

SIGN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF DAWSON COUNTY, GEORGIA

An ordinance to establish requirements for the placement, installation, and maintenance of signs in order to protect the health, safety, welfare, and general well-being of the citizens of Dawson County; to regulate the size and location of signs such that the purpose of signs can be served without unduly interfering with motorists and causing unsafe conditions; and to protect and preserve the aesthetic qualities of the unincorporated areas of Dawson County by regulating the number, size, placement, installation, and maintenance of signs in order to preserve the value of property and to encourage the most appropriate use of land within the unincorporated areas of Dawson County; to provide for the methods and procedures to implement the purposes and remedies provided herein; to provide for severability; to provide for repealer; and for other purposes.

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the State of Georgia has delegated the police powers of the State of Georgia to Dawson County, Georgia, with respect to persons and property situated within the unincorporated areas of Dawson County, Georgia, and has authorized and empowered the Board of Commissioners of Dawson County to make such rules and regulations respecting persons and property requisite and proper for the security, welfare, health, and convenience of the county and for the preservation of the peace and good order ; and

WHEREAS, it is requisite and proper for the security, welfare, health, and convenience of the citizens of Dawson County, Georgia that rules and regulations relating to uses of property lying within the unincorporated areas of Dawson County shall be established and those violations of rules and regulations be punishable as provided by law.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Commissioners of Dawson County, Georgia, hereby amends the Sign Ordinance of Dawson County adopted on the 20th day of August, 2009 and adopts this ordinance as follows:

ARTICLE I: TITLE, PURPOSE, JURISDICTION, COMPLIANCE RESPONSIBILITY

Section 100 – Title

This ordinance shall be known as the Sign Ordinance of Dawson County, Georgia and will be referred to as “the Sign Ordinance.”

Section 200 – Purpose

The Sign ordinance within Dawson County is necessary in the public interest to:

- A. protect property values;
- B. protect the public from damage or injury caused or partially attributable to distractions or obstructions from improperly designed or situated signs;
- C. maintain the legibility and effectiveness of signs;
- D. create and maintain high quality signage;
- E. eliminate excess signage;
- F. protect the right of citizens to enjoy Dawson County’s natural scenic beauty;
- G. encourage business and tourism; and
- H. regulate the construction, erection, maintenance, and size of signs.

Section 300 – Jurisdiction

This ordinance applies to all signs in the unincorporated areas of Dawson County Georgia.

Section 400 – Compliance

All signs must be in compliance with the provisions of the Dawson County Minimum Standards Code for Construction and the Dawson County Land Use and Land Development Resolutions adopted by Dawson County.

Section 500 – Responsibility

It shall be the sign owner’s responsibility to maintain and ensure conformity with the provisions of this ordinance.

Section 600 – Message Substitution

A non-commercial message of any type may be substituted for any duly permitted or allowed commercial message or any duly permitted or allowed non-commercial message if the sign structure or mounting device complies with the provisions of this Sign ordinance without consideration of message content. Such substitution of message may be made without any additional approval or permitting. This provision prevails over any more specific provision to the contrary within this ordinance. The purpose of this provision is to prevent any inadvertent favoring of commercial speech over non-commercial speech or the favoring of any particular non-commercial message.

ARTICLE II: DEFINITIONS

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article II is to define specific terms for use in enforcement and interpretation of the Sign ordinance. When construing the terms of this ordinance, the word “shall” is deemed mandatory not discretionary. The word “may” is permissive.

Section 200 – Definitions

The following words that are used in this ordinance shall be deemed to have the following meaning(s), unless the context requires otherwise:

"Awning" shall mean a cloth, plastic or other non-structural covering attached to a building when the same is so erected as to permit its being raised or retracted to a position against the building when not in use.

"Banner" shall mean a cloth, plastic or paper sign characteristically suspended along or across any street, from a building fronting a street or towed by or attached to an aircraft or other mobile machinery.

"Beneficial Use" shall mean person or persons deriving the proceeds or other advantages from the erection or operation of sign.

"Canopy" shall mean a non-retractable structure, other than an awning made of cloth, metal or other material, with frames attached to a building and carried by a frame supported by the ground or the building.

"Changeable Copy Sign" shall mean a sign whereon provision is made for letters or characters to be placed in or upon the surface area either manually or electronically to provide a message or picture.

"County" means the unincorporated areas of Dawson County, Georgia.

"County Board of Commissioners" or **"Commissioners"** means the "Dawson County Board of Commissioners"

"Face" or **"Facing"** shall mean the surface or plane of the sign upon, against, or through which a message or picture is displayed.

"Flashing Sign" shall mean any sign whose illumination is not kept constant in intensity at all times when in use, and exhibits sudden or marked change in lighting effect.

"Freestanding Canopy" shall mean a self-supported, open air structure with a roof which protects goods/services or people which are underneath from direct exposure to rain or sunshine.

"Height" shall mean the vertical distance from the grade at the base of the sign to the highest point on the sign unless otherwise specified in the ordinance.

"Illuminated Sign" shall mean any sign that has characters, letters, figures, designs, or outline illuminated by electric lights or luminous tubes as a part of the sign or by accessory flood or spotlights.

"Individual Lot" shall mean a lot of record that is not part of any other overall development and where the lot is owned by one person, entity or corporation and where only one primary structure will be located.

"Lot" shall include the words "piece", "plot" and "parcel."

"May" is permissive.

"Monument Sign" shall mean a freestanding sign where the base of the sign structure is on the ground.

"Official Signs and Notices" means signs posted by authorized persons performing official governmental duties.

"Out Parcel" shall mean a lot of record or leased lot that is part of an overall development and where only one primary structure will be located.

"Permanent" shall mean intended to last indefinitely without change, lasting a relatively long time.

"Permanent Window Signs" shall mean any letters, words, or symbols which are displayed on and permanently attached to the window glass of a structure or displayed permanently within the building but visible through the window primarily to attract the attention of the passing public. Such signs shall be deemed wall signs.

"Person" shall mean and include any individual, firm, partnership, association, corporation, company, or organization of any kind.

"Planned Center" shall mean a building or group of buildings in common ownership or condominium ownership developed on one lot, which may include buildings with more than one tenant. Multi-tenant buildings singularly or in a group may be considered planned centers if the following provisions apply:

1. Building size of at least 25,000 sq. ft.
2. The building is intended for multiple tenants (i.e. constructed with fire wall separations and has separate outside entrances for each tenant).
3. Each tenant in a wholly enclosed space separate from other tenant space (i.e. no sharing of space).
4. A minimum of five tenants are included in the building.
5. Accessory uses – Uses that are related but subordinate to the primary use (based on square footage), may not be counted as a separate tenant.

"Planning Commission" means the Dawson County Planning Commission.

"Shall" is mandatory, not discretionary.

"Sign" shall mean a device designed to inform or attract the attention of the public.

“Sign, Animated or Moving.” Shall mean any sign or part thereof that changes physical position or light intensity by any movement or rotation or that gives the visual impression of such movement or rotation.

“Sign, face.” The surface or plane of the sign upon, against, or through which a message is displayed or illustrated. The sign face area shall constitute the entire face of the sign including any illustrations and script and any framing, trim or molding, however specifically excludes the support structure (i.e. poles, monument base, etc.). Ground mounted signs shall be limited to two (2) faces.

“Sign, Freestanding or Ground.” A sign supported by uprights, braces or pole(s) placed into or upon the ground and not supported by or suspended from any building.

“Sign, illegal.” See Article V of this ordinance.

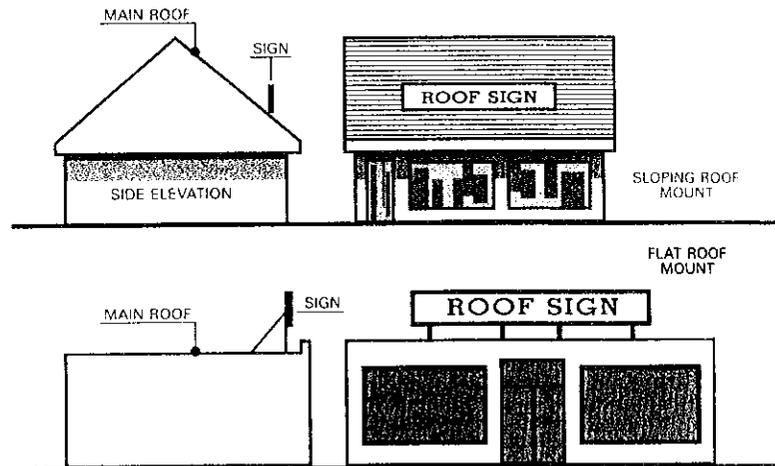
“Sign, Non-conforming” shall mean any sign legally existing prior to the adoption of this ordinance that does not conform to the requirements of the zoning district in which it is located.

“Sign, Owner” shall include the person receiving benefit from the sign and/or the property owner or, lessee.

“Sign, Portable.” Any sign that is not permanently attached to the ground, a structure, or a building that can easily be moved from one location to another. A-frame signs and trailer signs are examples of portable signs.

“Sign, Prohibited.” See Article V (originally Section 6) of the Sign Ordinance adopted by the Board of Commissioners on October 27, 1997 and any amendment thereto.

“Sign, Roof.” Shall mean a sign that is mounted on the roof of a building or that is wholly dependent upon a building for support and that projects above the top walk or edge of a building with a flat roof, the eave line of a building with a gambrel, gable, or hip roof, or the deck line of a building with a mansard roof.



Source: United States Sign Council. 2001. *Guideline Code for Regulation of On-Premise Signs.*

“Sign, Standard” shall mean a sign with an area of not greater than six(6) square feet with a sign face made for short-term use that when erect stands at a height no greater than three (3) feet and is mounted on a stake or metal frame with a thickness or diameter not greater than 1-½ inches.

“Sign, Temporary” shall mean any sign not permanently attached to the ground or a building.

“Sign, Wall” shall mean any sign attached to the exterior vertical side (wall) of a building not including temporary signs placed on windows but including signs placed on canopies and awnings attached to the exterior vertical structure (wall).

“Signs, Abandoned.” A sign shall be considered abandoned when the activity, which such sign advertises, is no longer in operation or does not have a current license in effect.

“Specific interest of the traveling public” means information regarding places offering lodging, food, or motor vehicle fuels and lubricants, motor vehicle service and repair facilities or any service or product available to the general public.

“Structure” shall include the words “building” and “sign.”

“Temporary” shall mean having or suggesting a non-durable character or a limited or short-term period of use.

“Used For” shall include the phrases “arranged for” and “designed for.”

“Visible” means capable of being seen (whether or not legible) or noticed without visual aid by a person with normal visual acuity.

ARTICLE III: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article III is to provide general regulation for all signage within the unincorporated portions of Dawson County.

Section 200 – Sign Maintenance

Any sign not meeting the following provisions shall be repaired or removed within thirty (30) days after the receipt of notification by the County Manager or Designee or his authorized representatives.

- A. Undergrowth vegetation around the sign shall be properly maintained.
- B. All damaged panels that create a safety hazard or detract from the surrounding aesthetics must be replaced as soon as discovered.
- C. All sign copy shall be maintained securely to the face, and all missing copy must be replaced.
- D. All structural defects that create a safety hazard shall be promptly repaired.
- E. Cracked or peeling paint on the face or supporting structure shall be refurbished and/or repainted.

Section 300 – Building Graphics

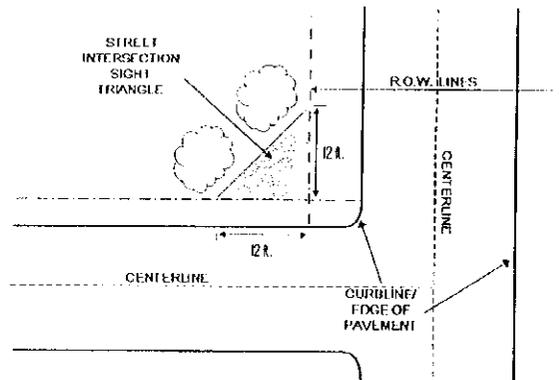
Drawings painted on buildings that contain copy, symbols, or other references to products or services shall be considered signs and shall not be exempt from the provisions of this ordinance.

Section 400 – Sign In or Over Public Right-of-way

No sign shall be allowed to project in or over a public right-of-way or easement over or through which the general public maintains a right of access, unless permitted in accord with the terms hereof.

Section 500 – Sight Triangle

Signs shall not obstruct the view across the triangle formed by joining points measured twelve (12) feet distant along the property line from the intersection of two streets or twelve (12) feet along both the street right-of-way and alley or driveway right-of-way lines measured from the intersection of the street and the alley or driveway.



Street Intersection sight triangle Illustration.

ILLUSTRATION
NOT TO SCALE

Section 600 – Sign Face Area

The sign face area shall be the entire face of the sign including the advertising surface and any framing, trim or molding; the support structure (i.e. poles, monument base, etc.) shall be excluded in measuring the sign face area. Sign area shall be measured by encompassing all signage elements.

Section 700- Electronic (LED) Signs

Electronic (LED) signs must comply with Article V Section 300 of this ordinance regarding brightness and message motion. Sign displays must be equipped with an automatic dimming technology such that the sign(s) automatically sense dusk and darkness and adjust the brightness level accordingly. To protect against malfunction, sign owner must provide Dawson County the 24 hr. number of an employee capable of adjusting the brightness of the sign(s) or, if the over-bright condition cannot be fixed, turning off the sign(s) in times of darkness until repairs can be made.

ARTICLE IV: NON-CONFORMING SIGNS

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article IV is to identify non-conforming signs and establish regulations pertaining to non-conforming signs.

Section 200 – Definition and Statement of Intent

Any sign legally existing prior to the adoption of the Sign Ordinance of October 27, 1997 and as amended from time to time, which does not conform to the requirements of this Ordinance, shall be deemed to be a non-conforming sign.

Section 300 – Existing Non-Conforming Signage

Subject to the following conditions, non-conforming permanent signs may remain in operation and maintenance after the effective date of this ordinance. Such signs shall not be:

- A. Changed to or replaced with another non-conforming sign.
- B. Enlarged, extended, reconstructed, moved or structurally altered except to bring the sign into conformity with all provisions of the ordinance.

Nothing contained herein shall prevent repairing or restoring to a safe condition any part of a sign or sign structure or normal maintenance operations, unless the damage or destruction to the sign is 50% or more of the area of the sign, or if the sign no longer serves a function as a sign because of damage or destruction.

Section 400 – Removal

All signs erected after the effective date of this ordinance that are non-conforming under this ordinance or any sign which has been modified as contemplated by Section 300 (A), (B) or (C) shall be removed within ninety (90) days of notice by the County Manager or designee in accordance with enforcement provisions of this ordinance.

ARTICLE V: ILLEGAL AND PROHIBITED SIGNAGE

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article V is to define those signs that are of a type specifically prohibited in the unincorporated area of Dawson County.

Section 200 – Illegal Sign

An illegal sign shall mean:

- A. Any sign established prior to or subsequent to the adoption of this ordinance, without proper authorization or permit; or
- B. Any sign existing in the public right-of-way without a proper permit.

Section 300 – Prohibited Signs

The following signs are not permitted in any land use district:

- A. Signs imitating traffic or emergency signals. No signs shall be permitted which imitates an official traffic sign or signal or contains words or symbols displayed in a manner which might mislead or confuse drivers of vehicles, or which displays intermittent lights resembling the color, sign, shapes or order of light customarily used in traffic signs or in emergency vehicles or on law enforcement vehicles, except as part of a permitted or public traffic control sign.
- B. Signs or devices employing confusing, distracting, or intense illumination when visible from the public right-of-way. No sign or device shall be permitted which utilizes spot lights, flood lights, flashing or blinking lights, or any type of pulsating or moving light which may impair the vision, cause glare, or otherwise interfere with a driver's operation of a motor vehicle or aircraft.
- C. Signs employing confusing or distracting motion either by changing physical position or light intensity. No sign shall be permitted which employs motion in such a manner as to obstruct or interfere with a driver's view of approaching, merging, or intersecting traffic, or a traffic signal, device of sign, or which would otherwise interfere with a driver's operation of a motor vehicle.
- D. Sign Lighting. No sign shall be illuminated if such illumination is not effectively shielded so as to prevent beams or rays of light from being directed at any portion of the traveled way, which beams or rays of light are of such intensity or brilliance as to cause glare or impair the vision of the driver of any motor vehicle or which otherwise may interfere with the operation of a motor vehicle.
- E. Signs that project into or over, or are constructed within the public right-of-way without a proper permit.
- F. Signs that are tacked, painted, posted, marked, or otherwise affixed on trees, utility poles or other similar structures or on rocks or other natural features.
- G. Signs that prevent free ingress or egress from any door, window, or fire escape. No sign of any kind shall be attached to any fire escape.
- H. Signs placed on or painted on a motor vehicle or trailer and parked with the primary purpose of providing a sign not otherwise allowed by this ordinance.
- I. Signs that require the removal of any trees from the public right-of-way, excluding official signs and notices.
- J. Any air or gas filled balloons or other similar devices and permanent signs made of paper, cloth or other nondurable materials, except as specifically permitted in this ordinance.
- K. Roof Signs.
- L. Portable signs.

ARTICLE VI: SIGNS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE A PERMIT

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article VI is to identify those signs for which a permit is not necessary.

Section 200 – Sign Types Included

A permit is not required for the following types of signs, and such signs shall not be considered in determining the allowable number or size of signs on a parcel or at a specific location; provided, however, that such signs must comply with all other applicable sections of this Article. The erection of any sign not listed in this section shall require a permit.

- A. Official signs and notices. Signs erected by a governmental entity shall require a permit as specified by Article XIII unless otherwise ordered by a court or mandated by legislation.
- B. Standard signs. See Definition. All signs shall have a contact name and phone number legibly displayed on the back of such sign. No sign shall be posted within the public right-of-way or a private easement without written approval.
- C. Name plates not exceeding two (2) square feet in area.
- D. Flags shall be limited to one per parcel, but the size of the flag shall be included within the total area of signs allowed. The flag of the United States the state flag of Georgia and/or any other official flag authorized by the United States and or the State of Georgia shall be exempt from this regulation when and if said flags are displayed in an official manner as prescribed in United States Code Title 4, Chapter 1 and Georgia Code Title 50 Chapter 3. The use of these flags for decorative purposes only does not exempt them from this regulation.
- E. Integral decorative or architectural features of buildings, except letters, trademarks, moving parts, or moving lights.
- F. Indoor signs, not including permanent window signs.
- G. Signs that appear on vending machines.
- H. Temporary signs located on the inside of windows that do not cover more than 25% of the total window area.
- I. Gasoline pump signs – Signs on gasoline pumps that are flat signs not to exceed six (6) square feet in the area per sign face, or a total of twelve (12) square feet per pump.
- J. Air or gas filled balloons and streamers may be displayed for no more than four (4) consecutive days and shall not be displayed more than six (6) times per calendar year. Such decorations shall not be illuminated, may not exceed 35 feet in height from ground, nor interfere with the safe and free flow of traffic.

ARTICLE VII: TEMPORARY PERMITTED SIGNS

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article VII is to provide for the regulation and enforcement of appropriate temporary signage.

Section 200 – General

“Temporary Sign” shall mean any sign not permanently anchored to the ground or a building.

- A. Types of temporary signs permitted: freestanding signs, inflatable signs, banners, and window signs.
- B. A temporary sign shall not be permitted in the public right-of-way.
- C. Temporary signs shall not be illuminated.
- D. A temporary sign shall not be permitted that has flashing lights or copy, moveable parts or colored lights that may resemble those of traffic signals and/or emergency vehicles, or lights that are directed toward a residential building.
- E. All temporary signs except as noted in Article VI Section 200 shall have the sign permit number legibly displayed on the back of the sign on the left bottom corner.

Section 300 – Temporary Signs in Residential Zoning Districts

Temporary signs may be erected in residential districts for a period of six (6) months with a six (6) month extension, provided that such signs do not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet in area in RA (Residential-Agricultural) districts and at the main entrance of new residential platted

subdivisions and not more than sixteen (16) square feet for all other residential districts, are set back at least ten (10) feet from the right-of-way and adjacent property lines. Maximum number shall be one (1) per street frontage. Maximum height of sign from ground level shall be eight (8) feet in RA (Residential-Agricultural) districts and at the main entrance of new residential platted subdivisions and not more than six (6) feet for all other residential districts

Section 400 – Temporary Signs in Commercial Zoning Districts

Temporary signs in commercial districts shall be permitted in all non-residential districts provided the following conditions are met:

- A. An annual permit shall be required in order to display a temporary sign. Signs may be Interchanged as needed so long as only one (1) sign is displayed at a time.
- B. The display permit shall be produced on demand when the permit is requested to be viewed onsite by a county official.
- C. Only one (1) temporary sign shall be permitted on an individual lot of record.
- D. The maximum permitted sign area per face shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet per face.
- E. No freestanding temporary sign shall be permitted except at the site of new construction or exterior renovation. Permits shall not be required for signs placed on construction sites. The maximum height of freestanding signs shall not exceed eight (8) feet. Such signs shall be removed fifteen (15) days after the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy or Completion by the Building Official of Dawson County.
- F. All other temporary signs shall be displayed on the face of the building or window.

ARTICLE VIII: PERMANENT SIGNS IN RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article VIII is to provide definition and regulation for permanent signage within residential districts in unincorporated areas of Dawson County located adjacent to arterial and collector roads in order to promote traffic safety and to preserve the aesthetics of residential districts along arterial and collector roads.

Section 200 – Entrance Signage

By permit only if a tract or parcel of land has been developed to create a residential subdivision and is adjacent to a collector road, as opposed to a major arterial road.

- A. One freestanding monument sign is allowed at each entrance from the primary roadway. Sign face shall not exceed thirty-six (36) square feet with a maximum of six (6) feet in height overall. The sign shall be set back ten (10) feet from any road right-of-way. Illumination will be allowed by indirect lighting only. Signage must be maintained by the homeowners' association or sign owner; or
- B. Two freestanding monument signs, one on either side of the entrance from the primary roadway. Sign face not to exceed eighteen (18) square feet each with a maximum six (6) feet in height. The sign shall be set back ten (10) feet from any road right-of-way. Illumination will be allowed by indirect lighting only. Signage must be maintained by the homeowner's association or sign owner.

- C. There shall be a minimum 100-foot separation between signs at each entrance.
- D. If signage is not maintained, then the provisions of Article III Section 200 "Sign Maintenance" shall be applied.

Section 300 - All Other Permanent Signs in Residential Zoning Districts

One freestanding monument sign shall be allowed on an individual residential lot except as provided in Article VI Section 611 of the Dawson County Land Use Resolution. The sign face shall not exceed three (3) square feet with a maximum height of six (6) feet overall. Signs shall be constructed on a base of brick or stone. The sign shall meet the minimum building setbacks for the lot on which it is placed as prescribed in the Dawson County Land Use Resolution. Illumination of the sign shall not be allowed.

ARTICLE IX: PERMANENT SIGNS IN COMMERCIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article IX is to identify signs allowed within commercial districts in unincorporated areas of Dawson County in order to promote traffic safety and to preserve the aesthetics of such area.

Section 200 – Freestanding Signs

Those signs wholly supported by their own structure and completely separate from a commercial building.

A. Planned Center – Outside the Ga. 400 Overlay District

- 1. One (1) freestanding sign per street frontage not to exceed one hundred (100) square feet. One freestanding sign per street frontage will be allowed assuming each frontage is equal to or greater than two hundred (200) feet in length. The sign shall be constructed of material such as brick, stone, stucco or similar material consistent with the architecture and exterior treatment of the building(s).
- 2. The sign shall have a maximum height of twenty (20) feet. However, up to an additional ten (10) feet in height may be added resulting in a total maximum height of thirty (30) feet if the base of the sign is below the grade of the adjoining road as calculated at a 1 foot rise of sign height per 1 foot drop from road grade elevation.
- 3. Any and all structural components shall be fabricated or covered so that such components may not be detected visually.
- 4. The width of a monument sign shall not exceed the width of the supporting structure.
- 5. The copy area of freestanding signs shall not exceed seventy five percent (75%) of the sign area. The copy area shall be measured by the smallest geometric form that encompasses it.
- 6. Changeable copy signage may be used, but the sign counts toward the total sign area allowed.
- 7. The sign shall include the street address for the project. The maximum copy area does not include the street address.

B. Planned Center – Within the Ga. 400 Overlay District

1. One (1) freestanding sign per street frontage not to exceed one hundred fifty (150) square feet. One freestanding sign per street frontage will be allowed assuming each frontage is equal to or greater than two hundred (200) feet in length. The sign shall be constructed of material such as brick, stone, stucco or similar material consistent with the architecture and exterior treatment of the building(s).
2. The sign shall have a maximum height of twenty five (25) feet. However, up to an additional ten (10) feet in height may be added resulting in a total maximum height of thirty five (35) feet if the base of the sign is below the grade of the adjoining road as calculated at a 1 foot rise of sign height per 1 foot drop from road grade elevation.
3. Any and all structural components shall be fabricated or covered so that such components may not be detected visually.
4. The width of a monument sign shall not exceed the width of the supporting structure.
5. The copy area of freestanding signs shall not exceed seventy-five percent (75%) of the sign area. The copy area shall be measured by the smallest geometric form that encompasses it.
6. Changeable copy signage may be used, but the sign counts toward the total sign area allowed.
7. The sign shall include the street address for the project. The maximum copy area does not include the street address.

C. Outparcels and Individual Lots – Outside the Ga. 400 Overlay District

1. Signs shall be limited to ground-mounted type signs. Base and sign structure shall be constructed of materials such as brick, stone, or similar materials consistent with the architecture and exterior treatment of the building.
2. Surface area of the sign face shall be a maximum of forty-eight (48) square feet per side.
3. The sign shall have a maximum height of ten (10) feet. However, up to an additional ten (10) feet in height may be added resulting in a total maximum height of twenty (20) feet if the base of the sign is below the grade of the adjoining road as calculated at a 1 foot rise of sign height per 1 foot drop from road grade elevation.
4. Structural poles used in the construction of said sign shall be wrapped with either brick or stone which shall be at least four (4) feet in width on the sides of the sign intended for viewing. The pole wrap shall not be used as part of the sign face for copy.
5. Changeable copy signage may be used but will count towards the sign area allowed.
6. For individual lots and outparcels only one freestanding sign shall be allowed.

D. Outparcels and Individual Lots – Within the Ga. 400 Overlay District

1. Signs shall be limited to ground-mounted type signs. Base and sign structure shall be constructed of materials such as brick, stone, or similar materials consistent with the architecture and exterior treatment of the building.
2. Surface area of the sign face shall be a maximum of seventy-two (72) square feet per side.

3. The sign shall have a maximum height of fifteen (15) feet. However, up to an additional ten (10) feet in height may be added resulting in a total maximum height of twenty five (25) feet if the base of the sign is below the grade of the adjoining road as calculated at a 1 foot rise of sign height per 1 foot drop from road grade elevation.
4. Structural poles used in the construction of said sign shall be wrapped with either brick, stone, or similar materials consistent with the architecture and exterior treatment of the building which shall be at least four (4) feet in width on the sides of the sign intended for viewing. The pole wrap shall not be used as part of the sign face for copy.
5. Changeable copy signage may be used but will count towards the sign area allowed.
6. For individual lots and outparcels only one freestanding sign shall be allowed.

Section 300 – Wall Signs and “Freestanding Canopy” Signs

Those signs attached to the building or structure for stability or decoration.

A. Wall signage for single tenant buildings:

1. Three (3) wall signs will be permitted per building.
2. Only one (1) wall sign shall be permitted per wall.
3. Signs shall not exceed one (1) sq. ft. per linear ft. of building wall facade each and shall not exceed one hundred eighty (180) sq. ft. each

B. Wall signage for multi-tenant buildings:

1. Two wall signs shall be permitted per tenant.
2. Only one (1) wall sign shall be permitted per tenant wall.
3. Wall signs shall not exceed 1 sq. ft. per linear ft. of tenant wall facade each and shall not exceed 180 sq. ft. each.

C. “Freestanding Canopy”:

1. Three (3) signs will be permitted per “Freestanding Canopy.”
2. Only one (1) wall sign shall be permitted per canopy side.
3. “Freestanding Canopy” signs shall not exceed one (1) sq. ft. per linear ft. of canopy side. Signs shall not be placed above nor extend beyond on any side of the canopy fascia.

D. No wall sign or canopy sign shall be located so that any part of the sign or supporting structure extends above the top of the wall or parapet.

Section 400 – Vehicle Signs

No vehicle or trailer with lettering or graphics applied thereto shall be parked or stored within any public right-of-way or within any road median. Banners attached to or hanging from a vehicle or trailer shall be considered a temporary sign and shall be regulated as such. This provision is intended to prohibit the use of vehicles to circumvent provisions of limiting the number and size of signs allowed. See "Sign, temporary."

Section 500 – Murals and Wall Graphics

Exterior murals and wall graphics shall be considered wall signs.

ARTICLE X: VARIANCES

Section 100 – Purpose

Variances to the Sign ordinance are granted for specific waiver or release of a requirement of this ordinance based on proof of hardship to the applicant.

Section 200 – Administration

Variances to sign requirements shall be granted by the Planning Commission in the same manner and pursuant to the same criteria as variances from the Dawson County Land Use Regulations. Administrative Variances may be granted by the County Manager or designee if the following criterion exists:

- A. Dimensional variances only (i.e. setback, size, height) excluding off-site signs.
- B. Shall not be greater than 10% of allowable limits.
- C. Shall not subvert the intent of the ordinance.
- D. Applicant shall show substantial hardship naturally occurring or otherwise.
- E. Granting the variance shall not create a safety hazard or other condition inconsistent with the general purpose of this ordinance;
- F. Granting the variance may include minor stipulations to compensate for the alteration (i.e. landscaping, material, lighting, etc.); and
- G. Extreme topographic conditions prevent the sign from being legible and effective from the roadway; a variance may be granted to allow the height to be measured from the base of the road after final grading.

ARTICLE XI: PERMITS

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article XI is to establish methods for allowing signs within the unincorporated portions of Dawson County.

Section 200 – Permits Required

It shall be unlawful for any person to erect or relocate within the County any sign, as defined in this ordinance, without first obtaining a sign permit from the County Manager or designee and making payments scheduled if applicable. Signs shall also be subject to the provisions of the electrical code and the permit fees required therein. A permit shall be required for each incidence of temporary sign usage. In order for any permit to be issued, applicant must have a Dawson County Business License or out of county business registration.

Section 300 – Application for Sign Permit

Applications for sign permits shall be made upon application forms provided by the County Manager or designee and shall contain or have attached thereto the following information:

- A. Name, address, telephone number of the applicant, sign owner and land owner;
- B. Address of building, structure, or lot to which or upon the sign is to be attached or erected;
- C. The sign and the distance of the sign from adjacent buildings, structures, property lines, and any other measurements as may be required by the County Manager or designee.

- D. Drawings of the plans, specifications, and method of construction and attachment to the building or ground for the sign, as well as a scale drawing of the site showing drives, structures, and any other limiting site features as well as drawings showing the relation of the road grade of the adjoining road to which the sign face is perpendicular to the base of the sign ;
- E. Name of person, firm, corporation or association erecting the structure;
- F. Any replacement, repair, or altering of existing sign from the disconnect that does not require the disturbance of the electrical service or disconnect shall not require a permit;
- G. A plat showing the sign location upon the premises.

Section 400 – Permit Issuance

It shall be the duty of the County Manager or designee, upon the filing of an application for a sign permit, to examine such plans and specifications and other data and the premises upon which it is proposed to erect the sign; and if it shall appear that the proposed structure is in compliance with all the requirements of this ordinance and all other laws and resolutions of the County, then the permit shall be issued within seven (7) days of the application being filed. If the work authorized under a sign permit has not been started within twelve (12) months after the date of issuance, then the permit shall become null and void and a new permit shall be required. All signs shall be subject to on-site inspections by the County Manager or designee or its authorized representative before a permit is issued.

Section 500 – Permit Fees

Every applicant before being granted a sign permit shall pay the County a permit fee in accord with the fee schedule approved by the Board of Commissioners. Non-profit organizations that are a valid 501.c.3. shall be exempt from fees. After the one time permit fee is paid, annual assessments will be made through ad valorem taxes.

ARTICLE XII: APPEALS

Section 100 – Purpose

Any decision or action of County personnel under this ordinance may be appealed to the Board of Commissioners of Dawson County; provided, however, that any such action or decision shall remain in full force and effect pending such appeal.

Section 200 – Appeals Process

If an applicant or permittee desires to appeal any decision or action of the County Manager or designee or its authorized representative or the Planning Commission, then the applicant or petitioner shall notify the County Manager or designee of Dawson County in writing within ten (10) days of the date of the action or decision. Upon receipt of the notice, the Board of Commissioners shall set an appeal hearing date regarding the appeal within thirty (30) days of such notice and shall notify the applicant or permittee in writing by first class mail and shall render a decision within forty-five (45) days of such notice.

ARTICLE XIII: ENFORCEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Section 100 – Purpose

The purpose of Article XIII is to provide clear guidelines for enforcement and administration of the Sign ordinance.

Section 200 – Administrative Powers

The Board of Commissioners of Dawson County, Georgia shall administer and enforce the provisions of this ordinance, and the County Manager or designee is hereby appointed to exercise the powers prescribed by this ordinance. These powers shall include, but shall not be limited to, accepting and processing applications, conducting inspections, issuing permits and instituting enforcement actions through one or more employees of the County; subject to the right of appeal to the Board of Commissioners as otherwise provided by this ordinance.

Section 300 – Enforcement

The erection or maintenance by any person, firm, or corporation of any sign for which a permit is required by this ordinance without a valid permit or renewal thereof issued by the County is declared to be a public nuisance. In addition to the remedies provided for in this ordinance or that may otherwise exist under the laws of the State of Georgia, the County is authorized to pursue all equitable remedies and criminal and civil sanctions available.

- A. Notification of Violations. Such Notification shall be made in writing from the County Manager or designee or an authorized representative of the Board of Commissioners to the applicant's or individual's last known address or at the location of the sign if notice can be given in person or to the owner's representative and shall provide the violator ten (10) days from the date of the letter to bring the sign into compliance. The notice shall be deemed sufficient upon mailing to the last known address or upon hand delivery to the owner or owner's representative.
- B. Signs placed in the public right-of-way or any sign posing an immediate danger to the public may be removed by the Dawson County Marshal's Office or the Dawson County Sheriff's Office without notice. Signs placed in the right-of-way are hereby considered litter and shall be remanded to the county transfer station. Signs removed due to an immediate public danger shall be returned to the sign owner, if said owner can be located, in a timely manner.
- C. Revocation of Permits and Licenses. Any person failing to comply with any provision of this ordinance shall be subject to revocation of the business license, work permit or other authorization for the conduct of business and associated work activities within the unincorporated areas of Dawson County.
- D. Stop Work Orders. Any person failing to comply with any provision of this ordinance shall be subject to a Stop Work order. Upon receipt of the Stop Work order, work on any project that is being performed in violation of this ordinance shall immediately stop. Such notice shall be in writing and shall be given to the owner of the property, owner of the sign, the owner's authorized agent or the person or persons in charge of the activity on the property and shall state the conditions under which work may resume. If an emergency exists, then no written notice shall be required.
- E. Violation of Permit. If through inspection it is determined that a person engaged in any activity covered by this ordinance has failed to comply with the ordinance or the conditions of the permit issued, then a written notice to comply shall be served upon that person. The notice shall set forth the measures necessary to achieve compliance and shall state the time within which such measures must be completed. If the person engaged in the activity fails to comply within the time specified, then such person shall be in violation of this ordinance and in addition to other penalties or enforcement, any applicable performance or surety bond shall be subject to forfeiture.

- F. Permit Suspension or Revocation. The permit issued hereunder may be suspended or revoked by the County upon a finding that the holder is in violation of the permit or any portion of this ordinance.
- G. Administrative Fines. Any person violating any provision of this ordinance, permitting conditions, or Stop Work order shall be liable for a civil penalty of not less than \$100.00 per day or not to exceed \$1,000.00 per day. Each day the violation continues shall constitute a separate violation.
- H. Criminal Citation. Any person who shall do anything prohibited by this ordinance or who shall fail to do anything required by this ordinance shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, amenable to the process of the Magistrate Court of Dawson County, and upon conviction, shall be assessed with any penalty, including fine, confinement, or both, allowed by law for the violation of the County resolutions or ordinance. Each day and every day that such violation exists shall be deemed to constitute a separate offense.
- I. Board of Commissioners Action. In addition to any other remedies, any violation of this ordinance may be addressed by the Board of Commissioners of Dawson County by instituting injunction, mandamus, or other appropriate action or proceeding to stop the violation. Such proceeding may be instituted without the necessity of showing the lack of an adequate remedy at law.
- J. Any one or more of the foregoing enforcement provisions may be utilized separately or in combination to achieve compliance with this ordinance.

Section 400 – Abandonment

An abandoned sign must be removed within thirty (30) days from the date official notice is given by the County Manager or designee, the County Marshal, or the Board of Commissioners to the owner by certified mail to the last known address. If an abandoned sign is not removed within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the official notice or if said notice is returned undeliverable, then the County may remove such sign.

Section 500 – Severability

If any paragraph, sub-paragraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or any portion of this ordinance shall be declared invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, or if the provisions of any part of this ordinance as applied to any particular situation or set of circumstances shall be declared invalid or unconstitutional, such invalidity shall not be construed to affect the portions of this ordinance not so held to be invalid or the application of this ordinance to other circumstances not so held to be invalid. It is hereby declared to be the intent of the Board of Commissioners of Dawson County to provide for separable and divisible parts, and does hereby adopt any and all parts hereof as may not be held invalid for any reason.

Section 600 – Revenue Use

The County may make such appropriations from its revenues as it may deem necessary, may accept and apply grants or donations and utilize permit fees collected hereunder, to assist it in carrying out the provisions of this ordinance in connection with the exercise of the powers granted hereunder.

Section 700 – Disclaimer

Nothing in this ordinance shall be construed to abrogate or impair the powers of the courts or of any department of the County to enforce any provisions of its ordinances or regulations nor to prevent or punish violations thereof; and the powers conferred by this ordinance shall be in addition to and supplemental to the powers conferred by any other law.

Section 800 – Repealer Provision

Any ordinance, rule, regulation or other instruction previously approved by the Board of Commissioners which is inconsistent with the provisions of this ordinance is repealed, revoked, and shall be of no further force or effect upon the effective date of this ordinance; but it is hereby provided that any ordinance or law which may be applicable hereto and aid in carrying out and making effective the intent, purpose, and provisions hereof, which shall be liberally construed to be in favor of the County, is hereby adopted as part hereof. A Resolution entitled "Georgia 400 Sign Ordinance" adopted April 6, 1981 and a resolution adopted November 4, 1985 regulating signs on and along county owned and maintained streets and roads are specifically repealed in their entirety.

Section 900 – Effective Date

This ordinance shall be effective on the day of its adoption by the Board of Commissioners of Dawson County.

This ordinance is hereby adopted this 2nd day of June 2011.

ATTEST:



Mike Berg, Chairman
Dawson County Board of Commissioners



Davida Simpson, County Clerk

Vote:

Yes: 4

No: 0

Dates of Public Hearing: March 15, 2011; April 7, 2011; and May 19, 2011

Dates of Advertising: February 23, 2011; March 2, 2011; March 9, 2011; April 27, 2011; and May 4, 2011