

11-1 PURPOSE

This sign ordinance is adopted under the zoning authority of the County in furtherance of the more general purposes set forth in this Ordinance.

The purpose of these sign regulations are:

- To encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication in the County while preserving the rights of free speech under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution;
- To maintain and enhance the aesthetic environment and the County's ability to attract sources of economic development and growth;
- To improve pedestrian and traffic safety;
- To minimize the possible adverse effect of signs on nearby public and private property; and
- To enable the fair and consistent enforcement of these sign restrictions.

11-2 APPLICABILITY

A sign may be constructed, erected, placed, established, painted, created, or maintained in the County only in conformance with the standards, procedures, exemptions, and other requirements of this Ordinance. The effect of this Ordinance as more specifically set forth herein is:

- To establish a permit system to allow a variety of types of signs subject to the standards and the permit procedures of this Ordinance;
- To allow certain signs that are small, unobtrusive, and incidental to the principal use of the respective lots on which they are located, subject to the substantive requirements of this Ordinance, but without a requirement for permits;
- To prohibit all signs not expressly permitted by this Ordinance; and
- To provide for the enforcement of the provisions of this Ordinance.

11-3 ALTERATION OF SIGN FACE

The physical alteration of a sign face or supporting structure shall be considered the same as construction of a new sign which shall require a permit and conformity to all the dimensional requirements of this Ordinance.

11-4 SIGNS ON PUBLIC PROPERTY FORFEITED

Any sign installed or placed on public property or within a public right-of-way, except in conformance with the requirements of this Ordinance, shall be forfeited to the public and is subject to confiscation. In addition to other remedies hereunder, the Administrator shall have

the right to recover from the owner or person placing such a sign the full costs of removal and disposal of such sign.

11-5 DEFINITIONS

The terms used in this Section shall have the meaning assigned herein. Any term not defined herein shall have the meaning assigned in Appendix A to this Ordinance.

A-Frame Sign - A portable sign comprised of two separate panels or faces joined at the top and spread apart at the bottom to form the base on which the sign stands.

Animation - The movement, or the optical illusion of movement of any part of the sign structure, design or pictorial segment including the movement of any illumination or the flashing, scintillating or varying of light intensity. The automatic changing of all or any part of the facing of a sign shall be considered to be animation. Also included in this definition are signs having "chasing action" which is the action of a row of lights commonly used to create the appearance of motion.

Balloon - A nonporous bag of material filled with heated or non-heated air or gas so as to rise or float in the atmosphere.

Banner - A sign or outside advertising display having the character, letters, illustrations, ornamentations, symbol, color or visual representation applied to cloth, paper, vinyl, fabric, plastic, or like kind of malleable material with or without frame.

Building Front - The linear length of building facing a street right-of-way or in the case of a planned unit development, a legal private access road.

Business or Building Identification Sign - A pedestrian oriented sign attached to a building

Canopy - A protective cover over a door, entrance, window, or outdoor service area which is attached to or cantilevered from a building. Also known as an awning. Permanent marquees and porticoes which are designed as a continuous or integral part of the structure shall not be considered canopies.

Canopy Sign - A sign that is suspended from, attached to, supported from, applied to, or constructed as part of a canopy or awning.

Changeable Copy Sign - A sign on which message copy is changed manually in the field through attachment of letters, numbers, symbols and other similar characters of changeable pictorial panels. Also known as a reader-board sign.

Combined Development - Two or more establishments or businesses occupying a common building or adjoining buildings which are designed and developed in a coordinated manner and

which share parking, driveways and other common facilities.

Electronic Message Board - A sign which displays messages, in alternating light cycles.

Facade - The entire building walls, including wall faces, parapets, fascia, windows, doors, canopy and visible roof structures of one complete elevation.

Facsimile Sign - An oversized, three-dimensional object, such as a chicken bucket, coffee cup, automobile (or automobile part), or human figure

Fence Sign - A sign mounted on, attached to, or constructed as part of a fence or similar structure.

Festoon Lighting - A string of outdoor lights suspended between two or more points.

Flag - Any fabric, banner or bunting containing distinctive colors, patterns, or symbols

Gasoline Pump Signs - Signs attached to gasoline and motor vehicle fuel pumps, which display material incidental to the operation of the pumps

Grade - The uppermost surface directly below the sign or immediately adjacent to the support.

Ground Sign - A free-standing sign with its base or its supports mounted directly to the ground.

Historic Building - Any building 50 years old or more with distinctive architectural features characteristic of the period of history during which it was originally constructed.

Holiday Decorations - Displays erected on a seasonal basis.

Illumination, Indirect - Illumination which reflects light from an artificial light source intentionally directed upon a surface. This shall also include silhouettes of letters or symbols placed before a background of reflected light.

Illumination, Internal - Illumination provided from a source located inside or within the face of the sign.

Individual Establishment or Business - A single establishment or business occupying one or more buildings designed to function as a single enterprise which does not share off-street parking, driveways, or other common facilities with an adjacent establishment or development.

Inflatable Signs - A three-dimensional object, filled with air or gas, and located in such a manner as to attract attention.

Mansard - A steeply pitched roof, pitched at such an angle as to resemble a building wall.

Monument Sign – A ground sign that is mounted generally flush with the surrounding grade. It may not be attached to a pole or pylon, nor raised by mounting on a man-made berm, wall, or similar structure. Supporting elements may not exceed 24 inches in height and are included in the measurement of sign height.

Panel - The primary surface of a sign that carries the identifying/advertising message.

Pennant - Any lightweight plastic, fabric, or other material, whether or not containing a message of any kind, suspended from a rope, wire, or string, usually in series, designed to move in the wind.

Portable Sign - Any sign designed or intended to be readily relocated whether or not it is permanently attached to a building, structure or on the ground. Portable signs also include signs on wheels or on portable structures such as trailers, tent signs, A-frame or T-shaped signs and normal advertising placed on motor vehicles and located or parked in such a manner as to attract attention.

Projecting Sign - A sign which projects from a structure into a vehicular or pedestrian access way, more than one foot from the surface on which it is mounted, and is mounted usually, but not always, at right angles to the building.

Pylon (or Pole) Sign – A ground mounted sign attached to one or more posts, whose base is greater than 24 inches above grade.

Roof Sign – Any sign erected, constructed, and/or painted wholly or partially on or above the roof of a building.

Sign - Any display of letters, words, numbers, symbols, emblems, objects, pictures, or any combination thereof made visible for the purpose of attracting attention or of making something known, whether such display be made on, attached to, or constructed as part of a building, structure, vehicle, or object.

Spinner - A wind activated, propeller-type device, which may or may not be attached to advertising copy.

Streamer - A string or strip of miniature or full size pennants or flags which may or may not be suspended between two points.

T-Frame Sign - A portable sign comprised of one or more panels or faces joined at the bottom to a perpendicular base on which the sign stands.

Temporary Sign – An advertising sign not intended to be displayed on a permanent basis.

Valance - A short apron which is designed and installed as part of a canopy/awning and is usually, but not necessarily vertical.

Vehicle Sign – See Portable Sign.

Wall Sign - A sign affixed on and parallel to the exterior wall of any building and projecting not more than 12 inches from the wall. Signs mounted on porticoes shall be considered wall signs.

Window Sign - A sign which is applied to the building glass area located such that the identifying/advertising message, symbol, insignia, visual representation, logotype or any other form which communicates information can be read.

11-6 SIGN PERMITTING

A. Signage Plan Required

For any lot on which the owner proposes to erect one or more signs requiring a permit the owner shall submit a Signage Plan containing the following information. For a combined development or other multi-tenant development, a master signage plan shall be provided.

- An accurate plot plan of the lot or parcel showing the proposed location of the sign(s) as well as the location of building, parking lots, driveways, sight triangles and landscaped areas.
- Each proposed individual sign type shall be depicted on the plan and shall include the following:
 - Computation of the proposed face of the sign or signs
 - The height of the proposed sign or signs
 - The number of proposed signs on the lot(s) or parcel(s) and the location
 - The number of proposed signs to be placed on buildings and the location
 - Rendering for each individual sign showing the proposed design, sign face area and the height of the sign

The Administrator shall review the application in accordance with the criteria established in this Ordinance. The Administrator shall solicit review comments in accordance with general review procedures.

11-7 SIGN AREA AND HEIGHT COMPUTATION

The following principles shall control the computation of sign area and sign height:

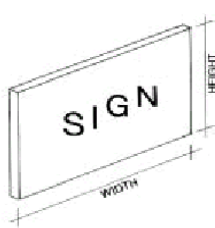
Computation of Area of Single-faced Signs

The area of a sign face shall be computed by means of the smallest square or rectangle that will

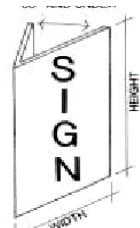
encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or structure against which it is placed.

Computation of Area of Multi-faced Signs

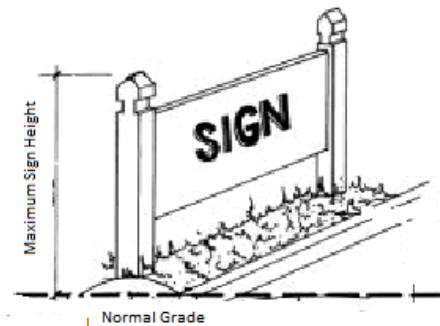
The sign area for a sign with more than one face shall be computed by adding together the area of all sign faces visible from any one point. When two identical sign faces are placed back to back so that both faces cannot be viewed from any point at the same time, and when such sign faces are part of the same sign structure and not more than 42 inches apart, the sign area shall be computed by the measurement of one of the faces.



Single-faced sign



Double-faced sign



Maximum Sign Height

Computation of Height

The height of a sign shall be computed as the distance from the base of the sign at normal grade to the top of the highest attached component of the sign. Normal grade shall be construed to be either of (1) existing grade prior to construction or (2) newly established grade after construction.

11-8 DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

All signs shall be designed, constructed, and sign maintenance shall occur, in accordance with the following standards:

- All signs shall be constructed and maintained to retain sound structural condition, and shall comply with all applicable provision of the State Building Code, all applicable electrical codes, and this Ordinance, at all times.
- All signs shall be shall be permanently attached to the ground, a building, or another structure by direct attachment to a rigid wall, frame, or structure.
- Where A-frame and T-frame signs are permitted, these signs must be professionally fabricated from plastic, metal, wood, melamine, and/or chalkboard and shall be maintained to retain sound structural condition.

11-9 PERMIT EXPIRATIONS

Sign Permits shall be good for up to six months. If the permit expires, the original cost of the permit shall be charged as the renewal fee.

11-10 PROHIBITED SIGNS

The following signs are prohibited within the unincorporated areas of the County:

- Signs which approximate official highway signs, warning signs or regulatory devices
- Signs displaying blinking, flashing or intermittent lights, animation, and moving parts
- Portable signs (excluding A-frame and T-Frame signs as allowed in Table 11-1 with approved sign permit)
- “Wrap-around” signs or other continuous wall signs that extend around building corners or radii.
- Off-Premise signs
- Facsimile Signs
- Signs placed within any required sight triangle
- Signs attached to or painted on utility poles, telephone poles, trees, parking meters, bridges and overpasses, rocks, other signs, benches and refuse containers
- Roof signs
- Pavement markings for purposes other than traffic control
- Signs placed within or extending into the right-of-way of state maintained streets and roads, except those signs in compliance with NCGS §136-32
- Signs that contain language and/or pictures obscene to the general public in accordance with NCGS §14-190.1
- Signs that advertise an activity or business no longer conducted on the property on which the sign is located
- Indirect illumination, such as floodlights, erected in such a manner as to cause glare that impairs driver vision on streets or roadways, pilot vision approaching or departing Concord Regional Airport runways, or that causes a nuisance to adjoining property

- Signs that obstruct fire escapes, windows, doors or other openings used as means of egress or as required legal ventilation
- Signs containing or consisting of pennants, feather pennants, feather flags, ribbons, streamers, festoon lighting, balloons, inflatables or spinners
- Signs that do not conform to the provisions of these regulations.

11-12 SIGNS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE A PERMIT

Applicability

No permit is required for the following signs provided they comply with the conditions set forth. Signs permissible in this section shall not be considered in determining the total sign area, however, if a sign exceeds the size or in any other way does not comply with these limitations, it shall be considered as a prohibited sign and/or shall be subject to all other provisions in this Chapter.

- **Occupant/Street Number Signs and E911 Identification Numbers**
Non-illuminated signs affixed to structures, mailboxes, decorative light posts, driveway entrances, etc., which serve to identify the address of the structure or occupant. All such signs are required to be placed in such a manner as to be visible from the street.
- **Window Signs**
Signs placed or painted on the interior or exterior of glass windows or doors provided that such signs cover no more than 25 percent of the glass area of the entire storefront. Window signs that cover more than 25 percent of the glass shall be considered as wall signs and shall meet requirements for wall signs within the appropriate zoning district.

11-13 PERMANENT SIGNS THAT REQUIRE A PERMIT

Applicability

The Section shall govern regulations for signs permanently installed on a site and which are required to obtain a sign permit in accordance with § 11.14-§ 11.19 of this Ordinance.

11-14 WALL SIGNS

The maximum permitted sign area, location, characteristics, and number of Wall Signs shall be determined in accordance with Tables 11.1-1 through 11.1-2.

The following additional regulations shall apply to on premise wall mounted signs:

- **Additional Wall Sign or Canopy Sign Permitted on Corner or Double Frontage Lots**
Lots with more than one street frontage shall be allowed to erect one additional wall or canopy sign on the secondary street frontage, provided that the secondary frontage is at

least 100 feet in width at the street right-of-way. The maximum allowable size for a sign on one wall is not transferable to other permitted signage.

- **Additional Wall Sign or Canopy Sign Permitted to Face Side or Rear Parking Lot**
Lots with parking to the side or rear of a building shall be allowed to erect one additional wall or canopy sign facing the parking lot, provided that at least 50 percent of the required parking for the establishment is located to the side or rear of the building and an entrance to the establishment faces the parking lot.
- **Location Requirements for Wall Signs**
No wall sign may extend more than one foot from the exterior of the wall and no portion of a sign shall extend above the wall on which it is mounted.
- **Changeable Copy Area and Electronic Message Board Area**
Changeable copy (reader board) area and electronic message board area are permitted provided that the changeable copy or electronic message board area does not exceed 50 percent of the total area of the sign face. See Table 11-1.2 for districts where changeable copy and electronic message boards are permitted.

11-15 CANOPY/AWNING SIGNS

The maximum permitted sign area, location, characteristics, and number of Canopy/Awning signs shall be determined in accordance with Table 11.1.

The following additional regulations shall apply to canopy/awning signs:

Valance and Copy Size for Canopy/Awning Signs

The valance, or apron, for any canopy shall in no case exceed 12 inches in height.

Illumination for Canopy/Awning Signs

Canopy/awning signs that may be illuminated shall have no bare bulbs present on or around the sign face.

Clearance Requirements for Canopy/ Awning Signs and Suspended Canopy Signs

All canopy/awning signs attached to the underside of a canopy/awning shall maintain the minimum clearance above the ground level of any sidewalk or vehicular access area as specified in the most recent edition of the North Carolina State Building Code.

11-16 GROUND SIGNS

The maximum permitted sign area, location, characteristics, and number of On-Premise Ground-Mounted Signs shall be determined in accordance with Table 11-1.

Base Landscaping for Ground-Mounted Signs

All ground-mounted signs located within parking or vehicular use areas, and not in identified planting yard areas, shall stand in a bed of landscaping at least 30 square feet in area. This area shall contain low growing materials such as ground covers, perennials, and shrubs.

Distance Requirements from Existing Ground Signs

No proposed ground-mounted sign shall be placed within 50 feet of an existing ground-mounted sign.

Ground-Mounted Signs for Combined Developments

All uses within a combined development (includes more than one establishment or business on a common parcel) shall share the permitted ground-mounted signage that is permitted in accordance with Table 11-1. These regulations shall not apply to outparcels of the development, as outparcels are separate parcels of land.

Changeable Copy Area and Electronic Message Board Area

Changeable copy (reader board) area and electronic message board area are permitted provided that the changeable copy or electronic message board area does not exceed 50 percent of the total area of the sign face area. See Table 11-1.2 for districts where changeable copy and electronic message boards are permitted.

Drive-Thru Menu Signs

Drive-Thru menu signs shall be limited to a maximum size of 64 square feet. Where dual drive-thru lanes are proposed, one additional sign limited to a maximum size of 64 square feet may be permitted for the second service lane.

Additional Ground Signs

Lots with more than one street frontage shall be allowed to erect one ground sign per frontage, provided that each frontage is at least 100 feet in width at the street right-of-way. No two ground signs shall be placed on the same street frontage.

11-17 PROJECTING OR SUSPENDED SIGNS

The maximum permitted sign area, location, characteristics, and number of Projecting or Suspended Signs shall be determined in accordance with Table 11-1.

The following additional regulations shall apply to projecting or suspended signs:

A projecting or suspended sign shall not extend more than five (5) feet into the public right-of-way. In no case shall this category of sign be permitted to encroach over a motorized vehicle travel way such a public or private street, alley, or driveway. If such a sign is suspended or projects above a public right-of-way, the issuance and continuation of a sign permit shall be conditioned on the sign owner obtaining, and maintaining in force, liability insurance in an amount of not less than \$500,000 per occurrence per sign.

11-18 PERMITTED ON SITE A-FRAME AND T-FRAME SIGNS

All on site A-frame or T-frame signs must meet the following requirements:

- The sign must be professionally fabricated from plastic, metal, wood, melamine, and/or chalkboard.
- The sign may only be displayed during the businesses specified business hours.
 - Business hours must be provided as part of the sign permit application and will be incorporated into the permit as the allowed hours for this type of signage to be displayed.

11-19 TEMPORARY SIGNS THAT REQUIRE A PERMIT

Temporary Construction Sign

One sign permitted per site not exceeding 32 square feet in area per face. Such signs shall not be erected prior to preliminary plat approval when the development is subject to Cabarrus County Subdivision Regulations. When the project is not under such regulation, the letting of contracts will be the point in time at which such signs may be posted. Signs shall be located outside of the right-of-way and any applicable sight triangle(s). The sign shall be removed within 14 days of the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for commercial projects or the final sale for residential projects.

Banner Sign Attached to Building

One banner sign permitted per individual business establishment not to exceed 16 square feet. Sign shall not be illuminated and shall be mounted flush against the building wall. The permit may be issued for a maximum of 30 days and may be issued up to six (6) times per calendar year. Sign shall be removed on the expiration date of the permit.

Bona Fide Farm, Seasonal Harvest

One banner sign or one ground sign permitted per farm, not to exceed 16 square feet.

- Banner sign shall not be illuminated and shall be mounted flush against the building wall.
- Ground sign shall not be illuminated and shall not exceed 4 feet in height. Must be located outside of the right-of-way and sight triangle.
- Must be removed once the seasonal product is no longer available from the bona fide farm.

TABLE 11-1

Standards for Permanent Signage in OI, LC, GC, LI and GI Zoning Districts				
Sign Type	Number Allowed	Max. Sign Area	Max. Height	Sign Location
<u>Ground Signs*</u>				
Individual Commercial Uses listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses, Commercial, Retail and Office Uses	1 per street frontage	32 square feet	6 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
Individual Industrial and Transportation Related Uses listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses, Industrial, Transportation Related	1 per street frontage	32 square feet	6 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
Individual Institutional Uses as listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses, Institutional, Civic and Public Uses	1 per street frontage	32 square feet	6 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
Combined Development	1 per street frontage	32 square feet plus 8 square feet per additional tenant up to a maximum of 64 square feet	10 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
Business Park Entrance Sign	1 per entrance	32 square feet	6 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
* Ground signs may be Monument style only. Pole and Pylon style signs are prohibited.				

TABLE 11-1 (CONTINUED)

Standards for Permanent Signage in OI, LC, GC, LI and GI Zoning Districts				
Sign Type	Number Allowed	Max. Sign Area	Max. Height	Sign Location
<u>Wall Signs</u>				
Individual Commercial, Industrial, Transportation or Institutional Use as listed in Table 3-8 Commercial, Retail and Office Uses, Institutional, Civic and Public Uses, Industrial, Transportation Related and Combined Developments	1 per street frontage	For buildings with no more than 100 linear feet of frontage (wall which serves as the building's "front") the following shall apply: 1.0 square foot per linear foot of the building the wall sign is to be attached to up to 50 square feet maximum sign area	Not to extend above the vertical wall	n/a
		For buildings with more than 100 linear feet frontage the following shall apply: 1.0 square foot per 2 linear feet of the building the wall sign is to be attached to up to 100 square feet maximum sign area.		
<u>Canopy/Awning Signs</u>				
Individual Commercial, Industrial, Transportation or Institutional Use as listed in Table 3-8 Commercial, Retail and Office Uses, Institutional, Civic and Public Uses, Industrial, Transportation Related and Combined Developments	May be substituted for allowed wall sign	12 square feet	n/a	n/a

TABLE 11-1 (CONTINUED)

Standards for Permanent Signage in OI, LC, GC, LI and GI Zoning Districts				
Sign Type	Number Allowed	Max. Sign Area	Max. Height	Sign Location
<u>Projecting/Suspended Signs</u>				
Individual Commercial, Industrial, Transportation or Institutional Use as listed in Table 3-8 Commercial, Retail and Office Uses, Institutional, Civic and Public Uses, Industrial, Transportation Related and Combined Developments	One per building entrance	For first floor units: Suspended sign - 4 square feet Projecting sign - 6 square feet	n/a	No portion of a projecting or suspended sign shall extend more than 5 feet from building wall. Must be located adjacent to an entrance. See 11-15.
<u>A-Frame or T-Frame Sign (Sidewalk Sign)</u>				
Individual Commercial or Institutional Use as listed in Table 3-8 Table of Permitted Uses, Commercial, Retail and Office and Institutional, Civic and Public	One A-Frame or T-Frame per individual use entrance	6 square feet	3 feet	Must be located at entrance to individual use. Must be removed after documented hours.

TABLE 11-1 (CONTINUED)

Standards for Permanent Signage in the AO, CR, LDR, MDR, HDR Zoning Districts				
Sign Type	Number Allowed	Max. Sign Area	Max. Height	Sign Location
<u>Ground Signs*</u>				
Residential Projects as listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses (Manufactured Home Park, Townhouse, Multifamily, Single Family Detached Subdivision)	2 per entrance	16 square feet	6 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
Home Occupation	1 per parcel where home occupation permit has been issued	4 square feet	2 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
Residential Care Facilities as listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses (Family care Home, Group Care Facility)	1 per premises	16 square feet	4 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
Institutional Uses as listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses, Institutional, Civic and Public Uses	1 per street frontage	16 square feet	4 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle
All other uses permitted in the AO, CR, LDR, MDR and HDR districts	1 per street frontage	16 square feet	4 feet	Outside of street right-of-way and sight triangle

* Ground signs may be Monument style only. Pole and Pylon style signs are prohibited.

TABLE 11-1 (CONTINUED)

Standards for Permanent Signage in the AO, CR, LDR, MDR, HDR Zoning Districts				
Sign Type	Number Allowed	Max. Sign Area	Max. Height	Sign Location
<u>Wall Signs</u>				
Residential Projects as listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses (Manufactured Home Park, Townhouse, Multifamily, Single Family Detached Subdivision)	Not Permitted	n/a	n/a	n/a
Residential Care Facilities as listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses (Family care Home, Group Care Facility)	1 per premises (if substituted for the ground sign)	5 sf	n/a	n/a
Institutional Uses as listed in Section 3-8, Table of Permitted Uses, Institutional, Civic and Public Uses	1 per structure	16 sf	n/a	n/a
All other uses permitted in the AO, CR, LDR, MDR and HDR districts	1 per structure	16 sf	n/a	n/a

Table 11-1.2 Standards for Sign Characteristics

	AO, CR, LDR, MDR, HDR	OI	LC	GC	LI	GI
Animated	-	-	--	--	-	-
Changeable Copy	P	P	P	P	-	-
Electronic Reader Board	-	P	P	P	-	-
Illumination, Internal	-	P	P	P	P	P
Illumination, Indirect	P	P	P	P	P	P
Illumination, Indirect, Exposed Bulbs or neon	-	-	-	-	-	-