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We Are Columbia

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**Planning and Development Services • Zoning Division**

1136 Washington Street, Columbia, SC 29201

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August 24, 2023

**RE: Political Signs**

Dear Municipal Election Candidate:

Political signs are present within most communities during election season, and Columbia is no different. While we certainly understand that signage increases voter turnout and educates individuals about candidates, the signage is often placed illegally along streets or on utility poles. The illegal placement creates a safety hazard and violates sections of the City of Columbia Unified Development Ordinance, specifically §17-5.10(c)(7)b.1 and §17-5.10(c)(7)b.2.

We respectfully request that you advise your staff and volunteers of the applicable code requirements to ensure that signs are placed entirely upon private property. Any sign, not just political signs, found illegally posted within any portion of a street right-of-way may be removed and discarded without notice.

Should you have any questions about the permitted location of signage, please do not hesitate to contact the Zoning Division. For your convenience, we have provided the relevant code sections with this letter.

Thank you,

*Hope M. Hasty*

Hope Hasty  
Zoning Administrator

**(ii) Interstate System and Freeway Class Highways**

A variance may be granted from the maximum height established in this section in accordance with Sec. 17-2.5(s), Variance – Zoning, for any outdoor advertising (billboard) sign oriented toward an interstate system or freeway class highway; otherwise no variance from any standard in this section shall be granted for any such sign.

**6. Replacement of Nonconforming Outdoor Advertising Signs**

The replacement of nonconforming outdoor advertising signs shall be in accordance with Sec. 17-7.5, Nonconforming Signs.

**(7) Temporary Signs**

Temporary signs shall comply with the standards in this Subsection. Temporary signs other than those for which standards are established in Sec. 17-5.10(c)(7)b, Standards for Specific Types of Temporary Signs, are prohibited.

**a. General Standards**

A temporary sign shall:

1. Not be an off-premise sign;
2. Be non-illuminated and constructed from materials that do not degrade over the life of the sign;
3. Be safely and securely fastened, mounted, and/or affixed to prevent damage to the sign, surrounding structures, and people, especially considering potentially adverse weather conditions;
4. Not be located within, or otherwise restrict access to, any parking spaces necessary to fulfill the requirements of Sec. 17-5.2, Off-Street Parking, Bicycle Parking, and Loading; and
5. Not be an inflatable sign, provided, up to two sign permits for inflatable signs may be issued within any calendar year, if the signs are:
  - (i) Located outside a Residential base district and the OV-HP overlay district;
  - (ii) Stationary and do not produce movement;
  - (iii) installed according to manufacturer's specifications, or, absent such specifications, in accordance with the requirements the building official deems necessary to safely secure the sign.

**b. Standards for Specific Types of Temporary Signs****1. Yard Signs**

- (i) Up to six yard signs having a combined display surface area not exceeding 18 square feet are allowed per lot in all Residential zoning districts, the MU-1 District, and the MU-2 District.
- (ii) A yard sign shall not be located in the right-of-way.

(iii) A yard sign shall not exceed six feet in height.

(iv) A yard sign shall not be displayed for more than 120 consecutive days or for a cumulative amount of time exceeding 180 days in any 12-month period.

**2. Temporary Signs for Nonresidential Uses and in Nonresidential Districts**

For any use other than a use in the Residential use classification (see Sec. 17-4.2(b), Principal Use Table) and in any district other than a Residential base zoning district (see Sec. 17-3.2, Residential Base Zoning Districts), up to two temporary signs having a combined display surface area not exceeding 48 square feet are allowed per street frontage, in addition to any other temporary signage allowed in accordance with this Sec. 17-5.10(c)(7), other than sandwich board signs, provided the temporary sign shall:

(i) Be located on the lot and not in the right-of-way;

(ii) Not exceed six feet in height if placed on the ground; and

(iii) Not be displayed for more than six consecutive months.

**3. Mobile Signs**

One mobile sign shall be permitted for each street frontage that does not have a freestanding sign or other temporary signage, subject to the standards in Sec. 17-5.10(c)(6)a.4, Freestanding Signs. Any mobile sign used on the same lot for more than 45 days per year will be considered a permanent freestanding sign.

**4. Signs Located on Proposed Subdivision Sites**

Temporary signs may be erected on the premises of land for which an application for a subdivision has been determined complete in accordance with Sec. 17-2.5(j), Subdivision, provided the signs shall:

(i) Not exceed 50 square feet in total display surface area;

(ii) Be set back at least 20 feet from any property line;

(iii) Be spaced at least 500 feet apart; and

(iv) Be removed not more than 30 days from such time as 75 percent of the lots are conveyed.

**5. Signs Located on Construction Sites**

Temporary signs may be placed on a parcel upon which construction activities of any type are being performed, in addition to any other temporary signage allowed in accordance with this Sec. 17-5.10(c)(7), in accordance with the following standards:

(i) If the construction activities do not include the construction of a new building, the total display surface area of the signs shall not exceed 12 square feet;