

Sign and Awning Permits

Category: Commercial Construction

Revised: March 1, 2001

Responsible Bureau Section: Development Services Center

1900 SW 4th Avenue Portland, OR 97201 (503) 823-7310

Signs, awnings and banners located on private property are regulated by Title 32 of the Portland City Code. Title 32 is known as the Sign Code. Also regulated by Title 32 are portable signs, also known as A-boards, whether located on private property or in street rights-of-way. The Sign Code is administered by the Office of Planning and Development Review (OPDR). Signs located in street rights-of-way, other than A-boards, are regulated by the Portland Office of Transportation. Certain signs are exempt from the Sign Code as listed in Section 32.12.020. Other signs which are prohibited in Portland are listed in Section 32.12.030.

A. WHAT SIGN PERMITS ARE NEEDED IN THE CITY OF PORTLAND?

There are five broad categories of "permits" for signs and awnings required by Title 32 - Signs and Related Regulations:

- 1. Sign Permit: Required for installing new permanent signs and for structurally altering or relocating existing permanent signs on private property. Except for certain portable signs, private signs are prohibited in street rights of way. Some private signs may project from a building into the right of way.
- 2. Awning Permit: Required for installing a new awning, for adding a sign to an existing awning or for structurally altering or relocating an existing awning on private property. Private awnings may project from buildings into the right of way. Otherwise private awnings are prohibited in street rights of way.

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- 3. Temporary Banner Registration: Required for hanging temporary banners on private property. Some smaller banners are exempt from both permit and registration requirements. Banners hung in street rights-of-way are regulated by the Portland Office of Transportation. Temporary balloon signs must also be registered.
- **4. Portable Sign (A-board) Registration**: Required for all portable signs whether located on private property or in street rights-of-way.
- 5. Temporary Fascia Signs and Temporary Freestanding Sign Registration: Required for these two categories of signs when displayed for more than one year.

Electrical components within a sign such as internal or neon lighting are covered by the sign permit. However, lighting for awnings or lighting which is projected onto a sign require a separate electrical permit.

See Section 32.62.010.A of the Sign Code for a listing of signs which are regulated by the Sign Code, but are exempt from permit and registration.

B. WHAT REQUIREMENTS MUST THE SIGNS AND AWNINGS MEET?

As of March 1, Title 32 contains all land use, construction and permitting standards for private signs and awnings in Portland. Review procedures that some signs may be subject to such as land use adjustment or design review or construction alternate methods review are not contained in Title 32, but are only referenced. In addition, specific construction standards for signs are partially in Title 32, or referenced from Title 32 to the Building and Electrical Codes.

Details of sign and awning permit requirements are found in this program guide. Requirements for banners and for portable sign registration can be found in separate publications specific to those programs.

C. WHAT IS THE APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS FOR SIGN AND AWNING PERMITS?

1. Who may apply: The owner of a site on which a sign or awning is to be placed must be the applicant for the sign or awning permit. The property owner may authorize another responsible party to apply, however OPDR may require specific written authorization from the property owner allowing the responsible party to apply. When a sign includes lighting or other electrical components, the applicant must either be a licensed State of

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Oregon electrical contractor or the property owner. No other responsible party may be authorized for an electrical sign.

- 2. <u>Work prior to permit prohibited:</u> Work to install a sign or awning prior to OPDR issuing a permit is prohibited. Any such pre-permit work is subject to a citation of violation and a fine. Both the person installing a sign without a permit and the property owner can be found in violation of the code.
- 3. Application: Sign, awning and electrical permit applications and temporary banner and A-board registration applications are available in the Development Services Center. A separate permit application is required for each sign or awning. Application requirements are provided in Section 32.62.020 of the Sign Code and are detailed on the application forms. Including all of the requested information will help speed the application through the review and approval process. (For plan and drawing requirements, see Section D.)

The requirements for application for alteration to an existing sign are the same as for a new sign, however if the expansion of the sign is 10% or less than the size/area of the existing sign, no structural review will be required.

- a. To apply for a permit for a permanent sign or awning, submit the following:
 - Sign/awning permit application including an elevation drawing of the sign and/or awning and a listing of existing exterior signs;
 - (2) Two copies of calculations showing allowed, existing and proposed sign area;
 - (3) Two copies of the site plan; and
 - (4) Structural plan review is required for fascia signs with a weight exceeding 400 pounds, for all awnings, projecting signs and pitched roof signs and for all freestanding signs in excess of 6 feet in height. For structural plan review, three sets of detailed structural design drawings and one set of calculations must be provided. Where a pre-approved structural design is being used, the OPDR reference number for the pre-approved design shall be included.

Pay appropriate permit and plan review fees.

b. To apply for a temporary banner registration, submit the following:

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- (1) Temporary sign registration application form.
- (2) Pay registration fee for each month banner will be posted.
- c. <u>To apply for an A-Board (portable sign) registration, submit the following:</u>

Portable sign application form. Pay registration fee.

- d. <u>To apply for registration of a temporary fascia or temporary freestanding sign, submit the following:</u>
 - (1) Temporary sign registration application form.
 - (2) Pay registration fee.
- e. <u>To apply for a temporary balloon sign registration, submit the following:</u>

Temporary sign registration application form. Pay registration fee.

- f. Submit the permit application package to: Registration applications may be submitted to the Development Services Center by mail or in person. Permit applications may be submitted by mail, fax (503-823-3018) or in person. In order for a permit to be issued based upon a faxed application, the applicant must have previously registered a Visa or MasterCard account with OPDR.
- 4. Reviews: OPDR staff in the Development Services Center will check the proposed sign or awning for its consistency with the Sign Code standards applicable to the zoning and use of the proposed sign location. DSC staff will also determine if additional reviews are needed for compliance with land use standards (adjustment, design review) or structural standards.
 - a. When the proposed sign or awning has been determined to meet all requirements and no additional review is required, fees are due and the permit or registration will be issued.
 - b. When the proposal requires either a construction standard alternate review, engineering review or additional land use review, these reviews must be completed before the permit will be issued.

 Please allow additional time for these reviews.

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(1) Land Use Review: If a land use sign standard is not met, land use review of the proposed sign or awning may be required prior to approval and issuance of a sign permit. These reviews apply only to the standards contained in Chapters 32.30 through 32.38. Not all standards are adjustable. Signs and awnings may be subject to design review, sign adjustment, special plan district standards or other regulations based on the zoning of the site. A special review may be required to determine the "grand-fathered" rights of any existing signs on the site that do not meet the land use sign standards. Land use review (LUR) fees must be paid when the application is submitted.

If the proposal receives an approved LUR, the applicant records the decision with the City Auditor's Office and forwards a copy along with the sign permit application and plans to the Development Services Center. OPDR Land Use Review staff in the Development Services Center will then review the sign permit application for compliance with the land use (LUR) decision.

(2) Construction Standard Alternative and Structural Reviews:

When construction standard alternatives are needed or structural review required, Development Services Center staff will forward the permit application package to Plan Review for review. Additional fees are charged when either of these reviews is needed. When the construction standard alternative and structural reviews are complete and the proposal approved, DSC staff will notify the applicant. Following are details about the construction alternative and engineering reviews:

(a) Construction Standard Alternatives: Construction standard alternatives (also known as Code Appeals) can only be sought for structural or electrical standards contained in Chapters 32.40 through 32.52. Application forms for these appeals are available and must be submitted on the 5th floor of the 1900 SW 4th Avenue building. Additional fees must be paid for these alternative requests. Applications filed by Friday are reviewed and acted upon by the following Wednesday. Further appeal of this initial decision is

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available to Building Code Board of Appeals or Electrical Code Board of Appeals.

- (b) <u>Structural Plan Review:</u> Structural plan review is required for:
 - (i) All awnings;
 - (ii) Signs projecting from or above buildings;
 - (iii) Freestanding signs over six feet high;
 - (iv) Signs with additions having an area greater than 10% of the area of the original sign (exceptions: signs and their additions less than six feet above grade, and flush mounted signs);
 - (v) Where structural designs and calculations are not pre--approved by OPDR. (For more information on pre-approved structural designs, see D.3.b.)
 - (vi) Structural alterations to existing signs unless the alteration results in an expansion which is less than 10% of the existing sign size.

A structural engineer will check the structural design for compliance with the Oregon Structural Specialty Code.

5. <u>Permit Issuance:</u> The permit will be issued when all reviews are complete, the proposed sign is approved, and fees are paid.

D. WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANS AND DRAWINGS?

All plans and drawings must be complete and drawn to scale. Line quality and contrast must be easily read and result in a readable document after photocopying, microfilming, scanning or similar reproduction. The site plan, and structural design drawings and calculations must be on substantial paper.

- 1. <u>Sign Elevation Drawing</u>: Provide two copies of an elevation drawing of the sign. The minimum sheet size for this plan is 8-1/2 by 11 inches. Include:
 - a. All details and dimensions of the sign;
 - b. Type of material and all dimensions of supports and footings;
 - c. Clearance above ground;
 - d. Distance of any projection over the right-of-way;

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- e. If the sign will be attached to a building: Show the building roof line for the wall on which the sign will be mounted; and,
- f. Type of lighting.
- 2. <u>Site Plan</u>: The minimum sheet size for the plan is 8-1/2 inches by 11 inches. Two copies of the site plan are required. On the site plan include:
 - a. Site address;
 - b. Sign contractor's name;
 - c. Property lines and lengths along street(s);
 - d. Building footprint;
 - e. Lengths of building walls:
 - (1) that face a public street and have a public entrance; or,
 - (2) tenant space without street frontage, but with a public entrance facing a parking area.
 - f. Public entrance(s) to each building;
 - g. Name(s) of abutting street(s);
 - h. If the sign is to be located within 15' of a street corner or driveway, distance between sign and corner or driveway. Distance is measured from the street curb on a corner and from the driveway throat on a driveway (not required for sign alterations if the size or location of the sign is not changing);
 - i. Parking areas and driveways (not required for sign alterations);
 - j. Locations and dimensions of existing and proposed signs (for sign alterations where the sign size is not changing, include only the sign proposed for alteration)
 - k. Note which existing signs are freestanding and which project over the right-of-way (not required for sign alterations where the size or location is not changing);
 - I. North arrow.
- 3. <u>Structural Design Drawings and Calculations</u>: Signs, awnings, and their supports, attachments and foundations must be designed in accordance with the Oregon Structural Specialty Code. All exterior signs must be able to resist the minimum wind loads and snow loads as required by the Oregon Structural Specialty Code (OSSC). All signs must be able to resist minimum vertical (dead and seismic) loads as required by the OSSC.
 - a. Requirements: Detailed drawings and calculations shall be prepared and sealed or stamped by an engineer registered in Oregon. The design shall provide for all appropriate loads including wind and vertical loads. Three sets of drawings and one set of calculations are required. Drawings shall show all:

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- (1) Dimensions;
- (2) Materials;
- (3) Construction of the sign (e.g, plastic, light gauge steel);
- (4) Foundations for freestanding signs;
- (5) Methods of attachments to the building or structure; and,
- (6) If the sign or awning is to be attached to a building, the drawings shall have information justifying the adequacy of building members to support the loads imposed by the sign and sign structure or awning and awning structure.
- b. Pre-approved Structural Designs and Calculations: Structural designs and calculations for certain types and sizes of signs and awnings have been pre-approved by OPDR. Although no pre-approved designs are on file for awnings or projecting signs, the pre-approval process is available for these installations as well. Drawings must still be submitted. However, if the drawings show compliance with a pre-approved structural design, *generally* engineering plan review will not be required. Drawings prepared and sealed/stamped by an engineer are not required for pre-approved structural designs.

Pre-approved structural designs are limited to:

- (1) Freestanding Signs, Asymmetrical Design: 200 square feet maximum area when not over 25 feet from top of the sign to grade;
- (2) Freestanding Signs, Symmetrical Design: 200 square feet maximum area when not more than 25 feet from top of sign to grade.
- Projecting wall mounted Signs: 200 square feet maximum sign area and which not less than 8 feet clearance is provided below the sign to the highest ground level. Pre-approved projecting sign designs will be limited to the attachment methods, attachment materials and wall materials specified in the request.
- Awnings: Maximum height from grade to top of awning does not exceed 40 feet and awnings meet the minimum pedestrian clearance requirements. Pre-approved awning designs will be limited to the attachment methods, attachment materials and wall materials specified in the request.

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E. WHAT INSPECTIONS ARE REQUIRED?

- 1. Inspections are required for all sign and awning permits. Call for inspections at the following points in the project:
 - a. Prior to pouring of footings for freestanding signs;
 - b. After installation of wall anchors for fascia or projecting signs, but before the sign is attached;
 - c. When the project is completed;
 - d. Additional inspections may be required due to the complexity of the project.
- 2. To request an inspection, call the OPDR 24-hour Inspection Request Line at 503-823-7000. You will be asked to enter your IVR or permit number, the three-digit inspection code (found in your IVR pocket reference card) for the type of inspection you need, when you want the inspection (a.m. or p.m.) and a phone number where you can be reached during weekdays. If the inspection request is made before 6 a.m. on a weekday, the inspector will usually be able to come out the same day.
- 3. Special inspection may be required for complex signs as specified in the Oregon Structural Specialty Code. Notice will be given to the applicant as part of the engineering plan review process. When special inspection is required, it must be performed by a City of Portland certified testing agency.

F. PERMIT EXPIRATION AND RENEWAL

If work authorized by the sign permit is not completed within 180 days of permit issuance, the permit will expire unless additional time is requested from the sign inspector. The extension request must be in writing. Only one extension of a maximum of 180 days may be granted by OPDR. Permits which have expired for less than 6 months may be renewed provided no changes have been made in the original plans and specifications for such work. A permit may be renewed only once. No permit which has expired for more than 6 months may be renewed.

G. CITATIONS AND FINES

With the revision of the Sign Code, effective March of 2001, OPDR has established a violation citation system. Sign violation citations will be similar to a parking ticket. It will

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include an automatic fine which may increase if not paid in a timely fashion and for repeat infractions. If a sign remains in violation for an extended period, the bureau may begin imposing administrative enforcement fees in addition to the citation fines. An appeal process is available. Citation fines are a minimum of \$25 and are higher for certain types of violations and for repeat violations. Alteration of non-conforming signs can result in the ordering of a sign to be removed or made to conform to the current sign code regulations.

H. INFORMATION

The City of Portland's Development Services Center is located on the first floor of the 1900 SW 4th Avenue Building. The Center is open weekdays from 7:30 am to 3:00 pm.