

## WHAT DOES EACH DIVISION DO?

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The Planning, Building and Engineering Divisions review signs to ensure they are safe, attractive and comply with other regulations. The following describes the role of each division in the Sign Permit process:

**Planning Division** reviews the design of the sign and determines whether it is consistent with the Sign Ordinance and Design Review Guidelines. The planner will check the size, location, materials and compatibility of the sign with the building and site.

**Building Division** will assure a safe installation. The plan reviewer will be looking for specifications on the sign's attachment to the building, sign weight and whether it requires an electrical permit.

**Engineering Division** determines whether an *Encroachment Permit* or an *Encroachment Agreement* will be required.

- *Encroachment Permit* allows the applicant to use public property (i.e. a sidewalk, street) to install a sign.
- *Encroachment Agreement* is a contract between the property owner and the City that clears the City of potential liabilities. An *Encroachment Agreement* is required when a sign or awning encroaches onto publicly owned property.

## WHO APPROVES THE SIGN PERMIT?

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A Sign Permit is issued by the Planning staff. Certain sign types first require approval by the Design Review Commission, or its Sign Subcommittee, at a public meeting.

**Design Review Commission** is a five-member body consisting of design professionals. They typically review new and revised Master Sign Programs, architectural banners, and signs that are part of a larger, comprehensive project.

**Sign Subcommittee** is a three-member body that reviews all new monument signs and any sign that staff is unable to approve.

## HOW MANY SIGNS CAN I PROPOSE? HOW LARGE CAN THEY BE?

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The Planning Division will review the proposed sign(s) with regard to the compatibility of the building. Permanent signs may not contain phone numbers or website addresses. The following is a synopsis of the maximum sign area allowed pursuant to the Sign Ordinance. Please see the Sign Ordinance for the exact language. **Please note that the Planning staff has authority over the sign and that the maximum sign area is usually not approved.**

- One square foot of signage for every linear foot of tenant frontage.
- Tenants of a building that are set back 100 feet or more from the street may increase the wall sign area face by 25%.
- Any business which has more than one building frontage may have 160% of the maximum sign area as mentioned above, for use on the secondary frontage.

**Shingle Signs** are placed at the pedestrian level and perpendicular to the building face or street, with a maximum area of 4.5 sq. ft. Only one side of a shingle sign will count toward the total sign area allowed. Staff strongly encourages shingle signs in the Pedestrian Downtown area that are well-detailed and have unique attachment brackets.

**Awning Signs** are permitted in accordance with the Awning Guidelines. A Sign Permit will be required if you propose to re-canvas an awning with a new business name. New awning frames will require an *Awning Permit*. Please check with the Planning Division for more information regarding this permit.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: In most cases, the maximum sign area allowed by ordinance is not granted. Sign area and design is dependent on the building's façade and other aesthetic factors, and are subject to the Planning Division.**

# HOW TO OBTAIN A SIGN PERMIT

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City of Walnut Creek  
Community Development Department  
1666 N. Main Street, Second Floor  
Walnut Creek, CA 94596  
t. 925.256.3558  
f. 925.256.3500  
www.walnut-creek.org

This brochure was designed to assist sign contractors and business owners in obtaining a Sign Permit for permanent business identification. Sign Permits are required for all sign and sign refaces.

To apply for a Master Sign Program, freestanding or temporary sign, please contact the duty planner at 925.256.3558 or [dutyplanner@walnut-creek.org](mailto:dutyplanner@walnut-creek.org). You may also review the City's Sign Ordinance online at [www.walnut-creek.org](http://www.walnut-creek.org) or visit City Hall.

## HOW TO OBTAIN A SIGN PERMIT

**Step One:** Speak to the duty planner about the sign you are considering. You should bring photographs and plans of the type of sign you are proposing, any existing signage on your building and a site plan indicating where the sign will be placed.

**Step Two:** Once you have spoken with the duty planner, he or she will instruct you to submit plans or recommend changes to your proposed sign. When you are prepared to submit your application, please submit **3 sets** of plans, a sign application and appropriate fee to the duty planner you initially contacted. This planner will be your main point of contact.

Your plans must be complete or the planner will not accept the application. All drawings must be to scale, accurate and in color. You may also be required to provide color/material samples. Your plans must include:

- **Site Plan** showing location of all proposed signs. The Site Plan must show streets, sidewalks, buildings and trees in the vicinity.
- **Details** that indicate dimensions, colors, materials, font, attachment/mounting details and lighting.
- **Elevation** showing how the sign will look on the building's façade.

## FEES (Subject to Change)

### **Planning:**

New Sign	\$300
Additional Signs	\$27 each
Face Change Only	\$65
Sign Subcommittee	\$1,200 (hourly retainer)

### **Engineering:**

Encroachment Permit	\$150 (may vary on location)
Encroachment Agreement	\$26*

\*Paid to the Contra Costa County Clerk Recorder's Office. This amount covers a 5-page document. Each additional page is \$3 per page.

### **Building:**

Building Permit fees are based on a schedule of the valuation of the construction and labor costs of the proposed sign.

*For example, an estimate of the building permit fee for a sign valued at \$500 would be \$142.50 and a sign valued at \$2,500 would be \$170.97.*

**Step Three:** Your assigned planner will review the plans and determine if your sign requires Engineering or Traffic Division review.

If the planner is satisfied with the proposal, he or she will contact you to pick up the sign permit. When you pick your sign permit, you must also obtain a building permit (if necessary) from the Building Division. The building permit will require a separate application form and fee. The application can be found on the City's website.

If the Planning, Building, Engineering divisions require more information, you must provide it or your sign permit may be denied.

**Step Four:** If changes are required, make necessary changes to the proposed plans and resubmit them to the assigned planner.

**Step Five:** Come to the counter, pick up permits and pay any applicable fees.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### WHO NEEDS A SIGN PERMIT?

Anyone who wishes to install permanent or temporary sign(s).

### HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

You should expect the sign permit process to take about 5-10 business days. This may vary depending upon complexity. Less time may be required for very simple signs which may be approved "over the counter" and more time may be required with complex signs.

### WHY DO I NEED A SIGN PERMIT?

Signs have a strong visual impact on the character and quality of the community. As a prominent part of the scenery, they attract or repel the public and help set the tone of the neighborhood.

### ARE THERE OTHER SIGNS I CAN INSTALL?

- **Neon Signs** are allowed as outlined in the Neon Sign Guidelines brochure.
- **Window Signs** may cover no more than 15% of the window frame, second floor tenants are limited to 10%.

### WHO IS ALLOWED TO PULL THE BUILDING PERMIT?

Please note that building permits may only be issued to a property owner or to a California licensed contractor. Written authorization from the property owner or contractor may allow an agent to obtain a permit. Such letter of authorization must be submitted to the Permit Clerk.