11.1 PURPOSE & INTENTION

The purpose of this section is to:

A. Establish reasonable and improved standards to assist property owners and business owners in understanding town expectations;

B. Encourage creative and innovative approaches to signs within an established framework;

C. Promote economic vitality and enhance property values;

D. Encourage signs that are integrated into the architectural scheme of the building facade and discourage signs that contribute to the visual clutter of the streetscape;

E. Promote a quality visual environment by allowing signs that are compatible with their surroundings and which effectively communicate their message;

F. Ensure signs and any associated text, logos, and artwork are pedestrian-oriented, enhancing pedestrian safety and experiences;

G. Achieve signs that are consistent and complementary to the overall design of the building which they serve, in terms of size, shape, color, texture, and lighting; and

H. Ensure signs are properly maintained in clean, working condition, and the copy is not obscured or damaged.
11.2 APPLICABILITY & ADMINISTRATION

11.2.1 APPLICABILITY

The regulations of this chapter shall apply to the placement, construction, erection, alteration, replacement, maintenance, use, type, quantity, location, material, and size of all exterior signs within the planning jurisdiction of the Town of Davidson, except those listed under Section 11.6.

11.2.2 REQUIRED PERMITS

A. A permit is required for the installation, alteration, or replacement of any sign, except those listed in Section 11.6.

B. All signs proposed to be affixed to a structure in the Local Historic Overlay District must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Historic Preservation Commission, and must comply with the provisions of this section and the Davidson Historic District Design Standards.

C. For commercial and mixed use developments outside of the historic district, no sign permit application may be submitted until the sign package, if applicable, is approved by the Planning Director.

D. A permit is not required for the replacement of tenant identification on a multi-tenant sign.

E. An application for a sign permit, a recent photo of the façade where the sign will be placed, a list of all existing signs for the business, including their dimensions and their location, and the appropriate fee must be submitted to the Planning Director (see fee schedule). The Planning Director shall review the sign application for compliance with the Planning Ordinance.
11.3 GENERAL PROVISIONS

11.3.1 NUMBER OF PRIMARY SIGNS PERMITTED

11.3.1.1 SINGLE TENANT BUILDINGS

A. One sign from the following list are allowed on each façade: wall, projecting, hanging, freestanding, and two additional from the following: sidewalk, awning, canopy, window, and door.

B. One additional sign may be located at the secondary entrance from the following: wall, awning, canopy, window, or door.

C. One sign may be placed to identify a service entry.

D. One parking directional sign is allowed to identify rear parking lots.

E. Only one of the total numbers of allowed signs may contain neon. The neon sign area shall not exceed 10 square feet and shall be approved by the Design Review Board.

11.3.1.2 MULTI- TENANT BUILDINGS

A. Each tenant on the street or ground level may display one of the following signs on each façade: wall, projecting, hanging, freestanding, and two additional signs from the following: sidewalk, awning, canopy, window or door.

B. Upper level tenants with a shared primary entrance at ground level may display the following signs: door, window, projecting, and hanging.

C. Second floor tenants with separate entry accessed via an exterior arcade may display within the arcade one of the following signs: wall, projecting, hanging, and two additional signs from the following: sidewalk, awning, window, and door.

D. The following additional regulations apply:

1. One building directory sign per multi-tenant entrance is allowed.

2. One service entrance sign is allowed.

3. One parking directional sign per rear parking lot is allowed.

4. Only one of the total numbers of allowed signs may contain neon. The neon sign area shall not exceed 10 square feet and shall be approved by the Design Review Board.
11.3.2 COMPUTATION OF SIGN AREA

A. The area of a sign face shall be deemed to be the entire area within the smallest polygon that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, or other display on the sign that can be reasonably calculated.

B. The area shall also include any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or structure against which it is placed.

C. Frames or structural members not bearing informational or representational matter shall not be included in computation of the area of a sign face.

EXAMPLE 11-1: COMPUTATION OF SIGNAGE AREA

Sign Area: Sign area is calculated as the area of the smallest polygon that will encompass the limits of the display, including any material or color used to differentiate the sign from its backdrop.

Multi-Sided Signs: When commercial copy is included on both sides of a two-sided back-to-back sign, only one side is required to be counted in the total area calculation. Otherwise, all sides of a multi-sided sign shall be counted in the total area calculation.

11.3.3 COMPUTATION OF SIGN HEIGHT

A. For the purposes of interpreting the height requirements of this chapter, height shall be measured from the grade directly below a sign, canopy, wall, or other feature as specified.

B. If multiples of a similar sign type are under review as part of a single sign permit application or package and distance to grade changes adjacent to the building, a consistent sign height or distance to grade must be established.

11.3.4 PLACEMENT & DESIGN

A. Placement: Except as permitted specifically in this chapter, signs shall not be posted in the public right-of-way, on trees or utility poles, and shall be outside of required site triangles.

B. Materials: Sign structures shall be constructed of durable materials such as wood, concrete, metal, brick, or other similar materials, except as noted otherwise in this chapter.
11.4 PRIMARY SIGN TYPES

11.4.1 PRIMARY SIGN TYPE DEFINITIONS & ILLUSTRATIONS

11.4.1.1 FREESTANDING SIGN

A sign erected independent of a building with an integral support structure.

1. Permitted Location
   Allowed for all buildings whose main entrance is setback at least 20 feet from the right-of-way.
   Signs may be located anywhere within the front setback as long as it does not interfere with required visibility triangles.

2. Area & Dimensions
   16 square feet maximum area per side
   Four feet maximum width

3. Height
   Eight feet maximum; a minimum of three feet clearance must be maintained between the bottom of the sign board and the grade.

4. Additional Requirements
   Internally illuminated signs, including LED and neon, are not permitted.
   Posts, poles, or other supporting structures may not exceed one foot in width or depth.

EXAMPLE 11-2: FREESTANDING SIGN
11.4.1.2 WALL SIGN

A sign directly attached and parallel to a building façade or dependent upon a building for its support. Wall signs may consist of sign board, metal, or channel letters mounted directly on wall or via raceway, neon, or paint directly on brick.

1. Permitted Location

Building facades that face the right-of-way, pedestrian passageways, and/or parking associated with the establishment.

2. Area & Dimensions

Maximum sign area per facade is five percent of the ground floor facade area on which the sign is located OR 24 square feet, whichever is greater. The Design Review Board must approve all signs greater than 24 square feet.

For multi-bay, multi-tenant buildings, the facade area shall include only that portion of the facade designed for a specific tenant.

3. Height

The top of a wall sign shall not exceed 18 feet above grade.

4. Additional Requirements

Internally illuminated signs, including LED signs, are not permitted.

Signs must either be a minimum of 1.5 inches thick or include a 1.5 to 2 inch border.
11.4.1.3 WINDOW SIGN

A sign affixed to the surface of a window or displayed within one foot of the window and visible from a street or park.

1. Permitted Location
   Windows on ground-level facades and upper level arcades only.

2. Area & Dimensions
   Maximum size is 25 percent of the window area
   Neon signs mounted on the interior of storefront windows shall not exceed 10 square feet in area, and shall be counted as part of the total window sign area.

3. Height
   No maximum, but signs are limited to windows on ground-level facades and upper level arcades only.

4. Additional Requirements
   Internally illuminated signs, including LED and neon, are not permitted, except for interior mounted neon signs not exceeding 10 square feet in area.
   To ensure that visibility both in and out of the window is not obscured, such signs may be silk-screened, vinyl, etched, or hand-painted.

EXAMPLE 11-4: WINDOW SIGN
11.4.1.4 DOOR SIGN

A sign applied, mounted or painted on the solid portion of a door; or a sign that is attached, applied, painted, silk screened, or etched onto the glass pane of a door.

1. Permitted Location
   Storefront doors only.

2. Area & Dimensions
   Two square feet maximum per door.

3. Height
   None.

4. Additional Requirements
   Internally illuminated signs, including LED signs, are not permitted.
11.4.1.5 CANOPY SIGN

A sign attached to, painted on, or printed onto a canopy.

1. Permitted Location

On the canopy fascia or above the canopy of any canopies above entryways or storefront windows.

2. Area & Dimensions

Maximum sign area is five percent of the ground floor facade area on which the sign is located OR 24 square feet, whichever is greater. The Design Review Board must approve all signs greater than 24 square feet.

If used in combination with wall signs, the total combined square footage may not exceed the total allowable wall sign area.

Maximum area may be split into no more than three signs - the front and two sides of the canopy.

3. Height

18 feet maximum - applies to both the sign and the canopy.

A minimum of seven feet of clearance must be maintained between the bottom of the sign and the grade.

4. Additional Requirements

Internally illuminated signs, including LED signs are not permitted.

Signs on the canopy above gas pumps at gasoline service stations are subject to the requirements of Section 11.5.6.
11.4.1.6 AWNING SIGN

A sign painted or printed onto an awning.

1. Permitted Location
   On the awning fascia only of awnings located or above first floor windows or doors only.

2. Area & Dimensions
   Eight square feet maximum area
   Maximum area may be split into no more than three signs - the front and two sides of the canopy.

3. Height
   No maximum, but signs are limited to first floor awnings.
   A minimum of seven feet of clearance must be maintained between the bottom of the sign and the grade.

4. Additional Requirements
   Internally illuminated signs, including LED signs are not permitted.

EXAMPLE 11-7: AWNING SIGN
11.4.1.7 PROJECTING SIGN

A sign directly attached and not parallel to a building facade or dependent upon a building for its support.

1. Permitted Location
   Building facades that front a right-of-way, pedestrian passageway, and/or parking associated with the establishment.

2. Area & Dimensions
   12 square feet maximum, per side.
   Three feet maximum width.
   Four feet maximum projection from building.

3. Height
   18 feet maximum.
   A minimum of seven feet of clearance must be maintained between the bottom of the sign and the grade.

4. Additional Requirements
   Must be perpendicular to the building facade. Internally illuminated signs are not permitted. Any external illumination may not be attached to the sign.

EXAMPLE 11-8: PROJECTING SIGN
11.4.1.8 HANGING SIGN

A sign suspended from an arcade, under a second floor balcony, or within an entry alcove.

1. Permitted Location

Building facades that front a right-of-way, pedestrian passageway, and/or parking associated with the establishment.

2. Area & Dimensions

12 square feet maximum area per side

3. Height

No maximum, but signs are limited to the bottom of second floor arcades or balconies, or within a first floor entry alcove.

A minimum of seven feet of clearance must be maintained between the bottom of the sign and the grade.

4. Additional Requirements

Must be hung parallel to the building facade from a second floor arcade or balcony, or within a first floor entry alcove. Internally illuminated signs are not permitted. Any external illumination may not be attached to the sign.

EXAMPLE 11-9: HANGING SIGN
11.4.1.9 SIDEWALK SIGN

Pedestrian-scaled non-permanent signs typically used to display restaurant menus, daily specials/sales or other events. Common types of sidewalk signs include easel signs and A-frame signs.

1. Permitted Location
   Within three feet of the primary entrance.

   Signs must leave a minimum horizontal sidewalk clearance of five feet and shall not interfere with pedestrian, bicycle, or vehicular circulation, or required sight visibility triangles.

2. Area & Dimensions
   Six square feet maximum area per side

3. Height
   Four feet maximum

4. Additional Requirements
   The sign must be constructed of a wooden or metal frame with a changeable face (e.g., chalkboard, whiteboard, and cork). Plastic signs prohibited.

   The signs must be removed at close of business each day.

EXAMPLE 11-10: SIDEWALK SIGN
11.5 OTHER SIGN TYPES

11.5.1 BUILDING DIRECTORY SIGNS
A. **Description:** A sign that identifies the occupants of a multi-tenant building that has a shared entrance.
B. **Permitted Location:** Building Directory Signs are allowed next to a shared entrance only.
C. **Maximum Number:** One per multi-tenant building.
D. **Maximum Area**
   1. Wall-mounted: Six square feet
   2. **Ground-mounted:** Three square feet
E. **Maximum Height:** (Ground-mounted only) Seven feet
F. **Additional Requirements:**
   1. Wall-mounted: Shall extend no more than six inches from building facade.
   2. Ground-mounted: Shall be supported by a single post no more than four inches in width or depth.

11.5.2 SERVICE ENTRANCE/DIRECTIONAL SIGNS
A. **Description:** Service Entrance/Directional Signs are signs used solely for the purpose of identifying the location of building entrances, parking areas, loading docks, and similar features.
B. **Permitted Location:** Service Entrance or Directional Signs may be wall-mounted or ground-mounted and may be placed at the driveway access from public right-of-way or on the rear building facade.
C. **Maximum Area:** Three square feet
D. **Maximum Height**
   1. Wall-mounted: Eight feet
   2. **Ground-mounted:** Three feet
E. **Additional Requirements:**
   1. Wall-mounted: Shall extend no more than six inches from building facade.
   2. Ground-mounted: Shall be supported by a single post no more than four inches in width or depth.

11.5.3 WALL MURALS
A. **Description:** Any picture, scene, or diagram painted on any exterior wall or fence that does not serve as advertising.
B. **Permitted Location:** Exterior Wall Murals are only allowed on commercial buildings in the Local Historic District, and as such, are subject to approval by the Historic Preservation Commission in accordance with the procedures set out for Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) in Section 22. In granting a COA the Historic Preservation Commission shall find that the proposed Wall Mural is in compliance with the criteria in this subsection (11.5.1), as well as the Davidson Historic District Design Standards.

C. **Maximum Area:** The size of a Wall Mural must be proportional to the wall on which it is painted and the existing structures nearby.

D. **Maximum Number:** Only one Wall Mural on one façade is allowed per structure.

E. **Additional Requirements**

1. **Materials:** The materials used to produce the Wall Mural shall be appropriate for outdoor use (i.e., long lasting and graffiti-resistant to the greatest extent possible).

2. **Design:** The colors used should be harmonious with the exterior colors of the building. Neon, fluorescent, or reflective colors or materials are not permitted.

3. **Content:** The content of a Wall Mural must reflect the values of the community, as set out in one or more instruments containing statements of Town policy adopted by the Board of Commissioners. Wall Murals shall not contain advertising for an extant business or product, though generic items where a specific brand is not apparent are permitted.

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**EXAMPLE 11-11: WALL MURAL**

The Davidson Farmer’s Market wall mural in downtown is an appropriate example of a mural that is proportional to the wall on which it is painted, harmonious with the exterior colors of the building, and reflects the values of the community as set out in the town’s Planning Principles.
11.5.4 MONUMENT SIGNS FOR SCHOOLS AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

A. **Description:** A freestanding sign having the entire bottom of the sign affixed to the ground and used for the purpose of identifying a Civic or Educational/Institutional use only, as defined in Section 2.

B. **Permitted Location:** One institutional ground sign is allowed along the primary frontage of a permitted Civic or Educational/Institutional use.

C. **Maximum Area:** 24 square feet

D. **Maximum Height:** Four feet

E. **Number:** One ground sign is permitted per Civic or Educational/Institutional development if no Freestanding Signs are used per Section 11.3.4.

F. The sign may contain an area for changeable typeface to display messages throughout the year.

11.5.5 GASOLINE SERVICE STATION CANOPY SIGNS

A. **Description:** A sign affixed or painted to the canopy above gas pumps at a gasoline service station: Only one sign is permitted per right-of-way.

B. **Permitted Location:** Signs may be placed on canopies above gas pumps on the side of the canopy that faces a public right-of-way.

C. **Maximum Area:** 12 square feet. Letter height is limited to 18 inches.

D. **Maximum Height:** The top of the sign board or individual letters, may not exceed 18 feet nor extend above the top of the canopy.

E. **Other Standards:** The use of internal illumination, including neon, is prohibited.

11.5.6 TEMPORARY PROJECT CONSTRUCTION AND MARKETING SIGNS

A. **Description:** A Temporary Project Construction Sign is a sign that identifies a construction project. A Temporary Project Marketing Sign is a sign that advertises the availability of space within a completed construction project.

B. **Permitted Location:** Temporary project construction or marketing signs are allowed on the frontage of a project site only.

C. **Time Period:** Such signs shall not be installed prior to the issuance of a building permit for the development.

1. **Project Construction Signs:** Commercial project construction signs must be removed upon issuance of a certificate of occupancy. Residential project construction signs must be removed when 95 percent of the lots owned by the developer or builder are sold. For mixed use development, containing both commercial and residential, signs must be removed on attainment of a certificate of occupancy.

2. **Project Marketing Signs:** May be displayed for six months and may be renewed every six months.
D. **Maximum Area**
   1. 32 square feet for all planning areas except those listed below.
   2. 16 square feet for Village Center, Village Commerce, Village Edge, and Village Infill Planning Areas.

E. **Maximum Width**: Eight feet

F. **Maximum height**: Height of sign shall not exceed eight feet, with any associated posts, brackets, or other supporting elements not exceeding nine feet above grade. Sign may have a single or double post or other supporting structure having a minimum of clearance of three feet from grade.

G. **Maximum Number**: One project construction sign or one project marketing sign is permitted per development. Project construction sign must be removed before a marketing sign is permitted and erected.

H. **Additional Requirements**: Project construction signs may include information related to the developer, contractor, financial institution, marketing agency, etc.

### 11.5.7 TEMPORARY PROMOTIONAL BANNERS

A. **Description**: Temporary banners that announce a grand opening, under new management or going out of business event are allowed one time per event. These are the only events in which temporary banners are permitted.

B. **Time Period**: 60 days maximum

C. **Permitted Location**: Above a public entrance. In no case may the banner be freestanding.

D. **Maximum Area**: 12 square feet

E. **Maximum Height**: 18 feet

F. **Maximum Number**: One banner per frontage per tenant; two banners total per tenant per event

### 11.5.8 TEMPORARY CIVIC BANNERS

A. **Description**: Banners for the purpose of announcing public events sponsored by non-profit organizations or the Town of Davidson which will be held on the Village Green.

B. **Time Period**: Completed applications must be received at least 10 days before the event. Banners may be posted up to 48 hours prior to the event and must be removed immediately after the event has concluded. Banners may not remain in place for more than seven days.

C. **Location/Area/Height**:
   1. Banners may be hung on the permanent poles at the Village Green provided that they do not exceed two feet in height and six feet in length.
11.5.9 TEMPORARY SIGNS FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP
A. **Description:** Temporary signs to direct parking on the day of service, limited to one day per week. Also, temporary place of worship identification for an establishment that is not the primary tenant of the building, limited to one sign, one day per week.

B. **Permitted Location:** Varies.

C. **Maximum Area:** Six square feet

D. **Maximum Height:** Three feet

11.5.10 NC73-CONSOLIDATED TENANT IDENTIFICATION SIGN
A. **Description:** Consolidated tenant identification signs near the entrances to major commercial developments along the NC 73 corridor. One consolidated tenant identification signs would be permitted per entry with no more than two signs permitted per development.

B. **Permitted Location:** Signage would be permitted adjacent to the future NC 73 right-of-way at the Mayes, Davidson East, and Poplar tent nodes, as identified on the Comprehensive Plan Targeted Growth Areas Map.

C. **Maximum Area:** 54 Square Feet.

D. **Maximum Height:** 12 feet

E. **Additional Requirements:** Enhanced landscaping to include a mixture of low lying shrubs and medium sized trees is required. All other signage associated with each development node will follow the sign regulations found within the ordinance and will be focused toward the interior street network, rather than directed toward NC73.
11.6 SIGNS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE A PERMIT

The following signs do not require a permit but shall conform to all applicable requirements of this chapter:

11.6.1 MUNICIPAL SIGNS

Signs may be erected for orderly traffic control and other municipal or government purposes, including historical monuments, markers, and signs erected by a public authority.

11.6.2 ADDRESSES

All structures must display address numbers visible for emergency purposes. Single-family residential structures and all other structures requiring an address must display address numbers that are a minimum of four inches in height. The number height may increase one inch for every 10 feet of distance between the displayed number and the centerline of the road, but not to exceed 18 inches.

11.6.3 HOURS OF OPERATION

A commercial establishment may display the hours of operation on the main entry or on a window next to the main entry. Such sign may not display letters or numbers exceeding three inches in height. The sign area may not exceed one square foot. The sign must be vinyl, etched, silk-screened, or painted on glass.

11.6.4 TEMPORARY USES

One sign advertising temporary uses (as established in Section 3) that does not exceed four square feet in area shall be permitted for each street abutting the lot. Such signs shall be displayed only for the duration of time that the temporary use is permitted and active.

11.6.5 TEMPORARY REAL ESTATE SIGNS

Temporary real estate signs advertising property for sale or for rent, on the premises, may not exceed four square feet per side in area. Such signs are limited to one sign per road right-of-way. Sign must be removed within two weeks of sale or rental of the property.

11.6.6 TEMPORARY WINDOW SIGNS

A. Temporary window posters announcing civic and cultural events or public services may be displayed by commercial establishments on the inside of windows at street level.

B. Temporary promotional or special sales window signs may be displayed by commercial establishments on the inside of windows at street level for up to 14 days.
Such signs may not be located between four feet and six feet above grade and shall be no greater than six square feet in total size per tenant.

11.6.7 POLITICAL SIGNS
Temporary campaign signs shall not exceed four square feet per side, and shall be located only on private property only with the permission of the property owner. Campaign signs are limited to one per candidate per property. Such signs may be displayed not more than 30 days prior to an election and must be removed within seven days after the election.

11.6.8 OUTFIELD WALL SIGNS
Commercial copy signs on ball fields shall only be mounted on exterior fences, facing toward the field.

11.6.9 MENU DISPLAY
A restaurant menu display box can be permanently mounted on the building façade adjacent to the entry. The display box shall not exceed five square feet. Menu displays are excluded from the permitted area and number of signs specified elsewhere in this section.

11.6.10 REPLACEMENT OF TENANT IDENTIFICATION SIGNS
A permit is not required for the replacement of tenant identification on a multi-tenant sign.

11.6.11 BUILDING NAME SIGNS
A permit is not required for signs used solely for the purpose of displaying the building name provided that such signs are no more than 10 square feet in area and are not illuminated. Such sign may be a wall sign, projecting sign, or canopy/awning sign. No more than two such signs (one per frontage) are allowed without a permit.

11.6.12 FLAGS
A. Flags or insignia of any nation, organization of nations, state, county or municipality; any religious, civic or fraternal organization; or any educational or cultural facility are permitted, provided that the height of any pole shall not exceed the maximum building height for the district.

B. Flags with commercial messages or flags used for the sole purpose of identifying a building or use are not permitted.
11.7 PROHIBITED SIGNS

11.7.1 PROHIBITED SIGNS

The following signs are prohibited within the planning jurisdiction of the Town of Davidson:

A. Signs that are dilapidated or in disrepair as outlined in Section 11.8;
B. Internally illuminated signs, except neon where prescribed;
C. Signs on roofs, chimneys, and balconies;
D. Billboards;
E. Monument signs, except as described in Section 11.5.4.
F. Off-premises advertising signs and banners except for temporary promotional banners and Temporary Civic Banners as outlined in Sections 11.5;
G. Flashing, blinking, or moving signs;
H. Mobile signs and vehicular signs;
I. Permanent entry structures and signs at the entrance to a neighborhood or development;
J. Plastic A-frame signs;
K. Any other signs not mentioned by this section.

11.8 MAINTENANCE & UPKEEP OF SIGN

11.8.1 APPLICABILITY

Signs shall be kept in proper repair. The following maintenance requirements must be observed for all signs visible from any public street or highway within the jurisdiction of the Town of Davidson.

11.7.2 DAMAGED SIGNS

A. Surface Appearance: No sign shall have more than 20 percent of its surface area covered with disfigured, cracked, ripped or peeling paint or poster paper for a period of more than 30 successive days.

B. Broken Displays: No sign shall remain with a bent or broken display area, broken supports, loose appendages or struts or stand more than 15 degrees from the perpendicular for a period of more than 30 successive days.

C. Illuminated Signs: No indirect or internally illuminated sign shall have only partial illumination for a period of more than 30 successive days.