



Information & Resources For Your Business: **BUSINESS SIGNAGE & outdoor displays**



Within city limits, business signage is regulated by the City's sign ordinance. Some of the most commonly requested information about signage is summarized below.

A-Board Signs

These signs include double-sided "A-boards" and other portable, stand-alone business signs, typically located on the sidewalk or on the property of the business. All A-board signs require review and approval by the City's Design Review Commission.

Because A-board signs can impede foot traffic and create visual clutter, approval requires a determination that special circumstances apply. You will need to demonstrate that the business is not visible from the street on which it lies, or provide other valid justification. Only one A-board sign is allowable per business, and there are requirements as to the sign's size and shape, stability, location, sidewalk clearance, hours of display, proof of insurance, etc. **Sidewalk signs are not allowed on the Plaza** (with the exception of Place des Pyrenees alleyway businesses).

To apply for a permit for a sidewalk sign, contact the City's Planning Department at (707) 938-3681.

Outdoor Displays of Merchandise



Display of merchandise outside your store requires a permit from the City's Planning Department. You will need to provide a site plan showing sufficient clearances for pedestrians (including those with disabilities), and provide proof of insurance.

Limitations on the size of the display include a total footprint of no more than 16 square feet per business; maximum display height of 7 feet;

and extension of the display from the adjacent storefront of no more than 2 feet. Merchandise display hours are limited to the operating hours of the business and the display must be kept clean, attractive, and safe.

Permits are good for up to one year. If your business is located along Highway 12, you may also be required to get a CalTrans encroachment permit. For more information on how to apply for a merchandise display permit, contact the City's Planning Department at (707) 938-3681.

Updating and Improving Sonoma's Sign Ordinance

The goals of the sign ordinance include balancing the interests of individual business owners, the safety of drivers and pedestrians, and the protection and enhancement of the overall appearance and architectural heritage of the city.

The City of Sonoma is in the process of reviewing the sign ordinance to determine if there are **changes that would better support business interests and other goals**. To learn more about this process and to **provide your input**, contact:

Wendy Atkins, Associate Planner,
933-2204, wendya@sonomacity.org, or

Laurie Decker, Sonoma Valley
Economic Development Manager, (707)
327-7338, LaurieADecker@comcast.net

If you'd like to view the City's sign ordinance in detail, visit www.sonomacity.org. Under *Find It Fast*, chose City of Sonoma Municipal Code. The sign ordinance can be found under Title 18, and regulations on outdoor displays are found under Title 12, chapter 12.04.

Banners & Temporary Signage

To promote grand openings, sales, and other special events, your business can display a decorative banner for up to 10 consecutive days and for a total of no more than 45 days in a calendar year.

Your business can also display temporary window signs for up to a total of 90 days per year. Window signs include signs that are secured, applied, or painted to the inside or outside of the window. These signs should cover no more than 20% of each window.

A permit is not required for temporary signs that meet these guidelines.



Permanent Signage

As you develop your plans for signage, take the opportunity to talk with Planning Department staff, who can outline for you the requirements and review process as it applies to your business. There are some types of signs (e.g., wall signs of no more than 10 square feet in area, hanging signs with less than 6 square feet per side) that can be reviewed and approved at the staff level. Other types of signs will require an application to the Design Review Commission (DRC), which meets monthly. Staff can assist with your application and can work with you to approve temporary signage of up to 3 square feet for use while your application is in the review process.

If your proposed signage does not conform to the requirements of the Sign Ordinance, there is a process for requesting a variance, which can be granted by the DRC if certain findings can be made. There's also an appeal process; any Planning Department action can be appealed to the Design Review Commission, and any action of the DRC can be appealed to the City Council.



Plaza Periphery Wayfinding Signs

As a way to support the local economy by increasing pedestrian traffic to off-Plaza blocks, the City is installing Plaza Periphery Business Wayfinding signs at several intersections around the Plaza perimeter. The signs are designed to highlight the types of businesses known to be critical in attracting foot traffic in a downtown area.

Priority for inclusion on the Plaza Periphery Wayfinding Signs is given to ground-floor retail, restaurant, wine-related, and visitor-oriented uses. For project details, contact Laurie Decker, Economic Development Project Manager, at (707) 327-7338.

Financial Assistance

If your business is located in the City's redevelopment area, you may be eligible to apply for matching funds for storefront improvements such as new signage, awnings, paint, exterior lighting, window boxes, and doors. To learn more, visit the "Business Assistance" section of www.SonomaValley4Biz.com.