

## **Philadelphia's Window Sign Law – What Businesses Need to Know**

The City of Philadelphia passed a new law on signage to make the City's Code more user-friendly and enforceable, while promoting good design and supporting small businesses. The City no longer requires permits for window signs, so businesses can use their windows to advertise store hours, goods or services, and/or "this week's special". The new law also limits the amount of window and transparent space that can be covered with signs (Section 14-904 of The Philadelphia Code). This law, like similar laws throughout the country, is intended to improve neighborhoods by removing excessive signage and to enhance safety by allowing people to see in and out of stores.

- **To whom does this law apply?** This law applies to ALL businesses located in a fixed structure. It does not apply to mobile vehicles or newsstands.
- **What are the requirements?** The law says that **only 20% of windows and transparent doors facing a street can be covered with signs**. This is known as the "20% rule".<sup>1</sup>
- **What is considered a window sign?** A window sign is any sign that is attached to, affixed to, etched into, leaning against, or otherwise placed within 18 inches of a street-facing window or transparent door in a manner that the sign is visible from the outside of the building.
  - This includes posters, ads, flyers, stickers, banners, digital signs, open/closed signs, product signs, and store-name signs.
  - This includes temporary and permanent signs, no matter what the sign says.
- **How do I comply? (see next page for an examples)**
  1. Calculate the total area of all transparent, street-facing parts of your business (including windows and transparent space on doors).
  2. Calculate the total area of signs on windows and transparent door space. For signs that aren't rectangles, picture the sign fitting in an imaginary rectangle. The area of the rectangle is the "sign area" for that sign.
  3. Make sure sign area does not exceed 20% of the total window and transparent door area. See examples on next page.
- **What happens if a business posts more signs than are allowed?** A violation is punishable by a fine of up to \$300. Each day of continuing violation is considered a separate offense.
- **For more information:** visit [www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li).

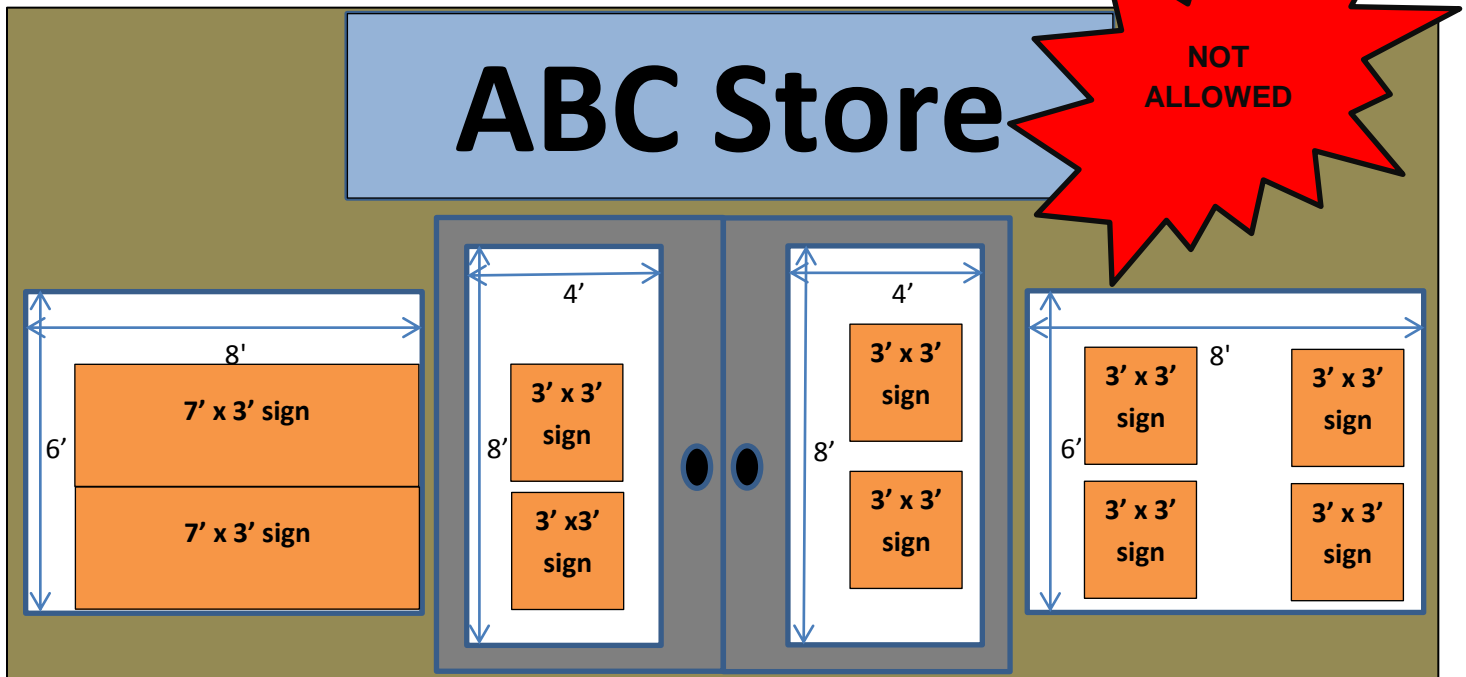
<sup>1</sup> Window signs must be limited to the ground floor, except that in CMX-2, CMX-2.5, CMX-3, CMX-4, CMX-5, CA-1, and CA-2 districts, window signs for businesses that are not located on the ground floor are also permitted in second floor windows. Digital displays are permitted on window signs in CMX-2, CMX-2.5, and CMX-3 districts, provided the digital displays do not exceed 4 sq. ft. total per building frontage

**Example 1: Window signs exceed maximum allowable area of 20%**

Total transparent area = 160 ft<sup>2</sup>

Window sign area = 114 ft<sup>2</sup>

Window sign area as % of total transparent glazed area = 71%



**Example 2: Window signs do not exceed maximum allowable area of 20%**

Total transparent area = 160 ft<sup>2</sup>

Window sign area = 31ft<sup>2</sup>

Window sign area as % of total transparent glazed area = 19%

