



Catawba County Planning and Parks
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HOW DO I GET A PERMIT FOR A SIGN?

Steps to follow when applying for a sign permit:

1. Check with a representative of the Catawba County Planning Department to discuss your plans for installing a sign. You may contact the Catawba County Planning Department at 828-465-8380, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. or email us at planning@catawbacountync.gov.
2. Submit an [application for a zoning permit](#) for a sign. The application needs to include an 8 ½ x 11 inch or 8 ½ x 14 inch drawing, prepared to scale, showing the footprints of existing buildings or structures and the proposed location of the sign. You may obtain a copy of a map of your property from Catawba County's Geographic Information System at www.gis.catawbacountync.gov/parcel/.
3. Obtain a zoning permit from the Planning Department. You may reach the Planning Department by phone at 828-465-8380, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or email at planning@catawbacountync.gov.
4. Submit an [application for a building permit](#) to the Catawba County Permit Center. If you have questions you may call the Permit Center at 828-465-8399, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or email at permit_center@catawbacountync.gov.

Following are general guidelines for signs. To review the entire sign regulations, please refer to the [Unified Development Ordinance, Article V, Division 7](#).

The definition of a sign is as follows:

“Any display surface or display device containing or intending to contain elements organized, related, and composed to form a unit designed to inform or attract attention”

A zoning permit must be obtained for all signs and sign structures visible from public rights-of-way prior to installation. The sign needs to be erected, maintained, and operated in compliance with the sign regulations.

Signs not requiring a zoning permit:

- On-site signs less than 2 square feet and of a noncommercial nature
- Legal notices, identification and information signs erected by a governmental body

- Insignia of nonprofit charitable or government agencies
- Decorative or architectural features of buildings
- Theme banners associated with decorative light fixtures
- Time and temperature displays

Types of signs that are not allowed:

- Portable signs, roof signs, banners, balloons, pennants whether or not they contain a message of any kind, except for a temporary use as discussed below.
- Signs with pulsating, rotating or flashing lights which may cause public safety concerns.
- Signs cannot be attached to a utility pole or tree.

Lighting of Signs:

Floodlights, spotlights, or unshielded lights focused on a sign need to be directed away from roads or adjoining property. LED signs need to be low intensity so the glare doesn't distract drivers due to public safety concerns.

Temporary Signs:

- Real estate signs:
 - < 1 acre for sale – a single sign on each road frontage up to 6 square feet in area.
 - ≥1 acre for sale- up to 20 square feet in area.
 - Real estate pointer signs which give directions to open houses or special promotions are allowed for up to 3 days.
- Construction site sign—the sign can be up to 32 square feet in area and needs to be located at least 10 ft. from the front property line(s).
- Signs announcing openings, special events, closings, and management changes may be installed for up to 30 days.
- On-site signs announcing fundraising, civic or philanthropic event may be installed for up to 30 days.
- Residential roadside stands may have 2 off-premise signs and one on-site sign.
- Political signs may be displayed prior to elections. Signs must be removed within 14 days after the election.

On-premise freestanding signs for businesses:

- One sign may be installed unless there is additional street frontage, then one sign per road front may be installed

- Sign area and height requirements are based on the number of lanes and speed of the road which the business is located on
- All parts of the sign need to be located out of the road right-of-way

On-premise wall sign for businesses:

- One wall sign may be installed on the street frontage side of a business
- If a business fronts 2 streets, one wall sign on each wall with street frontage may be installed
- The size of a wall sign may be up to 10% of the wall surface area, with a maximum 75 square feet in area

Off-premise directional signs:

- Up to 2 off-premise directional signs are permitted when the approved business is not located on a major road
- Signs may be up to 16 square feet for one business or 48 square feet for more than one business
- The sign needs to be 6 feet or less in height
- The sign cannot be lit

Off-premise signs (billboards):

For specific regulations on off-premise signs, see [Sec. 44-564 of the Unified Development Ordinance](#).

If you have questions concerning a sign, where they may be located or obtaining a permit, please call the Catawba County Planning Department at 828-465-8380 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or email us at planning@catawbacountync.gov. Please know that we are here to assist you throughout the process.

The purpose of this information sheet is to assist you with the process of obtaining permits and approvals associated with the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Before proceeding with any project or spending any funds, you are strongly encouraged to contact staff of the Catawba County Planning and Parks Department at 828-465-8380, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or email us at planning@catawbacountync.gov to insure awareness of all options that may exist as well as the most effective way of accomplishing a particular project.

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