

Public Hearing for Text Amendment Application 2017-669 Brakeman's Coffee Signage

DATE: January 4, 2018
FROM: Jay Camp

The Town of Matthews issued a Notice of Violation to Brakeman's Coffee in August 2017 due to the placement of signage atop the front porch of the building at 225 North Trade Street. To bring the property into compliance, the owners decided to submit for a text amendment to modify the UDO.

The initial proposal from the owner can be found attached to this memo. Staff has drafted a revision (also attached) that would add standards for signage placed on canopies or lower roof lines of structures. The applicant supports this revised language. The primary change to the code adds the following language at Section 155.608.14.C:

1. Signs composed of individual elements such as letters or digits placed on top of and at the front edge of a canopy over an entryway or at the front edge of a lower incidental roofline with a pitch no greater than 2:12. Such signs may not exceed 75% of the width of the canopy or roof structure and may only be 20" in height as measured from the base of the entry canopy or roof area. These signs are not considered roof signs, which are otherwise prohibited.

Planning Staff feel that this text change adds a unique signage option only available to businesses within the Downtown Overlay District. Signage in the Downtown Overlay is much more restrictive than other areas of Town due to the historic nature of the downtown core. Adding additional, attractive signage opportunities is a simple step the Town can take to become more business friendly.

Deleted text in red, new text in blue

155.608.14.C ADDITIONAL SIGNS PERMITTED IN THE DOWNTOWN OVERLAY DISTRICT.

The following signs are encouraged and favored in the Downtown Overlay District:

1. Signs painted or stenciled on or through windows or doors to complement the architectural period or style of the building;
2. Individual sculpted or carved letters/logos/number of metal or wood applied to the building face;
3. Painted wood or metal signs applied to building face;
4. Projecting signs made of wood or metal and painted, and having at least seven and one-half feet (7.5') clearance when encroaching over a street, sidewalk or pedestrian use area, and having an agreement with the Town or NCDOT when encroaching a public right-of-way;
5. Awning ~~or canopy~~ sign when the sign is same or similar material and same plane as the awning ~~or canopy~~, and not built up;
6. Signs composed of individual elements such as letters or digits placed on top of and at the front edge of a canopy over an entryway or at the front edge of a lower incidental roofline with a pitch no greater than 2:12. Such signs may not exceed 75% of the width of the canopy or roof structure and may only be 20" in height as measured from the base of the entry canopy or roof area. These signs are not considered roof signs, which are otherwise prohibited.
7. Neon signs displayed on or through a window area only and not occupying more than ten (10) square feet, when complementing the architectural period or style of the building, and not exceeding two (2) colors;
8. Portable signs in compliance with the regulations of this § 155.608.14.H; and
9. Externally illuminated identification signs in keeping with the architectural style and age of the surrounding structures. Direct light of white or yellow from a shielded source is the preferred method of illumination, although white or colored halo lighting, where individual opaque letters/symbols are displayed in front of a background which reflects a hidden light source, is permitted.

155.103 Definitions

Sign, Canopy: shall mean a sign attached to or made a part of a canopy. When attached to a structure, canopies must provide a minimum of ten feet (10') clear height above sidewalks, plazas, or public use areas. Canopies may extend from the front façade of the building up to the full width of the sidewalk area below and may be composed of wood, metal, glass or a combination of these or similar permanent rigid materials.

Canopy: Shall mean a permanent, rigid and generally horizontal architectural projection without additional roof covering intended to provide weather protection. A canopy may be separate from or supported by the building to which it is attached.

Canopy and Sign Examples







BLACK SHEEP







232 Matthews Station Street
Matthews, NC 28105
704.847.4411

**ZONING APPLICATION FOR UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE TEXT CHANGE
AS PROVIDED IN THE UDO AT 155.401.3**

APPLICATION NUMBER _____ DATE FILED MONDAY OCT 2ND 2017
APPLICANT'S NAME MARK MOORE BRAKEMANS COFFEE
APPLICANT'S MAILING ADDRESS 225 N TRADE ST MATTHEWS
APPLICANT'S PHONE NUMBER/EMAIL ADDRESS 202 329-3291 MARK@MANANUTRITION.ORG

I request consideration of the following change in text of the Matthews Unified Development Ordinance:

Requested text change is:

- a change in wording to existing Section(s)
- an addition to Section(s)
- a deletion of wording at existing Section(s)

Below is the text requested to be changed, added or deleted:

Existing Section 155.213 / 155.608 Proposed Section _____

Current:
Rooftop signs prohibited....

Proposed:
In historic Matthews flat, painted, vinyl or other printed signs affixed to the roof structure are prohibited, but raised lettered or crafted stand alone letters and or images ~~may be permitted upon permission~~ is permitted in keeping with the architectural style of the building and in keeping with signage of that era.

Or more simply:
In historic Matthews rooftop signs are prohibited, but ~~in some instances may be permitted if applicants can prove they are~~ is in keeping with the architectural style of the particular building and signage that would have been specific to that era.

THIS IS SPECIFIC & FACTUAL AND EASY TO ASSESS BY HISTORIC RECORD?
www.matthewsnc.gov



Oct 2, 2017

Town of Matthews
Planning Office
Town Hall
Matthews, NC 28105

RE: Application for Text Change

Dear Zoning Office,

Thanks for all you do to keep Matthews' codes enforced and thanks for your patience with us as we endeavor to present our business in a way that enhances the town. We feel our current sign does just that, and accordingly would like to respectfully apply for a slight text change to the existing law.

While we now realize (as of your notice) that our current sign violates *sections 155.213 and 155.608*, we would like to respectfully propose that blanket code banning roof signs is ineffective at achieving its goal of preventing tasteless or unsightly signs that deter the classic theme of downtown Matthews.

In our research into best practice and existing laws in towns we felt have a similar classic feel as desired by Matthews, we found several instances of simple language that would be useful. While we found plenty of towns that used boiler plate language banning roof signs we also found several that had more nuanced approaches like this one here at the city of Alexandria VA. Their language acknowledges a very similar situation to Matthews when they say:

The old and historic Alexandria District is the third historic district established in the United States. It has a remarkable ensemble of late 18th and early 19th century buildings and includes virtually every architectural style that has been popular on the east coast over the last 200 years.

While our history in Matthews covers just 150 years rather than 200+ we also can say we have a wide variety of architectural styles that came in and out of popularity over that time. A large part of our architectural history in Matthews came during a time when rooftop signs were in vogue: As the NPS historians say here:

Rooftop signs appeared with greater frequency in the second half of the nineteenth century than previously. Earlier rooftop signs tended to be relatively simple—often merely larger versions of the horizontal signs typically found on lower levels. Late in the century the signs became more ornate as well as more numerous. These later rooftop signs were typically found on hotels, theaters, banks and other large buildings.

Also noted in the National Park Service observations about the history of signs in the USA was this section we found relevant to Matthews:

Most historic districts contain buildings constructed over a long period of time, by different owners for different purposes; the buildings reflect different architectural styles and personal tastes. By requiring a standard sign "image" in such matters as size, material, typeface and other qualities, sign controls can mute the diversity of historic districts. Such controls can also sacrifice signs of some age and distinction that have not yet come back into fashion.⁷

As I reviewed the [ordinance for Alexandria VA](#) it is interesting how they craft sign rules for the buildings in their historic district that are left more open to interpretation (knowing that a one-sized-fits-all rule might not enhance their historic feel) but require that signs erected on these designated buildings that may be in question be erected upon permission from authorities. This would encompass hundreds of structures for them, but be limited to no more than a dozen or so in Matthews. It seems this would not present some sort of unwieldy process for the downtown area if we adopted a similar approach to Alexandria. Surely if we achieved their level of compliance we would be thrilled with our look and feel.

Finally in this application we have the support of our building owner Garry Smith as well as our neighbor Jim Johnson both of whom have volunteered to provide letters of support or appear in person in favor of our current sign and in favor of our text variance request.

Thanks again for all you do and for your kind consideration on this matter.


Mark Moore

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME
AND KIND CONSIDERATION,

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