

Section 6.3 GENERAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT (GCD)

The General Commercial District is designed to encourage the formation and continuance of a compatible and economically healthy commercial environment for businesses, services, and professional uses and to discourage industrial and other uses that could adversely affect the functioning of commercial districts.

6.3.1 Permitted Uses. Retail sales and offices are permitted in the GCD, unless otherwise specified. Other uses permitted outright, or permitted with conditions or as special exceptions in the GCD are shown in Table 6.3.1. Uses not listed in this table are not permitted in GCD, but may be allowed by a determination of the Codes Enforcement Officer.

6.3.2 On-Site Parking. At the time of the construction of any principal building, or when a structural alteration or other changes in a principal building produce an increase in floor area and seating or bed capacity, or when a conversion in use occurs, areas for parking motor vehicles on site are required according to the standards shown in Table 6.3.1.

The Zoning Board of Appeals may grant a reduction in the parking requirements set forth in Table 6.3.1 if it is determined that the reduced number of parking spaces can satisfy demand.

Table 6.3.1 Permitted Uses and Parking Requirements in the General Commercial District

Use	Permitted	Conditional Use	Special Exception	Parking Required	Standard
Accessory apartments		X		2 spaces	Per unit
Amusement Centers	X			4 spaces	Per 250 sq ft
Animal hospital	X			1 space	Per 250 sq ft
Athletic Club, sports lessons	X			1 space	Per 200 sq ft
Assembly Hall	X			1 space	Per 5 seats
Automatic teller machines	X			1 space	Per 150 sq ft
Automotive sales, rental, parts & service		X		1 space	Per 150 sq ft
Bank		X		1 space	Per 150 sq ft
Bar, tavern	X			1 space	Per 3 seats
Barber, beauty shop	X			2 spaces	Per chair
Bottle gas sales, storage, distribution		X		1 space	Per 2000 sq ft And 1-15'x30' Loading space
Bowling alley, skating rinks	X			5 spaces 1 space	Per alley and Per 100 sq ft
Brew-on-premises store, brew pub, micro-brewery	X			1 space	Per 3 seats of Capacity
Cabinetry/woodworking shop, restoration			X	1 space	Per 300 sq ft
Café, restaurant, drive-in	X			1 space	Per 3 seats and 1 space per 150 sq ft of food prep area

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UPDATED ORIGINAL 06-16-09

Use	Permitted	Conditional Use	Special Exception	Parking Required	Standard
Carwash	X			1 space	Per 300 sq ft
Caterer	X			1 space	Per 150 sq ft
Clinic, public or private	X			1 space	Per 250 sq ft
Commercial dental, medical optical Laboratory		X		1 space	Per 150 sq ft
Community center	X			1 space	Per 300 sq ft
Convenience store without gasoline	X			1 space	Per 250 sq ft
Convenience store with gasoline	X			1 space	Per 250 sq ft and up to 5 Tandem lanes
Day care	X			2 spaces	Per classroom, Plus 1 space Per 150 sq ft of Floor space
Dwelling units, single- or multi-family	X			2 spaces	Per unit
Equipment and material storage yards	X			1 space	Per 3000 sq ft
House of worship			X	1 space	Per 3 seats
Hotel, motel	X			1 space	Per room, plus 1 space per 250 sq ft, and space for food & beverage facilities
Laundry, self-service	X			1 space	Per 250 sq ft
Micro-retail (permanent structure)	X			1 space	Per 150 sq ft
Mortuary, cemetery, crematorium	X			1 space	Per 50 sq ft of assembly rooms and parlors
Museum	X			1 space	Per 300 sq ft
Nursery, greenhouse (commercial)	X			1 space	Per 2000 sq ft, plus 1-15'x30' loading space
Nursing home, assisted living facility	X			1 space	Per residential or bedroom facility, plus 1 space per 150 sq ft of office space
Open air market, produce market, farmer's Market (permanent and seasonal)		X		1 space	Per 250 sq ft of open space

Use	Permitted	Conditional Use	Special Exception	Parking Required	Standard
Park, playground	X			1 space	Per 150 sq ft Of open space
Parking lot	X				
Parking garage, public or private			X		
Personal and business services	X			1 space	Per 300 sq ft
Professional offices, including medical, Real estate	X			1 space	Per 300 sq ft
Public safety and public/private utility structures			X	1 space	Per 250 sq ft
Recreational facility		X		1 space	Per 300 sq ft
School of art, dance, music	X			1 space	Per 250 sq ft
Schools, public, private, commercial			X	1 space	Per classroom and administrative office
Sewerage disposal/treatment plant			X	1 space	Per 250 sq ft
Shopping center		X		1 space	Per 200 sq ft
Storage facility, min-warehouse		X		1 space	Per 3000 sq ft
Theatres	X			1 space	Per 3 seats
Telecommunication towers			X		

6.3.3 Conditional Uses. The determination of compliance for conditional uses is the responsibility of the Codes Enforcement Officer who may in turn refer the decision to the Planning Commission. Specific conditions for the conditional uses in the GCD are included in Table 6.3.2. All conditions must be met before approval may be issued.

Table 6.3.2 Conditional Uses in the General Commercial District (GCD)

Use	Conditions
Accessory apartments	Neighborhood compatibility Traffic impacts
Automotive sales, rentals, parts, and service	Outside storage must be adequately screened. No vehicles may be parked outside overnight on the property of automobile service stations or car washes. No noise or light trespass on residential properties.
Bottle gas sales, storage, distribution	Sufficient distance from adjacent uses to assure public safety. Adequate screening and buffers between storage yard/parking lots and residential properties. No light, odor, or noise trespass onto residential properties. No overnight parking of vehicles in locations visible from the street.

Use	Conditions
Equipment and material storage yard	Outside storage must be screened sufficiently to provide completely opaque, screening at chest-height. This use cannot be located within 500 feet of another storage yard. No noise, odor, or light trespass on adjacent properties.
Open air market, produce market, farmers' market (permanent or seasonal)	Adequate screening and buffers between structures/parking lots and adjacent properties.
Recreation facilities	Adequate screening and buffers between structure/parking lots and adjacent properties. No light or noise trespass onto residential properties. Maximum hours of operation from 10am until midnight if near residential properties.
Sewerage disposal/treatment plant	Facility must be screened sufficiently to provide completely opaque, screening at chest-height. This use cannot be located within 500 ft of another sewerage disposal/treatment plant. No noise, odor, or light trespass on adjacent properties.
Storage, mini-warehouses	Setbacks to fence line. Sufficient screening of structures/parking lots to not affect adjacent uses, particularly residential. Outside storage must be screened sufficient to provide completely opaque, screening at chest-height. This use cannot be located within 500 feet of another storage/mini-warehouse facility. No noise, odor, or light trespass on adjacent properties. No structure shall be over three stories. No outside storage of vehicles or boats shall be visible from the street.

6.3.4 Special Exceptions. Special exceptions are reviewed by the Board of Zoning Appeals for a determination of conformance. The factors to be reviewed and the process are described fully in Article III. Additional factors or those which should be given special consideration by the Board of Zoning Appeals within the GCD are included in Table 6.3.3.

Table 6.3.3 Special Exceptions in the General Commercial District

Use	Special Issues
House of worship	Traffic impacts. Neighborhood compatibility. Buffers and screening.
Parking garage, public or private	Traffic impacts. Buffers and screening. Landscaping. Architectural requirements. Maximum height three stories.
Public safety and public/private utility structures	Noise or light trespass on residential properties. Neighborhood compatibility. Buffers and screening.
Schools, public, private, commercial	Neighborhood compatibility. Nearby uses. Screening and buffering. Landscaping. Traffic impacts.
Telecommunications towers*	Neighborhood compatibility. Nearby uses. Screening and buffering. Landscaping.

*Subject to the regulations specified in Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance.

6.3.5 Noise and light trespass. No commercial activity in the GCD shall constitute a noise or light nuisance to a residential property. Noise and light trespass to accessory apartments in the GCD shall be mitigated to the extent possible.

Table 6.3.4 Development Standards

Minimum lot size	6,000 sq ft
Minimum lot width	50 ft
Front setback	35 ft
Side setback	0 ft
Corner side yard	20 ft
Rear yard	15 ft
Maximum building size (% if total lot)	45%
Maximum stories	NA

Substandard Lots of Record. Where the owner of a lot at the time of the adoption of this chapter does not own sufficient land to enable him/her to conform to the dimensional requirements of this chapter, such lot may nonetheless be used as a building site, provided that the lot requirements are not reduced below the minimum specified in this chapter by more than twenty (20) percent. The use of substandard lots of record is encouraged, but the setbacks must be approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Any lot of record existing at the time of the adoption of this chapter, which has a lot area which is less than that required by this chapter, shall be subject to the following exceptions and modifications:

1. The Maximum lot coverage by buildings on such lot, subject to all other requirements, shall not exceed sixty (60) percent.
2. **Adjoining lots.** When two (2) or more adjoining lots with contiguous frontage are in one ownership at any time after the adoption of this chapter and those lots, individually, are smaller in area than required in this chapter, then that group of lots shall be considered as a single lot or several lots of minimum permitted area for the district in which they are located. In no case of adjoining lots may more than one (1) combined lot be divided so as to result in lots containing less than the minimum permitted area for the zoning district in which the property is located. If, however, the owner of two (2) or more adjoining lots with insufficient land dimensions decides to build on or sell off these lots he must first combine the lots to comply with the requirements of this chapter. Any lot requiring waivers below the twenty (20) percent minimum set forth in this section may be approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals provided that further decreased dimensional requirements shall conform as closely as possible to the required dimensions.

6.3.6 Signage. It is the intent of this section to ensure that businesses in the General Commercial District which rely on transient traffic shall have the ability to identify their businesses to potential customers using signs, both on the structures and on-premises near frontage roads and intersections, while preventing clutter and confusion.

Signs shall be maintained in good repair at all times and the messages on signs must be current.

General Requirements

- A. No sign shall be erected, altered, or reconstructed unless a sign permit has been issued by the City's Code Enforcement Officer. The exception is that one (1) sign real estate marketing sign per street frontage, pertaining to the sale or lease of the premises, is allowed without a permit. The sign shall have a maximum of thirty-two (32) square feet in surface area per side and be a maximum of five (5) feet high.
- B. Signs shall not be permitted where they obstruct motorist vision of regulatory signs, traffic control devices or street signs.
- C. Every sign shall be constructed and maintained in a manner consistent with the building code provisions and maintained in good structural condition at all times. The message must be kept current on all signs, except for historical signs.

- D. No sign shall be illuminated by other than a steady, continuous light; neither intermittent nor flashing illumination will be permitted. Illumination shall be located, shielded, and directed so as to not be directly visible from any public street or residentially zoned property at grade level. All artificial illumination shall be designed, located, shielded and directed as to illuminate only the sign face and to prevent the casting of glare or direct light upon adjacent residential property or streets.
- E. Signage on canopies, awnings, or marquees shall be limited to the name of or type of business only, and may not contain any message without permission of the Planning Commission.
- F. No signs shall be placed in the General Commercial District, except those listed below.
- G. **The Planning Commission may approve off-premise signs when they are in the public interest. The Commission may place restrictions or conditions upon the signs. (Amended 06-16-09, Ord. 2007-02, CITY CLERK)**
- H. No attention-getting devices, including pennants, streamers, festooned lights, "whirligigs," nor any sign which is designed to be moved by the wind shall be permitted, except once a year for a period not to exceed seven (7) days.
- I. One flag display, consisting of three (3) flags, displayed according to proper flag protocol on a maximum of three (3) poles, is permitted for each business property in the CBD.

General Guidelines

- A. The scale and proportions of the sign should take into account the preservation of the historic theme of the CBD and the building on which it is mounted.
- B. The size of individual signs should be limited to the extent necessary to prevent them from obscuring or competing with other elements of the building.
- C. All signs shall be designed in good taste and reflect the historical character of the CBD.

The only types of signs that shall be permitted in this district are those listed below:

Types of Signs

A. Wall Signs shall be fixed flat against the wall of a building or on the face of a marquee wall. Signs shall be installed perpendicular to the building façade.

B. Ground-Mounted Signs

1. Businesses with a minimum building setback of twenty (20) feet from the fronting right-of-way shall be permitted the use of a ground mounted sign in addition to any other permitted signage.
2. *The maximum height of such signs shall not exceed five (5) feet. The maximum area for such signs shall be no more than thirty-five (35) square feet.*

C. Window Signs shall be placed on the interior side of the building. Signs painted on glass windows are allowed, provided that the letter height does not exceed six (6) inches and that only black, bronze, gold or white letter is used.

D. Canopy Signs. Canopy or awning signs shall meet the following criteria:

1. A sign message on a canopy or awning shall contain only the name of the business and/or the type of business, type of goods sold, or services rendered. Each business is permitted up to one (1) sign hung under a canopy or awning provided the message on the sign is perpendicular to the building and the sign is at least eight and one half (8-1/2) feet above the surface of the sidewalk and is no more than four (4) square feet in size. If a wall sign is not used, a business is permitted to use up to one (1) canopy or awning sign.
2. Signage on the canopy or awning sign shall be limited to no greater than one-half (1/2) of the area bounded by the edges of the canopy or awning not including any drip flap or vertical fascia surface. If signage is only found in fringe drip-flap portions of the canopy, the entire portion of said area shall be utilized for signage.

**E. Signs not located on the premises of a business shall not be permitted.
(AMENDED, AUG 11, 2006, ORD.2006-15, CITY CLERK)**

F. Non-Conforming Signs. Signs existing at the time of the enactment of this ordinance and not conforming to the provisions herein, but which were constructed in compliance with previous regulations and ordinances, shall be regarded as non-conforming signs and subject to the following regulations:

1. Any sign constructed after the adoption date of this ordinance and which is found to exist in violation of this ordinance shall be declared to be illegally non-conforming and shall be removed after thirty (30) days notice. If the owner or lessee fails to remove the sign during the permitted time, then the city or independent contractor secured by the city shall remove the sign and the ensuing charges shall be assessed to the owner or lessee.
2. Non-conforming signs shall not be structurally enhanced or modified so as to prolong the life of the sign.
3. No changes in the existing non-conforming signs shall be allowed except for those repairs which are necessary to keep the sign in good working order.
4. Non-conforming signs must be brought into conformance at the time of an application for site plan approval.
5. All non-conforming signs are required to be brought into compliance within three (3) years from the adoption of this ordinance, or when there is a change in business ownership, type or name, or if the sign becomes damaged to an amount greater than fifty (50) percent of its replacement cost. Signs which have a value greater than two thousand (\$2000) dollars at the time of the passage of the ordinance shall be depreciated at the rate of one thousand (\$1000) dollars per year and removed when fully depreciated. The monetary value to be depreciated shall be the assessed value according to the Colleton County Tax Assessor's office.

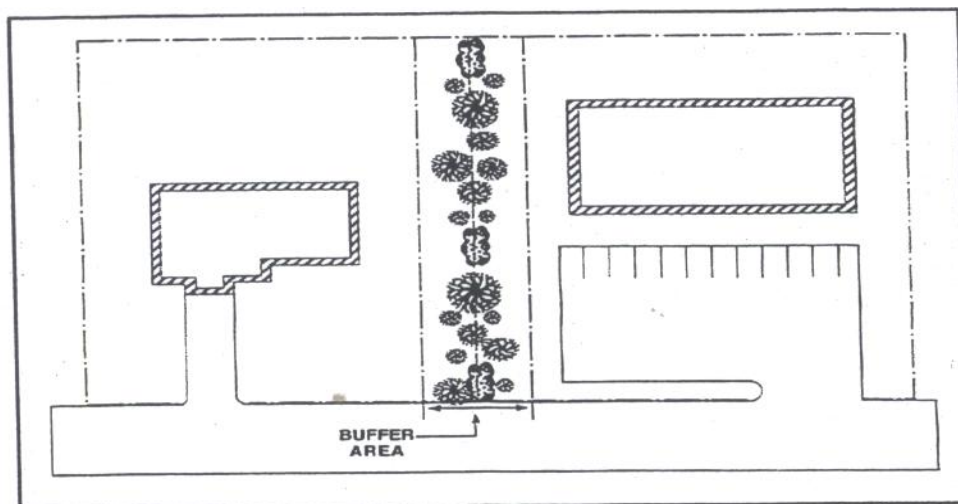
6.3.7 Landscape and Buffers. Landscaping in the General Commercial District is intended to create spatial separation between businesses without interfering with traffic flow and pedestrian safety.

Landscaping of on-site parking: The landscaping of the off-street parking facilities shall meet the following criteria:

- A. A landscape plan shall be submitted with the required site plan.
- B. Landscaping shall be located so it does not obscure traffic signs or fire hydrants, or obstruct driver's sight distance within the parking areas and at driveway entrances and exits.
- C. All plant material shall be installed to not alter the drainage patterns in the GCD.
- D. Landscaping shall be disbursed throughout the parking lot in order to break up large expanses of pavement.
- E. Minimum landscaping shall be two (2) canopy trees per every ten (10) spaces and one hundred (100) square feet of landscaping area per ten (10) spaces.
- F. Permeable areas are required to reduce the impacts of storm-water run-off created by development. Paving with impervious surfaces such as asphalt or concrete shall be limited to eighty (80) percent of the parking area surface.

Buffer Areas: Buffer areas are required in the GCDs to screen commercial development from adjacent residential uses, thereby preventing land use incompatibilities. Buffer areas in the GCD shall be medium-density screen landscaping located on the outer perimeter of a lot or parcel, extending to the lot or parcel boundary line; the following diagram illustrates this approach. They shall not be located on any portion of an existing street or right-of-way; however, they may occupy part or all of any front, side, rear yard or setback required to separate nearby residential areas from the businesses. They shall be located on the outer perimeter of a lot or parcel, extending to the lot or parcel boundary line. The buffer areas shall not be located on any portion of an existing street or right-of-way causing distraction; however, they may occupy part or all of any front, side, rear yard or setback in order to aid in creating spatial separation between land uses. Buffer Areas shall be a width of twenty-five (25) feet and include a solid fence to screen the commercial activities from Single Family, Medium Density and High Density Residential areas.

Screening/Buffers Between Uses



6.3.8 Special Exceptions

Loading. All loading must be done from the side or rear of the Neighborhood Commercial District structure. Loading from the rear of the business shall be screened to prevent intrusion upon neighboring residential districts. The following diagram demonstrates siting and screening for loading areas.

