

City of Thomson Sign Standards

A. Purpose and Intent.

(a) In order to protect the public safety, including traffic safety, to assure aesthetic harmony and compatibility of signs with surrounding land uses, to enhance the business and economy of the city, to protect the public investment in streets and roads, to maintain the tranquil environment of residential areas, to promote industry and commerce, and to provide for orderly and reasonable display of advertisements for the benefit of all its citizens, the governing authority finds that the improper control of signs would be detrimental to the unique characteristics of the city. The governing authority thus determines that the public health, safety, and welfare require the adoption of this ordinance.

(b) The governing authority finds that signs and advertising are proper and necessary uses of private property and can constitute a legitimate business entitled to the protection of the law. A sign by its very nature is designed to draw an individual's attention to that sign. This characteristic makes signs a valuable medium of communication; however, this same characteristic can distract motorists and pedestrians, thus creating traffic hazards.

(c) The governing authority further finds that the clutter created by an excess in number, size, and height of signs creates a distraction to travelers and negatively impacts the general appearance of an area. Signs may lessen the aesthetic qualities of an area and may intrude upon the residential character of an area, as well as property values.

(d) The governing authority further finds that signs and advertising should be reasonably regulated in the interest of traffic safety, aesthetics and public welfare by the establishment of standards for the location, size, illumination, number, construction, and maintenance of all signs and advertising structures in the city, and to ensure that they are structurally safe and sound.

Note: Signage associated with properties located within the City of Thomson Historical Preservation District must comply with additional guidelines placed on signing within the district. When the guidelines for the Historic Preservation signing are more restrictive than the sign standards contained herein, the Historic Preservation Standards shall prevail.

B. Permitted Signs

Note: For purposes of these standards all signs referenced herein, unless otherwise specified by the City of Thomson, shall be restricted to static signs (non-changeable copy). For change copy or digital signs, see section C(9) below.

Table S:1 Permitted Signs by Zoning District

Zoning District	Sign: Number-Type-Faces	Max. Size (sq. ft.)	Max. Height	Max. Width	Illumination	Other:
R-1 Low Density Residential District	1-Ground-2	4	4'	4'	No	(9)(16)(18)
	1-Window-1	4(7)	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs →	→	→	→	→	Not permitted.
R-1A Medium Density Residential District	1-Ground-2	4	4'	4'	No	(9)(16)(18)
	1-Window-1	4(7)	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs →	→	→	→	→	Not permitted.
R-1B High Density Residential District	1-Ground-2	4	3'	2'	No	(9)(16)(18)
	1-Window-1	4(7)	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs →	→	→	→	→	Not permitted.
TR/R-1 Retirement Residential District	1-Monument-2 →	64	6'	12'	See Section F5	(9)(18)

	1-Ground-2	4	3'	2'	No	← Residents' Signs ⁽¹⁶⁾
	1-Window-1	4 ⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs →	→	→	→	→	Directional and safety only.
TT/C-1 Townhouse/Condominium District	1-Monument-2 →	64	6'	12'	See Section F5	⁽⁹⁾
	1-Ground-2	4	3'	2'	No	← Residents' Signs ⁽¹⁶⁾
	1-Window-1	4 ⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs →	→	→	→	→	Directional and safety only.
R-2 Multifamily Residential District	1-Monument-2 ⁽⁴⁾	64	6'	12'	See Section F5	← Entrance Sign Only ⁽²⁾ ← Rental Office & Each Apartment.
	1-Window-1	4 ⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs →	→	→	→	→	Directional and safety only.
TPUD-1 Planned Unit Development	1- Monument-2, ⁽⁴⁾	64/96 ⁽³⁾	8'	12'	See Section F5	^{(2) (17)(18)}
	Window →	4 ⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A		
	Exterior Wall Signs	20% ⁽⁶⁾	20% wall height	25% wall width		⁽¹⁵⁾
B-2[FS- ⁽¹²⁾] Central Business District	1-Monument-2, ⁽⁴⁾	50	5'	10'	See Section F5	⁽²⁾
	1-Window-1	⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	⁽¹¹⁾
B-2[CW- ⁽¹³⁾] Central Business District	1-Hanging Sign-2 ⁽⁸⁾	12	4'	4'	External Only ⁽¹⁴⁾	See Section F6
	1-Window-1	⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	⁽¹¹⁾
B-1 Highway Business District	1-Monument-2, ⁽⁴⁾	64	6'	12'	See Section F5	^{(2) (11) (17)}
	1-Window-1	⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs	5% ⁽⁶⁾	6'	25% wall width	See Section F5	⁽¹⁵⁾
P-1 Professional District	1-Monument-2, ⁽⁴⁾	64	6'	12'	See Section F5	^{(2) (11)}
	1-Window-1	⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs	5% ⁽⁶⁾	6'	25% wall width	See Section F5	⁽¹⁵⁾
TI/P-1 Institutional/Public District	1-Monument-2, ⁽⁴⁾	64	6'	12'	See Section F5	^{(2) (11)}
	1-Window-1	⁽⁷⁾	N/A	N/A	No	
	Exterior Wall Signs	5% ⁽⁶⁾	6'	25% wall width	See Section F5	⁽¹⁵⁾
I-1 Light and Wholesale Industrial District	1- Monument-2, ⁽⁴⁾	98	8'	12'	See Section F5	⁽¹¹⁾
	Window →	→	→	→	→	
	Exterior Wall Signs	5% ⁽⁶⁾	20% wall height	25% wall width	See Section F5	⁽¹⁵⁾

Footnotes:

(1.) A double standard(pole sign with the name of the development or shopping center at the top, with the tenant names listed beneath. Ground clearance of 8' below bottom tenant sign is required unless otherwise approved.

(2.) Individual tenant street /exterior signs are prohibited!

- (3:) 64 sq. ft. if heated building space is less than 50,000 sq. ft., 96 sq ft if (heated) building space is greater than 50,000 sq. ft.
- (4:) For developments located on corner lots see Section C7.
- (5:) See Section F11.
- (6:) Exterior wall signage may cover 5% of each exterior wall (excluding any openings - doors, windows, exhaust fans, attachments, etc.). Also see Section E and F.
- (7:) Opaque window signs may not cover more than 33% of the total area of window.
- (8:) Hanging signs must not exceed 1" in thickness unless otherwise approved.
- (9:) For residential subdivision entrance sign, see Section C1.
- (10:) (Reserved)
- (11:) Signing on the back of buildings is permitted but limited to hanging signs or exterior wall signs (See footnote 6 above).
- (12:) For lots having a **Free-Standing (FS)** building with front yard areas suitable for monument sign placement. Example - Dozier Realty, Citizens Bank, Huddle House, Sun Trust, Plunkett, and Hammond.
- (13:) For commercial buildings sharing one or more of its exterior walls as a **Common Wall (CW)** with an adjacent structure and those locations not having a suitable yard area for a FS sign. Such signs shall be anchored securely to the wall and supported by a decorative steel support. Sign Placement: Minimum height above sidewalk or common grade - 9 feet. Maximum height above same - 18 feet. Maximum protrusion from exterior wall (including support) - 5 feet. Also see Section (F).
- (14:) Unless otherwise approved - Incandescent bulb (not tube) lighting only, should not exceed 100w. Light flooding beyond sign face is prohibited.
- (15:) Maximum sign depth (thickness) - 8 inches (8").
- (16:) Static message signs only.
- (17:) Upon review and approval, a mansard roof signs may be approved if mounted in a vertical (0° - Upright) position with the mounting supports recessed so as to not be readily visible.
- (18:) Upon review and approval, churches within or locating within residential districts may be permitted a monument sign up to 64 sq. ft.

C. Additional Permitted Signs

The following signs are also permitted:

1. **Subdivision Entrance Signs:** Unless otherwise referenced or specified, subdivision entrance signs shall be of monument type and not exceeding 64 square feet.
2. **Entrance/Exit Signs:**
In the commercial and industrial zones: Two single or double-faced pole or monument style signs each clearly indicating "Entrance" and "Exit" respectively. Each sign may not exceed three (3) feet in height, nor three (3) square feet per face. Such signs shall be internally illuminated only and may be placed within one (1) foot of the right-of-way. Such signs shall not obstruct the view of on-coming traffic.
3. **Obscured Signs:** Any sign not visible from the outside of a structure is not regulated by this section.
4. **Holiday Lighting:** Holiday lights and decorations with no commercial message.
5. **Construction/Home Improvement Signs:**
 - a.) Residential home construction and improvement signs may be placed on the site of the construction or repair provided all such signs do not exceed nine (9) sq. ft. in size and are removed within seven (7) days after completion of work.
 - b.) Commercial and Industrial construction signs displaying the intended occupant (i.e. "Coming Soon") or the names of the contractor(s) or subcontractor(s) may be placed on the site of the construction or repair provided each sign does not exceed thirty-two (32) sq. ft. and are removed within seven (7) days after cessation or completion of construction.
6. **Temporary Type Signs:** See Section H
7. **Corner Lot Signage:**
Upon approval, those developments having more than one entrance may be permitted a monument sign at each entrance provided there is 1,000' of frontage between each sign.
8. **Election/Candidate Signs:**
Election/Candidate signs shall require no permit and may be permitted in all zoning districts. Such signs shall be limited to one double face sign per road frontage and shall not exceed six (6) sq. ft. in any residential district, nor 32 sq. ft. in any non-residential zoning district. Signs shall be permitted twelve (12) weeks prior to the election and should be removed within five (5) days following any election or runoff election and shall thereafter be forfeited to the City for immediate removal. All such signs shall conform to any other applicable provisions of these regulations.
9. **Electronic and/or Manual Change Copy Signs.** Changeable Electronic Variable Message Sign

(CEVMS) may be incorporated into an approved and permitted monument sign only.

Such CEVMS monument signs:

- a. Shall be located within the parameters of the permitted monument sign.
- b. Shall display (in permanent, non-digital form) the name of the development. Such name shall be displayed above the digital portion of such digital sign.
- c. May be two sided with such sides being parallel (V-shaped not permitted) and, unless otherwise approved, with its faces positioned perpendicular to the roadway.
- d. Shall have a message duration of each display (ad.) between 4 and 10 seconds – 8 seconds is recommended. Periodic or continuous scrolling messages are prohibited. Rapid “Vegas style” flashing messages are prohibited.
- e. Transition time between messages of between 1 and 4 seconds – 1 to 2 seconds is recommended.
- f. Intensity shall not be unreasonably bright for the safety of the motoring public.
- g. As a condition of approval the owner of the sign must agree to display public service announcements upon request.

10. Weekend Directional Signs.

Weekend directional signs shall be limited to garage, yard, and estate sale signs and are permitted in all zoning districts. Applications, signs, and sign approval may be obtained at City Hall (see sample sign below).



Such signs shall conform to the following Rules and Regulations for weekend directional signs:

- a. Garage sale signs require a permit.
- b. Only signs acquired at City Hall are permitted – NOTE: Signs CANNOT be altered in any way – NO BALLOONS.
- c. No additional writing is permitted on the sign.
- d. Signs may be placed two days prior to the sale.
- e. Signs must be removed immediately after the sale.
- f. No sign can be placed in a median.
- g. No sign can be affixed to a utility pole, tree, traffic sign, or other structure not approved by the City of Thomson.
- h. No sign can be placed more than three (3) feet above the ground.
- i. Signs placed in public right-of-way must be at least 5 feet from the curb or asphalt, and no more than 10 feet from the curb or asphalt. Signs must be placed within 50' of an intersection.
- j. All illegal signs will be removed.

D. Exempt Signs

No sign permit shall be required to display any of the following signs in any zoning district; provided, however, that the signs comply with the requirements set forth for each such type of sign; that all other regulations in these standards shall apply to such signs, including, but not limited to, location requirements and sign prohibitions; and that no such sign shall be illuminated.

1. (Reserved)

2. Real estate signs.

- a. One real estate sign per single-family residential lot, not exceeding six square feet in area, is

permitted, but shall be removed within five (5) days of the closing or consummation of an agreement for the sale, rental or lease of the property advertised.

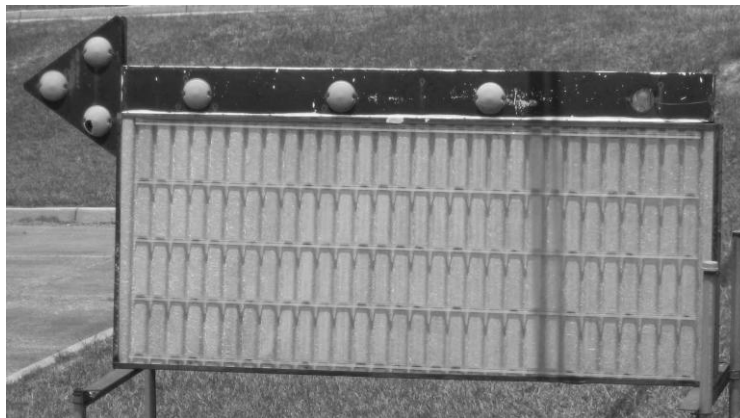
- b. Real estate signs shall be allowed on other than single-family lots, not to exceed 16 square feet in area, and shall be limited to two such signs per project, or one such sign per entrance. Such signs shall be removed within five (5) days of the closing or consummation of the sale, rental or lease of the property as, advertised.
3. Real estate directional signs.
 - a. Real estate directional signs may not contain any commercial message or advertisement, but may contain the name, trademark or trade symbol of the development or property to which directions are being provided and/or the real estate company offering the property.
 - b. (Reserved)
 - c. Real estate directional signs shall be erected and maintained only with the permission of the owner of the property upon which the sign is erected.
 - d. Real estate directional signs shall not exceed a maximum size of four square feet.
 - e. Real estate directional signs shall not be illuminated.
 - f. Real estate directional signs shall be removed within five days of the consummation of the sale or lease of the property to which directions are provided on such sign.
 - g. There may be no more than four real estate directional signs providing directions to any one residential, commercial or industrial development, or more than two signs providing directions to any one lot.
 - h. Real estate signs located within a public right-of-way shall be removed. Also see Section E(16).
4. Worship directional signs.
 - a. Worship directional signs are allowed in all zoning districts.
 - b. Worship directional signs shall be erected and maintained only with the permission of the owner of the property upon which the sign is erected.
 - c. Worship directional signs shall not exceed a maximum size of six square feet.
 - d. Worship directional signs shall not be lighted.
 - e. There shall be no more than four worship directional signs providing directions to any church or other place of worship on any intersection or any other location.
 - f. Worship directional signs shall be erected on supports provided specifically for that purpose, and no more than one such support may be erected at any street corner.
 - g. Worship directional signs located within a public right-of-way shall be removed. Also see Section E(16).
5. Official signs. Signs placed by a governing body including, but not limited to, any federal, state, county or municipality. When appropriate, city officials will make an effort to comply with the sign regulations contained herein.
6. Private and public recreational support signs. Private and public recreational activities support signs shall be those signs erected on inside walls, fences, dugouts, press boxes, stadium stands, concession stands, ticket booths and fencing for race tracks which are sold by private and/or public organizations to support recreational activities of the type sponsored by the City, the Board of Education and/or Recreation Department.
7. Temporary signs for civic, religious and school organizations or special events.
 - a. Temporary signs for civic, religious and school organizations or special events, either on-site or off-site, shall include, but are not limited to, special event notices, temporary meeting location notices or signs promoting the activities of an organization. Such activities shall be nonprofit activities.
 - b. Any temporary sign for civic, religious and school organizations or special events shall be allowed in all zoning districts for a period of 30 days.
 - c. Temporary signs for civic, religious and school organizations or special events shall not exceed 8 square feet in area, and shall be located at least five feet from the right-of-way.
 - d. No part of a temporary sign for civic, religious and school organizations or special events shall be located in or on a public right-of-way.
 - e. To prevent wind damage to a temporary sign for civic, religious, and school organizations or special events, or other property, the sign must be securely anchored to the site in a manner approved by Planning Commission.
8. Official flags.
 - a. Official flags may be displayed on a lot as follows:

1. The official flag of the United States of America or of the State of Georgia may be displayed on any lot. If placed on a flagpole such flagpole shall not exceed the height limitation of the zoning district in which the flagpole is located.
 2. No more than one official flag, excluding the official flag of the United States of America or of the State of Georgia, shall be displayed on any one lot by a person occupying said lot, and such official flag shall not exceed 32 square feet in area, or be located on a flagpole that exceeds the height limitation of the zoning district in which the flag is located.
- b. The official flag of the United States of America shall be flown in accordance with protocol established by the Congress of the United States, as applicable.

E. Prohibited Signs, Displays, or Advertising

Signs which are prohibited include, but are not limited to:

1. Signs, displays, advertising, or objects for sale, which are located on any public right-of-way or sidewalk. Also see Section E(16).
2. Roof signs; including, but not limited to signs which are mounted or suspended from a structure's roof, top of parapet, or any wall or façade sign extending above the parapet or the upper extent of the structure's wall.
3. Portable signs including, but not limited to, portable box signs, posters, and placards as seen below. Those in existence upon the adoption of this ordinance shall be removed within ninety (90) days.



4. Banners in existence prior to the adoption of this ordinance shall be removed within ninety (90) days. See Section H.
5. Animated signs involving the movement, flapping, or rotation of the sign itself or portions or parts thereof.
6. Flashing, blinking, or signs of varying light intensity with the exception of signs referenced in section C(9).
7. Exposed neon or signs containing exposed neon tubing which are not enclosed within a channel or

box lettering.

8. Signs which contain, or are an imitation of, an official traffic sign or signal, or can be confused with an official traffic sign including those signs employing the word "Stop", "Yield", "Go", etc.
9. Signs that have been abandoned, including signs that advertise an activity, business, product or service no longer active or in existence.
10. Signs not in good repair, including any sign which is in a state of disrepair or disassembly, or any sign which has its internal lighting exposed to view for more than thirty days.
11. Signs or advertising devices attached directly onto any vehicle parked for more than 48 hours so as to be visible from a public right-of-way, except for work vehicles of a business, and common carriers or other vehicles used for daily transportation with a valid license plate.
12. Signs attached to any mansard roof, awning, or roof overhang, unless otherwise approved by the Planning Commission.
13. Canopy or awnings having a commercial message sign attached to or incorporated within the canopy or awning, with the exception of the name and address of the establishment.
14. Strip panel rotating signs.
15. Signs emitting any audible sounds, message, smoke, fumes, or other emission.
16. Prohibited Signs – Forfeited.
 - a. Any sign, display, advertisement, installed or placed on public property including right-of-ways or sidewalk except in conformance with the requirements of these standards.
 - b. Any item or object for sale which is placed on any public right-of-way or sidewalk shall immediately be removed by its owner.
 - c. Signs attached to, or painted on, any street signs or markers, traffic control signs or devices, any sign pole, fence, utility pole or post, tree, rock, or other natural object or feature.

Such signs may be forfeited to the public and subject to immediate confiscation. In addition to other remedies hereunder, the City shall have the right to recover from the sign owner or person(s) placing or maintaining such sign the full costs of removal and disposal of such sign.

17. Signs mounted to fences and walls other than for public safety or as may be permitted in Section D(6).

F. Standards

1. Computation of Sign Area:

The area of a sign shall be computed as the area within the smallest square, rectangle, or portion thereof enclosing, or which would have enclosed, the outer limits of the sign face and sign frame or cabinet, base, text, material, texture, embellishment, or color forming an integral part of the sign or used to differentiate the sign face and frame from the structure upon which it is placed. The calculated area representing the standards/support poles supporting such sign and that open area associated with such supports shall be excluded from such calculation. In the case of monument signs, the area of the sign shall include the size of the sign, base, and any side supports or columns.
2. Content:

Any sign, display or device allowed under these standards may contain any commercial or non-commercial message, except that such messages cannot be profane, depict obscenity as defined by O.C.G.A. 16-12-80, nor can it depict sexual conduct or sexually explicit nudity as defined by O.C.G.A. 36-60-3, nor advertise any illegal activity.
3. Embellishments:

Sign embellishments (including protrusions) shall not constitute greater than 20% of the surface of the sign face or perimeter. Protrusions greater than twelve inches from the sign face and eighteen inches from the sign perimeter must receive review and approval from the Planning Commission.

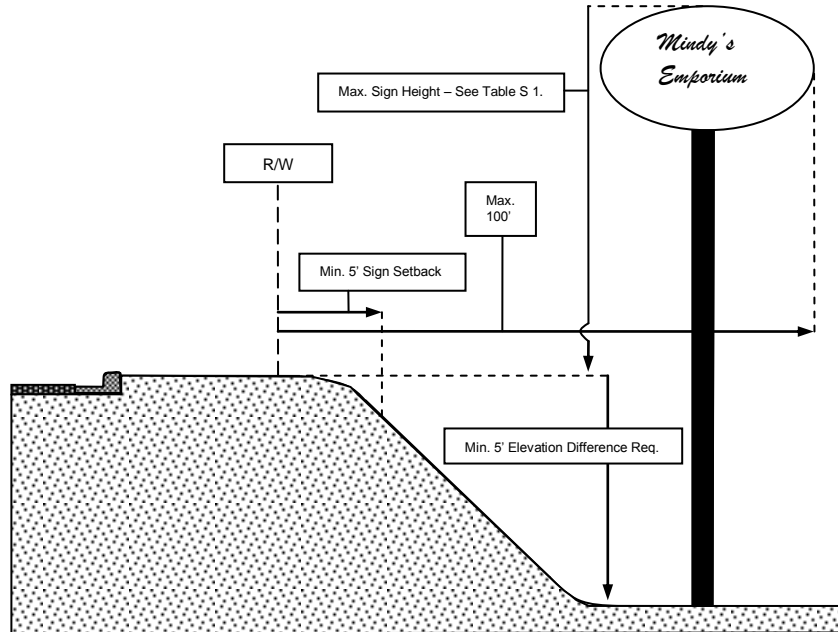
4. Number:
For the purposes of determining the number of signs, ground signs shall be equal to the number of sign structures. All other non-ground signs shall be considered to be a single display surface or display device containing elements organized, related and composed to form a unit. Where matter is displayed in a random manner without organized relationship of elements, such elements shall be considered to be a single sign.
5. Illumination:
 - a. Unless otherwise approved by the Planning Commission, as in the case of grandfathered commercial uses and approved conditional uses in single family residential districts, ground signs shall not be internally illuminated in any single-family residential district. All external lighting shall be positioned and shielded so that the light source cannot be seen directly by any passing motorist nor cause detriment to any surrounding business or residence.
 - b. For non-residential land uses, no sign shall be illuminated if located within 100' of a residence unless otherwise approved by the Planning Commission.
 - c. (Reserved)
 - d. All externally illuminated signs shall utilize low wattage luminaries, mounted in fixtures designed to direct the light and eliminate light trespass.
 - e. All internally illuminated signs shall utilize low wattage luminaries designed to reduce light glow.
 - f. All signs over six feet in height, if illuminated, shall be internally illuminated or by external lighting fixtures located below the sign area.
6. Support and Stabilization
No signage shall employ the use of guy wires or other external support bracing for stabilization. Whether placed permanently or temporarily, and unless otherwise approved by the Planning Commission, all ground signs shall be affixed to the ground. However, in the case of hanging signs an external brace/hanger shall be permitted but shall not employ the use of guy wires for stabilization.
7. Setbacks
All ground signs or portions thereof shall be setback at least five feet (5') from any public right-of-way or property line. No permanently affixed ground sign shall interfere with any public utility, or vehicular line of sight.
8. Corner Visibility
No sign or sign structure above the height of three feet may be sited within fifteen feet (15') of the intersection of the right-of-way lines of opposing streets.
9. Fire Safety
No sign or sign structure may be erected or maintained which obstructs any form of fire escape or fire lane.
10. Overhanging Signs
Unless otherwise approved, no exterior free standing sign, or portion thereof, may project or extend over any residential, commercial, or industrial structure, driveway, or parking area.
11. Sign Material
All sign materials must be approved by the Planning Commission. Materials and design which are not commonly used in sign construction, are aesthetically inappropriate, or may detract from the zoning district, property, or property value are prohibited. At its discretion the Planning Commission may defer the review of the sign material to the Historic Preservation Commission.
12. Placement
Unless otherwise approved, façade signing shall be centered on the building face.

13. Sign Height

The height of signs shall be governed by the standards specified within each zoning district as found in Table S1.

Elevation Variance: The Planning Commission may grant an administrative variance regarding the height of a sign when installed immediately adjacent to, or within one hundred feet (100') of a right-of-way where the unaltered common grade at the sign base is greater than five feet (5') below the common grade of the roadway as determined by the Planning Commission. **See Figure S1 below.**

Figure S1: Elevation Variance



G. (Reserved)

H. Short Duration Temporary Signs (1-14 days):

The following standards shall govern Short Duration Temporary Signs:

1. Short Duration Temporary signs may be erected in any zoning district with the exception of B-2.
2. Short Duration Temporary signs may be erected for a maximum of two weeks.
3. No more than one sign can be erected on any lot at one time.
4. Such signs shall be made of water proof material.
5. Such signs must be attached to its own mounting device. The mounting must be secure to prevent the sign from blowing off of the device. The mounting device or sign should bear the name and phone number of the party responsible for the device.
6. Short Duration Temporary signs cannot be placed at the same specified location more than four (4) times per year.
7. Sign placement shall not violate the provisions of Section E (16) of this ordinance.
8. Short Duration Temporary signs may include the following:
 - a. Signs not exceeding six feet in height, nor sixteen sq.ft. per side, and shall not be more than two (2) sided.
 - b. Banners.

I. Procedures

1. Sign Permit:

a. A sign permit is not required for the erection of an exempt sign referenced in Section D or window signs, however, all signs using electrical wiring and connections shall require an

electrical permit.

b. For all other signs a sign permit is required before a ground or wall sign may be erected; and before an existing sign may be enlarged, relocated, or substantially improved.

c. Effective upon approval of a sign application/permit any and all liability for cost of injury or damage shall be assumed by the permittee.

d. If the proposed sign is to be placed within the Historic Preservation District, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required to obtain the sign permit.

2. Application:

Except for Weekend Directional Signs as referenced in Section C(10), applications for sign permits shall be filed by the sign owner or owner's agent with the Planning Commission upon forms as provided, to include such additional information as may be requested.

3. Expiration Date:

A sign permit shall become null and void if the sign installation or erection for which the permit was issued has not been completed within six months after the date of issuance, provided however, that an extension of the permit may be granted by the Planning Commission.

4. Processing of Application:

Upon receipt of an application for a sign as permitted under the provisions of these standards, the Planning Commission, shall examine and process the application within fifteen (15) working days. A permit may be denied if the applicant, landowner, or lessee or other party is presently maintaining any sign in violation of the sign provision of this Section.

5. Fees:

No permit should be issued until the appropriate application has been filed with the Planning Commission and the appropriate fee has been paid, such fees having from time to time been established by the mayor and council.

J. Inspection

Effective with the adoption of this ordinance, enforcement personnel for the City of Thomson are hereby empowered to enter upon or into a building, structure, or premises upon which a sign is located for the purpose of inspecting the sign, its structural and electrical connections, and to ensure compliance with the provision of these standards.

K. Appeals and Variances

1. Procedure upon Denial

Upon denial of an application for a sign permit the aggrieved party may appeal any decision to the City Council.

2. Variances

1. The City Council may grant variances from the provisions of these standards.

2. Administrative. Administrative variances may be granted by the Planning Commission provided any variance that is granted should conform to the intent and purpose of these sign standards.

L. Construction and Maintenance

It shall be unlawful to erect or place any sign which does not conform to the requirements of these standards.

1. All signs for which a permit is required, together with all their supports, shall be kept in constant repair and unless constructed of galvanized or non-corroding metal shall periodically be given a protective coating. The area immediately in front of all freestanding signs shall be maintained free of high weeds, grass, and debris.

2. The owner or entity shall be required to remove or have removed from the premises discarded or unusable paper, sign faces, parts and debris resulting from the changing of the advertising copy or message or maintenance of any sign or sign structure.

M. Enforcement

1. Removal with Notice
City of Thomson enforcement personnel may order the removal of any sign in violation of these standards. Such notice shall be given to the owner of record of the property upon which the sign is, or is proposed to be erected following the notice provision found herein. If a sign permit was previously issued, such removal notice shall operate to revoke such permit. The removal order shall be issued only after the appropriate party fails to comply with the terms of such notice after the receipt of written notice of non-compliance from the enforcement personnel.
2. Removal without notice
The enforcement personnel of the City of Thomson may, upon passage of these sign regulations, remove, or direct the removal of any sign in violation of these standards, without giving notice to any party, if:
 1. Said sign or any portion of said sign is upon the public right-of-way or upon other public property.
 2. Said sign poses an immediate threat to the life, health, or safety of any member of the public.
3. Cost of removal
The cost of the removal of any sign as provided for in these standards shall be the responsibility of the property owner and without liability to the City of Thomson, its officers, agents and employees. If removed by the City, the City shall be afforded all means available to remedy the collection for the cost associated with such removal. Removed signs shall be temporarily stored, and if remain unclaimed for more than sixty (60) days from the date of removal, such sign shall be considered forfeited and may be disposed of in accordance with State law.
4. Invalid Permits
The enforcement personnel may issue a removal order when it has been determined that a permit was improperly issued as a result of misstatement of fact, or fraud, that the sign has not been placed or constructed in compliance with these standards or with the specifications of the application or site plans, that the sign permit has expired, or that the sign is otherwise not in compliance with the provision of these sign standards.
5. Non-Conforming Signs
 - a. Signs which do not comply with these standards but were legally placed before the effective date of this Ordinance shall become non-conforming with respect to the requirements set forth herein. Signs which were illegally erected, established or maintained with respect to the applicable requirements of prior Ordinances shall be removed or brought into compliance herewith. Non-conforming signs made of paper, cloth, or other non-durable material, all temporary signs other than those permitted therein, and any signs that are not permanently affixed to a building or the ground, or are located within a public right-of-way, shall be removed within 90 days of the adoption of this ordinance (also see Section E(3)(4)).
 - b. A non-conforming sign shall not be replaced by another non-conforming sign except that the substitution or interchange of advertising panels (faces), or demountable material on non-conforming signs shall be permitted. Should non-conforming signs be removed intentionally, unintentionally, accidentally, or by natural causes, such signs shall not be replaced unless in conformity with the provisions of this ordinance, unless otherwise approved.
 - c. Minor repairs and maintenance of non-conforming signs such as repainting, electrical repairs and neon tubing may be permitted. However, no structural repairs or changes in the size or shape of the sign shall be permitted except to bring such sign into conformity with the provisions of this ordinance.
 - d. If a non-conforming sign must be removed due to a City or State road improvement or other

public project, the Planning Commission may authorize the relocation of such sign. Such sign shall, however, meet the district setback requirements.

6. Penalties

Without limitation, sign erectors or owners, property owners and/or associated parties may be cited for the violation of any provision of these sign standards.

N. Definitions

When used in this ordinance, the following words and phrases shall have the meaning given in this section or by the City of Thomson or its agent. The definition or meaning of any word associated with this ordinance may be defined by use of The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition, Copyright © 1991, with interpretation by the City of Thomson or its agent as to the applicability of the definition to the provisions of this ordinance.

ALLEY: A public way dedicated to and accepted by a governing body, providing a secondary means of access to abutting properties within a block.

BANNER: A pliable, weather-proof form of notice or advertisement that is tied or hooked to a fixed means of support. Also see Section H.

BUILDING: Any structure attached to the ground and intended to provide shelter or housing for, or enclosure of persons, animals, plants, or chattels. Also, see "Structure".

BUILDING, HEIGHT OF: The vertical distance from the average elevation of the proposed finished grade at the front of the building to the highest point of the roof, to the mean height level between the eaves and ridge for gable, hip, and gambrel roofs, and to the deck line for mansard roofs.

COUNCIL: The elected City Council for the City of Thomson. In the context of this ordinance the term "council" shall include the mayor unless otherwise referenced.

EMBELLISHMENT(S): A structural protrusion or addition to or from a sign face or frame generally for the purpose of adding a visual dimensional image to the sign or sign face.

FRONTAGE (BUILDING): The distance along the front of a building.

GOVERNING AUTHORITY: Shall mean the Mayor and Council of the City of Thomson.

HEIGHT: Shall mean, when referring to signs, the distance measured from ground level to the highest point on the sign.

LOT: A parcel of land which satisfies the applicable area and dimensional requirements for the general zoning district within which it is located, or upon which exists a legal nonconforming use or structure and which has frontage along or legal access to a public street, and is intended as a unit for transfer of ownership or for land development. A recorded lot shall have a separate tax parcel reference number designated in the office of the County Tax Commissioner and/or the County Tax Assessor.

MAYOR: Mayor of the City of Thomson.

NONCONFORMING USE/STRUCTURE: A structure or use of land legally existing at the time of the enactment of this ordinance or at the time of a zoning amendment which does not conform with the applicable regulations of the general zoning district in which it is located.

O.C.G.A.: Official Code of Georgia Annotated.

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT/PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD): An area of land intended to be developed by a landowner, developer, corporation, group, etc., as a single development, the design of which may incorporate multiple densities or uses. A planned development may be designated as a planned unit development (PUD), a mixed use development (MUD), shopping center, office park, or other similar development so designated by the Planning Commission.

[For residential planned development refer to the city's Subdivision Ordinance.]

PROFESSIONAL: When used in connection with "use," "office," and "occupancy," the term Professional is defined as a

use or occupancy by persons generally engaged in rendering a high or technical degree of personal, executive, or administrative services or activities, including but not limited to accountants, architects, engineers, land surveyors, doctors, lawyers, planning and zoning officials, stockbrokers, and administrative agencies considered professional in character. Occupations that are considered professional in nature typically are represented by national organizations which promulgate ethical codes and standards of conduct for persons employed in that trade. These national organizations also provide a forum for exchange of ideas and may issue licenses for persons practicing the professional trade. This term may not include those persons defined as professional by the business license provisions of the state of Georgia.

PUD: See Planned Unit Development above.

SIGN: Any display or words, shapes, or images designed to convey a message to the viewer, located within or on the exterior of any dwelling, building, object or structure, or located on any lot, or upon a dedicated supporting structure, object, device, including poles, banners, windows or other devices located upon such lot.

SIGN FACE: SINGLE

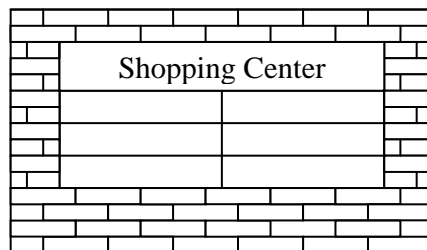
Any advertising sign having a single face or board for advertising display. Such sign is positioned so that the display face is parallel to the public thoroughfare.

DOUBLE

Any advertising sign having two separate or independent faces or boards for advertising display. Such double face signs shall have the advertising boards facing in opposite or nearly opposite directions and positioned so that the display faces are perpendicular to the public thoroughfare.

SIGN, GROUND: A sign that is permanently affixed to the ground and is wholly independent of a building for support. Freestanding signs are included in this definition, as are signs on poles, frames, or other mounting structures other than buildings. Not to be confused with monument signs.

SIGN, MONUMENT: A ground sign commonly used to advertise the name of the development or establishment and may, or may not, display a list of tenants. Such sign shall conform to the dimensional criteria referenced in each zoning district and shall be constructed of approved brick or stone with the advertising or name element of the sign being fully framed by or within the brick or stone face. Such sign face or cabinet may incorporate brick/stone columns on each side of the monument face. Unless otherwise approved, such columns shall be limited to three (3) feet in width and may not extend more than three (3) feet above the top of the sign face.



SIGN, PORTABLE: Signs which are themselves portable, movable, transportable, or designed as such, or are attached to a portable fixture such as vehicles, trailers, movable structures, or attached to approved sign structures which are not permanently anchored to the ground or a wall. Such signs include, but are not limited to, "A" frame, sidewalk, sandwich, trailer signs, portable box signs, curb-type signs, banners, posters or placards. Inflatable figures and objects (e.g., creatures, beer cans) also fall into this category. For clarification, banners may be permitted on a temporary basis under Section H of this ordinance.

SIGN, PUBLIC PURPOSE AND SAFETY: A sign erected by a municipal, county, state or federal governmental agency or office in furtherance of official business, public purposes, or public safety.

SIGN, WEEKEND: A garage, yard, or estate sale sign. Also see Section C(10) of this ordinance.

SIGN, WINDOW: A sign adhered to the interior or exterior of a see through window. Such sign must be supported by the window glass or window frame.

STREET: A dedicated and accepted public right-of-way which has been improved to provide a principal means of motor vehicle access to abutting properties.

STRUCTURE: Anything constructed or erected, the use of which requires a location on the ground, or attached to something having a location on the ground and extending twelve (12) inches above common grade.

VARIANCE: The application and granting of relief from any of the dimensional standards set forth in this ordinance as granted by the Thomson City Council.