or leased parcel within a group development, multiple-lot development, or shopping center.*

We understand the common parlance of an outparcel – usually one that is created at the same time as a shopping center but that is developed separately from the rest of the center. The current definition, however, includes the terminology of a “leased” parcel which has no relevance to this issue of regulating signage on an outparcel.

Section 5.7.10 Attached Sign Requiring a Permit, Subsection A.1.(b) Multi-tenant Buildings, it references buildings that have their own entrances and those with shared entrances. These developments have similar issues as developments with outparcels. Given discussions with City staff, there is clearly a need to improve sign provisions related to multi-parcel and multi-tenant developments.

**Recommendations:**

- a. Provisions related to “multiple-lot development signs (Section 5.7.4.C.), those related to signs on outparcels or leased lots in Table 5.7.9.B., and those pertaining to wall signs in multi-tenant buildings (Section 5.7.10) need to be part of reworking the “common signage plan” provisions, including the provisions in the Development Guide’s related to “permitting.” This brings us back to the discussion of sign provisions contained in the “Development Guide” versus the “Development Ordinance.”
- b. Revise Section 5.7.4.C. Multiple-Lot Development, to only stipulate that multiple-lot development shall be considered as a single lot for the purposes of sign review and permitting and deleting other provisions or moving them to more appropriate locations – as may be the case under many provisions with Section 5.7.4. General Standards.
- c. Address sign provisions related to multi-parcel and multi-tenant development by revising Section 5.7.12 Common Signage Plan to treat these developments as a unified commercial development requiring uniformity in how signage is planned for the development and what freestanding signs will be permitted on the principal development site and outparcels.
- d. Revise the definition of an “outparcel” to delete reference to a leased parcel, and define as, “A plot of land in a commercial shopping center development reserved for later construction of freestanding businesses.”

## Nonconforming Signs

Provisions dealing with nonconforming signs is found within the Development Ordinance, Section 8.5 Nonconforming Signs, and thus are separate from the bulk of the sign regulations. Organizationally, this is appropriate; we will review and update if necessary, these provisions as part of Sign Ordinance update.

Section 8.5.2. Prohibited Actions, already prohibits enlargement, alterations to the structure, relocation or change to the type of lighting, but it should be amended to prohibit explicitly any change in the technology used for the message. The above reference to prohibiting the changing of technology of nonconforming signs is very important for the City in limiting expansion of the impacts of nonconforming billboards.

Section 8.5.3 Signs Rendered Nonconforming, which reads:

*Signs made nonconforming by reason of annexation, expansion of the ETJ, or by amendment of the Official Zoning Map shall be removed within 365 days of the date they were rendered nonconforming.*

Yet, annexation or text amendments are some of the very reasons signs become nonconforming.

Section 8.5.5. Replacement of Nonconforming Signs, Subsection C. Renovation:

1. *Expansions of principal buildings that exceed 1,000 square feet of gross floor area (GFA) or the total expansions of principal buildings, open uses of land or off-street parking that individually or collectively exceed 3,000 square feet; or*
2. *Structural or nonstructural alterations (excluding routine maintenance and repair of the façade of the principal building) that exceed 50 percent of the façade's area, which is calculated from the area of the façade or wall used in calculating the maximum allowable sign area.*

These provisions are logical and easy to explain to the public or to affected sign owners.

**Recommendations:**

- a. Revise Section 8.5.2, to prohibit explicitly any change in the technology related to the nonconforming sign's message.
- b. Delete Section 8.5.3 Signs Rendered Nonconforming, which requires signs made nonconforming by reason of annexation or expansion of the ETJ.
- c. Section 8.5.3 Signs Rendered Nonconforming could be modified to address property owner-initiated rezonings that result in an amendment to Official Zoning Map that results in a sign becoming nonconforming and therefore must be removed within a certain number of days. We would not recommend the same for a City-initiated change to the Official Zoning Map.
- d. Revisit Section 8.5.5. Replacement of Nonconforming Signs, Subsection C. Renovation, to confirm these standards do not need modification as part of other revisions related to updating the Sign Ordinance.

**Outdoor Advertising Signs (Off-Premises Advertising / Billboards)**

Currently, there are approximately 50 outdoor advertising signs within the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction, nearly all located in the southwestern part of the City along streets in old established industrial areas. Most of these signs are nonconforming either because of the zoning district, permitted height, or separation requirements. All but five of these signs are owned by Fairway Outdoor Advertising (Fairway was purchased by Lamar Advertising in 2018).

During the City's October/November stakeholder forums there was a significant amount of public discussion concerning billboards raised Fairway Outdoor Advertising, the Chamber, Convention and Visitors Bureau, High Point Rockers' representative, and High Point Theatre. Outdoor advertising representatives discussed the general value of outdoor advertising as an advertising medium and the public benefit billboards provide by devoting part of their electronic message time to public service messages. Community representatives such as those with the High Point Rockers, High Point Theatre and Convention and Visitors Bureau discussed the need for electronic community events signage to advertise in real time upcoming recreational and cultural events to visitors and residents. Other than these particular interest groups, other stakeholder meeting groups did not raise the issue of needing more outdoor advertising.

**Recommendations:**

- a. In 2019, the sign type “outdoor advertising” or “off-premises advertising” was removed from the City’s Sign Ordinance. It is recommended that this change remain in effect as a part of the Sign Ordinance update.
- b. Recommendations related to “community events signs” are addressed separately under heading of “Community Events Signs.”

**Prohibited Signs**

Section 5.7.6 Prohibited Signs, lists a large group of “prohibited signs” with exceptions such as:

- *Windblown device ... except as temporary identification for market showrooms and as temporary events/special promotion.*
- *Video wall sign, except in the CB district.*
- *Electronic changeable copy sign, except in the CB, GB, MS, LB, and RC districts.*
- *Portable sign legible from the public right-of-way, ... temporary uses ... and temporary signs not requiring a permit and A-frame signs.*
- *A sign which projects over a public right-of-way, except that a wall sign may project not more than 18 inches ...*

The list of prohibited signs should not include a list of signs prohibited except within certain zoning districts or meeting conditions.

**Recommendation:**

Confine the list of prohibited signs to those prohibited under all conditions and signs that are permitted only in certain districts or meeting certain conditions should be addressed elsewhere.

**Sign Scale – Monument Signs**

Like many other communities, High Point has limited the use of pole signs in some downtown areas and developing areas of the City requiring monument signs. The following are provisions related to monument signs:

Section 3.8.7.F(6)(d): Freestanding signs in Eastchester GCO District may only be monument signs:

6 feet in height for lots < 200 feet of street frontage and up to 20 feet in height for lots ≥ 200 feet of street frontage based on underlying district

50 square feet of sign area for single businesses; 90 square feet for group developments <25,000 square feet floor area; and 135 square feet for developments ≥ 25,000 square feet

Table 5.7.9.B.: Freestanding Signs in the Main Street and Mixed-Use District are required to be monument limited to:

MX District: 6 feet in height and 40 square feet

MS-B District: 6 feet in height and 50 – 75 square feet based on 1 x the lot width

MS-A, C, D Districts: 15 feet in height and 50 – 150 square feet based on 1 x the lot width

Section 5.7.9.B(2)(a)(1):

Freestanding signs in the Central Business District are limited to 6 feet but may be increased to 15 if a monument sign and 50 – 100 square feet based on 1 x the lot width.

The excessive height of monument signs permitted by the Sign Ordinance should be addressed. It appears as an incentive for having a monument signs in the CB District. The Sign Ordinance permits a 15-foot high sign if it is a monument sign (in lieu of a required 6-foot sign) and the sign may have up to 100 square feet. In three of the four Main Street Districts a monument sign may be 15 feet high and have up to 150 square feet – this apparently was what created the overly large “Publix” sign that a number of people pointed out to us.

Although Chapter 10: Measurement and Definitions, defines a monument sign as “A monolithic sign in which the bottom of the sign is flush with the ground,” a monument sign is typically a low-profile structure, not a large freestanding wall. A major problem with encouraging excessively large monument signs, particularly in the CB District and Main Street Districts, is that they may not be particularly pedestrian-friendly and given the often close proximity of the buildings to the street, are not actually necessary. Overly large monument signs can impair visibility for pedestrians – and for drivers who should be watching for them.

**Recommendations:**

- a. Reexamine the sign size (scale) and heights for monument signs.
- b. Reexamine the use of only monument signs in the MS District. There are examples along Main Street that use small format pole signs that do not appear nearly as obtrusive as some of the 75 – 150 square foot monument signs. Alternatively, there are low-rise pole with a sign hanging from an angle bracket that can work well for pedestrians and low speed vehicular traffic
- c. Permit projecting signs (“blade” sign), with a minimum clearance height for pedestrians in the CB, MS and MX Districts in lieu of monument signs.
- d. Investigate an alternative to large monument signs in CB, MS and MX Districts and prohibiting monument signage where buildings are sited within a certain distance of a sidewalk. Attached signage is highly visible in areas where buildings are close to the street and pedestrians as well as vehicular traffic can easily see the name of the business without the need of a freestanding sign.

**Works of Art**

With the 2019 Sign Ordinance amendments, “works of art with no commercial message” was deleted from Section 5.7.7. Exempt Signs.

Some cities want to encourage murals to cover bare walls and to create a livelier downtown area, but potential abuse leads into a quagmire of trying to decide when an image is really a commercial message and when it is not.

This issue exists in High Point, because there are some talented mural artists who work at a very large scale. During our stakeholder meetings the wall painting in the parking lot recognizing The Dog House restaurant’s 75 years of business garnered quite a bit of discussion as to whether it was a sign or a work of art. We heard no philosophical or policy arguments against murals, although there were some quibbles about particular signs.

**Recommendations:**

Craft provisions that institutionalize what City staff is doing to judge if a work of art (mural on a building) is a work of art or a commercial sign. This would include provisions that provide staff guidance in determining if it is “art” or “advertising.”

## Miscellaneous Sign Ordinance Issues

### Measurement of Sign Height, Size and Location

Chapter 10 – Measurement and Definitions: Section 10.2.10 Signage, sets forth standards for measuring area of signs (single-face, multi-face), how the height of signs is calculated, determining permitted sign size based on multiple frontages, and calculating wall area.

**Recommendations:**

- a. This section should be fully revised as part of the new Sign Ordinance along with adding illustrations.
- b. Clearly define what part of a sign area and structure is included in the measurement of a freestanding sign as well as if any part of the building façade might be considered part of a wall sign square footage – for example not including a sign’s cabinet in the overall square footage of a monument sign can result in a very large sign.
- c. Add illustrations of sign measurements and calculations.
- d. As the new Sign Ordinance is prepared conduct additional discussions as to whether provisions related to sign measurements remain in Chapter 10 or migrate to the chapter on signs.
- e. Assess whether illuminated canopies or building walls that are backlit with the name of the business attached to the illuminated panel should be included in the sign measurement and if these are actually “signs.”

### Removal of Signs

Section 5.7.4. General Standards, includes multiple provisions related to signs that should be removed including the following signs: no required permit, permit lapsed or revoked, nonconforming status expired, obstruction at street intersection, unsafe, deteriorated or abandoned.

**Recommendation:**

Provisions in this section should be combined into a section related to “Removal of Signage” perhaps as an administrative or enforcement section.

### Specific Sign Standards

Section 5.7.9.B.(2) and (3), contain an extensive list of provisions for freestanding signage.

**Recommendation:**

This section should be completely reworked with the possibility of addressing under a heading that relates to specific sign conditions as well by a table when standards relate to zoning districts.

## Variances

Section 5.7.3 relates to sign variances. Currently variances are limited to sign height and location (references Section 2.4.15. Variances) and prohibits variances for changing required sign number, size, illumination, or minimum spacing between signs

### **Recommendation:**

Review provisions for sign variances and consider allowing some administrative relief without having to request a variance.

## Wall Signs – Proportionate Share and Computations

Section 5.7.10.A. General Standards for Attached Signs Requiring a Sign Permit, contains provisions relating to proportionate share of building and proportionate share of parking area which is somewhat unusual. In addition, Table 5.7.10.A. Grouped Sign Area Computation is difficult to understand, particularly for multi-tenant buildings. Table 5.7.10.B. Footnote 2 “Based on first 30’ in height of wall on which sign is attached. Buildings over 30’ may have additional sign area based on 5 percent of wall area above 30’ ...” narrative hard to follow.

### **Recommendations:**

- a. Require additional discussion on standards by which the area of a wall sign is determined and consider that it should be proportionate share of the building wall facing main entrance.
- b. Create a more easily understood table related to how wall sign computations are calculated.
- c. Table B footnote is an example of a standard that would benefit by an illustration.

## Definitions – Missing or Poorly Defined Terms

Many words can and should be given common, ordinary meanings. In sign ordinances, however, there are a number of words that need definitions to ensure that they carry the meaning intended by the drafters.

### Definition of a “Sign”

Chapter 10: Measurement and Definitions, Section 10.4 Definitions, includes the following definition of a “sign:”

*An object, device, display, or structure, or part thereof, which is used to advertise, identify, display, direct, or attract attention to an object, person, institution, organization, business, product, service, event, or location by any means, including but not limited to words, letters, pennants, banners, emblems, trademarks, trade names, insignias, numerals, figures, design, symbols, fixtures, colors, illumination, or projected images or any other attention directing device.*

### **Recommendation:**

Revisit the definition to decide whether it should be more encompassing to include the sign’s structure or a business painting its building in the same corporate color and style (Kentucky Fried Chicken’s red and white striped building that is similar to their chicken 15-piece bucket) or illuminated canopies or building walls that are backlit with the name of the business attached to the illuminated panel.

## Development Entrance Sign and Identification Sign

Table 5.7.9.B: Requirements for a Freestanding Sign Requiring a Permit uses the term “Development Entrance Sign” but there is no definition of this term. This same section uses the term “development identification sign” permitted in the RC District which appears to be a similar type of sign. In the section discussing “Identification Signs” it describes at least four different sign types referred to “Identification Signs” and has sign sizes ranging from 6 square feet to 200 square feet.

### Recommendations (see also “Identification Signs”):

- a. Add definition for a “Development Entrance Sign.”
- b. Revise the definition of an “Identification Sign” and create other sign term for different types of “Identification signs.”
- c. Define a “home occupation” sign in a manner other than an “identification” sign.

## Intended / Legibility

Section 5.7.7.D. Exempt Signs, uses the term “intended” in reference to:

*A sign located on the interior of a building, court, lobby, athletic field, stadium, or other structure which is not intended to be seen from the exterior of the building or structure.*

A sign, as an inanimate object, has no intent. Proving the intent of those who installed the sign is difficult at best – and particularly so when it would be in their self-interest to try to make a sign exempt by testifying that they did not “intend” for anyone outside the building to see it.

### Recommendation:

Substitute the word “legible” and define it as: Something is “legible” if words, images and/or letters can be read by a person with normal vision (corrective or not) who is standing in the location from which “legibility” is required to be determined.

## Flags, emblems, Insignia of Corporate, Political, Professional, Fraternal, Civic, or Educational Organization

Table 5.7.8.B. Requirements for a Sign Not Requiring Sign Permit, allows “Flags, emblems, Insignia of Corporate, Political, Professional, Fraternal, Civic, or Educational Organization in all districts.” This appears to mix “flags,” “emblems” and “insignias” and commercial and non-commercial speech.

### Recommendation (see also “Non-commercial Signs on Private Property” and “Flags”):

This provision should be totally reworked to clearly only refer to non-commercial speech.

## Educational, Philosophical, Religious, and Political Signs

Table 5.7.8.B. Requirements for a Sign Not Requiring Sign Permit, allows temporary “religious, philosophical, educational, and political” signs in all districts without defining these terms.

### Recommendations (see also “Non-commercial Signs on Private Property” and “Political Signs”):

- a. To simply and clarify the regulation of these signs, create a category of temporary non-commercial signs that groups “Educational, Philosophical, Religious, and Political Signs” within this category of signage.

- b. Add definition for a “Religious Sign” that begins with “a non-commercial sign” and simply references Table 4.2.5 Institutional Use Classifications, as the definition of this type of sign [defines “religious” as “an institution is a place in which worship, ceremonies, rituals, and education are held, together with accessory uses (including locations used for education and recreation activities), operated and maintained under the direction of the religious group. Examples include churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples.”].
- c. Revise the term “Philosophical Sign” and begin the definition with “a non-commercial sign” and change the term to “personal viewpoints” or “personal opinions.”
- d. Add definition for an “Educational Sign” that begins with “a non-commercial sign” and simply references Table 4.2.5 Institutional Use Classifications, as the definition of this type of sign (defines “educational” as “a public or private institution that provides elementary, secondary, post-secondary or other institution that provides business or trade skills.”).
- e. Add definition for a “Political Sign” that begins the definition with “a non-commercial sign” and add definition of “political sign” using the North Carolina state law dealing with political signs: “political sign” means any sign that advocates for political action. The term does not include a commercial sign.” See N.C.G.S. § 136-32(c).
- f. Need to determine if “educational” is always a “non-commercial” activity given for-profit educational services.

## Residential and Non-Residential Districts

The Sign Ordinance uses the term “residential” and “nonresidential” districts without a clear understanding which zoning districts fall under these two categories.

### Recommendation:

If this term is continued in the new Sign Ordinance, add a reference to Section 4.1.9 Principal Use Table that identifies which zoning districts are classified as “residential” and “nonresidential.”

## Yard Sale Sign

Table 5.7.8.B. Requirements for a Sign Not Requiring a Permit, references “yard sales” signs but does not define the term.

### Recommendations (see also “Non-commercial Signs on Private Property” and “Political Signs”):

- a. Add the definition of a “Yard Sign” – “A sign advertising the non-commercial sales of goods owned by the occupant of the dwelling in a residential district.”
- b. Determine if the term “yard sign” should apply to non-residential districts.

## Enforcement of Sign Ordinance

Currently, enforcement of the City’s Sign Ordinance is the responsibility of the Code Enforcement Division, which in 2016 became part of the Community Development & Housing Department. This division is responsible for enforcement of the minimum housing code, public nuisances, vehicle ordinances and zoning – part of which is enforcing the Sign Ordinance. It is our understanding that most sign enforcement is complaint driven, meaning that many violations are allowed to continue

unchallenged. City Council and the City Manager should take all steps necessary to ensure that sign enforcement is proactive and consistent.

Enforcement is particularly critical with regard to electronic signs. As more than one person reminded us, an electronic changeable copy sign can easily be modified by the user to make it brighter or change messages more frequently than the 8 second limit than is allowed by the ordinance. Limiting these signs' distraction to drivers requires successfully limiting the modification of these signs' operational characteristics. In a chain retail business, a new manager may independently decide to make such adjustments.

Section 5.7.9.B.3(e)(3) of the current ordinance provides:

*Any electronic changeable copy sign which malfunctions, fails, or ceases to operate in its usual or normal programmed manner, causing therein motion, flashing, movement or an inability to read the text of the message clearly shall be turned off, or shall display a blank screen until repairs can be made.*

**Recommendations:**

- a. After adoption of the new Sign Ordinance, develop a strategy for effective sign ordinance enforcement, particularly as it relates to temporary signage such as banners, promotional and special events signs, political signs and electronic changeable copy signs.
- b. Make enforcement proactive and consistent, rather than complaint-driven.
- c. For an electronic changeable copy sign that is not malfunctioning but that has been re-programmed in violation of the Sign Ordinance, the new Sign Ordinance should create a system that gives one or two warnings (perhaps with an assessment of penalty point), and if continued non-compliance occurs within a given time period, requiring a mandatory period of 30 or 60 days during which the sign would have to be turned off completely (this approach will only work, however, if there is regular, consistent and effective enforcement).
- d. Upon adoption of a new Sign Ordinance, and prior to enforcing new Sign Ordinance provisions, hold workshops for sign users, perhaps hosted jointly with the City and Chamber of Commerce.

## **New Sign Ordinance Format and Illustrations/Graphics**

### **Organized by Geographical Areas**

The current Sign Ordinance is organized by sign "type." The new Sign Ordinance proposes an organizational format that addresses signs by geographical area based on signs occurring inside and outside the City's Core. The last part of the Diagnostic Report provides a skeletal illustration showing how sign types might be organized by geographical areas in context to relevant zoning districts.

**Recommendation:**

Completely revise the manner in which the Sign Ordinance is organized changing it to an ordinance that addresses signs by geographical areas based on sign locations inside or outside the City's Core. This is consistent with the City's approach to its comprehensive planning documents and other Chapters of the Development Ordinance.

## Illustrations / Graphics / Tables

The current Sign Ordinance is completely devoid of illustrations or graphics related to sign types as well as how sign areas and heights are measured in relation to buildings or lots. One of the most challenging aspects is determining the computation of wall signage in the absence of illustrations. Also, there are no illustrations related to definitions of sign types. In addition, the current Sign Ordinance has tables based on whether a sign requires a permit or does not. This could be more easily handled in one table related to the geographical area where signs are permitted. There are a number of other regulatory provisions that would be more easily addressed via tables rather than by narrative.

### Recommendations:

- a. Add illustrations and graphics for sign types, measurements, location of signs, and definitions, etc.
- b. Address when a sign requires a permit in the same table showing where specific sign types are permitted. A number of other standards would be more easily understood if organized in tables rather than narrative format.

## Sample Table – Sign Standards by Geographical Area

The following table is an illustration as to how the High Point Sign Ordinance might be grouped by geographical area related to inside and outside the Core Area and in relation to the types of signs. This is not a complete table, but it begins to organize signs by geography and zoning district locations rather than the current arrangement of - exempt signs, signs not requiring a permit, freestanding signs requiring a permit, attached signs requiring a permit and a large group of miscellaneous sign types.

This is an initial illustration that will need to be further refined and supported by additional tables related to sign characteristics such as electronic changeable copy signs, illumination, temporary promotional signs, and temporary commercial and non-commercial signs. The intent is to view signage in terms of the geographical context of the sign rather than simply by sign type.

Sample Table – Sign Standards by Geographical Area

Sign Types Inside / Outside Core	CB – Central Business	MX – Mixed Use	MS – Main Street B & C	MS – Main Street A & D	GB – General Business (out parcel lot)	GB – Outside Core	RC – Retail Center (out parcel lot)	RC – Outside Core	LB – Limited Business	LB – Outside Core	EC – Employment Center	EC – Outside Core	OI – Office Institutional	OI – Outside Core	I – Institutional	I – Outside Core	TO – Transitional Office	TO – Outside Core	LI – Light Industrial	LI – Outside Core	HI – Heavy Industrial	HI – Outside Core	AGR – Agricultural / Rural	R – Residential Single Family (3, 5, 7)	RM – Residential Multifamily (5, 16, 24)	PNR – Parks and Natural Resources			
	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf			
<b>Ground Signs (Permit Req.)</b>	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf			
Monument – small ≤ 3.5'																													
Monument – medium ≤ 6'																													
Monument – large ≤ 10'																													
Pole/Pylon/Post – small ≤ 6'																													
Pole/Pylon/Post – medium ≤ 15'																													
Pole/Pylon/Post – large ≤ 30'																													
Development Entry (monument sign sf (?))																													
Identification (monument sign sf (?))																													
<b>Building Signs (Permit Req.)</b>	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf		
Projecting																													
Projecting (General)																													
Awning or Canopy																													
Blade																													
Hanging / Suspended / Shingle																													
Marquee																													
Roof																													
Wall																													
Wall – small % of wall (?)																													
Wall – medium % of wall (?)																													
Wall – large % of wall (?)																													
Upper Story (Crown Sign)																													
<b>Incidental Signs</b>	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	
Electronic Changeable Copy																													
Historical Markers																													
Instructional / Warning																													
Playbill																													
Tenants																													
Vending/ice machine, gas, etc.																													
Window																													

Sign Types Inside / Outside Core	CB – Central Business	MX – Mixed Use	MS – Main Street B & C	MS – Main Street A & D	GB – General Business (out parcel lot)	GB – Outside Core	RC – Retail Center (out parcel lot)	RC – Outside Core	LB – Limited Business	LB – Outside Core	EC – Employment Center	EC – Outside Core	OI – Office Institutional	OI – Outside Core	I – Institutional	I – Outside Core	TO – Transitional Office	TO – Outside Core	LI – Light Industrial	LI – Outside Core	HI – Heavy Industrial	HI – Outside Core	AGR – Agricultural / Rural	R – Residential Single Family (3, 5, 7)	RM – Residential Multifamily (5, 16, 24)	PNR – Parks and Natural Resources
	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf
<b>Temporary Signs*</b>																										
A-Frame																										
Banners / Special Events (?)																										
Construction Signs																										
Personal Speech Signs (?)																										
Political Signs																										
Real Estate Signs																										
Yard Sale Signs																										
*Most could simply be “Yard” signs																										

## Opinions of Interest Groups, Citizenry, City Staff and Elected/Appointed Officials

Over the past months, the Consultant Team has been involved in a number of initiatives to more fully understand issues related to the regulation of signage in High Point. This has included:

- A two-day informal “listening” session in late August with City departments, the city manager and assistants, the mayor and members of City Council (separately or in small groups), and most members of the Planning and Zoning Commission;
- On October 31<sup>st</sup>/November 1<sup>st</sup>, stakeholder group meetings representing large land uses, furniture market, retail, community interests, city and county departments and the school district, banks, general retail operators, sign companies, and institutional uses.
- Responses to an informal five-question survey distributed to the above stakeholders as part of the above stakeholder meetings and a request that they post in on their website as well as the City also posting the questionnaire on its Sign Ordinance Update webpage; and,
- A Sign Survey sent to 600 residential households within the City.

These outreach initiatives, along with the April 2019 public presentation of our analysis of the current Sign Ordinance and recommendations, will inform the drafting of the new Sign Ordinance for the City of High Point.

The following are comments on respective sign-related ideas and issues from the above outreach initiatives. They are not a “consensus” on a particular idea or viewpoint, but rather what was shared by individuals during these listening and stakeholder sessions.

### Listening Sessions with City Staff and Public Officials (August 2018)

#### Sign-Related Issues and Ideas

- a. Greater enforcement of temporary signs particularly HPU and church-related signs.
- b. Comments on lighting issues, specifically neon lighting around Kickback Jack’s and visibility of Andy’s Custard Shop’s inside signs at night (during Stakeholder sessions owner indicated sign visibility was needed because the store was not easily seen from Eastchester Drive).
- c. Banner signs in the Market Showroom area that are not removed promptly.
- d. Time limits on signs in Market Showroom area should be more liberal year-round.
- e. Multiple people raised concerns about signs on UPS boxes and ice house kiosks.
- f. Preference for monument rather than pole signs, but not all monument signs are desirable such as the size of the Publix “monument” sign.
- g. Need for pedestrian-oriented signs; but monument signs are not always pedestrian friendly.
- h. Perhaps base signs on parcel area (square feet) rather than on frontage.
- i. Some support billboards along I-74, although not consistent with existing zoning and land use along I-74.
- j. Did not want the City to look like Greensboro.
- k. Consider window sign square footage in determining allowable wall signage (someone noted the extensive problems in Greensboro with building and window “wrapping.”)

## Stakeholder Meetings (Oct./Nov. 2018)

### Sign-Related Issues and Ideas

- a. Need way-finding signage and about community events.
- b. Need more effective enforcement.
- c. Limited but expanded use of digital signs without making City look like Times Square.
- d. Give City a sign makeover – need to allow creativity in signage.
- e. Require a commercial center’s name on main sign with addresses clearly visible.
- f. Significant satisfaction with the current appearance of the Eastchester corridor.
- g. Re-think Furniture Market sign rules, recognizing that some uses are year-round and also recognizing pedestrian-orientation of area.
- h. Eliminate requirement that must have only “registered trademark” for logos signs for monument signs (Eastchester).
- i. Fine line between too big and not big enough when dealing with sign issues.
- j. Rethink sign rules for Main Street; monument signs are not working well there.
- k. Reexamine all measurement rules in context; some create awkward results.
- l. Conflicting views on further design controls – some expressed an interest in more uniformity in sign design; others urged more room for individual creativity.
- m. Concern with proliferation of HPU signs, tempered by recognition of HPU’s value to community.
- n. Good bit of discussion of billboards, much of it organized by a billboard operator; no real consensus on doing anything differently and this overlapped with discussion of community events signage (billboard representatives explained how billboards can play that role).
- o. Rethink temporary sign rules, with issues ranging from medical offices introducing a new doctor to religious institutions posting information about upcoming events – on weekends everyone does what they want and temporary signs don’t go away.
- p. Allow larger wall signs (% of wall area too small) particularly where free-standing signs limited.

## Informal Questionnaires (November 2018)

### Summary of Sign-Related Responses (18 responding)

Question 1: “Do you feel signage in High Point enhances or detracts from the City’s image?”

Responses were varied like “the right type signage in appropriate place should be used to help promote and enhance High Points image.” Some responded “both” to this question and others answered “detracts.” Perhaps a main benefit of this question is that it should have encouraged those completing the questionnaire to look more critically at signage in the City.

Question 2: “Do you feel the City’s Sign Ordinance allows businesses and/or civic activities, including educational and religious, to have the types of signs they need?”

A billboard company said “No” ... there should be off-premise billboard advertising (especially digital billboards) opportunities on the north side of town.” Several commented on need for other types of temporary signs. Another said, “too many junk signs put up on weekend.”

Question 3: “Do you feel signs in High Point are potentially a safety hazard to drivers?”

The dominant answer was “No,” but one respondent said: “Sometimes, if there is more than one sign explaining something, people slow down to figure it out, thus creating an accident ... signage around the museum is terrible.”

Question 4: “What would you hope the rewrite of the Sign Ordinance would accomplish?”

Answers ranged from “less government” to “help raise the quality of graphic design without cluttering the streetscape with too much advertising content,” to “reasonable sizes for location identification,” to “simplicity and clarity of language.”

Question 5: Any other sign-related ideas you would like to share with us?”

Responses included way-finding ideas, requiring address numbers on all signs, headers on street signs in historic districts, more color and LED signs (particularly at recreation centers), more uniformity in signage, and a “deer crossing” sign at a particular address.

## **Citizen Sign Survey (February 2019)**

### **Summary of Citizen Sign Survey Responses (124 responding)**

#### **1. Electronic Changeable Copy Signs (digital signage – not video)**

Respondents overwhelmingly supported having electronic changeable message signs in the Downtown and High Point Rockers stadium areas; however, in the Eastchester corridor there was significantly less support for such signage. This was a somewhat similar response to changeable copy signs in residential areas for schools, parks and places of worship but with a larger share saying “no” to those sign types, with a number commenting they would not want these in parks.

#### **2. Yard Signs in Residential Districts**

Responding to the question of whether the City was too restrictive on yards signs in residential areas, a larger majority responded “no;” interestingly, a strong majority believed a maximum of 2 signs per lot was appropriate.

#### **3. Temporary Signs**

As to the question whether the City should be more restrictive on temporary signs a small majority responded “no” but about a quarter answered “yes” and others were unsure. Although respondents did not believe that the City should be more restrictive on temporary signs, a majority believed that the time limit for these signs should be a couple of weeks with about a third preferring 30 days. A significant majority believed that requiring permits for temporary signs was not necessary.

#### **4. Electronic Wall Signs in Market Showroom Area and High Point Rockers Stadium Area**

A strong majority supported electronic wall signs in the Market Showroom's Central Business District and in the High Point Rockers stadium Mixed-Use District Area. The general response as to sign size was they should not exceed "300 square feet" with many feeling that under 100 square feet would be appropriate. The responses to the length of time such signs should be allowed to remain operational were evenly divided between a 60-day time limit and a 365-day limit, with some saying time limits should be tied to actual occupancy of the building.

#### **5. Community Events Signs**

A strong majority supported the use of electronic signs that would display community events. There were many useful suggestions for possible locations as well as concerns about such signs creating a distraction.

##### *Suggested Locations for Community Events Signs:*

Parks, Senior Center, Library, City Hall, Buy Back Center, HPU, Compost Center, New Events Center, Ballpark, Chamber of Commerce, large shopping areas, entryways into High Point, Main Street Corridor, Westchester, Palladium Area, Eastchester by Wendover, Centennial, etc.

##### *Suggested Concerns Related to Community Events Signs:*

Avoid high traffic areas and other areas that would either distract and/or take away views; these signs would add one more hazard to High Point's busy streets; okay as long as there is height restriction of 20 feet and does not impede a homeowner's view.

#### **6. What Do You Think ...**

The final part of the survey asked a series of general sign questions. Their responses were: More than half believed High Point should have uniformity in the way signs look. Almost half thought businesses should not be allowed to have more signs. A strong majority thought temporary signs should be better regulated. An even stronger majority thought High Point should have more wayfinding signs. Over half thought High Point should increase enforcement of its Sign Ordinance.