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SIGNS – PERMANENT, TEMPORARY & BANNER

The Sign Code ([LOC Chapter 47](#)) allows temporary and permanent signs to be displayed in the City. The purpose of the Sign Code is to ensure that signs are designed, installed, and maintained in a safe manner that does not create visual distractions for motorists. It also helps our community maintain a neat, clean, orderly, and attractive appearance. This handout gives an overview of some of the regulations of the Sign Code.

WHAT IS A SIGN?

The definition of a sign is very broad. A sign is any “device, structure, or fixture which incorporates graphics, symbols, or written copy visible to the public...(which is) intended to communicate information.”

SIGN CONSULTATION SERVICE

The Sign Code can be very complex. The allowable sign type, size, placement and compatibility with nearby signs can vary based on the zoning of a property, the size of the property, and the design of the existing building(s) and sign(s) on or adjacent to the property. In addition, certain properties may have sign programs that were adopted as part of the original development of the site. **Before designing your permanent, temporary, or incidental sign, please contact the Planning Department to understand what standards apply to your site. This consultation is free and is intended to help business owners save time and money.**

PERMANENT SIGNS

Generally, a sign permit and fee are required for permanent signs installed in both residential and non-residential zones. While a sign permit is also required for a change of copy, there is no fee if there has been no change of use, occupancy, or ownership. Permanent signs must be designed to be compatible with other nearby signs, other elements of street and site furniture, and with on-site and adjacent structures. Compatibility is determined by the relationships of the elements of form, proportion, scale, color, materials, surface treatment, overall sign size, and the size and style of lettering. Please refer to [LOC 47.06 Regulation of Permanent Signs](#) and [LOC 47.10 Permit Requirements](#).

INCIDENTAL SIGNS

In each zone, permanent incidental signs are allowed without a permit or fee. These include public signs, signs cut into masonry, flags displayed from a flagpole, and other small signs placed on a property, on a building, or in a window. Size limitations apply - please refer to [LOC 47.06.205 Permanent Signs Exempt From Permit and Fee](#). These signs must also meet the compatibility standard as described above.

TEMPORARY SIGNS

Temporary signs are allowed in all zones with limits on the size, placement, duration, and manner in which a sign is displayed. Generally, there is no permit or fee required. Temporary signs can include window signs, signs attached to the side of a building, and signs attached to stakes and driven into the ground. Please refer [to LOC 47.08.300 Temporary Signs Exempt from Permit and Fee](#) for regulations on the time, place, and manner for temporary signs. Temporary signs that advertise a special event or store opening, such as a banner, or are larger than those exempt from permit and fee in LOC 47.08.300, require a Temporary Sign Permit and fee. Please refer to [LOC 47.08.305 Temporary Sign Requiring a Permit](#).

PORTABLE SIGNS (A-FRAME OR "SANDWICH BOARD" SIGNS, ETC.)

This type of temporary sign is only allowed if the following restrictions are all met:

- (1) only on Sundays between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.,
- (2) only in residential zones, and
- (3) only in the public right-of-way.



LOC 47.08.300(2)(c) describes in detail the restrictions on placement, contact information, design, and size of these signs. Improperly placed portable signs are subject to collection and retrieval, as described below. Please also refer to the "[A-Frame Signs Brochure](#)".

TEMPORARY SIGN COLLECTION AND RETRIEVAL

The Sign Code prohibits signs that extend into or over the public right-of-way (except for over-the-street banners and A-frame signs, as described in this handout). The following guidelines generally are used to determine the location of the public right-of-way. All signs should be placed behind these items and on private property.

- Water meters, utility boxes, utility lines/overhanging wires
- Traffic signals, traffic signs, street lights, fire hydrants
- Road medians and landscape islands
- Sidewalks and streets unless posted as private
- Property pins noting the edge of the public right-of-way.

Signs placed in the public right-of-way, other than those allowed above, are subject to removal, retrieval fees, and/or a Notice of Civil violation, citation, and fine.

Change of Copy

A Change of Copy is considered a change of logo and/or message upon the face or faces of a legal sign. An example is replacing the plastic face of an existing cabinet sign.

- A complete permit application is required to review the sign for compatibility.
- No sign permit fee is charged for a face change (whether or not it is for a new business), but a records retention fee is required.
- If alterations to the dimensions or location of the sign are proposed, or if the elements of the sign other than the face of the sign are being removed or replaced, it is not a face change and will be processed as a new sign.

Note: This handout summarizes only portions of the Sign Code and is intended to be used solely as an informal discussion document. As such, it should not be relied on as a guarantee that a particular sign could be approved or denied. Please refer to [Chapter 47](#) of the Lake Oswego Development Code for the original code sections and contact the Planning and Building Departments of the City of Lake Oswego for more information.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

A complete application is required before the City can proceed with reviewing your proposed signage. The following is a list of materials that are typically required for Sign Permit applications. Providing a complete sign permit application will facilitate the review of your proposed signage. Please do not submit your application until all the items on the list that apply to your sign permit have been included. This includes the business owner and property owner's signatures, business license number, and accurate plans. Consult with the Planning and Building Departments if you have a question.

GENERAL

The following items are required to be submitted electronically to planning@lakeoswego.city, unless otherwise noted:

- Completed [Sign Permit Application](#) form signed by the property and business owner(s). Agent authorization is required if the application is not signed by the property (or business owners). The owner of the business applying for the sign permit must also provide the business license number. Each sign type will need to be noted in the application form.
- Accurate and scaled plans that include the proposed signage, building elevations, and site plan. See the sign permit application for details.
- Correct sign and administrative fees for each sign type(s) you are requesting, e.g., wall sign, monument sign, window sign, etc. *These will be calculated at the time your sign permit is submitted and processed.*
- [Structural and Electrical permits](#) (if needed) must be submitted separately to the Building Division.