



## DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

# POLICY STATEMENT FOR SIGNS

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
2 George Street, Third Floor

Charleston, South Carolina 29401

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY  
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Appropriate signage is necessary as a way of identifying businesses and developments. It is also important that these signs contribute to and not detract from the aesthetic qualities of a site or building. All signs within the jurisdiction of the Design Review Board are reviewed on a case by case basis. Although the requirements of Article 4 titled "Sign Regulations" of the City of Charleston Zoning Ordinance will apply in most instances, the Board or its designated staff representative has the right to vary from Article 4 when deemed appropriate due to a buildings location, character or architectural features.

**Submittal Requirements:** All signage must meet requirements per Article 4 of the City of Charleston Zoning Ordinance. The ordinance can be found at: <https://library.municode.com/sc/charleston/codes/zoning?nodetd=ART4SIRE>

**Board Review:** All signs associated with new developments, or existing developments undergoing alterations and/or additions, will require review by the Board. These signs must be submitted to the board as part of the development submittal (at Preliminary) to ensure that their design is compatible with the project's overall design. Final review of all the signage will be by DRB staff with a separate sign application.

**Staff Review:** All signs for existing developments and/or buildings not undergoing exterior alterations or additions will require approval by staff only. Staff is to use the following criteria in conjunction with Article 4 when reviewing a sign submittal:

### Freestanding Signs:

- a. All new freestanding signs are to be designed as monument signs. The use of pole signs is not permitted.
- b. Pole skirts are to be added to exposed poles on all existing signs being refaced. Generally, pole skirts are to be at least one-third the width of the sign cabinet.
- c. When appropriate, freestanding signs are to incorporate building materials colors and design elements found on the principal structure. For example, if a building is brick, then it may be appropriate to incorporate the same or similar brick into the design of the sign.
- d. The application of extraneous information to a freestanding sign, such as services provided by the business, telephone numbers, hours of operation, and etcetera, is not to be permitted. This information may be allowed in certain cases as window graphics.
- e. No changes can be made to the cabinet or structure of a non-conforming sign. A non-conforming sign may be re-faced, but any other changes will require the entire sign be brought into conformity with the current zoning ordinance.
- f. Plastic sign faces shall have opaque backgrounds allowing only the text and logo to illuminate.

### Façade Signs:

- a. All new façade signs are to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. A façade sign is to be proportionate to the building façade and the area of the building façade.
- b. In order to provide a consistent and unified look within new multi-tenant developments, such as shopping centers and office parks, all tenant signs are to be similar in type, color, font size, font style, and method of illumination.
- c. When reviewing signs within existing multi-tenant developments, the type, and method of illumination, of existing signs within the development is to be taken into consideration. Except where the type is predominately cabinet signs, which are no longer allowed as façade signs.
- d. The application of extraneous information to a building façade, such as services provided by the business, telephone numbers, hours of operation, etcetera, is not to be permitted. This information

may be allowed in certain cases as window graphics.

- e. The use of cabinet or box signs is prohibited. They must be removed and replaced with other types of signage rather than refaced when they need to be updated.
- f. Generally, the use of exposed neon is not allowed.
- g. Façade signs for businesses occupying space above the ground floor of a building are generally not allowed. Identification for these businesses is to be limited to the ground floor door leading to the upper floor space.
- h. Sign faces shall have a vertical dimension of no more than two-thirds ( $2/3$ ) of the vertical dimension of a single uninterrupted wall plane, surface, or sign band within which the sign is located.

Awning Signs:

- a. The use of awnings for the primary purpose of providing signage is not permitted.
- b. When text or graphics are applied to awnings, they are to be applied only to the valance of the awning and have a vertical dimension of no more than two thirds ( $2/3$ ) of the vertical dimension of the awning valance.
- c. Internal illumination of semi-opaque awnings is not to be permitted.
- d. All awnings must be appropriate to the architectural style of the building and sized to fit the window and / or door opening.
- e. Awnings are to be used above window and door openings at the street level only.