



Permitting for Signs

1.0 Continuing Education Credit



Sign Permits Webinar


- Topics:

Zoning

- What is a Sign?
- Types of Signs
- What Signs Require Zoning Permits?
What is Exempt?
- What Does the Zoning Code Permit?
- Zoning Permit Process and Requirements

Building

- What is a Sign?
- What Signs Require Building Permits?
What is Exempt?
- What Code Requirements Apply?
- Building Permit Process and Requirements

- Use the Q&A feature to ask questions.
 - Please keep questions general - no address-specific questions.
 - The slide deck will be posted on the website.
- 



What is a Sign?



Signs – Zoning (14-203)

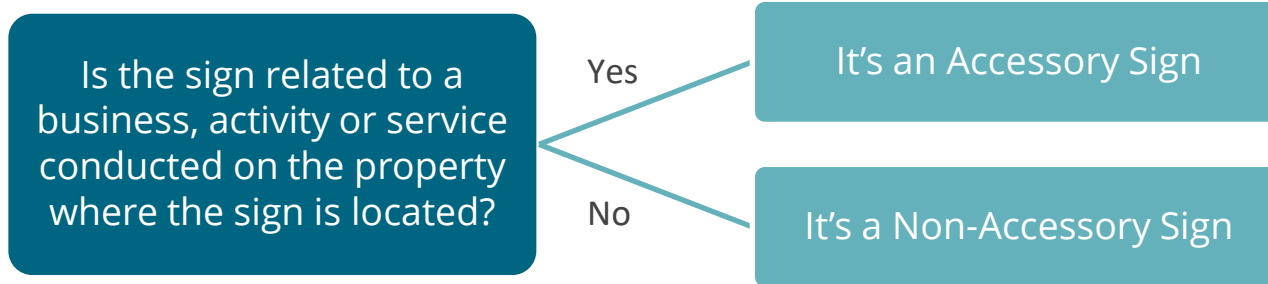
- The Zoning Code Defines Sign as:

A name, identification, description, emblem, device, or structure that is affixed to, printed on, projected, or represented directly or indirectly upon a building, structure, or parcel of land and that directs attention to a person, place, product, institution, business, organization, activity, or service. Signs shall also include any banner, pennant, placard, window sign, or temporary sign that directs attention to a person, place, product, institution, business, organization, activity, or service, with the exception of national flags.



Types of Signs

Accessory and Non-Accessory (14-203(278) and 14-203(285))



Accessory and Non-Accessory



Non-Accessory Sign



Accessory Sign

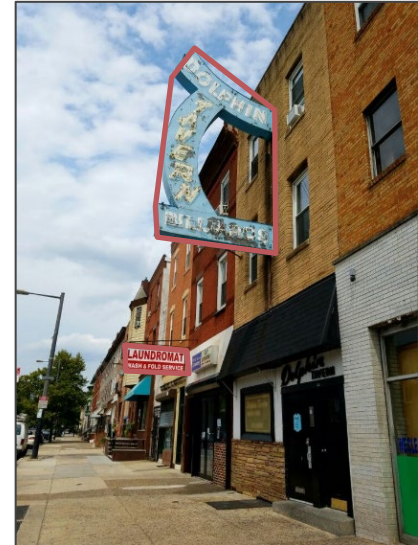
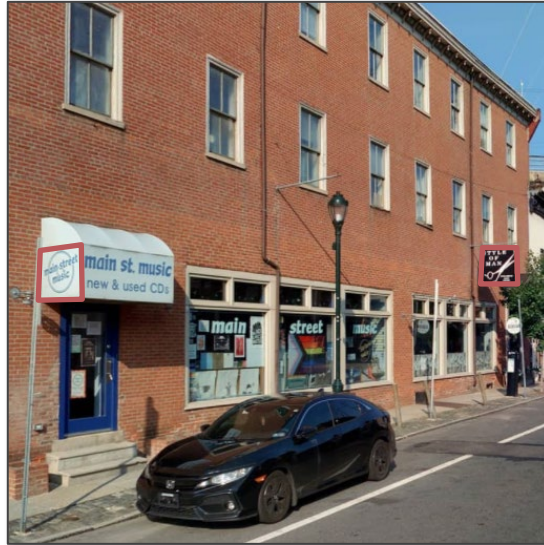
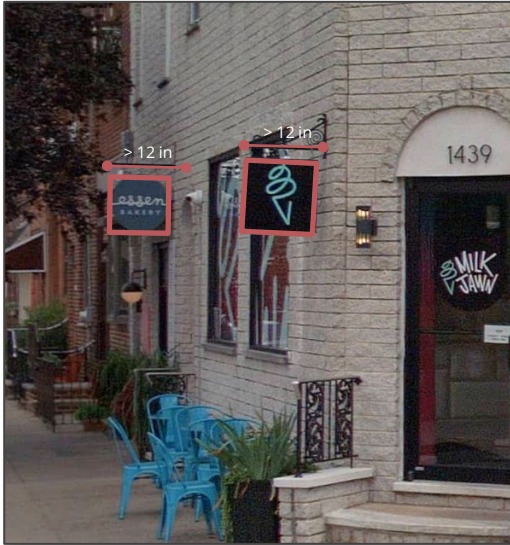
Wall Sign (14-203(295))

- A sign that extends 12 inches or less from the exterior wall of a building or structure.
- A sign on the front or slope of an awning, regardless of distance from exterior wall.



Projecting Sign (14-203(289))

- A sign that extends more than 12 inches from the exterior wall of a building or structure.
- A sign that is on the side of an awning.



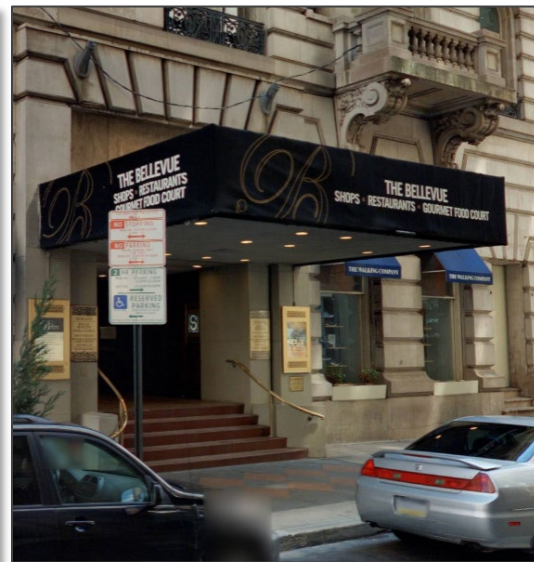
Freestanding Sign (14-203(283))

- Signs supported by frames, poles or other support structures permanently erected in or upon the ground



Marquee Sign ([14-203\(284\)](#))

- Sign on a marquee, which is a permanent overhang that projects more than 18 inches over a sidewalk, walkway or right-of-way



Roof Signs (14-203(293))

- Sign on and over the roof of a building, supported by the roof structure, and extending vertically above the roof.



Window Signs (14-203(295.1))

- Sign within 18 inches of a street-facing window or door visible from outside of building.



Menu Board Signs (14-203(284.2))

- Freestanding sign solely for drive-through patrons which display items for sale and their prices



Directional Signs (14-203(282))

- Sign, not erected by government, primarily limited to directions on the same property/development/campus.



Building Identification Signs (14-203(280))

- A sign with the logo, name, address or number of a building, institution or person.



Cabinet Sign (14-203(280.1))

- A sign with a face that is enclosed within a box-like structure.



Mechanical Movement Sign (14-203(284.1))

- A sign having a part or parts that physically move
- Shall not include wind-activated movement such as used for banners or flags.





Sign Illumination Types

- Static: Internal or external, does not change color or intensity.
- Animated: lighting that changes
 - Digital Sign - displays a series of still images, usually remotely programmable and changeable.
 - Electronic Message Sign - displays a series of electronically changeable still messages consisting of alphanumeric text, such as those often used for gas price display signs and athletic scoreboards.
 - Accessory Digital News Ticker - displays a scrolling stream of messages, including but not limited to stock prices, sports scores, headline news, and entertainment news.

Murals with Signage

- When signage is incorporated into murals only the portions that are being used as signage require a zoning permit.





What Signs Require Zoning Permits? What is Exempt?



No Zoning Permit Required

- Compliant window signs
- Compliant directional signs
- Temporary Signs (e.g. Real Estate Signs):
 - Residential – 6 sq ft per sign
 - All others – 12 sq ft per sign
- Signs not designed to be viewed by members of the public outside of the premises.
- Video screens less than 1 sq ft (example: screens on gas pumps)



No Zoning Permit Required (cont'd)

- Changing sign content without structural or electrical changes
- Customary maintenance

Zoning Permit Required

- Erection or placement of any sign other than exceptions previously listed.
- Convert any sign to a different type of sign.



What Does the Zoning Code Permit?



Accessory Sign Controls


- Controls in All Districts – [14-904\(1\)](#)
 - Limits of allowable directional signs:
 - Max 10 sq ft and 7 ft high (except clearance signs), logos max 10% area
 - Limits of window signs.
 - Limited to the ground floor with some exceptions
 - 20% of glazed area
 - No more than two windows
 - Height limit of wall signs
 - shall not extend above the roof line or the second-floor windowsill of a structure, whichever is lower.

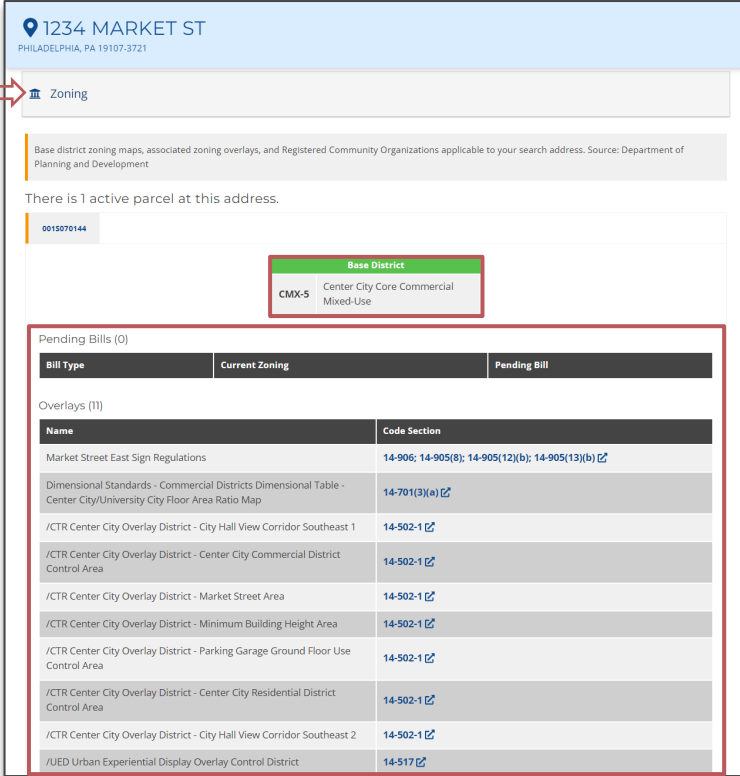
Accessory Sign Controls (cont'd)

- Controls in All Districts – 14-904(1)
 - Projection limits – from the façade and over the right of way
 - Projecting signs max 4 ft from façade
 - Over right of way (except marquee or front of awning), encroachment depends on height
 - Menu Board allowances
 - Take out with drive-through allows two menu boards ≤ 55 sq ft
 - Temporary real estate signs
 - Residential – 6 sq ft per sign
 - All others – 12 sq ft per sign

See [14-904\(1\)](#) for additional sign controls. This list is meant to highlight common controls.

Determining Zoning Districts & Overlays

1. Go to [Atlas.phila.gov](https://atlas.phila.gov).
2. Type the address in the search bar and click 
3. Click on the Zoning Tab.
4. Here you will see the Base Zoning District and any Zoning Overlays.



1234 MARKET ST
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107-3721

Zoning

Base district zoning maps, associated zoning overlays, and Registered Community Organizations applicable to your search address. Source: Department of Planning and Development

There is 1 active parcel at this address.

0015070144

Base District	
CMX-5	Center City Core Commercial Mixed-Use

Pending Bills (0)

Bill Type	Current Zoning	Pending Bill
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Overlays (11)

Name	Code Section
Market Street East Sign Regulations	14-906; 14-905(8); 14-905(12)(b); 14-905(13)(b) ↗
Dimensional Standards - Commercial Districts Dimensional Table - Center City/University City Floor Area Ratio Map	14-701(3)(a) ↗
/CTR Center City Overlay District - City Hall View Corridor Southeast 1	14-502-1 ↗
/CTR Center City Overlay District - Center City Commercial District Control Area	14-502-1 ↗
/CTR Center City Overlay District - Market Street Area	14-502-1 ↗
/CTR Center City Overlay District - Minimum Building Height Area	14-502-1 ↗
/CTR Center City Overlay District - Parking Garage Ground Floor Use Control Area	14-502-1 ↗
/CTR Center City Overlay District - Center City Residential District Control Area	14-502-1 ↗
/CTR Center City Overlay District - City Hall View Corridor Southeast 2	14-502-1 ↗
/UED Urban Experiential Display Overlay Control District	14-517 ↗

Accessory Signs - District Controls

- Specific Controls per Zoning District – [Table 14-904-1](#)

			CA-2		
			Permitted Sign Types:		
			Wall, Projecting & Marquee	Freestanding	Portable
Standards	Max Number		N/A	1 per 15,000 sq. ft. of lot area	1 per building frontage
	Max Area		10 sq. ft. per lin. ft. of ground floor frontage of the business or tenant w/ which the sign is associated	150 sq. ft. / face, up to 4 faces	10 sq. ft
	Max Height		The higher of the roof line or parapet wall, if applicable	40 ft.	5 ft.
Permitted Sign Characteristics	Static Illumination		Yes	Yes	No
	Animated Illumination	Digital Sign	Wall: Yes Others: No	Yes	No
		Electronic Message Sign	Wall: Yes Others: No	Yes	No
		Accessory Digital News Ticker	No	No	No
	Mechanical Motion		Yes	Yes	No

		RSA-4/5/6 and RM-1	
		Permitted Sign Types:	
		Wall	Freestanding
Standards	Max Number	N/A	N/A
	Max Area (sq.ft. for each lot frontage)	Home Occupations (except as provided in 14-604(10)(b)(.1)): 1 Non-Residential Uses: 15	Home Occupations (except as provided in 14-604(10)(b)(.1)): Prohibited Non-Residential Uses: 15
	Max Height	The lower of the roof line or second floor windowsill	7 ft
	Additional Requirements	N/A	Prohibited in required setbacks
Permitted Sign Characteristics	Static Illumination	Yes	Yes
	Animated Illumination	No	No
	Mechanical Motion	No	No



Accessory Signs - Overlays

- Additional requirements may apply for properties within overlays.
- Overlay zoning district regulations apply in combination with underlying base zoning district regulations
- Conflicts:
 - When an overlay and a district standard conflict – the overlay governs
 - When two overlays conflict – the stricter provision governs
- Overlay provisions may require additional prerequisite approvals, permit different size signs or prohibit certain sign types.



Non-Accessory Sign Controls

- Spacing
 - Not permitted within 500 ft of another non-accessory sign
- Distance from Residential
 - Not permitted within 300 ft of any residentially-zoned property.
- Area Regulations
 - 1,000 or 1,500 sq. ft. per sign face, depending on the width of the street the sign is fronting.
- Height
 - Height is based on the road surface from which the sign is intended to be viewed.



Non-Accessory Sign Controls (cont'd)

- Faces and Supports
 - No more than two sign faces are permitted on a lot
 - No more than one sign support structure is permitted on a lot.
- Illumination and Movement
 - Illumination permitted but must be focused on sign to prevent glare
 - Flashing, intermittent illumination, or mechanical or electronic changing messages shall not be erected within 500 ft. of any Residential district, nor face any Residential district within 1,000 ft. of the sign.
 - Revolving signs require special exception approval from ZBA



Non-Accessory Sign Controls (cont'd)

- Digital Signs
 - Not within 500 ft of residentially zoned properties
 - May not face residentially zoned properties within 1000 ft.
 - Automatic dimming required
 - Motion is prohibited. Only static graphics or texts permitted.
 - Each display shall show for 8 seconds minimum.
 - Non-accessory signs may only be converted to digital if within 660 ft of I-95 and I-76 and meant to be viewed from those roadways.

Non-Accessory Sign Controls (cont'd)

○ Permitted Areas

- Within I-2 (except within the area bounded by the Delaware Expressway, the Schuylkill Expressway, and Darien Street), I-3, I-P

○ Prohibited Areas

- (a) Within 660 ft. of all the bridges over the Schuylkill River from the Girard Point Bridge northwestwardly to the Belmont Avenue Bridge;
- (b) Within 660 ft. of all ingress and/or egress ramps of the Delaware expressway (I-95), from the Bucks County Line to the Delaware County Line, and the Schuylkill expressway (I-76), between the Montgomery County Line and the Walt Whitman Bridge;
- (c) Within 660 ft. of Benjamin Franklin Parkway as defined by the Streets Department;
- (d) Between 23rd Street and the Schuylkill River from the south side of Race Street to Chestnut Street;
- (e) Between 24th Street and the Schuylkill River from Chestnut Street to South Street;
- (f) East of 6th Street from South Street to the south side of Race Street;
- (g) Between 6th Street and Christopher Columbus Boulevard from South Street to Washington Avenue;
- (h) Within 660 ft. of the outward edge of the right-of-way lines as defined by the Department of Streets, of the Delaware expressway between Washington Avenue and Oregon Avenue;
- (i) Within 660 ft. of all the bridges over the Delaware River from the Walt Whitman Bridge to the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge;
- (j) Within 660 ft. of the outward edge of the right-of-way lines as defined by the Department of Streets, of Woodhaven Road;
- (k) Within 660 ft. of the outward edge of the right-of-way lines as defined by the Department of Streets, of the Roosevelt Boulevard;
- (l) Within any area of the City designated as a local or national Historic District;
- (m) Within 660 ft. of the outward edge of any park under the jurisdiction of DPR, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or the National Park Service;
- (n) Within 660 ft. of any park, playground, recreation center, play lot, or other recreational facility under the jurisdiction of DPR; and
- (o) Within 660 ft. of any public or private pre-school, elementary, middle, or high school.

○ Relocation specific to the I-95 Acquisition Corridor




Non-Accessory Sign Controls (cont'd)

- Permits
 - For each non-accessory sign erected or converted to digital, two existing lawful, non-accessory signs encompassing equal or greater sign area, other than a sign located in the Market Street East Advertising District, shall be removed.
 - No permit for the erection of an outdoor advertising or non-accessory sign shall be issued prior to actual removal of the sign(s)
- Unique Cases:
 - Municipal Property, Market Street East Advertising District, 1900 Market Street

Non-Accessory Sign Controls (cont'd)

FAQ



Department of
Licenses and Inspections
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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.

PD_016_FAQ (Rev 8.2023)

Page 1 of 2



Department of
Licenses and Inspections
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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.

Obtain Zoning Permit
(L&I)

→

Obtain approval letter
(PennDOT)

→

Obtaining Building and
Electrical Permits
(L&I)

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/get-help](#).

PD_016_FAQ (Rev 8.2023)

Page 2 of 2



Zoning Permit Process and Requirements

Zoning Permits without Plans (EZ Permit)

- [EZ Permit Standard](#)
- [EZ Permit Web Service](#)

Get permits without plans (EZ permits)

Service overview

You can get an EZ permit for some construction and renovation projects. EZ permits do not require you to submit plans.

To find out if your project qualifies, check if the planned work complies with an [EZ Standard](#). If you get an EZ Permit and don't follow the standard, the permit will be revoked.

Types of projects that may qualify for an EZ permit include:

Alterations and interior demolition

- Interior, non-structural alterations in single-family residences
- Limited commercial alterations
- Demolition of interior walls that aren't load bearing

Miscellaneous exterior items

- Residential decks up to 216 sq. ft. (excluding roof decks)
- Exterior window and door replacement with no change in size (one-or-two-family dwellings don't need a permit for this, unless they are historic)
- Masonry facade replacement (not applicable for historic properties)
- Above-ground pools and spas
- Roof covering replacement
- Security gates and grilles
- Wall covering replacement
- Retaining walls



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES & INSPECTIONS
Construction Services Division
Municipal Services Building - Concourse Level
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

EZ PERMIT STANDARD **ZONING SIGN INSTALLATION** For installation of signs on existing buildings

EZ Permit Standard: Zoning Sign Installation

Obtain zoning permits for sign installation to an existing building without submitting plans by meeting requirements below. Deviations will require submission of plans to the Department of Licenses and Inspections with your permit application.

EZ zoning sign permits are only valid for the zoning classifications listed below:

TABLE 1

DISTRICT	ALLOWABLE SIGN AREA
CMX-1	*1 square foot per linear foot of building frontage
CMX-2 / CMX-2.5	**3 square feet per linear foot of building frontage or one 25 sq. ft. sign per building frontage
CA-1 / CA-2	10 square feet of linear foot of ground floor frontage of the business / tenant with which the sign is associated

**For corner properties, the allowable sign area along the longer building frontage = 0.5 SF / LF*

***For corner properties, the allowable sign area along the longer building frontage = 2.0 SF / LF*

To be eligible for an EZ zoning permit:

- A photograph of the store front must be included with application.
- An approval letter from the Department of Parks and Recreation is required for any signage proposed within the Cobbs Creek / Roosevelt Blvd / Parkway Buffer area and otherwise mandated by the Zoning Code.
- Properties located within Center City overlay districts, NCA Ridge Avenue control or CAO City Avenue control are not eligible for EZ permit

Conditions and Limitations:

Signage must be:

- Limited to a single space and a single street frontage.
- Limited to three (3) signs total (existing and proposed).
- Accessory to the approved use of the space.
- Installed on the first floor and shall not extend above the roof line or the second-floor window sill (whichever is lower).
- Flat wall and / or awning type (with copy only on the front face).
- Non-illuminated and statically illuminated (i.e. digital or mechanically rotated).

Signage cannot be:

- Cabinet, freestanding, projecting, roof mounted, directional, marquee, portable, window or non-accessory.
- Flashing, intermittent, or animated.



Zoning Permits without Plans (EZ Permit)

- Conditions:
 - Limited to single tenant and street frontage.
 - A max of three (3) signs (including existing)
 - Accessory sign only
 - Not above roof line or 2nd floor window sill.
 - Mounted flat against the wall ($\leq 12''$) or front of awning.
 - Bottom of signs max 12' above grade
 - Non-illuminated or static-illumination only.



Zoning Permits without Plans (EZ Permit)

- Limitations:

- Property must be zoned CMX-1, CMX-2, CMX-2.5, CA-1 or CA-2.
- Sign CANNOT be cabinet, freestanding, projecting, roof mounted, directional, marquee, portable, window, or non-accessory.
- Illumination CANNOT be flashing, intermittent, or animated.
- Property CANNOT be located within Center City overlay districts, NCA Ridge Avenue control or CAO City Avenue control.

- Submissions:

- Department of Parks and Recreation approval is required for any signage proposed within the Cobbs Creek / Roosevelt Blvd / Parkway Buffer area
- A photograph of the store front must be included with application

Zoning Permits for Signs

- [Zoning Permit for Sign Web Service](#)
- [Sign Plan Requirements](#)

Get a Zoning Permit for signs

Service overview


You need to get zoning approval to install signs. The [Department of Licenses and Inspections](#) (L&I) issues these approvals.

The Philadelphia Zoning Code includes rules for:

- Number of signs.
- Type.
- Size.
- Location.
- Height.
- Illumination or lighting.

Types of signs that don't need zoning permits

- Window signs installed in up to two windows or doors. The sign can't take up more than 20 percent of the transparent glazed area of a door or window.
- Signs located in a building's interior that are more than 18 in. from, or on more than a 45 degree angle to any window or opening. These signs are not intended to be visible from the outside.
- Digital and video screens on outdoor equipment such as fuel pumps and ATM's (limited to 1 sq. ft.)
- Signs that give directions and are under 10 sq. ft. in area and under 7 ft. in height
- Temporary real estate signs
 - Residential districts: 6 sq. ft. per face
 - Other districts: 12 sq. ft. per face



Plan Requirements:
Zoning - signs permit applications

Overview

The Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) reviews plans submitted with permit applications for accessory signs for on-site activities or services and non-accessory signs for general outdoor advertising. Directional signage is also subject to zoning review, but this does not include traffic signs located in the public right-of-way. Review the information below before submitting plans for review.

Plan sheet size and material

- Minimum Sheet Size: 11 in. x 17 in.
- Maximum Sheet Size: 24 in. x 36 in.
- Print plans on white, standard-weight, bond type paper and provide 6 hard copies with the application.
 - For additional details on filing a paper permit application, refer to the [Paper Processing Information Sheet](#).
 - For plans that will be submitted in eCLIPSE, refer to the [ePlan Submission Standard Information sheet](#) for rules and limitations of creating drawing files that will be uploaded for review.

Acceptable drawing scales

- Architectural Scale: 1/4 in. = 1 ft.-0 in.
- Engineering Scale: 1 in. = 10 ft.; 20 ft.; 30 ft.; 40 ft.; 50 ft.; 60 ft.; 100 ft.
- Larger scales may be used. If a smaller scale is used, the plans examiner may reject your plans.

Minimum requirements

- Must be of professional quality and drawn to scale. Free-hand sketches will **not** be accepted.
- Printed plans must be in ink and in grayscale. Pencil drawings will **not** be accepted.
- Include a title block with sheet number and project address.
- Site plans must include:
 - Property lines
 - Exterior dimensions of all buildings.
 - Tenant space width or ground floor frontage dimension (if applicable).
 - Existing signs to remain, including sizes and locations.
 - Proposed signs including size, location, and type of illumination.
 - Sign setbacks from property lines.
 - Non-accessory signs:
 - 500-ft. radius; indication of any other non-accessory signs in this area.
 - 300-ft. radius; indication of any residential property.
 - Compliance with prohibited areas: see [Zoning Code Section 14-905\(10\)](#) for more information on minimum distances from specific locations.
- Elevation plans must include:
 - Size of signs and all faces.
 - Location of wall, awning, or projecting sign relative to any building roof line or second floor window sill.
 - Projection of sign from building or structure face.
 - Height of sign if free-standing.
 - Rendering of signs showing basic content, messages, or logos.

Prerequisite approvals

Plans included with your zoning permit application package may require approvals from other departments or agencies.

P_006_INF (Rev 9/2024)

Page 1 of 1



Zoning Permits Process

- Permit Fees:
 - Accessory signs: \$253 each
 - Non-accessory signs: \$398 each
 - Filing Fee due at application, Balance due after approval
- Timeline:
 - Zoning must be approved before building can be approved.
 - Applications with plans are processed within 20 business days.
 - EZ Permits and Accelerated applications are reviewed in 5 business days.

Zoning Permits Process (cont'd)

- Prerequisite Approvals
 - Art Commission, Parks & Rec and Streets

Required pre-approvals

- ☑ For projecting signs or awnings with text on sides perpendicular to building face over the right-of-way. [More +](#)
- ☑ For signs within certain areas of the CTR overlay and the NCA overlay (Germantown - Mount Airy subarea). [More +](#)
- ☑ For signs in Market East Advertising District. [More +](#)
- ☑ For signs within land under the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. [More +](#)
- ☑ For signs within 200 feet of Roosevelt Boulevard, Cobbs Creek Parkway, Fairmount Park, or Cobbs Creek Park. [More +](#)
- ☑ For signs that project into the right-of-way beyond the limits of Zoning or Streets Code [More +](#)

Required pre-approvals

- ☑ For projecting signs or awnings with text on sides perpendicular to building face over the right-of-way. [Less -](#)
- You need approval from**
- The Art Commission
-
- What's needed**
- You must have this approval in order to apply. See how to [apply for sign, awning, or canopy approval](#) for your project.
-
- In-person submission**
- You'll need your approval letter from the Art Commission before you make your application to L&I.
- Submit your approval letter when making your application at the Permit and License Center in the MSB.
-
- Online submission**
- Upload all plans and documents required by the Art Commission when applying for your permit in eCLIPSE.
- The Art Commission will perform its review electronically and provide approval directly to L&I.



What is a Sign?



Signs – Building (IBC, Appendix H)

- The Building Code Defines Sign as:

Any letter, figure, character, mark, plane, point, marquee sign, design, poster, pictorial, picture, strike, stripe line, trademark, reading matter or illuminated service, which shall be constructed, placed, attached, painted, erected, fastened or manufactured in any manner whatsoever, so that the same shall be used for the attraction of the public to any place, subject, person, firm, corporation, public performance, article, machine or merchandise, whatsoever, which is displayed in any manner outdoors. Every sign shall be classified and conform to the requirements of that classification as set forth in this chapter.



What Signs Require Building Permits? What is Exempt?



No Building Permit Required

- Painted nonilluminated signs.
- Temporary signs announcing the sale or rent of property.
- Signs erected by transportation authorities.
- Projecting signs not exceeding 2.5 square feet.
- The changing of movable parts of a sign designed for such changes, or repainting/repositioning of display

Building Permit Required

- Erection or placement of any sign other than exceptions previously listed.



What Code Requirements Apply?



2018 IBC - Appendix H

- Location
 - Shall not obstruct exit signs or windows/doors required for means of egress.
- Design
 - Capable of withstanding a 3-second 115 mph wind gust and snow loads per Chapter 16 of the Building Code
 - Weight of Sign
 - Anchoring – Plans must indicate the wall construction and anchor details (size, quantity, spacing, etc.)
 - Foundation details



Sealed Plans

- A PA-licensed design professional must seal plans:
 - Wall Signs: attached to unbraced parapet or EIFS wall.
 - Awnings: (1) More than 12 feet above grade, (2), Attached to an unbraced parapet, (3) Exceed 8 ft in width or (4) project more than 2 ft
 - Projecting Sign: all signs with projection into the public right-of-way, a private pedestrian footway, private vehicular way, or easement.
 - Freestanding Signs: height exceeds 12 ft unless no change to existing support structure (e.g. painting or reface).



Building Permit Process and Requirements

Building Permits without Plans (EZ Permit)

- [EZ Permit Standard](#)
- [EZ Permit Web Service](#)

Get permits without plans (EZ permits)

Service overview

You can get an EZ permit for some construction and renovation projects. EZ permits do not require you to submit plans.

To find out if your project qualifies, check if the planned work complies with an [EZ Standard](#). If you get an EZ Permit and don't follow the standard, the permit will be revoked.


Types of projects that may qualify for an EZ permit include:

Alterations and interior demolition

- Interior, non-structural alterations in single-family residences
- Limited commercial alterations
- Demolition of interior walls that aren't load bearing

Miscellaneous exterior items

- Residential decks up to 216 sq. ft. (excluding roof decks)
- Exterior window and door replacement with no change in size (one-or-two-family dwellings don't need a permit for this, unless they are historic)
- Masonry facade replacement (not applicable for historic properties)
- Above-ground pools and spas
- Roof covering replacement
- Security gates and grilles
- Wall covering replacement
- Retaining walls

WALL SIGN PERMIT APPLICATION		 CITY OF PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS MUNICIPAL SERVICES BUILDING - CONCOURSE 1401 JOHN F. KENNEDY BOULEVARD PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102 For more information visit us at www.phila.gov/ill	
APPLICATION #: <small>This application may only be used for the installation of accessory wall signs. Please complete all sections below and print clearly. All correspondence from the Department will be e-mailed when a valid e-mail address is provided.</small>			
ADDRESS OF PROPOSED SIGN INSTALLATION:		TENANT SPACE # / LTR. (IF APPLICABLE):	
PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME:	PROPERTY OWNER'S ADDRESS:		
APPLICANT NAME:	APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:		
CONTRACTOR NAME:	CONTRACTING COMPANY ADDRESS:		
CONTRACTING COMPANY:			
TELEPHONE #	FAX #	PHILA. LICENSE # / I.D.	E-MAIL:
OCCUPANCY:		ZONING / USE REGISTRATION PERMIT #:	
<small>(any sign to be erected must be accessory to a previously approved use)</small>			
PROPOSED SIGN TYPE(S): <input type="checkbox"/> FLATWALL PANEL <input type="checkbox"/> WALL CABINET <input type="checkbox"/> CHANNEL LETTERS <input type="checkbox"/> RACEWAY MOUNTED <input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL FLUSH MOUNTED			
WILL THE SIGN BE ILLUMINATED? <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES (if YES, a separate electrical permit must be obtained)			
SIZE, HEIGHT AND WEIGHT OF PROPOSED SIGN(S):			
SIGN # 1 - (LENGTH) (WIDTH) (DEPTH) (HEIGHT ABOVE FINISHED GRADE) (WEIGHT #)			
SIGN # 2 - (LENGTH) (WIDTH) (DEPTH) (HEIGHT ABOVE FINISHED GRADE) (WEIGHT #)			
SIGN # 3 - (LENGTH) (WIDTH) (DEPTH) (HEIGHT ABOVE FINISHED GRADE) (WEIGHT #)			
WALL TYPE: <input type="checkbox"/> SOLID MASONRY <input type="checkbox"/> FRAME (STUD SIZE) <input type="checkbox"/> WOOD <input type="checkbox"/> METAL <input type="checkbox"/> SHEATHING, INSULATION & FINISH LAYERS (SELECT ALL APPLICABLE LAYERS) <input type="checkbox"/> MASONRY / CONC. / STONE THICKNESS		<input type="checkbox"/> STUCCO THICKNESS <input type="checkbox"/> PLANKWOOD / CEMENT BOARD THICKNESS <input type="checkbox"/> *EXT. INSULAT. FINISH (EIFS) THICKNESS <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER THICKNESS	
<small>*Anchorage to structure required</small>			
DESCRIPTION OF FASTENERS TO BE USED: (please indicate quantity per sign or individual letters, type, material, size and spacing)			
SIGN # 1 - SIGN # 2 - SIGN # 3 -			
LIMITATIONS OF THIS APPLICATION:		ESTIMATED COST OF WORK:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signs must be mounted flat against the wall (parallel to building facade)• A maximum of three (3) signs are permitted in a single application• Signs may not extend more than twelve inches (12") beyond the wall face• The bottom edge of signs may be located no higher than twelve feet (12'-0") above finished grade• The top edge of signs may be located no higher than fifteen feet (15'-0") above finished grade• The total area of each sign may not exceed 36 square feet and twelve feet (12'-0") in any direction• The total weight of a single sign assembly may not exceed seven (7) pounds per square foot (including lighting, trim, etc.)• All installed signs shall be capable of withstanding a three (3) second 90 mph wind gust and snow loads in accordance with Chapter 16 of the Building Code• The total cost of installation may not exceed \$25,000• This application may not be used for historic buildings (Historical Commission - City Hall Room 576, Phone: 215-686-7660)		\$	
IF ANY OF THE CONDITIONS MENTIONED ABOVE ARE EXCEEDED, DRAWINGS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR REVIEW AND THE SEAL / SIGNATURE OF A PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER LICENSED IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA MAY BE REQUIRED			
PB_017_F		Page 1 of 2	



Building Permits without Plans (EZ Permit)

- Conditions:

- Mounted flat against the wall ($\leq 12''$)
- A max of three (3) signs
- Bottom of signs max 12' above grade
- Top of signs max 15' above grade
- The max area per sign: 36 ft²
- Max dimension 12' in any direction
- Capable of withstanding a 3-second 115 mph wind gust and snow loads per Chapter 16 of the Building Code
- Cost of installation: \$25,000 max
- This application may not be used for historic buildings

Building Permits for Signs

- [Building Permit for Sign Web Service](#)
- [Sign Plan Requirements](#)

Get a building permit to install signs

Service overview


To permanently install a sign, you may need a [Building Permit](#) and a [Zoning Permit](#). Use the table below to determine which permits you need for your sign.

	Building permit	Zoning permit
Exterior signs	Yes, except painted signs, adhesive or vinyl graphics and letters	Yes
Interior signs	Yes, if they require fasteners	Yes, if installed within 18 inches of a window or door that is visible to the public
Window signs	Yes, if they require fasteners	Yes, if they take up 20% or more of two windows or doors
Signs on historic properties	Yes, for painted signs, adhesive or vinyl graphics and letters, regular maintenance of existing signs, and any sign types with conditions listed above.	No, with the exception of any of the sign types with conditions listed above.

If your sign will be illuminated, you also need an [Electrical Permit](#).

If your sign meets certain standards, you can use [EZ zoning](#) and [EZ sign installation](#). EZ permits do not require plans.

The [Department of Licenses and Inspections](#) (L&I) issues these permits.

 Department of
Licenses and Inspections
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Plan Requirements:
Sign permit applications

Overview

The Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) reviews plans submitted with permit applications for the installation of permanent signs attached to buildings, structures, posts, or their own foundations. Review the information below before submitting plans for review.

Plan sheet size and material

- Minimum Sheet Size: 18 in. x 24 in.
- Maximum Sheet Size: 36 in. x 48 in.
- Print plans on white, standard-weight, bond type paper and provide 3 [hard copies](#) with the application.
 - For additional details on filing a paper permit application, refer to the [Paper Processing Information Sheet](#).
 - For plans that will be submitted in eCLIPSE, refer to the [ePlan Submission Standard information sheet](#) for rules and limitations of creating drawing files that will be uploaded for review.

Acceptable drawing scales

- Architectural Scale: 1/4 in. = 1 ft.-0 in.
- Larger scales may be used. If a smaller scale is used, the plans examiner may reject your plans.

Minimum requirements

- Must be of professional quality and drawn to scale. Free-hand sketches will **not** be accepted.
- Printed plans must be in ink and in grayscale. Pencil drawings will **not** be accepted.
- Include a title block with sheet number and project address.
- The following information must be provided for each sign:
 - Dimensions of all components (length, width, and thickness).
 - Total weight of sign assembly.
 - Height above adjacent grade (to bottom and top edges of sign. Also, to mounting points for any supports located above/ beyond the sign face).
 - Mounting details, including type, size, quantity, and spacing of anchors, and attachment brackets and cabling.
 - Materials of wall construction where to which the sign will mount (masonry wall or wood/metal stud wall).
 - Plans to include a section drawing of the wall where the sign is to be mounted.
 - Signs and mounting materials shall be designed to withstand wind speed of 90 mph (3-second gust).

Design professional signature and seal

Plans must be signed and sealed by a PA-licensed design professional (registered architect or professional engineer) for all:

- Wall signs: if attached to an unbraced parapet wall or to an Exterior Insulation and Finish System (EIFS) type wall.
- Awning: if located more than 12 ft. above the sidewalk (measured to the bottom of the sign), are attached to an unbraced parapet wall, exceed 6 ft. in width, or project more than 2 ft. from the wall.
- Projecting signs: all signs with projection into the public right-of-way, a private pedestrian footway, private vehicular way, or easement.
- Free-standing signs: if the sign height exceeds 12 ft.
 - If the work indicated does not alter a previously approved base or support structure, and involves only repainting or refacing of the sign, an engineer's seal is not required.

Prerequisite approvals

Plans included with your sign permit application package may require approvals from other departments or agencies.

P_005_INF (Rev 9.2024)

Page 1 of 1



Building Permits Process

- Permit Fees:
 - Accessory signs: \$253 each
 - Non-accessory signs: \$316 each
 - City surcharge: \$3 per permit, State surcharge: \$4.50 per permit
 - Filing Fee due at application, Balance due after approval
- Timeline:
 - Zoning must be approved before building can be approved.
 - Applications with plans are processed within 20 business days.
 - EZ Permits and Accelerated applications are reviewed in 5 business days.



Building Permits Process (cont'd)


- Prerequisite Approvals:
 - Historical Commission: You must have this approval in order to apply. L&I will refuse your permit application without Historical Commission approval.
 - Streets: You'll need to complete a Streets plan review.
- Electrical:
 - If your sign will be illuminated or have mechanical motion, you also need an [Electrical Permit](#).



Resources



Additional Resources

- [Zoning Code](#)
 - [Zoning Summary Generator](#)
 - [Zoning Code Quick Reference Guide](#)
 - [Atlas](#)
 - [Zoning Permit Web Services](#)
 - [L&I Zoning & Building FAQs](#)
 - [Summary of Permit Fees](#)
 - [Summary of Filing Fees and Processing Times](#)
 - [Permit Navigator](#)
 - [L&I Plan Requirements](#)
- 



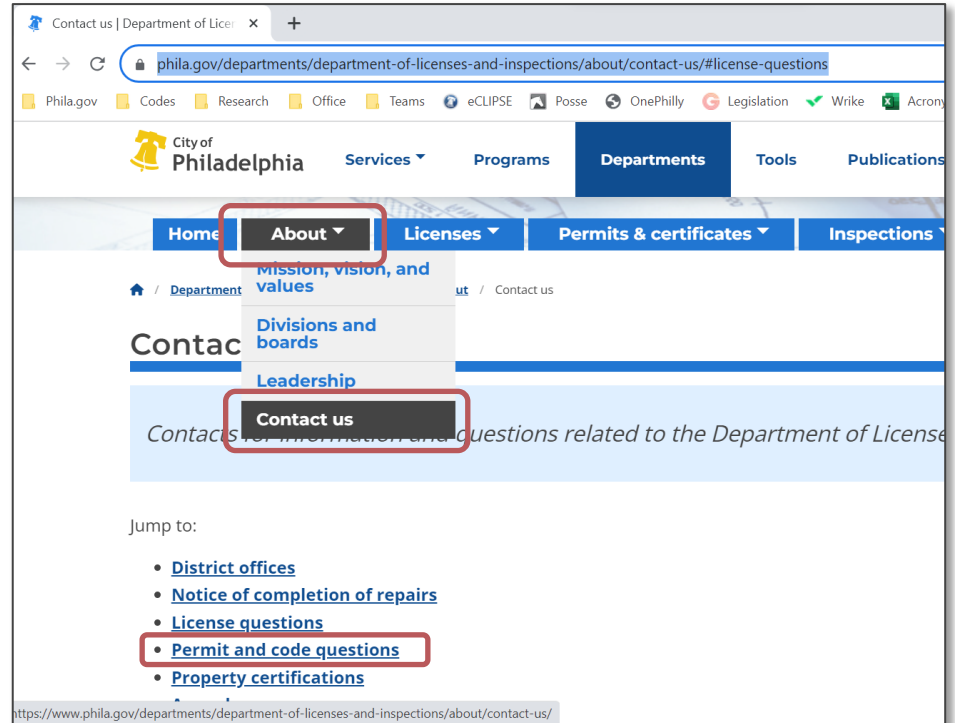
Need More Help?

- If you require assistance interpreting the code, preparing plans, or submitting an application, you are encouraged to consult a design professional or attorney.
- General questions can be submitted to L&I through the [Help Form](#).
 - If you do not see an option that matches your inquiry, reach out to 311 for support.
- L&I can also perform a [preliminary plan review](#) for more complex applications.



Contacting L&I

- L&I's website has multiple resources for contacting the department.
- Hover over "About" then click "Contact Us".
- You can submit questions of schedule appointments.





L&I Newsletter

- Stay up to date with L&I related updates by signing up for our newsletter.
- Go to [L&I's website](#) and scroll down to “Sign up for our newsletter”

Sign up for our newsletter

L&I's newsletter helps you stay up-to-date about permits, licenses, and more.



SIGN UP TODAY!



Continuing Education Credits

- Poll must be completed to receive CEU's.
- CEU's will be sent via e-mail.





Thank You! Questions?

To build and sustain a safer Philadelphia, L&I embraces best practices in technology and customer service. We enable the public to access information, secure required approvals, and comply with building safety requirements in a convenient, reliable, and transparent manner.

L&I achieves code compliance through collaboration, education, and effective enforcement measures that hold businesses, contractors, and property owners accountable.

