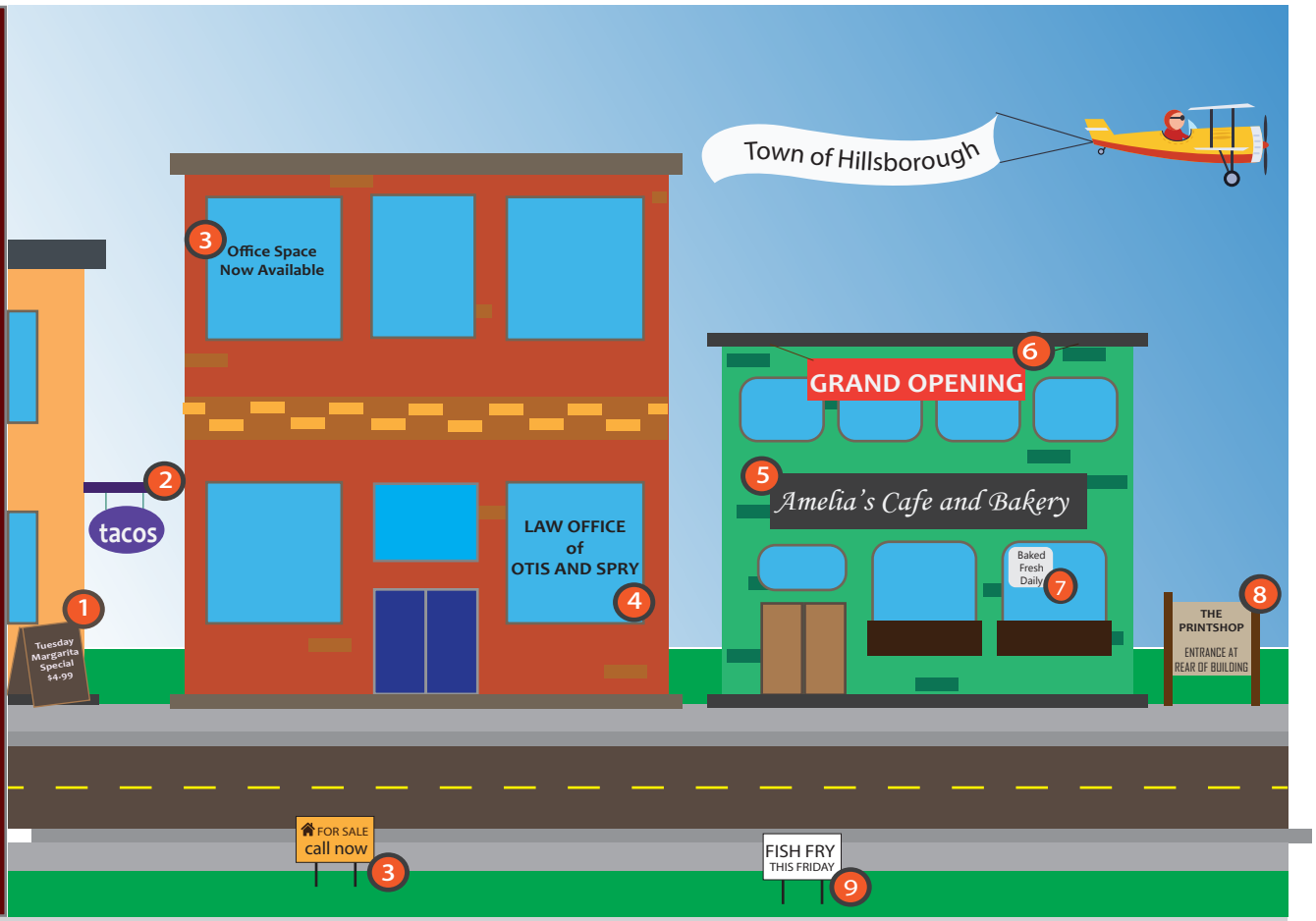
SIGNAGE 101

A Brief Guide to Town of Hillsborough Signage Regulations for downtown businesses



The following signage guidelines are based on the Town of Hillsborough Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). For further detail, please reach out directly to Town staff or refer to Section 6.18 of the UDO. These guidelines, though useful, are not comprehensive.
Planning Department (919) 296-9470

Please note that the Town of Hillsborough does not regulate sign message but does regulate characteristics such as lighting, location, and size.

WHO

Business owners, event organizers, real estate developers, residents or any one interested in posting a sign in the Town limits should consult the sign ordinance to ensure the proposed signs are permissable.

WHAT

The following are examples of types of signs permitted in Town. When planning to install a sign, please check in with the Planning Department to determine permit requirements.

1 SANDWICH BOARD SIGNS

No taller than 4 feet; up to 6 sf per side. May only be displayed during business hours. Must be located out of pedestrian path. May be wood or metal material. One board per lot.

2 WALL MOUNTED SIGNS

4 5 7

32 sf maximum of sign surface. Includes hanging arm signs, posters, banners, window lettering or other advertising material oriented toward the public.

8 FREESTANDING SIGN

In downtown: 20 sf per sign side for lots zoned CC or lots with 50 ft or less of frontage. Must observe 10 ft setback, 7 ft maximum height. One per parcel.

3 REAL ESTATE SIGNS

One sign is permitted on each street front. Not to exceed 4 sf of signage on 1 acre lots, may be up to 32 sf on lots over 1 acre.

6 GRAND OPENING BANNERS

May be displayed for no more than 30 days. One per business. 32 sf maximum. No permit required.

9 SPECIAL EVENT SIGN

For government-sponsored or non-profit events. Allowed 14 days prior to event. No more than 6 signs; 1 on-site, 1 at Welcome to Hillsborough sign, 4 off-site.

APPLY for sign permits at 101 E Orange Street, Hillsborough, NC 27278 || CALL with questions or concerns (919) 296-9470

LIGHTEN UP! WHEN and WHERE is illumination appropriate?

Directional light fixtures must be TOP-MOUNTED so that lighting shines downward

For ground mounted signs (similar to 8) that are 5' or less, ground lighting is acceptable given that lighting is shielded to illuminate the sign only. We've got to keep our pedestrians, neighbors, and drivers safe from glare after all!

- No illuminated signs are allowed in residential zoning districts, except signs marking a development's entrance
- Freestanding signs 8 and wall mounted signs 7 may not be illuminated when the business is CLOSED.
- Flashing or intermittent lights or lights of changing degrees of intensity are not permitted.
- Internally lit signs are not permitted in the Historic District

NOW ENTERING TOWN ZONING LIMITS

THE FOLLOWING SIGN CHARACTERISTICS ARE NOT PERMITTED

- ⊘ No temporary signs are to be affixed on any utility pole, tree, rock, or other object.
- ⊘ No devices consisting of flags, banners, streamers, pennants, windblown propellers, balloons, flashing lights, rotating lights, strobe lights, florescent lights, rotating or other moving or apparently moving installations are permitted. LED message signs are not permitted.
- ⊘ No temporary commercial signs, except those advertising special events which have first acquired a Special Event Sign Permit are permitted.
- ⊘ Off-site signage for commercial businesses are not permitted.

BUSINESS AS USUAL NO PERMIT NECESSARY

THE FOLLOWING SIGNS DO NOT REQUIRE A ZONING COMPLIANCE PERMIT*

- ✓ Signs posting addresses, phone numbers, post office box numbers
- ✓ Signs related to private parking, warning against trespass or danger from animals
- ✓ Flags or insignia of governmental or non-profit organization when not displayed in connection to commercial activity; 1 US flag and 1 NC flag allowed per business
- ✓ Memorial signs bearing names and construction dates of building
- ✓ Real estate signs, construction identification signs, yard or garage sale signs

*Though no Zoning Compliance Permit is required, these signs will require a Certificate of Appropriateness when located in the Historic District. Additionally, these signs may be subject to limitations on size and number.

HOW

Zoning Compliance Permit applications are available online at www.hillsboroughnc.gov/zoningpermit

For properties located within the Historic District, a Certificate of Appropriateness application will also be necessary, which is available at hillsboroughnc.gov/coa

Planning staff is ready to help! If you have any questions or would like assistance filling out your permit application, give us a call at (919) 296-9470 and we'll get you moving in the right direction.

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