



City of Ukiah

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

300 SEMINARY AVENUE
UKIAH, CA 95482

SIGN PERMIT GUIDE

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Do You Need a Sign Permit? A Guide for Ukiah Residents and Businesses

Navigating sign regulations helps ensure public safety, maintains community aesthetics, and supports business visibility. The City of Ukiah's sign regulations are designed to balance these important aspects. This handout will help you understand when a sign permit is required and when your sign might be exempt. Full City of Ukiah Sign Regulations may be found within [Ukiah City Code Division 3 Building Chapter 7 Signs](#)

When is a Sign Permit Required?

Generally, a sign permit is required for most signs within Ukiah City limits.

You will need a sign permit if you plan to:

- **Erect a new sign.**
- **Construct a new sign.**
- **Enlarge an existing sign.**
- **Move an existing sign.**
- **Convert an existing sign.**

In addition to a general sign permit, you might need other specific permits depending on your sign:

- **Building Permit:** Required for any sign attached to a building or a post or has a foundation.
- **Electrical Permit:** Required for any sign that will be served by electricity (Energy Calculations/Title 24 required)
- **Encroachment Permit:** Required from the City's Public Works Department if your sign is located within or projects into the public right-of-way.

Please note: You do not need a permit for routine maintenance activities like repainting or cleaning a sign or sign structure, as long as the sign or structure itself is not modified.

PROHIBITED SIGNS

The following are prohibited sign types and are not allowed within City-limits:

- Attention-Getting Devices: Flashing, rotating, animated, blinking, moving signs, dynamic digital signage (video screens, LED displays with frequent changes, scrolling text).
- Miscellaneous signs/posters affixed to buildings, barns, sheds, trees, utility poles, posts, fences (unless explicitly provided for).
- Signs affixed to vehicles/trailers on public right-of-way or public property for the sole purpose of attracting business (unless official use).
- Banner flags, pennants, searchlights, twirling signs, balloons, or other gas-filled figures placed on occupant's property or in the public right-of-way (with limited exceptions). This includes air-powered inflatable advertising devices.
- Flags other than national or corporate flags. Temporary flags, unless associated with a City-approved event.
- Portable or wheeled signs (except specific real estate and temporary signs as provided).
- Signs that utilize visible guywires, angle irons, and iron frame structures, unless construction is otherwise impractical and decorative frames are approved by the Director of Community Development.
- Signs emitting audible sounds, odor, or visible matter, including interactive fuel dispenser screens conveying advertisements, video, or interactive media.
- Signs that resemble official traffic signs or signals, or bear words like "stop," "go slow," "caution," "danger," "warning"
- Signs that may be confused with traffic control signs, signals, or emergency equipment lights.
- Outlining of a building by exposed neon tubing, exposed incandescent lighting, or equivalent effect.
- Signs located on or projecting over the roof of a building or structure.
- Off-premises signs (billboards) within the city limits, except for specific "open house" real estate signs and certain temporary portable signs. All off-site commercial signs are prohibited.
- Freestanding, projecting, portable, and other detached signs from the ground level to 8 feet in height in the 30-foot triangular area at street intersections on corner properties, unless approved by Public Works Director and an encroachment permit is secured.
- Signs that physically or visually move, scroll, rotate, or create an illusion of movement, or which emit audible sound or noise, including electronic message centers (EMC signs) (unless preempted by state law for fuel price signage).
- Signage advertising cannabis, alcohol, or tobacco products or businesses that includes depictions of minors or anyone under 21, images attractive to children, logos/images imitating candy packaging, or terms attractive to children.
- Backlit translucent awning signs.

EXEMPT SIGNS

Certain types of signs are exempt from the standard sign permit requirements. However, even exempt signs must still comply with other applicable City regulations and design standards.

Signs that typically **do not require a sign permit** include:

- Professional or business signs in residential zones for home occupations, provided they do not exceed two (2) square feet in area.
- Real estate signs, with specific size limits:
 - For single-family homes or duplexes: No more than six (6) square feet per face.
 - For multiple-family uses: No more than sixteen (16) square feet per face.
 - For commercial uses: No more than thirty-two (32) square feet per face.
 - These signs must be removed when the property is taken off the market.
- One political campaign sign on private property, not exceeding four (4) square feet in area or four feet (4') in height. These signs must be removed within ten (10) days following the election, and it's strongly encouraged that they are not erected prior to eighty-eight (88) days before the election.
- Names of buildings or dates of erection when cut into a masonry surface or constructed of bronze or other incombustible material.
- Traffic or other municipal signs, railroad crossing signs, danger and other emergency signs, including wording painted on streets.
- Directional signs for special events, not exceeding twenty-four (24) square feet each, allowed for a maximum of fourteen (14) days.
- Permanent directional signs for educational, religious, charitable, or civic institutions, not exceeding four (4) square feet in area.
- Directional signs located within parking lots identifying entrances, exits, and other directional information, not exceeding four (4) square feet each or eight (8) square feet for all such signs per acre of parking.
- Signs showing the location of public telephones, restrooms, and underground utility facilities.
- Signs (or decals) advertising credit cards, association memberships, or trading stamps, not exceeding two (2) square feet per sign.
- Holiday lights, decorations, and displays, provided they are removed within ten (10) days after the holiday.
- Any sign, posting, or notice placed by or required by a governmental entity to protect public health and welfare.
- Street signs and address numbers.
- Downtown parking district signs with business identification.
- Painted Wall Signs or Window Signs that do not require a Building, Electrical, or Encroachment permit and comply with all requirements of Section 3227 of the City Code. Window signs should generally be

scaled to pedestrians, limited to small graphics/logos/text, and should not obscure the view into a store or business.

- Signs prohibiting parking on private property that conform with Section 7389 of the City Code.
 - Substitution of an existing commercial sign's message with a new message, provided no building permit is required, the sign is otherwise legal, the physical structure or mounting device is not changed, and it does not substitute an off-site commercial message for an on-site one. This does not allow an increase in total signage.
 - Signs or advertisements painted or conveyed on pavement as part of a City-recognized event.
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How to Apply for a Sign Permit

If your sign requires a permit, here's what you need to do:

1. **Obtain an Application:** Sign Permits may be obtained by applying in one of the following ways: online via the Community Development Department's permitting platform, [CitizenServe](#) which is the preferred and most efficient application process; by emailing buildingservices@cityofukiah.com; or by visiting the Community Development Department in person at 300 Seminary Avenue, Ukiah CA 95482.
2. **Provide Required Information:** Your application must include specific details and materials:
 - **Property Owner or Authorized Representative Consent:**
 - Consent of the owner or person entitled to possession, or their authorized representative, or the sign user.
 - Their name, address, and telephone number.
 - **Sign Contractor Information:**
 - Name, address, telephone number, and license number of the sign contractor or sign erector.
 - **Plot Plan:**
 - A plot plan indicating the location of the building, structure, lot, or parcel of property to which or upon which the sign or other advertising structure is to be placed or erected.
 - This plan must also include data showing building elevation and street frontages.
 - **Detailed Sign Sketch with Color Swatches:**
 - A detailed sketch depicting the proposed sign or sign structure.
 - Color swatches to show the sign's intended colors.
 - The sketch should illustrate the sign's relation to the building or the use it intends to identify.
 - **Copies of a Comprehensive Plan Showing:**
 - The position of the sign or other advertising structure in relation to adjacent buildings or structures.
 - The construction design, size, and type of material used for the sign.
 - A statement or diagram (or current dated photographs) depicting the size and dimensions of all existing permanent advertising displays on the premises at the time of application.
3. **Review and Issuance:** The permit may be issued if the application is complete and the sign complies with all applicable City laws and regulations.

Be aware that in addition to the sign permit, your project may require other permits:

- **Building Permit:**

- A building permit shall be required for any sign which, in the opinion of the Chief Building Official, constitutes a structure or structural alteration.
- **Electrical Permit:**
 - An electrical permit shall be required for any sign to be served by electricity.
 - Energy Calculations/Title 24 Compliance must be submitted.
- **Encroachment Permit:**
 - An encroachment permit shall be required from the City Public Works Department for any sign located within or projecting into the public right-of-way.
 - Applications for encroachment permits are filed with the Public Works Department and must be accompanied by a plot plan sufficient to show the details of the proposed sign size, height, any other information deemed necessary by the Community Development Director or Public Works Director, and application fees.

4. **Permit Validity:**

- Work must commence within sixty (60) days from the permit issuance date.
 1. If a Building Permit is required, work is allowed to start within 365 days from the Building Permit issuance date.
- The Sign Permit becomes null and void if work is suspended or abandoned for one hundred twenty (120) days or more after it has started.
 1. If attached to a Building Permit, the Building Permit becomes null and void if work is suspended or abandoned for 365 days or more after it has started.
- If a Sign Permit expires, a new one must be obtained, typically at half the original fee, provided no changes are made to the plans and the suspension hasn't exceeded one year.
 1. If attached to a Building Permit, the Building Permit may be reinstated at a \$105 flat fee.

5. **Permit Suspension or Revocation:** Permits can be suspended or revoked if issued based on a material omission, misstatement of fact, fraud, or failure to comply with the ordinance.

Additional Important Considerations

- **Design Review Board:** This board reviews and approves Mural Permits for artwork on private structures, ensuring consistency with design guidelines, historical context, and community values. They also review sign programs for unified developments like shopping centers.
- **Mural Permits:** Murals on private commercial structures are allowed, but they require review and a permit from the Design Review Board. Criteria include compatibility with the environment, appropriateness to the site, impact on traffic, and advertising potential. Written messages are discouraged, and any allowed advertising within a mural counts toward the parcel's overall signage allowance.

If you are applying outside of the CitizenServe Permitting Portal, please fill out the ["SIGN CHECKLIST AND APPLICATION"](#)