



**OVERVIEW**

The Guilford County Development Ordinance defines a billboard as “a freestanding sign designed for the display of information and/or advertising and erected as a principal use in accordance with the provisions of this Ordinance.” Treated as a principal use, a billboard’s location, size, and height are regulated by the Development Ordinance in the same manner as a structure or building. The regulations governing billboards are “content neutral,” meaning that what the billboard advertises or the type of information displayed is not regulated.

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

**Location:** The location or placement of a billboard is regulated in the following manner:

- 1) Billboards are permitted in the HB Highway Business, LI Light Industrial, and HI Heavy Industrial zoning districts;
- 2) The support post(s) of any billboard shall meet the minimum setbacks of the district in which it is located; however, no portion of a billboard shall project closer than fifteen (15) feet to a street right-of-way or closer than five (5) feet to any other property line, measured horizontally;
- 3) No billboard shall be erected so as to obstruct any fire escape, required exit, window, door opening, or wall opening intended as a means of ingress and egress, or any opening required for ventilation. Above ground and ground clearance shall be maintained:
  - a) from electrical power lines and communication lines;
  - b) to avoid obstruction of pedestrian and vehicular traffic;
  - c) from surface and underground utilities;

- d) not to interfere with any natural or artificial drainageways; and
  - e) from any existing warning or instructional signs.
- 3) No billboard shall be erected within one thousand (1000) linear feet along the same street frontage of another billboard as measured from the billboard pole(s);
  - 4) Within the Urban Loop Scenic Corridor, billboards shall not be allowed within a 500-foot area beginning from the taper of the pavement of each on/off ramp as measured from the point at which the pavement widens and the direction of such measurement shall be along the pavement away from the interchange. Regardless of spacing or other restrictions, no more than three (3) billboards shall be permitted on each side of the Urban Loop within any two mile segment.
  - 4) No billboard shall be erected closer than three hundred (300) feet to any residentially zoned property.

**Height:** No billboard shall exceed thirty (30) feet in height. If a billboard is located within four hundred (400) feet of an Interstate Highway, the height may be increased to fifty (50) feet.

**Size:** The sign area of any billboard shall not exceed four hundred and fifty (450) square feet.

**Construction and Maintenance:** All billboards shall be constructed of permanent materials and shall be permanently attached to the ground, a building, or another structure by direct attachment to a rigid wall, frame, or structure. All billboards, except those attached against the wall of a building, shall be constructed to withstand minimum wind loads as specified by the NC Building Code and any other applicable provisions of the Building and Electrical Code. Billboards shall be maintained in good structural condition, in compliance with all building and electrical codes and in conformance with the

Ordinance at all times.

## **HOW TO OBTAIN A PERMIT TO ERECT A BILLBOARD**

Applications for a permit to erect, alter, or replace a billboard shall be made to the Guilford County Planning and Development Department. To apply for a permit, the applicant will need to provide the following information:

- 1) Dimensions of the sign;
- 2) Type of Installation (i.e. new sign, alteration, or replacement);
- 3) Job location, including address and township;
- 4) Name, address, and telephone number of property owner;
- 5) Name, address, and telephone number of billboard installer;
- 6) Construction plans, if required;
- 7) Is the sign illuminated? If yes, include name, address, and telephone number of electrical contractor and name of electrical power company;
- 8) A site plan, prepared in accordance with Appendix 2 of the Guilford County Development Ordinance; and
- 9) A sign permit fee of \$100.00

## **NONCONFORMING BILLBOARDS**

Since the Development Ordinance defines a billboard as a principal use, it enjoys the same rights and privileges as a nonconforming structure.

Any nonconforming billboard legally existing on January 1, 1992 may be continued so long as it remains otherwise lawful, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) No nonconforming billboard may be enlarged or altered in any way which increases its

dimensional or locational deficiencies. However, any nonconforming billboard may be altered to decrease its dimensional deficiencies. Any enlargement or relocation of the billboard shall conform to the current regulations;

- 2) In the event of damage by fire or other causes to the extent exceeding fifty (50%) percent of its tax value prior to such damage as established by the County Tax Department, reconstruction of a nonconforming billboard shall be permitted only in compliance with the dimensional provisions of the Development Ordinance.
- 3) In the event of damage by fire or other causes to the extent causing less than fifty (50%) percent of its tax value prior to such damage as established by the County Tax Department, reconstruction of a nonconforming billboard shall be permitted provided it is constructed:
  - a. In the same manner in which it originally existed; or
  - b. In compliance with the dimensional requirement; and
- 4) No nonconforming structure shall be moved or relocated unless it is made to comply with the dimensional, locational, and use requirements of the district in which it is relocated.

**This bulletin is intended for public information purposes only. It summarizes and omits some provisions. It is not to be construed or used as an official Development Ordinance interpretation in any legal proceeding.**