

# Seattle's

# SIGN

# Regulations

A  
handbook  
consolidating  
code and  
procedural  
regulations



April 2005



City of Seattle  
Department of Planning and  
Development

CITY OF SEATTLE

**SIGN REGULATIONS HANDBOOK**

**2005 EDITION**

Issued by the Department of Planning and Development

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# Preface

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This handbook consolidates sign regulations from the various codes and ordinances which apply to the construction and use of signs in the City of Seattle. It has been assembled to assist applicants in their application process and is not intended as a design specification nor an instruction manual for untrained persons.

Three City departments share responsibility for sign permits. The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) issues sign permits for all signs not in the public right-of-way. If a proposed sign extends into the public right-of-way the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) must issue a Street Use Permit before DPD may issue the sign permit.<sup>1</sup> If the sign is in a historic or special review district, or on the same lot as a Landmark structure, the Department of Neighborhoods must issue a written approval of the proposal before DPD may issue the sign permit. This approval is based on the recommendation of the preservation board having jurisdiction over the property.

All applications to DPD for sign permits are accepted at the Over-the Counter (OTC) Permits Counter in the Applicant Services Center (ASC) (located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Avenue), whether or not the sign is electrical. Applications to SDOT are made at the Street Use Counter (37th floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower) at the Engineering Permit Center.

## Intent and Purpose

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Seattle's Land Use Code provides standards specifying the type, number, size, location and lighting of signs in the various zones of the city. The intent of these regulations is specified in Section 23.55.001 of the Land Use Code, and reads as follows:

### **Section 23.55.001**

The intent of the standards in this chapter is:

- A. To encourage the design of signs that attract and invite rather than demand the public's attention, and to curb the proliferation of signs;
- B. To encourage the use of signs that enhance the visual environment of the city;
- C. To promote the enhancement of business and residential properties and neighborhoods by fostering the erection of signs complementary to the buildings and uses to which they relate and which are harmonious with their surroundings;
- D. To protect the public interest and safety;
- E. To protect the right of business to identify its premises and advertise its products through the use of signs without undue hindrance or obstruction; and
- F. To provide opportunities for communicating information of community interest.

**DPD Note:**

1. Similar standards for signs located in the public rights-of-way are found in portions of the Street Use Ordinance.

Construction requirements for signs are located in the National Electrical Code (NEC) Article 600, in Seattle DPD Director's Rules, Seattle Building Code (SBC) and other related codes. SBC Chapter 31, Section 3107.1 states the purpose of the Building Code regulations for signs and outdoor displays. It reads:

### **Section 3107.1**

It is the purpose of this chapter to safeguard the life, health, property and welfare of the citizens of the City by regulating and controlling the design, quality of materials, construction, location, illumination, and maintenance of signs and sign structures visible from any portion of public property or rights-of-way.

## **Sources**

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The regulations contained in this handbook are excerpted from a variety of city ordinances and regulations. Regulations are found in: Title 23 (Land Use Code), and Sections 3105 and 3107 of Chapter 31, Seattle Building Code. Other regulations are found in the Street Use Ordinance, Title 15, Historic Preservation, Title 25, and in the Seattle Electrical Code, Chapter 6. All land use sign regulations have been consolidated into Chapter 23.55 of the Seattle Land Use Code. **This package is intended to aid applicants for sign permits; however, applicants must refer to the actual codes for final authority.**

# Application For Sign Permits and Inspections

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## I. Application Process

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Most permanent signs erected in the City of Seattle require permits, for which a permit application must be submitted to the Department of Planning and Development.

The sign permit application process is summarized below. Most of the referenced code standards are included in this handbook. If you have questions regarding how these standards and permit exceptions may apply to your proposed sign, please contact DPD Sign Inspections at (206) 684-8419. Business Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The following is the recommended process for preparing and submitting a sign permit application.

### 1. Customer research:

DPD's website, located at [www.seattle.gov/dpd](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd), contains the necessary information for completing a sign application before applying for a permit. The more information you provide will save you time in the application process.

- a. Sign/Billboard/Awning permit applications can be printed from the following location under Over-the-Counter (OTC) Forms:

[www.seattle.gov/dpd/Publications/Forms/](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Publications/Forms/)

- b. DPD GIS provides useful property data and zoning information. Go to:

[www.seattle.gov/dpd/mapcenter/](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/mapcenter/)

- c. Code information related to signs, such as Land Use, Energy and Permit Fee Subtitle can be accessed from:

[www.seattle.gov/dpd/Codes/](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Codes/)

### 2. Applicant obtains the following information from DPD Sign Inspections:

- a. What is the zoning of the property where the sign is to be located?
- b. What are the sign regulations in that zone?
- c. Is the site in a Historic Landmark or Special Review District, or in the shoreline? If so, what are the sign regulations in that district? (Signs located in special review districts may require a Certificate of Approval).
- d. What are the Building Code regulations for the proposed sign?
- e. What are the Electrical Code regulations for the proposed sign?
- f. What will be the sign permit fee?



**3. Applicant submits plans with the following information:**

- a. Name and address of the applicant;
- b. Address of site;
- c. Description and drawing of the sign and its placement on the site; and
- d. If the applicant is other than the owner of the site, letter of approval from the owner.

**4. Applicant submits plans to the OTC Permit Counter** (whether or not the sign is electric). For signs which require a Certificate of Approval, applicants will also be required to submit application materials to the Department of Neighborhood's Division of Urban Conservation.

## **II. Application: Required Information**

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Sign permit applications are made to DPD at the OTC Permit Counter located at 700 Fifth Avenue (Seattle Municipal Tower), 20th floor. Completed applications are made at the OTC Permit Counter whether the sign is electrical or not. Section 3107.5 of the Building Code requires that the application for a sign permit shall:

1. Clearly indicate the precise location of the proposed sign;
2. Be accompanied by adequate plans and specifications;  
**Exception:** The building official may waive submission of plans and specifications when the structural aspect is of minor importance.
3. Be signed by the owner of the premises or an authorized agent; and
4. Be accompanied by the permit fee specified in the Fee Subtitle.

Additionally, an application is not considered to be complete until the following items are also included:

1. Owner/Tenant information;
2. Contractor/Installer information;
3. Description of work to be done;
4. Work site address;
5. List all signs to be installed; and
6. Payment and mailing instructions.

### III. Plans: Required Information and Format

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The Department has established the following standards for plans to be submitted with a sign permit application.

Required information on the plans includes:

1. Site plan with a legend describing the signs;
2. Elevation drawing showing the sign;
3. Installation detail; and
4. Other applicable details or notes, i.e. footing/foundation, engineering calculations for wind load and seismic load.

#### Basic Format For Plans With Sign Permit Application

##### PLANQUALITY

- Plans must be easy to read and microfilm.
- Lines and lettering must be dark enough to provide good contrast with the paper.
- Brownline prints and pencil drawings are not acceptable.
- Plans must SHOW DIMENSIONS; it is not adequate to just indicate scale.

##### TYPE OF PAPER FOR PLANS

- Paper must be relatively heavy, such as blueprint quality or standard drafting paper.
- Tissue paper, graph paper, poster-board, and cardboard are not acceptable.

##### PAPER SIZE

- Minimum size of 11 inches x 17 inches.

##### COPIES

- Three (3) copies are needed. (Do not submit originals or scotch taped copies.)

##### METHODS OF ATTACHMENT

The plans must indicate one of the following methods of attachment based on the types of structure listed below.

- **Brick or Masonary blocks (CMU)— Bolt, lag and drill through.**
  1. Bolt through using washer plates and nuts.
  2. Void behind brick or CMU's, use screen tube and epoxy resin anchoring.
  3. Lag through brick into wood - see wood below.
  4. Bolt through brick into concrete - see concrete below.
- **Wood — “\_ x \_ lag screw into wood structural frame member.”** (Specify size of lag screw.)
- **Concrete — “\_ x \_ rated expansion bolt into concrete.”** (Specify size of bolt.)

##### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Contact DPD Sign Inspections at (206) 684-8419  
Fax: (206) 684-8113  
Business Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays,  
10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.



## IV. When Permits Are Required

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Most permanent signs require sign permits. Section 3107.4.1 of the Seattle Building Code (shown below) describes the exceptions where sign permits are not required. Some sign renovation activities that do not need a sign permit may still need Certificate of Approval if located within a Historic or Special Review District, or on the same lot as a Landmark structure.

### PERMITS REQUIRED

#### Sec. 3107.4.1

**Permanent Signs.** No sign shall be erected, re-erected, constructed, painted, posted, applied, altered, structurally revised or repaired, except as provided in this chapter and Chapter 23.55 of the Land Use Code and pursuant to a permit issued by the building official.

A separate permit shall be required for a sign or signs for each business entity and/or a separate permit for each group of signs on a single supporting structure installed simultaneously. There after, each additional sign erected on the structure must have a separate permit, including electric signs. In addition, electrical permits shall be obtained for circuits for electric signs and street use permits shall be obtained for signs over any public place pursuant to the Street Use Ordinance as amended.

**EXCEPTION:** The following sign activity shall not require a permit, provided the owner of any such sign shall continue to have the responsibility of erection and maintenance of such sign and for compliance with the provisions of this chapter and any other law or ordinance regulating signs:

1. Signs which are located within the interior of the building and which are not visible from the public right-of-way unless.
  - 1.1 The sign is mounted within an interior shared pedestrian mall of a multi-tenant retail facility; located over or adjoining the pedestrian walking surface; and
  - 1.2 When any individually mounted element of the sign is greater than 10 square feet (0.93 square meter ) in area or when it is an electric sign;
2. The changing of the advertising copy or message on a lawfully erected painted or printed sign, theater marquee, gasoline price sign or similar sign specifically designed for the use of replaceable copy;
3. Painting, repainting, cleaning, repairing, and other normal maintenance unless a structural or electrical change is made;
4. One business identification sign, non-electrical and non-illuminated, 11/2 square feet (0.14 square meters) or less in area and permanently affixed to the building facade or wall on a plane parallel to the building facade or wall located entirely on private property;
5. On-premises directional and information signs not over 5 square feet (0.46 square meters) in area;
6. One bulletin board not over 12 square feet (1.1 square meters) in area and not over 8 feet (2438 mm.) in height for each public, charitable or religious institution when located on the wall of the institution;



7. Memorial signs or tablets and names of buildings and dates of building erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze or other noncombustible material;
8. Signs of public service companies indicating danger and/or providing service or safety information.



## V. Permits For Temporary Signs Not Required

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### SBCSec.3107.4.2

**Permits Not Required for Temporary Signs.** The erection, re-erection, construction, posting or placement of temporary signs as permitted by Section 23.55.012 of the Land Use Code shall not require a temporary sign permit. The owner of any such sign shall be responsible for compliance with the provisions of this section and other law or ordinance regulating signs. Permanent sign permits shall be required for signs which do not comply with the standards for temporary signs found in 23.55.012 of the Land Use Code when required by Section 3107.4.1.

### 3107.4.3

**Number of Signs.** Temporary signs as permitted by Section 23.55.012 of the Land Use Code and signs not requiring a permit as specified in Section 3107.4.1 shall not be included as part of the maximum number of signs permitted under Chapter 23.55 of the Land Use Code.

## **VI. Adding Attachments To Existing Signs**

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### **SBCSec.3107.4.4**

**Attachments to Signs.** Ancillary devices, displays and attachments not originally a part of the sign for which a permit was issued shall not be added to an existing sign except as provided in this chapter, Chapter 23.55 of the Land Use Code and pursuant to another permit issued by the building official.

## **VII. Inspections and Closure of Business**

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### **SBCSec.3107.6**

**Inspections.** All signs regulated by this chapter shall be subject to inspection and periodic reinspection by the building official. All footings shall be inspected by the building official. All signs containing electrical wiring shall be subject to the Seattle Electrical Code. Refurbished, used electrical signs and field-assembled electrical signs shall be inspected by the building official.

### **3107.7 Maintenance and closure of business.**

**3107.7.1 Maintenance.** All signs, together with all of their supports, braces, guys and anchors, shall be kept in good repair and in a proper state of preservation. The display surface of all signs shall be kept neatly painted or posted at all times. The building official may order the removal of all signs not properly maintained or no longer in use by the owner, occupant or lessee, and the permit there fore may be canceled.

**3107.7.2 Closure of business – abandoned signs.** Upon the closure and vacation of a business or activity, the operator of the business or activity shall be responsible for the removal of all signs relating to the business or activity within 90 days from the date of such closure. If the operator of the business or activity fails to remove the signs within the designated time period and the business or activity is not reoccupied or resumed during the 90-day period, then the owner of the premises upon which the signs are located shall be responsible for the removal of the signs within 180 days from the date of closure and vacation of the premises.

# Definitions

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The definitions in this section are assembled from the Seattle Building Code and the Land Use Code. The source of each definition is listed after each definition. Please note that the guidelines for the Ballard Avenue Landmark District, the Harvard/Belmont Landmark District, and the Columbia City Landmark District, include sign definitions specifically for these districts.

## Definitions

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### “A”

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#### **Advertising sign**

See Sign, Advertising

#### **Awning<sup>2</sup>**

A protective covering with a non-rigid surface projecting from a building. (Building Code)

A protective covering of fixed, noncollapsible, rigid construction, attached to a structure, the upper surface of which has a pitch of at least thirty degrees from the horizontal. (Land Use Code)

### “B”

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#### **Billboard<sup>3</sup>**

See Sign, advertising and DPD Footnote

#### **Building facade**

That portion of any exterior elevation of a building extending from the grade of the building to the top of the parapet wall or eaves, for the entire width of the building elevation. (Building Code)

#### **Building facade facing**

A resurfacing of an existing facade with approved material. (Building Code)

#### **Bulletin board**

A board for messages for users of the premises on which the board is erected and not intended for view from the public right-of-way. A bulletin board is not a sign. (Building Code)

#### **DPD Footnote:**

- 2. Permits for awnings are issued through the Over-the-Counter process.**
- 3. Billboard is a term traditionally used to identify a sign attached to a pole structure used to advertise products and services not available where the sign is located. The Land Use Code identifies billboards as off-premises advertising and is regulated by 23.55.014.**

**Business district identification sign** An off-premises sign which gives the name of a business district or industrial park and which may list the names of individual businesses within the district or park. (Land Use Code)

**Business establishment**

means an economic or institutional unit organized for the purposes of conducting business and/or providing a service. In order to be considered a separate business establishment, a business shall be physically separated from other businesses. Businesses that share common facilities, such as reception areas, checkout stands, and similar features (except shared building lobbies and bathrooms) shall be functionally related. The structures may be located on a single lot or on adjacent lots. A business establishment may be a commercial, manufacturing, institutional, or any other type of nonresidential use or live-work unit. (Land Use Code)

**“C”**

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**Canopy<sup>4</sup>**

A protective covering with a rigid surface projecting from a building. Marquees are a type of canopy. (Building Code)

**Control of access**

The condition where the right of owners or occupants of abutting land or other persons to access, light, air or view in connection with a public street is fully or partially controlled by public authority. (Land Use Code)

**Control of access, full**

The condition where the authority to control access is exercised to give preference to through traffic by providing access connections with selected public streets only and by prohibiting crossings at grade and direct driveway connections. (Land Use Code)

**Control of access, partial**

The condition where the authority to control access is exercised to give preference to through traffic to a degree that, in addition to access connections with selected public streets, there may be some crossings at grade and some direct connections. (Land Use Code)

**Curbline**

The edge of a roadway, whether marked by a curb or not. When there is not a curb, the curbline shall be established by the Director of Transportation. (Land Use Code)

**“D”**

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**Display surface**

The area of a sign structure used to display the advertising message. (Building Code)

**DPD Footnote:**

4. Because canopies are a type of structure affecting publicly-used areas, they are reviewed for structural stability according to Seattle's building code. Permit applications for canopies are processed as an expedited building permit and handled through the normal building permit review channels. A sign on a new canopy requires a sign permit.

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**“E”**

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**Entrance ramp**

Any public road or turning roadway, including acceleration lanes by which traffic enters the main traveled way of a limited-access facility from the general street system; such designation applying to that portion of the roadway along which there is full control of access. (Land Use Code)

**Exit ramp**

Any public road or turning roadway, including deceleration lanes, by which traffic leaves the main traveled way of a freeway to reach the general street system within the city; such designation applying to that portion of the roadway along which there is full control of access. (Land Use Code)

**Expressway**

A divided arterial street for through traffic with full or partial control of access and generally with grade separations at intersections. (Land Use Code)

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**“F”**

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**Freeway**

An expressway with full control of access. (Land Use Code)

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**“L”**

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**Landscape section**

A section of the right-of-way of a freeway, expressway, parkway or scenic route, at least one (1) side of which is improved by the planting, for other than the sole purpose of soil erosion control, of ornamental trees, shrubs, lawn or other vegetation, or at least one (1) side of which is endowed by nature with native trees and shrubs that are reasonably maintained, and which has been so designated by this Code. (Land Use Code)

**Large sign**

See Sign, large. (Land Use Code)

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**“M”**

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**Multiple business center**

A grouping of two (2) or more business establishments which either share common parking on the lot where they are located, and/or which occupy a single structure or separate structures which are physically attached. Shopping centers are considered to be multiple business centers. (Land Use Code)

**Marquee**

See canopy.

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**“N”**

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**Nonstructural trims**

Are the molding, battens, caps, nailing strips, latticing or cutouts which are attached to the sign structure. (Building Code)

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**“P”**

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**Parkway**

A thoroughfare located within a park, or including a park-like development and designated as a “parkway.” (Land Use Code)

**Pendency period<sup>5</sup>**

See DPD Footnote

**Projection**

The distance by which a sign extends over public property or beyond the building line. (Building Code)

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**“R”**

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**Residential district identification sign**

An off-premises sign which gives the name of the group of residential structures, such as a subdivision or cluster development. (Land Use Code)

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**“S”**

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**Scenic route**

Those streets designated by the Land Use Code as scenic routes. (Land Use Code)

**Scenic view section**

A section of the traveled way of a freeway, expressway, parkway, or scenic route the daily traffic along which includes a large number of motorists entering, passing through or leaving the City and from which there is a view of scenic beauty or historical significance, or of an array of urban features or natural prospects, or of a public park, or of lakes, bays, mountains, the harbor or the City skyline, and which has been so designated by this Code. (Land Use Code)

**Sign<sup>6</sup>**

Any medium, including its structural and component parts, which is used or intended to be used to attract attention to the subject matter for advertising, identification or informative purposes. (Land Use and Building Codes)

**DPD Footnote:**

5. The pendency period as it relates to billboards and billboard relocation is the period of time between when the billboard demolition permit is issued and when the billboard relocation permit is issued. Since a demolition permit expires in eighteen (18) months, with one renewal, the pendency period is thirty-six (36) months. If a billboard installation permit is not issued within this thirty-six (36) month period, the billboard will be removed from the registration program.
6. The City’s rules draw a distinction between artwork (typically occurring as wall murals) and commercial signs. The most apparent difference is that commercial signs include a commercial message that is usually meant to identify a business or draw attention to a product, service or event. A mural or other artwork may be intended to decorate or enliven a building façade, with a rather wide spectrum of potential aesthetic treatments. However, murals or other artwork should not contain logos or advertising copy, and should not depict products, services or events in a fashion that delivers a commercial message. If a particular mural or artwork is inspected and found to contain commercial messages, it may be possible to eliminate the commercial message and retain portions that do not deliver a commercial message. This type of determination is made on a case-by-case basis.

**Sign, advertising**

A sign directing attention to a business, profession, commodity, service or entertainment conducted, sold or offered elsewhere than upon the lot where the sign is located. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, awning**

Graphics on a fixed awning used or intended to be used to attract attention to the subject matter for advertising, identification, or informative purposes. An awning sign shall not be considered a fabric sign. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, business**

An on-premises sign directing attention to a business, profession, commodity, service or entertainment conducted, sold or offered on the lot where the sign is located. This definition shall not include signs located within a structure except those signs oriented so as to be visible through a window. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, canopy**

Graphics on a canopy used or intended to be used to attract attention to the subject matter for advertising, identification, or information purposes. A canopy sign shall not be considered a fabric sign. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, changing-image<sup>7</sup>**

A sign, including a sign using a video display method, which changes its message or background by means of electrical, kinetic, solar or mechanical energy, not including message board signs. A video display method is a method of display characterized by real-time, full-motion imagery of at least television quality. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, chasing**

A sign which includes one (1) or more rows of lights which light up in sequence. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, combination**

Any sign incorporating any combination of the features of freestanding, projecting, and roof signs. The individual requirements of roof, projecting and pole signs shall be applied for combination signs incorporating any or all of the requirements specified in this Code. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, double-faced**

A sign which has two (2) display surfaces in approximately parallel planes backed against each other or against the same background, one (1) face of which is designed to be seen from one (1) direction and the other from the opposite direction. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, electric**

Any sign containing electrical wiring, but not including signs illuminated by an exterior light source. (Land Use and Building Codes)

**Sign, environmental review**

A sign with dimensions of four (4) feet by eight (8) feet constructed of a durable material, required for public notice of proposed land use actions according to Chapter 23.76, Procedures for Master Use Permits and Council Land Use Decisions. (Land Use Code)

**DPD Footnote:**

7. A sign using video display techniques is a type of changing image sign. Signs with electronically “scrolling” text or signs that otherwise portray text or images that create an illusion of motion are another type of changing image sign. These signs are not allowed in single-family, multifamily, RC, NC1 or NC2 zones.

**Sign, externally illuminated**

A sign illuminated by an exterior light source. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, fabric**

A sign made of canvas, cloth or similar non-rigid material. (Building Code)

**Sign, flashing**

An electrical sign or portion of an electrical sign which changes light intensity in sudden transitory bursts. Flashing signs do not include changing image or chasing signs. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, freestanding**

A pole or ground sign. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, ground**

A sign that is six (6) feet or less in height above ground level and is supported by one (1) or more poles, columns or supports anchored in the ground. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, identification**

Any ground, wall or roof sign which displays only (1) the name, address and/or use of the premises; and/or (2) noncommercial messages. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, kiosk**

A small freestanding sign structure visible to the public used for posting small signs. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, land use**

A sign with dimensions of at least eighteen (18) inches by twenty-four (24) inches but smaller than an environmental review sign, constructed of a durable material, required for public notice of proposed land use actions according to Chapter 23.76, Procedures for Master Use Permits and Council Land Use Decisions. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, large**

A sign four (4) by eight (8) feet, constructed of a durable material. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, marquee<sup>8</sup>**

A sign placed on, constructed in or attached to a marquee. (Land Use and Building Codes)

**Sign, message board<sup>9</sup>**

An electric sign which has a readerboard for the display of information, such as time, temperature, of public service or commercial messages, which can be changed through the turning on and off of different combinations of light bulbs within the display area. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, nonconforming**

A nonconforming sign is a sign or any portion thereof which because of its location or construction could not law fully be reconstructed in its present location. A nonconforming sign shall have no additions thereto. **Exception:** Minor additions which the building official may find necessary in the interest of safety, or the changing of the advertising message thereon in connection with a change of ownership or tenancy of the

**DPD Footnotes:**

8. For definition of a marquee, see canopy.
9. See Sign, readerboard



premises, provided that the addition or physical change does not expand the nonconforming nature of the sign. (Building Code)

**Sign, off-premises**

A sign relating, through its message and content, to a business activity, use, product or service not available on the premises upon which the sign is erected. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, off-premises directional**

An off-premises sign used to direct pedestrian or vehicular traffic to a facility, service, or business located on other premises within one thousand five hundred (1500) feet of the sign. The message of such sign shall not include any reference to brand names of products or services whether or not available on such other premises; provided, that the name of the facility, service or business may be used. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, on-premises<sup>10</sup>**

A sign used solely by the business establishment on the lot where the sign is located which displays either (1) commercial messages which are strictly applicable only to a use of the premises on which it is located, including signs or sign devices indicating the business transacted, principal services rendered, goods sold or produced on the premises, name of the business, and name of the person, firm or corporation occupying the premises or (2) noncommercial messages. This definition shall not include signs located within a business establishment except signs oriented so as to be visible through a window. (Building Code)

**Sign, on-premises directional**

An on-premises incidental sign designed to direct pedestrian or vehicular traffic. (Land Use and Building Codes)

**Sign, pole**

A sign wholly supported by a structure in the ground. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, portable**

A sign which is not permanently affixed and is designed for or capable of being moved, except those signs explicitly designed for people to carry on their persons or which are permanently affixed to motor vehicles. (Land Use and Building Codes)

**Sign, projecting**

A sign other than a wall sign, which is rigidly constructed and projects from and is supported by a wall of a building or structure. (Building Code)

**Sign, readerboard**

A sign that displays identification, public service or commercial messages by using characters that are changed or arranged in a manual fashion.

**Sign, roof<sup>11</sup>**

A sign erected upon or above a roof or parapet of a building or structure. (Land Use and Building Codes)

**Sign, rotating**

A sign that revolves on a fixed axis. (Land Use Code)

**DPD Footnote:**

10. A political sign is considered to be an on-premises sign with a non-commercial message and therefore needs to comply with 23.55.012 for temporary signs and all other sign code regulations.

**Sign, side-by-side**

Advertising signs that are adjacent to each other on the same plane and facing in the same direction, either on the same structure or within twenty-five (25) feet of one another. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, temporary**

Any sign which is to be displayed for a limited period of time only, including but not limited to, banners, pennants, streamers, fabric signs, wind-animated objects, clusters of flags, festoons of lights and search lights. A temporary sign may be of rigid or non-rigid construction. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, type of**

Ground, roof, projecting, combination, wall, awning, canopy, marquee, under-marquee or pole signs. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, under-marquee**

A lighted or unlighted sign attached to the underside of a marquee. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, visually blocked**

An advertising sign that is located against or attached to a building, thereby visible from only one (1) direction. To be considered visually blocked, the advertising sign must be within eight (8) feet of any building wall or walls that are used to block the back side of the advertising sign and the advertising sign cannot project above or beyond the blocking wall or walls. (Land Use Code)

**Sign, wall**

Any sign attached to and supported by a wall of a structure, with the exposed face of the sign on a plane parallel to the plane of the wall, or any sign painted directly on a building facade. (Land Use Code)

**Sign structure**

Any structure which supports or is designed to support any sign as defined in this chapter. A sign structure may be a single pole or may be an integral part of the building. (Building Code)

**“T”**

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**Traveled way**

The portion of a freeway, expressway, parkway and their entrance or exit ramps, or scenic route, exclusive of shoulders, used for the movement of vehicles. (Land Use Code)

**“V”**

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**Visible**

Capable of being seen (whether or not legible) without visual aid by persons of normal visual acuity. (Land Use Code)

**DPD Footnote:**

**11. Signs mounted on the facade of a building with rooftop features are considered roof signs. “Rooftop feature” means any parts of or attachments to the structure which project above a roof line and which may or may not be exempt from zoning height limitations.**

# Code Regulations

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## I. Land Use Regulations

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The Land Use Code (Title 23) provides specific standards for signs. These standards specify what types of signs are permitted, or prohibited, how large signs can be, the maximum height, how many and what type of illumination is proposed. The following section of the handbook provides a zone by zone listing of sign regulations, followed by sign provisions for special circumstances and locations.

Applicants for sign permits should carefully review all of the following:

- General Standards;
- Zone specific standards;
- Special sign regulations and procedures;
- Director's Rules; and
- Measurements.

# Land Use Regulations

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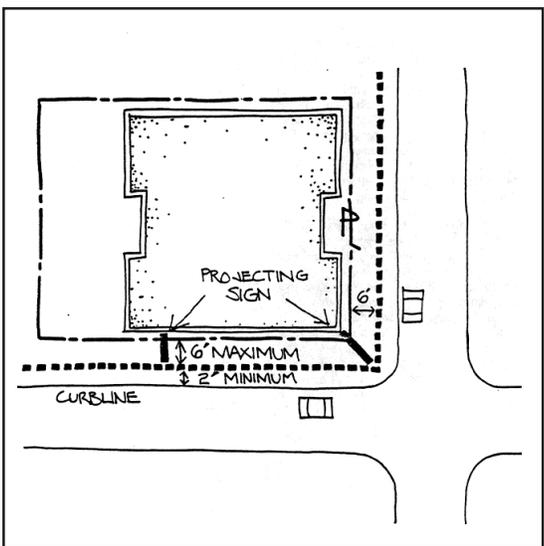


## A. GENERAL STANDARDS FOR ALL ZONES

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1. 23.55.002 Scope of provisions
  - A. The provisions of this chapter shall apply to signs in all zones, except those zones regulated by Chapter 23.66, Special Review Districts.
  - B. Signs located in the Shoreline District shall meet the requirements of the Seattle Shoreline Master Program in addition to the provisions of this chapter. In the event that there is a conflict between the provisions of this chapter and the regulations of the Shoreline Master Program, the provisions of the Shoreline Master Program shall apply.
  - C. Signs are also regulated by the provisions of Chapter 32 of the Building Code, Title 22 of the Seattle Municipal Code, including the permit requirements of that title.
  - D. Signs located completely within public rights-of-way shall be regulated by the Street Use Ordinance, Title 15 of the Seattle Municipal Code. Signs projecting from private property over public rights-of-way are also regulated by the Street Use Ordinance, as well as the provisions of this chapter.
  - E. Signs adjacent to certain public highways and designated scenic routes shall meet the provisions of Section 23.55.042 of this chapter. Signs adjacent to state highways may also be regulated by state law or regulations.
  - F. Variances may be permitted from the provisions of this chapter, except that variances shall not be permitted from subsection A of Section 23.55.014, and variances from Section 23.55.042, Off-premises and business signs adjacent to certain public highways, shall be limited by the provisions of subsection E of Section 23.55.042.
  - G. Measurements provisions for signs are located in Chapter 23.86, Measurements
2. 23.55.003 Signs prohibited in all zones
  - A. The following signs shall be prohibited in all zones:
    1. Flashing signs;
    2. Signs which rotate or have a rotating or moving part or parts that revolve at a speed in excess of seven (7) revolutions per minute;
    3. Signs attached to or located on stationary motor vehicles, equipment, trailers, and related devices, except for signs not exceeding five (5) square feet in area and relating to the sale, lease or rent of a motor vehicle to which the signs are attached;
    4. Portable signs other than readily detachable signs having a fixed base or mounting for the placement and intermittent use of such signs;
    5. Banners, streamers, strings of pennants, fabric signs, festoons of lights, clusters of flags, wind-animated objects, balloons, searchlights, and similar devices, except where the principal use or activity on the lot is outdoor retail sales in NC3, C1, C2 and downtown zones, and except where permitted as temporary signs under Section 23.55.012.
    6. Signs that attempt or appear to attempt to direct the movement of traffic or that interfere with, imitate or resemble any official traffic sign, signal or device.
    7. Signs using a video display method, except as provided in section 23.55.005, Video display methods.

3. 23.55.004 Signs projecting over public rights-of-way
  - A. Signs projecting into any public right-of-way, except alleys, shall have a minimum clearance of eight (8) feet over the adjacent sidewalk or other grade.
  - B. Signs projecting into any public alley shall have a minimum clearance of sixteen (16) feet above grade, and shall not project more than twenty-four (24) inches beyond the property line.
  - C. No permanent sign shall extend into any public right-of-way to within less than two (2) feet of the curb line, or more than six (6) feet beyond the property line, except that at street intersections, signs which project from intersecting street property lines may extend to the intersection of the six (6) foot projection margins on each street (Exhibit 23.55.004A).
  - D. No barber pole, including the brackets and fastenings for the barber pole, shall extend more than one (1) foot into any public right-of-way.
  - E. No temporary sign made of rigid material shall extend more than four (4) inches into the public right-of-way.
  - F. Marquee signs may be permitted in conjunction with any lawful marquee, provided that they shall not project more than twelve (12) inches beyond the front of the marquee nor closer than two (2) feet to the curbline. Marquee signs may not exceed thirty (30) inches in height above the top of the marquee, and total vertical dimension may not exceed five (5) feet. Only one (1) sign may be placed on or attached to an end face of a marquee.
  - G. Roof signs shall not project into any public right-of-way.



**Exhibit 23.55.004A**  
**Signs projecting over public rights-of-way**



4. SMC 23.55.005 Video display methods

A. Development standards. Video display may be used on a sign when the sign meets all of the following development standards:

1. The sign is an on-premises sign;
2. The sign is not located in a residential, NC1 or NC2 zone, Special Review District, Historical District, Preservation District or shoreline environment;
3. The sign meets one of the following criteria:
  - i. The sign face is not visible from a street, driveway or surface parking area, and also is not visible from a lot that is owned by a different person, in which case the size of the sign is not limited by this subsection, and the standards for duration or pause periods and subsection A5 shall not apply; or
  - ii. The sign area is less than or equal to one thousand (1000) square inches and no single dimension of the sign exceeds three (3) feet; or
  - iii. The sign meets the standards set out in subsection B, in addition to meeting all other standards of this subsection A.
4. The maximum height for any sign using a video display method shall be fifteen (15) feet above existing grade. Pole signs using a video display method shall be at least ten (10) feet above the ground;
5. The sign is at least thirty-five (35) linear feet in any direction from any other sign that uses a video display method;
6. When located within fifty (50) feet of a lot in a residential zone, any part of the sign using a video display method is oriented so that no portion of the sign face is visible from an existing or permitted principal structure on that lot;
7. Duration: Any portion of the message that uses a video display method shall have a minimum duration of two (2) seconds and a maximum duration of five (5) seconds. Calculation of the duration shall not include the number of frames per second used in a video display method. Calculation of the maximum duration shall include the time used for any other display methods incorporated within that portion of the message displayed using a video display method;
8. Pause Between Video Portions of Message. There shall be twenty (20) seconds of still image or blank screen following every message using a video display method;
9. Audio speakers shall be prohibited in association with a sign using a video method of display;
10. Between dusk and dawn the video display shall be limited in brightness to no more than five hundred (500) units when measured from the sign's face at its maximum brightness; and
11. Signs using a video display method may be used after dusk only until 11:00 p.m. or, if the advertising is an on-premises message about an event at the site where the sign is located, for up to one (1) hour after said event.

B. In lieu of complying with subsection A3 above, the Director of DPD shall allow video display methods on a sign if the sign meets all of the following additional development standards:

1. The sign is within the area shown on the map attached as Exhibit 23.55.005A and not within a Special Review District, Historic District, Preservation District, residential zone or shoreline environment;
2. The sign is a minimum distance of fifteen (15) feet from the curb; and

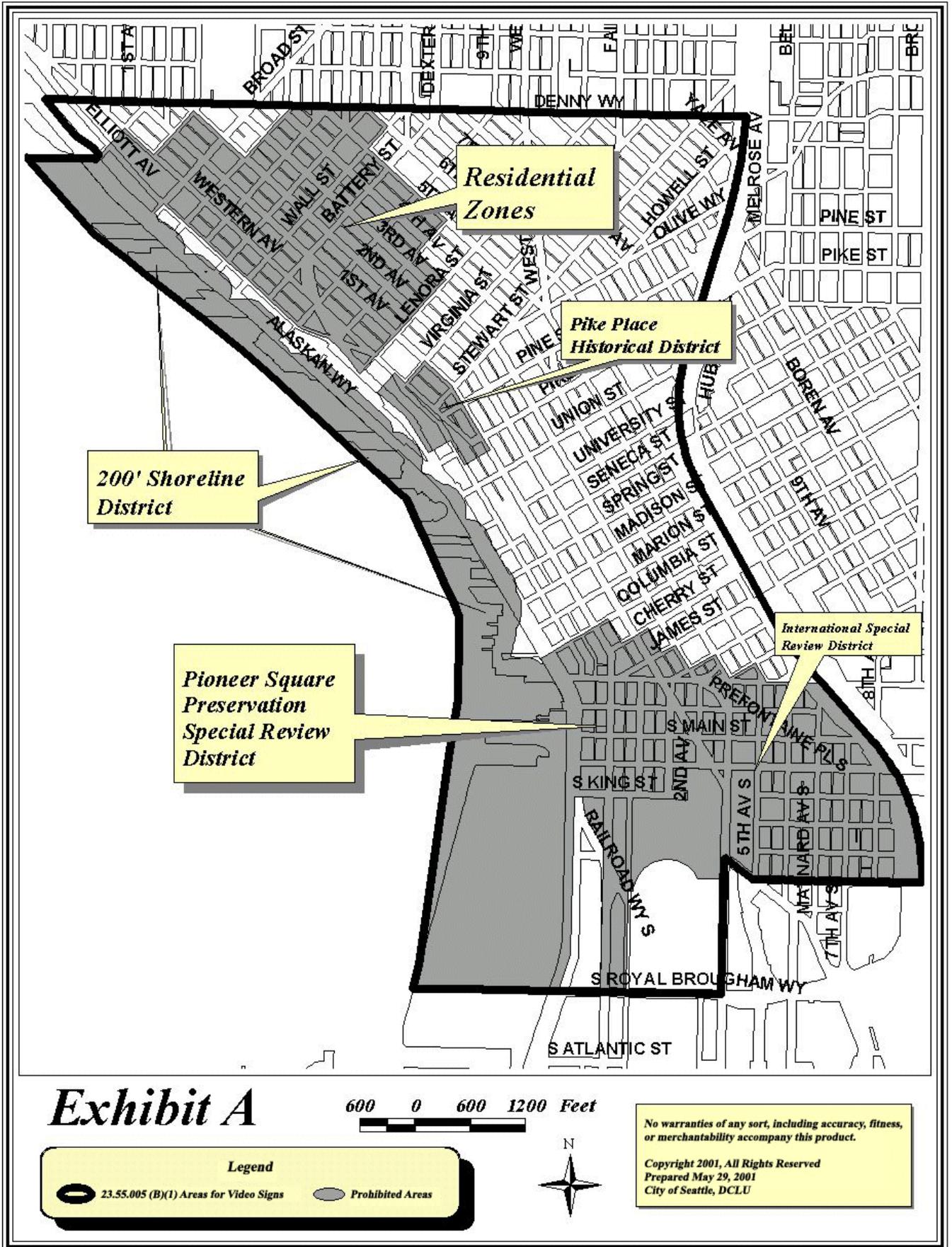


Exhibit 23.55.005A



3. The maximum size of the sign is twenty (20) square feet as independently applied to each sign face, including framework and border.

C. Video Signs Previously Erected. On-premises signs using the video method of display, that have permits authorizing use of that method of display issued prior to August 1, 2001, may continue to use the video method of display authorized in the permit provided that they meet the standards of 23.55.005 A6-11 above within one hundred eighty (180) days from the effective date of the ordinance codified in this section. Previously erected and permitted signs that use a video method of display located within the area shown on the map attached as Exhibit A shall not be subject to the foregoing standards of this section except 23.55.005A1. If the video method of display is terminated for one hundred eighty (180) days or the sign is relocated or reconstructed, then the video method of display cannot be used except in conformance with the development standards of this section.

#### 5. 23.55.008 Signs Near Intersections or Driveways

Signs which are ten (10) feet or less in height as measured from street or driveway grade and which obscure the vision of motorists shall be located at least twenty (20) feet from intersections and driveways.



## B. TEMPORARY SIGNS

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### 23.55.012 Temporary signs permitted in all zones

- A. Real estate “for sale,” “for rent” and “open house” temporary signs, temporary signs identifying the architect, engineer or contractor for work currently under construction, and temporary noncommercial messages displayed on fabric signs, flags or rigid signs shall be permitted in all zones at all times, provided they are not painted with light reflecting paint or illuminated. The total area for these types of temporary signs in the aggregate shall not exceed eight (8) square feet per building lot in single-family zones, and twenty-four (24) square feet per building lot in all other zones, except as follows: the total area allowed for noncommercial messages may increase to a maximum of eight (8) square feet per dwelling unit for use by the occupant of that dwelling unit; and in buildings where there are eight (8) dwelling units or more, a real estate banner not exceeding thirty-six (36) square feet may be permitted for one (1) nine (9) month period starting from the date of the issuance of the certificate of occupancy.
- B. In addition to the signs described in subsection A of this section above, commercial or noncommercial messages may be displayed for a total of four (4) fourteen (14) consecutive day periods a calendar year; these additional four (4) periods are the maximum, whether the message is the same message or a different message. These messages may be displayed on banners, streamers, strings of pennants, fabric signs, festoons of lights, flags, wind-animated objects, rigid signs, balloons, searchlights, portable signs attached to vehicles, or devices of a carnival nature, and shall be allowed as temporary signs in all zones. The total area for all temporary signs per fourteen (14) day period, when combined with those signs authorized under subsection A of this section, in the aggregate shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet per building lot for signs made of rigid material, with no dimension greater than eight (8) feet, and one hundred (100) square feet per building lot for temporary signs not made of rigid material; provided that the total area allowed for noncommercial messages may increase to a maximum of thirty-two (32) square feet per dwelling unit, with no dimension greater than eight (8) feet, for signs made of rigid material, and one hundred (100) square feet per dwelling unit for temporary signs not made of rigid material, all for use by the occupant of that dwelling unit. No individual sign made of nonrigid material may exceed thirty-six (36) square feet.
- C. All signs authorized by this section are subject to the following regulations:
1. No sign may be placed on public property or on the planting strips that abut public property, including planting strips forming a median in a public street, except as provided in subsection C3 below and except for portable signs attached to vehicles that are using the public streets.
  2. All signs must be erected with the consent of the occupant of the property on which the sign is located, except as provided in subsection C3 below.
  3. Temporary Signs on Public Property or in Planting Strips.
    - a. Temporary signs with commercial or noncommercial messages may be located on public rights-of-way or in planting strips in business districts, subject to the requirements of City of Seattle Public Works Rules Chapter 4.60 or its successor Rule.
    - b. Temporary signs with noncommercial messages, other than in subsection C3a above, may be located in the planting strip in front of private property with the



consent of the occupant of that property and may not exceed eight (8) square feet or be supported by stakes that are more than one (1) foot into the ground. Signs in the planting strip shall be no more than twenty-four (24) inches in height as measured from street or driveway grade when located within thirty (30) feet from the curblines of intersections. Signs shall be no more than thirty-six inches (36") in height as measured from street or driveway grade when located thirty feet (30') or more from the curblines of intersections.

- c. In addition to commercial signs in business districts allowed in subsection C3a above, only temporary commercial "open house" signs may be placed in planting strips. One (1) "open house" temporary sign per street frontage of a lot may be located with the consent of the occupant and provided the occupant or seller is on the premises. The "open house" signs may not exceed eight (8) square feet per lot or be supported by stakes that are more than one foot (1') into the ground. The "open house" signs shall be no more than twenty-four inches (24") in height as measured from street or driveway grade when located within thirty feet (30') from the curblines of intersections, and shall be no more than thirty-six inches (36") in height as measured from street or driveway grade when located thirty feet (30') or more from the curblines of intersections.
  - d. No sign placed in a planting strip may be displayed on banners, streamers, strings of pennants, festoons of lights, flags, wind-activated objects or balloons.
  - e. The requirements of this subsection C3 shall be enforced by the Director of Seattle Department of Transportation pursuant to the enforcement provisions of that Department.
4. No sign shall obstruct or impair access to a public sidewalk, public or private street or driveway, traffic control sign, bus stop, fire hydrant, or any other type of street furniture, or otherwise create a hazard, including a tripping hazard.
  5. Signs shall be designed to be stable under all weather conditions, including high winds.
  6. A temporary sign shall conform to the standards for roof signs, flashing, changing image or message board signs, for moving signs, and for lighting and height regulations for the zone or special review district in which the temporary sign is located, provided that balloons may exceed height regulations.
  7. The entire visible surface of the sign, exclusive of support devices, shall be included in area calculations.

## C. OFF-PREMISES SIGNS

### 1. 23.55.014 Off-premises signs.

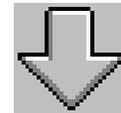
#### A. Advertising Signs.

1. No advertising sign shall be erected, or constructed, unless an existing advertising sign is relocated or reconstructed at a new location. An advertising sign may be relocated or reconstructed if:
  - a. The existing advertising sign was lawfully erected and after the effective date of the ordinances codified in this section,<sup>1</sup> is registered to pursuant to subsection F of this section;
  - b. The advertising sign is located on a site or in a zone where it is not permitted, except as provided in subsection A1c of this section;
  - c. In each calendar year one advertising sign which is located on a site or in a zone where it is permitted may be relocated or reconstructed if a citizen submits a written request for relocation to the Director;
  - d. The reconstructed or relocated advertising sign will be a permitted use and will conform with all ordinances of the City at its new location;
  - e. The construction permit for the relocated or reconstructed advertising sign is issued during the pendency of the demolition permit for the existing sign;
  - f. The advertising sign face does not increase in size; and
  - g. The advertising sign is relocated to an area with the same or more intensive zoning. Areas in which advertising signs are allowed are listed below from least intense to most intense zoning, and zones listed on the same line are considered of the same intensity. Zones which do not allow advertising signs shall be considered less intense zones for the purpose of relocation. This list is for purposes of this criterion only.

**Downtown Mixed Residential/  
Commercial (DMR/C)**

**Least intense**

**Commercial 1 and 2 (C1 and C2)**



**Downtown Zones (except DMR/R  
and DMR/C)**

**Industrial Zones (I)**

**Most intense**

- h. The number of relocated advertising signs does not exceed twelve (12) structure locations per year or twenty-four (24) sign face locations per year, excluding relocations pursuant to subsection G of this Section.
2. For purposes of relocation, sign owners maintain the right to relocation.
3. Wall signs cannot be relocated.
4. Maximum Sign Face Area. The maximum total area of any advertising sign in Commercial 1 and 2, Industrial and Downtown (except Downtown Mixed Residential/Commercial) zones shall be six hundred seventy-two (672) square feet, with a maximum vertical dimension of twenty-five feet (25') and a maximum horizontal dimension of fifty feet (50'), provided that cutouts and extensions may add up to twenty percent (20%) of additional sign area. The maximum total area of any

**Codified Note:**

**1. Editor's Note: Ordinance 116780 was passed by the City Council on July 19, 1993.**



advertising sign in Downtown Mixed Residential/Commercial (DMR/C) zones shall be three hundred (300) square feet, except for visually blocked signs which may be a maximum of six hundred seventy-two (672) square feet.

5. All advertising signs shall be located at least fifty feet (50') from any lot in a residential zone, and at least five hundred feet (500') from any public school grounds, public park, or public playground, or community center. For purposes of this section, a public park or public playground means a park or playground at least one (1) acre in size and a community center must be publicly owned.
6. No variances shall be permitted from the provisions of this subsection A.
- B. Off-premises Directional Signs. The maximum area of any off-premises directional sign shall be one hundred (100) square feet, with a maximum vertical dimension of ten feet (10') and a maximum horizontal dimension of twenty feet (20').
- C. The maximum area for each sign face for business district identification signs shall be that permitted for pole signs in the zone.
- D. The maximum area for each sign face for residential district identification signs shall be fifty (50) square feet.
- E. Development Standards Applicable to All Off-premises Signs.
  1. Dispersion Standard.
    - a. Directional Sign Faces and Business District Identification Signs. Not more than a total of four (4) off-premises directional sign faces, plus two (2) identification signs for a business district, shall be permitted on both sides of a street within a space of six hundred sixty feet (660'). There shall be a minimum distance of one hundred feet (100') between sign structures.<sup>12</sup>
    - b. Advertising Signs.
      - (1) Not more than a total of five (5) advertising sign structures shall be permitted when counting both sides of a street within a linear distance of two thousand six hundred forty feet (2640'), one-half (1/2) mile.
      - (2) There shall be a minimum distance of three hundred linear feet (300') between advertising sign structures on the same side of the street; a maximum of two (2) advertising sign structures within three hundred linear feet (300') when counting both sides of the street; and, a minimum distance of one hundred radial feet (100') between advertising sign structures.
      - (3) Visually blocked advertising signs shall count as one-half (1/2) a structure, and may be within any distance from each other on the same side of the street as long as they are oriented in opposite directions. Visually blocked advertising signs oriented in the same direction or on opposite sides of the street are subject to the spacing criteria under subsection E1b(2) of this section.
      - (4) There shall be a maximum of two (2) sign faces per advertising sign structure and a maximum of one (1) sign face per side of the advertising sign structure.
  2. Off-premises signs shall not be roof signs.
  3. Lighting. No off-premises sign shall be incandescently illuminated by more than one and one-quarter (1 1/4) watts of electrical power per square foot of sign area,

**DPD Footnote:****12. See Measurements section 23.86.004.**

or be fluorescently or otherwise illuminated by more than one (1) watt of electrical power per square foot of sign area. Off-premises signs that include lights as part of the message or content of the sign (chasing and message board advertising signs) are prohibited.

4. Sign Height. The maximum height limit for any portion of an off-premises sign (except in Industrial zones) is forty (40) feet or the height limit of the zone, whichever is less. The maximum height limit for any portion of an off-premises sign in an Industrial zone is sixty-five (65) feet or the height limit of the zone, whichever is less.

F. Registration of Advertising Signs. Each owner of an off-premises advertising sign shall file a written report with the Director on or before July 1st of each year. The report shall be submitted on a form supplied by the Director. The owner shall identify the number and location of advertising signs maintained by the owner in the City at any time during the previous year, and provide such other information as the Director deems necessary for the inspection of signs and for the administration and enforcement of this section. The owner shall pay a fee to the Director at the time the written report is filed. The amount of the fee is Forty Dollars (\$40)<sup>13</sup> for each sign face identified in the report. DPD shall assign a registration number to each sign face, and the sign number shall be displayed on the face of the billboard frame in figures which are a minimum of eight (8) inches tall. It is unlawful to maintain a sign face which has not been registered as required by this section. Notwithstanding any other provision of this code, any person who maintains an unregistered sign face is subject to an annual civil penalty of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) for each unregistered sign face.

G. Side-by-side Advertising Signs. One (1) of the two (2) sign faces that comprise side-by-side advertising signs shall be removed within three (3) years of the effective date of the ordinance codified in this section.<sup>1</sup> The sign face may be relocated if the sign will meet the requirements of subsections A1e, A1f and A1g of this section, provided that in lieu of relocation the two (2) side-by-side advertising signs may be replaced by one (1) six hundred seventy-two (672) square foot advertising sign at the same location.

H. The provisions of this section do not apply to sign kiosks, except subsection A5, prohibiting advertising signs within five hundred (500) feet from any public school grounds.

**2. SMC 23.55.015 Sign kiosks and community bulletin boards.**

A. Sign Kiosks. Sign kiosks are permitted in all zones, except single-family residential zones and multifamily residential zones, provided that a sign kiosk may abut a park or playground at least one acre in size, or publicly owned community center in all zones. Sign kiosks are not permitted within fifty (50) feet of a single-family residential zone or multifamily residential zone.

B. Sign Kiosks in the Public Right-of-way. Sign kiosks that are located in the public right-of-way must obtain a street use permit from Seattle Department of

**DPD Footnote:**  
**13. See current Permit Fee Subtitle for off-premises advertising sign registration fee.**

**Codified Note:**  
**1. Ordinance 116780 was passed by the City Council on July 19, 1993.**



Transportation and are subject to the requirements, conditions and procedures set out in SMC Title 15. Seattle Department of Transportation shall review an application for a sign kiosk in the public right-of-way for compliance with the provisions of this chapter. The street use permit issued by Seattle Department of Transportation shall serve as the required sign permit.

C. Development Standards for Sign Kiosks.

1. Design and Construction.

- a. The design of any sign kiosk shall comply with the design principles for sign kiosks approved by the Seattle Design Commission, or shall be reviewed and recommended by the Commission.
- b. The design of any sign kiosk adjacent to a park, playground or publicly owned community center shall also be reviewed and must be approved by the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation for aesthetic compatibility with existing signs and the design of the park, playground or community center.
- c. The design of any sign kiosk in a special review district established in SMC Chapters 23.66, 25.16, 25.20, 25.22, and 25.24 shall also be reviewed and must be approved by the board for that district for compliance with the standards of that district.
- d. The sign kiosk shall be in sections with maximum dimensions of seven (7) feet high, three (3) feet wide measuring from the centers of the supporting posts on either side of the sections, and six (6) inches deep, with a maximum of four (4) sections. No more than two (2) feet of additional height will be allowed for artistic decoration on top of the kiosk, with additional width not to exceed the width of the kiosk structure. The Seattle Design Commission may approve a different style or different dimensions, which shall not exceed the maximum height dimension and the maximum overall size set out above.
- e. Lights, changing image signs, and message board signs shall not be placed on any part of a sign kiosk that is visible from the street. Flashing signs and chasing signs are prohibited on any part of a kiosk. Any lighting fixtures used within kiosks or used externally to illuminate kiosks shall be fully shielded. The maximum illumination level at the kiosk shall be five (5) foot-candles (fc) maintained at ground level.
- f. Materials used in constructing sign kiosks shall minimize reflective glare from natural or artificial illumination.
- g. The design of any kiosk structure shall not be likely to be mistaken for any traffic control device and shall comply with SMC Sections 11.50.500 through 11.50.560.
- h. All sign kiosks shall be designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with SMC Chapter 22, Section 3204, the Seattle Building Code provisions governing signs.

2. Location.

- a. The location of any sign kiosk shall comply with the location standards set out in the rules of Seattle Department of Transportation, including without

limitation rules for line of sight at intersections, compatibility with traffic control signs and other right-of-way uses, parking and pedestrian safety, and access to adjacent and abutting property.

- b. The location of any sign kiosk adjacent to a park, playground or publicly owned community center shall also be reviewed and must be approved by the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation as not conflicting with or distracting from existing signs of the park, playground or community center.
  - c. The location of any sign kiosk in a special review district established in SMC Chapters 23.66, 25.16, 25.20, 25.22, and 25.24 shall also be reviewed by and must be approved by the board for that district for compliance with the standards of that district.
  - d. Sign kiosks shall be located in compliance with SMC Section 23.55.042 and Chapter 23.60.
  - e. Sign kiosks that are not located in the public right-of-way shall be located so that they are accessible for posting and reading by the public at all times.
3. Dispersion.
- a. Not more than a total of five (5) sign kiosks are permitted when counting both sides of street within a linear distance of two thousand six hundred forty (2640) feet (one-half (1/2) mile).
  - b. There shall be a minimum distance of three hundred (300) linear feet between sign kiosks on the same side of the street; a maximum of two (2) sign kiosks within three hundred (300) linear feet when counting both sides of the street; and a minimum distance of one hundred (100) radial feet between sign kiosks.

D. Standards for Posting Signs on Sign Kiosks.

1. All members of the public may post signs on sign kiosks. Each person may post, or have posted on his/her behalf, two signs with noncommercial messages and one sign with a commercial message on each sign kiosk.
2. Graffiti is prohibited on sign kiosks.
3. All signs posted on sign kiosks shall comply with the following standards:
  - a. The maximum size of any sign shall be eight and one-half (8 1/2) inches by fourteen (14) inches.
  - b. Signs shall not be posted in a manner that creates the appearance of a sign larger than eight and one-half (8 1/2) inches by fourteen (14) inches.
  - c. The design of any posting shall not be likely to be mistaken for any traffic control device and shall comply with SMC Sections 11.50.500 through 11.50.560.
4. Signs shall show the date they are posted and shall be removed within thirty (30) days of posting or the day after the event announced, whichever is first.



Signs with commercial messages must also include the name of the person posting the sign or causing the sign to be posted.

5. The sign posting standards set out in subsections D1, 2, 3 and 4 shall be affixed to the kiosk. These standards are in addition to any standards set out in City ordinances or rules, in policies adopted by City departments and posted on the sign kiosk, and in contracts with The City of Seattle for sign kiosks.
  6. The sign kiosk permit holder shall clearly designate and maintain one quarter of the total posting area and may designate and maintain up to three-quarters of the total posting area of a sign kiosk for posting only noncommercial signs.
  7. The City of Seattle may post a map of the area and historical information on any kiosk in addition to the area reserved for noncommercial speech.
  8. No one may (1) sell, (2) rent, or (3) reserve or transfer for consideration posting space on a sign kiosk. Posting a sign on sign kiosk does not create a transferable right.
- E. Sign Kiosks Previously Erected. The Council finds that the sign kiosks erected or planned for before the effective date of Ordinance 120388<sup>1</sup> that are listed on Attachment 1 of the ordinance amending this section, which is filed with the City Clerk in C.F. 305387, are consistent with the policies for allowing sign kiosks and reasonably further the objectives of promoting traffic safety, aesthetics, and community communication. As a result, they are lawful signs. All postings on these sign kiosks shall comply with the requirements of this section. Any alteration of these sign kiosks or their location shall comply with the requirements of this section.

## **D. LIGHT AND GLARE FROM SIGNS**

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### **23.55.016 Light and glare from signs.**

- A. The source of light for externally illuminated signs shall be shielded so that direct rays from the light are visible only on the lot where the sign is located.
- B. The light source for externally illuminated signs, except advertising signs, shall be no farther away from the sign than the height of the sign.

**Codified Note:**

**1. Ordinance 120388 was passed by the City Council on May 29, 2001.**



## E. STANDARDS SPECIFIC TO ZONES

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### 1. Single Family Zones

SF 9600

SF 7200

SF 5000

#### 23.55.020 Signs in single family zones.

- A. Signs shall be stationary and shall not rotate.
- B. No flashing, changing-image or message board signs shall be permitted.
- C. No roof signs shall be permitted.
- D. The following signs shall be permitted in all single family zones:
  1. Electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated signs bearing the name of the occupant of a dwelling unit, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;
  2. Memorial signs or tables, and the name of buildings and dates of building erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze or other noncombustible materials;
  3. Signs for public facilities indicating danger and/or providing service or safety information;
  4. Properly displayed national, state and institutional flags;
  5. For any permitted nonresidential use in the zone except for public elementary or public secondary schools, one (1) electric or nonilluminated double-faced identifying wall or ground sign not to exceed fifteen (15) square feet of area per sign face on each street frontage;
  6. On-premises directional signs not exceeding eight (8) square feet in area. One (1) such sign shall be permitted for each entrance or exit to a surface parking area or parking garage;
  7. For public elementary or public secondary schools, one (1) electric or nonilluminated double-faced identifying sign, not to exceed thirty (30) square feet of area per sign face on each street frontage, provided that the signs shall be located and landscaped so that light and glare impacts on surrounding properties are reduced, and so that any illumination is controlled by a timer set to turn off by 10 p.m.
- E. Existing business signs for nonconforming business establishments may be replaced, provided that:
  1. Maximum total area of sign faces shall be one hundred seventy (170) square feet, and the maximum area of the face of any single sign face shall be eighty-five (85) square feet.
  2. The replacement sign shall not be a roof sign.
  3. Replacement signs may be located in the same place as the original sign except that maximum height of any portion of the replacement sign shall be twenty-five (25) feet.



4. Replacement signs may be electric or nonilluminated.
  5. The number of business signs shall not be increased.
- F. No sign shall be maintained in a surface parking area or on a parking garage which faces a residential lot other than one (1) designating an entrance, exit, or condition of use.
- G. Off-premises signs shall not be permitted, except that:
1. When accessory parking is provided on a lot other than the lot where the principal use is located, off-premises directional signs five (5) square feet or less in area identifying the accessory parking shall be permitted;
  2. One (1) residential district identification wall or ground sign per entrance meeting the standards of Section 23.55.014 shall be permitted.
  3. Sign kiosks are not permitted, except when the sign kiosk abuts a park or playground at least one (1) acre in size, or publicly owned community center and complies with Section 23.55.015.

## 2. Multifamily Zones

### Lowrise Duplex/Triplex (LDT)

Lowrise 1 (L-1)

Lowrise 2 (L-2)

Lowrise 3 (L-3)

Lowrise 4 (L-4)

Midrise (MR)

Midrise/85 (MR/85)

Highrise (HR)

### 23.55.022 Signs in multifamily zones.

- A. Signs shall be stationary and shall not rotate.
- B. No flashing, changing-image or message board signs shall be permitted.
- C. No roof signs shall be permitted.
- D. The following signs shall be permitted in all multifamily zones:
  1. Electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated signs bearing the name of the occupant of a dwelling unit, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;
  2. Memorial signs or tablets, and the names of buildings and dates of building erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze or other noncombustible materials;
  3. Signs for public facilities indicating danger and/or providing service or safety information;
  4. Properly displayed national, state and institutional flags;
  5. One (1) electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated sign bearing the name of a home occupation not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;



6. One (1) nonilluminated wall or ground identification sign for multifamily structures on each street or alley frontage in addition to signs permitted by subsection D2. For structures of sixteen (16) units or less, the maximum area of each sign face shall be sixteen (16) square feet. One (1) square foot of sign area shall be permitted for each additional unit over sixteen, to a maximum area of fifty (50) square feet per sign face;
  7. For institutions other than public elementary and public secondary schools, one (1) electric or nonilluminated double-faced identifying wall or ground sign on each street frontage, not to exceed twenty-four (24) square feet of area per sign face;
  8. One (1) electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated sign bearing the name of a bed and breakfast, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;
  9. For public elementary or public secondary schools, one (1) electric or nonilluminated double-faced identifying sign, not to exceed thirty (30) square feet of area per sign face on each street frontage, provided that the signs shall be located and landscaped so that light and glare impacts on surrounding properties are reduced, and that any illumination is controlled by a timer set to turn off by 10 p.m.
- E. In Midrise and Highrise zones which are not designated Residential-Commercial, permitted ground-floor business establishments in multifamily structures may have one (1) electric or nonilluminated sign per street frontage. The sign may be a wall or projecting sign. The maximum area of each sign face shall be twenty-four (24) square feet. The maximum height of any portion of the sign shall be fifteen (15) feet.
- F. Existing business signs for nonconforming uses may be replaced, provided that:
1. Maximum total area of sign faces shall be one hundred seventy (170) square feet, and the maximum area of any single sign face shall be eighty-five (85) square feet;
  2. The replacement sign shall not be a roof sign;
  3. Replacement signs may be located in the same place as the original signs, except that the maximum height of any portion of the replacement sign shall be thirty (30) feet.
  4. Replacement signs may be electric or nonilluminated;
  5. The number of business signs shall not be increased.
- G. On-premises directional signs shall be permitted. Maximum sign area shall be eight (8) square feet. One (1) such sign shall be permitted for each entrance or exit to a surface parking area or parking garage.
- H. No sign shall be maintained in a surface parking area or on a parking garage which faces a residential lot other than one (1) designating an entrance, exit, or condition of use.
- I. Off-premises signs shall not be permitted, except that:
1. When accessory parking is provided on a lot other than the lot where the principal use is located, off-premises directional signs five (5) square feet or less in area identifying the accessory parking shall be permitted;
  2. One (1) residential district identification, wall or ground sign per entrance meeting the standards of Section 23.55.014 shall be permitted.



### **3. Residential Commercial (RC) Zones**

#### **23.55.024 Signs in residential commercial (RC) zones.**

- A. The standards of this Section shall apply only to signs for business establishments permitted on the ground floor or below in RC zones. The standards for multifamily zones, Section 23.55.022, shall apply to all other signs in RC zones.
- B. Ground-floor business establishments may have one (1) electric or nonilluminated wall sign per street frontage, located on the commercial portion of the structure.
- C. Maximum total area of sign faces per business establishment shall be one hundred seventy (170) square feet, and the maximum area of any single sign face shall be eighty-five (85) square feet.
- D. The maximum height of any portion of a sign for a business establishment shall be fifteen (15) feet.
- E. Sign kiosks as provided in Section 23.55.015 are permitted.

### **4. Neighborhood Commercial Zones**

#### **Neighborhood Commercial 1 (NC1) Zone**

#### **Neighborhood Commercial 2 (NC2) Zone**

#### **23.55.028 Signs in NC1 and NC2 zones.**

- A. Signs shall be stationary and shall not rotate, except for barber poles.
- B. Signs may be electric, externally illuminated, or nonilluminated.
- C. No flashing, changing-image or chasing signs shall be permitted, except that chasing signs for motion picture and performing arts theaters shall be permitted in NC2 zones.
- D. On-premises Signs
  - 1. The following signs shall be permitted in addition to the signs permitted by subsections D2, D3, and D4:
    - a. Electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated signs bearing the name of the occupant of a dwelling unit, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;
    - b. Memorial signs or tablets, and the names of buildings and dates of building erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze or other noncombustible materials;
    - c. Signs for public facilities indicating danger and/or providing service or safety information;
    - d. Properly displayed national, state and institutional flags;
    - e. One (1) under-marquee sign which does not exceed ten (10) square feet in area;
    - f. One (1) electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated sign bearing the name of a home occupation, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area.
  - 2. Number and Type of Permitted Signs for Business Establishments.



- a. Each business establishment may have one (1) ground, roof, projecting or combination sign (Type A sign) for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
  - b. In addition to the signs permitted by subsection D2a, each business establishment may have one (1) wall, awning, canopy, marquee, or under-marquee sign (Type B sign) for each thirty (30) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
  - c. In addition to the signs permitted by subsections D2a and D2b, each multiple business center and drive-in business may have one (1) pole sign for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys. Such pole signs may be for a drive-in business or for an individual business establishment located in a multiple business center, or may identify a multiple business center.
  - d. Individual businesses which are not drive-in businesses and which are not located in a multiple business center may have one (1) pole sign in lieu of another Type A sign permitted by Section D2a for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
3. Maximum Area of Signs for Nonresidential Uses and Live-work Units. The maximum area of all signs for each business establishment permitted in subsection d2 shall be one hundred eighty-five (185) square feet, and the maximum area of any one (1) Type A sign shall be seventy-two (72) square feet, provided that the maximum area of pole signs for gas stations which identify the price of motor fuel being offered by numerals of equal size shall be ninety-six (96) square feet.
4. Identification Signs for Multifamily Structures.
- a. One (1) identification sign bearing the name of a multifamily structure shall be permitted on each street or alley frontage of a residential use in addition to the signs permitted by subsection D1.
  - b. Identification signs may be wall, ground, awning, canopy, marquee, under-marquee, or projecting signs.
  - c. For structures of twenty-four (24) units or less, the maximum area of each sign face shall be twenty-four (24) square feet. One (1) square foot of sign area shall be permitted for each additional unit over twenty-four (24), to a maximum of fifty (50) square feet per sign face.
5. Sign Height.
- a. The maximum height for any portion of a pole, projecting or combination sign shall be twenty-five (25) feet .
  - b. The maximum height for any portion of a wall or under-marquee sign shall be twenty (20) feet or the height of the cornice of the structure to which the sign is attached, whichever is greater.<sup>14</sup>
  - c. Marquee signs may not exceed a height of thirty (30) inches above the top of the marquee, and total vertical dimension shall not exceed five (5) feet.

**DPD Footnote:**

**14. Roof top features such as mechanical and stair penthouses shall not be considered part of a facade. See Director's Rule 11-97**



- d. No portion of a roof sign shall exceed a height of twenty-five (25) feet above grade.
- E. Off-premises Signs. Off-premises signs shall not be permitted, except that:
1. Each business district may have two (2) identifying ground, pole, wall, or projecting signs which may list businesses located in the district. The identifying signs shall not be located in a residential zone, and shall meet the standards of Section 23.55.014, Off-premises signs.
  2. One (1) residential district identification wall or ground sign per entrance, meeting the standards of Section 23.55.014, shall be permitted.
  3. When accessory parking is provided on a lot other than the lot where the principal use is located, off-premises directional signs five (5) square feet or less in area identifying the accessory parking shall be permitted. Off-premises directional signs five (5) square feet or less in area shall not be counted in sign size or number limits.
  4. Sign kiosks as provided in Section 23.55.015 are permitted.
- F. Signs Near Residential Zones. When located within fifty (50) feet of an abutting lot in a residential zone, electric and externally illuminated signs shall be oriented so that no portion of the sign face is visible from an existing or permitted principal structure on the abutting lot.

## **5. Neighborhood Commercial and Commercial Zones**

### **Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3) Zone Commercial 1 (C1) Zone Commercial 2 (C2) Zone**

#### **23.55.030 Signs in NC3, C1, and C2 zones.**

- A. No sign shall have rotating or moving parts that revolve at a speed in excess of seven (7) revolutions per minute.
- B. Signs may be electric, externally illuminated, nonilluminated or may use video display methods when the sign meets the development standards in Section 23.55.005, Video display methods.
- C. No flashing signs shall be permitted.
- D. On-premises Signs.
  1. The following signs shall be permitted in addition to the signs permitted by subsections D2 and D3:
    - a. Electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated signs bearing the name of the occupant of a dwelling unit, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;
    - b. Memorial signs or tablets, and the names of buildings and dates of building erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze or other noncombustible materials;



- c. Signs for public facilities indicating danger and/or providing service or safety information;
  - d. Properly displayed national, state and institutional flags;
  - e. One (1) under-marquee sign which does not exceed ten (10) square feet in area;
  - f. One electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated sign bearing the name of a home occupation, not to exceed sixty-four (64) square inches in area.
2. Number and Type of Permitted Signs for Business Establishments.
    - a. Each business establishment may have one (1) ground, roof, projecting or combination sign (Type A sign) for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
    - b. In addition to the signs permitted by subsection D2a of this section, each business establishment may have one (1) wall, awning, canopy, marquee, or under-marquee sign (Type B sign) for each thirty (30) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
    - c. In addition to the signs permitted by subsections D2a and D2b of this section, each multiple business center and drive-in business may have one (1) pole sign for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys. Such pole signs may be for a drive-in business or for an individual business establishment located in a multiple business center, or may identify a multiple business center.
    - d. Individual businesses which are not drive-in businesses and which are not located in multiple business centers may have one (1) pole sign in lieu of another Type A sign permitted by subsection D2a of this section, for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
    - e. Where the principal use or activity on the lot is outdoor retail sales, banners and strings of pennants maintained in good condition shall be permitted in addition to the signs permitted by subsections D2a, D2b and D2c.
  3. Maximum area.
    - a. NC3 zones and the SCM zone.
      - (1) The maximum area of each face of a pole, ground, roof, projecting or combination signs shall be seventy-two (72) square feet plus two (2) square feet for each foot of frontage over thirty-six (36) feet on public rights-of-ways, except alleys, to a maximum area of three hundred (300) square feet, provided that:
        - i. The maximum area for signs for multiple business centers, and signs for business establishments located within one hundred (100) feet of a state route right-of-way which is not designated in Section 23.55.042 as a landscaped or scenic view section, shall be six hundred (600) square feet; and
        - ii. The maximum area for pole signs for gas stations which identify the price of motor fuel being offered by numerals of equal size shall be ninety-six (96) square feet.



(2) There shall be no maximum area limit for wall, awning, canopy, marquee, or under-marquee signs.

b. C1 and C2 Zones. There shall be no maximum area limits for on-premises signs for business establishments in C1 and C2 zones.

4. Identification Signs for Multifamily Structures.

a. One (1) identification sign shall be permitted on each street or alley frontage of a multifamily structure.

b. Identification signs may be wall, ground, awning, canopy, marquee, under-marquee, or projecting signs.

c. The maximum area of each sign shall be seventy-two (72) square feet.

5. Sign Height.

a. The maximum height for any portion of a projecting or combination sign shall be sixty-five (65) feet above existing grade, or the maximum height limit of the zone, whichever is less.

b. The maximum height limit for any portion of a pole sign shall be thirty (30) feet; except for pole signs for multiple business centers and for business establishments located within one hundred (100) feet of a state route right-of-way which is not designated in Section 23.55.042 as a landscaped or scenic view section, which shall have a maximum height of forty (40) feet.

c. The maximum height for any portion of a wall, marquee, under-marquee or canopy sign shall be twenty (20) feet or the height of the cornice of the structure to which the sign is attached, whichever is greater.<sup>15</sup>

d. No portion of a roof sign shall:

(1) Extend beyond the height limit of the zone;

(2) Exceed a height above the roof in excess of the height of the structure on which the sign is located; or

(3) Exceed a height of thirty (30) feet above the roof measured from a point on the roof line directly below the sign or from the nearest adjacent parapet.

E. Off-premises Signs.

1. Identifying Signs for Business Districts. Each business district may have up to two (2) identifying ground, pole, wall or projecting signs which may list businesses located in the district. The identifying signs shall not be located in a residential zone, and shall meet the standard of Section 23.55.014, Off-premises signs.

2. One (1) residential district identification wall or ground sign per entrance, meeting the standards of Section 23.55.014 shall be permitted.

3. When accessory parking is provided on a lot other than the lot where the principal use is located, off-premises directional signs five (5) square feet or less in area identifying the accessory parking shall be permitted.

**DPD Footnote:**

**15. Rooftop features such as mechanical and stair penthouses, shall not be considered part of a facade. See Director's Rule 11-97.**



4. Off-premises directional signs and advertising signs, in addition to those permitted by subsections E1, E2, and E3 of this section, shall be permitted according to Section 23.55.014, Off-premises signs.
  5. Advertising signs are prohibited in Neighborhood Commercial 3 zones and in the Seattle Cascade Mixed (SCM) zone.
  6. Sign kiosks as provided in Section 23.55.015 are permitted.
- F. Signs Near Residential Zones. When located within fifty (50) feet of an abutting lot in a residential zone, electrical and externally illuminated signs shall be oriented so that no portion of the sign face is visible from an existing or permitted principal structure on the abutting lot.

## 6. Downtown Zones

<b>Downtown Office Core 1 (DOC1)</b>	<b>Downtown Mixed Residential (DMR)</b>
<b>Downtown Office Core 2 (DOC2)</b>	<b>Downtown Harborfront 1 (DH1)</b>
<b>Downtown Retail Core (DRC)</b>	<b>Downtown Harborfront 2 (DH2)</b>
<b>Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC)</b>	<b>Pike Market Mixed (PMM)</b>

### 23.55.034 Signs in downtown zones.

- A. The provisions of this Section shall apply to all downtown zones except PSM, IDR and IDM zones, and portions of PMM zones located in a Historic District. In areas of PMM zones not located in a Historic District, these regulations may be modified by the provisions of the Pike Place Urban Renewal Plan. Signs in the PSM, IDR and IDM zones are regulated by the provisions of Chapter 23.66, Special Review Districts.
- B. The following signs shall be permitted in all downtown zones regulated by this Section:
  1. Electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated signs bearing the name of the occupant of a dwelling unit, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;
  2. Memorial signs or tablets, and the names of buildings and dates of building erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze or other noncombustible materials;
  3. Signs for public facilities indicating danger and/or providing service or safety information;
  4. Properly displayed national, state and institutional flags.
- C. General Standards for All Signs.
  1. Signs may be electrical, externally illuminated, nonilluminated or may use video display methods when the sign meets the development standards in Section 23.55.005, Video display methods.
  2. No sign shall have rotating or moving parts that revolve at a speed in excess of seven (7) revolutions per minute.
  3. No flashing signs shall be permitted.
  4. Roof signs shall not be permitted.
  5. No portion of any on-premises or off-premises sign shall be located more than sixty-five (65) feet above the elevation of the sidewalk at the street property line closest to the sign, other than for on-premises signs that only identify hotels and public buildings and where such a sign shall have no rotating or moving parts and shall meet the other requirements of this section.



D. On-premises Signs.

1. Number and Type of Permitted Signs.
  - a. Each use may have one (1) pole, ground, projecting or combination sign for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
  - b. In addition to the signs permitted by subsection D1a, each use may have one (1) wall, awning, canopy, marquee, or under-marquee sign for each thirty (30) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
  - c. In addition to the signs permitted by subsections D1a and D1b, each multiple business center may have one (1) wall, marquee, under-marquee, projecting or combination sign for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
  - d. Among the number and type of permitted signs in subsections D1a, D1b and D1c, a maximum of four (4) of these signs identifying hotels or public buildings may be located sixty-five (65) feet or more above the elevation of the sidewalk.
  - e. Where the principal use or activity on the lot is outdoor retail sales, banners and strings of pennants maintained in good condition shall be allowed in addition to the signs permitted by subsections D1a, D1b and D1c.
2. There shall be no maximum area limits for on-premises signs, except for signs identifying hotels and public buildings sixty-five (65) feet or more above the elevation of the sidewalk, which shall not exceed eighteen (18) feet in length, height or any other direction.

E. Off-premises Signs.

1. When accessory parking is provided on a lot other than the lot where the principal use is located, off-premises directional signs five (5) square feet or less in area identifying the accessory parking shall be permitted.
2. Off-premises directional signs and advertising signs, in addition to those permitted by subsection E1, shall be permitted according to Section 23.55.014.
3. Advertising signs are prohibited in Downtown Mixed Residential/Residential (DMR/R) zones.
4. Sign kiosks as provided in Section 23.55.015 are allowed in downtown zones.

## 7. Industrial Zones

**Industrial Buffer (IB) Zone**  
**Industrial Commercial (IC) Zone**  
**Industrial General 1 (IG1) Zone**  
**Industrial General 2 (IG2) Zone**

### 23.55.036 Signs in IB, IC, IG1 and IG2 zones.

- A. No sign shall have rotating or moving parts that revolve at a speed in excess of seven (7) revolutions per minute.
- B. Signs may be electric, externally illuminated, or nonilluminated or may use video display methods when the sign meet the development standards in Section 23.55.005, Video display methods.



- C. No flashing signs shall be permitted.
- D. On-premises Signs.
1. The following signs shall be permitted in addition to the signs permitted by subsections D2, D3 and D4:
    - a. Electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated signs bearing the name of the occupant of a dwelling unit, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;
    - b. Memorial signs or tablets, and the names of buildings and dates of building erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze noncombustible materials;
    - c. Sign for public facilities indicating danger and/or providing service or safety information;
    - d. Properly displayed national, state and institutional flags;
    - e. One (1) under-marquee sign which does not exceed ten (10) square feet in area;
    - f. One (1) electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated sign bearing the name of a home occupation, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area.
  2. Number and Type of Permitted Signs for Business Establishments.
    - a. Except as further restricted in subsection D5, each business establishment may have one (1) ground, roof, projecting or combination sign (Type A sign) for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
    - b. In addition to the signs permitted by subsection D2a, each business establishment may have one (1) wall, awning, canopy, marquee, or under-marquee sign (Type B sign) for each thirty (30) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
    - c. In addition to the signs permitted by subsections D2a and D2b, each multiple business center and drive-in business may have one (1) pole sign for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys. Such pole signs may be for a drive-in business or for an individual business establishment located in a multiple business center, or may identify a multiple business center.
    - d. Individual businesses which are not drive-in businesses and which are not located in multiple business centers may have one (1) pole sign in lieu of another Type A sign permitted by subsection D2a for each three hundred (300) lineal feet, or portion thereof, of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys.
    - e. Where the principal use or activity on the lot is outdoor retail sales, banners, and strings of pennants maintained in good condition shall be permitted in addition to the signs permitted by subsections D2a, D2b and D2c.
  3. Maximum Area. Except as provided in sub section D5, there shall be no maximum area limits for on-premises signs for business establishments.
  4. Identification Signs for Multifamily Structures.
    - a. One (1) identification sign shall be permitted on each street or alley frontage of a multifamily structure.



- b. Identification signs may be wall, ground, awning, canopy, marquee, under-marquee, or projecting signs.
- c. The maximum area of each sign shall be seventy-two (72) square feet.

5. Sign Height.

- a. The maximum height for any portion of a projecting or combination sign shall be sixty-five (65) feet above existing grade, or the maximum height limit of the zone, whichever is less.
- b. The maximum height limit for any portion of a pole sign shall be thirty (30) feet; except for pole signs for multiple business centers and for business establishments located within one hundred (100) feet of a state route right-of-way which is not designated in Section 23.55.042 as a landscaped or scenic view section, which shall have maximum height of forty (40) feet.
- c. The maximum height for any portion of a wall, marquee, under-marquee, or canopy sign shall be twenty (20) feet or the height of the cornice of the structure to which the sign is attached, whichever is greater.
- d. No portion of a roof sign shall:
  - (1) Extend beyond the height limit of the zone for office uses, except that spectator sports facilities with a seating capacity of forty thousand (40,000) or greater and more than one (1) roof level may have up to two (2) identification signs, with the vertical dimension of lettering or characters limited to twelve (12) feet and a maximum total area for both signs limited to three thousand (3,000) square feet; provided, the sign height does not exceed the highest roof level. One (1) additional identification sign may be applied to each surface of the highest roof level, provided it does not exceed the height of that roof level.
  - (2) Exceed a height above the roof in excess of the height of the structure on which the sign is located; or
  - (3) Exceed a height of thirty (30) feet above the roof measured from a point on the roof line directly below the sign or from the nearest adjacent parapet.

E. Off-premises Signs.

1. Identifying Signs for Business Districts. Each business district may have up to two (2) identifying ground, pole, wall, or projecting signs which may list businesses located in the district. The identifying signs shall not be located in a residential zone, and shall meet the standard of Section 23.55.014, Off-premises Signs.
2. When accessory parking is provided on a lot other than the lot where the principal use is located, off-premises directional signs five (5) square feet or less in area identifying the accessory parking shall be permitted.
3. Off-premises directional signs and advertising signs in addition to those permitted by subsections E1, E2, and E3 shall be permitted according to Section 23.55.014, Off-premises signs.
4. Sign kiosks as provided in Section 23.55.015 are permitted.

F. Signs Near Residential Zones. When located within fifty (50) feet of an abutting lot in a residential zone, electrical and externally illuminated signs shall be oriented so that no portion of the sign face is visible from an existing or permitted principal structure on the abutting lot.



## 8. Major Institution Overlay Districts

### 23.69.021 Signs in Major Institution Overlay Districts.

- A. General Standards.
  1. Signs shall be stationary and shall not rotate.
  2. No flashing, changing-image, message board signs or signs using video display methods, except as permitted as defined in Section 23.55.005, Video display methods, shall be permitted.
  3. Signs may be electric, externally illuminated, or nonilluminated.
- B. The following signs shall be permitted in all Major Institution overlay districts, regardless of the facing zone:
  1. Electric, externally illuminated or nonilluminated signs bearing the name of the occupant of a dwelling unit, not exceeding sixty-four (64) square inches in area;
  2. Memorial signs or tablets, and the names of buildings and dates of building erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze or other noncombustible materials;
  3. Signs for public facilities indicating danger and/or providing service or safety information;
  4. Properly displayed national, state and institutional flags.
- C. Signs across a street, alley or easement from a residential zone, and signs which face an abutting lot in a residential zone, shall meet the following standards:
  1. Sign area shall be limited to:
    - a. Thirty-five (35) square feet per sign face for main entrance signs;
    - b. Such size as is necessary for emergency entrance signs to be clearly visible; and
    - c. Twenty (20) square feet per sign face for all other signs.
  2. The number of signs permitted shall be as follows:
    - a. One (1) identifying sign for each use per street frontage; plus
    - b. One (1) sign for each entrance to the institution; plus
    - c. Emergency entrance and directional signs as necessary.
  3. Pole, ground, roof, wall, marquee, under-marquee, projecting or combination signs shall be permitted.
  4. The maximum height of any portion of a pole sign shall be twelve (12) feet.
  5. No portion of a roof sign shall:
    - a. Extend beyond the height limit of the overlay district;
    - b. Exceed a height above the roof in excess of the height of the structure on which the sign is located; or
    - c. Exceed a height of thirty (30) feet above the roof measured from a point on the roof line directly below the sign or from the nearest adjacent parapet.
- D. Signs across from non-residential zones shall have no area, type or number limitations.
- E. Off-premises signs shall not be permitted, except for sign kiosks.



## 9. Pioneer Square Preservation District

In addition to meeting the following requirements from the Land Use Code, signs located in the Pioneer Square Preservation District require a certificate of approval from the Department of Neighborhoods, which is based on a review and recommendation from the Pioneer Square Preservation Board.

### 23.66.160 Signs.

- A. The following signs shall be prohibited throughout the Pioneer Square Preservation District:

Permanently affixed, free-standing signs (except those used to identify areas such as parks);

Roof signs;

Billboards;

Electric signs and signs using video display methods, excluding neon signs.

- B. All flags and banners shall be subject to Preservation Board review and approval of the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

- C. To ensure that flags, banners and signs are of a scale, color, shape and type compatible with the character of the District and the buildings in the district and to ensure that the messages of signs are not lost through undue proliferation or competition with other signs, and to enhance views and sight lines into and down streets, the overall design of a sign including size, shape, typeface, texture, method of attachment, color, graphics and lighting, shall be reviewed by the Board. Building owners shall be encouraged to develop an overall signage plan for their entire building. In determining the appropriateness of signs, the Preservation Board shall consider the following:

1. Signs Attached or Applied to Structures.

- a. The relationship of the shape of the proposed sign to the architecture of the building and with the shape of other approved signs;
- b. The relationship of the texture of the proposed sign to the building for which it is proposed, and with other approved signs;
- c. The possibility of physical damage to the structure and the degree to which the method of attachment would conceal or disfigure desirable architectural features or details of the structure. The method of attachment shall be approved by the Director;
- d. The relationship of the proposed colors and graphics with the colors of the building and with other approved signs;
- e. The relationship of the proposed sign with existing lights and lighting standards, and with the architectural and design motifs of the building;
- f. Whether the proposed sign lighting will detract from the character of the building; and
- g. The compatibility of the colors and graphics of the proposed sign with the character of the District.

2. Wall signs painted on or affixed to a building shall not exceed ten (10%) percent of the total area of the facade or two hundred forty (240) square feet, whichever is less. Area of original building finish visible within the exterior dimensions of the



sign (e.g., unpainted brick) shall not be considered when computing the sign's area.

3. Signs not attached to structures shall be compatible with adjacent structures and with the District generally.
4. When determining the appropriate size of a sign the Board and the Department of Neighborhoods Director shall consider the purpose of the sign and the character and scale of buildings in the immediate vicinity, the character and scale of the building for which the sign is proposed, the proposed location of the sign on the building's exterior, and the total number and size of signs proposed or existing on the building, as well as the type of sign proposed (e.g., informational, theater marquees, building identification, business identification, address or hours-open signing).
5. Signing displayed on the valance of awnings, canopies or marquees shall be limited to identification of the name or address of the building or of an establishment located in the building.
6. Projecting signs, neon signs, signs which appear to be in motion, and signs with flashing, running or chaser lights may be recommended only if the Preservation Board determines that all other criteria for permitted signs have been met and that historic precedent, locational or visibility concerns of the business for which the signing is proposed warrant such signing.

#### D. Temporary Signs.

1. The following signs are permitted at all times:
  - a. Real estate "for sale," "for rent" and "open house" signs, and signs identifying the architect, engineer or contractor for work currently under construction. The total area for these types of signs in the aggregate shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet per sixty (60) linear feet of street frontage, provided that the design, location, shape, size, color and graphics are approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Preservation Board, and provided further that the Director may approve up to thirty-six (36) square feet if there is more than one user of real estate signs or if the building abuts more than two (2) streets; and
  - b. Noncommercial signs. The total area for noncommercial signs in the aggregate shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet per sixty (60) linear feet of street frontage, but where there are multiple users of the building, each business establishment and dwelling unit shall be allowed a minimum of eight (8) square feet of signage, regardless of the twenty-four (24) square foot limitation.
2. The following signs are permitted for fourteen (14) consecutive days four (4) times a calendar year:
  - a. On-premises commercial signs. The total area for on-premises commercial signs in the aggregate shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet per sixty (60) linear feet of street frontage, provided that the design, location, shape, size, color and graphics are approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Review Board; and
  - b. Noncommercial signs. The total area for noncommercial signs in the aggregate shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet per sixty (60) linear feet of street frontage, provided that each dwelling unit shall be allowed thirty-two (32) square feet of signage.



3. All temporary signs authorized by this section are subject to the following:
  - a. Wind-animated objects, search lights and devices of a carnival nature are not allowed.
  - b. No individual sign shall exceed twelve (12) square feet.
  - c. Temporary signs required by law shall be permitted.

## 10. International Special Review District

In addition to meeting the following requirements from the Land Use Code, signs located in the International Special Review District require a certificate of approval from the Department of Neighborhoods, which is based on a review and recommendation from the International Special Review District Board.

### 23.66.338 Business identification signs.

To ensure that the scale, shape, color and type of signs within the International Special Review District are consistent with permitted uses and are in keeping with the Asian character of the area, the following sign controls shall apply:

- A. Message. Signs shall be limited to those that identify the name of the establishment and/or the primary business or service provided by it. Advertising related to businesses or services not provided on the premises or products not manufactured on the site are prohibited; provided, that product name signs that are incidental to other signs on the premises may be permitted when the establishment or use on the premises is the sole distributor of the product in the District.
- B. Permitted Signs. Permitted signs include projecting and nonprojecting signs integrated into the building facade, marquee, awning and window signs that are approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director following a recommendation by the Board. Banners and flags bearing emblems, symbols or messages shall be permitted on an interim basis only and shall be subject to periodic review and approval to ensure that their appearance is maintained and that they comply with the requirements of this Code.
- C. Prohibited Signs. Freestanding signs (except signs in parks or parking lots), roof signs, portable signs, off-premises advertising signs (billboards), and product advertising signs of a permanent nature are prohibited. Flashing signs or signs that appear to be in motion shall be prohibited unless of a public service nature, such as signs indicating the temperature or time of day.
- D. Permitted Sign Area.
  1. Asian Character Signs. Asian character signs are Asian bilingual or multilingual business identification signs at street level in which at least forty (40%) percent of the message area is in a non-English medium, or signs that have recognizable Asian symbols or designs that have been reviewed by the Board and approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director. The total message area of all such signs for an individual use shall not exceed the area indicated on Table 338 D. For street frontages not listed on Table 338 D, the Maximum Sign Area column shall be interpolated proportionally.
  2. Non-Asian Character Signs. The total message area of non-Asian character signs for each street-level use shall not exceed seventy (70%) percent of the area authorized in subsection D1 and indicated on Table 338 D.

**Table 338D Sign Area Permitted**

<b>Street Frontage</b>	<b>Max Sign Area Permitted</b>
15	59
16	61
17	62
18	64
19	65
20	66
21	68
22	69
23	70
24	71
25	72
26	74
27	75
28	76
29	77
30	78
35	83
40	87
45	92
50	96
55	99
60	103
65	106
70	109
75	112
80	115
85	118
90	121
95	124
100	126
110	131
120	136
130	140
140	144
150	148
160	152
170	156
180	160
190	163
200	167
220	173
240	179
260	185
280	190
300	196
320	201
340	206
360	211



Street Frontage	Max Sign Area Permitted
380	215
400	220
420	224
440	228
460	232
480	236
500	240

3. The total number of signs permitted per use is not limited; provided, that the total area of all signs for an individual use shall not exceed the area authorized in subsections D1 and D2. The maximum size for any single sign face for Asian and non-Asian character signs at street level shall be seventy-five (75) square feet for a single-faced sign and one hundred and fifty (150) square feet for a double-faced sign, unless the Department of Neighborhoods Director, after review and recommendation by the Board, approves a greater sign area because of hardships resulting from location, topography or similar conditions.
4. Businesses located on or above the second floor may have business identification signs with a total sign area that does not exceed one-half (1/2) of the area authorized in subsection D1 and indicated on Table 338D. The maximum size for any single sign face above the second floor shall be forty (40) square feet for a single-faced sign and eighty (80) square feet for a double-faced sign unless the Department of Neighborhoods Director, after review and recommendation by the Board, approves a greater sign area because of hardships resulting from location, topography or similar conditions.
5. The total illuminated area of theater marquees shall not exceed eighty (80) square feet in addition to the sign area authorized in subsections D1 and D2.
6. Parking Lot Signage. The total signage area permitted for each accessory parking lot shall not exceed one (1) square foot for each parking space up to a maximum of twenty-four (24) square feet. Existing principal use parking lots shall have a maximum total sign area of one-half (1/2) square foot per parking space in the lot, to a maximum of eighteen (18) square feet.
  - a. Parking lots shall display a sign with the following message:
    - (1) For customer parking lots: "Customer Parking for (Principal User or Users) Only. Other cars will be impounded (location)." The sign may also contain the name and address of the principal user or users and mention validation of parking if applicable.
    - (2) For long-term reserved parking lots: "Reserved Parking Under Contract. Other cars will be impounded (location)." The sign may also contain the name and telephone number of the owner.
  - b. Small directional signs, such as those designating the entrance to or exit from accessory parking areas, that are three (3) or fewer square feet in area and are located at a height four (4) or fewer feet above grade at points of egress or ingress are permitted. Such signs shall not be counted against the total permitted sign area.
7. Sign size shall be calculated according to the provisions of Section 23.86.004 of this Land Use Code.



E. Illumination.

Neon-lit signs are encouraged to create an exciting and enhanced visual image in the retail core.

1. No sign or light shall move, flash or make noise. Exceptions may be granted by the Department of Neighborhoods Director for indicators of time or temperature, after review and recommendation by the Board.
2. Illuminated signs shall be designed and sited in a manner to minimize glare on floors above grade in nearby residences.
3. Signs using video display methods are prohibited.

F. Exceptions for Miscellaneous Signs.

1. Signs that are handpainted, goldleafed or decalced onto the glass area of a building facade shall be permitted without the approval of the Department of Neighborhoods Director or review by the Board when the area of such signs does not exceed four (4) square feet per business. Signs in excess of four (4) square feet shall be subject to review by the Board and approval by the Department of Neighborhoods Director for visual interest and compatibility with the surrounding area, and shall be calculated against the total permitted signable area. Nonilluminated symbolic signs painted on wood or other exterior surfaces that are four (4) square feet or less shall be permitted outright.
2. Graphics and paintings are permitted on building walls that do not abut a street lot line only if such graphics and paintings are not primarily used to advertise or identify businesses or products and comply with the building facade provisions of Section 23.66.336 of this Chapter. All graphics and paintings on building walls shall be subject to review by the Board and approval by the Department of Neighborhoods Director.
3. Temporary Signs.
  - a. The following signs are permitted at all times:
    - (1) Real estate "for sale," "for rent" and "open house" signs, and signs identifying the architect, engineer or contractor for work currently under construction. The total area for these types of signs in the aggregate shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet per sixty (60) linear feet of street frontage, provided that the design, location, shape, size, color and graphics are approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Review Board, and provided further that the Director may approve up to thirty-six (36) square feet if there is more than one user of real estate signs or if the building abuts more than two (2) streets; and
    - (2) Noncommercial signs. The total area for noncommercial signs in the aggregate shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet per sixty (60) linear feet of street frontage, but where there are multiple users of the building, each business establishment and dwelling unit shall be allowed a minimum of eight (8) square feet of signage, regardless of the twenty-four (24) square foot limitation.
  - b. The following signs are permitted for fourteen (14) consecutive days four (4) times a calendar year:



(1) On-premises commercial signs. The total area for on-premises commercial signs in the aggregate shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet per sixty (60) linear feet of street frontage, provided that the design, location, shape, size, color and graphics are approved by the Department of Neighborhoods Director after review and recommendation by the Review Board; and

(2) Noncommercial signs. The total area for noncommercial signs in the aggregate shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet per sixty (60) linear feet of street frontage, provided that each dwelling unit shall be allowed thirty-two (32) square feet of signage.

c. All temporary signs authorized by this section are subject to the following:

(1) Wind-animated objects, search lights and devices of a carnival nature are not allowed.

(2) No individual sign shall exceed twelve (12) square feet.

d. Temporary signs required by law shall be permitted without review or approval.

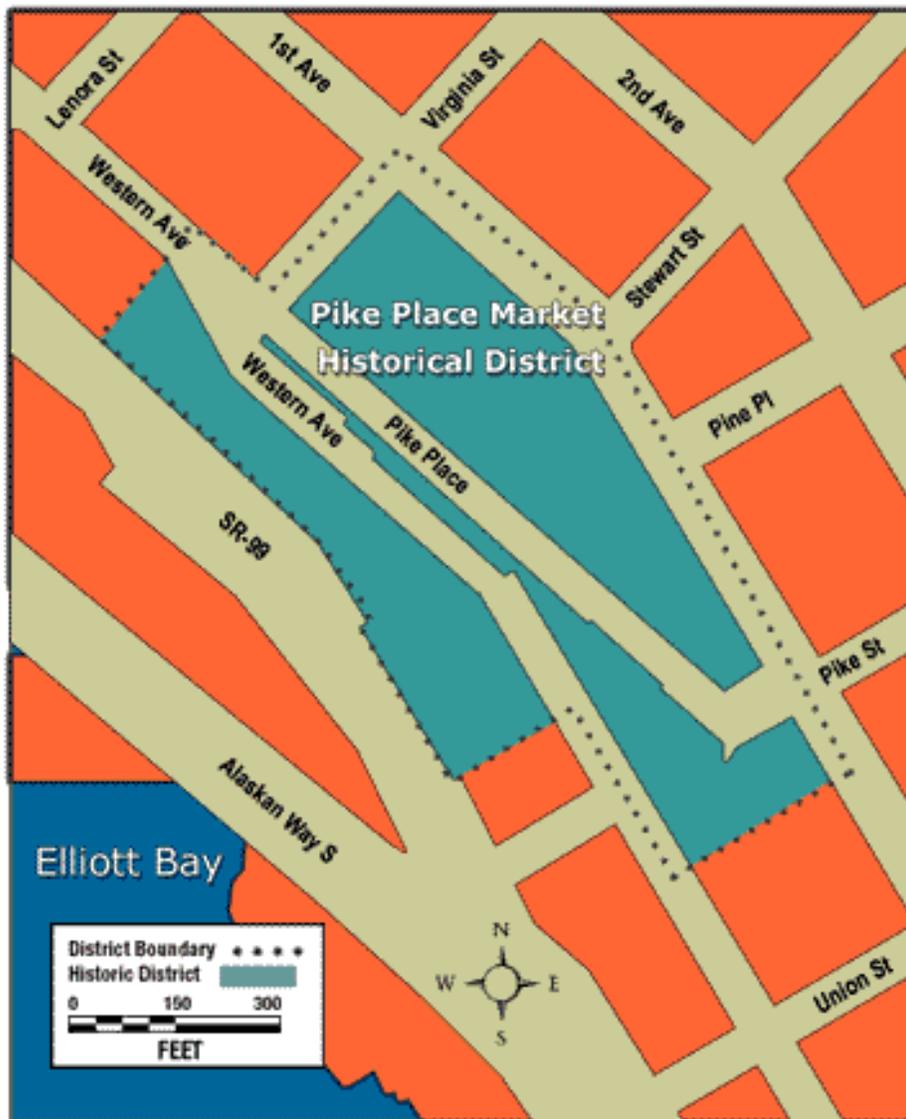
#### G. Criteria for Approval.

1. The overall design of a sign including size, shape, texture, method of attachment, color and lighting, shall be compatible with the use to which the sign refers, with the architecture of the building upon which it is to be installed, and with the District.
2. Signs shall be affixed to structures so that they do not conceal, damage or disfigure desirable architectural features or details of the structure.
3. Projecting signs shall be sited in a manner that minimizes view blockage of abutting business signs.
4. All projecting signs shall be installed or erected so that there are no visible angle iron sign supports above the roof, building face, or wall.



## 11. Pike Market Historic District and Urban Renewal Plan

In addition to meeting the regulations for signs in Downtown Zones, signs located in this district require a Certificate of Approval from the Pike Place Market Historical Commission. For those areas zoned Pike Market (PMM) and located outside of the historic district, the provisions of the Pike Place Urban Renewal Plan may also apply.





## F. SPECIAL SIGN REGULATIONS

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1. Special Exceptions for Signs in Commercial and Downtown Zones
2. Variances
3. Signs Adjacent to Certain Highways
4. Shoreline Sign Regulations
5. Bed and Breakfasts

### 1. Special Exceptions for Signs in Commercial and Downtown Zones

Applicants may request exceptions to the regulations specified below in Neighborhood Commercial 1, 2, and 3 zones and Commercial 1 and 2 zones. Such special exceptions are processed according to Section 23.550.40 below. Prior to submitting an application for special exception, the applicant should consult with the Sign Inspector and a Land Use Planner.

#### **23.55.040 Special Exceptions for Signs in Commercial and Downtown Zones.**

The Director may authorize exceptions to the regulations for the size, number, type, height and depth of projection of on-premises signs in neighborhood commercial, commercial, downtown office core, downtown retail core, downtown mixed commercial and downtown harborfront zones as a special exception pursuant to Chapter 23.76, Procedures for Master Use Permit and Council Land Use Decisions, except that no special exception may be authorized for a sign using video display methods. When one (1) or more of the conditions in subsection A of this section have been met, the characteristics described in subsection B of this section shall be used to evaluate the merits of the proposal. Proposals must also meet the intent of the Sign Code as specified in Section 23.55.001, Intent. An exception shall not be granted for roof signs or signs prohibited in Section 23.55.003. In downtown zones, the Director shall consult with the Seattle Design Commission before issuance of the special exception decision.

A. Conditions. One (1) or more of the following conditions shall be met:

1. The proposed sign plan shows an exceptional effort toward creating visual harmony among signs, desirable streetscape features, building facades and other architectural elements of the building structure through the use of a consistent design theme;
2. The proposed sign plan will preserve a desirable existing design or siting pattern for signs in an area;
3. The proposed sign plan will reduce views of historic landmarks designated by the Landmarks Preservation Board no more than would be permitted by a sign permitted outright without a special exception.

B. Desired Characteristics. All the following desired characteristics shall be used to evaluate applications for a special exception, and at least one (1) must be met. The proposed sign(s):

1. Unifies the project as a whole or contributes positively to a comprehensive building and tenant signage plan;

2. Is compatible with the building facade and scale of building in terms of size, height and location;
  3. Adds interest to the street level environment, while also identifying upper level businesses;
  4. Helps orient pedestrians and motorists at street-level in the vicinity of the subject building;
  5. Integrates support fixtures, conduits, wiring, switches and other mounting apparatus into the building architecture to the extent feasible.
- C. Submittal Requirements. As part of any application for a special sign exception, the following information shall be submitted:
1. A narrative describing how the proposal is consistent with the conditions and desired characteristics listed in subsection A and B of this section, and why the desired results cannot be achieved without a special exception;
  2. A colored rendering showing the proposed signs and how they relate to development in the area and on the subject property.

## 2. Variances

As with any development standard in the Land Use Code, variances may be requested from the standards regulating signs. The variance criteria are found in Section 23.40.020 of the Land Use Code which is reproduced below. The variance process is established in Chapter 23.76 of the Land Use Code, Procedures for Master Use Permits and Council Land Use Decisions. Variances are not permitted from the standards of other codes. Applicants wishing to apply for a variance should consult with the department Sign Inspector and a Land Use Planner, prior to submitting an application.

### 23.40.020 Variances.

- A. Variances may be sought from the provisions of Subtitle II, Divisions 2 and 3 of this Land Use Code, as applicable, except for the establishment of a use which is otherwise not permitted in the zone in which it is proposed, for maximum height which is shown on the Official Land Use Map,<sup>1</sup> from the provisions of Section 23.55.014A, or from the provisions of Chapter 23.52. Applications for prohibited variances shall not be accepted for filing.
- B. Variances shall be authorized according to the procedures set forth in Chapter 23.76, Procedures for Master Use Permits and Council Land Use Decisions.
- C. Variances from the provisions or requirements of this Land Use Code shall be authorized when all the facts and conditions listed below are found to exist:
  1. Because of unusual conditions applicable to the subject property, including size,

**Codified Note:**

1. Editor's Note: The Official Land Use Map is codified at the end of this title.



shape, topography, location or surroundings, which were not created by the owner or applicant, the strict application of this Land Use Code would deprive the property of rights and privileges enjoyed by other properties in the same zone or vicinity; and

2. The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief, and does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which the subject property is located; and
  3. The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zone or vicinity in which the subject property is located; and
  4. The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provisions or requirements of this Land Use Code would cause undue hardship or practical difficulties; and
  5. The requested variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of the Land Use Code regulations for the area.
- D. In order to qualify for a variance under the foregoing criteria, an applicant need not demonstrate that, absent the variance, he or she would have no reasonable economic use of the property at issue.
- E. When a variance is authorized, conditions may be attached regarding the location, character and other features of a proposed structure or use as may be deemed necessary to carry out the spirit and purpose of this Land Use Code.

### **3. Signs Adjacent to Certain Highways**

Section 23.55.042 of the Land Use Code provides additional regulation of signs within 660 feet of designated public highways. It is reproduced below:

#### **23.55.042 Off-premises and Business Signs Adjacent to Certain Public Highways.**

A. Intent.

The purpose of this section is to implement the purpose and policy expressed by the Highway Advertising Control Act of the State of Washington in the regulation of outdoor off-premises signs adjacent to certain public highways, and this section is declared to be an exercise of the police power of the City to protect the public health, safety, convenience and the enjoyment of public travel, to attract visitors to the City and to conserve the beauty of the natural and built environment by regulating the size and location of certain signs adjacent to certain designated freeways, expressways, parkways and scenic routes within the City. This section shall be liberally construed for the accomplishment of these purposes and is intended to be additional and supplemental to other laws regulating the size and location of signs.

B. Off-premises and Business Signs Prohibited Near Certain Areas.

No off-premises sign or business sign shall be erected within six hundred sixty (660) feet outgoing from the nearest edge of the main traveled way of any landscaped and/or scenic view section of a freeway, expressway, parkway or scenic route designated by this subsection and shown on Exhibit 23.55.042 A (Type A sections), and no off-

premises sign shall be erected within two hundred (200) feet in any direction from the main traveled way of the exit and entrance ramps thereto, if any part of the advertising matter or informative content of the sign is visible from any place on the traveled way of the landscaped and/or scenic view section or ramp, except as provided in subsections C and D:

1. West Seattle Freeway from Harbor Avenue S.W. to 35th Avenue S.W.;
2. The west side of the Alaskan Freeway from South Connecticut Street<sup>16</sup> to the west portal of the Battery Street Tunnel. The east side of the Alaskan Freeway from South Connecticut Street to the west portal of the Battery Street Tunnel;
3. Interstate Highway No. 5 from the north City limits to the south City limits;
4. Interstate Highway No. 90 from the east City limits to Interstate Highway No. 5;
5. State Route 520 (Evergreen Point Bridge) to Interstate Highway No. 5.

C. Business Signs Permitted on Type A Landscaped and Scenic View Sections.

The following business signs shall be permitted outright on Type I (sic) A landscaped and scenic view sections:

1. Stationary, nonflashing business signs on the face of a structure, the total area of which shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the face of the structure or two hundred fifty (250) square feet, whichever is less;
2. Stationary, nonflashing freestanding business signs, of which the total area visible from any place on the traveled way of the landscaped and/or scenic view section does not exceed seventy-five (75) square feet, and not exceeding thirty (30) feet in height including structures and component parts as measured from the grade immediately below the sign;
3. Real estate "for sale" or "for rent" signs, provided the total area of all such signs on any lot shall not exceed fifty (50) square feet;
4. Stationary, nonflashing business signs for gas stations, the area of a single face of which shall not exceed one hundred fifty (150) square feet and the total combined area of which shall not exceed two hundred fifty (250) square feet, which may be apportioned among freestanding business signs not exceeding thirty (30) feet in height and business signs on the face of a structure.

D. Discretionary Exceptions.

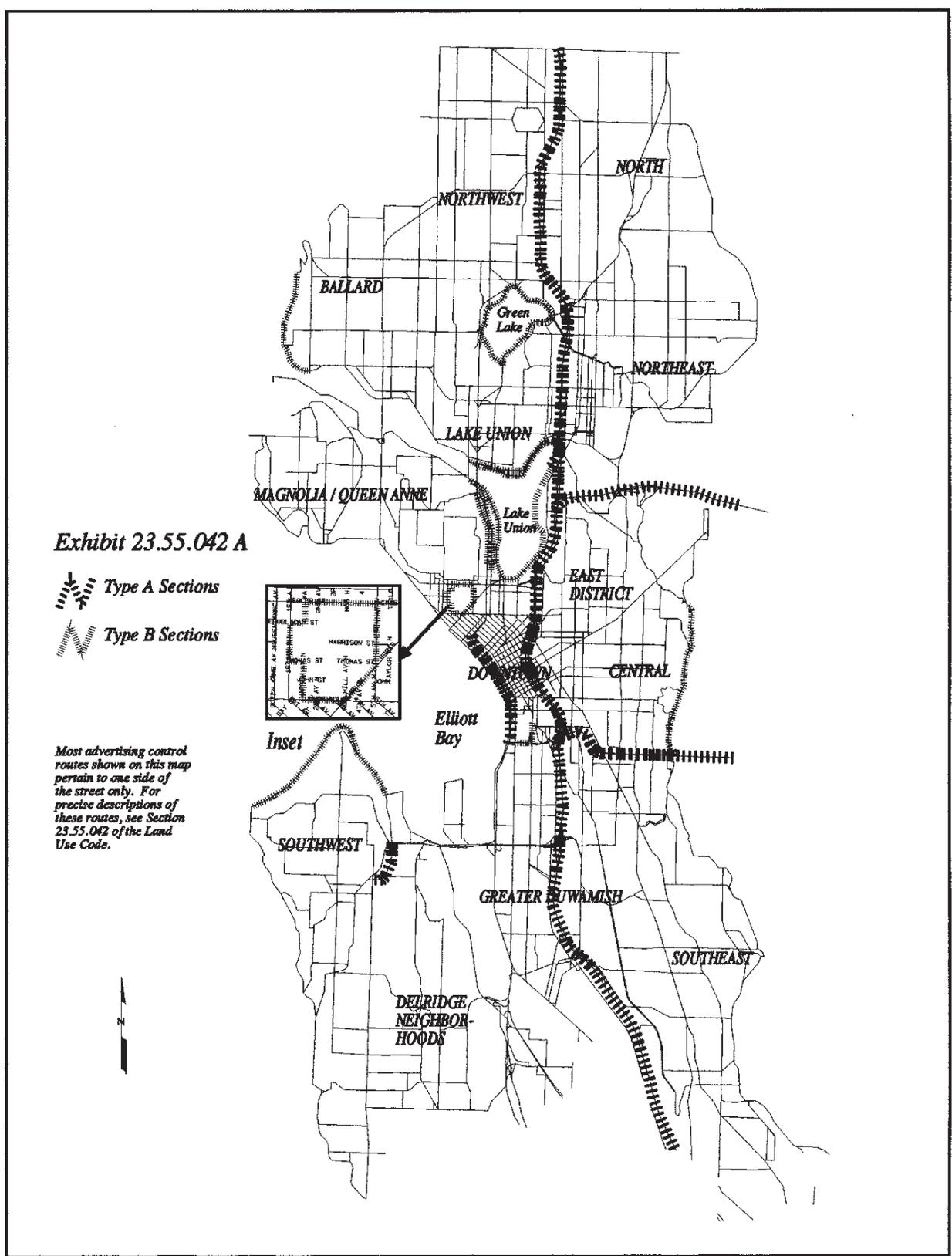
1. Discretionary exceptions from the provisions of subsection B may be issued for the types of signs listed in subsection D2 as a Type I (sic) A decision under Chapter 23.76, Master Use Permits and Council Land Use Decisions, when the Director finds that the following criteria are met:

**DPD Footnote:**

**16. S. Connecticut St. is S. Royal Brougham Way.**



- a. The exception will not make difficult the viewing and comprehending by motorists and pedestrians of official or conforming signs; and
  - b. The exception will not increase the density of signs along a designated landscaped and/or scenic view section to an extent tending to constitute a hazard to traffic safety or a detriment to the appearance of the neighborhood; and
  - c. The exception will not allow a sign to impinge upon a view of scenic interest.
2. Discretionary exemptions may be permitted for the following types of signs:
- a. Business signs composed of letters, numbers or designs individually painted or mounted directly on a structure;
  - b. Business signs on a structure which extend not more than twelve (12) feet in height above the face of the structure, provided that the maximum permitted area of such signs, except for gas station signs, shall be reduced by fifty (50) percent;
  - c. Time, temperature and/or stock index recording devices as part of a business sign;
  - d. Business signs on a structure face of five thousand (5,000) square feet or more, the area of which exceeds two hundred fifty (250) square feet but which in no case exceeds five (5) percent of the area of the face of the structure;
  - e. Except signs for gas stations, freestanding business signs on the same premises with business signs on the face of a structure.
- E. Off-premises Signs Prohibited Near Certain Areas. No off-premises sign shall be erected within six hundred sixty (660) feet outgoing from the nearest edge of the main traveled way of any landscaped and/or scenic view section designated by this subsection (Type B section) and shown on Exhibit 23.55.042 A, and no off-premises signs shall be erected within two hundred (200) feet in any direction from the main traveled way of the exit or entrance ramps thereto, if any part of the advertising matter or informative content of the off-premises sign is visible from any place on the traveled way of the landscaped and/or scenic view section or ramp.
1. The east side of Aurora Avenue North from the George Washington Memorial Bridge (Raye Street) to Prospect Street;
  2. The east side of Dexter Avenue North from Westlake Avenue North to Aloha Street;
  3. The east side of Westlake Avenue North from the Fremont Bridge to Valley Street;
  4. The west side of Fairview Avenue North and Fairview Avenue East from Valley Street to the Lake Union Ship Canal;
  5. The north side of Valley Street from Westlake Avenue North to Fairview Avenue North;
  6. The south side of North 34th Street from the Fremont Bridge to North Pacific Street;
  7. The south side of North Northlake Way and Northeast Northlake Way from the George Washington Memorial Bridge to Tenth Avenue Northeast;



**Exhibit 23.55.042 A**

 Type A Sections  
 Type B Sections

*Inset*  
 Most advertising control routes shown on this map pertain to one side of the street only. For precise descriptions of these routes, see Section 23.55.042 of the Land Use Code.

**Exhibit 23.55.042 A**



8. The east side of Harbor Avenue Southwest from Southwest Florida Street to Duwamish Head;
9. The northwesterly side of Alki Avenue Southwest from Duwamish Head to Alki Point;
10. Lake Washington Boulevard and Lake Washington Boulevard South from Interstate 90 to Denny Blaine Park;
11. The perimeter streets of Green Lake, consisting of Aurora Avenue North from West Green Lake Way North to West Green Lake Drive North; West Green Lake Drive North; East Green Lake Way North; and West Green Lake Way North;
12. Northwest 54th Street and Seaview Avenue Northwest from the Hiram Chittenden Locks to Golden Gardens Park;
13. All streets forming the perimeter of Seattle Center, as follows: Mercer Street from Warren Avenue North to Fifth Avenue North; Fifth Avenue North from Mercer Street to Broad Street; Broad Street from Fifth Avenue North to Denny Way; Denny Way from Broad Street to Second Avenue North; Second Avenue North from Denny Way to Thomas Street; Thomas Street from Second Avenue North to First Avenue North; First Avenue North from Thomas Street to Republican Street; Republican Street from First Avenue North to Warren Avenue; Warren Avenue from Republican Street to Mercer Street;
14. The south side of North Pacific Street and Northeast Pacific Street from 34th Street North to Latona Avenue Northeast;
15. Fourth Avenue South from Airport Way South to South Royal Brougham and South Royal Brougham Way from Fourth Avenue South to Occidental Avenue South.

#### 4. Shoreline Sign Regulations

The following excerpt provides language regarding signs located in the Shoreline District. These provisions take precedence over any underlying zone-specific sign standards which are less stringent.

##### **23.60.122 Nonconforming Uses.**

- A. 3. Any sign in the Shoreline District which does not conform to the provisions of this chapter shall be discontinued within seven (7) years from the effective date of the ordinance codified in this chapter,<sup>1</sup> unless designated a landmark pursuant to Chapter 25.12, the Landmark Preservation Ordinance.

**Codified Note:**

1. Editor's Note: Chapter 23.60, the Seattle Shoreline Master Program, became effective on December 31, 1987.

**23.60.180 Sign Standards.****A. General Standards for All Signs.**

1. Roof signs shall not be permitted in the Shoreline District.
2. Signs mounted on buildings shall be wall-mounted except for projecting signs mounted on the street-front facade of a building facing a street running generally parallel to the shoreline and located at a distance from the corner of the building so as not to obstruct views of the water.
3. Pole signs shall be permitted only on piers or floats which lack buildings for wall-mounted signs and only to provide visibility from fairways (publicly owned navigable waters) for water-dependent or water-related uses. Pole signs shall not be located in view corridors required by this chapter or so as to obstruct views through view corridors required by this chapter or of a substantial number of residents. The Director may modify proposed signs to prevent such view obstruction.
4. Ground signs are permitted when not located in required view corridors or in an area which impairs visual access to view corridors.
5. The size, height and number of permitted signs and the determination as to whether a sign may be flashing, illuminated, rotating or portable, shall be as regulated in the underlying zoning except as follows:
  - a. Any sign which is visible from a fairway (publicly owned navigable water) shall be limited to only the name and nature of the use, and each letter shall be limited to no more than sixteen inches (16") in height;
  - b. Signs on piers shall be limited to forty (40) square feet in area; and
  - c. Freestanding signs on piers shall not exceed twelve feet (12') in height.

**B. Types of Signs.**

1. Signs permitted in the CN, CP, CR, CM, CW and UR Environments shall be limited to identification signs, on-premises directional signs, and interpretive signs.
2. Signs permitted in the US, UH, UM, and UG Environments shall be limited to identification signs, on-premises directional signs, interpretive signs and business signs.
3. Signs permitted in the UI Environment shall be limited to identification signs, on-premises directional signs, interpretive signs, business signs, and off-premises directional signs. Advertising signs may be permitted only on upland lots in the UI Environment.
4. Temporary signs as defined in Section 23.55.012 shall be allowed in all Environments, subject to the restrictions in subsection A.



### **23.60.704 Historic Character Area review criteria.**

The following is an excerpt from the section on the Historic Character Area of the downtown central waterfront.

- A. Location. All developments located in the Historic Character Area, as shown on the official Land Use Map, including all lots from the southerly edge of Pier 54 to the northerly edge of Pier 59 inclusive are subject to Historic Character Area review as provided in this section.
- B. Review Process. All applications for development in the Historic Character Area shall be referred to the Landmarks Preservation Board and to the Department of Neighborhoods for their review and comment prior to issuance of a permit. In order to avoid undue project delay, such review and comment shall be completed within forty-five (45) days of receipt of an application by the Landmarks Preservation Board and the Department of Neighborhoods.
- C. Review Standards. New construction or modification of existing structures shall be reviewed using the following criteria:
  - 9. Each pier shall have the pier number clearly identified on both the street end and water end of the pier shed. For all exterior signage, large simple graphics painted directly on the building are preferred. Exterior neon signs are discouraged.

## **5. Bed and Breakfasts**

### **Single Family<sup>17</sup>**

#### **SMC 23.44.051 Bed and breakfasts.**

- 7. There is no evidence of the bed and breakfast from the exterior of the structure;

### **Multifamily**

#### **SMC 23.45.160 Bed and breakfasts.**

- B. The bed and breakfast shall be operated within the principal structure and not in an accessory structure. It shall not require structural alterations. There shall be no evidence of such occupation from the exterior of the structure other than a permitted sign, so as to preserve the residential appearance of the structure.

#### **DPD Footnote:**

**17. See CAM 236, Businesses in Your Home: Home Occupations allowed in Residential Zones.**





# Code Regulations

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## II. Street and Sidewalk Use Ordinance

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Reprinted on the following pages are Chapters 15.10 - Marquees, Awnings, Canopies and Decorative Elements, and 15.12 - Signs, Banners and Street Clocks, of the Seattle Municipal Code. These chapters of the street and sidewalk use regulations provide additional standards for signs and similar objects which encroach into, or are erected on, public rights-of-way.<sup>18</sup>

### Chapter 15.10-MARQUEES, AWNINGS, CANOPIES AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

Sections: 15.10.010 Extension - Approval and compliance.

15.10.020 Lowest point.

15.10.030 Vertical depth.

15.10.040 Lighting.

15.10.050 Obstructing streetlight, utility pole or tree prohibited.

#### 15.10.010 Extension - Approval and compliance.

No marquee, awning, canopy, or other decorative element shall extend over any public place closer than to within two feet (2') of the curbline. Marquees, awnings and canopies shall be approved as to structural strength and quality of materials, and shall be checked for conformance to all applicable codes by the Director of Design, Construction and Land Use.

#### 15.10.020 Lowest point.

The lowest point of any part of any marquee, awning, canopy, or other decorative element shall be not less than eight (8) feet, or sixteen (16) feet if in an alley, from the surface over which it is constructed, unless an exception to that requirement is approved by the Director of Transportation after a showing that traffic considerations have been satisfied.

#### 15.10.030 Vertical depth.

No marquee shall exceed thirty (30) inches in vertical depth, unless an exception to that requirement is approved by the Director of Transportation after a showing that the proposed marquee will not obscure the visibility of any sign or traffic control devices in the immediate area.

#### 15.10.040 Lighting.

The lighting under a marquee shall be at least equal to the lighting in the nearby public place outside. If the marquee reduces the natural or street light in a public place, the public place under the marquee shall be lighted during the hours of darkness and on the same time schedule as the municipal street lighting. Lights shall be designed, constructed and

#### **DPD Footnote:**

**18. For most recent and accurate information regarding Street and Sidewalk Use, reference Seattle City Clerk's Office, Title 15.**

maintained to provide a minimum average illumination on the sidewalk of five (5) footcandles of light intensity. The lowest footcandle value of any point shall not be less than one-half ( 1/2) the average value.

**15.10.050 Obstructing streetlight, utility pole, or tree prohibited.**

No awning, canopy, marquee, or other decorative element shall be constructed at a location or in a manner which will obstruct, obscure, or interfere with any streetlight or with any utility pole or with any publicly maintained street tree.

**Chapter 15.12- SIGNS, BANNERS AND STREET CLOCKS**

Sections: 15.12.010 Conformance to applicable regulations.

15.12.020 Barber poles.

15.12.030 Banners.

15.12.040 Street clocks.

**15.12.010 Conformance to applicable regulations.**

- A. All signs in public places and their supports shall be reviewed as to structural strength and quality of materials and for conformance to all applicable ordinances by the Director of the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use, except for sign kiosks in public rights-of- way and for signs on utility poles, lamp poles and traffic control devices that the court has declared to be a traditional public forum, which shall be reviewed by the Director of the Seattle Department of Transportation, formerly known as Seattle Transportation.
- B. All signs, banners, barber poles and street clocks constructed upon or projecting over a public place shall conform to SMC Chapter 23.55, and, except those located in park drives and boulevards, the decisions and policies of the Director of Transportation.
- C. No new signs, barber poles, or street clocks shall be constructed over park drives and boulevards.

**15.12.020 Barber poles.**

No barber pole or any of its brackets and fastenings shall extend more than one (1) foot over or into any public place, or so that the bottom thereof will be less than eight (8) feet from the sidewalk.

**15.12.030 Banners.**

No canvas or cloth sign or banner shall be stretched, hung, or otherwise placed over or across any public place except upon written permit issued by the City and then only upon such terms and conditions, and for such period of time as authorized in the permit.

**15.12.040 Street clocks.**

- A. No clock shall be constructed, erected or maintained in or upon any public place within one hundred (100) feet of any other clock on the same side of such place, nor within eight (8) feet of any utility pole or fire hydrant, nor so that any portion thereof extends beyond the curbline.
- B. No clock shall be more than fifteen (15) feet nor less than twelve and one-half (12 1/2) feet in height from the sidewalk to the center of the clock face. Each dial or the



time on a digital clock shall be illuminated from within only, by electric light of not less than ninety (90) candlepower to each dial or number on a digital clock. The clock shall be kept lighted during the hours of the day in which the municipal streetlights are lit.

- C. No clock shall be erected which has a base greater than twenty-eight (28) inches nor less than sixteen (16) inches in any dimension, nor which has a dial greater than three (3) feet nor less than two (2) feet in diameter.
- D. No more than two (2) lines of advertising matter shall appear upon the dial, nor anything other than the name and address of the owner, occupant or lessee upon the post or base of any clock.
- E. No cloth, drapery, sign or other thing shall be added, attached or suspended from the head of any clock.
- F. No person shall permit a street clock of which he/she is the owner, to incorrectly record the time unless all dials thereof are covered. The cover of such a clock shall not have advertising matter thereon. Any clock not showing correct time or which has been covered for more than fourteen (14) days shall be removed upon order of the Director of Transportation.

# Code Regulations

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## III. Signs in Historic Districts

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The following list contains contact phone numbers of the Ballard Avenue, Columbia City, and Harvard/Belmont Historic Districts.<sup>19</sup> In addition to meeting Land Use Code requirements and other applicable regulations, signs located in these districts require a Certificate of Approval from either the District Preservation Board for the district in which they are located, or the Landmarks Preservation Board. For more information about the approval process, call the Department of Neighborhoods' Division of Urban Conservation at (206) 684-0228.

**Ballard Avenue Landmark District:**  
(206) 684-0229

**Columbia City Landmark District :**  
(206) 684-0226

**Harvard/Belmont Landmark District:**  
(206) 684-0380

### Landmark Structures

Landmark structures are designated on the City's Official Land Use Map. Signs located on a lot with a designated landmark structure must be approved by the Landmarks Preservation Board. Each landmark structure and site has specific review criteria and conditions. For more information about individual sites, call the Department of Neighborhoods' Division of Urban Conservation at (206) 684-0228.

**DPD Footnote:**

19. Maps of these districts can be found in the Appendix section of this handbook. Also, see Seattle City Clerk's Office website, [http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/preservation/historic\\_districts.htm](http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/preservation/historic_districts.htm)

# Code Regulations

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## IV. Seattle Building Code

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Reprinted on the following pages are Sections 3107.9 through 3107.13 of the Seattle Building Code. These sections provide the specific standards for sign construction. Other relevant sections of Chapter 31 are reprinted in other sections of this handbook.

### SEATTLE BUILDING CODE

#### 3107.9 General requirements.

1. **General.** All signs shall conform to the requirements of this section.
2. **Clearance From High Voltage Power Lines.** Signs shall be located no closer than 3 feet (914 mm) horizontally or 8 feet (2438 mm) vertically from over head electrical conductors which are energized at 750 volts or less and not less than 10 feet (3048 mm) in any direction from over head conductors energized at more than 750 volts. The term "overhead conductors" as used in this section means any electrical conductor, either bare or insulated, installed above the ground except such conductors as are enclosed in iron pipe or other material covering of equal strength.
3. **Clearance from Fire Escapes, Exits or Standpipes.** No sign or sign structure shall be erected in such a manner that any portion of its surface or supports will interfere in anyway with the free use of any fire escape, exit or standpipe.
4. **Obstruction of Openings.** No sign shall obstruct any openings to such an extent that light or ventilation is reduced to a point be low that required by this code.  
Signs erected within 5 feet (1524 mm) of an exterior wall in which there are openings within the area of the sign shall be constructed of noncombustible material or approved plastics.
5. **Supporting Members.** Signs mounted on and attached to buildings shall be so designed and mounted that secondary structural members shall be incorporated into and become a part of the sign display. Exterior bracing such as angle irons, guy wires, cables and similar devices shall be permitted only where no other reason able method of fasten ing consistent with safety is possible.
6. **Non - Display Surfaces.** If a sign is visible from more than one direction, all areas not in tended as display surfaces, including the back and sides, shall be designed so that such areas are given a finished and pleasing appearance with the display surfaces visible only from the directions that they are intended to be seen.
7. **Label.** Every permanent sign shall display the name of the sign erector.

#### 3107.10 Design.

1. **General.** Signs and sign structures shall be designed and constructed to resist all

forces to which they are subject as specified in Chapter 16 and this section. All signs shall be designed and installed to transfer all forces directly to the structural frame of the building or structure. The over turning moment produced from lateral forces shall in no case exceed two thirds of the dead load resisting moment. Uplifts due to overturning shall be adequately resisted by proper anchorage to the ground or to the structural frame of the building. The weight of earth superimposed over footings may be used in determining the dead load resisting moment. Such earth shall be carefully placed and thoroughly compacted.

2. **Wind and Seismic Loads.** Signs and sign structures shall be designed and constructed to resist wind and seismic forces as specified in Chapter 16 of this code.
3. **Allowable Stresses.** The design of wood, concrete, steel or aluminum members shall conform to the requirements of Chapters 19, 20, 22 and 23. Loads, both vertical and horizontal, exerted on the soil shall not produce stresses exceeding those specified in Chapter 16 of this code. The working stresses of wire rope and its fastenings shall not exceed 25 per cent of the ultimate strength of the rope or fasteners.

### 3107.11 Construction.

1. **General.** The supports for all signs or sign structures shall be placed in or upon private property and shall be securely built, constructed, and erected in accordance with the requirements of this chapter. All structural welding on signs and sign structures shall conform to the requirements of Chapter 20 for aluminum and Chapter 22 for steel.
2. **Materials.** Materials of construction for signs and sign structures shall be of quality and grade as specified for buildings in this code.

2.1 **Plastics.** All plastics used in signs shall be approved plastics as defined in Chapter 26.

Sections of approved plastics on wall signs shall not exceed 150 square feet (13.9m<sup>2</sup>) in area.

#### Exceptions:

1. Outside the Fire District the area of approved plastics may be increased by 50 percent. See Section 401.2 for the definition of the Fire District.
2. Sections of approved plastics on signs other than wall signs may be of unlimited area if approved by the building official.

Sections of approved plastics on wall signs shall be separated 3 feet (914 mm) laterally and 6 feet (1829 mm) vertically by the required exterior wall construction.

**Exception:** Sections of approved plastics on signs other than wall signs need not be separated if approved by the building official.

2.2 **Other materials.** In all signs and sign structures the materials and details of construction shall, in the absence of specified requirements, conform with the following:

1. Structural steel shall be of such quality as to conform with Chapter 22, Secondary members in contact with or directly supporting the display surface may be formed of light gauge steel provided such members are designed in accordance with the specifications of the design of light gauge steel as specified in Chapter 22 and shall be galvanized. Secondary



members, when formed integrally with the display surface, shall not be less than No. 24 gauge in thickness. When not formed integrally with the display surface, the minimum thickness of the secondary members shall be No. 12 gauge. The minimum thickness of hot-rolled steel members furnishing structural support for signs shall be 1/4 inch (6.4 mm) except that if galvanized, such members shall not be less than 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) thick. Steel pipes shall be of such quality as to conform with Chapter 22. Steel members may be connected with one galvanized bolt provided the connection is adequate to transfer the stresses in the members.

2. Anchors and supports, when of wood and embedded in the soil, or within 6 inches (152 mm) of soil, shall be of all heart wood of a durable species or shall be pressure-treated with an approved preservative. Such members shall be marked or branded by an approved agency.
  3. **Nonstructural trim.** Nonstructural trim and portable display surfaces may be of wood, metal, approved plastics or any combination thereof.
  4. **Approval of materials.** The building official may require that sufficient technical data be submitted to substantiate the proposed use of any materials and may approve their use if it is determined that the evidence submitted is satisfactory for the use intended.
3. **Restrictions in the Fire District.** In the Fire District all signs and sign structural members shall be constructed of noncombustible materials. See Section 401.2 for the definition of the Fire District.

**Exceptions:**

1. Regardless of fire resistive requirements for exterior walls, certain elements of signs fronting on streets or yards having a width of 50 feet (15 240 mm) may be constructed as follows: Wood veneer of boards not less than 1 inch (25 mm) nominal thickness or exterior type ply wood panels not less than 3/8 inch (9.5 mm) nominal thickness may be applied to walls provided the veneer does not exceed 15 feet (4572 mm) above grade, and further provided such veneer shall be placed either directly against noncombustible surfaces or furred out from such surfaces not to exceed 15/8-inches (41 mm) with all concealed spaces fireblocked as provided by this code.
2. The display surface of a projecting sign may be of wood provided such sign is not more than 42square feet (3.9 m<sup>2</sup>) in area, is constructed of materials not less than 2 inches (51 mm) in nominal thickness and is not over 15 feet (4572 mm) in height, from ground level to the top of the sign.
3. Nonstructural trim as in 3107.11.2.3 above.
4. **Anchorage.** Members supporting unbraced signs shall be so proportioned that the bearing loads imposed on the soil in either direction, horizontal or vertical, shall not exceed the safe values. Braced ground signs shall be anchored to resist the specified wind or seismic load acting in any direction. Anchors and supports shall be designed for safe bearing loads on the soil and for an effective resistance to pull-out amounting to a force 25 percent greater than the required resistance to overturning.

Signs attached to masonry, concrete or steel shall be safely and securely fastened thereto by means of metal anchors, bolts or approved expansion screws of sufficient size and anchorage to support safely the loads applied.

No wooden blocks or plugs or anchors with wood used in connection with screws or nails shall be considered proper anchorage except in the case of signs attached to wood framing.

No lead plugs or anchors shall be used to support signs.

No anchor or support of any sign shall be connected to or supported by an unbraced parapet wall unless the wall is designed or braced for the added forces.

### 3107.12 Roof Signs.

1. **General.** Roof signs shall be constructed of noncombustible material except as specified in Section 3107.11. When constructed on a building, the sign shall be thoroughly secured and anchored to the frame of the building on which it is constructed and erected.
2. **Clearance and access.** A passage clear of all obstructions shall be left under or around, and immediately adjacent to, signs exceeding a height of 4 feet above the roof. Such passage shall not be less than 3 feet (914 mm) wide and 4 feet (1219 mm) high and shall be at parapet or roof level.

There shall be one such passage or access opening as follows:

1. For each roof sign upon a building.
2. An access opening for every 50 lineal feet (15 240 mm) of horizontal roof sign extension.
3. Within 20 feet (6096 mm) of walls and parapets when roof signs are at right angles to a face of the building.

### 3107.13 Electric signs.

1. **Construction.** Electric signs shall be constructed of noncombustible materials except as provided in Section 3107.11. The enclosed shell of electric signs shall be water tight except that service holes fitted with covers shall be provided into each compartment of such signs.
2. **Installation.** Electrical equipment used in connection with display signs shall be installed in accordance with the Seattle Electrical Code.
3. **Display surfaces.** Display surfaces of wood may not be used in electric signs.

# Code Regulations

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## VI. Awnings - Seattle Building Code. Chapter 31

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Reprinted on the following pages is Chapter 31, Section 3105 of the Seattle Building Code adopted by the City of Seattle in December, 1995, Ordinances 117721 and 117865, for regulations of the construction and installation of awnings.

### 2003 SEATTLE BUILDING CODE

#### Chapter 31, Section 3105 - AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

**3105.1 Scope.** All awnings and canopies are subject to the requirements of this section. Awnings and canopies containing electrical wiring and light fixtures are also subject to the *Seattle Electrical Code*. Awnings and canopies over a public place shall comply with the Street and Sidewalk Use Ordinance (Title 15, Seattle Municipal Code).

**3105.2 Definitions** For the purposes of this chapter, certain terms are defined as follows:

**AWNING.** A protective covering with a non-rigid surface projecting from a building.

**AWNING SIGN.** A sign applied to the surface of an awning or canopy.

**CANOPY.** A protective covering with a rigid surface projecting from a building. Marquees are a type of canopy.

**FIRE-RETARDANT COVERING.** A material which has a flame spread rating of less than 15 when tested to ASTM E 84.

**SIGN.** See Section 3107.3.

**VENEER.** See Section 1402.1.

#### 3105.3 Permits.

1. **Permits required.** No awning or canopy shall be erected, constructed, altered or structurally revised with out a permit issued by the building official, except as specifically exempted in Section 106.2. A sign/awning permit shall be required for an awning or canopy specific to any business entity. A single permit may be issued for a single awning or canopy which serves a multi-tenant building. A single permit may be issued for all awning signs for each business entity installed concurrently. Awning signs for separate business entities must have a separate sign permit whether or not located on a separate awning. Subsequent installation of an awning, canopy or awning sign shall require a separate permit.

Painting, cleaning, repair and other maintenance shall not require a permit unless a structural change is made or the awning is covered with new fabric.



2. **Permit Application.** To obtain a permit as required by this chapter, the applicant shall file an application which shall include the following:
1. The location of the proposed awning or canopy on the building;
  2. Plans or drawings and specifications;
  3. Signature of the building owner or an authorized agent;
  4. Permit fee as specified in the Fee Subtitle.

**3105.4 Maintenance.** All awnings and canopies, together with their supports, braces and anchors, shall be kept in good repair and in a proper state of preservation. The surface of all awnings and canopies shall be kept clean and protected with a sealer-type solution. The building official may order the removal of any awning or canopy not properly maintained or no longer in use and may revoke the permit.

**3105.5 Materials.** Awnings shall have approved fire-retardant coverings. Frames shall be of materials allowed for the type of construction of the building, except that aluminum frames are allowed with all construction types.

**3105.6 Welding.** All structural welding shall conform to the requirements of Chapter 20 for aluminum and Chapter 22 for steel.

**3105.7 Electric signs and lights.** No electric sign, including a neon assembly, shall be attached to, or located on, any part of the frame of an awning. Where light fixtures are attached to an awning or canopy, adequate bracing shall be designed and installed to sustain the additional loads imposed by the weight of the fixtures. Lamps shall be located at least 12 inches (305 mm) from combustible material.

**3105.8 Obstruction of exits, light and ventilation.** No portion of the surface or support of an awning or canopy, including a retracted awning, shall interfere with the free use of a fire escape, exit or standpipe. Awnings and canopies shall not reduce the light or ventilation to any occupancy below requirements of Chapter 12 of this code.

**3105.9 Location.** All portions of awnings and canopies shall be at least 8 feet (2438 mm) above any walking surface immediately below. All portions of awnings and canopies located over public property shall be at least 8 feet (2438 mm) above grade and at least 2 feet (610 mm) from the curb. Awnings and marques shall be located where they will not obstruct, obscure or interfere with any publicly maintained street tree, street light or utility pole.

**3105.10 Supports.** The supports for awnings and canopies shall be located on private property.

**Exception:** Where approved by the Director of Transportation, stanchions for awnings located at the entrance to buildings may be installed on public property if they are located in line with other street furniture. Individual stanchions shall have a cross sectional dimension or diameter no greater than 6 inches (152 mm).

**3105.11 Drainage.** Awnings and canopies shall be provided with conductors for water which shall drain back to the building line and be connected to a sewer or, if approved by the Director of Seattle Public Utilities, to a dry well or under a sidewalk to a gutter.

**Exception:** Awnings and canopies may drain away from the building line, provided the water drains uniformly over the edge. The upper surface of canopies shall be sloped a minimum of 1 unit vertical in 48 units horizontal (2 percent slope). Awnings and canopies complying with this exception may drain onto the public right of way.

**3105.12 Design loads.** Awnings and canopies shall be designed and constructed to resist all forces to which they are subject as specified in Chapter 16.

**3105.13 Pitch.** The upper surface of all awnings shall have a pitch of at least 30 degrees from the horizontal. The building official may approve awnings with a smaller pitch when the design is prepared by a licensed structural engineer.

**3105.14 Attachment of awnings.** All awnings attached to masonry, concrete or steel shall be safely secured with steel anchors and bolts, or approved rated expansion bolts of sufficient size and anchorage to support the loads safely. No support or attachment for an awning or canopy shall be connected to, supported by, or fastened to exterior veneer.

**3105.15 Size.** Where an awning or canopy is located at an exit door from a stair way or exit passage way that is fire-resistance-rated, the distance the awning or canopy projects from the building shall be no more than one-half the distance from the walking surface to the lowest point of the bottom of the awning or canopy.

# Director's Rules

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From time to time DPD issues Director's Rule which provide interpretations of existing code language. This section contains the Director's Rules applicable to signs.

DR 14-86 Sign Requirements for Off-Site Accessory Parking

DR 2-95 Off-Premises Advertising Signs

DR 15-96 Noncommercial Speech in Signs

DR 11-97 Sign Height and Building Facades

Please note that some code references in the Director's Rules have changed since the rules included in this handbook became effective.

Additional rules may be published from time to time and existing rules may change (be superceded or rescinded) as laws change. Please ask the DPD Sign Inspector if any rule changes are in effect. You may also view a current list of active Director's Rules at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/codes](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codes).

**DCLU**

**Director's Rule 14-86**

Applicant CITY OF SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE	Page 1	Supersedes 11-79
	Publication April 28, 1986	Effective June 9, 1986
Subject SIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR OFF-SITE ACCESSORY PARKING	Code and Section Reference Land Use & Zoning Code SMC 23.47.032, 23.49.16, 23.54.020, 24.64.040	
	Type of Rule Code Interpretation	
Index LAND USE/TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS	Ordinance Authority SMC 3.06.040	
	Approved Holly Miller	Date 5-21-86

Section 24.64.040 of the Zoning Code, and Sections 23.47.032, 23.49.16, and 23.54.20 of the Land Use Code permit parking to be located on a lot within eight hundred feet of the lot on which the use requiring the parking is located.

**RULE:**

Whenever required parking is provided on a lot other than the principal use lot, appropriate signs must be provided, both on the principal use lot and on the lot where the parking is provided.

One or more signs of a size and at locations to be approved by the Director must be placed on the principal use lot. These must contain language similar to the following, to be approved by the Director:

*Parking (or additional parking) for patrons (customers, employees, residents, etc.) is available at 8422 NE Austin Street.*

Signs identifying each parking space reserved for the principal use must be located on each such space. The size and location of these signs must be approved by the Director. These must have upon them language similar to the following, to be approved by the Director.

*This space reserved for customers (patrons, employees, etc.) of Clay's Department Store.*

If the space has been approved as a joint use parking space, times must also be designated on the sign. For example:

*This space reserved for customers of Joe's Tavern on Saturdays and Sundays after 5 pm Monday through Friday. Doctor's clinic from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.*

Proposed location and language of signs must be shown on plans before they will be approved, and no certificate of occupancy will be issued until signs are in place.

A sign permit may be required.

**REASON:**

In order to meet the Code intent of providing off-street parking, when parking is provided off-site, signs are necessary to let the public know where the parking is located. In addition, to ensure that the spaces are available, the off-site spaces must be clearly reserved for the use to which they are accessory.



**DCLU**

**Director's Rule 2-95**

Applicant: CITY OF SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE	Page 1 of 4	Supersedes: N/A
	Publication: 4-3-95	Effective: 5-19-95
Subject: Off-premises advertising signs	Code and Section Reference: Land Use Code SMC 23.55.014	
	Type of Rule: Code Interpretation	
Index: Land Use Code	Ordinance Authority: 3.06.040 SMC	
	Approved R. F. Krochalis	Date 5/19/95

**Relocating Signs That are Located on Sites or In Zones Where They Are Permitted**

**BACKGROUND**

The Sign Code (SMC 23.55) only allows relocation of off-premise advertising signs located on sites or in zones where the Sign Code does *not* permit them. In addition, in each calendar year the Sign Code allows relocation of one advertising sign face located on a site or in a zone where the Sign code *does* permit it.

**RULE**

Any citizen, whether or not they reside in Seattle, may submit to the Director of DCLU a written request for the relocation of an advertising sign face located on a site or in a zone permitted by the Sign Code. DCLU will accept requests between January 1 and March 1 of each calendar year. DCLU will only accept one request per advertising sign face. Once DCLU receives a request, the Department will verify that the advertising sign face is located on a site or in a zone where the Sign Code permits it.

### Part One: Selecting a Community Request

During the month of March, the Director will review all the relocation requests submitted by citizens or community groups who are not associated with any sign companies who own signs in Seattle. Relocation requests from citizens associated with sign companies who own signs in Seattle will not be reviewed under Part One. If all the signs submitted for relocation requests are owned by the same company, DCLU will give the sign company the option of selecting one of the signs for relocation. If the signs are owned by more than one company, DCLU will select one of the sign companies by lottery. The selected sign company will then have the option of selecting one of the signs that it owns for relocation that is among the relocation requests. If a sign company is willing to relocate a sign through the process described above, DCLU will consider this sign face the "one" during the calendar year that may be moved.

The owner of the selected sign face must comply with the requirements for obtaining Master Use, demolition and construction permits for the proposed new location. If DCLU denies the Master Use Permit or construction permit for the proposed sign/structure location, the sign owner may submit a new application for one new location within 30 days of the notification of the denial or the decision of any appeal therefrom. If the owner of the sign does not apply for the Master Use Permit within 9 months of selection by the Director, then another sign will be chosen following the lottery process as described under Part Two below.

### Part Two: Selecting from All Requests

If the sign company chooses not to select a sign as described in Part One above, or does not apply for the Master Use Permit<sup>1</sup> within 9 months of selection by the Director, then all sign requests (including requests by sign companies) will be placed in one pool. The Director will by lottery select one request for relocation and an additional submittal as an alternate from this pool of signs (sic). If the owner of the sign face first selected is willing to relocate that sign, DCLU will consider this sign face the "one" sign during the calendar year that may be moved.

The owner of the selected sign face must comply with the requirements for obtaining Master Use, demolition and construction permits for the proposed new location. If DCLU denies the Master Use Permit or construction permit for the proposed sign/structure location, the sign owner may submit a new application for one new location within 30 days of the notification of the denial or the decision of any appeal therefrom. If the owner of the sign does not apply for the Master Use Permit within 9 months of selection by the Director, the owner of the sign selected as the alternate will have the option of applying for the Master Use Permit to relocate the alternate sign. The owner of the sign that DCLU selects as the alternate will have 9 months to apply for a Master Use Permit, beginning on the date that DCLU notifies the sign owner that he or she can relocate the alternate sign. If DCLU

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<sup>1</sup> The intent of the 9 month maximum time period between selection and application of the selected sign is to begin the permit process for the selected sign during the same year as DCLU selects the sign. Otherwise, sign companies could wait years to apply for the sign relocation. When the Seattle City Council adopted the Sign Code amendment in July 1993, their intent was to limit the number of sign relocations that occurred per year, both those that are and are not located on sites or zones where the Sign Code permits them. Section 23.55.014 of the Sign Code limits the number of relocated advertising signs to 12 structures or 24 sign faces per year for those signs that are not located on sites or in zones where the Sign Code permits them.

denies the Master Use Permit or construction permit for the proposal alternate sign/structure location, the sign owner may submit a new application for one new location within 30 days of the notification of the denial or the decision of any appeal therefrom.

If the Director does not receive any written requests for the relocation of advertising signs by March 1, he or she will select the first relocation request submitted during the period March 2 through December 31. If no request is received, there shall be no relocation under this provision for that year. For relocation requests submitted during the years 1993, 1994, and up to May 15, 1995, the Director shall select one request for relocation per year following the process as described above.

### Billboard Bank

#### BACKGROUND

As part of a 1980 agreement, Ackerley Communications, the owner of the majority of advertising signs in Seattle, agreed to move several advertising signs located on sites or in zones where the Sign Code no longer permitted them. The City gave Ackerley a relocation credit for each such sign removal. The City did not require Ackerley to immediately erect new signs for each relocation credit, so the city placed the credits in a "billboard bank." At the time of the agreement, there were only a few advertising signs located on sites or in zones where the Sign Code no longer permitted them. However, the adoption of new commercial zone designations and the redesignation of commercial areas in 1986 further restricted advertising sign locations and created a pool of additional advertising signs located on sites or in zones where the Sign Code did not permit them. Currently, there are still advertising signs in the billboard relocation bank.

With passage of the Sign Code amendment on July 19, 1993, DCLU must now issue construction permits for relocated or reconstructed advertising signs during the pendency of the demolition permit for the existing sign. In other words, before the demolition permit expires, the applicant must apply for and be issued a construction permit. This results in no new credits being added to the billboard bank, leading to its eventual elimination. However, the 1993 amendments do not address using existing credits in the bank in place of demolition permits. Since the relocation credits represent signs that owners have already taken down, owners do not need demolition permits.

#### RULE

DCLU shall issue construction permits without corresponding demolition permits only if the new advertising sign uses a relocation credit in the billboard bank. The requirements of Section 23.55.014 shall still apply, except for A 1 e (the construction permit for the relocated or reconstructed advertising sign is issued during the pendency of the demolition permit for the existing sign). At the time the construction permit is issued for that sign, DCLU shall assign a registration number to that sign face(s), which must be displayed on the sign face upon its construction. That sign must be included in the report filed on or before the following July 1, at which time the fee for that sign shall be paid.



**DCLU**

**Director's Rule 15-96**

Applicant CITY OF SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE	Page 1	of 2	Supersedes 3-95
	Publication Feb. 5, 1996		Effective March 1, 1996
Subject NONCOMMERCIAL SPEECH ON SIGNS	Code and Section Reference SMC 23.84.036 SBC Section 3205		
	Type of Rule Code Interpretation		
Index TITLE 22- BUILDING CODE TITLE 23- LAND USE CODE	Ordinance Authority SMC 3.060.040 and 3.02.050		
	Approved R.F. Krochalis	Date 2-27-96	

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this rule is to state explicitly how the City's Land Use Code related provisions regulating signs apply to noncommercial speech. This rule does not change the City's past practice of allowing noncommercial speech on all authorized signs where commercial speech is allowed.

**BACKGROUND**

The Code (SMC 23.84.036) contains the following definitions:

'Sign' means any medium, including structural and component parts, which is used or intended to be used to attract attention to the subject matter for advertising, identification or informative purposes.

'Sign, advertising' means a sign directing attention to a business, profession, commodity, service or entertainment conducted, sold or offered elsewhere than upon the lot where the sign is located.

'Sign, business' means an on-premises sign directing attention to a business, profession, commodity, service or entertainment conducted, sold or offered on the lot where the sign is located. This definition shall not include signs located within a structure except those signs oriented so as to be visible through a window.

The Seattle Building Code, Section 3205, defines on-premise sign as follows:

ON-PREMISE SIGN is a sign used solely by the business establishment on the lot where the sign is located which displays either (1) commercial messages which are strictly applicable only to a use of the premises on which it is located, including signs or sign devices indicating the business transacted, principal services rendered, goods sold or produced on the premises, name of the business, and name of the person, firm or corporation occupying the premises or (2) noncommercial message. This definition shall not include signs located within a business establishment except signs oriented so as to be visible through a window.

These Code definitions are used to classify signs as either advertising signs or on-premises (or business) signs because each class of sign is subject to different regulations. The Code has never been interpreted to restrict display of noncommercial speech on authorized signs. It is consistent with the Code to put noncommercial messages on authorized on-premises, business and advertising signs (or any other authorized sign). Placement of a noncommercial message on an authorized on-premises sign or on an authorized business sign does not convert that sign into an advertising sign. Signs on which noncommercial messages are placed must conform to all regulations (such as size, location, and dispersal regulations) applicable to the type of sign authorized.

**RULE**

Any sign authorized in the Land Use Code, and all related provisions, may contain noncommercial subject matter in lieu of any other subject matter.



**DCLU**

**Director's Rule 11-97**

Applicant CITY OF SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE	Page of	Supersedes N/A
	Publication 9-4-97	Effective
Subject SIGN HEIGHT AND BUILDING FACADES	Code and Section Reference SMC 23.55.028 SMC 23.55.030	
	Type of Rule Code Interpretation	
Index LAND USE CODES	Approved R.F. Krochalis	Date 2-27-96

Section 23.55.028.D.5.b regulating signs in NC1 and NC2 zones, states the following:

The maximum height for any portion of a wall or under-marquee sign shall be twenty feet or the height of the cornice of the structure to which the sign is attached, whichever is greater.

Section 23.55.030, regulating signs in NC3, C1 and C2 zones, and Section 23.55.036, regulating signs in IB, IC, IG1 and IG2 zones, state the same thing, with the addition of canopy and marquee signs to the list.

**RULE:**

The maximum height for placement of wall and under-marquee signs in NC1 and NC2 zones shall be 20 feet or the height of the facade of the structure to which it is attached, whichever is greater. For buildings with a cornice or parapet extending more than 20 feet above grade, all under-marquee signs may extend to the top of the cornice or the parapet. On existing building facade over 20 feet tall shall not be extended for the purpose of increasing the allowable height of a wall sign. For a new building, the facade above the roof elevation shall be consistent with the architectural design of the building, and shall also not be extended for the purpose of increasing the allowable height of a wall sign. Rooftop features such as mechanical and stair penthouses shall not be considered part of a facade.

**REASON:**

Cornices or parapets are allowed to project (with limitations) above the roof of structures of which they are a part, and are therefore the highest point of the facade of the structure. For the purposes of this rule, a cornice or a parapet on an exterior wall shall be considered part of the facade. Since the code states that the listed signs may go to the height of the cornice or 20 feet, whichever is greater, it is appropriate to allow the sign to the top of the facade of the structure if there is no cornice, and to the top of the cornice or parapet if either is present. Artificially extending a facade to increase the height of a wall sign does not meet the intent of the code.

# Measurements

Chapter 23.86 of the Land Use Code specifies the measurement techniques for determining if development complies with regulations. Measurement standards for signs are found in Section 23.86.004 and apply to signs in all zones for the Land Use Code.

## 23.86.002 General Provisions.

- A. For all calculations, the applicant shall be responsible for supplying drawings illustrating the measurements. These drawings shall be drawn to scale, and shall be of sufficient detail to allow verification upon inspection or examination by the Director.
- B. Fractions.
  1. When any measurement technique for determining the number of items required or allowed, including but not limited to parking or bicycle spaces, or required trees or shrubs, results in fractional requirements, any fraction up to and including one-half ( $1/2$ ) of the applicable unit of measurement shall be disregarded and fractions over one-half ( $1/2$ ) shall require the next higher full unit of measurement.
  2. When any measurement technique for determining required minimum or allowed maximum dimensions, including but not limited to height, yards, setbacks, lot coverage, open space, building depth, parking space size or curb cut width, results in fractional requirements, the dimension shall be measured to the nearest inch. Any fraction up to and including one-half ( $1/2$ ) of an inch shall be disregarded and fractions over one-half ( $1/2$ ) shall require the next higher unit.

## 23.86.004 Sign measurements.

### A. Sign Area.

1. For a sign which is an independent structure, the entire visible surface of the sign, exclusive of support devices, shall be included in area calculations. Only one (1) face of a double faced sign shall be counted.
2. For a sign painted or mounted directly on another structure, sign area shall be the area contained in the smallest rectangular area enclosing the graphic or worded message, measured by the projection of the legs of two (2) right angles that are placed at opposite corners of the graphic and/or worded message, (Exhibit 23.86.004 A).
3. Where a background color different from that of the face upon which a sign is located is used as part of the sign, the entire background area shall be included in area calculations, (Exhibit 23.86.004 B).

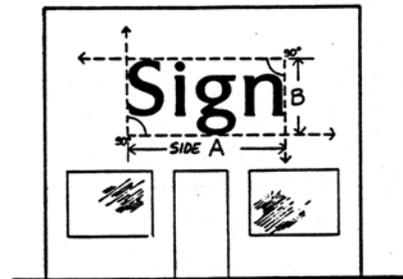


Exhibit 23.86.004A

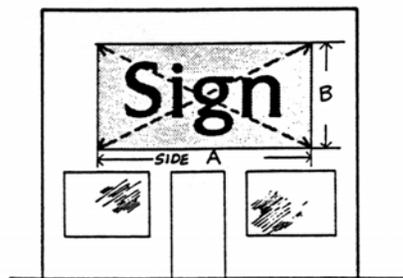


Exhibit 23.86.004B

4. Only message-conveying text shall be included. Decorative graphics not conveying a readily apparent message are not counted in the area of the sign.
5. For the purposes of measuring sign area for signs regulated by Section 23.55.042, Signs Adjacent to Certain Public Highways, the following provisions shall also be used to calculate sign area:
  - a. Where freestanding business signs and business signs on the face of a building are visible on the same premises, the sum of the area of both types of signs visible from any place on the traveled way shall not exceed the area permitted on the face of the building, except as provided for gas station signs and in subsection E1 of Section 23.55.042.
  - b. Where a multi-faced sign is used, the greatest area visible from any place on the traveled way shall be measured.
6. In major institution zones, when signs with and without size limits are combined, the portion of the sign to which a size limit applies shall not exceed the applicable limit.

**B. Number of Signs.**

In certain zones, the type and number of signs is determined by amount of frontage on public rights-of-way, except alleys. Frontage shall be measured as follows:

1. When only one business establishment is located on a lot, or when determining the frontage of a multiple business center, frontage shall equal the length of the street property line(s) of the lot on which the business establishment or multiple business center is located, (Exhibit 23.86.004 C).
2. When determining the frontage of a business establishment located in a multiple business center, the following method shall be used:
  - a. Draw the least rectangle that encloses the portion of the principal structure in which the business establishment is located, as well as any area used for outdoor sales or outdoor display of rental equipment.
  - b. Extend the sides of the rectangle to the property line(s) of the lot which abut a right-of-way, except an alley, and which are not blocked from the rectangle by another structure or portion of the structure (Exhibit 23.86.004 D).
  - c. The lineal footage of the frontage between the extended sides of the rectangle shall be the frontage of the business establishment for purposes of measuring the number and type of permitted signs.

Exhibit 23.86.004 C  
 Measurement of Property Frontage for Business Establishments  
 and Multiple Business Centers

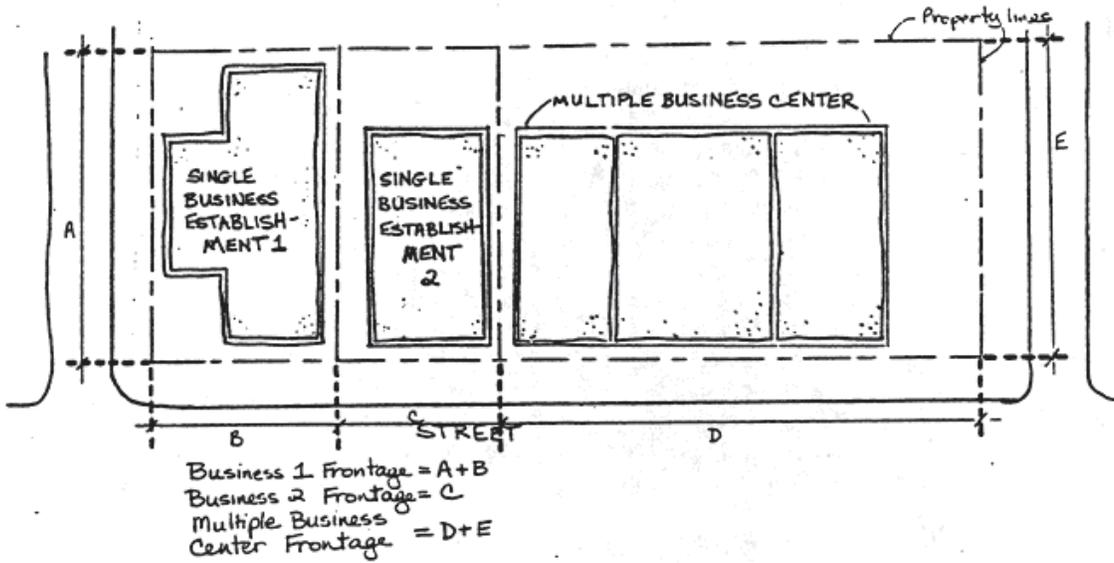
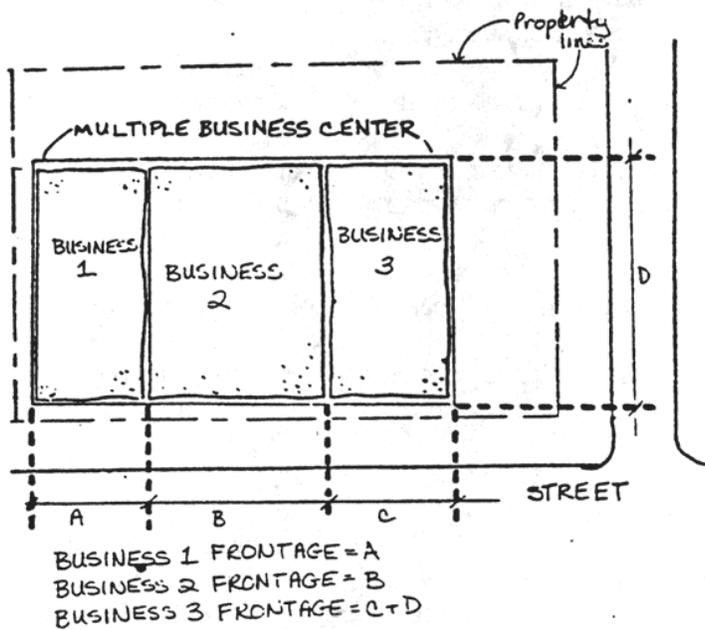


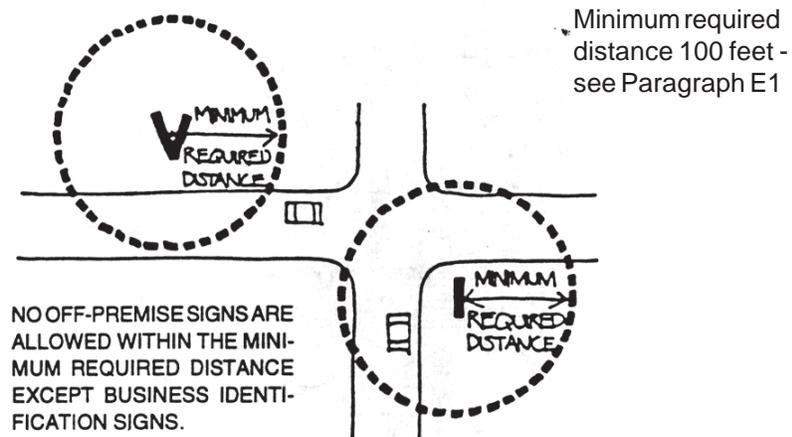
Exhibit 23.86.004 D  
 Measurement of Property Frontage for Business Establishments  
 in a Multiple Business Center



C. Dispersion Standards for Off-premises Signs.

1. Where linear dispersion of off-premises signs is required, the number of off-premises signs permitted on a street shall be calculated as follows:
  - a. Project the centerline of each off-premises sign structure or sign painted on a structure to the center line of each street from which the sign face is visible, at right angles to the street. Signs which are set so far back from a street that they are not visible from the street, sign structures which may be visible from the street but are oriented to face another street and permitted business district identification signs, shall not be counted.
  - b. Signs on both sides of the street shall be counted, unless otherwise stated.
  - c. Single-face billboards shall be considered one (1) structure for the purposes of this subsection.
  - d. Double face or "V" type shall be considered one (1) structure for the purposes of this subsection.
  - e. Visually blocked advertising signs shall be considered one-half (1/2) of a sign structure for the purposes of this subsection.
  - f. The number of permitted signs shall be measured from the projections made under subsection C1a at the centerline of the street.

Exhibit 23.86.004 F  
Distance Between Off-premises Signs



2. Where a minimum radial distance between each off-premises sign structure is established, the distance shall be calculated as follows:
  - a. Draw a circle with its center on the centerline of the sign structure, and a radius equal to the minimum required distance, (Exhibit 23.86.004 F).
  - b. No off-premises sign except permitted business district identification signs shall be located within the circle. c. Double-face or "V" type billboards shall be considered one (1) structure for the purposes of this subsection.
  - d. When permitted sign area is calculated as a percentage of the area of the face of the structure on which the sign is located, the area of the structure face shall be the elevation of the structure as measured on flat projection from any side, excluding the roof and excluding any chimney, stack, structure, or mechanical equipment on the roof.



# Appendix A

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# Types of Signs



**POLE SIGN FOR MULTIPLE BUSINESS CENTER**



**ROTATING POLE SIGN WITH MESSAGE BOARD**



**GROUND SIGN**

**AWNING WITH AWNING SIGN**



**CANOPY**



**NON-ILLUMINATED  
WALL SIGN**





**PROJECTING SIGN**



**BILLBOARD OFF-PREMISES  
ADVERTISING SIGN**



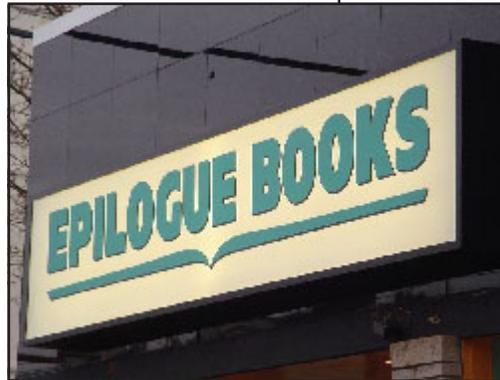
**PORTABLE SIGN  
NOT ALLOWED ON  
PRIVATE PROPERTY**



**AWNING**



**INTERNALLY  
ILLUMINATED SIGN**



**ELECTRIC WALL SIGN**







City of Seattle  
Department of Planning and Development

Mailing Address: 700 5th Ave, Suite 2000, PO Box 34019, Seattle, WA 98124-4019  
Phone: (206) 684-8464 Fax: (206) 684-8113  
Website: [www.seattle.gov/dpd](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd) Hours: M, W, F: 7:30-5:30 T, Th: 10:30-5:30



Work Site Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Activity Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt/Suite: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupancy:  Single Family  Multi-Family  Commercial  Institutional  Industrial

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

WORK SITE OWNER/TENANT INFORMATION	CONTRACTOR INFORMATION
<input type="checkbox"/> Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Tenant Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____ Address: _____ Apt/Ste: _____ City/State: _____ Zip: _____	State License #: _____ Company Name: _____ Contact Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____ Address: _____ Apt/Ste: _____ City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Protected Districts and Landmarks Approval #: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Use Permit #: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Branch Circuits: \_\_\_\_\_  Shoreline

Installations Based on Valuation	
(Include labor and materials whether or not furnished by installer, furnishings and equipment provided by the owner)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Awning/Canopy Structure (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Border Tubing (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Owner's Value (1 & 2): \$ _____
Installations Based on Sign Area	
<b>Sign #1:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Awning <input type="checkbox"/> Canopy <input type="checkbox"/> Directional <input type="checkbox"/> Ground <input type="checkbox"/> Pole <input type="checkbox"/> Projecting <input type="checkbox"/> Roof <input type="checkbox"/> Under canopy <input type="checkbox"/> Wall <input type="checkbox"/> Painted Wall Sign Sign Area: _____ Square feet Structure #: _____	
<b>Sign #2:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Awning <input type="checkbox"/> Canopy <input type="checkbox"/> Directional <input type="checkbox"/> Ground <input type="checkbox"/> Pole <input type="checkbox"/> Projecting <input type="checkbox"/> Roof <input type="checkbox"/> Under canopy <input type="checkbox"/> Wall <input type="checkbox"/> Painted Wall Sign Sign Area: _____ Square feet Structure #: _____	
<b>Sign #3:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Awning <input type="checkbox"/> Canopy <input type="checkbox"/> Directional <input type="checkbox"/> Ground <input type="checkbox"/> Pole <input type="checkbox"/> Projecting <input type="checkbox"/> Roof <input type="checkbox"/> Under canopy <input type="checkbox"/> Wall <input type="checkbox"/> Painted Wall Sign Sign Area: _____ Square feet Structure #: _____	

Off-Premises Advertising Sign Information
<b>Action Type:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Alteration <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Billboard Registration #: _____ Related MUP #: _____

**Warning!** The Revised Code of Washington (R.C.W.19.28) and the City of Seattle Electrical Code requires all individuals or entities (other than the property owner) engaged in the business of the installation of electrical wiring to have a valid Washington State Electrical Contractors license.

I certify that the work to be performed under this application will be done in conformance with the City of Seattle Municipal Code.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contractor or Owner (or Authorized Agent)

**PAYMENT & MAILING INSTRUCTIONS:**

Pay by Check **Mail checks to:** DPD, P.O. Box 34234, Seattle, WA 98124-1234  
 Charge my escrow (ADA) account # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Call me at (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ for a credit card number  
**Choose one of the following options:**  Mail Permit  Mail & Fax Permit  
 Hold Permit for Pick-Up  Mail & Email Permit to: \_\_\_\_\_

**DPD USE ONLY:**

Permit #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Permit Fee: \_\_\_\_\_



City of Seattle, Department of Planning and Development  
700 Fifth Ave, Suite 2000, P. O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019  
Phone (206) 684-8419  
Fax (206) 684-8113 or (206) 386-4039

## City of Seattle, DPD SPECIAL INSPECTIONS SCHEDULE Sign / Billboard / Awning

Project Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Permit #: \_\_\_\_\_ Permit #: \_\_\_\_\_

Geotechnical Engineer / Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Structural Engineer Firm / Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan Examiner: \_\_\_\_\_

Prior to final inspection, the Owner, or Engineer acting on behalf of the Owner, shall appoint an inspection agency and shall sign and submit this form to the Building Official. If structural observation is required, the Engineer must designate the name of the person who will perform the observation.

Inspection Agency	Owner/Contact Person Signature & Title	Phone	Date
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Structural Observation Required \_\_\_\_\_ Structural Observers Name

The above signed hereby certifies that the above inspection agency has been engaged to perform the special inspections outlined below as required by Section 1704 of the Seattle Building Code. It is the responsibility of the owner or the Owner's Designee to forward to the inspection agency, in a timely manner; the results of the inspections checked below.

**REQUIRED GEOTECHNICAL INSPECTIONS:**

- Observe and Monitor Excavation
- Monitor Slope Stability
- Erosion Control
- Shoring Installation and Monitoring
- Soil Bearing Verification
- Verify Structural Fill Material and Required Compaction
- Pile Installation:
  - Timber       Steel
  - H Piles
  - Pin Piles
  - Pin Pile Load Test
- Other (describe): \_\_\_\_\_

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

- Seismic Tie Installation
- Parapet Braces
- Epoxy Grouting
- Structural Steel Embeds in Concrete
- Expansion Anchor Installation
- Epoxy-Grouted Anchor Installation
- Anchor Bolt Installation
- Other (describe): \_\_\_\_\_

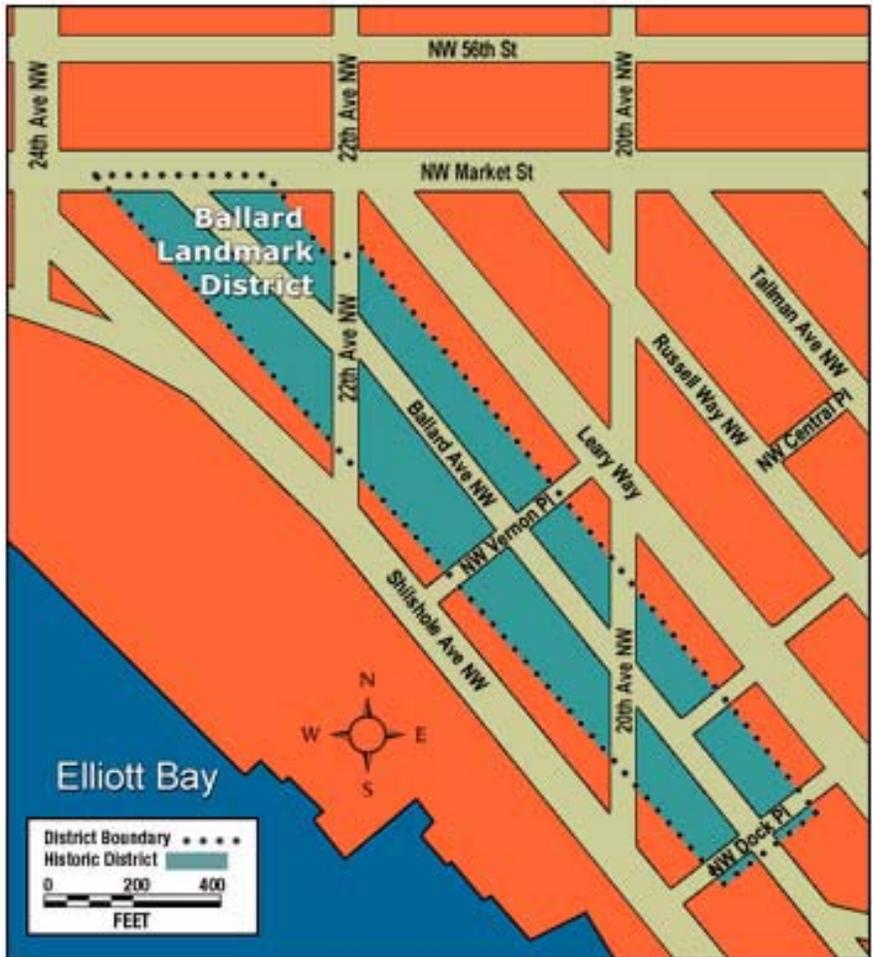
**STRUCTURAL STEEL:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fabrication          | <input type="checkbox"/> Erection      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steel Joist Erection | <input type="checkbox"/> Cast in Place |

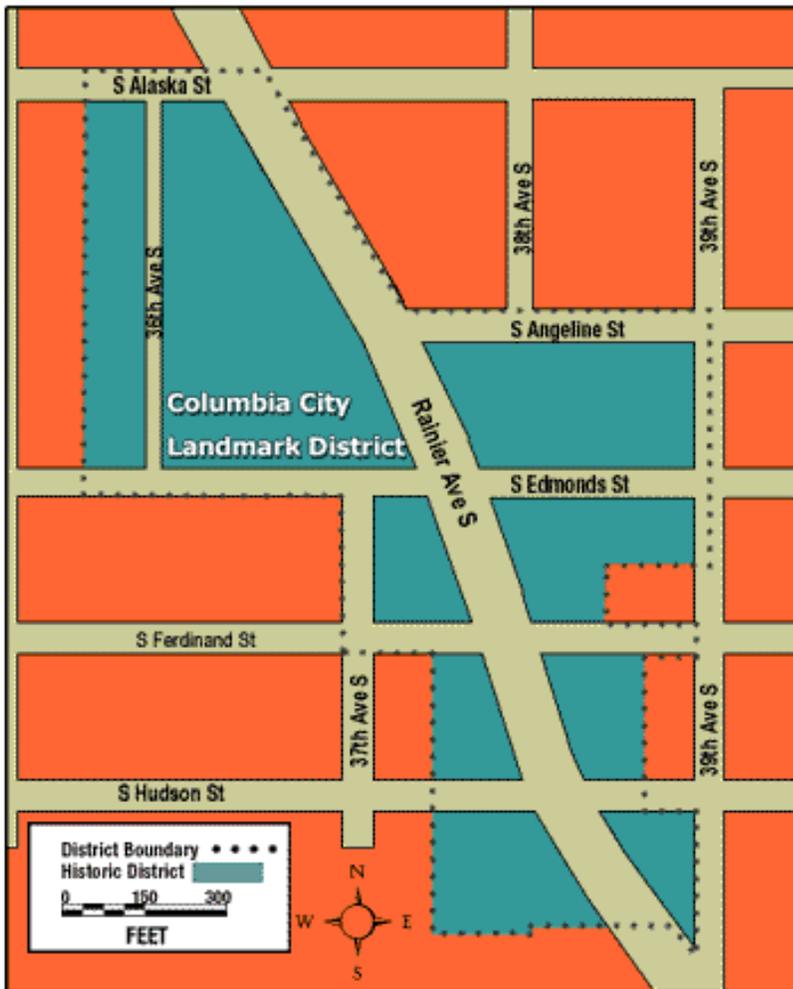


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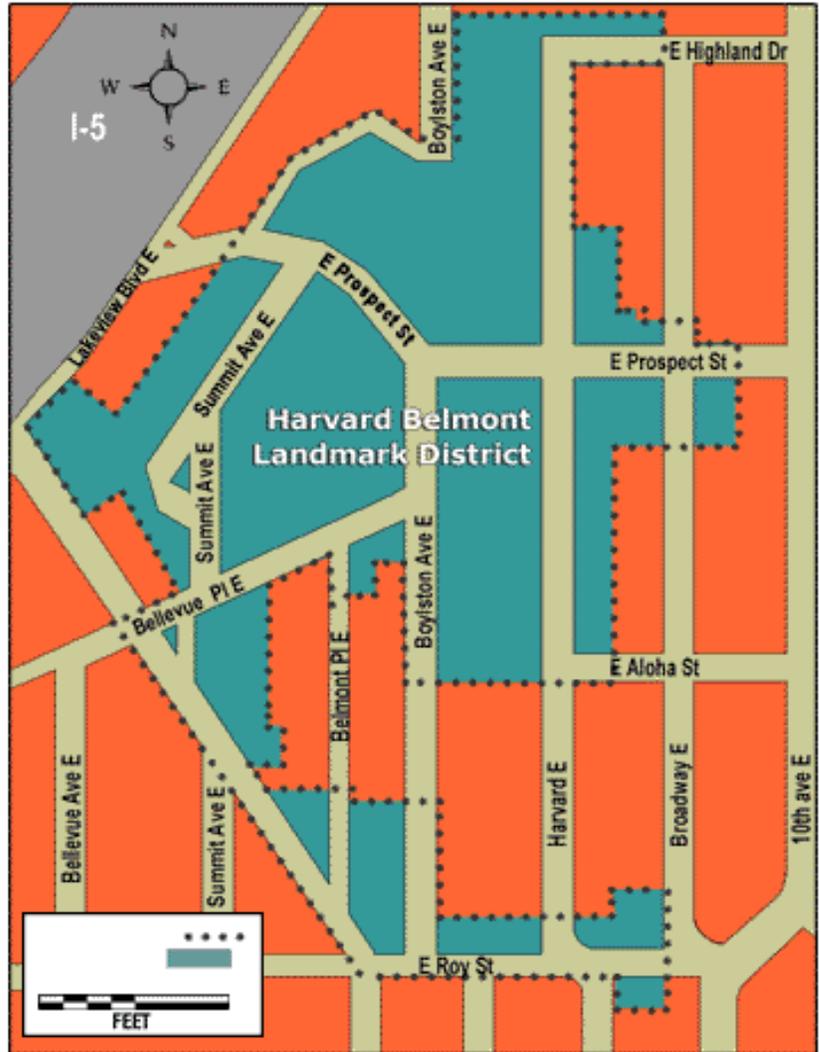
# Ballard Landmark District



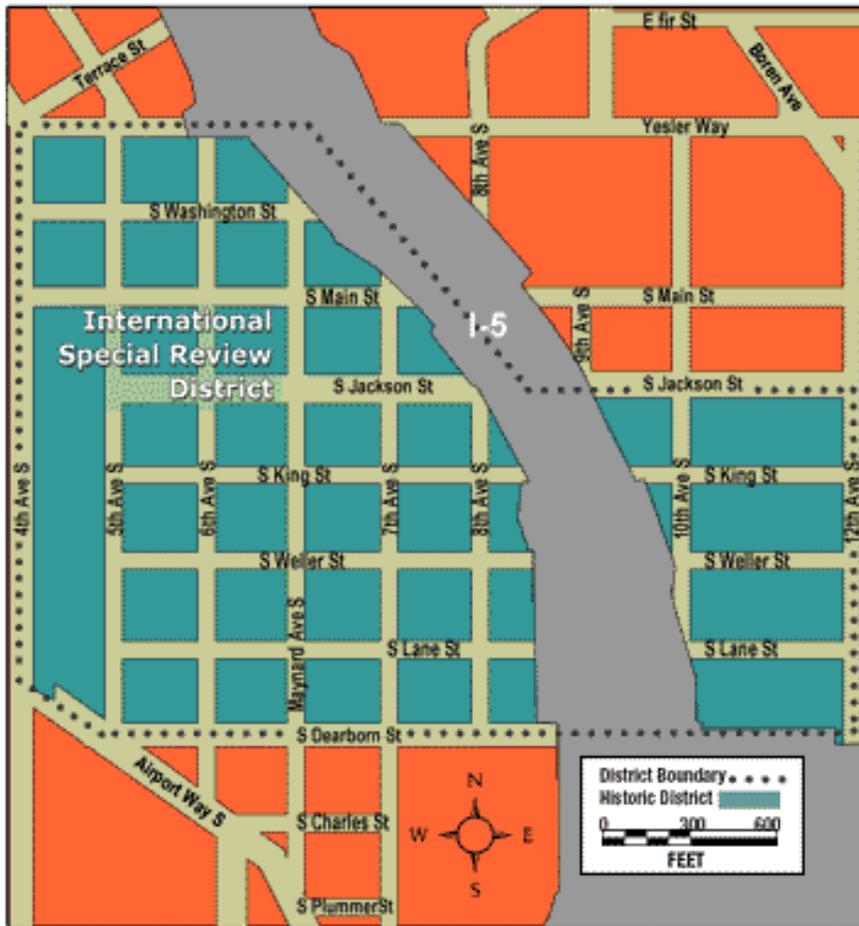
# Columbia City Landmark District



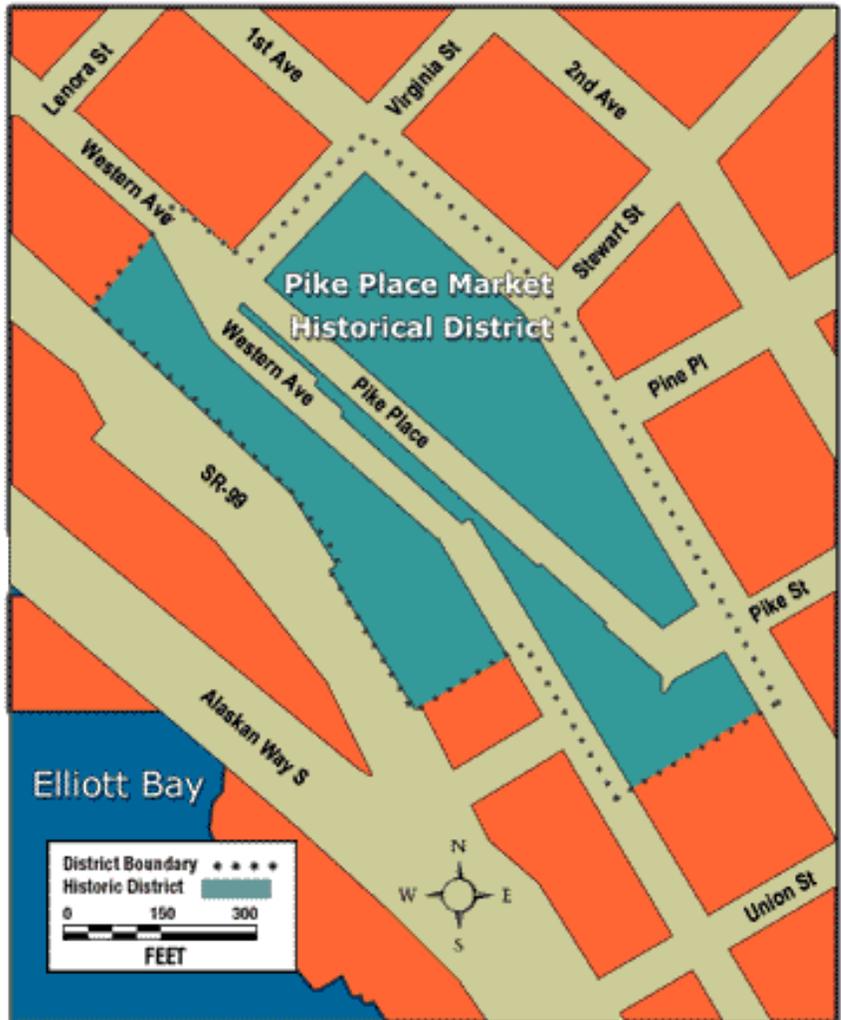
# Harvard Belmont Landmark District



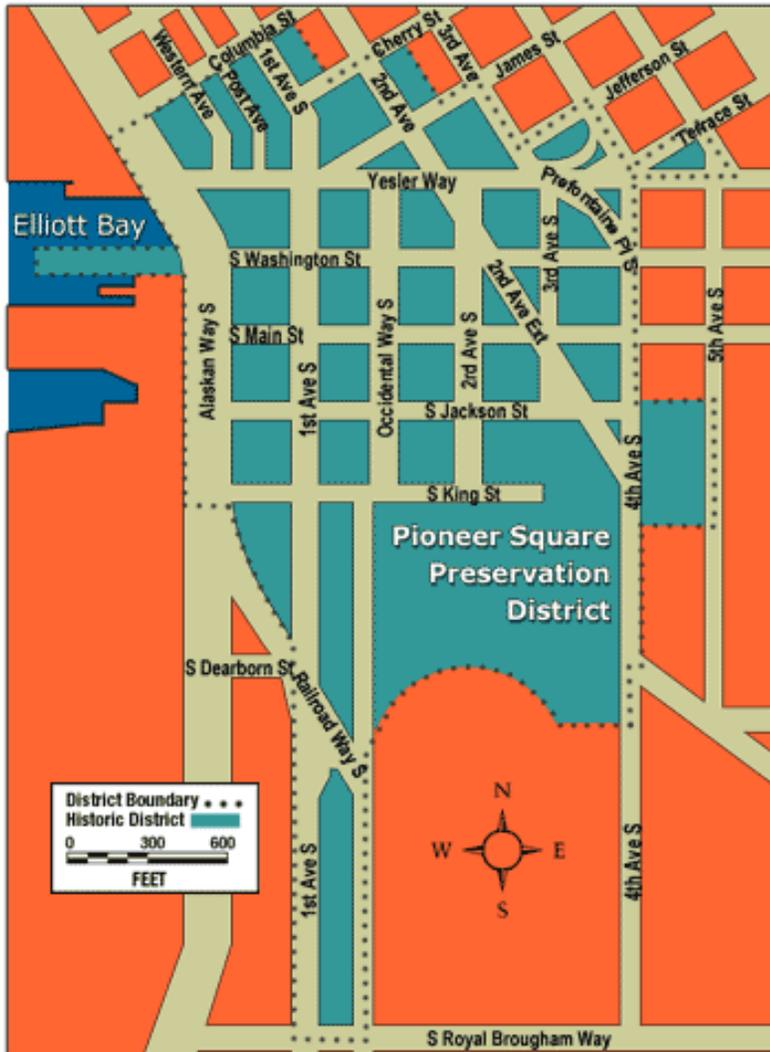
# International Special Review District



# Pike Place Market Historical District



# Pioneer Square Preservation District



## SIGN HANDBOOK UPDATES

If you would like to keep your Sign Handbook up to date and be notified of future amendments to the code reference sections of this publication, complete the form below and return it to:

Sign Inspections  
Department of Planning and Development  
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, Washington 98124-4019

If you return the form, DPD will notify you when supplemental pages are available.

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### 2005 SIGN HANDBOOK

I wish to be notified of future amendments to this handbook:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_