

3.19 Site Feature – Historic District (HD)

3.19.1 Intent

This Section is intended to provide procedures and standards for the review of *Site Feature Applications* within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District (HD) designated zoning districts and for all other historic structures throughout the Town of Bluffton. Review of Site Feature Application shall consider the following objectives:

- A. Maintenance of the educational, cultural, and general welfare of the public through the preservation, protection, and enhancement of the old, historic, and/or architecturally significant structures and areas in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District (HD);
- B. Maintenance of such structures as visible reminders of the history and cultural heritage of the Town of Bluffton as well as the Lowcountry region in accordance with the standards set forth in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings; and
- C. Ensure that activities described below respect and complement the eclectic character of the HD designated zoning districts.

3.19.2 Applicability

- A. **Permit Required.** The following activities require approval of a Site Feature Permit:
 - 1. Minor exterior modifications that do not alter the exterior architectural character;
 - 2. Signs;
 - 3. Modifications or improvements to site elements such as changes to parking lots, sidewalks, landscaping, and lighting.
 - 4. Garden Structures;
 - 5. Ordinary maintenance and repair of any of the existing features of a structure that does not involve a change in design, or outward appearance. Materials shall be a like for like replacement or equivalent to be reviewed and approved by the UDO Administrator; and
 - 6. Exterior non-structural work of a minor nature that includes modifications or renovations to an existing building or structure. Such work is discouraged on the principle façade, as it is the intent of this section to preserve the outward appearance of the building or structure. Examples of allowable work include, but are not limited to, adding screens or balustrades to an existing porch, new decks without a roof covering, and improvements made for ADA accessibility.
- B. **Permit Not Required.** Any activity that is not determined by the UDO Administrator to be a Site Feature or subject to the requirements of the Certificate of Appropriateness Historic District shall not require approval of a permit.

3.19.3 Application Review Criteria

The UDO Administrator shall consider the following criteria in assessing an *application for Site Feature*:

- A. The application must be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in *Article 5, Design Standards*; and,
- B. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

3.19 Site Feature – Historic District (HD) Permit

3.19.4 Effect and Expiration of Approvals

- A. **Approval.** Issuance of a permit shall authorize the Applicant to install the site feature as specified by the permit.
- B. **Expiration.** Approval of a Site Feature HD permit shall expire two years from the date of its issue unless an appreciable amount of improvement or development commences and proceeds to completion in a timely and customary manner in accordance with the Site Feature HD permit.

3.21 Sign Permit

3.21 Sign Permit (Existing UDO Text)**3.21.1 Intent**

This Section is intended to provide procedures and standards for the review of *Sign Permit Applications*. Review of Sign Permit Applications shall consider the following objectives:

- A. Encourage a high degree of design quality in the context of the overall image and visual environment of the Town of Bluffton, as well as encourage designs that are in aesthetic harmony with their location on buildings and surrounding area;
- B. Promote the public welfare and property values by preserving the aesthetic qualities of the natural environment and Bluffton vernacular architecture and reducing visual clutter;
- C. Protect pedestrians, motorists and property by ensuring that signs do not create hazards due to distractions, collapse, fire, collision, or decay;
- D. Promote the efficient transfer of general public and commercial information by improving the legibility and effectiveness of signs through the control of their number, location, size, appearance and illumination; and
- E. Stimulate the economic vitality of the Town of Bluffton and encourage a business atmosphere that continues to attract new enterprises to the Town of Bluffton.

3.21.2 Applicability

- A. **Permit Required.** A Sign Permit is required to install signage on any property, replace existing signage, or modify existing signage.
- B. **Permit Not Required.** A Sign Permit is not required for the following:
 - 1. Signage located in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District (HD) designated zoning district. Instead, an application permit for a Site Feature – Historic District is required; and
 - 2. Signs as defined in Article 5, Design Standards to be exempt from obtaining a Sign Permit.

3.21.3 Application Review Criteria

The UDO Administrator shall consider the following criteria in assessing an application for Sign Permit:

- A. The application must be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards;
- B. The signage is compatible with the surrounding natural area and the character of structures and architecture in the vicinity; and
- C. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

3.21.4 Effect and Expiration of Approvals

- A. **Approval.** The issuance of a sign permit shall authorize the Applicant to either install or modify signage as specified by the permit or apply for a building permit, if applicable.

3.21 Sign Permit

- B. **Expiration.** Approval of a Sign permit shall expire two years from the date of its issue unless an appreciable amount of improvement or development commences and proceeds to completion in a timely and customary manner in accordance with the Sign permit.

5.13 Signs (Existing UDO Text)**5.13.1 Intent**

The intent of this Section is to:

- A. Encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication in the Town of Bluffton;
- B. Maintain and enhance the aesthetic environment and the Town's ability to attract sources of economic development and growth;
- C. Improve pedestrian and traffic safety; and
- D. Minimize the possible adverse effect of signs on nearby public and private property.

5.13.2 Applicability

- A. A sign may be erected, placed, established, painted, or maintained in the Town only in conformance with the requirements of this Section.
- B. The effect of this UDO as more specifically set forth herein, is:
 - 1. To allow a variety of types of signs in commercial and industrial zones, and a limited variety of signs in other zones, subject to the standards and the permit procedures of this UDO;
 - 2. To allow certain signs that are small, unobtrusive, and incidental to the principal use of the respective lots on which they are located, subject to the substantive requirements of this UDO, but without a requirement for permits; and
 - 3. To prohibit all signs not expressly permitted in this Ordinance.

5.13.2 Permissible Signs

- A. The area and quantity of any freestanding sign for which a permit is required should conform to the following requirements. Planned Unit Developments (PUD), which because of their composition may qualify for more than one category, may apply the appropriate category to the various individual portions of the Planned Unit Development. The total number of signs for any individual development may not exceed the total number allowed as noted below:

Table 5.15.3.A Signs				
Type of Development	Quantity of Signs Allowed	Maximum Area per Sign	Maximum Faces per Sign	Maximum Area per Face
Residential 501 or more units	One per entrance	240 Sf	4 Faces	80 SF
Residential 300 to 500 units	One per entrance	80 SF	4 Faces	40 SF
Residential 299 or less units	One per entrance	80 SF	4 Faces	40 SF
Non-residential 100,000+ SF	Four Signs Maximum	240 SF	4 Faces	80 SF
Non-residential 40,000 to 100,000 SF	Three Signs Maximum	240 Sf	4 Faces	80 SF

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Non-residential 2,500 to 40,000 SF	Two Signs Maximum	160 SF	4 Faces	40 SF
Non-residential Up to 2,500 SF	One Allowed Sign	40 SF	2 Faces	40 SF

- B. The maximum height of any freestanding sign above the average grade elevation of the nearest public way or within a 20 foot radius of the sign shall not exceed the following:
 - 1. Eight feet where the sign face does not exceed 40 square feet;
 - 2. Ten feet where the sign face does not exceed 60 square feet; and
 - 3. 12 feet where the sign face exceeds 60 square feet.
- C. The bottom edge of the sign shall not exceed three feet in height from the lowest grade elevation at the base of the sign.
- D. The maximum width of any freestanding sign shall not exceed the following:
 - 1. 15 feet where the sign face does not exceed 40 square feet;
 - 2. 20 feet where the sign face does not exceed 60 square feet; and
 - 3. 25 feet where the sign face exceeds 60 square feet.
- E. The maximum depth of any freestanding sign shall not exceed 25 percent of the width.
- F. The area of a sign structure for any freestanding sign is limited to the same number of square feet as the sign face that it supports.
- G. Freestanding signs shall be separated by a distance of no less than 200 foot intervals along each street frontage of the premises. In the event that a street frontage of less than 200 feet exists for any premises, only one sign shall be permitted along that frontage, notwithstanding that a greater number of signs may appear to be permitted by this Section.
- H. In lieu of a freestanding sign, a development may use signs on entrance structures such as fences or walls. The number of sign faces is limited to two per entrance, on either side of the entrance, and confined to the entrance area. The distance between sign faces shall not exceed 100 feet. Such signs are subject to the size limitations of this Section.
- I. Changeable copy signs are allowed for schools, churches, gas stations, and public agencies, provided that the letters are hand-changed only and not electronic. The changeable copy portion of the sign cannot exceed 30% of the sign area.

5.13.4 Wall Signs

- A. The total area of wall signs shall not occupy more than ten percent of the area of the wall upon which they are placed with the maximum size of any one sign limited to 40 square feet.
- B. No more than two signs may be placed on any one façade of any one building except that shopping centers shall be permitted two signs per tenant space, per tenant façade, provided only one such

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tenant sign per tenant façade is visible from any street right-of-way. Such tenant signs shall only be permitted in lieu of building signs.

- C. Wall signs must be contained within any single wall panel, window, door, or other architectural component upon which they are placed.
- D. Tenant façade signs must be located on the façade of the tenant space being identified.

5.13.5 Directory Signs

- A. Shall be permitted where a particular site includes more than one tenant;
- B. May contain logos or business names with arrows or other directional information but shall not contain any commercial message;
- C. May be free-standing or affixed to an exterior wall; and
- D. Shall be consistent with the architectural style and colors of the principal structures.

5.13.6 Sign Materials

The finish materials to be used for signage throughout the Town shall include:

- A. Wood: painted, stained, or natural;
- B. Metal: copper, brass, galvanized steel, or aluminum;
- C. Stucco, Tabby, Stone, or Brick; or
- D. Any other material that is finished or painted and looks like painted wood.

5.13.7 Prohibited Signs

- A. Off-premise signs, except special event signs;
- B. A sign which contains any flashing or animated lights, gives the appearance of animation or movement, or contains a message board which utilizes individual bulbs or electronic means to produce the message, excluding time and temperature signs;
- C. Any sign that projects above the peak of a roof, or above the top of an awning or canopy on which it is erected;
- D. Any sign which exhibits statements, words, or pictures of an obscene or pornographic nature;
- E. Any sign which emits a sound, odor, or visible matter;
- F. Any sign which obstructs free ingress/egress from a door, window, fire escape, or other exit way;
- G. Any sign and or sign structure which obstructs the view of, may be confused with, or purports to be a governmental or traffic direction/safety sign;
- H. Signs using the words “stop,” “danger,” or any other word, phrase, symbol, or character in a manner that might reasonably mislead, confuse, or distract a vehicle driver;
- I. Except as otherwise provided, no sign whether temporary or permanent, except by a public agency or with the approval of the Town and upon issuance of an Encroachment Permit, is permitted within any street right-of-way;
- J. Signs painted on, or attached to trees, rocks, or other natural features, telephone, or utility poles;
- K. No sign of any kind shall be erected or displayed in any salt marsh areas or on any land subject to periodic inundation by tidal salt water;
- L. Abandoned, hazardous, or dilapidated signs;

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- M. Portable signs, except as provided for in this section;
- N. Attention-getting devices, including searchlights, spinners, streamers, balloons and similar devices, fluttering signs, pennants, ribbons, balloons, and other aerial devices;
- O. Internally illuminated signs, neon signs, or signs which contain a visible light source; and
- P. Vehicle signs.

5.13.8 Exempt Signs

The following signs are exempt from the regulations of this Ordinance, provided they are not located within the public right-of-way without an encroachment agreement:

- A. Nameplates of four square feet or less;
- B. Residence signs or street address numbers, not exceeding 4 square feet in size;
- C. Signs located on property within those portions of PUD Districts where vehicular access by the general public is restricted by a security gate staffed 24 hours each day by a security guard and where such signs are not visible from any public street, beach, or navigable waterway;
- D. Signs directing and guiding traffic and parking on private property which do not exceed 1.5 square feet in area and bear no advertising matter;
- E. Projecting signs displaying the name of the business and having an area of two square feet or less when located under a pedestrian canopy;
- F. Buses, taxicabs, and similar common carrier vehicles which are licensed or certified by a public body or agency;
- G. Signs used for bona fide navigational aids;
- H. Historic Plaques;
- I. Traffic, directional, warning, or informational signs authorized by any public agency;
- J. Flags and insignia of the United States or the State of South Carolina which are five feet by eight feet or smaller, with a maximum flagpole height of 30 feet when displayed in connection with a commercial use. Government buildings are exempt from the size and height limitations. Official flags limited to three per establishment; and
- K. Official notices issued by any court, public agency, or public office, including signs erected on behalf of, or pursuant to, the authorization of a governmental body, including legal notices, identification and informational signs, and traffic, directional, or regulatory signs

5.13.9 Setbacks from Right-of-way

- A. All freestanding signs shall be set back at least 10 feet from the public right-of-way.
- B. Signs shall not be located within the vision clearance triangle at street intersections.

5.13.10 Temporary Signs

- A. Temporary signs announcing a sale, promotion, civic, philanthropic, educational, religious, or other special event shall require the issuance of a Temporary Sign Permit. The permit shall state the length of time any such sign may be displayed and all such signs shall meet the following requirements.

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1. Signs shall not exceed 16 square feet in area per sign face, 32 square feet in total sign area, and 6 feet in height if free-standing;
2. Signs shall be affixed at all corners to the structure on which the sign is attached;
3. No more than one temporary sign shall be permitted at any time;
4. No temporary sign shall be illuminated; and
5. Any tenant space or lot, if a single occupant, may display temporary signs, in aggregate, for up to 30 days in any 12 month period.

B. Sandwich Board Signs

1. One sandwich board sign may be permitted per tenant space or lot if a single occupant during business hours;
 2. Sign must not exceed 6 square feet in area per sign face, 12 square feet in total sign area, and 4 feet in height;
 3. In addition to being located on private property, such sign may be located on any common property associated with the private property for which the sign serves;
 4. Sign shall not be placed in any highway or roadside buffer.
 5. Sign must be located in a manner that maintains a minimum of 36 inches of unobstructed sidewalk clearance and does not impede pedestrian traffic; and
 6. Sign must be located in a manner that does not impede vehicular traffic or parking, including safety sight lines at intersections
- C. The following signs shall be allowed without a permit provided the restrictions for the type of sign are met.

1. Political Signs:

- a. Political signs shall not be located on public property or in public rights-of-way., and must be confined wholly to placement on private property, with permission of the property owner;
- b. Signs shall not be erected earlier than 60 days prior to the election or referendum to which they apply;
- c. Signs shall be removed within five days after the election or referendum to which they apply. Signs for candidates in a runoff election may be maintained until the final election to which the signs apply; and
- d. Signs shall not exceed six square feet in area per sign face, 12 square feet in total sign area, and shall not exceed a height of four feet.

2. Real Estate Signs:

- a. Real estate "for sale" or "for lease" signs shall not be located on public property or in public rights-of-way, and must be confined wholly to placement on private property, with permission of the property owner;
- b. For single-family residential lots or units, one real estate sign, not exceeding five square feet in area per sign face and ten square feet in total sign area, and if freestanding, not exceeding four feet in height, shall be permitted. Property with frontage on two or more streets shall be permitted one additional sign per frontage. If a framed metal freestanding sign is not used, then a single post sign may be used, not to exceed six feet in height and five square feet in area per sign face and ten square feet in total sign area;

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- c. For single-family subdivisions, multi-family, commercial, and industrial developments, one real estate or project sign not exceeding 48 square feet in area per sign face and 96 square feet in total sign area, and if freestanding, not exceeding eight feet in height, shall be permitted. Property with frontage on two or more streets shall be permitted one additional sign per frontage; and
 - d. Such signs shall be removed within 30 days of the rental, sale, or lease of a property.
3. **Project Signs:**
- a. Project signs shall not be located on public property or in public rights-of-way and must be confined wholly to placement on private property, with permission of the property owner;
 - b. Signs shall not exceed 32 square feet in area per sign face, 64 square feet in total sign area, and shall not exceed 8 feet in height; and
 - c. Signs shall not be erected prior to issuance of a development plan approval and shall be removed prior to issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy.

5.13.11 Automotive Service Station/Convenience Market Signs

The following sign standards apply to automotive service station and convenience markets:

- A. **Gasoline Pump Signs.** Signs on gasoline pumps must be an integral part of the pump structure.
- B. **Product or Service Advertising**
 - 1. No more than four product/service advertisements shall be allowed.
 - 2. Signs must be grouped on one sign structure per street frontage.
 - 3. Individual product/service advertisements shall not exceed four square feet in size.
 - 4. None of the allowable signs on the same structure shall be duplicates.

5.13.12 Planned Unit Development: Off-premise Directional Signs

- A. Planned Unit Developments may erect freestanding off-premise directional signs on property within the boundaries of the Planned Unit Development for the purpose of directing vehicular traffic to destinations within the development.
- B. Off-premise directional signs which are viewed from any public street shall meet the following requirements:
 - 1. Copy shall be limited to the name of the development and qualified facilities, the direction vehicles must turn, and the distance to the turn. Graphics shall be limited to a logo and directional arrow;
 - 2. Such signs must be located within one mile of the intersection where vehicles must turn to reach the development. No more than two doubled-sided signs shall be placed in any one direction from such intersection with no more than three double-sided signs for any one development; and
 - 3. No single sign face can exceed greater than 40 square feet. Sign height, width, depth, and structure shall meet the requirements of this Section.
- C. Off-premise directional signs which are viewed from private streets internal to the development shall meet the following requirements:

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1. Such signs shall be limited to 20 square feet of sign face;
2. Such signs must be located within 200 feet of an intersection with no more than one double-sided sign viewed from any one direction; and
3. Copy for such signs shall list only destinations with directional arrows.

5.13.13 Planned Unit Development: Off-premise Identification Signs

A Planned Unit Development (PUD) whose primary entrance (right-of-way or easement) is located on a public street but is not within the boundary of the PUD, shall be allowed one off-premise identification sign. The sign shall be located within the right-of-way or easement for the entrance road and shall be solely for identifying the entrance to the PUD. Such sign shall be subject to the standards of this Section.

5.13.14 Master Sign Plan

A master sign plan design shall be required for all PUDs, commercial or major subdivisions, office complexes and shopping centers. These systems shall be reviewed for materials, shapes, sizes, compatibility with architecture, and establishment of unity of design for the development. New individual signs and changes to existing individual signs shall be reviewed for conformance with such sign systems.

5.15 Old Town Bluffton Historic District (Existing UDO Text)**5.15.6.Q. Architectural Standards, Sign Guidelines****1. General Requirements:**

- a. All signs shall be subject to review by the UDO Administrator for consistency and harmony with the character of the Old Town Bluffton Historic District. The UDO Administrator shall use the graphics in this section as non-binding guidelines, to make a determination of appropriateness on a case-by-case basis.
- b. Wall signs shall be flat against the façade, or mounted projecting from the façade.
- c. Free standing monument signs shall be placed at least five feet from the right of way.
- d. Signs shall be externally lit from the front.
- e. All signs shall be permanently mounted.
- f. No off premise signs shall be permitted.
- g. Temporary signs announcing a sale, promotion, civic, philanthropic, educational, religious, or other special event must meet the following requirements:
 - (1) Any tenant space or lot, if a single occupant, may display temporary signs, in aggregate, for up to 30 days in any 12 month period;
 - (2) Must not exceed 6 square feet in area per sign face, 12 square feet in total sign area, and 4 feet in height if free-standing ;
 - (3) Signs shall be affixed at all corners to the structure on which the sign is attached.
 - (4) No more than one temporary sign shall be permitted at any time; and
 - (5) No temporary sign shall be illuminated.
- h. One sandwich board sign may be permitted per tenant space or lot if a single occupant during business hours and must meet the following requirements:
 - (1) Must not exceed 6 square feet in area per sign face, 12 square feet in total sign area, and 4 feet in height;
 - (2) In addition to being located on private property, such sign may be located on any common property associated with the private property for which the sign serves;
 - (3) Must be located in a manner that maintains a minimum of 36 inches of unobstructed sidewalk clearance; and
 - (4) Must be located in a manner that does not impede vehicular traffic or parking, including safety sight lines at intersections

2. Finish Materials:

- a. Wood: painted or natural
- b. Metal: copper, brass, galvanized steel, or aluminum
- c. Painted Canvas
- d. Paint/engraved directly on façade surface
- e. MDU or other recycled material finished to resemble wood.

3. Configurations

- a. Maximum gross area of wall signs on a given façade shall not exceed 10% of the façade area, with maximum size of any one sign limited to 25 square feet.
- b. Maximum area of any single freestanding sign shall not exceed 5 square feet per side and 5 feet in height. Freestanding on-premise signs along SC Highway 46 and Bruin Road shall not exceed 25 square feet and 8 feet in height

*Signs shall maintain a minimum clear height above sidewalks of 8 feet.

- c. All other sign types shall not exceed 5 square feet per side.
- d. No more than 2 signs may be displayed per address.
- e. Freestanding signs shall be mounted either parallel or perpendicular to the right-of-way.

9.2 Defined Terms (Sign-Related Definitions – Existing UDO Text)

Sign: Any device for visual communication that is used for the purpose of bringing the subject thereof to the attention of the public.

Sign, Animated: Any sign that uses movement or change of lighting to depict action or create a special effect or scene.

Sign, Banner: Any sign of lightweight fabric or similar material that is permanently mounted to a pole or a structure by a frame at one or more edges. National flags, State or municipal flags, or the official flag of any institution or business shall not be considered banners.

Sign, Canopy: Any sign that is part of or attached to an awning, canopy, or other fabric, plastic, or structural protective cover over a door, entrance, window, or outdoor service area. A marquee is not a canopy.

Sign, Changeable Copy: A sign or portion thereof with characters, letters, or illustrations that can be changed or rearranged without altering the face or the surface of the sign. A sign on which the message changes more than five times per day shall be considered an animated sign and not a changeable copy sign for the purposes of this Ordinance. A sign on which the only copy that changes is an indication of time or temperature shall be considered a “time and temperature” portion of a sign and not a changeable copy sign for purposes of this Ordinance.

Sign, Freestanding/ Monument: Any sign supported by structures or supports that are placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that are independent from any building or other structure.

Sign, Incidental: A sign, generally informational, that has a purpose secondary to the use of the zone lot on which it is located, such as “no parking,” “entrance,” “loading only,” “telephone,” and other similar directives. No sign with a commercial message shall be considered incidental.

Sign, Nonconforming: Any sign that does not conform to the requirements of this Ordinance.

Sign, Portable: Any sign not permanently attached to the ground or other permanent structure, or a sign designated to be transported, including, but not limited to, signs designed to be transported by means of wheels; balloons used as signs; and umbrellas used for advertising.

Sign, Projecting: Any sign affixed to a building or wall in such a manner that its leading edge extends more than six (6) inches beyond the surface of such building or wall.

Sign, Residential: Any sign located in a district zoned for residential uses that contains no commercial message except advertising for goods or services legally offered on the premises where the sign is located, if offering such service at such location conforms with all requirements of this Ordinance.

Sign, Roof, Integral: Any sign erected or constructed as an integral or essentially integral part of a normal roof structure of any design, such that no part of the sign extends vertically above the highest portion of the roof and such that no part of the sign is separated from the rest of the roof by a space of more than six.

Sign, Roof: Any sign erected and constructed wholly on and over the roof of a building, supported by the roof structure, and extending vertically above the highest portion of the roof.

Sign, Suspended: A sign that is suspended from the underside of a horizontal plane surface and is supported by such surface.

Sign, Temporary: Any sign that is used only temporarily and is not permanently mounted.

Sign, Vehicle: Any sign that is attached or affixed to a vehicle for the advertisement of business. This shall not apply to vehicles used in the daily operation of the business.

Sign, Wall: Any sign attached parallel to, but within six inches of, a wall, painted on the wall surface of, or erected and confined within the limits of an outside wall of any building or structure, which is supported by such wall or building, and which displays only one sign surface.

Sign, Window: Any sign, pictures, symbol, or combination thereof, designed to communicate information about an activity, business, commodity, event, sale, or service that is placed inside a window or upon the windowpanes or glass and is visible from the exterior of the window.