

Chapter 3.275 - SIGN REQUIREMENTS

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3.275.010 Purpose, Scope and Definitions

This Chapter regulates the erection, placement, maintenance and display of signs to protect and enhance public health, safety, welfare and property.

A. Purposes. The purposes of this sign code are:

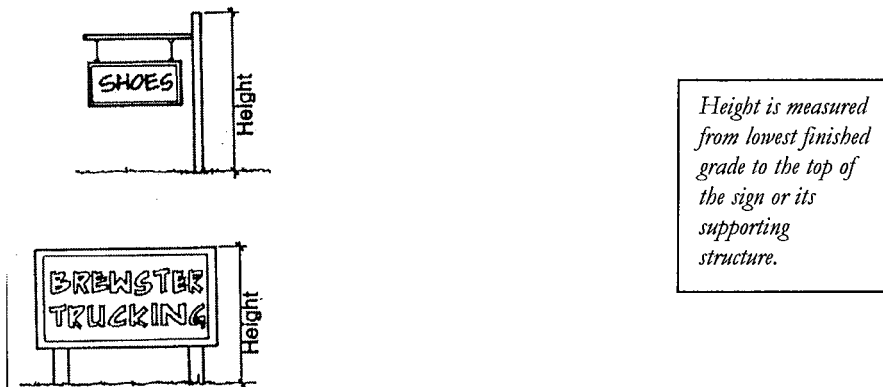
1. Allow those signs compatible with the character and uses allowed in the zoning district in which they are located.
2. Maintain the effectiveness of traffic signs and other signs erected for public safety, while limiting the number and scale of distractions to motorists.
3. Protect the public right-of-way for the safe, expeditious and uncluttered passage of motorists, bicycles and pedestrians. To prevent signs or portions thereof from interfering with the safe movement of people, vehicles and emergency service providers in the public right-of-way. To prevent signs or portions thereof from creating a public nuisance or hazard by obstructing clear vision or distracting motorists by their dominating size or appearance.
4. Maintain and enhance the scenic and other aesthetic qualities of the city by limiting the size and number of signs, reducing clutter and the dominance of signs.

B. Scope. All signs, including sign structures and display areas or building walls with lettering, numbers, symbols or other expressive content on them shall be erected, maintained and displayed only as provided by this Chapter, except for the following.

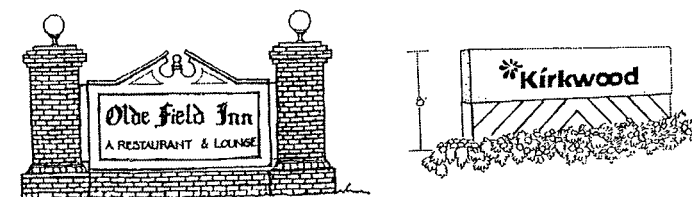
1. Signs not visible from either a public right-of-way or property under different ownership, provided such signs shall be erected and maintained in accordance with applicable law.
2. Signs owned and maintained by governmental agencies.
3. Signs inside a building, except for strobe lights or floating lights visible from a public right-of-way, private road or other private property.
4. Signs carved into or part of materials that are an integral part of a building.

C. Definitions. The following definitions shall control the interpretation of this chapter, in addition to the definitions in Chapter 1.040 WDC:

1. Abandoned Sign means a sign that does not have copy on the display surface for a period of 6 months or more.
2. Alternation or altered sign means any physical or structural change to a sign structure, shape, area, equipment or other physical component, but does not include a change in the copy.
3. Banner is sign, such as those used to announce an open house, a grand opening, or to make a special announcement, that is made of cloth, canvas, or some similarly flexible material without a rigid frame or surface.
4. Billboard means a sign with a display surface of 200 square feet or more.
5. Copy means the text, letters, numbers, symbols and any other sort of graphical expressive content.
6. Display Surface Area means the total area of a sign that is available for displaying advertising or an informational message, subject to the provisions of this Chapter.
7. Directory Sign means a sign that identifies the names and locations of tenants in a multi-tenant building or in a development made up of a group of buildings.
8. Erect or Erected means to construct, build, assemble, alter, place, affix, attach, create, recreate, paint, draw or in any way bring into being or establish.
9. Freestanding sign means a sign supported from the ground by its own structure.
10. Fence and fencing mean any barrier or section thereof, other than a wall, designed to define a boundary or provide a visual screen.
11. Frontage means the boundary between a single parcel and the public right-of-way. For purposes of this sign code, where a property abuts only one right-of-way, it has only one "frontage." Where a property is a corner lot or otherwise abuts more than one right-of-way, it has one frontage for each point where it abuts a different right-of-way.
12. Government sign means any sign erected by a federal, state or local government, including signs related to traffic control and direction, safety, identification of governmental buildings and activities, community announcements or other public information.
13. Grade means the level of the nearest sidewalk or road pavement.
14. Height of sign is the vertical distance of a sign measured from the average finished grade below the sign and the highest point on the sign or sign structure, which ever is higher, for example:



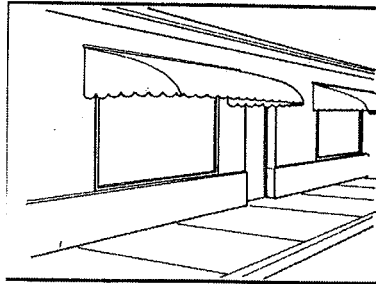
15. Incidental sign means a sign identifying or advertising associated goods, products, services or facilities available on the premises, including but not limited to, trading stamps, credit cards accepted, brand names or price signs.
16. Maintain, maintained or maintaining mean activities, such as upkeep and repair of signs or sign structures and the replacement of sign messages or advertisement displayed on a sign, and an activity by which a sign or sign structure are permitted to exist.
17. Monument sign is a sign and supporting structure which has similar top and bottom dimensions and is constructed as a solid structure or one which gives the appearance of a continuous, non-hollow, unbroken, unfenestrated mass. Further, similar top and bottom dimensions shall mean dimensions, which are within 10% of each other.



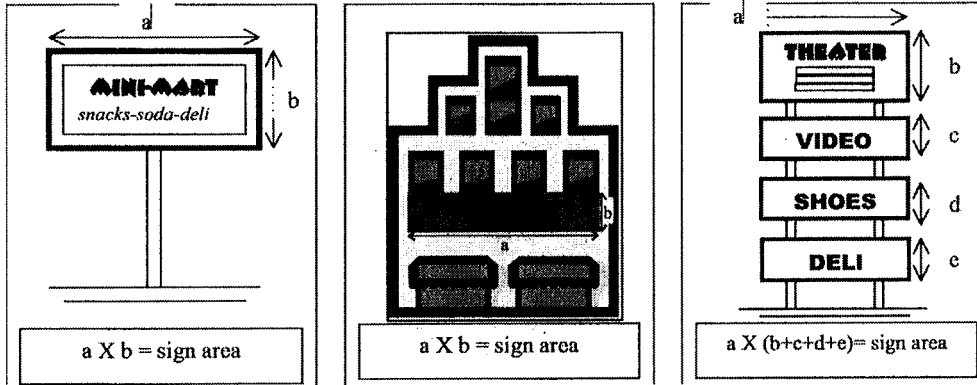
Monument Sign

18. Multi-Business Building means a building with two or more commercial businesses on a lot or contiguous lots with common access and parking.
19. Obsolete sign means a sign for which there is no current city sign permit.
20. Off-Premise sign is a sign that relates to activities, services, goods, products or other things that are not on the property where the sign is located.
21. Portable Sign is any sign designed to move or be moved by trailer or vehicle to advertise at different locations. Further, these signs include any sign, which is not permanently fastened to a building or ground.
22. Property means a single, separately deeded parcel of real property.

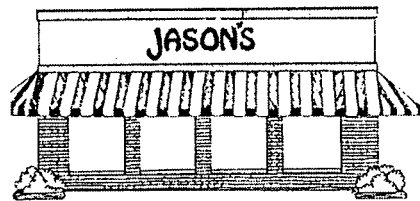
23. Projecting sign means a sign projecting more than one foot from the wall of a building, including awnings and similar structures that serve a function and to which a sign face can be affixed, for example:



24. Roof sign means a sign erected or maintained wholly upon or over the roof of any building with the principal support on the roof structure.
25. Setback means the shortest perpendicular distance between a structure, including a sign, and the nearest property line.
26. Sign means any sign, display message, emblem, banner, flag, device, figure, painting, drawing, placard, poster, billboard or other thing that is designed, used or intended to convey a message, advertise something, inform or attract the attention of the public. Signs include the sign structure, display surface and all other component parts of a sign; when dimensions of a sign are specified, the term includes panels and frames, and the term includes both sides of a sign of specified dimensions or display surface area.
27. Sign face means the total of display surface area visible from one side of a sign.
28. Sign area is the area of message area of a sign, excluding any structural components that do not include text or other message, and is measured as follows:
- The area of a free-standing sign or structure not using an integral part of the building for its background means the largest cross-sectional area of the sign measured to a line encompassing all portions of the sign structure, including tubing used in lighting such sign or structure, but excluding posts without attached lighting. Further, the base on which a monument-type sign is set may be excluded provided there is no attached lighting.
 - The area of a double-faced sign, i.e. a sign marked on 2 sides, or signs which are erected in a "V" configuration with an angle between the 2 faces not exceeding 30°, shall be the largest area on one side of the sign. Further, this type of sign shall be considered one sign for the purpose of determining the number of signs allowed.
 - The area of any sign or structure using an integral part of the building or awning as a background means the area within the shortest line drawn to include all letters, design, and tubing which are part of the sign or structure. Provided, that for illuminated awnings the area shall be limited to the area within the shortest line drawn to include all copy and graphics, excluding illuminated areas outside of these lines.



29. Street frontage means the linear frontage of a parcel of property abutting a single public street.
30. Temporary sign means a sign that will become obsolete after the occurrence of an event or series of events. Temporary signs include, but are not limited to, for sale and lease signs, garage sale signs and political campaign signs.
31. Time and Temperature Sign is a sign that displays only the current time and temperature.
32. Wall Sign means a sign painted on the wall of a building, for example:



Wall Sign

3.275.020 Permit Required

- A. No sign shall be erected or displayed except as provided by this Chapter and for which a permit has been issued by the city planner. This permit requirement applies to all signs, except those specifically exempt by a provision of this chapter. The City may impose any reasonable condition, including a limitation on duration or a prohibition on renewal, on a sign permit issued under this chapter.
- B. Permit duration and automatic expiration: All sign permits issued under this chapter shall not have an expiration date.
- C. Process. Sign permits under this Chapter shall be processed as Type I decisions according to the procedures and requirements of Section 1.030.080 WDC.
- D. Modifications to Existing Signs: Any sign that is structurally altered, relocated or replaced shall be brought into compliance with all applicable substantive requirements of this Chapter, including the requirement to obtain a permit. Any modification to a sign for which a permit has been issued shall be processed as a Type I decision in the same manner as for a new sign. This

requirement to obtain a new permit for sign modifications does not apply to copy or panel changes where the sign area, shape and height are maintained.

- E. Permit Application. Application for a sign permit shall be made in writing upon forms furnished by the city clerk. A permit application fee shall accompany the application for it to be processed by the review authority. The amount of the fee shall be according to a permit fee schedule adopted by resolution of the city council. The application shall include all plans and information necessary to establish that the proposed sign complies with all applicable requirements of this chapter and applicable buildings, structural and life safety codes. The permit shall be valid if the sign is erected and maintained in compliance with the permit, the requirements of this chapter, and if the applicant did not misrepresent or falsify any information supplied in the application. Any permit issued under this chapter shall be void if no substantial physical action is taken, in accordance with any conditions of the permit and the applicable requirements of this chapter, within 90 days following the date of its issuance. Any permit issued under this chapter shall remain in effect as long as the sign is maintained in compliance with any permit conditions and all applicable provisions of this chapter.

3.275.030 Variances

- A. Grounds for Variance. Upon application by an applicant, the review authority may grant a specific variance from provisions of this Chapter provided all of the requirements of this section are met. The variance provisions in Chapter 3.260 WDC (Variances) that customarily apply to land use permits do not apply to sign code variances:
1. Exceptional or extraordinary circumstances apply to the property which does not generally apply to other properties in the same area or vicinity. Such conditions may be the result of an unusual location or orientation of the applicant's building, topography, vegetation or other circumstance over which the applicant has no control.
 2. The variance is necessary for the preservation of a right of the applicant substantially the same as is possessed by the owners of other property in the area or vicinity.
 3. The authorization of the requested variance will not be materially detrimental to, or conflict with, the purposes of this chapter or be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the area or vicinity, or the public way, in which the property is located.
 4. The variance requested is the minimum variance necessary, to alleviate the identified hardship.
 5. By way of mitigation for the variance of any requirement of this chapter, the city may require mitigation in the form of sign design, area, height, location, duration or other reasonable measure, including compliance with the Downtown Design Guidelines.
- B. Variance Fee. At the time of application for variance from the provisions of this chapter, the applicant shall pay a fee in accordance with the fee schedule established and amended from time to time by the city council and on file with the City Clerk/Treasurer.
- C. Procedure. Any variance sought to the requirements of the sign code shall be processed as a Type II decision and in conjunction with the underlying sign permit application. Once granted, a sign variance shall be valid so long as the sign permit is maintained, including renewals and extensions.

3.275.040 Prohibited Signs

It is unlawful for the following signs to be erected, maintained or displayed except as otherwise provided in this chapter. Signs installed, altered, relocated, maintained or displayed in violation of this chapter are deemed to be nuisances and subject to enforcement and removal by the city at the owner's expense after appropriate process.

- A. Billboards and off-premise signs.
- B. A sign that obstructs or interferes in any way with the public's ability to clearly view government signs or interferes in any way with traffic, visibility or passage within the public right-of-way, including vehicle travel lanes, sidewalks and bike lanes.
- C. Any sign with animated, rotating, flashing or moveable parts, lights, video display or changing type/message or emits an audible sound, except for government signs and Time and Temperature signs.
- D. A sign with lighting that shines light directly onto any portion of the main traveled right-of-way of a public street or is of such high intensity or brilliance as to cause glare or shine into the eyes of a pedestrian or motorist in the public right-of-way.
- E. A sign attached to a tree or painted or drawn on a natural feature.
- F. Obsolete signs and abandoned signs.
- G. A sign that obstructs free ingress to, or egress from, any door, window or fire escape, alley, driveway or fire lane, or is attached to a fire escape.
- H. Any sign, except for a governmental sign, which is erected or maintained on public property or within the public right-of-way, including the sidewalk, without a permit from the city or permission of the public body having jurisdiction over the right-of-way or public property in question.
- I. A sign not able to withstand a wind pressure of 20 pounds per square foot of exposed surface or is insecurely erected or is constructed so as to constitute a fire hazard.
- J. A sign not maintained in a safe, neat, clean and attractive condition and in good repair.
- K. A sign not otherwise in compliance with any provision of this code, Washington law or the terms and conditions of any valid sign permit.
- L. Signs on fences or fencing.
- M. Roof signs.
- N. Signs, which by reason of their size, location, movement, content, coloring, or manner of illumination may be confused with a government sign.
- O. A sign erected, maintained or displayed without a permit where this chapter requires a permit.

3.275.050 Signs Not Requiring a Permit

In any zoning district, the following signs may be erected and maintained without a permit, so long as they comply with all applicable provisions of this chapter and are not illuminated:

- A. One temporary sign per street frontage of property under a single ownership provided that the sign is not otherwise a prohibited sign, does not cause a public safety hazard or nuisance, has no more than two faces, and no sign face exceeds 4 square feet in area.

- B. Signs carved into a building or which are part of materials that are an integral part of the building not exceeding 10 square feet in area. This subsection does not include wall signs or signs painted on sides of buildings.
- C. A single sign where the display surface area does not exceed 2 square feet.
- D. Incidental signs situated on the inside side of a window or door.
- E. Flags limited to two per premises.
- F. Signs attached to, or carried by, a person.
- G. Signs required by law or legal action, including but not limited to, signs warning of hazardous or dangerous conditions on a premises and land use application and hearing notice signs.
- H. Government or political election signs.

3.275.060 Requirements applicable to all signs

- A. Permit required. Except for signs specifically listed elsewhere in this chapter as not requiring a permit, all signs require a sign permit before being displayed. Sign permits are valid for one year and must be renewed annually so long as the sign is displayed.
- B. Structural specialty code compliance. All signs shall meet the construction and operation standards of the Uniform Sign Code and the National Electrical Code, latest editions and amendments. Where conflicting standards between this title and the codes exist, the more stringent shall apply.
- C. No off-premises signs. All signs shall relate exclusively to activities or business conducted, goods sold or manufactured, or services rendered on the property where the sign is located.
- D. Sign Maintenance. All signs, including signs heretofore installed, shall be constantly maintained in a state of security, safety, and repair. If any sign is found not to be so maintained or is insecurely fastened or otherwise dangerous, it shall be the duty of the owner and/or occupant of the premises on which the sign is fastened to repair or remove the sign within five days after receiving notice from the designated public official. The premises surrounding a freestanding sign shall be free and clear of rubbish, and landscaping area free of weeds.
- E. Sign Obstructing View or Passage. No sign shall be located to physically obstruct any door, window, or exit from a building. No sign shall be located to be hazardous to a motorist's ingress and egress from parking areas of any way open to the public.
- F. Landscaping for Freestanding Signs. All permanent freestanding signs shall include as part of their design landscaping about their base to prevent automobiles from hitting the sign-supporting structure and to improve the overall appearance of the installation. The planting area about the base of the sign shall be a minimum of one square foot for each square foot of sign surface area, and shall include trees, shrubs and ground cover so that at the time of installation a minimum of 25 percent of the required planting area is covered by plant material.
- G. Removal. All signs shall be removed within 30 days of expiration of the sign permit that authorized their display. An expired sign permit may be extended (as opposed to renewed) for a total of 6 months (a period that includes the first 30 days following expiration).

3.275.070 Signs in Residential Zones

- A. Signs Allowed. The following signs are allowed in the city’s residential zoning districts:
1. Signs allowed without a permit. All signs that are allowed without permit as provided by this chapter are allowed in residential zones so long as all applicable requirements of this chapter are met.
 2. Permitted Signs. All signs not otherwise prohibited are permitted in residential zones so long as a permit is first obtained as required by this chapter and the requirements of this section are met.
 3. Signs of Limited Duration Following Subdivision or Partition. In addition to the temporary signs allowed without a permit, a single sign is permitted on residentially zoned property following subdivision or partition of a parent parcel into multiple new lots for a limited duration. The limited duration sign allowed under this subsection may remain in place from the time of preliminary subdivision or partition plat approval until 14 days following the day on which the last new lot in the subdivision or partition has been sold, at which point the sign must be removed. The limited duration sign allowed by this subsection may be a maximum of 32 square feet, limited to one sign per parent parcel, and is subject to all sign permit and fee requirements, including non-content-based conditions of approval.
- B. Display Requirements. All signs in the residential zones listed in this section shall comply with the following requirements:
1. Measured from the nearest property line.
 2. Measured from ground level to the highest part of the sign.
 3. Single or double faced.
 4. If illuminated, the illumination shall be directed or shielded to not shine directly onto any neighboring structure and so as to not shine directly into the eyes of motorists in the public right-of-way.

Table 3.275.070 Residential Signs

Sign Type	Maximum gross area per face (sq. ft.)	Minimum setback	Maximum height	Maximum number of faces
Residential Nameplate	4	None	None	One
Freestanding Sign	6	1 foot	6 feet	Two
Wall Sign	15	10 feet	10 feet	One
Home occupation	4	10 feet	5 feet	One

3.275.080 Signs in Commercial, Urban Public, and Industrial Zones

- A. Signs Allowed. In the Commercial, Urban Public and Industrial zoning districts, the following signs are allowed, so long as a sign permit is obtained (excepting signs that specifically do not require a permit) and all other applicable provisions of this chapter are met:
1. Signs that don’t require a permit. All signs allowed without permit as provided by this chapter so long as all other applicable requirements are met.

2. Wall signs, so long as a permit is first obtained as required by this chapter, and the display surface area is no larger than 36 square feet.
3. Freestanding signs, if a permit is first obtained as required by this chapter, and the following standards are met:
 - a. Number. One freestanding sign shall be permitted for each street frontage of a premise, provided minimum lot frontage of 25 feet is met. Freestanding signs on the same premises but on different frontages shall be separated by a minimum of 50 feet. No more than two such signs are allowed to advertise a commercial group complex. Any freestanding sign in a multi-tenant group or complex shall be a complex sign. Freestanding signs shall not be located closer than 75 feet to another similar sign along the same street.
 - b. Area. Maximum area is 50 square feet.
 - c. Projection. Freestanding signs shall not project into or over a public right-of-way.
 - d. Height. The height of any freestanding sign shall not exceed 20 feet above grade.
4. Electronic Readerboard Signs. One wall-mounted or freestanding, monochrome LED or similar electronic readerboard (changing text) sign is allowed per property, so long as no part of such a sign is more than 20 feet above the ground, with no video display, and only text, letter, time and temperature display is allowed. Wall-mounted electronic readerboard signs allowed under this provision may be up to 15% of the wall surface area on which they are mounted, not to exceed a maximum of 40 square feet. Freestanding electronic readerboard signs allowed under this provision shall not exceed 40 square feet in area.
5. Projecting Signs. Projecting signs are allowed so long as a permit is first obtained as required by this chapter and the following standards are met:
 - a. Number. One projecting sign may be permitted for each business frontage. In a multi-tenant building, a maximum of one projecting sign per tenant for each street frontage is allowed. No projecting signs shall be permitted for the same business frontage where there is a freestanding sign.
 - b. Area. Sign area shall not exceed 32 square feet per sign face for a single-story building and 48 square feet per sign face in sign area for a two-story building
 - c. Projection. Maximum projection from a building wall shall be 4 feet. No sign shall project any closer than 2 feet from the curb line.
 - d. Vertical Dimension. The maximum vertical projection of the sign shall not exceed 3 inches. The visible supporting structure shall be minimized to the greatest extent possible consistent with safe structural support. Signs hanging parallel to the building face shall not exceed the length of the building.
 - e. Clearance. A minimum clearance of 10 feet from grade shall be maintained over pedestrian or vehicular areas, 14 feet over areas of truck access.
 - f. Separation. The minimum distance between adjacent projecting sign shall be 20 feet in the same horizontal plane.
 - g. Projecting Signs on Other Project Structures: awnings, marquees, canopies, false fronts and wall extensions, safety constructed and approved by the review authority, may not

extend beyond the limits for projecting signs. Projecting signs on any such structure shall not exceed the limits as to number, area, projection, vertical dimension, clearance and separation as provided for any projecting sign. The only exception shall be for those instances in which a projecting structure would prohibit a projecting sign within sight of pedestrians; in these instances, the clearance under the marquee or other permanent structure may be reduced to 8 feet.

6. Incidental Signs. One additional sign is allowed per premises, so long as a permit is first obtained under this chapter. An incidental sign may be a freestanding or wall sign, but in either case, shall meet all provisions for such signs, excepting area. The surface display area of an incidental sign shall not exceed 6 square feet.
7. Portable Signs. Tent signs, streamers, strings of lights, balloons, or pennants, excepting traditional holiday decorations.
8. A-frame signs. A-frame signs shall not exceed 48 inches in height and 32 inches in width, per sign side. One A-frame sign is allowed per business or entity. The sign may not be placed to cause a sight distance problem, obstruction or a hazard, and shall not be displayed outside of business hours. A-frame signs placed on a sidewalk within the public right-of-way shall not reduce the sidewalk below 36 inches.
9. Outdoor Sale and Temporary Advertising Signs. Temporary signs are limited to a single sign advertising an event, product or service that is available for a short or limited period of time. Temporary signs need not meet the structural requirements that otherwise apply but shall be weather resistant. Temporary signs shall not display the same copy for more than 30 consecutive calendar days. Temporary signs shall not be illuminated or permanently erected, constructed or otherwise attached to a building. Temporary signs shall not exceed 15% of the building wall area facing the street where the sign is located.
10. Street Banners. Street banners advertising civic events sponsored by a nonprofit organization may be erected in or over the public right-of-way subject to first obtaining a city sign permit and compliance with conditions attached to that permit. All other banners shall be regulated as signs under this chapter.
11. Multiple businesses within a common building.
 - a. All signs shall be of common type and appearance.
 - b. Where a common entrance(s) is/are shared:
 - i. A single sign for each street frontage is allowed, but shall not exceed the maximum allowed sign area;
 - ii. One sign not to exceed 6 square feet listing the individual occupants or tenants is permitted within the common doorway or entrance;
 - iii. A-frame signs. A-frame signs shall not exceed 48 inches in height and 32 inches in width, per sign side. A-frame signs shall not be placed to cause a sight distance problem, obstruction or a hazard, and shall not be displayed outside of business hours. A-frame signs placed on a sidewalk within the public right-of-way shall not reduce the sidewalk below 36 inches.
 - iv. Where separate entrances are provided, each tenant or establishment may have its own sign; provided, that in no case shall the combined sign area of all such signs

exceed 15% of the gross area of the building wall facing the nearest street upon which the signs are located.

3.275.090 Lighting of Exterior Signs

Signs may be lit, either from within the sign structure or by external lights shining on the sign face. In no case shall sign lights be allowed to shine directly onto adjacent property or the public right-of-way or to cast glare into the eyes of pedestrians or motorists in the public right-of-way. All sign lights shall comply with all applicable electrical code requirements. Sign lights shall not substitute for security or safety lighting that may otherwise be required.

3.275.100 Implementation of this Sign Code

All signs lawfully established, legal and in existence on the date this chapter is adopted shall be considered nonconforming and may continue in their current condition so long as they are continually maintained, do not change or expand. Any change to a nonconforming sign, including a change to the text or message, will require a sign permit under this chapter and require compliance with the requirements of this chapter.

3.275.110 Conflict and Severability

In the event any provision herein is found to conflict with any zoning, building, fire safety, health or other code provisions of the city, the provision that establishes the higher, stricter or more specific standard for the promotion and protection of the health, safety and welfare of the people shall prevail. A finding by a court of competent jurisdiction that any portion of this chapter is invalid shall not invalidate the remaining portions. A permit issued pursuant to this chapter does not grant any authority to violate any other law or regulation that may apply.

3.275.120 Enforcement, Violation and Penalty

In addition to any other provisions hereof, it is unlawful for any person or entity to erect, maintain or display a sign in violation of this Chapter. All violations of this chapter are deemed to be a nuisance and subject to civil enforcement. Signs found to be erected, maintained or displayed in violation may be removed by the City and the owner of the sign and/or premises upon which the sign is located subject to enforcement and possible fines and other penalties as provided by applicable laws.