

# city of san luis obispo



## sign regulations september 2019



**Chapter 15.40**  
**SIGN REGULATIONS**

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### **General Provisions**

#### **15.40.100 Title**

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

#### **15.40.105 Authority**

This chapter is adopted pursuant to the authority vested in the City of San Luis Obispo and the State of California, including but not limited to: the State Constitution, California Government Code Sections 38774 and 65850, California Business and Professions Code Section 5230 and California Civil Code Section 713.

**15.40.110 Findings and Purpose.**

The Council of the City of San Luis Obispo has determined that these sign regulations are necessary for the following purposes:

A. Protecting and enhancing 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 built environment;

B. Regulating 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 consistent with community goals and policies expressed in the General Plan; to ensure that new signs are consistent with overall City goals to protect San Luis Obispo's physical identity and character by maintaining and enhancing the community with distinctive, attractive, and pedestrian-oriented commercial areas and neighborhoods. The Sign Regulations work together with the Community Design Guidelines and Historic Preservation Guidelines to achieve these goals;

D. Ensuring that the design of signs are 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. Limiting the number and size of all signs to avoid visual clutter which is detrimental to the character of the community.

F. Protecting public safety by ensuring 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. Protecting the constitutionally guaranteed right of free speech by enacting regulations to regulate the time, place and manner under which signs are permitted, and not the content of signs. Although examples of content may be provided in these Regulations 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.

### **15.40.130 General Rules and Interpretation**

A. Signs Must Comply with This Code. In all zones, only such signs that are specifically permitted or exempted in this Chapter may be placed, erected, maintained, displayed or used, and the placement, erection, maintenance, display or use of signs shall be subject to all restrictions, limitations and regulations contained in this chapter. The placement, erection, maintenance, display or use of all other signs is prohibited.

B. Enforcement Authority. The Community Development Director (“the Director”) is authorized and directed to enforce and administer the provisions of this chapter with the Public Works Director’s authority where noted.

C. Permit Requirement. Unless expressly exempted by a provision of this chapter, or by other applicable law, signs within the regulatory scope of this chapter may be displayed only pursuant to a permit issued by the City pursuant to this chapter and any applicable permits required by the Building Code or Title 12 of the City’s Municipal Code.

D. Message Neutrality. It is the City’s policy to regulate signs in a way that does not favor commercial speech over noncommercial speech and is content neutral as to noncommercial messages which are within the protections of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the California Constitution.

E. Regulatory Interpretations. All regulatory interpretations of this chapter are to be exercised in light of the City’s message neutrality policy. Where a particular type of sign is proposed in a permit application, and the type is neither expressly allowed nor prohibited by this chapter, or whenever a sign does not qualify as a “structure” as defined in the Building Code, then the Director shall approve, conditionally approve or disapprove, or refer the sign to the Architectural Review Commission, based on the most similar sign type that is expressly regulated by this Chapter.

F. Substitution of Messages. Subject to the property owner’s consent, a noncommercial message of any type may be substituted for any commercial message or any noncommercial message, provided that the sign is otherwise legal without consideration of message content. Such substitution of message may be made without any additional approval or permitting. This provision prevails over any more specific provision to the contrary within this Chapter. This provision does not create a right to increase the total amount of signage on a parcel, lot or land use; does not affect the requirement that a sign structure or mounting device be properly permitted; does not allow a change in the physical structure of a sign or its mounting device;

and does not allow the substitution of an off-site commercial message in place of an on-site commercial message.

G. **Property Owner's Consent.** No sign may be displayed without the consent of the legal owner(s) of the property on which the sign is mounted or displayed. For purposes of this policy, "owner" means the holder of the legal title to the property and all parties and persons holding a present right to possession, control or use of the property.

H. **Severance.** If any section, sentence, clause, phrase, word, portion or provision of this Chapter is held invalid or, unconstitutional, or unenforceable, by any court of competent jurisdiction, such holding shall not affect, impair, or invalidate any other section, sentence, clause, phrase, word, portion, or provision of this Chapter which can be given effect without the invalid portion. In adopting this Chapter, the City Council affirmatively declares that it would have approved and adopted the Chapter even without any portion, which may be held invalid or unenforceable.

## **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 in the public 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 California Fire Code, Section 505.1 or, if updated, the applicable Fire code section as determined by the City Fire Marshal.

**B. Signs Posted During Construction.** A maximum of four non-illuminated signs located on construction sites not exceeding 16 square feet in aggregate area, while a valid construction permit is active. For commercial and residential projects on sites three acres or larger, the maximum exempt sign area under this subsection is 32 square feet.

**C. Gasoline Price Signs.** 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. Notwithstanding other provisions of this Chapter, signs may include digital readouts or LED technology as necessary to comply with Business and Professions code for the display of fuel prices.

**D. Official Signs.** Official federal, state, local government signs and notices issued by any court, person, or officer in performance of a public duty; signs required by federal, state, or local law; and signs placed by utility companies as part of the normal operation and maintenance of utility facilities.

**E. Miscellaneous Small Signs.** Signs with an aggregate area not to exceed three square feet and located within five feet of an entrance to a building.

**F. No Trespassing Signs.** Trespass warnings that are posted in compliance with applicable 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 three feet in height and five square feet in area and limited to guidance of pedestrian or vehicular traffic within the premises on which they are located.

**H. Temporary Window Signs.** Temporary signs posted for 30 days or less on commercial properties that are painted directly on a window, affixed to the inside of a window, or hung within 36 inches of a window and 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 four square feet per window, whichever is greater.

**I. Vehicle Signs.** Painted signs or decals affixed to the body of any vehicle, unless parked or operated for the primary purpose of displaying the sign. See prohibited vehicle signs in 15.40.300.I.

**J. Signs Within Building Interior.** Signs or other visual communicative devices that are located entirely within a legally established building or other enclosed structure and are not intended to be oriented or be made visible from the exterior.

**K. Signs in Residential Zones or Signs on Residential Properties in Commercial Zones.** In addition to addressing signs in conformance with 15.40.200.A. & Flag Signs in conformance with 14.40.470.K., up to three temporary signs are allowed in conformance with the following requirements: (1) Regardless of the total number of signs posted at any time, temporary signs shall not exceed 120 days per sign in total duration per calendar year; (2) Individual signs shall not exceed five square feet; (3) Temporary signs may only be placed in the yard area. Examples of such signs include yard sale signs, real estate signs, and campaign signs. Exempt residential signs shall not include features from Prohibited Signs Section 15.40.300 which would be incompatible with the residential neighborhood such as audio, flashing or blinking lights or other attention getting devices. The content of the message conveyed has no application to compliance with the requirements of this section.

Signs in multi-unit apartment, condominiums, or common interest subdivisions with no ground level ownership may have up to two temporary window signs not to exceed 20 percent of the window area in which they are displayed and not exceed 120 days in total duration per calendar year.

**L. Temporary Signs in Non-residential Zones.** Three non-illuminated and non-electronic temporary signs not to exceed ten square feet for a total not to exceed 120 days per calendar year. Examples of such signs include campaign signs, real estate signs, or notice of special events. Temporary signs shall not include audio, movement, or other characteristics listed in Prohibited Signs Section 15.40.300 which would be incompatible with area character and/or create distractions which could inhibit the safe movement of traffic. Temporary signs shall be posted below the roofline of the building and not obscure architectural features or cover windows.

## Prohibited Signs

### 15.40.300 Prohibited signs.

The City has a compelling interest to prohibit the following signs to further the findings and purpose (Section 15.40.110) of these sign regulations and to enforce local, State and Federal law. All signs below are specifically identified as prohibited with some exceptions, and any other signs not expressly provided for or exempted from this chapter are prohibited. Sign types which, in the determination of the Community Development Director, are similar to those listed in this section or which are not described in these Regulations, are also prohibited.

**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 an unsafe distraction for users of the public right-of-way.

**B. Banner Signs** are prohibited unless:

1. Approved in conjunction with an approved temporary or intermittent use, or outdoor event 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 for not more than 30 days or within a specified timeframe as determined by the Community Development Director; or



3. Approved by the Public Works Director over designated rights-of-way in compliance with Municipal Code Section 12.04 (Encroachments); or
4. The sign is exempt under 15.40.200.

**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, handheld signs, mascots, and all off-site commercial signs that display advertising for a business, commodity, service, facility, or other such matter that is not located, conducted, sold, or offered upon the premises where the sign is located are prohibited within the city of San Luis Obispo. Any such outdoor advertising displays that are located within the public right-of-way are considered off-site and are prohibited. The onsite/offsite distinction applies only to commercial messages on signs.

**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, signal, or marking, or any other official traffic-control device, unless in accordance with 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 or Mobile Advertising Displays.**

Mobile billboard advertising displays and advertising signs on motor vehicles parked or left standing upon a public street, except for advertising signs that are permanently affixed to the body of, an integral part of, or a fixture of a motor vehicle for permanent decoration, identification, or display and that do not extend beyond the overall length, width, or height of the vehicle, advertisement on license plate frames installed in compliance with Vehicle Code section 5201, and paper advertisements issued by a dealer contained within a license frame installed in compliance with Vehicle Code section 5201. For purposes of this section, “permanently affixed” means any of the following: (i) Painted directly on the body of a motor vehicle, (ii) Applied as a decal on the body of a motor vehicle, or (iii) Placed in a location on the body of a motor vehicle that was specifically designed by a vehicle manufacturer as defined in Vehicle Code section 672 and licensed pursuant to Vehicle Code section 11701, in compliance with both state and federal law or guidelines, for the express purpose of containing an advertising sign. The City has determined this prohibition is necessary because mobile advertising as a primary purpose inhibits the safe movement of traffic, contributes to air pollution, and detracts from the overall aesthetics of the City. This prohibition applies citywide irrespective of the content of the message or ideas expressed.

**L. Prohibited or Unpermitted Uses.** Any sign displaying a commercial message promoting a business that is not a permitted use pursuant to Title 17 of the City of San Luis Obispo Municipal Code (Zoning Regulations).

### M. Roof Signs.

Unless expressly allowed Section 15.40.420 of this chapter, roof signs are prohibited in all zones.

### N. Electronic Message Centers (EMC signs) and Digital Display.



Signs using digital displays or other means to present images or messages. These signs typically use light emitting diode (LED), liquid crystal display (LCD), plasma or other technology to present a series of still images, full motion animation, or other text messages. (Does not apply where pre-empted by State law for fuel price signage or other applicable codes).

Exemption: City parking facilities are exempt from the EMC prohibition in order to provide information to the public regarding parking availability. This exemption is necessary for the public health, safety, and welfare of the community in order to manage unnecessary car trips and reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from unnecessary vehicle parking space searches in City parking facilities and to minimize driver confusion and distraction that can increase the likelihood of vehicle and pedestrian accidents and injuries.

## Sign Standards

### 15.40.400 Area and height measurement

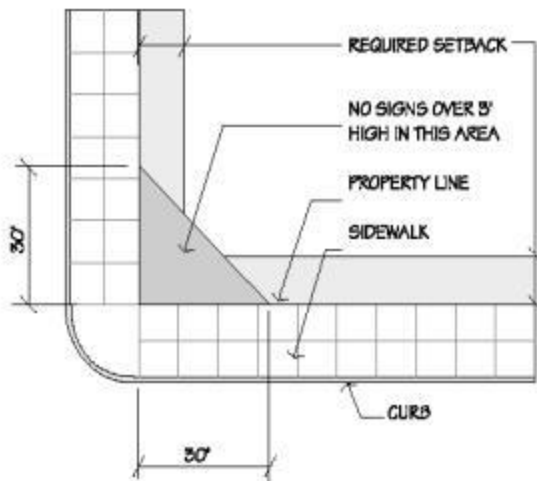
The sign area is calculated by determining the periphery of the sign. The periphery of the sign shall be established by drawing no more than eight straight lines encompassing the limits of the sign within the smallest possible area. In determining the area of an individual sign that has more than one 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. Sign area does not include supporting structures, such as sign bases and columns without lettering or graphics.

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 three feet may not be located within the visibility triangle depicted below. Minor exceptions may be granted for controlled intersections if approved by both the Public Works Director and Community Development Director, if a finding is made that the proposed sign will not affect 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, signs may be located in the required setback area, provided they are outside of the visibility triangle and provide adequate site distance for driveways.

D. The Community Development Director may approve reduced setbacks for signs, provided the Public Works Director concurs 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 as provided for each sign type specifically identified in this chapter in 15.40.470, or with sign program approval or by exception as provided in 15.40.485 and 15.40.600 respectively.

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.

The Community Development Director may make exceptions to the prohibition of roof signs in circumstances where the sign does not extend above the roofline, the building lacks an architectural feature to locate a sign, or other special circumstances.

**15.40.430 Illumination.**

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

A. Lighting for signs shall not create a hazardous glare for pedestrians or vehicles either in a public street or on any private premises.

B. 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, LED, or similar technology.

C. 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 and to limit direct illumination of any object other than the sign or onto any public right-of-way or adjoining property.

D. 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.

E. In the Office zone, illumination of the sign face shall not exceed 10 luxes (one foot-candle) measured at a distance of 10 feet from the sign.

F. Signs located in residential zones may not be illuminated, except externally illuminated directory signs approved for residential projects, which shall not exceed 10 luxes (1 foot-candle) measured at a distance of 10 feet from the sign.

G. Internally illuminated cabinet signs are prohibited in the Downtown-Commercial (C-D) zone and allowed in other zoning districts in compliance with the Design Principles.



Encouraged



Discouraged

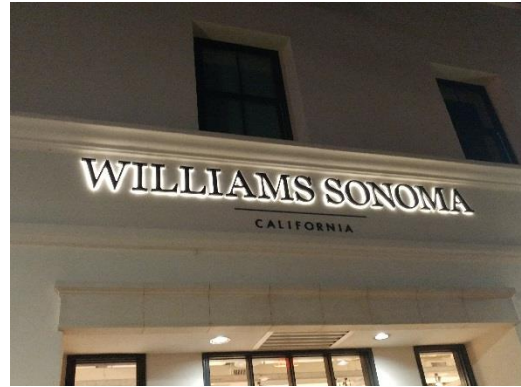
Internally Illuminated Cabinet signs consist of frame and face(s) with a translucent message panel. Signs with a backing or case of opaque material with punch thru letters so only the letters or business symbol are illuminated are not classified as internally illuminated cabinet signs.

H. Signs in the Downtown (C-D zone)

Signs in the Downtown (C-D zone) may only use external illumination, halo backlighting, push through, neon, channel letters, or LED tubing with a similar appearance and brightness level which simulates neon.



Channel Letter Signs



Backlit (Halo) Signs

All signs with internal illumination including monument signs, walls signs, projecting signs and pole signs shall have opaque only lettering illuminated, subject to compliance with the standards in subsections E, F, and G of this section.

#### **15.40.440 Clearance.**

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

- A. 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.
- B. Horizontal Clearance. The minimum horizontal clearance between a sign and the curb line shall be two feet; the maximum projection over a public sidewalk shall be two-thirds (2/3) the width of the sidewalk or six 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 or the Design Principles established by Section of 15.40.480. In no case may the maximum number or size of signs, or their illumination levels, exceed the standards provided by this Section 15.40.460, unless approved through a Sign Program or Exception as provided by Section 15.40.485 or Section 15.40.600.

- A. The cumulative area and number of signs requirements provided in 15.40.460 & 15.40.470 summarized in this table represent maximum standards for signs which conform to the requirements for each sign type in 15.40.470 & Design Principles of 15.40.480.

Zoning Designation	Sign Types Allowed	# of signs per premises	Illumination	Max cumulative sign area (notes)
Residential Zones (R1-R4)	Wall, hanging and suspended, freestanding post, flags	1	Not allowed	20 square feet Flags see 15.40.470.K
Office (O)	All Sign Types except pole signs	2	External only 15.40.430	50 square feet
Neighborhood Commercial (C-N)	All Sign Types except pole signs	2	No internal illumination. May be external only or include low level backlit signs behind opaque surface	50 square feet
Retail Commercial (C-R), Downtown Commercial (C-D) Business Park (B-P),	All Sign Types except pole and multi-tenant signs in the CD zone	4	See requirements of 15.40.430 and 15.40.470(F) for monument signs	200 square feet
Tourist Commercial (C-T), Service Commercial (C-S), Manufacturing (M)	All Sign Types except projecting, pole, and multi-tenant signs in the M zone	2	See requirements of 15.40.430	200 square feet
Public Facilities (PF), Community Commercial (C-C)	All Sign Types except projecting, pole, and multi-tenant signs in the PF zone	2		100 square feet
Conservation and Open Space (C/OS), Agriculture (AG)	Wall, Freestanding post, monument, Hanging and suspended	2	External only 15.40.430	50 square feet



### 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. Signs shall also comply with Section 15.40.430 Illumination of these regulations. Each sign type shall also comply with Design Standards section 15.40.480 in addition to design and quality requirements within the sign standards for each sign type within this section.

#### 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 facade. Wall signs should be placed on a flat building surface and should not be placed over or otherwise obscure architectural building features.

1. Location, Height, and Number Permitted. Wall signs shall be located on a building face that has a public entrance (unless allowed section 15.40.420). One wall sign is permitted per wall face for each occupant, with up to two per occupant space where conditions of 15.40.420 are applicable. The maximum height of wall signs on multi-story buildings is the upper most point of the second story unless additional height is approved through a sign program or exception as provided in 15.40.485 and 14.40.600.

2. Size. Wall signs may be a maximum of 100 square feet or 15-percent of the building face where the sign is attached, whichever is less. Wall signs shall not exceed maximum cumulative areas of 15.40.460. The building face area is determined by multiplying the length of the linear frontage of the tenant space or building by the average height of the tenant space or building.

3. Illumination. Wall signs may be illuminated externally or internally consistent with Section [15.40.430](#) of these sign regulations- and the design standards set forth in section [15.40.470.A.4](#) below.

4. Design. Internally illuminated cabinet signs are prohibited in the Downtown-Commercial District. Examples of allowed internally illuminated signs include backlighting, halo, or neon lit letters or emblems, channel letters, or logos. All wall signs shall consist of high-quality installations using a direct or flush mount without exposed wiring, raceways, or other stabilizing devices or mounts including backer mounts. Attachments shall be hidden from view in the least destructive manner possible. For masonry, attachments should be embedded into the mortar, not the brick or stone. Except as allowed herein, materials such as foam, poster board, or flat plastic which are usually associated with temporary signage are not appropriate.

A. Balance and Proportion

Wall signs shall appear balanced and in proportion and scale with the building elevations which they are placed, and not obscure windows, or overwhelm architectural features such as pilasters and cornices (see examples shown below).



B. Material

Unless approved as a temporary sign, wall signs shall not consist of materials such as foam, poster board, or flat plastic which are usually associated with temporary signage (see examples below).



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. Window signs are located within 36 inches of the face of a window. Window displays, including merchandise displays, graphics and text, that are located more than 36 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-percent 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 vertical and horizontal clearance requirement of 15.40.440.
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. Design. Graphics, logos, and signage language should have a quality integrated appearance and signage shall not be added to existing awnings with adhesive applications or other means of attaching a sign to the awning material. The awning material should incorporate a durable sign design and consist of long-lasting materials such as canvas or another durable outdoor fabric material.

5. Zoning. Awning signs may be located in all commercial zones.

#### 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 ten feet of each other if on the same property and should be separated from projecting signs on adjacent properties by ten feet to ensure proper visibility.

1. Location and Number. Projecting signs must be attached to building facades that have a public entrance and must maintain minimum vertical and horizontal clearance requirements of 15.40.440. One projecting sign is allowed per tenant space. Multiple projecting signs shall not be installed within ten feet of each other if on the same property and shall be separated from projecting signs on adjacent properties or tenant spaces by ten feet to ensure proper visibility.

2. Size. Projecting signs may have the following maximum areas:

Office (O) zone: Six (6) square feet

Neighborhood-Commercial (C-N) zone: twelve (12) square feet

Downtown-Commercial (C-D) zone: twelve (12) square feet

Community-Commercial Zone (C-C) zone: twelve (12) square feet

Retail-Commercial (C-R) zone: twenty-four (24) square feet

Tourist-Commercial (C-T) zone: twenty-four (24) square feet

3. Illumination. Projecting signs may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section 15.40.430 of these sign regulations.

4. Design. Projecting signs shall attach to a building face and project out perpendicular to the building wall. Projecting signs are encouraged as an effective pedestrian scale sign. 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. Materials such as foam, poster board, or flat plastic which are usually associated with temporary signage are not appropriate.

5. Zoning. Projecting signs are allowed in the O, C-N, C-D, C-C, C-R and 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 shall be attached to building facades that have a public entrance and must maintain minimum vertical and horizontal clearance requirements of 15.40.440. One hanging or suspended sign is allowed per tenant space.
2. Size. Hanging signs may have a maximum area of eight square feet.
3. Illumination. Hanging signs and suspended signs may be externally illuminated consistent with 15.40.430.

4. Design. Hanging and Suspended signs are intended as pedestrian scale signs used to help define entries. Materials shall be durable and made of quality materials such as wood or metal to convey a sense of quality and permanence. Materials such as foam, poster board, or flat plastic which are usually associated with temporary signage are prohibited.

5. 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 in all commercial districts and the public facility (PF) zone, subject to the approval of the Community Development and Public Works Directors, 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 and Height. Monument signs may be a maximum of 24 square feet. The maximum height of a monument sign is six feet from the average natural grade at the base of the sign. 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 four 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 monument signs downtown illumination shall be consistent with Section [15.40.430](#) of these sign regulations. Internal illumination of monument signs as shown below are not allowed in the Office (O) or Neighborhood Commercial (N-C) zone.



4. Design. Monument signs shall be designed to be compatible with the architecture of the buildings on site with a solid base and background with a maximum of two parallel sides. Materials should be durable and made of quality materials such as wood or metal to convey a sense of quality and permanence. Materials such as foam, poster board, or flat plastic which are usually associated with temporary signage are not permitted.

**G. Freestanding Post Signs.**





**Signage Guidelines**

Freestanding 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. Freestanding post signs may be located in required street yards, subject to the approval of the Community Development and Public Works Directors, as provided for in Section [15.40.410](#) of these sign regulations. Only one freestanding post sign is permitted per premises, per street frontage.
2. Size and height. The maximum sign area for freestanding post signs is 20 square feet. Freestanding post signs shall not be taller than six feet, measured from average natural grade at the base of the sign to the top of the sign structure. Where two or more uses are located on the same premises, the sign area for freestanding post signs must be shared.
3. Illumination. Freestanding post signs may be externally illuminated consistent with Section [15.40.430](#) of these sign regulations.
4. Design. Colors and materials used for the sign construction shall include complementary colors and materials with the associated building design and the size and scale of the signs shall not detract or be out of character with the surrounding neighborhood. Materials should be durable and made of quality materials such as wood or metal to convey a sense of quality and permanence. Materials such as foam, poster board, or flat plastic which are usually associated with temporary signage are not permitted.
5. Zoning. Freestanding post signs are allowed in all zoning districts.

## H. Pole and Pylon 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 and Pylon signs may be 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 Director 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 measured from the average natural grade of the ground immediately beneath the sign. Where two or more uses are located on the same premises, the sign area for pole signs must be shared on a single sign.
3. Illumination. Pole signs may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section [15.40.430](#) of these sign regulations, and subject to approval by the Director of the lighting design.
4. Design. Colors and materials used for the sign construction shall include complementary colors and materials with the associated building design.
5. Zoning. Pole signs are allowed in the C-R (Commercial Retail), C-S (Commercial Service) and C-T (Commercial Tourist) zones only along designated arterial routes as identified in the Circulation Element of the General Plan, subject to the approval of the Director.

## I. A-Frame (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 signs may have rewritable surfaces, such as chalk boards or dry-erase boards.

1. Location and Number. A-Frame (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 eight square feet and a maximum height of four feet, measured from the ground to the top of the sign structure.
3. Illumination. Sandwich-board signs may not be illuminated.
4. Design. Signs must be made of durable materials designed to withstand exterior conditions such as smooth particle board, medium density fiberboard, or plywood.
5. Zoning. Sandwich-board signs are allowed in all commercial zones.

## J. Shopping Center (or Multi-Tenant) 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 five 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 subject to approval of the Director.
2. Size. Shopping center identification signs for new developments shall be reviewed as part of the development application consistent with 15.40.485. Sign Programs.
3. Illumination. Shopping center identification signs may be illuminated consistent with Section [15.40.430](#) of these sign regulations. Shopping center identification signs shall not incorporate internally illuminated cabinet signs.
4. Design. Shopping center identification signs shall be compatible with the colors, materials, and design theme of the development. Multi-tenant centers with more than five tenants shall only list the main anchor tenants with no more than five listed. Multi-tenant signs which list an excessive number of individual tenants can result in sign clutter.
5. Zoning. Shopping center identification signs shall only be permitted in the C-S, C-C or C-R zoning districts.

**K. Flags.**



1. Location and Number. Flag poles shall be located outside of required setback areas. Only one flagpole is permitted per premises. Flag poles consistent with this section and section 15.40.200.N. do not require a sign permit but may require building permits. In residential zoning districts wall mounted flags which do not project above the roofline are exempt from permit requirements.

2. Size. The size (dimensions) of the flag shall be commensurate with the height and diameter of the pole, per recommended industry standards. The maximum height of the flag or pole which the flag is mounted to is the same as the maximum height for structures, as provided in the zoning regulations. Height and size standards for flags are shown in the table below:

<i>Ground Set Poles</i>		<i>Roof-Mounted Poles</i>	
<i>Exposed Pole Height (ft.)</i>	<i>Flag Dim. &amp; Size (sq. ft.)</i>	<i>Exposed Pole Height (ft.)</i>	<i>Flag Size (sq. ft.)</i>
15 -20	3 x 5	15	4 x 6
25	4 x 6	20-30	5 x 8
30 - 35	5 x 8	35-40	6 x 10
40 – 45	6 x 10	45-50	8 x 12
50	8 x 12	50-60	9 x 15

3. Illumination. Flags may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section [15.40.430](#) of these sign regulations.

4. Zoning. Flags may be located in all zoning districts, subject to conformance with the above size and pole height criteria.

**L. 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 freestanding 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 six inches in height.
3. Illumination. Directory signs may be illuminated by any means consistent with Section [15.40.430](#) of these sign regulations.
4. Design. Directory signs are intended for multi-tenant buildings to provide visibility and guidance for pedestrians in locating tenant suites. Directory signs are small scale and oriented to pedestrians.
5. Zoning. Directory signs are allowed in all zoning districts.

### **15.40.480. Design Principles**

In addition to meeting all criteria of 15.40.470 above, all signs shall be found consistent with the following design principles.

1. Architectural Compatibility. A sign's scale shall be appropriate for the building on which it is placed and the area where it is located on the building. Signs shall integrate with the design of the building and incorporate materials, colors, and shapes that complement the building's architectural style.
2. Scale, proportions to building and placement. Signs shall be in scale with the building and not cover or obscure architectural details or ornamentation of a building's façade. The outer perimeter of signs shall not extend beyond the limits of the architectural feature of the building it is installed and should include some separation to the edge of the feature.
3. Sign Quality and Installation methods. Signs shall be made of durable materials designed to withstand the elements, such as wood or metal to convey a sense of quality and permanence. Unless approved as a temporary sign, signs shall not be made of plastic, plywood, or pressed board. Materials such as foam, poster board, or flat plastic which are usually associated with temporary signage are prohibited.
4. Community Design Guidelines. Signs are an integral review component of the Community Design Guidelines. The Community Design Guidelines has a specific Chapter addressing signs including appropriate design, details, scale, location, consistency, types, illumination, and materials.
5. Historic Resources and Districts. Signs on historic buildings and/or in historic districts shall be compatible with the architectural character of the structure and not detract from the character of the resource or the district it is located in. Sign installations on historically designated buildings or which are eligible for historic listing shall comply with recommendations of the Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
6. Residential zones, C-N zone, and Office zone. Signs shall not include internal illumination of any type, or signs typically designed for internal illumination such as channel letters, marquees, or cabinets. Bases, framing, and sign mounting and presentation methods shall use materials that are compatible with the architecture of the building on the parcel which they are located.

### **15.40.485 Sign Programs.**

Sign programs are required for new commercial, office, and/or mixed-use projects in order to establish ongoing sign requirements and to ensure the signage is complementary and compatible with the development and surrounding neighborhood or commercial district. Sign programs create a coordinated

set of standards for signs on properties with multiple buildings or tenants and establish uniform sign design elements such as size, color, materials, lighting, and placement on the property. Applications for new commercial, office and/or mixed-use projects shall include schematic plans for signage sufficient to demonstrate signs will be compatible with the project and surroundings. Conditions of approval may require a subsequent final sign program submittal subject to the approval of the Community Development Director. Modifications to sign programs may be referred to the ARC as determined by the Director with final decision being made by the Director. Sign programs may supersede sections of these sign regulations (Sections 15.40.460 and 15.40.470). The purpose of sign programs is to provide for project specific designs and sign accommodations that take into account compatible and appropriate signage which can be reviewed concurrently with the review of building designs and site layout. Sign programs are not intended to primarily provide for additional signage than would otherwise be allowed and may not provide for approval of otherwise prohibited sign types. In order to approve a sign program, the Community Development Director shall make findings that the sign program results in signage that is compatible with the development, complementary to project architecture, and coordinated among tenant spaces for consistency and superior design. Prior to submitting a sign permit application to the Building Division under a sign program, the program must have been approved and all appeal periods must have expired.

### **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:

- A. A complete construction permit application and supplemental sign permit worksheet.
- B. A site plan showing existing improvements and proposed sign locations.
- C. A detailed plan of the proposed signage, including dimensions and method of illumination, if any.
- D. Samples and descriptions of the proposed sign's colors and materials.



E. 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 fifteen days if Architectural Review or other entitlements are required.

#### **15.40.520 Architectural review application.**

When review is required by the Architectural Review Commission, 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 Level of 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 Community Development Director 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.

Any sign not specified in this Chapter for review by the Architectural Review Commission, Community Development Director, or Planning Commission, which does not, in the determination of the Community Development Director, comply with these sign regulations, or with requirements of Section 15.40.470 or Design Principles of 15.40.480, may be denied consistent with 15.40.550.

#### **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 Planning Commission.

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 Planning Commission meeting, considering public notification requirements.

B. Planning Commission Decisions. Any decision of the Planning Commission may be appealed to the City Council in accordance with the procedures set out in Chapter [1.20](#) of the municipal code.

## **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 approval by the Community Development Director review consistent with Section 15.40.480 and may be subject to review by the ARC as determined by the Director. Exceptions require a separate application and fees for ARC or Community Development Director review, which must be approved before a sign permit will be issued.

### **15.40.610 Findings for Approval of an Exception.**

Exceptions to the Sign Regulations must meet all of the following findings:

A. There are unusual circumstances applying to the property which make strict adherence to the regulations impractical or infeasible, such as building configuration, historic architectural features, architectural style, site layout, intervening obstructions, or other unusual circumstances. Exceptions shall not allow for additional signage in number or size beyond what is necessary to compensate for the unusual circumstances. Unusual circumstances may also include sign designs which are not expressly provided for or exempted in this Chapter, but which represent superior or innovative design appropriate for the building and location.

B. The exception is consistent with the intent and purpose of the sign regulations (see Section 15.40.110) and the exception is not being granted in cases where alternative options of allowed signage in this Chapter could provide an adequate alternative for sufficient visibility to the public with equal or superior design.

C. The sign exception is for superior design and complies with Design Principles of this Chapter and will not result in: visual clutter; excessively sized signage in comparison to the building or surroundings;

signage that is inconsistent with the character of the surroundings; or approval of signs that are prohibited in this Chapter.

### **Sign Maintenance and Abandonment**

#### **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. When signs are removed, the wall behind the sign shall be repaired and painted to match the rest of the building wall.

#### **15.40.720 Unsafe Signs.**

Any sign that, in the opinion of the Chief Building Official or the Public Works Director, 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.

### **Nonconforming Signs**

#### **15.40.800 Existing Nonconforming Signs**

Signs not compliant with this Chapter which previously lawfully existed as conforming signs or legal non-conforming signs under Sign Regulations established by Ordinance 1455 and subsequent ordinances amending this Chapter prior to 2018 shall be deemed legal non-conforming signs.

#### **15.40.840 Removal of Non-Conforming Signs.**

A. Removal of Nonconforming Signs. Nonconforming signs shall not be altered, enlarged, relocated, and/or reconstructed, and shall be removed if:

1. The nonconforming sign is more than fifty (50) percent destroyed, and the destruction is other than facial copy replacement. A nonconforming sign shall be deemed to be more than fifty (50) percent destroyed if the estimated cost of reconstruction exceeds fifty (50) percent of the replacement value as determined by the Chief Building Official;
2. The nonconforming sign is located on a building that is enlarged, remodeled, or expanded, if the nonconforming sign is affected by the construction, enlargement, remodel, or expansion. An enlargement, remodel, or expansion of the portion of the building upon which the nonconforming sign is located or that is more than fifty (50) percent of the building area shall be deemed to affect the nonconforming sign;

3. The nonconforming sign is temporary.

B Deactivation of Flashing Features. The owner of a sign that contains flashing features shall permanently deactivate the flashing features.

C. Continuance of Nonconforming Signs. Except as provided in subsections (A) and (B) of this section, a nonconforming sign may be continued and shall be maintained in good condition as required by these regulations, provided that it shall not be:

1. Structurally changed to another nonconforming sign, although the content of the sign may be changed.
2. Structurally altered to prolong the life of the sign, except to meet safety requirements.
3. Expanded or altered in any manner that increases the degree of nonconformity.

D. Repairing and Repainting. Nonconforming signs shall only be painted and repaired in place and shall not be removed from their existing location, except as part of a building remodel, unless removal of the sign for painting or repair is part of the sign's customary maintenance and repair.

## 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 they 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 Obispo Municipal Code.

## Definitions

### **15.40.1000 Definitions.**

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

**“A-frame Sign (aka sandwich board sign).”** A temporary, portable, and freestanding sign composed of two panels hinged at the top and capable of standing on its own without external support or attachment.

**“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 Chapter [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.

**“Back-lit” (Halo letters).”** The letters or graphics have an opaque face with where only the back of the sign is illuminated. These signs are also often referred to as “reverse channel letters”.

**“Banner Sign.”** A flexible sign including Feather Banners and Pennants 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. This definition does not include Flags as defined by this Article.

**“Blade Sign.”** A double-sided sign oriented perpendicular to the building wall on which it is mounted. (See Projecting Sign.)

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

**“Building Frontage.”** The linear measurement of exterior walls enclosing interior spaces which are oriented to and most nearly parallel to public streets, public alleys, parking lots, malls or freeways.

**“Cabinet Sign.”** An internally illuminated sign consisting of frame and face(s), with a translucent message panel in an enclosed case; also referred to as a panel sign. Cabinet signs are typically internally illuminated with a plastic or plexi-glass face.

**“Changeable Copy Sign.”** A sign displaying a message that is changed by means of moveable letters, slats, lights, light emitting diodes, or moveable background material.

**“Channel Letters.”** Three-dimensional individual letters or figures typically made of formed metal, usually with an acrylic face, with an open back or front, illuminated or non-illuminated, that are affixed to a building or to a freestanding sign structure by sliding the letters into channels.

**“Channel Letter Sign.”** A sign with multiple components, each built in the shape of an individual dimensional letter or symbol, each of which may be independently illuminated, with a separate translucent panel over the letter source for each element.

**“Commercial Speech or Commercial Message”.** A message on a sign which identifies, advertises, or directs attention to a business or is intended to induce a purchase of a good, property, or service, including, without limitation, any sign naming a brand of good or service.

**“Commercial Zone.”** Commercial zone refers to all nonresidential zones, regardless of how the property is actually used.

**“Digital Display.”** A display method utilizing light emitting diode (LED), liquid crystal display (LCD), plasma display, projected images, or any functionally equivalent technology, and which is capable of automated, remote or computer control to change the image, either in a “slide show” manner (series of still images), or full motion animation, or any combination of them.

**“Directory Sign.”** A freestanding or wall sign that identifies all businesses and other establishments located within a commercial or industrial complex or an institutional establishment.

**“Electronic Message Center or Electronic Message Display.”** A sign that uses digital display to present variable messages displayed by projecting an electronically controlled pattern and which can be programmed to periodically change the message display.

**“Feather Banner.”** A type of vertical banner made of flexible materials, (e.g., cloth, paper, or plastic), the longer dimension of which is typically attached to a pole or rod that is driven into the ground or supported by an individual stand. Also called a “swooper” or “teardrop” banner. Also known as quill signs or quill banners.

**“Flag.”** A piece of fabric or other flexible material, usually rectangular, of distinctive design, used as a symbol, which is capable of movement, or fluttering in moving air or wind.

**“Freestanding Sign.”** A sign supported by structures or supports that are placed on, or anchored in, the ground and which are structurally independent from any building including “monument signs”, “pole signs”, and “pylon signs.” (Also called Ground Signs).

**“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. (See Building Frontage).

**“Halo-lit”** (see Back-lit definition)

**“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.”** Any sign which does not meet the requirements of this Chapter and which has not received legal, nonconforming status.

**“Illuminated Sign.”** A sign that is illuminated with an artificial source of light incorporated internally or externally. Also called a Lighted Sign.

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

**“Mobile Billboard Advertising Display.”** An advertising display that is attached to a mobile, non-motorized vehicle, device, or bicycle, that carries, pulls, or transports a sign or billboard, and is for the primary purpose of advertising, as defined by California Vehicle Code section 395.5. See prohibited signs.

**“Monument Sign.”** A low-profile freestanding sign erected upon or supported solely by a planter, pedestal base, or similar ground structure approximately the same width as the sign and which is designed to incorporate the architectural theme and building material of the building on the premises. Internal supports, poles or pylons, if any, are enclosed by decorative covers or otherwise not exposed to view.

**“Mural.”** A one-of-kind, hand painted, hand-tiled, or digitally-printed image on the exterior of a building that does not contain any commercial message advertising a business, services rendered, or goods produced or sold. Murals are not regulated under this Chapter but may be subject to the City’s Public Art Program.

**“Nonconforming Sign.”** A nonconforming sign is a sign which was erected illegally, but which does not now comply with these subsequently enacted Sign Regulations.

**“Nonresidential 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.

**“Off-Premises Sign.”** A sign that advertises commercial products, accommodations, services or activities not provided in or on the property or premises upon which it is located.

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

**“Pennant.”** An attention-seeking device made of flexible materials, (e.g., cloth, paper, or plastic) that is typically triangular or swallow-tail in shape and may or may not contain copy.

**“Permanent Sign”.** A sign that is solidly attached to a building, structure, or the ground by means of mounting brackets, bolts, welds, or other combination of attachment methods, thereby rendering the sign non-moveable or difficult to reposition without the use of machinery, cutting devices, or mechanical devices. Contrast: temporary sign.

**“Pole Sign.”** A freestanding sign that is supported by one or more exposed poles that are permanently attached directly into or upon the ground.

**“Post Sign.”** A low-profile free-standing sign supported by posts that has a single sign face and is generally oriented parallel to the public right-of-way.

**“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.

**“Projecting Sign.”** A building wall sign, the surface of which is not parallel to the face of the supporting wall and which is supported wholly by the wall. See Blade Sign.

**Public Entrance.** One or more places of entry to a premises that are accessible to the general public.

**“Pylon Sign.”** A freestanding sign that is supported and in direct contact with the ground or one or more solid, monumental structures or pylons and which typically has a sign face with a vertical dimension that is greater than its horizontal dimension.

**“Reverse Channel Letters.”** (see Back-lit definition)

**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.

**“Sandwich board Sign.”** (see A-Frame sign definition).

**“Shopping (or Multi-tenant) Center Identification Sign.”** A freestanding sign that identifies the name of the shopping center and lists its tenants.



**“Sign.”** A structure, device, figure, display, message placard or other contrivance, or any part thereof, situated outdoors or indoors, which is designed, constructed, intended or used to advertise, provide information in the nature of advertising, ideological, political, or social information, or direct or attract attention to an object, person, institution, business, product, service, message, event, or location by any means, including words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, fixtures, colors, or illumination.

**“Sign Area” or “area of sign.”** The area of a sign is the number of square feet within which an individual sign face can be enclosed, as defined by Section 15.40.400.

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

**“Street right-of-way.”** Any road or other public place, including but not limited to a highway, alley, street, avenue, place, sidewalk, parkway (i.e., planted or landscaped area between a curb and the edge of a sidewalk), path, walk, park, plaza, boulevard, right-of-way or any other public place in the City whether or not currently improved.

**“Temporary Sign.”** A temporary sign is a sign that is temporary in nature and that is displayed for no more than 120 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.

**“V Sign.”** A V sign is a sign consisting of two, essentially equal, sign faces positioned at an angle less than 180 degrees rather than parallel to each other.

**“Window Display.”** A window sign is a sign, window display, merchandise display, graphics and text, or lifestyle graphics that are painted on, hung, or attached to a window, or displayed visibly in any way so as to be viewed or legible from outside the window or structure.