

# A Guide to Ashland's Sign Code Downtown District

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## Permitted Signs and Specific Guidelines

Sign Types	1
Wall Signs .	2
Ground Signs	3
Marquee or Awning Signs	4
Projection Signs	5
Three Dimensional Signs	6
Exempt Incidental Signs	7-8
Portable Business Signs	9
Temporary Signs	10
Prohibited Signs	11
Historic Signs	12
Sign Permit Process	13

The City of Ashland Sign Ordinance recognizes the important function of signs and the need to safeguard and enhance the economic and aesthetic values in the City of Ashland. This guide is intended to assist businesses in understanding the allowances and restrictions that apply. Additionally City Staff within the Department of Community Development at 51 Winburn Way are available to discuss application of the sign code to a particular business or property.

The Oregon Constitution, Article 1 Section 8, provides for freedom of speech and press, and these protections extend to content of signage.

**“No law shall be passed restraining the free expression of opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print freely on any subject whatever”**



Department of Community Development  
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In keeping with this essential Constitutional right, the City of Ashland does not regulate the content of any sign, rather it is the area, material, and placement of various sign types that is governed by the Sign Code (Chapter 18.4.7 of the Land Use Ordinance) .

# Sign Types

## Common Sign Types:

### Wall Sign

A sign attached to or erected against the wall of a building with the face in a parallel plane of the building wall.

### Ground Sign

A sign erected on a free-standing frame, mast or pole and not attached to any building. Also known as a “free-standing sign”.

### Marquee or Awning Sign

A sign which is painted on, attached to, or supported by a marquee, awning or canopy.

### Portable Sign

A permitted sign not permanently attached to the ground or other permanent structure including sandwich boards, pedestal signs, 'A' Frame signs, flags, and wind signs (not including flags of national, state or city governments).

### Projecting Signs

Signs other than wall signs, which are attached to and project from a structure or building face, usually perpendicular to the building face.

### Three-Dimensional Sign

A sign which has a depth or relief on its surface greater than six inches exclusive of the supporting sign structure, and not to include projecting wall signs.



# Wall Signs



A *Wall Sign* is a sign which is attached to or erected against the wall of a building in which the face is parallel to the plane of the building wall. Often the most prominent signage on a building's frontage, a wall sign also has the greatest allowable area within the Sign Ordinance. For a primary business frontage with a pedestrian entrance open to the public, depending on the amount of street frontage these signs can potentially be as large as 60 square feet in size.

## Permitted Wall Signs 18.4.7.070(B)

**1. Number.** Two signs per building frontage shall be permitted for each business, or one sign per frontage for a group of businesses occupying a single common space or suite.

**2. Area.** Buildings with two or fewer business frontages shall be permitted one square foot of sign area for each lineal foot of business frontage. For the third and subsequent business frontage on a single building, the business shall be permitted one square foot of sign area for every two lineal feet of business frontage. The maximum sign area on any single business frontage shall not exceed 60 square feet. Business frontages of three or more, on a single building, shall comply with all of the following standards established in chapter 18.4.2 Building Placement, Orientation, and Design.

a. A pedestrian entrance designed to be attractive and functional, and open to the public during all business hours.

b. The pedestrian entrance shall be accessed from a walkway connected to a public sidewalk.

**3. Projection.** Signs may project a maximum of two feet from the face of the building to which they are attached, provided the lowest portion of the sign is at least eight feet above grade. Any portion lower than eight feet may only project four inches.

**4. Extension Above Roofline.** Signs shall not project above the roof or eave line of the building.

# Ground Signs

Buildings within Ashland's downtown have historically been developed right to the property line, thus there is typically not an opportunity for the installation of a Ground Sign. However for commercial, employment and industrial properties outside the downtown, or those few properties with available land within the historic downtown, a Ground Sign can be installed in lieu of one Wall Sign of equal area.

## Permitted Ground Signs 18.4.7.070(C)

**1. Number.** One sign, in lieu of a wall sign, shall be permitted for each lot with a street frontage in excess of 50 lineal feet. Corner lots can count one street frontage. Two or more parcels of less than 50 feet may be combined for purposes of meeting the foregoing standard.

**2. Area.** Signs shall not exceed an area of one square foot for each two lineal feet of street frontage, with a maximum area of 60 square feet per sign.

**3. Placement.** Signs shall be placed so that no sign or portion thereof shall extend beyond any property line of the premises on which such sign is located. Signs on corner properties shall also comply with the vision clearance area requirements of section 18.2.4.040.

**4. Height.** No ground sign shall be in excess of five feet above grade.



## Limitations:

As with all sign types there are specific regulations that prohibit such things as movable copy, moving or animated components, sound devices, exposed sources of illumination (see section on prohibited signs 18.4.7.050). Additionally for businesses within a designated Historic District like the downtown, the use of plastic as a material, and internal illumination of signs, are also prohibited by ordinance. (see 18.4.7.050I).

# Marquee or Awning Signs

Awnings and marquees are functional elements of a building that serve to protect pedestrians, windows, and entries from the elements. Including lettering and logos directly upon an awning or marquee can help a business better identify the primary entrance and also provide signage visible from angles perhaps not accommodated by a wall sign. Often businesses will have one wall sign and one awning sign to comprise the two allowable signs per business frontage.

## Permitted Marquee or Awning Signs 18.4.7.070 D

- 1. Number.** A maximum of two signs shall be permitted for each business frontage in lieu of wall signs.
- 2. Area.** Signs shall not exceed the permitted aggregate sign area not taken up by a wall sign.
- 3. Projection.** Signs shall not project beyond the face of the marquee if suspended, or above the face of the marquee if attached to and parallel to the face of the marquee.
- 4. Height.** Signs shall have a maximum face height of nine inches if placed below the marquee.
- 5. Clearance Above Grade.** The lowest portion of a sign attached to a marquee shall not be less than 7 ½ feet above grade.
- 6. Signs Painted on a Marquee.** Signs can be painted on the marquee in lieu of wall signs provided the signs do not exceed the permitted aggregate sign area not taken up by wall signs.



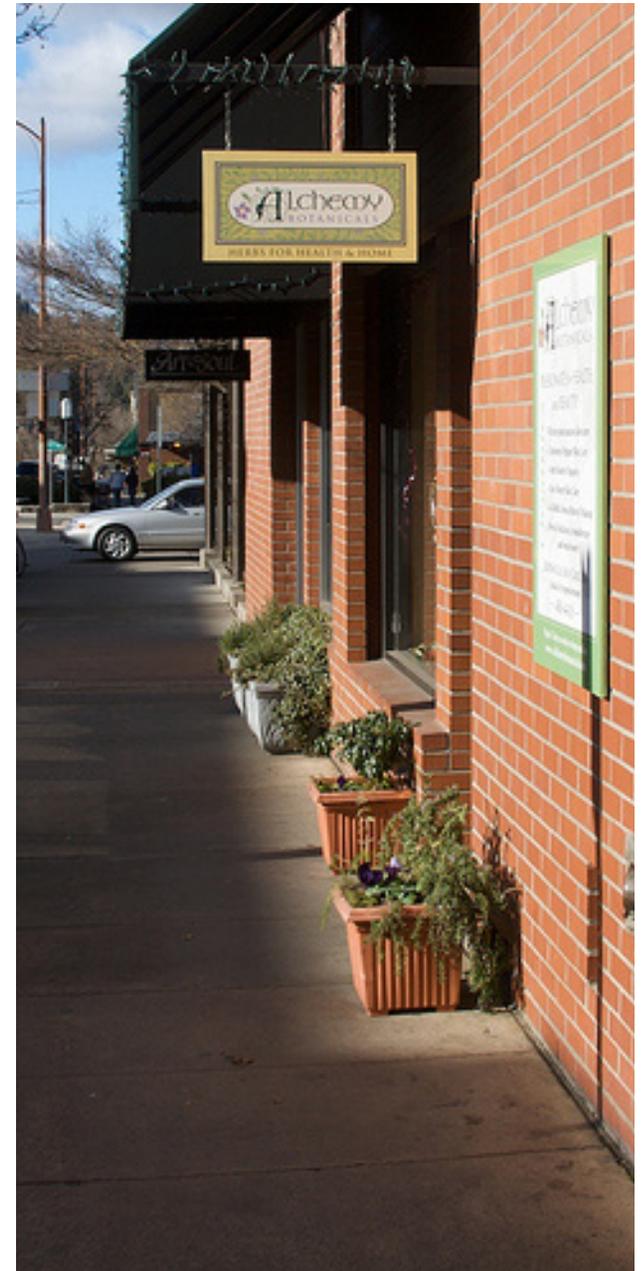
# Projection Signs

Projection Signs are those signs that are attached to, and project from, a structure or building's face, usually perpendicular to the wall. Like all signs, they can only be located on a business frontage that has an entrance which remains open to the public during regular business hours.

The area of these signs is limited to a maximum of 15 square feet and this area shall be deducted from the available wall sign allotment. As such signs are permanently affixed to the wall a building permit may be necessary in addition to a sign permit prior to installation.

## Permitted Projection Signs. 18.4.7.070.E

- 1. Number.** One sign shall be permitted for each business or group of businesses occupying a single common space or suite in lieu of a wall sign.
- 2. Area.** Except for marquee or awning signs, a projecting sign shall not exceed an area of one square foot for each two feet of lineal business frontage that is not already utilized by a wall sign. The maximum area of any projecting sign shall be 15 square feet.
- 3. Projection.** Signs may project from the face of the building to which they are attached a maximum of two feet if located eight feet above grade, or three feet if located nine feet above grade or more.
- 4. Height and Extension Above Roof Line.** Signs shall not extend above the roofline, eave or parapet wall of the building to which they are attached, or be lower than eight feet above grade.
- 5. Limitation on Placement.** No projecting sign shall be placed on any frontage on an arterial street as designated in the Comprehensive Plan.



# Three Dimensional Signs

## Small 3-D signs

A permit is required for the installation of any 3-D sign in which staff will ensure:

- The 3-D sign does not obstruct pedestrian movement
- The 3-D sign is less than three cubic feet in area (for example – the outer dimensions do not exceed 1' x 1' x 3').
- The 3-D sign is not made of plastic.



## Permitted Three-Dimensional Signs. 18.4.07.070.F

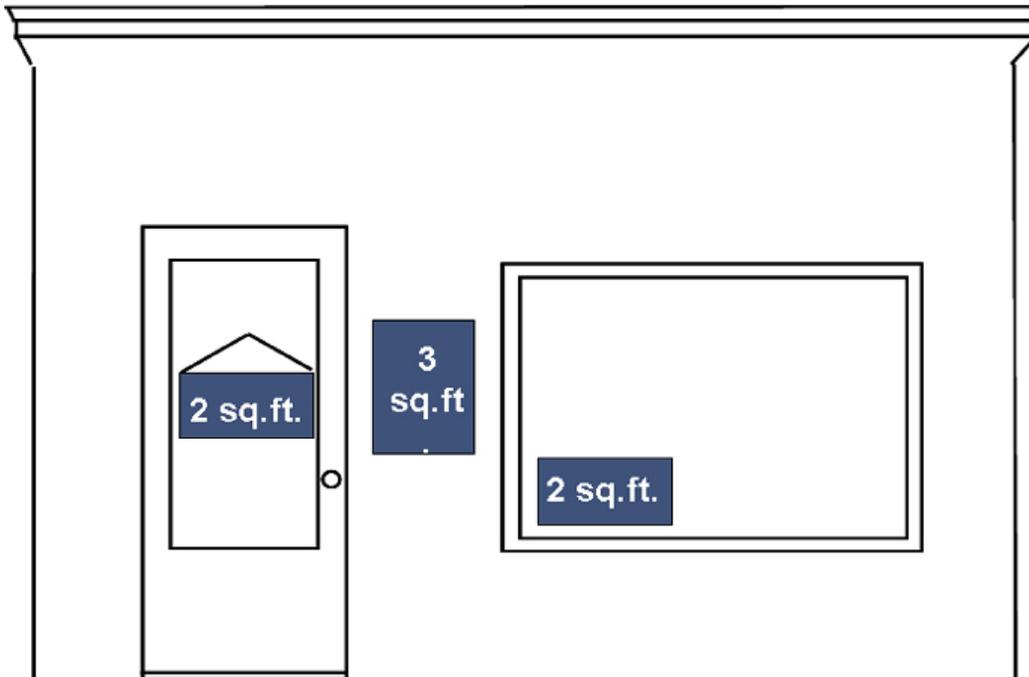
- 1. Number.** One three-dimensional sign shall be permitted for each lot in lieu of one three-square foot incidental sign otherwise allowed per 18.4.7.040.G.
- 2. Surface Area.** Flat surfaces in excess of two square feet shall count toward the total aggregate sign area per 18.4.7.070.A.4.
- 3. Placement.** The three-dimensional sign shall be located so that no sign or portion thereof is within a public pedestrian easement or extends beyond any property line of the premises on which such sign is located into the public right-of-way unless the sign is attached to the face of the building and located eight feet above grade, or the sign is attached to a marquee with the lowest portion of the sign not less than 7 ½ feet above grade not projecting beyond, or above, the face of the marquee.
- 4. Dimensions.** No three-dimensional sign shall have a height, width, or depth in excess of three feet.
- 5. Volume.** The volume of the three-dimensional sign shall be calculated as the entire volume within a rectangular cube enclosing the extreme limits of all parts of the sign and shall not exceed three cubic feet. For the purposes of calculating volume the minimum dimension for height, width, or depth shall be considered one foot.
- 6. Materials.** The three-dimensional signs shall be constructed of metal, wood, bronze, concrete, stone, glass, clay, fiberglass, or other durable material, all of which are treated to prevent corrosion or reflective glare. Three-dimensional signs shall not be constructed of plastic. Three-dimensional signs shall not be internally illuminated or contain any electrical component.

# Exempt Incidental Signs

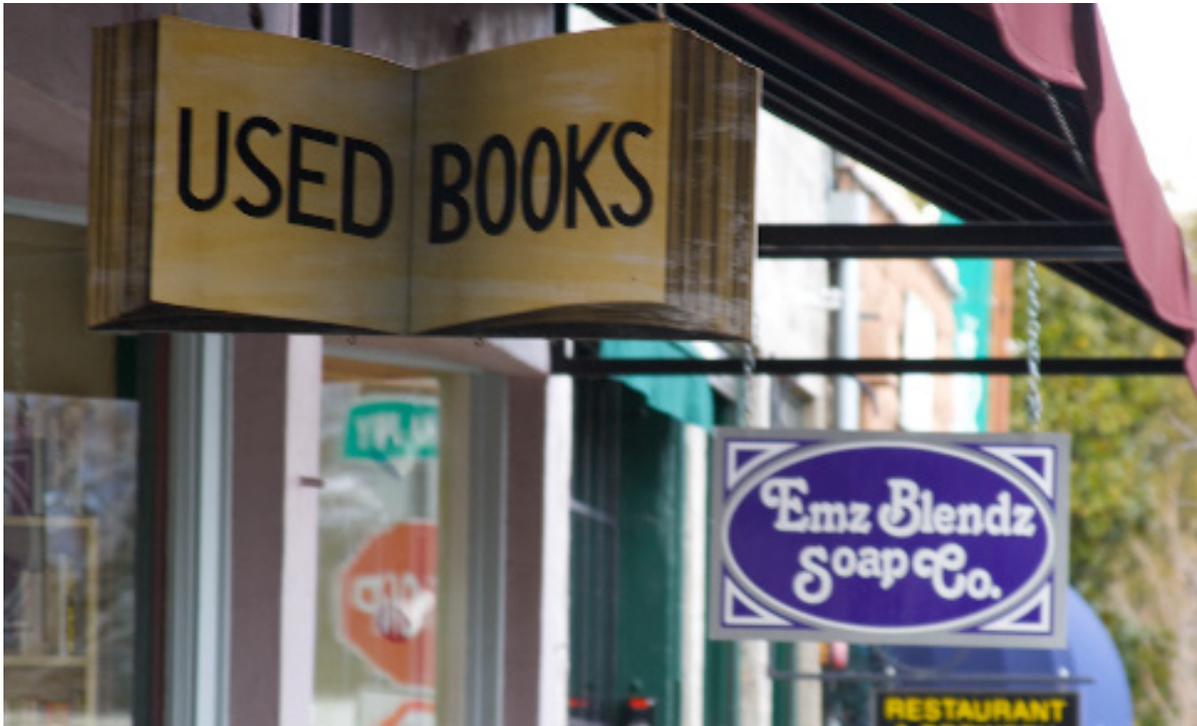
Small incidental signs can be installed along a business frontage without permit approval from the City.

Incidental signs are commonly seen as menu boards, open signs, small window signs noting hours of operation, and small hanging marquee signs. Although a permit is not required for these signs, there are limits on total number, area, materials and location.

	Downtown District	Other Commercial Districts
<b>Number allowable:</b>	Three individual exempt signs	Two individual exempt signs
<b>Maximum area:</b>	3 sq.ft. each	2 sq.ft. each
<b>Maximum cumulative area:</b>	7 sq.ft.	4 sq.ft.

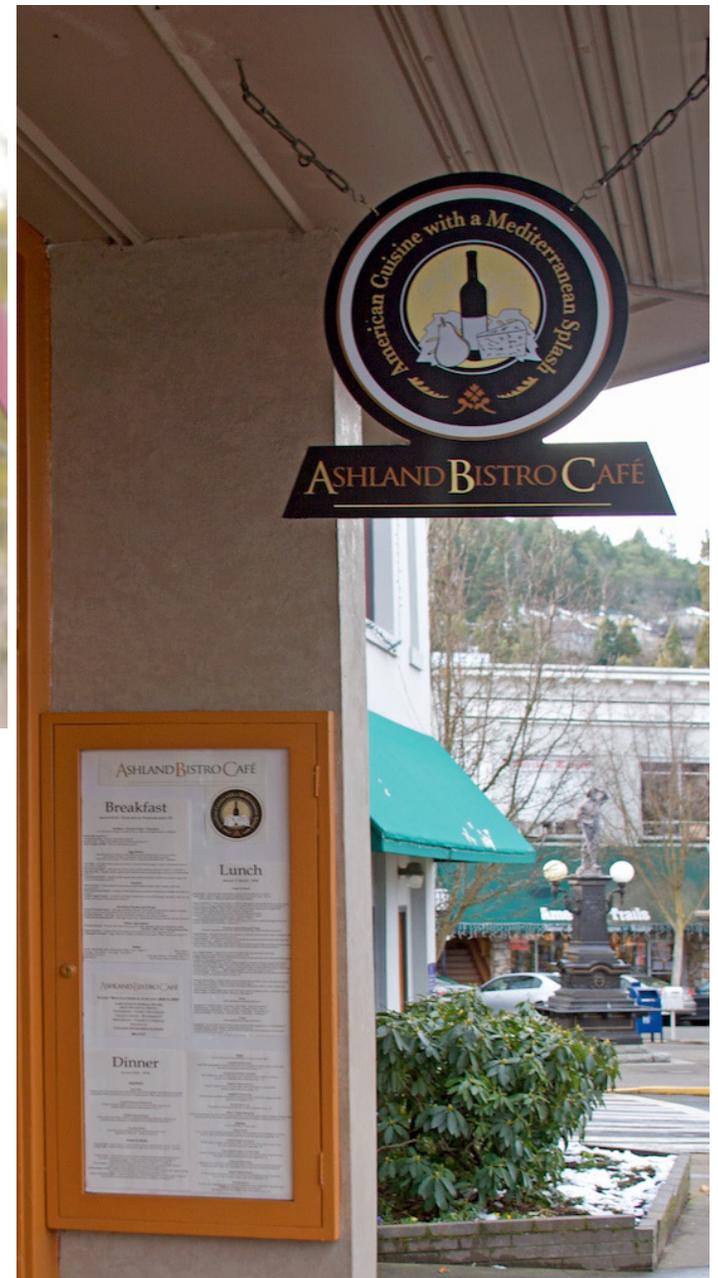


# Exempt Incidental Signs



In many cases businesses consider a small sign hanging below an awning as one of their allocated three incidental signs. These hanging signs must be located so that they are at least 7'6" above the sidewalk. These signs can not project out beyond the awning, or extend above an awning or marquee. In cases where a hanging sign exceeds the maximum area of an incidental sign, or when three incidental signs already exist, the area is counted against the allowable wall sign area .

*Portable Signs*, although counting against the maximum 7sq.ft. area allocation for exempt incidental signs, are regulated under a separate section of the Sign Code (18.4.7.070.G). This section contains specific requirements on size, location and materials. Portable signs also require permit approval.



# Portable Signs

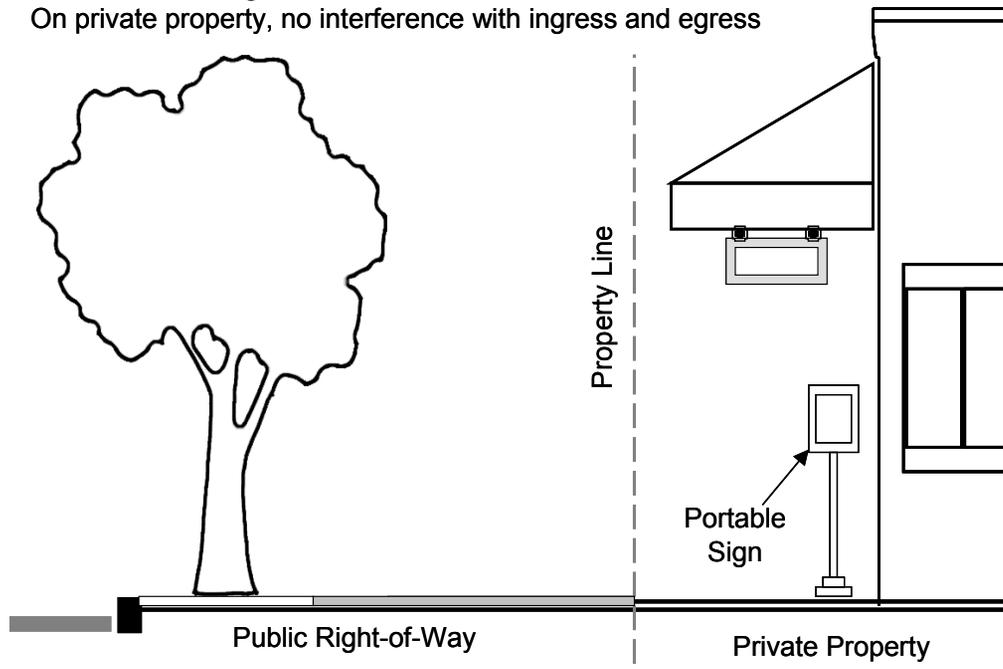
## Portable sandwich boards and pedestal signs

A permit is required for the installation of any portable sign in which City staff will ensure

- The portable sign is located on private property, within ten feet of the business entrance, and shall not be placed on the public sidewalk.
- The portable sign does not obstruct pedestrian movement
- The portable sign is less than four square feet in area.
- The portable sandwich board is less than three feet tall, and pedestal signs are less than four feet tall.
- The portable sign is not made of plastic
- The portable sign is brought indoors when the business is closed.

## Portable Sign Locations

On private property, no interference with ingress and egress



## Portable Business Signs 18.4.070.G

**1. Number.** One portable business sign, limited to sandwich boards, pedestal signs, 'A' frame signs, flags, and wind signs, shall be allowed on each lot excepting that buildings, businesses, shopping centers, and business complexes with permanent ground signs shall not be permitted to have portable signs.

**2. Area.** Sign area shall be deducted from the aggregate sign allowed for exempt incidental signs established in 18.4.7.040.G. Signs shall not exceed an area of four square feet per face including any border or trim, and there shall be no more than two faces.

**3. Height.** Sandwich board signs and 'A' frame signs shall not extend more than three feet above the ground on which it is placed. Pedestal signs shall not extend more than four feet above the ground on which it is placed. A freestanding wind sign shall not extend more than five feet above the ground on which it is placed.

**4. Placement.** Signs shall be placed so that no sign or portion thereof shall extend beyond any property line of the premises on which such sign is located. Portable signs shall be located within ten feet of the business entrance and shall not be placed on public right-of-way. No portable business sign shall be constructed and placed so as to interfere with pedestrian ingress and egress as regulated within AMC Title 13.

**5. General Limitations.** Signs shall be anchored, supported, or designed as to prevent tipping over, which reasonably prevents the possibility of signs becoming hazards to public health and safety. Signs shall not be constructed of plastic, illuminated, or contain any electrical component. No objects shall be attached to a portable sign such as but not limited to balloons, banners, merchandise, and electrical devices. Portable business signs shall be removed at the daily close of business. These signs are prohibited while the business is closed.

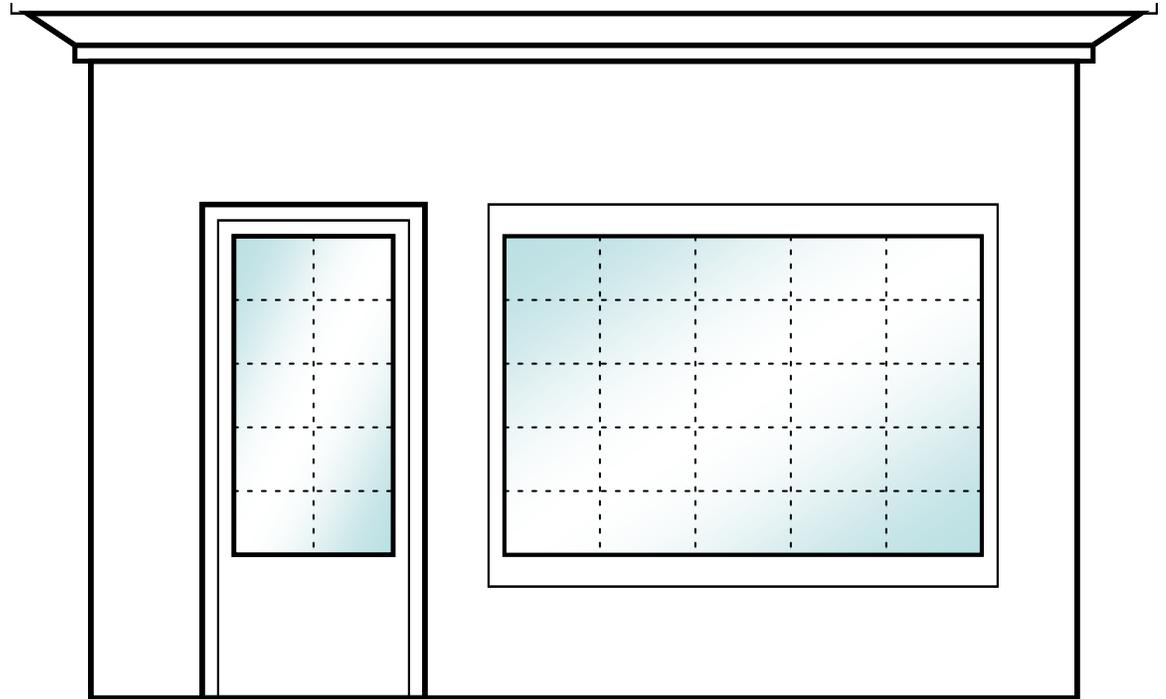
# Temporary Signs

Temporary signs advertising sales, promotional discounts, and special hours are a vital part of retail business. The City of Ashland Sign Code allows for such short term signs covering up to 20% of the window area.

Such signs may also include event posters, flyers, real estate listings, and window paintings placed in the windows on a temporary basis.

Provided such signs remain up for less than seven days at a time, they are not regulated by Ashland's sign code and no permit is required.

When a business has placed signs in the window that remain longer than 7 days, they will either have to be counted as the business' exempt incidental signs (size and number limitations applied), or a sign permit shall be obtained with their area deducted from the wall sign allowance.



Covering 20% of the window area in the illustration above would allow for temporary signs to cover up to seven of the squares. Simply determine the area of all windows on the business frontage and divide by five to determine the maximum area that can be used to display temporary window signs.

## **Temporary Window Signs, Non-Residential Zone. 18.4.7.040.M**

Temporary signs painted or placed upon a window in a non-residential zone, when such signs do not obscure more than 20 percent of such window area, and are maintained for a period not exceeding seven days. Signs that remain longer than seven days will be considered permanent and must comply with the provisions of this chapter [18.4.7]

# Prohibited Signs

To preserve Ashland's unique visual character, prevent visual clutter, and ensure public safety, the City of Ashland prohibits a number of sign types as explicitly listed in section 18.4.7 of the Land Use Code.

## Prohibited Signs 18.4.7.050

Notwithstanding section 18.4.7.040 Exempted Signs, and except as provided by section 18.4.7.120 Government Signs, the following signs and sign elements are prohibited.

- A. No movable sign, temporary sign, or bench sign shall be permitted except as may be provided in section 18.4.7.040.
- B. No wind sign, device, or captive balloon shall be permitted except as may be provided in section 18.4.7.020 ,18.4.7.070.G and 18.4.7.080.E.
- C. No flashing signs shall be permitted.
- D. No sign shall have or consist of any moving, rotating, or otherwise animated part.
- E. No three-dimensional statue, caricature, or representation of persons, animals, or merchandise shall be used as a sign or incorporated into a sign structure except as may be provided in 18.4.7.070.F.
- F. No public address system or sound devices shall be used in conjunction with any sign or advertising device.
- G. No roof signs or signs which project above the roof shall be permitted.
- H. No exposed sources of illumination shall be permitted on any sign, or for the decoration of any building, including, but not limited to, neon or fluorescent tubing and flashing incandescent bulbs, except when the source of illumination is within a building, and at least ten feet from a window which allows visibility from the public right-of-way, or when a sign is internally illuminated, or the source of light is fully shielded from the public view.
- I. No signs that use plastic as part of the exterior visual effects or are internally illuminated in the Historic District, as identified in the Comprehensive Plan or in any residential zones shall be permitted.
- J. No bulletin boards or signs with changeable copy shall be permitted, except as allowed in 18.4.7.030.A.
- K. No wall graphics shall be permitted.
- L. No unofficial sign which purports to be, is an imitation of, or resembles an official traffic sign or signal, or which attempts to direct the movement of traffic, or which hides from view any official traffic sign or signal shall be permitted.
- M. Vehicle signs used as static displays such that the primary purpose of the vehicle is the display of the sign, placed or parked on the public right-of-way for a continuous period of two days or more. Vehicles and equipment regularly used in the conduct of the business such as delivery vehicles, construction vehicles, fleet vehicles, or similar uses, shall not be subjected to this prohibition.



# Historic Signs

Historic Signs are those signs that have been in existence for over 40 years and have applied for, and received, designation on the Historic Sign Inventory.

The owner of any sign may request that a sign be reviewed for listing on the Historic Sign Inventory. Approval of such an application is contingent upon demonstrating that the sign is an exemplary example of technology, craftsmanship or design of the period when it was constructed, uses historic sign materials or means of illumination, and is not significantly altered from its historic period.

Applications shall include written findings addressing the criteria for designation of historic signs, and current and historic photographs of the sign, if available.

The Council shall decide, based on the criteria in section 18.4.7.130, and the recommendation of the Historic Commission, whether to approve a request to include the sign on the inventory.

Signs included on the Historic Sign Inventory are exempted from the total allowable sign area, location, and material limitations of the Sign Code unless modified by conditions imposed by the City Council when the sign was added to the inventory.



# Sign Permit Process

The sign code is comprehensive and covers a broad range of situations, zoning designations, and overlays. The City of Ashland Planning Division staff is available to provide consultation to assist in the application of the sign code provisions as they relate to your specific business location. Business owners are encouraged to develop a sign program that accounts for all types of signs they wish to display, from the large wall sign above the door to the small *open* sign in the window.

By consulting with Planning Division Staff, business owners can ensure they are both aware of the sign options available to them, as well as make sure that their significant investment in signage is in compliance with the code provisions.

## Area Calculation:

The Sign Code defines "Area" as :  
*The entire area within circles, triangles or rectangles which enclose the extreme limits of lettering, logo, trademark, or other graphic representation, together with any frame or structural trim forming an integral part of the display used to differentiate the sign from the background against which it is placed*

## Equations used to calculate Area:

Rectangle: Height x Width

Triangle:  $1/2 \times \text{Height} \times \text{Width}$

Circle:  $3.14 \times \text{Radius}^2$

The business owner can obtain a sign permit application form at the Community Development Building at 51 Winburn Way, or online at:  
[www.ashlandoregon.gov/508/Online-Permits](http://www.ashlandoregon.gov/508/Online-Permits)

Along with the application and associated permit fees, a scaled site plan and rendering of the sign(s) must be submitted. The rendering must clearly indicate the location, dimensions, color and material of the proposed and existing signs.

- All sign approvals are based on the criteria detailed in section 18.4.7 of the Ashland Municipal Code.
- Sign Applications within a Historic District (including the Downtown) must be reviewed by the Historic Review Board prior to issuance.

## Sign Permit Fees

### New Sign

- Base Fee \$175.95 + \$3.10 per sq.ft.

### Replacement Sign

- Base Fee \$37.20 + \$3.10 per sq.ft.

### Portable Sign

- \$37.20

*A replacement sign is one in which only the material is changed. The original size, location, and supporting structure remain unaltered.*

## Contact information:

Planning Division  
Phone: 541-488-5305  
fax: 541-552-2050  
[www.ashlandoregon.gov](http://www.ashlandoregon.gov)

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Ashland, Oregon 97520

