

Sign Regulations

WHAT IS CONSIDERED A SIGN?

A sign is “any object, device, display, structure, or part thereof, situated outdoors, that is used to advertise, identify, display, direct, or attract attention to an object, person, institution, organization, business, product, service, event, or location by any means, including words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, fixtures, colors, illumination, or projected images” (§17.84.020 Municipal Code).

WHAT DO I NEED TO GET A SIGN PERMIT?

All signs used for advertising in the City limits require a permit except for those specifically exempted (see right). An application, \$62.00 permit fee, and sign inventory are required to obtain a sign permit. A permit application can be obtained at City Hall or downloaded from our [website](#). A sign inventory is a graphic representation of the signs on the site that includes a drawing of each existing sign, as well as the type, message, and dimensions of the proposed sign. A summary of the total signage area must be included. The sign inventory and summary must include all signs on the property, including temporary signs and window signs. If a pylon (pole) sign is on the site, the height of the sign should also be noted.

WHY DO I NEED A SIGN PERMIT?

Sign regulations are intended to lessen threats to public safety from poorly constructed signs; insure compatibility of location, size and placement of signs; protect against hazards to vehicular traffic movements through improper placement of signs; and preserve the natural beauty and attractiveness of the city.

DO I NEED A SIGN PERMIT?

Permits are required for the following:

- Any sign that advertises a business or organization, including pylon, monument, wall, window, and roof signs
- Electronic reader board signs
- Temporary signs
- Banners

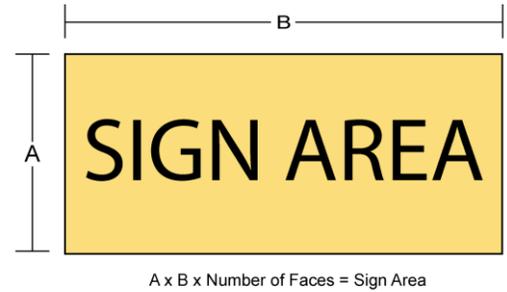
Signs that do not require a permit:

- Political campaign signs
- Real estate signs
- Memorials embedded in another structure
- Holiday and celebration signs
- Traffic control and other city regulatory and information signs
- Advertising of garage sales, nonprofit organization functions, and community events
- Incidental signs
- University district signs
- Portable signs (i.e. A-frame/sandwich board signs)

If you would like to install a new sign on your property, it is best to contact the Community Development Department to learn the rules for signs as they pertain to your specific site. Please call 715-425-0900 to make an appointment to discuss your sign project.

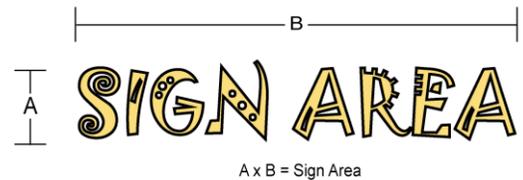
HOW DO I MEASURE THE AREA OF A SIGN?

Sign area is determined in two ways. If the sign is enclosed by a box or other outline, the total area of the box or outline is the sign area. If the sign consists of individual letters or figures, the imaginary outline that would enclose all letters or figures shall be the sign area. If the sign has two faces, both sides are counted toward the total sign area. If the sign face is irregularly shaped, the area of that shape is the area of the sign. For example, the area of the octagon of a stop sign would be the area of that sign.



HOW MANY SIGNS ARE PERMITTED?

The number and size of signs are limited based on sign type and the district in which they are located. Properties in the commercial and industrial districts are permitted up to 2 square feet of surface area for each linear foot of lot frontage. In the Downtown Overlay District, the total amount of signage allowed per building is 1 square foot per linear foot of building frontage. In cases of corner buildings, both sides facing a street are allocated to the building frontage. The example below demonstrates how a building in the Downtown Overlay District meets the maximum allowable square footage of signage.



Example: B-1 General Commercial within the Downtown Overlay



Existing Sign Summary

- Bern Building sign = 12 square feet
- Poet's Den sign = 46 square feet
- Red Lion Tavern sign = 46 square feet
- Red Lion double-sided overhanging sign = 40 square feet
- Open sign = 2 square feet
- Open sign = 2 square feet
- Eat Your Coffee window sign = 2 square feet

Total = 150 square feet

Min. 10' to sidewalk

50 linear feet of frontage on street
100 linear feet of frontage on side street
Total permitted signage = 150 square feet

(Side street)

HOW MANY SIGNS ARE PERMITTED FOR MULTIPLE TENANT BUILDINGS?

As is the case for single-occupant buildings, the total amount of signage for multiple tenant buildings is based on the building frontage for the entire building. To accommodate each tenant, building owners may consider adding a signage clause in their leases to allocate what percentage of signage each business space is allowed.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR TEMPORARY SIGNS?

Temporary signs are any signs that are displayed for only a short time and are not fastened to the ground or a building with bolts, screws, or other type of device. Common temporary signs include banner, window, and feather sign types with messages such as “now renting”, “now hiring”, and “now open”.

Permits are required for temporary signs. An application and \$25.00 permit fee are required to obtain a temporary sign permit.

Each business is allowed *one* temporary sign with a valid sign permit. Temporary signs are permitted up to 60 days per calendar year or up to 30 days in the Downtown Overlay District. Temporary signs are prohibited on a lot where an electronic reader board sign exists.

For the purposes of permitting, the following *are not* considered temporary signs and do not require a permit:

- Real estate signs
- A-frame (sandwich board) signs
- Political campaign signs
- Garage sale sign

ARE ELECTRONIC SIGNS PERMITTED?

Electronic reader board and time/temperature signs are not permitted in the Downtown Overlay District, however, they are permitted in all other commercial areas and the University District provided the size of the sign does not exceed 60 percent of the overall sign area on the site. Messages displayed on the electronic reader board must be one color, either amber or red, and must not change more than once an hour. All electronic reader boards must be equipped with photosensitive equipment that automatically adjusts the brightness and contrast of the sign in direct relation to the ambient outdoor illuminations. Commercial messages displayed may only promote goods or services provided by companies occupying the site on which the sign is erected. Messages displayed on an electronic reader board sign must not scroll or flash.

ARE SOME SIGN TYPES PROHIBITED?

Yes—in the Downtown Overlay District the following signs are not permitted: moving, flashing, roof, painted signs on buildings except on windows, animated or revolving, internally illuminated, changeable copy, inflatable signs, pennants, neon on outside of building, portable changeable copy, billboard, conspicuous vehicle sign, electronic reader board signs.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR GARAGE SALE SIGNS?

Garage sales are the sale of miscellaneous used items sold from a yard or garage of a residential use. Garage sales are allowed for up to 3 days. Garage sale signs may be placed on public right-of-way up to 48 hours before the sale and must be removed 48 hours after the sale. No permit is required for a garage sale or placing a garage sale sign. If a garage sale sign is located in the right-of-way, it must be placed in the ground. Garage sale signs are not permitted on any public light, sign, utility pole, tree or other similar structure.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR REAL ESTATE SIGNS?

Up to four directional real estate signs are permitted per property, residential or commercial development, model home, or open house. Directional real estate signs are permitted between the hours of 3:00 p.m. Friday to 10:00 p.m. Sunday. These signs may be located in the right-of-way. Real estate signs must exceed 4 square feet in display surface area and should not exceed 2 ½ feet in height as measured from the top of the curb nearest the sign. If no curb exists, the height is measured from the street grade nearest the sign.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR POLITICAL SIGNS?

Political signs do not require a permit, however, the City does regulate placement of such signs. All political signs must be at least 15 feet from the edge of pavement. Political signs may not be attached to any boulevard tree, utility pole, or traffic control device. Political signs must be removed within 72 hours following the election for which the signs were intended. Political signs in residential zoning district may not be lighted.

WHAT IF MY SIGN DOESN'T FOLLOW REGULATIONS?

If a sign fails to meet permitting standards, such as being unsafe, unlawful, or a general menace to the public, the city will provide written notice to the permittee or property owner. If the permittee or property owner fails to remove or alter the sign to comply with the provisions of the sign ordinance within 10 days after the written notice is given, the city may have the sign removed at the owner's expense. If the city deems a sign is an immediate danger to the public, the sign may be removed without notice. Costs of this action will be the responsibility of the permittee or property owner.

