



What type of Outdoor Signs are You **LEGALLY** allowed to have? And what are the **SIZE** restrictions?

Violating local sign codes can result in fines up to \$500 *per day!* Outdoor signs must follow local County & City Sign Ordinances.

The information directly below outlines the sign permitting process required for new, outdoor sign installations.

The legal requirements of outdoor signage.

- ❖ Local sign ordinances have become increasingly restrictive on the size and type of outdoor signs allowed.
- ❖ The Building, Zoning or Planning Department in your municipality, can provide a copy of the sign ordinances.
- ❖ The person in the department who is **most** familiar with the sign ordinances, should be able to determine the total **SIZE** allowed.
- ❖ Window lettering applied to the **outside** of storefront glass windows, may also be classified as Outdoor Signage.
- ❖ Once the size limitations are known, the next step is to determine the **EXACT TYPE** of sign allowed outdoors, at the location.
- ❖ The type of outdoor signage allowed by the municipality is often decided in collaboration with property owners, well in advance.
- ❖ A structural Engineer's stamp certifying the wind load capacity of an outdoor sign installation, may be required to obtain a sign permit.
- ❖ Getting final approval for the sign permit goes hand-in-hand with getting written permission from the Landlord.
- ❖ Applying for a sign permit is easy. It just takes time to gather and provide all of the detailed information that's required.
- ❖ The sign permit application can usually be accessed online. Provide the information required on the form for permit approval.
- ❖ You can definitely save money by doing all of this upfront work yourself. Or, we can provide this service for you. Our service charge for acquiring the sign permit on your behalf ranges from \$300 - \$750, plus related costs. Costs include any fees charged by the Zoning Department, Building Department or the Business License Department.



Breaking the Sign Code

Sign Permitting Guide & Insights

When I started in the commercial sign business back in 1986, I could walk into the sign permitting office and 17 minutes later, leave with an approved sign permit. Now when you walk into the permit office at city hall or other municipal office, the same permitting process can take anywhere from 2 days to 6 weeks! This could be for the main business sign to be mounted directly to the building. Or, a freestanding sign to install out by the road.

After more than 3 decades, I am still fascinated by all of the technological advancements in the sign industry! One of the biggest challenges in this business, is not the creation of the advertisements themselves, but complying with all the new rules, regulations, zoning laws, codes and permissions needed, just to hang a sign over the door of a business.

Today, there are specifications and regulations involving practically every aspect of a sign, including the mounting specifications. As you look into the requirements, you need to know the zoning laws for where the sign will be posted. Each of the zoning laws are different, depending on if it is a residential, commercial or an industrial area.

Once you know how the location is zoned, you need to know the specifications. This includes:

- The overall height of the sign, once it is installed.
- Height & Width of the sign itself.
- Overall Square Footage of the sign.
- Type & location of nearby signs.
- Lighting allowances.
- Along with the number of signs permitted at a single location.

Permitting was originally initiated as part of the **Highway Beautification act of 1965** that was put in place to keep American Highways beautiful and scenic. That federal act has filtered down to the state, county and local municipality levels where even more regulation and restrictions have been put into place, to keep our neighborhoods and cities aesthetically appealing.

The US government bureaucracy is alive and operating in the permit office. Be prepared for it. Because of that, I have compiled the following suggestions to assist you in achieving your goal of installing your new signage, *legally*.

Be prepared before you enter the sign permit office.

Most people go online to view the government websites where the codes, rules and regulation are posted. This is a good starting point, but not the finish line. Many US government websites are only periodically updated, so some of the information you find there, might be inaccurate. It is best to make contact with the office first and ask for a list of the current sign regulations, for your specific area.

Another area to be aware of, is that many property owners obtain amendments to the zoning law so they can legally break the sign codes. Just because your neighbor or someone in your area has a sign larger than what is specified in the code, does not mean you can automatically do it too.

There might also be signage that was grandfathered in at the time the new code or regulation was put in place, that is now out of regulation. New signs are never grandfathered in.

Be prepared for multiple levels of approval, before FINAL approval is granted.

Most workers at the permit office DO NOT have the power to grant final approval of new sign installations. Depending on the size and location of the sign, other officials, or even Review Boards, may be required to review the information before a final decision is made.

Be polite and neighborly.

Obtaining a sign permit is part of business and requires interaction with others to make the approval process go smoothly. If your sign is of the neon or LED variety, talk to your neighbors and inform them of your plans. In many instances, just a neighborly heads up, is enough to prevent any possible objection they might have.

When in the permit office, remember these are government workers. Being polite and patient is the only way to be if you want your permit. It also makes them more willing to assist you if there is a problem or complication.

The more detailed information, the better.

You can never provide too much information about the outdoor sign you want. The more pictures you provide along with the calculations, will help to show you have done your homework. By having all possible information available at your fingertips, the sign approval process will be timely and efficient.

Know all the loopholes & amendments.

Ask for any special considerations that are possible in the zoning laws and permit regulations in your area. If someone in the past was granted an exception to the rules or regulation, you could get the same one if you know about it. Learning about these loopholes could be to your advantage during the process.

Questions – Ask as carefully and politely as you can possibly muster.

The quiet truth is, workers in the sign permitting office can make the approval process a breeze, or a nightmare! The more polite and friendly you are, the more helpful the staff will naturally be. It's amazing how much mileage fresh donuts will get you in the permit office!

If the signage you are requesting is not allowed, asking for help and guidance will provide the direction needed for a successful outcome.

There are many laws and regulations that are no longer enforced, but only passed because someone complained. Because the process of obtaining a sign permit has become so complicated, there are now experts in the field that know all the ins and outs that can streamline the process for you. We can be your personal representatives in the process so you can concentrate on your business. This will reduce the time required to get the permit, along with all the headaches in dealing with another bureaucratic level of government.

If you have any questions, we can help you.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "the Sign Chef". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

1.800.899.6272

Landlord Approval May Also Be Required!

When certain terms like "Signage Criteria" are included in a lease, the TYPE of signs allowed, and **NOT ALLOWED**, are usually described in detail.

The unfamiliar terms and types of signs described in a lease, can definitely be confusing. Calls to the landlord or leasing agent will provide additional information or clarification, as needed.

Permitting offices usually require a written letter from the landlord approving:

- ❖ The final design & colors.
- ❖ Size and overall dimensions.
- ❖ Placement of wall mounted signs, shown on building.
- ❖ Type of sign with specifications shown in a diagram.
- ❖ And finally, mounting details showing the hardware and installation method.


PREMIUM OUTLETS
TENANT SIGNAGE CRITERIA



The Sign Permit combined with the Landlord's Approval, sets the stage for ordering your new sign with peace of mind.

the Sign Chef

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