



Outdoor Advertising Signs

FAQ

This information sheet is meant to act as a guide to explain the permit and licenses that are required for outdoor advertising signs. These signs are also known as billboards or non-accessory signs.

Are permits required to erect an outdoor advertising sign?

Yes. [Zoning](#), [Building](#) and [Electrical](#) Permits are required to erect an outdoor advertising sign. All permits must be obtained before the sign is erected.

Are permits required to remove an outdoor advertising sign?

Yes. [Zoning](#) and [Building](#) Permits are required to remove an outdoor advertising sign. All permits must be obtained before the sign is removed.

In some cases, the zoning code requires the removal of outdoor advertising signs before a zoning permit for a new sign can be issued; What needs to be done to confirm that an outdoor advertising sign has been removed?

Both [Zoning](#) and [Building](#) Permits are required to confirm that an outdoor advertising sign has been removed. The demolition must be physically completed, the permit must be closed out and a Certificate of Approval must be obtained.

Additionally, the zoning application for the new sign must be accompanied by a written authorization from the owner of the property where the sign(s) to be removed are located authorizing the applicant to remove those sign(s) and acknowledging that the right to maintain an outdoor advertising or non-accessory sign is being forfeited through the filing of the application and the issuance of the permit for the erection of the new sign.

What needs to be done to convert an existing outdoor advertising sign to a digital outdoor advertising sign?

[Zoning](#), [Building](#) and [Electrical](#) Permits are required to convert an existing outdoor advertising sign to a digital outdoor advertising sign.

Converting a standard outdoor advertising sign to a digital display sign, involves substantial alteration, reconstruction and conversion of the billboard structure. Therefore, under [14-104\(2\)](#) and [14-903\(1\)\(a\)\(.3\)](#) of the Philadelphia Zoning Code, a permit for such conversion may be issued only where the current structure and use are otherwise in compliance with the current dimensional and use standards of the Code in effect at the time of the proposed conversion.

See [Code Bulletin No Z-1302](#) for more information.

How can I determine if an existing outdoor advertising sign is legally existing?

The permit history of any permit is available at atlas.phila.gov. Under the “Licenses & Inspections” tab, you can review the information under “Permits” and “Zoning Permit Documents”.

Additionally, there is an inventory of outdoor advertising signs on [L&I's website](#). Any sign listed in this inventory is considered to be legal unless it has since been removed from the site.

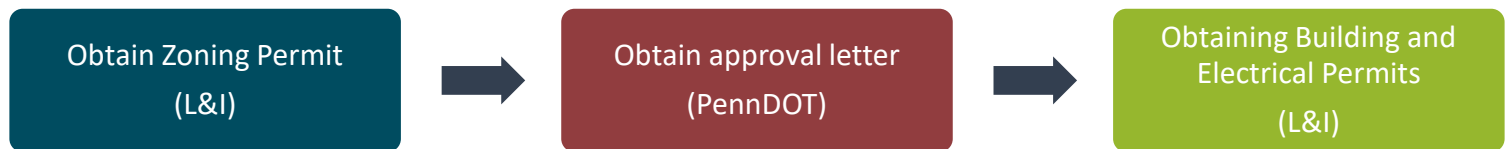
Will compliance with the Federal Highway Beautification Act be confirmed during the permit process?

Once L&I issues a zoning permit for an outdoor advertising sign located along, or within view from, a state-controlled highway, the applicant will need to obtain Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) approval for their proposed sign. If any permit applicant believes that the sign will not be visible from a State controlled highway, they will be asked to provide supporting evidence of that claim.

PennDOT will review the application for State and Federal location requirements and issue a location approval in the form of an approval letter.

After completing the PennDOT review process, the applicant must then obtain building and electrical permits from L&I. L&I will not accept an application for either of these permits without a state approval letter.

These processing requirements apply, not only to new signs, but also conversions of existing signs to digital format as well as replacement of 50% or more of the entire sign structure.



Is a license required to operate an outdoor advertising sign?

Yes. Any company that owns an outdoor advertising sign needs an Outdoor Advertising License and must maintain a current inventory of all outdoor advertising signs with their license. Visit [L&I's website](#) for more information about this license.

Questions?

Call 311 or (215) 686-8686 (if outside Philadelphia) or submit a permit-related question online via www.phila.gov/li/get-help.