

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Sign, Awning & Billboard Permits

July 10, 2019

This Tip provides information about when you need a sign permit, the types of permits you might need, and steps to get a permit. For electrical signs we combine the electrical and sign permit together.

We require a sign permit when a sign is erected, re-erected, constructed, painted, posted, applied, altered, structurally revised, or repaired except when exempted by the Seattle Building Code. We require an awning permit when an awning is erected, constructed, altered, or structurally revised, or when an existing awning is covered with new fabric and when signage is installed onto an awning.

A sign permit allows you to install, alter, or LED retrofit lighting for any sign that has an area larger than 5 square feet or is connected to an electrical power source, including outline and border tube lighting. A sign permit also allows you to install or alter an awning, including re-covering an existing awning with a new material or changing or adding a business name on an existing awning. We will issue your sign permit after we review your application and plans, and confirm your plans meet the City's code requirements.

Signs, awnings and canopy installations are regulated by the [Seattle Land Use Code 23.55](#), [Seattle Building Code](#), [Seattle Electrical Code](#), and [Seattle Energy Code](#).

Types of Permits

We have two types of sign permit applications, one for on-premises signs and one for off-premises advertising signs (billboards).

On-premises signs are used at the business location to identify the business's name, goods, and services available at that business. On-premises signs can also

be used for non-commercial messages. Most new sign permits are for on-premises signs.

Off-premises signs are billboard signs advertising products that are not related to a specific business location. The City requires you to register billboards in Seattle and renew the registration every year. Billboards are limited to existing registration numbers. The City prohibits new billboard installations, except for existing billboard registration numbers that have relocation rights.

If your sign is connected to electrical power, an electrical permit is included with your sign permit when you complete the illumination information on the application. You will need to indicate the number of branch circuits your sign requires. Electrical signs must be installed by a qualified licensed electrical contractor, unless the sign is installed by the owner.

Steps to Get a Permit

All new sign, awning, and canopy permits are applied for and issued through the Seattle Services Portal (<https://cosaccela.seattle.gov/portal/>). To get started in the portal, you will first need to register for an account. Once you have an account, you can begin a new application by selecting "Permits – Trade, Construction & Land Use" from the Seattle Services Portal home page. Before you begin, be sure to have all your project information ready, including electronic plans of your project in pdf format.

The required information includes:

- Name, work site address, and contact information for the business establishment using the sign (sign owner)
- Building or property owner's name, address, and contact information
- Installation contractors contact name, address, contact information, and Washington state contractor's license number and expiration date unless the project will not be installed by the business owner
- Site plan showing the businesses street frontage and property line relationship to the proposed sign



- Elevation of the structure to which the proposed sign, awning, or canopy will be installed
- Sign, awning, or canopy construction drawings showing the copy, graphics, configuration, sign area in square feet, overall height and width dimensions, and the distance the sign will project from the structure
- Installation and attachment detail drawings showing how the sign, awning, or canopy will connect to the structure
- If your sign, awning, or canopy will project beyond the property line and overhang the public right-of-way, you may also need a separate Seattle Department of Transportation public space permit
- The certificate of approval from the Department of Neighborhoods Historic Preservation program if the site or building where your project is to be installed is designated as a Seattle historic landmark, or is located within a historic landmark district

Generally, sign, awning and canopy permits applications are processed, reviewed and issued within 5 business days of receipt. If you need to make corrections, our sign reviewer will contact you for more information.

Fees

You must pay your fees before we issue your permit. You can pay with a credit or debit card online, or you can contact our cashier for alternative payment arrangements. See *How to Pay Fees* (<https://seattlegov.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/115005864427-How-to-Pay-Fees>) or *How to Pay by Check* (<https://seattlegov.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/115005228247-How-Do-I-Pay-by-Check->)

For signs, we charge a basic fee for the first 32 square feet of sign area. We charge an additional amount for each additional 10 square feet.

For awnings, canopies, and border-tube or outline lighting installations, we charge a fee based on the total value of the labor and materials required to manufacture and install your project. We also charge a fee for any electrical branch circuits required for your project.

You can find our fees in the SDCI's Fee Subtitle posted on our fees webpage: [www.seattle.gov/sdci/codes/codes-we-enforce-\(a-z\)/fees](http://www.seattle.gov/sdci/codes/codes-we-enforce-(a-z)/fees).

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of **SDCI Tips, Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Resources" page of our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this Tip, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.