

city of san luis obispo

Sign Regulations



October 7, 2004

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Article I. General Provisions

15.40.100 Title.

This chapter shall be known and cited as the City of San Luis Obispo “Sign Regulations.”

15.40.110 Intent and Purpose.

The Council of the City of San Luis Obispo has determined that these Sign Regulations are necessary because:

- A.** The Sign Regulations are intended to protect and enhance the character of the community and its various neighborhoods and districts against visual blight. Furthermore, a proliferation of signs can seriously detract from the pleasure of observing the natural scenic beauty of San Luis Obispo and the human environment.
- B.** It is necessary to regulate the size, type and location of signs to encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication and to provide equality and equity among sign owners and those who wish to use signs.
- C.** Controlling the size and number of signs is necessary to implement community goals and policies expressed in the General Plan;
- D.** Signs have an important design component and must be architecturally compatible with affected structures and the character of surrounding development in order to maintain the overall quality of a neighborhood or commercial district;
- E.** The cumulative effect of numerous signs close to each other has a detrimental impact which can not be addressed in any way other than by limiting the number and size of all signs;
- F.** It is necessary for public safety that official traffic regulation devices be easily visible and free from nearby visual obstructions and distractions, such as attention-getting signs, an excessive number of signs, or signs in any way resembling official signs.
- G.** It is the intent of these regulations to regulate the time, place and manner under which signs are permitted, and not the content of signage. Although examples of content may be provided in these regulations for clarity, content will not be used as a basis for determining whether or not a proposed sign may be permitted.

15.40.120 Applicability.

This chapter shall apply to all property and land within the jurisdiction of the City of San Luis Obispo. It is unlawful for any person, firm, or corporation that owns, occupies, or controls property in the City of San Luis Obispo to construct, maintain, display or alter or cause to be constructed, maintained, displayed or altered, a sign within the City except in conformance with this chapter.

Article II. Exempt Signs

15.40.200 Types of Signs Exempt from a Sign Permit

The City has a compelling interest in permitting the following signs in order to comply with state and local laws and to promote public safety on City property and/or in the street right-of-way. The following signs may be installed without a sign permit, provided they meet the requirements listed below. Under certain circumstances these signs may require a building permit or encroachment permit. Contact the Building Division of the Community Development Department and the Public Works Department for permitting requirements prior to installing any of the signs listed below. These signs shall not be included in the determination of type, number, or area of signs allowed on a given property.

- A. Address Signs:** Signs installed in compliance with Article 901.4.4 of the 1997 Uniform Fire Code.
- B. Construction Signs:** A maximum of four signs located on construction sites not exceeding 16 square feet in aggregate while a valid construction permit is active. For commercial and residential projects on sites 3 acres or larger, the maximum exempt sign area is 32 square feet.
- C. Gasoline Price Signs:** As required by State and Federal law, not more than one price sign for each frontage, not to exceed 20 square feet each and subject to height, and setback limits established by zoning district.
- D. Government Signs:** Official federal, state or local government signs and notices issued by any court, person or officer in performance of a public duty.
- E. Miscellaneous Small Signs:** Signs with an aggregate area not to exceed 3 square feet and located within 5 feet of an entrance to a building.
- F. No Trespassing Signs:** Trespassing warnings that are posted in compliance with the requirements of Federal, State and local laws.
- G. Traffic Safety Signs:** Signs warning of construction, excavation, or similar hazards if expressly approved by the City’s Public Works Director. Parking lot and other private traffic directional signs each not exceeding 3 feet in height and 5 square feet in area and limited to guidance of pedestrian or vehicular traffic within the premises on which they are located.
- H. Real Estate Signs:** Temporary signs indicating that the property on which the sign is located is for sale, rent or lease, as provided for by State law. Only one such sign is permitted to face on each street adjacent to the property. Such signs may be single- or double-faced and are limited in size to 3 square feet or less on property in residential zones, and 10 square feet or less on property in commercial zones.

- I. Temporary Window Signs:** Temporary signs on commercial properties that are painted directly on a window, affixed to the inside of a window, or hung within 12 inches of a window promoting any message, including but not limited to, grand openings and special events (commercial and non-commercial), provided the sign or signs do not exceed 10 percent of each window area, or 4 square feet per window, whichever is greater.
- J. Transit Signs:** Signs identifying transit stops, facilities, times and bus routes.
- K. Utility Signs:** Signs placed by utility companies as part of the normal operation and maintenance of facilities such as public telephones and underground services.
- L. Vehicle Signs:** Painted signs or decals affixed to the body of any vehicle, unless parked for the primary purpose of displaying the sign.

Article III. Prohibited Signs

15.40.300 Prohibited signs.

The following signs are prohibited and subject to immediate abatement by the City of San Luis Obispo’s Code Enforcement Officer. The City has a compelling interest to prohibit the following signs to further the Intent and Purpose (15.40.110) of these Sign Regulations and to enforce local, State and Federal law.

- A. Attention Getting Devices:** Pennants, streamers, spinners, balloons, inflatable signs, search lights, beacons, flashing lights or messages and other similar attention-getting devices, unless authorized in conjunction with a temporary use permit or special event permit, or Architectural Review, and provided the City’s Public Works Director determines that such a sign will not create a distraction for users of the public right-of-way.
- B. Banner signs** are prohibited unless:
1. approved in conjunction with a temporary or intermittent use permit or special event permit; or
 2. approved with a sign permit as a temporary sign pending manufacture and installation of an approved permanent sign; or
 3. approved by the Public Works Director over designated rights-of-way;
- C. Backlit Translucent Awning Signs:** Any sign located on an awning that is translucent or semi-transparent and illuminated from a light source under or within the awning.
- D. Outdoor Advertising Displays and Off-Site Signs:** Outdoor advertising displays such as billboards and all off-site commercial signs are prohibited within the City of San Luis Obispo.
- E. Highly Reflective and Fluorescent Signs:** Signs made wholly or partially of highly reflective material and fluorescent or day-glow painted signs.
- F. Signs on Utility Poles or Traffic Control Devices** - Signs attached or placed adjacent to any utility pole, traffic sign post, traffic signal or any other official traffic-control device, in accordance with Section 21464 of the California Vehicle Code.
- G. Signs on Street Trees:** Any sign posted on a street tree.
- H. Signs that Block Ingress or Egress:** Any sign, such as a sandwich-board sign, placed or maintained so as to interfere with free ingress to or egress from any door, window or fire escape, or parking lot.

- I. Signs in the Street Right-of-Way:** Any sign placed in any street right-of-way without a valid encroachment permit or prior approval of the Public Works Director for the purpose of safety or traffic control.
- J. Simulated Traffic Signs:** Any sign which simulates or imitates in size, color, lettering or design any traffic sign or signal, or which makes use of words, symbols or characters in such a manner as to interfere with, mislead, or confuse pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
- K. Vehicle Signs:** Signs attached or painted to vehicles and parked in a position and location with the primary purpose of displaying the sign.

Article IV. Sign Standards

15.40.400 Area and Height Measurement

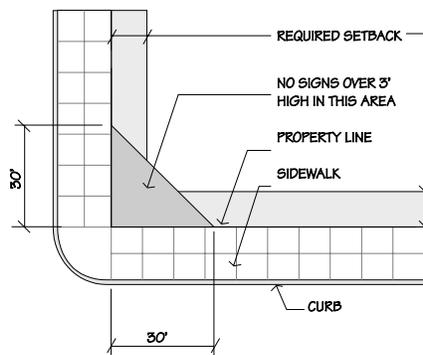
The sign area is calculated by determining the number of square feet of the smallest rectangle(s) within which a sign face can be enclosed. In determining the area of an individual sign that has more than one face (e.g. a monument or projecting sign), the single sign face with the greatest area shall be used. The total sign area is the sum of all individual sign areas.

The height of a sign shall be measured from the ground, adjacent to the sign, to the top of the sign and support structure. If the ground under the sign slopes, the height shall be measured from the average grade under the sign itself.

15.40.410 Setbacks

Except as provided in these Sign Regulations, sign location shall conform with setbacks established in the Zoning Regulations.

- A. Signs taller than 3' may not be located within the visibility triangle depicted below. Minor exceptions may be granted for controlled intersections if approved by the Public Works Director and Community Development Director, or the ARC, if a finding is made that the proposed sign will not effect the line of sight of vehicles or pedestrians at the intersection.



- B. With Public Works Director approval, traffic directional signs may be placed in the required setback, providing they do not interfere with visibility required for safe vehicular and pedestrian circulation, especially at street corners.
- C. With Public Works Director and Community Development Director approval, monument signs may be located in the required setback area, provided they are outside of the visibility triangle, provide adequate site distance for driveways and meet applicable height and area limits established for the zoning district.
- D. The ARC may approve reduced setbacks for signs that they review, provided the sign does not interfere with visibility required for safe vehicular and pedestrian circulation and provided that the sign is architecturally compatible with the proposed location.

15.40.420 Maximum Height and Location

The maximum height of any sign is 25 feet above the adjacent grade. A sign may not be located above the highest point of the second story of any building, unless an exception is approved by the Architectural Review Commission (ARC).

All signs that are attached to a building must be located on a building face that has a public entrance. The Community Development Director may make exceptions to this requirement in circumstances where the purpose and intent of these regulations is maintained and where the orientation of the public entrance to a building is such that the sign would not have sufficient visibility from the public right-of-way to provide for adequate identification of the business or use.

15.40.430 Illumination

Where illumination of signs is permitted, the following standards shall apply.

1. Lighting for signs shall not create a hazardous glare for pedestrians or vehicles either in a public street or on any private premises.
2. The light source, whether internal to the sign or external, shall be shielded from view. This requirement is not intended to preclude the use of diffused exposed neon.
3. Sign illumination for externally illuminated signs shall utilize focused light fixtures that do not allow light or glare to shine above the horizontal plane of the top of the sign or onto any public right-of-way or adjoining property.
4. Signs shall not be illuminated after 10:00 p.m. or close of business, whichever is later.
5. Each sign shall be designed so that illumination does not exceed 100 luxes (10 foot-candles) measured at a distance of 10 feet from the sign.
6. In the Office Zone illumination of the sign face shall not exceed 10 luxes (1 foot-candle) measured at a distance of 10 feet from the sign.
7. Signs located in residential zones may not be illuminated, except directory signs, which shall not exceed 10 luxes (1 foot-candle) measured at a distance of 10 feet from the sign.
8. These maximum illumination levels are not guaranteed and may need to be reduced to insure compliance with standards 1, 2 and 3 of this section.
9. Internally illuminated cabinet signs are prohibited in the Downtown Commercial (CD) zone.
10. All internally illuminated cabinet signs, including monument signs, walls signs, projecting signs and pole signs shall have dark backgrounds with light lettering, subject to compliance with standards 5, 6, and 7 of this section, unless otherwise approved by the ARC.

15.40.440 Clearance

Where permitted, awning, projecting, marquee, and suspended signs shall conform to the following requirements:

1. **Vertical clearance:** The minimum clearance between the lowest point of a sign and the grade immediately below shall be 8 feet for public right-of-way and private sidewalk areas.
2. **Horizontal clearance:** The minimum horizontal clearance between a sign and the curb line shall be 2 feet; the maximum projection over a public sidewalk shall be two-thirds ($2/3$) the width of the sidewalk or 6 feet, whichever is less.

15.40.460 Sign Standards by District.

The following standards shall be applied in each of the City’s zoning districts, notwithstanding the standards for each sign type established by Section 15.40.470.

Zoning District	Allowable Sign Types	Total Number of Signs Allowed	Maximum Cumulative Sign Area Per Tenant Space	Special Illumination Restrictions (See Section 15.40.430)	Special Size Restrictions (See Section 15.40.460)
All Residential Zones	Wall, Free-Standing Post, Hanging & Suspended, Residential Subdivision, Directory	1 per street frontage	20 square feet (s.f.)	Illumination is not permitted, except for directory signs.	
Office	All Sign Types except pole signs	2 per tenant space	50 s.f.	See Section 15.40.430 for lighting Restrictions	
C-N	All Sign Types except pole signs	2 per tenant space	50 s.f.		Maximum size per wall sign is limited to 25 s.f. ² . See 15.40.460 for monument sign size limits.
C-R	All Sign Types	4 per tenant space	200 s.f.		See 15.40.460 for monument sign size limits.
C-D	All Sign Types except pole signs	4 per tenant space	200 s.f.	Internally-illuminated cabinet signs prohibited	See 15.40.460 for monument sign size limits.
C-C	All Sign Types, except pole signs	2 per tenant space	100 s.f.		Maximum Size per wall sign is limited to 50 s.f. ² .
C-T	All Sign Types	2 per tenant space	200 s.f.		
C-S and M	All Sign Types, except projecting & pole signs in the M zone	2 per tenant space	200 s.f.		
PF	All Sign Types, except projecting & pole signs	2 per tenant space	100 s.f.		
C/OS and AG	Wall, Free-Standing Post, Monument, Hanging & Suspended	2 per tenant space	50 s.f.		All signs over 24 square feet in size are subject to Architectural Review

15.40.470 Sign Standards by Sign Type

This section is intended to be used in conjunction with other standards contained in these Sign Regulations. In no case may the maximum number or size of signs, or their illumination levels, exceed the standards provided by Section 15.40.460 (Sign Standards by District) and Section 15.40.430 (Illumination) of these regulations, respectively.

A. Wall Signs



Signage Guidelines

Wall signs include most types of signage that are attached to the face of a building wall. These include channel letters made out of wood, metal or plastic. Wall signs may be painted on a wall, or on a board that is attached to a wall. Wall signs should be oriented to achieve balanced composition and harmony with other architectural elements of a building façade. Wall signs should be placed on a flat building surface and should not be placed over or otherwise obscure architectural building features.

1. Location and Number Permitted

Wall signs must be located on a building face that has a public entrance. The maximum number of wall signs permitted is two per tenant space.

2. Size

Wall signs may be a maximum of 100 square feet or 15% of the building face where the sign is attached, whichever is less. Wall signs with changeable copy are limited to 6 square feet.

3. Illumination

Wall signs may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

Wall signs are allowed in all zoning districts.

B. Window Signs



Signage Guidelines

Window signs should be scaled to the pedestrian and oriented to window shoppers on the sidewalk, as opposed to vehicles passing by. Window signs should be limited to small graphics and text that serve to frame a window or to provide information. A window sign should not obscure the view into a store or place of business.

1. Location and Number

There is no specific location requirement or limit to the number of window signs allowed. A window sign is a sign that is painted on or attached to a window and located within 12-inches of the face of a window. Window signs do not include business hours of operation or open/closed signs. Window displays, including merchandise displays, graphics and text, that are located more than 12 inches from the face of a window are not considered signs.

2. Size

Window signs are limited to a maximum of 24 square feet or 15% of the window area, whichever is less.

3. Illumination

Window signs may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

Window signs are allowed in all commercial zoning districts.

C. Awning Signs



Signage Guidelines

Signs on awnings should be minimized and are only appropriate if there are no good alternatives for wall signs, projecting signs or hanging and suspended signs. Signage should be limited to the skirt of the awning and should not be on the awning face. Signs should only be considered for the awning face if there is no other adequate location for signage on a given storefront or property.

1. Location and Number

Signs may be located on awnings subject to size criteria. One awning sign is permitted per tenant space and must maintain a minimum clearance of 8 feet above any public right-of-way or private sidewalk area.

2. Size

Signs on awnings shall not cover more than 25 percent of the main area of the awning, or exceed 25 square feet in size, whichever is smaller.

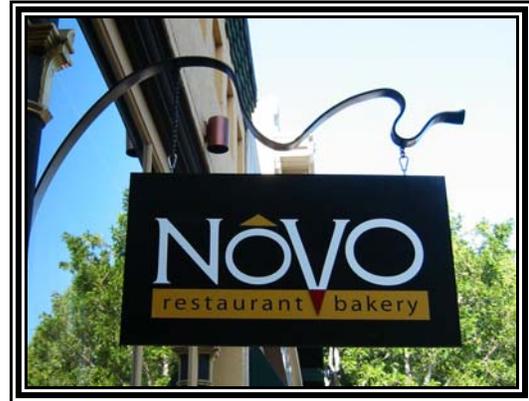
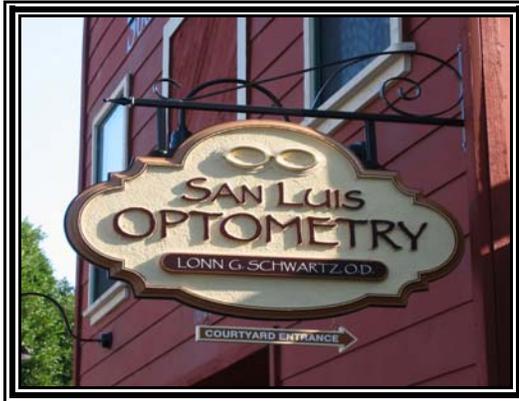
3. Illumination

Awning signs may be externally illuminated consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations. Back-lit, translucent awning signs are prohibited.

4. Zoning

Awning signs may be located in all commercial zones. Installation of new awnings is subject to Architectural Review.

D. Projecting Signs



Signage Guidelines

Projecting signs are attached to a building face and project out perpendicular to the building wall. Projecting signs are very effective when oriented to pedestrians on the sidewalk level. Appropriate materials include wood and metal with carved or applied lettering, or any other material that is architecturally compatible with the building that the sign is attached to. Multiple projecting signs should not be installed within 10 feet of each other if on the same property and should be separated from projecting signs on adjacent properties by 10 feet to insure proper visibility.

1. Location and Number

Projecting signs must be attached to building façades that have a public entrance and must maintain a minimum clearance of 8 feet above the public right-of-way or private sidewalk area. One projecting sign is allowed per tenant space.

2. Size

Projecting signs may have a maximum area of 6 square feet in the O (Office), 12 square feet in the C-N (Neighborhood Commercial), C-D (Downtown Commercial), C-C (Community Commercial), and 24 square feet in the C-R (Retail Commercial) and C-T (Tourist Commercial) zoning districts.

3. Illumination

Projecting signs may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

Projecting signs are allowed in the O, C-N, C-D, C-C, C-R & C-T zoning districts only.

E. Hanging and Suspended Signs



Signage Guidelines

Hanging signs, or suspended signs, are used to help define entries and identify business names to pedestrians. They are small and can hang over a building entry if the appropriate clearance is provided. Hanging signs can be particularly useful for storefronts that have multiple tenants.

1. Location and Number

Hanging or suspended signs must be attached to building façades that have a public entrance and must maintain a minimum clearance of 8 feet above any public right-of-way or private sidewalk area. One hanging or suspended sign is allowed per tenant space.

2. Size

Hanging signs may have a maximum area of 8 square feet.

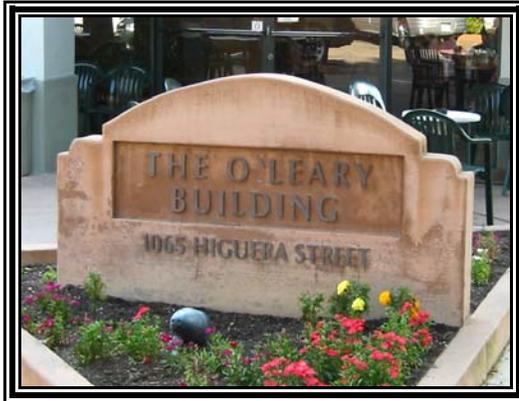
3. Illumination

Hanging signs and suspended signs may be externally illuminated, although ambient light is usually sufficient to light these small signs.

4. Zoning

Hanging and suspended signs are allowed in all zoning districts.

F. Monument Signs



Signage Guidelines

Monument signs are typically used where building setbacks, orientation or design make it difficult to provide other types of signage, such as wall signs, that are plainly visible to people that are trying to identify a use. Monument signs have a solid base that the sign face is installed upon. These signs should be designed so that the style of the sign and its base are consistent with the architecture of the buildings on the site. They are typically oriented perpendicular to the adjacent street and sidewalk and have a maximum of two parallel sign faces. Monument signs provide opportunities for landscaping to enhance their appearance.

1. Location and Number Permitted

Monument signs may be located in required street yards for any given zone, subject to the approval of the Community Development Director, as provided for in Section 15.40.410 of these Sign Regulations. Only one monument sign is permitted per premises, per street frontage.

2. Size

Monument signs may be a maximum of 24 square feet. The maximum height of a monument sign is 6 feet. In the C-R (Retail Commercial) and C-D (Downtown Commercial) zoning districts, the maximum size of a monument sign is 12 square feet and the maximum height is 4 feet. Where two or more uses are located on the same premises, the sign area for monument signs must be shared. The largest single sign face is used to calculate the area of monument signs.

3. Illumination

If illumination of monument signs is desired, then external illumination or halo lighting is preferred. Internally-illuminated cabinet signs must have a dark background with light lettering, per Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

Monument signs are allowed in all commercial and public facility zoning districts.

G. Free-Standing Post Signs



Signage Guidelines

Free-standing post signs are primarily used to identify office uses, especially where a former residence has been converted into an office. They are similar to monument signs, except they do not have a base other than the support posts, they usually have a single sign face, and they are usually oriented parallel to the sidewalk instead of perpendicular. The colors and materials used for the sign must be compatible with the associated building design. Lettering should be carved, routed or applied as opposed to painted on a flat board.

1. Location and Number

Free-standing post signs may be located in required street yards for any given zone, subject to the approval of the Community Development Director, as provided for in Section 15.40.410 of these Sign Regulations. Only one free-standing post sign is permitted per premises, per street frontage.

2. Size

The maximum sign area for free-standing post signs is 20 square feet. Free-standing post signs shall not be taller than 6 feet, measured from the ground to the top of the sign structure. Where two or more uses are located on the same premises, the sign area for free-standing post signs must be shared.

3. Illumination

Free-standing post signs may be externally illuminated consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

Free-standing post signs are allowed in all zoning districts.

H. Pole Signs



Signage Guidelines

Pole signs are primarily intended to communicate with people in automobiles. The sign structure is typically located on a single pole, but other types of supports may be used.

1. Location and Number

Pole signs are located along arterial streets and must not impact the line of sight of people in cars to pedestrians or other vehicles in the street right-of-way. They must be located outside of required yard or setback areas, unless an exception is approved by the ARC during review of the sign design, as provided for by Section 15.40.410. One pole sign is permitted per premises along an arterial street frontage.

2. Size

Pole signs may have a maximum height of 16 feet and a maximum area of 72 square feet. Where two or more uses are located on the same premises, the sign area for pole signs must be shared.

3. Illumination

Pole signs may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations, and subject to ARC approval of the lighting design.

4. Zoning

Pole signs are allowed in the C-R (Commercial Retail), C-S (Commercial Service) and C-T (Commercial Tourist) zones only, subject to the approval of the ARC.

I. Sandwich-Board Signs



Signage Guidelines

Sandwich-board signs can be effective for certain types of uses, such as markets, restaurants or bakeries that have changing specials and menus. These sign may have rewritable surfaces, such as chalk boards or dry-erase boards.

1. Location and Number

Sandwich-board signs are prohibited in the public right-of-way and must be placed on private property. Sandwich-board signs may be located in required street yards for any given zone, subject to the approval of the Community Development Director, as provided for in Section 15.40.410 of these Sign Regulations. They may be placed in a front yard or in a foyer, portico or other building entry provided they do not interfere with pedestrian ingress or egress as required by the Building Code. Only one sandwich-board sign is permitted per tenant space.

2. Size

Sandwich-board signs may have a maximum area of 8 square feet and a maximum height of 4 feet, measured from the ground to the top of the sign structure.

3. Illumination

Sandwich-board signs may not be illuminated.

4. Zoning

Sandwich-board signs are allowed in all commercial zones.

J. Murals



Signage Guidelines

Certain building walls present opportunities for murals. Murals should not contain text or any specific commercial message. Murals that do not contain text or any specific commercial message can be considered public art.

1. Location and Number

Murals may be located on any building wall. There is no specific limit on the number of murals permitted.

2. Size

Murals may be any size, subject to the approval of the ARC.

3. Illumination

Murals may be externally illuminated, consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

Murals may be located in all zones, subject to the approval of the ARC.

K. Electronic Message Centers



Signage Guidelines

Electronic message centers (EMCs) come in different shapes and sizes and typically have a scrolling message. Some EMCs have interactive computer screens.

1. Location and Number

Electronic message centers may be incorporated into pole signs, mounted or free standing. One EMC is permitted per premises.

2. Size

The allowable size of an electronic message center is determined as part of Architectural Review. If part of a pole sign, the electronic message center may only constitute 10% of the overall sign area. If mounted on a building or if free standing, the maximum area is 8 square feet.

3. Illumination

EMC's may be illuminated, consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

EMC's may be located in all commercial zoning districts, subject to Architectural Review.

L. Shopping Center Identification Signs



Signage Guidelines

Shopping center identification signs should be compatible with the design theme of the development. They may identify multiple tenants, but larger shopping centers with more than 5 tenants should avoid listing individual tenants, other than the project anchors, to avoid sign clutter. The sign structure should contain elements of the design theme of the buildings in the center.

1. Location and Number

One shopping center identification sign may be located on each major street frontage of a development.

2. Size

The size of the sign shall be subject to the approval of the ARC and the height is limited to 16 feet.

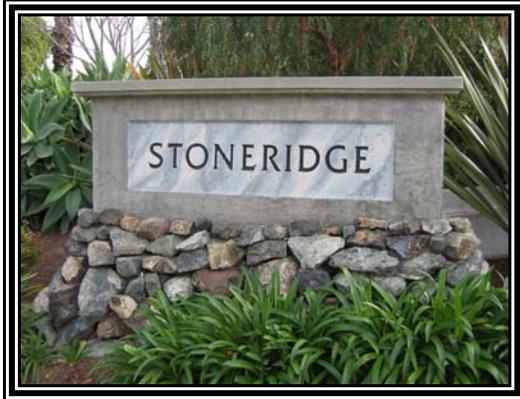
3. Illumination

Shopping Center Identification signs may be illuminated consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

Shopping Center Identification signs may be located in the C-S, C-C or C-R zoning districts only, subject to the approval of the ARC.

M. Residential Subdivision Signs



Signage Guidelines

The purpose of residential subdivision signs is to identify the name of a subdivision, provided the subdivision is not an in-fill project within an established neighborhood. They are usually monument signs or wall signs placed on a wall feature in a landscaped open space area at the entry of the development.

1. Location and Number

One residential subdivision sign is allowed at each major street frontage of a subdivision. They must be located within a landscaped area that is maintained by a homeowner's association.

2. Size

Each sign may be up to 20 square feet and have a maximum height of four feet.

3. Illumination

Residential subdivision signs may not be internally illuminated.

4. Zoning

Residential subdivision signs are allowed in all zones, subject to the approval of the ARC.

N. Flags



Signage Guidelines

Flags should be sized appropriately for the height and diameter of the proposed pole.

Recommended Flag and Pole Sizes

Ground Set Poles		Roof-Mounted Poles	
Exposed Pole Height	Flag Size	Exposed Pole Height (Ground to Top of Pole)	Flag Size
15'-20'	3'x5'	15'	4'x6'
25'	4'x6'	20'-30'	5'x8'
30'-35'	5'x8'	35'-40'	6'x10'
40'-45'	6'x10'	45'-50'	8'x12'
50'	8'x12'	50'-60'	9'x15'

1. Location and Number

Flag poles shall be located outside of required setback areas. Only one flag pole is permitted per premises.

2. Size

The size of the flag shall commensurate with the height and diameter of the pole, per recommended industry standards. The maximum height of the flag pole is the same as the maximum height for structures, as provided in the Zoning Regulations unless the ARC determines that additional height is necessary to achieve architectural compatibility with the proposed flagpole location and surrounding buildings.

3. Illumination

Flags may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations, and subject to ARC approval of the lighting design.

4. Zoning

Official flags (Federal, State, local) may be located in all zoning districts, subject to Architectural Review. Flag signs are allowed in the C-R, C-S and C-T zones only, subject to the approval of the ARC.

O. Directory Signs



Signage Guidelines

Directory signs are used for multi-tenant buildings to provide a directory of tenant locations within the building. They may also serve as the address sign for the property. Directory signs are small scale and are oriented to pedestrians.

1. Location and Number

Directory signs may be free standing, or may be fixed on an exterior wall if the building has no setback. One directory sign may be permitted per premises.

2. Size

Directory signs may be no larger than 12 square feet in area, and individual letters may not exceed 6 inches in height.

3. Illumination

Directory signs may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these Sign Regulations.

4. Zoning

Directory signs are allowed in all zoning districts.

15.40.480 Signs Requiring Architectural Review.

The following signs require Architectural Review prior to issuance of a sign permit. The Community Development Director shall determine if the level of review is aesthetically insignificant, Minor or Incidental or whether the ARC must review the sign:

- A. Animated signs:** Signs consisting of or containing any moving, rotating, flashing or otherwise animated light or component.
- B. Signs requiring exceptions:** Any individual sign, or combination of all signs on any one property, which is not consistent with the height, number, type, location, setback, size, or maximum area standards prescribed by these Sign Regulations.
- C. Sign Program Modifications:** Changes to signs or sign programs approved by the ARC, per Section 15.40.485 of these Sign Regulations.
- D. Signs for new commercial development, unless a sign program is approved:** In most cases, the ARC will review signage at the same time that proposed commercial buildings are reviewed.
- E. Shopping center identification signs:** Shopping center identification signs are usually reviewed at the same time as architectural plans for the shopping center.
- F. Pole signs and Outdoor Advertising Displays.**
- G. Theater marquees.**
- H. Murals.**
- I. Flags.**
- J. Roof Signs:** Roofs having interesting architectural or unique features may be considered for sign where findings found in Section 15.40.610.A numbers 2,3 and 4 can be made.
- K. V-Signs:** Any monument sign with the two sign faces positioned at an angle instead of parallel to each other.
- L. Other:** Any other sign or visual device which does not, in the determination of the Community Development Director, comply with the purpose of these Sign Regulations, or with the design guidelines included in Section 15.40.470, will be forwarded to the Architectural Review Commission for consideration.

15.40.485 Sign Programs

The ARC may approve a sign program for a particular development or property. In this case, the requirements of the sign program supercede Article III and Article IV of these Sign Regulations. Prior to submitting a sign permit application to the Building Division under a sign program, the program must have been approved by the ARC and all appeal periods must have expired.

Article V. Sign Permits: Application and Processing Procedures

15.40.500 Permit Required.

No sign shall be constructed, maintained, displayed or altered without a sign permit obtained as provided in this chapter, unless the sign is specifically exempted from permit requirements.

15.40.510 Sign Permit Application - Contents.

Any person desiring to construct, repair, alter or display a sign for which a permit is required shall submit an application and associated fees, established by resolution of the City Council, to the Community Development Department.

Such application shall include descriptive material sufficient to enable evaluation of the proposal's conformance with the Sign Regulations including at least the following items:

1. A complete construction permit application and supplemental sign permit worksheet.
2. A site plan showing existing improvements and proposed sign locations.
3. A detailed plan of the proposed signage, including dimensions and method of illumination, if any.
4. Samples and descriptions of the proposed sign's colors and materials.
5. Photographs of all existing signage and of the building faces or site areas where signage is proposed.

The Community Development Department staff will review all sign permit applications for completeness and consistency with these regulations. Staff will notify the applicant within 15 days if Architectural Review or an Administrative Use Permit is required.

15.40.520 Architectural Review Application.

When Architectural Review is required (Section 15.40.480), a separate application for such review together with fees, as established by resolution of the City Council, shall be filed with the Community Development Department.

15.40.530 Review and Action by the Director.

Within 15 working days after receiving a complete application for a sign permit, which does not require Architectural Review or the issuance of other permits, the Director of Community Development shall forward the sign permit application to the Chief Building Official for issuance. The Director may impose only such conditions as will assure compliance with the provisions of this chapter.

15.40.540 Permit Issuance.

The Chief Building Official shall be responsible for issuance of sign permits, determination of compliance with building code requirements, and inspection of installation. No sign permit shall be issued until other required permits and approvals, including Architectural Review, have been issued and granted, and any associated appeal periods have expired.

15.40.550 Denial.

Denial of a sign permit application shall be based on specific findings explaining how the proposed sign fails to satisfy the evaluation criteria above or other provisions of these regulations.

15.40.560 Appeals.

A. Community Development Director Decisions.

- 1. Appeal body:** Any discretionary decision of the Community Development Director authorized by these regulations may be appealed to the ARC.
- 2. Filing time:** Appeals must be filed in writing at the Community Development Department within 10 calendar days of the Director's decision. If the tenth day is a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, the appeal period shall extend to the next use day.
- 3. Public hearing:** Once an appeal has been filed, it shall be considered at the earliest available ARC meeting, considering public notification requirements.

B. Architectural Review Commission Decisions.

Any decision of the ARC may be appealed to the City Council in accordance with the procedures set out in Chapter 1.20 of the Municipal Code.

Article VI. Exceptions to Sign Standards

15.40.600 Requests for Exceptions.

Unusual site conditions or other design factors may warrant signs not otherwise permitted by these regulations. A sign permit application which includes a request for exceptions to standards established by these regulations is subject to Architectural Review Commission review and shall include reasons for the request. Exceptions require a separate application and fees for ARC review, which must be approved before a sign permit will be issued.

15.40.610 Findings for Approval of an Exception.

Granting an exception to the sign regulations must be based on at least one of the following findings:

- A.** There are exceptional or unusual circumstances applying to the property involved which do not apply generally to properties in the vicinity with the same zoning, such as, but not limited to:
 - 1. The presence of a legal, nonconforming use;
 - 2. Visual obstructions;
 - 3. Unusual building location on-site;
 - 4. Unusual building design, architectural style, or historic significance.
- B.** The sign for which an exception is requested is a nonconforming sign that acts as a neighborhood landmark or focal point while not disrupting views of prominent community landscape features. When granting an exception, the ARC or the Director shall require that as many nonconforming elements of the sign as possible be eliminated while allowing its basic form and character to remain.
- C.** The exception is consistent with the intent and purpose of the sign regulations (see Section 15.40.110) and will not constitute a grant of special privilege or entitlement inconsistent with limitations applied to other properties in the vicinity with the same zoning.
- D.** The sign exception is for superior design will not result in visual clutter and is consistent with the intent and purpose of these Sign Regulations.

Article VII. Sign Maintenance and Abandoned Signs

15.40.700 Maintaining Signs

All signs must be maintained in the same condition as when the sign was installed. Normal wear and tear of aged signs shall be repaired when they detract from the visible quality of the sign, as determined by the Community Development Director. When signs are repaired, they must be done so in a manner (paint colors shall match, etc.) that is consistent with the approved sign permit or ARC approval for the sign. When signs are removed, the wall behind the sign shall be repaired and painted to match the rest of the building wall.

15.40.710 Abandoned Signs

Any sign, including its supporting structure, which no longer identifies the current occupant after a lapse of 60 days, shall be deemed an abandoned sign and shall be removed by the owner of the property on which it is located upon 30 days written notice by the Community Development Department.

15.40.720 Unsafe Signs

Any sign that, in the opinion of the Chief Building Official, is unsafe or insecure, shall be deemed an unsafe sign and shall be corrected or removed, together with any supporting structure, by the owner of the property on which the sign is located, within 72 hours of written notice by the Community Development Department.

Article VIII. Nonconforming Signs

15.40.800 Existing Nonconforming Signs - Abatement.

Signs which lawfully existed and were maintained as nonconforming signs prior to March 12, 1983, have been fully amortized and are subject to abatement, unless otherwise in compliance with this chapter. The adoption of this chapter shall in no way extend any abatement period in effect prior to March 12, 1983.

15.40.810 Abatement or Conformance - When required.

Signs which lawfully existed and were maintained and became nonconforming after March 12, 1983, shall be removed or made to conform within 30 days after written notice by the Department of Community Development, when:

- A. The use of the premises changes and the exterior of the building or other site conditions are to be altered; or
- B. A sign is damaged by any cause resulting in replacement or repair cost equal to or greater than one-half of its replacement value at the time the damage occurs; or
- C. In accordance with the amortization schedule outlined in Section 15.40.820.

15.40.820 Amortization.

- A. Signs which lawfully existed and were maintained and became nonconforming after March 12, 1983, shall be removed or made to conform within 30 days of written notice by the Community Development Department, in accordance with the following schedule:

If Twice the Original Value of Sign is:	Amortization Period (in years)
Less than \$500	Two
\$500 to \$999	Three
\$1,000 to \$2,999	Five
\$3,000 to \$5,999	Eight
More than \$6,000	Ten

- B. The time periods in the schedule set out in subsection A of this section shall commence on the effective date of the ordinance giving rise to or creating the nonconforming sign.
- C. If more than one sign on a premises is or becomes nonconforming, the original cost of all such nonconforming signs shall be aggregated for the purpose of determining the amortization period.

D. The owner or user of a nonconforming sign shall, upon written request of the Community Development Department, furnish acceptable proof of the initial cost in the form of:

- 1.** An original bill of sale;
- 2.** A description schedule from state or federal income tax returns; or
- 3.** A written appraisal by a sign manufacturer.

Article IX. Enforcement

15.40.900 Type of Offense.

Any person who violates any provision of this ordinance shall be guilty of an infraction. Violations shall be punishable as set forth in Chapter 1.12 of the San Luis Obispo Municipal Code. Nothing in this chapter shall be deemed or constituted to prevent the City from commencing any civil proceeding otherwise authorized by law for the declaration or abatement of a public nuisance.

15.40.910 Public Nuisance.

If the owner of any premises fails or neglects to comply with the provisions of this chapter, it shall constitute a public nuisance, pursuant to Chapter 8.24 of the San Luis Obispo Municipal Code. Any aggrieved party may, in addition to any other right or remedy he or she may possess either at law or in equity, pursue a private cause of action to abate a public nuisance, as specified in Chapter 8.24 of the San Luis Municipal Code.

Article X: Definitions

As used in this Chapter, the following terms and phrases shall have the indicated meanings:

“Architectural Review.” Refers to the Architectural Review process authorized by Municipal Code Section 2.48.090.

“ARC” or “Architectural Review Commission.” The Commission with the jurisdiction to perform Architectural Review, per Section 2.48 of the Municipal Code. When these Sign Regulations refer specifically to the ARC or Architectural Review Commission, review by the Commission is required.

“Attention-getting sign.” Any sign with moving parts, flashing lights, and/or neon colors, or signs incorporating pennants, streamers, large helium balloons or any similar visual device used for the purpose of drawing attention.

“Banner Sign.” A flexible sign of lightweight fabric or similar material typically supported at two or more points and hung on a building or otherwise suspended down or across its face, or across a public right-of-way.

“Building face.” The building face means the whole of a building visible in an elevation view, excluding sloped roof surfaces.

“Commercial zone.” Commercial zone refers to all non-residential zones, regardless of how the property is actually used.

“Frontage.” Frontage is the horizontal distance along a lot line adjacent to a public street, or the side of a lot adjacent to a public street.

“Height.” The height of a sign is the vertical distance from average grade (ground level) immediately below the sign to the top of the sign - including the support structure and any projecting design elements.

“Illegal sign.” An illegal sign is any sign which does not meet the requirements of this code and which has not received legal, nonconforming status.

“Non-conforming.” A non-conforming sign is a sign which was erected legally, but which does not now comply with these subsequently enacted Sign Regulations.

“Major Street Frontage.” A major street frontage is any arterial road shown in the City’s Circulation Element.

“Marquee.” is a building element that is part of a permanent entryway or entry canopy and traditionally associated with theaters. A marquee sometimes includes a projecting vertical sign which may extend above the cornice line of a building. The design and allowable sign area for a marquee are determined by the ARC during their review of the proposed building and/or marquee.

“Non-residential zone.” A non-residential zone is any zone other than the R-1, R-2, R-3, or R-4 zone, regardless of how the property is actually used.

“Outdoor advertising display.” An outdoor advertising display is a sign, such as a billboard, that advertises a product or display

“Premises.” Premises means a lot or series of lots under common ownership and/or developed together as a single development site, regardless of how many uses occupy the site.

“Public entrance.” The public entrance is one or more places of entry to a premises that are accessible to the general public.

“Roof sign” A roof sign is any sign where any part of the sign is on or over any portion of any roof, eave, or parapet of a building or structure.

“Sign.” A sign is any visual device or representation designed or used for the purpose of communicating a message or identifying or attracting attention to a premises, product, service, person, organization, business or event, with or without the use of words.

“Sign area” or “area of sign.” The area of a sign is the number of square feet of the smallest rectangle within which an individual sign face can be enclosed.

“Sign face.” The sign face is the visible portion of the sign, including all characters, symbols, and structural or nonstructural background (e.g. cabinet frame or painted border), but not including the base of a pole sign, monument sign, or free standing sign.

“Storefront.” A storefront is a distinct architectural feature that is immediately accessible from a public sidewalk and consisting of window displays and entry doors to a one or more uses.

“Temporary Sign.” A temporary sign is a sign that is temporary in nature and that is displayed for no more than 45 days in a row, or no more than 90 days within any 365 day period.

“Tenant's building face.” The tenant building face is that portion of the building face enclosing the area of the building occupied by the tenant. In multi-tenant buildings with interior tenant spaces, each tenant's building face shall be the proportionate share of the building face enclosing the area occupied by all tenants.

“Window Display.” A window display is an arrangement of merchandise, including graphics and text that is displayed in a building window. Provided the display is located more than 12 inches back from the inside of the window the display is not considered a sign.

“V sign.” A V sign is a sign consisting of two, essentially equal, sign faces positioned at an angle less than 180 degrees.