

CITY OF PORTLAND, TENNESSEE

Sign Permit Guidelines



The Portland Sign Regulations control the type, location, and size of individual signs as well as the total amount of signage per lot. This document is intended to be a guide to understanding the sign regulations and how to fill out a sign permit. In the event of conflict between this document and the Zoning Ordinance the Zoning Ordinance shall control. Sign regulations are determined by the zoning of the lot, to confirm the property's zoning go to:

cityofportlandtn.gov/departments/planning/gis/

A digital copy of the sign permit can be found at:

cityofportlandtn.gov/departments/planning/planning-applications/

Definitions

This is a list of definitions of frequently used signs. A complete list of definitions relating to the sign regulations can be found in the Sign Regulations section of the Portland Zoning Ordinance.

Banner: Any sign of lightweight fabric or similar material that is securely mounted to a pole or a building. National flags, state or municipal flags, or the official flag of any institution or business shall not be considered banners.

Billboard: An off-premises sign that is affixed to or erected upon a freestanding framework that directs attention to a profession, business, commodity, service, product or entertainment conducted, sold, or offered at a location other than the premises on which the sign is located.

Changeable copy sign: A sign or portion thereof with characters, letters, or illustrations that can be changed or rearranged without altering the face or the surface of the sign. A sign on which the message changes more than eight times per day shall be considered an animated sign and not a changeable copy sign for purposes of this ordinance. A sign on which the only copy that changes is an electronic or mechanical indication of time or temperature shall be considered a "time and temperature" portion of a sign and not a changeable copy sign for purposes of this ordinance.

Electronic Message Center (EMC): Any sign or portion of a sign that uses changing lights to form a sign message or messages in text form wherein the sequence of messages and the rate of change is electronically programmed and can be modified by electronic processes. This definition includes electronic changeable copy signs.

Freestanding sign: Any sign supported by structures or supports that are placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that are independent from any building or other structure.

Incidental sign: A sign, generally informational, that has a purpose secondary to the use of the zone lot on which it is located, such as "no parking", "entrance", "loading only", "telephone", and other similar directives. No sign with a commercial message legible from a position off the zone lot on which the sign is located shall be considered incidental.

Monument sign: A freestanding sign supported primarily by an internal structural framework or integrated into landscaping or other solid structural features other than support poles. The

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perimeter of monument signs is to be constructed of masonry, and such signs shall be externally lit.

Portable sign: A sign not permanently attached to the ground or other permanent structure, or a sign designed to be transported, but not including trailer signs (as herein defined); signs converted to A- or T-frames; menu or sandwich board signs; spring board signs; balloons used as signs; umbrellas used for advertising; and signs attached to or painted on vehicles parked and visible from the public right-of-way, unless said vehicle is used in the normal day-to-day operations of a business.

Temporary sign: Any sign that is used only temporarily and is not permanently mounted.

Wall sign: Any sign attached parallel to, but within six (6) inches of, a wall, painted on the wall surface of, or erected and confined within the limits of an outside wall of any building or structure, which is supported by such wall or building, and which displays only one (1) sign surface.

Window sign: Any sign, pictures, symbol, or combination, thereof, designed to communicate information about an activity, business, commodity, event, sale, or service, that is placed inside a window or upon the window panes or glass and is visible from the exterior of the window.

Temporary Signs

This is a brief overview of the temporary sign regulations out of the Portland Sign Regulations, the complete regulations can be found in the Sign Regulations section of the Zoning Ordinance.

- Temporary signs are required to be permitted. Permits are effective for sixty (60) days.
- Temporary signs may not be placed in the public Right-of-Way and may not create a traffic visibility issue.
- Political signs are permitted for a period not to exceed sixty (60) days prior to an election and removed within three (3) days following such election. This time period shall include weekends and each day shall begin and end at 12:00 noon.
- **Temporary business signs** are subject to the following requirements:
 - Only one (1) temporary sign is permitted per business
 - A freestanding sign may not exceed 18" X 24".
 - Temporary commercial banners shall not exceed forty (40) square feet shall be allowed upon the issuance of a temporary sign permit.
 - Portable signs, including A- or T-frame; menu or sandwich board signs may not be larger than thirty (30) by thirty-six (36) inches in size.
- **Temporary inflatable signs and tethered balloons** are subject to the following requirements:
 - A temporary sign permit shall allow the use of an inflatable sign or tethered balloon for a period not to exceed seven (7) days.
 - No balloon or inflatable sign shall exceed ten (10) feet in height (Height of actual balloon or sign).

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- **Temporary garage sale signs** are subject to the following requirements:
 - One (1) temporary sign announcing a garage sale may be erected on the property for which it advertises. It shall not exceed eight (8) square feet in sign area per face. Property with two (2) or more frontages shall be permitted one (1) additional sign per frontage. Such signs may be posted only between Wednesday at noon and Monday at noon.
- **Temporary for sale signs** are subject to the following requirements:
 - For Sale signs of not more than sixteen (16) square feet pertaining to the sale, lease or rental of the property where such sign is located may be permitted subject to the following provisions. If the said property faces more than one (1) street, one (1) sign may be allowed for each frontage. Each such sign shall be located not nearer than ten (10) feet to a street right-of-way.
- **Temporary construction/development signs** are subject to the following requirements:
 - A sign of not more than sixteen (16) square feet indicating the name of the contractors, engineers, developers and/or architects of a construction project. Temporary shall mean in connection with this sign the period of time commencing with construction of the project and terminating with completion of the project.
- **Temporary open house signs** are subject to the following requirements:
 - "Open House" signs of not more than sixteen (16) square feet pertaining to the sale, lease or rental of the property may be permitted subject to the following provisions. Such signs may be posted only between Friday at noon and Monday at noon. Each such sign shall be located not nearer than ten (10) feet to a street right-of-way.

Permanent Signs

This is a brief overview of the permanent sign regulations out of the Portland Sign Regulations, the complete regulations are located in the Sign Regulations section of the Zoning Ordinance. Maximum individual sign area is outlined in the table below. Other maximum signage regulations by zoning district are outlined in the Sign Regulations section of the Zoning Ordinance.

Freestanding signs

Freestanding signs are regulated by number allowed on the lot and maximum size. Size and number allowed are dependent on the zoning of the property.

Freestanding signs on any premises shall be spaced at minimum intervals of two hundred (200) feet along each public way which views the premises. In the event that less than two hundred (200) feet of any premises is visible from any one public way, only one (1) sign shall be permitted along that public way

1. Residential and Office Subdivision
 - i. Residential and office subdivisions may erect freestanding identification and information signs.
 - ii. Located at the primary entrance(s) to the development/subdivision.

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- iii. These signs shall not exceed sixteen (16) square feet in area, and any permit issued for such signs shall not exceed twelve (12) months duration.
2. Other freestanding signs:
 - i. shall be limited to one (1) per entrance, but no more than a total of two (2) such signs for the development.

Wall signs

Wall signs may not exceed 25% of the wall area. Wall area includes the area of the wall the sign will be located on not including window and door openings.

Window signs

Window signs shall not exceed 25% of the total window area.

Electronic Messaging Center

- Only one (1) EMC sign is permitted on a lot or parcel.
- EMC signs must be at least one hundred fifty (150) feet from the nearest existing residence.
- EMC signs shall not exceed thirty-six (36) square feet of electronic copy area. EMC signs shall be included in the overall sign allowances.
- Electronic graphic display signs shall not project images or messages into the sky, or onto buildings or other objects.
- The illumination of the sign shall not exceed 3.0 foot-candles over ambient lighting conditions, day or night. Measurements shall be as prescribed in the document "Recommended Brightness Levels on On-Premise Electronic Message Centers" published by the International Sign Association.
- All EMCs are required to have automatic dimming capability that adjusts the brightness to the ambient light at all times of the day and night.
- A malfunctioning sign shall be programmed to shut down.
- The sign is not a nonconforming sign. Nonconforming signs are not allowed to convert to electronic/digital changeable copy, unless the sign as an element of its nonconformity already has such electronic/digital changeable copy.
- Shall be of high-resolution quality (10mm minimum).
- The electronic message center message shall not change more than once every seven (7) seconds. Such EMC shall contain messages without rapid movement or flashing. The transition duration between messages shall be instantaneous or may dissolve or fade with a duration of not to exceed one (1) second.
- The electronic message center message shall only contain messages related to the on-premise use except for community, non-profit, and City of Portland events.

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Figure 1: Number, dimensions, and location of individual signs by district

Sign Type	All RS	All RSD	All RM	R-MHP	COM. FAC., (a)	OPS & NSD	ISD	GCS	HCD	CBD	I-R	I-G	I-S
FREESTANDING													
Area (sq. ft.)	8	8	12	12	40	40	160	80	160	60	80	80	320
Height (ft.) (e)	5	5	5	5	6, b	6, b	18	18	18	6, b	18	18	18
Setback (ft.)	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	18
Number Permitted (e)													
1. Per Zone Lot	1	1	NA	NA	1	NA	1						
2. Per Feet of Street Frontage	NA	NA	1 per 200	1 per 200	NA	1 per 100	1 per 200	1 per 100	1 per 200	1 per 200	1 per 800	1 per 200	NA
BUILDING													
Area (Maximum sq. ft.)	8	8	12	12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wall Area (Percent), (d)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	25	25	25	25	25	25	15	15
a. This column does not represent a zoning district. It applies to institutional uses permitted under the zoning ordinance in residential zoning districts. Such uses may include, but are not necessarily limited to, churches, schools, funeral homes, and cemeteries.													
b. Within these districts, all freestanding signs shall be monument signs, as defined in Section 4-202, (DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS).													
c. In addition to the setback requirements on this table, signs shall be located such that there is at every street intersection a clear view between heights of three (3) feet and ten (10) feet in a triangle formed by the corner and points on the curb thirty (30) feet from the intersection or entrance way. Exception to this setback requirement is contained in Section 4-205.													
d. The percentage figure here shall mean the percentage of the area of the wall of which such sign is a part or to which each such sign is most nearly parallel. Provided, however, that the area of such signs shall not exceed the area of a freestanding sign permitted for the property.													
f. See Subsection 4-203.4, for limitations on the number and height of freestanding signs located within developments covered by common signage plans.													
e. Signs shall be placed on private property and not within the right-of-way of any street. A sign shall be measured to the nearest edge.													

Signs That Do Not Require a Permit

Not all signs are required to be permitted. Listed below are the types of sign exempted from the permitting requirements.

- A. Any public notice or warning required by a valid and applicable Federal, state, or local law, regulation, or ordinance;
- B. Any sign that is not legible from a distance of more than three (3) feet beyond the lot line of the zone lot or parcel on which such sign is located;
- C. Works of art that do not include a commercial message;
- D. Holiday lights and decorations with no commercial message, but only in conjunction with the appropriate holiday;
- E. Private street name and traffic control signs on private property, such as Stop, Yield, and similar signs, the face of which meet Department of Transportation standards and which contain no commercial message of any sort.
- F. "No trespassing", "no hunting", "no fishing", "no loitering", and like signs not exceeding one (1) square foot in area;
- G. Incidental signs as defined by this article; and

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- H. On-premise identification signs for home occupations provided that only one (1) unlighted sign not exceeding four (4) square feet in area may be permitted on any zone lot and that any such sign shall contain only the name of the business and/or the business owner.

Prohibited Signs

Signs prohibited within the City Limits of Portland are listed below.

- A. Beacons;
- B. Pennants and streamers;
- C. Strings of lights not permanently mounted to a rigid background, except those exempt under the provision of Section 4-206; and
- D. Inflatable signs and tethered balloons not in accordance with Subsection 4-205.5.
- E. Signs painted on or attached to trees, fence posts, rocks or other natural features, telephone or utility poles, or painted on the roofs of building visible from any public thoroughfare;
- F. Signs using the words "stop", "danger", or any other word, phrase, symbol or character in a manner that misleads, confuses or distracts a vehicle driver;
- G. Trailer signs;
- H. Roof Signs;
- I. Any sign or sign structure other than freestanding and vertical wall extension, any portion of which extends above the parapet, building roof line or canopy against which the sign is located;
- J. Signs, Off-Premises
- K. Billboards

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Measuring Signs

Individual Signs

Individual signs shall be measured by the means of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or combination thereof that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or structure against which it is placed, but not including any supporting framework, bracing, or decorative fence or wall when such fence or wall otherwise meets zoning ordinance regulations and is clearly incidental to the display itself.



Multi-Faced Signs

The sign area for a sign with more than one face shall be computed by adding together the area of all sign faces visible from any one point. When two (2) identical sign faces are placed back to back, so that both faces cannot be viewed from any point at the same time, and when such sign faces are part of the same sign structure, the sign area shall be computed by the measurement of one of the faces.



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Sign Height

The height of a sign shall be computed as the distance from the base of the sign at normal grade to the top of the highest point of the sign face.

Calculating Total Signage

The maximum total signage per lot is determined by the smallest of the following calculations:

1. Maximum signage area per lot
2. Percentage of ground floor of the principle building
3. Square feet of signage per linear foot of street frontage.
 - * Street frontage is the length of the property line (not just the building) along the street. For double frontage and corner lots the street frontage is measured for all property lines along the street.



Figure 2: Maximum total sign area per zone lot by zoning district

The maximum total area of all signs on a zone lot except incidental, building marker, temporary signs in compliance with Section 11-105, and identification signs, and flags, shall not exceed the lesser of the following:													
	All RS	All RSD	RM-1	R-MHP	COM. FAC., (a)	OPS & NSD	ISD	GCS	HCD	HSD	CBD	I-R	I-G & I-S
Maximum Area (in sq. ft.)	8	8	150	150	100	100	400	400	400	400	400	400	1,000
Percentage of Ground Floor Area of Principal Building	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4%	6%	10%	2%	8%	2%	2%	2%
Square Feet of Signage per Linear Foot of Street Frontage	NA	NA	0.5	0.5	0.5	2.0	3.0	6.0	4.0	4.0	1.0	NA	NA
NOTES:													
(a) This column does not represent a zoning district. It applies to institutional uses permitted under the zoning ordinance in residential zoning districts. Such uses may include, but are not necessarily limited to, churches, schools, parks, and hospitals. (See Article III, for full listing).													

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Examples of Types of Signs:

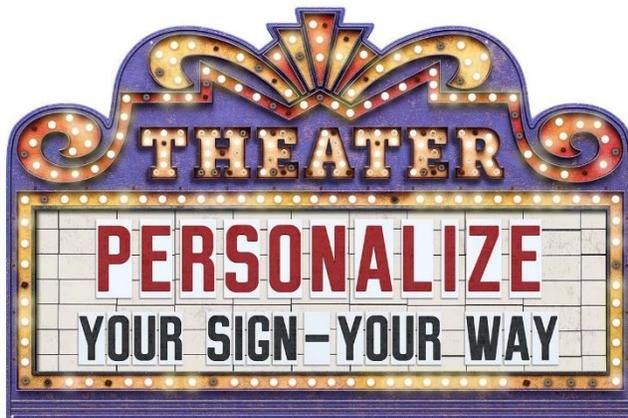
Banner Sign:



Canopy Sign:



Marquee Sign:



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Projecting Sign:



Window Sign:



Residential Sign:



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Roof, Integral Sign:



Suspended Sign:



Wall Sign:

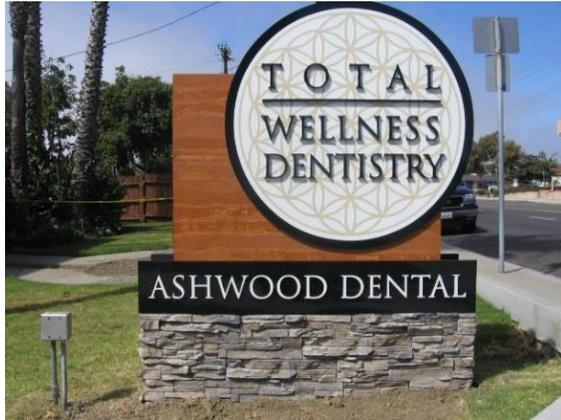


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Monument Sign:



Changeable Copy Sign:



Trailer Sign:



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Electronic Messaging Center:



Interstate Sign:

