

Chapter 18.15 - SIGNS

18.15.010 - Purpose.

The city council finds that the manner of the construction, location, and maintenance of signs affects the public health, safety, and welfare of the people; the safety of motorists, and other users of the public streets are affected by the number, size, location, lighting, and movement of signs that divert attention of such users. Uncontrolled and unlimited signs may degrade the aesthetic attractiveness of the natural and man-made attributes of the community that could undermine economic value of tourism, visitation, and economic growth. The regulations in this chapter are found to be the minimum necessary to achieve these purposes.

18.15.020 - Scope.

The primary intent of this chapter shall be to regulate signs of a commercial nature intending to be viewed from any vehicular or pedestrian right-of-way. This chapter shall not apply to building design, to official traffic or government signs, or to any sign authorized or permitted by any other ordinance or resolution of the city. This section shall further not apply to the display of street numbers or to any display or construction not defined herein as a sign.

18.15.030 - Maintenance and repair of signs.

- A. All signs and all components thereof, including supports, braces and anchors, shall be kept in a state of good repair. With respect to freestanding signs, components not bearing a message shall be constructed of materials that blend with the surrounding environment.
- B. Abandoned signs and all supporting structural components shall be removed by the sign owner, owner of the property where the sign is located, or other party having control over the sign. Each is individually and severally responsible for removing such sign within thirty days after abandonment, unless such sign is replaced with a conforming sign.
- C. If a sign suffers more than fifty percent damage or deterioration as determined or is dangerous because of insecure construction or fastening with resultant danger of falling by the building official, or because it is an extreme fire hazard as determined by the fire marshal then such sign shall be brought into conformance with this code or removed.

18.15.040 - General definitions and regulations.

- A. Regulated. In the event that a definition is not listed in this section and is necessary in the interpretation of this chapter, the director shall primarily rely upon the general definitions established for this title, and secondarily on the definition found in a standard English dictionary. For the purpose of this chapter the following definitions and regulations shall apply:
 1. "Abandoned" means a sign which no longer identifies or advertises a bona fide business, service, owner, product, or activity, and/or for which no legal owner can be found.
 2. "Awning" is a structure that may support a sign. An awning is a shelter projecting from, and supported by, the exterior wall of a building, constructed of non-rigid materials on a supporting framework. [Refer to "awning signs."]
 3. "Commercial" means the purpose of the sign is to engage in commerce, or to advertise for one's work that is intended for sale.
 4. "Date of adoption" means the date the ordinance codified in this chapter was originally adopted or the effective date of an amendment to it, if the amendment makes a sign nonconforming.
 5. "Height" is defined at "Dimensions of Signs" within this chapter.

6. "Internally illuminated" means signs where the source of the illumination is inside the sign and light emanates through the message of the sign, rather than being reflected off the surface of the sign from an external source. Neon signs are considered internally illuminated signs.
 7. "Multiple building complex" means a group of structures housing at least one retail business, office, commercial venture, or independent or separate part of a business which shares the same lot.
 8. "Nit" means a luminance unit equal to one candela per square meter measured perpendicular to the rays from the source.
 8. "Off-premises sign" means a sign that advertises products, services, or facilities, or directs person to premises different than where the sign is placed.
 9. "On-premises sign" means a sign that advertises products or services related to the building or structure where it is located.
 10. "Permanent sign" means a sign that is intended to remain for the life of the project or business without fundamental or marked changes and is attached to a building or structure by means of a rigid wall, frame, or structure.
 11. "Public right-of-way." There are two distinctions of right-of-way. "Privately maintained right-of-way" means that portion of the public right-of-way maintained by the abutting property owner. "Publicly maintained right-of-way" means that portion of the public right-of-way maintained by the City of Camas or other public agency. Signs placed in the public right-of-way must be located outside vision clearance areas and may not pose a traffic hazard or other threat to human safety.
 12. "Sign" means any device, structure, or placard using graphics, logos, symbols, and/or written copy designed specifically for the purpose of advertising or identifying any establishment, product, goods, or services.
 13. "Sign area" is defined at "Dimensions of Signs" within this chapter.
 14. "Sign schedule" means a listing of multiple signs proposed within an application or development project, which consists of dimensions and descriptions; normally this is in a tabular format (e.g., spreadsheet).
 15. "Site plan" means a drawing of the location of a sign or multiple signs within the city limits.
- B. Sign Types—Regulations and Limitations. In the event that a sign type as provided in this section is in conflict with provisions elsewhere in this chapter, the more restrictive criteria shall apply.
1. "Animated sign." [Refer to "electronic message board" sign.]
 2. "Awning signs." Signage on awnings shall not exceed thirty percent of the awning and shall be included in the combined sign calculation for particular business or storefront.
 3. "Banner" is a sign constructed of fabric, vinyl or other non-rigid, durable material that can withstand the typical weather in this area, and does not exceed sixty square feet in size. Banners primarily announce a special occasion, such as a grand opening or special event. National, state or municipal flags are not considered banners.
 4. "Bulletin board" is often installed to provide a central location for people to gather information about events or classes that are happening within the building or community in which it is installed. Bulletin boards are included in the overall signage calculation for the site. They are not electronic, LED or otherwise programmable for messaging.
 5. "Cabinet sign" is generally a wall sign. This type of sign is usually internally illuminated with a removable face and is enclosed on all edges with a metal cabinet, and does not extend more than ten inches from the wall face on which it is mounted.

6. "Construction sign" means a temporary sign identifying an architect, contractor, subcontractor, and/or material supplier participating in construction on the property on which the sign is located.
7. "Directory sign" identifies two or more establishments and/or the complex as a whole. If a tenant in a multi-building complex has a sign on the freestanding directory sign, then the tenant shall not have an individual freestanding sign. Directory sign area may not exceed one-hundred square feet.
8. "Electronic message board sign," "animated sign," and "LED sign" are considered to be similar sign types for purposes of this chapter. These signs use changing lights to form a message, or messages in sequence, uses movement or change of lighting to depict action or create a special effect or scene. This element of a sign may not exceed thirty percent of total sign area or ~~thirty six one hundred~~ square feet, whichever is ~~less~~ greater. This calculation does not including post or mounting framework. The electronic board must avoid using flashing, rotating or blinking lights or videos.
9. "Entrance structure." Refer to "monument sign."
10. "Freestanding sign" is attached to, erected on, or supported by some structure (such as a pole, mast, frame, or other structure) that is not itself an integral part of or attached to a building or other structure whose principal function is something other than the support of a sign.
 - a. Height limit. Freestanding sign height shall not exceed twenty-five feet from the ground to the top of sign in any zone.
 - b. Construction. Rigid, fire-proof material that can withstand wind pressure of thirty mph per square foot.
 - c. Combination. A freestanding sign is permitted in combination with wall signs; however, the size of all permitted signs cannot exceed the overall size permitted per building face per zone. A freestanding sign is not permitted in combination with a projecting or monument sign.
11. "Incidental sign" means a small sign, two square feet or less in surface area. Included are decals informing the public of goods, facilities, or services available on the premises, e.g., designating restrooms, a credit card sign, hours of operation, or "help wanted." May also contain the name or logo of an establishment, e.g., parking, or exit and entrance signs. Incidental signs if placed in windows may not cover more than twenty-five percent of window area in combination with any other permitted signs.
12. "Monument sign" is a sign not attached to a building, not more than five feet in height or twenty feet in length, which is attached to the ground by means of a wide base of solid appearance. Monument signs must be designed so as to be compatible with adjacent architecture and landscaping, and must be constructed with materials conducive to abutting structures and the surrounding area. They may not be constructed from fabric or banner material.
13. "Pennant" is a small, double-faced sign that is intended to be viewed by pedestrians and is hung above the sidewalk or street, with the bottom edge conforming to sign height regulations. Pennants may not exceed four square feet, may not be placed closer than twenty feet apart, and are constructed of fabric or other durable materials with a message, logo or artistic rendering on the sign face.
14. "Portable sign" means any sign designed to be moved easily, and not permanently affixed to the ground, or other permanent structure, to include such other descriptive names such as "A-frame," "sandwich board," and "poster panels."
 - a. Size. The sign shall not exceed forty-two inches above ground, and six square feet in sign area per side.
 - b. Construction. Portable signs shall be firmly and solidly constructed so as to be able to bear a wind pressure of at least thirty pounds per square foot of area.

- c. Location. It is unlawful to erect or maintain any portable sign in such a position as to obstruct any fire escape or any window or door leading thereto, or within vision clearance at intersections; and must allow for a pedestrian clearance of five feet on sidewalks.
 - d. Portable signs may only be displayed during business hours. If business hours continue past daylight hours, precautions should be taken to place the sign in a location that is visible after dark.
 - e. One sign per business entity and located on same lot as business entity.
- 15. "Poster" is a piece of sales literature that presents information through words and graphic images. It has text and symbols or pictures to convey an idea or concept. Usually, it is designed vertically and displayed on a wall or window. Posters, where allowed, may not exceed six square feet.
 - 16. "Projecting sign" is a sign affixed to a building or wall in such a manner that its leading edge extends more than ten inches beyond the surface of such building or wall.
 - 17. "Real estate sign" means a temporary sign advertising that real estate is for rent, lease, or sale.
 - 18. "Roof sign" means any sign erected over or on the roof of a building. The roof sign may not exceed the maximum building height allowed in the zoning district in which it is located. If the zoning district has no limitation to building height, then the height from base of sign shall not exceed that of a freestanding sign, which is limited to twenty-five-foot tall.
 - 19. "Sandwich board sign." [Refer to definition of "Portable Sign."]
 - 20. "Temporary sign" means a sign that is used in connection with a circumstance, situation, or event that is designed, intended or expected to take place or to be completed within a reasonably short or definite period after erection of such sign; or is intended to remain on the location where it is erected or placed for a short period of time [refer to additional requirements in Section 18.15.100 CMC]. "Temporary signs" include, but are not limited to, the following examples:
 - a. Political signs advocating political candidates or political issues;
 - b. Real estate signs advertising property for sale or lease;
 - c. Construction signs identifying the builder of a structure or the developer of a residential, commercial or industrial development;
 - d. Special event signs or banners advertising grand openings, fairs, carnivals, circuses, festivals; or
 - e. Community events, garage and yard sale signs, and any other sign of a similar purpose.
 - 21. "Vehicular sign" means a sign adhered to or mounted to the vehicle body that is parked along a vehicular right-of-way for the principle purpose of displaying advertising.
 - 22. "Wall sign" is any permanent sign that is attached parallel to and extending not more than ten inches from the wall of a building. This includes painted, individual letter, cabinet signs and signs attached to a mansard roof (if constructed at an angle of seventy-five degrees or more from horizontal). No more than two wall signs are permitted per building face, and in combination with all other permitted signs shall not exceed ten percent of wall area.
- C. Determination of number of signs.
- 1. For the purpose of determining the number of signs permitted, a sign shall be considered to be a single display surface or display device containing elements organized, related, and composed to form a unit. Where matter is displayed in a random manner without organized

relationship of elements, each element shall be considered a single sign. A two-sided or multi-sided sign shall be regarded as one sign if the sign faces are identical.

2. Only one projecting or monument sign is permitted per street frontage (either one or the other) and neither is permitted in combination with a freestanding sign, per lot.
3. Only one permanent sign per lot in residential zones.
4. Combination. Only one freestanding sign may be allowed per street frontage for each commercial and industrial zoned lot on which the business is located in combination with a maximum of two wall signs (if the lot does not contain a monument or projecting sign). The combined square footage of signs may not exceed size allowance per building face per zone. If a lot contains a multi-building complex a directory sign is permitted in combination with a freestanding sign and wall signs. For a multi-building complex with property frontage that exceeds three-hundred feet, an additional freestanding sign may be allowed for each three hundred feet and set apart no less than one-hundred feet.
5. Refer to "Temporary Sign" section of this chapter for limitation on number of temporary signs.

D. Dimensions of signs.

1. Sign Area. The sign area is defined as the area of the surface, or surfaces, which displays letters or symbols identifying the business or businesses occupying the parcel, together with any allowable electronic message board. In calculating the sign area, the following apply:
 - a. The sign area shall not include the base or pedestal to which the sign is mounted.
 - b. The sign surface area of a double-faced (back-to-back) sign shall be calculated by using the area of only one side of such sign and shall be considered one sign structure.
 - c. The sign surface area of double-faced signs constructed in a "V" shall be calculated by using the area of only one side of such sign and shall be considered one sign structure.
 - d. The sign surface area of three dimensional signs shall be computed by including the total of all sides designed to attract attention or communicate information that can be seen at any one time by a person from one vantage point.
2. Sign Height. Height is measured from the finished grade at the point of support to the topmost point of a sign. Height limitations are determined by type of sign as defined in this chapter.
3. Placement. All signs, unless attached to a building, must be set back from the property line by a minimum of five feet, unless otherwise stated in this chapter. Setbacks may be increased or decreased during plan review if there are concerns for vision clearance or other public safety concerns. Signs must provide a minimum clearance of fourteen feet over any vehicular use area, and ten feet over any pedestrian area.

18.15.050 - Signs controlled by zoning district.

The following table identifies signs by zoning district as permitted (P), prohibited (X), or only allowed with a Conditional Use Permit (C). All permitted signs are subject to the requirements of this chapter, and any other applicable sections of CMC. If dimensions of a sign vary by zone, then it is noted in this table.

Table 1 - Signs controlled by Zoning District

Sign Types as defined in this chapter	Residential and Multi-family Zones	Commercial, Industrial, and Park Zones	LI/BP

Animated/electronic message board signs	C	P	P
Awning signs	X	P	P
Bulletin board	P Note 4	P Note 2	P Note 2
Cabinet	X	P Note 2	P Note 2
Directory sign	X	P	P
Freestanding sign	X	P Note 2	P Note 2, 3
Incidental sign	P	P	P
Monument sign	P	P	P
Portable sign	X	P Note 2	P Note 2
Projecting sign	X	P Note 2	P Note 2
Roof sign	X	P Note 2	P
Temporary sign (e.g., construction signs, real estate, banners, and other sign types as defined in this chapter)	P Note 1	P Note 2, 3	P Note 2, 3
Vehicular signs	P	P	P
Wall signs	P Note 1	P Note 2	P Note 2

Notes:

¹ Sign may not exceed six square feet in area per lot unless approved with a Master Sign Permit.

² Sign may not exceed ten percent of the size of the wall area in combination with all other permitted signs on the same plane and visible from public view unless approved with a Master Sign Permit.

³ If lot is vacant, then sign is limited to ninety-six square feet.

⁴ Only allowed if approved in combination with a Type III development permit.

18.15.060 - General sign permit requirements.

A. Sign permit required.

1. Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, no sign may be erected, placed, or substantially altered in the city except in accordance with the provisions of this chapter and the requirements of the International Building Code, current adopted edition.
2. If plans submitted for a Conditional Use Permit (Type III permit) or Design Review include sign construction plans in sufficient detail to determine compliance with the provisions of this chapter, then issuance of such conditional use or design review may constitute approval of the proposed placement of sign or signs (other structural/mechanical permits may be required).

B. Application Requirements. Applications for a General Sign Permit shall contain the following information when submitted to the Community Development Department at a minimum:

1. Application form and payment of current fee as determined by resolution.
2. Site Plan. Drawn to scale showing the subject property, streets, all existing buildings, and the location of any existing freestanding signs, utility poles and other structures within fifty feet of the proposed new sign's location;
3. Construction Drawings. Includes the structural details of the proposed sign, including its dimensions, heights, materials, type of illumination, landscaping (if required) and structural support;
4. Photographs. Provide photographs of all existing signs on the subject property and building(s), and marked to indicate the proposed location of the new sign(s). Staff will accept original photos, color copies or compatible electronic format (e.g. compact disc).
5. When required by the building official, the construction of the sign may require submittal of structural and/or mechanical drawings prepared by a licensed Washington State professional.

18.15.070 - Master sign permit requirements.

A. Purpose. The purpose of this section is to establish a binding Master Sign Permit that will allow for placement of both permanent and temporary signs on a group of lots or within a business complex, in order to encourage comprehensive sign design, and reward proper placement and prompt removal of temporary signs, which combined will benefit the city by reducing municipal costs for code enforcement. This section allows the size of signs on a lot or within a zoning district to be exceeded and other bonuses as set forth. Individual signs may be permitted by the building department without additional General Sign Permits after a Master Sign Permit has been approved.

B. Application Requirements. Applications for a Master Sign Permit shall contain the following materials in addition to the requirements for a General Sign Permit:

1. Application form and payment of current fee as determined by resolution.
2. Site Plan. Site plan shall include the proposed placement of all signs, both on-premises and off-premises.

3. Consent of property owner for placement of signs within privately-maintained right-of-way or on private lots.
 4. Sign Schedule - existing conditions. The schedule will include a calculation of the combined maximum sign area permitted and the number of signs allowed on the proposed lot(s).
 5. Sign Schedule - proposed. The schedule will include a calculation of the combined total proposed sign area included in the plan, sign types, number, and short description.
 6. Construction Plans. Detailed construction plans shall be provided at a reasonable scale to include type of material and method of installation.
 7. Time frame for installation of each sign indicated on plan.
 8. Narrative that supports how this application meets or exceeds the criteria for approval for a Master Sign Permit and other regulations in this chapter.
- C. Maximum total area of all signs. The combined sign area of all proposed signs on a lot or lots under consideration for a Master Sign Permit shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the total ground floor area (GFA) of the building(s) or in the case of a vacant lot then ten (10) percent of the area of building lot coverage.
- D. Bonus. If the owners of two or more contiguous (disregarding intervening streets and alleys) lots or the owner of a single lot with more than one building (not including any accessory building) file with the Director for such lots a Master Signage Plan conforming with the provisions of this section, a thirty percent (30%) increase in the maximum total sign area of that zone shall be allowed for each included lot. This bonus shall be allocated within each lot as the owner(s) elects. Or if a subdivision, then the applicant may combine potential sign area from multiple lots for a single sign to be no greater than thirty-two (32) square feet in lieu of the residential zone size limitation of six square feet.
- E. Criteria of Approval for Master Sign Permit.
1. Provisions have been made to have a consistent design with regard to: color scheme; lettering or graphic style; lighting; location of each sign on the buildings or on the lots or elsewhere; material; and sign proportions.
 2. Provisions have been made to install signs that will not detract from the natural beauty of the city or contribute to urban blight.
 3. The locations of off-premises signs do not exceed one sign per radius of 300-feet.
 4. The application and plans shall be consistent with the applicable regulations of the adopted development codes, comprehensive plans, shoreline master plan, state and local environmental acts and ordinances in accordance with RCW 36.70B.030.
- F. Approval and Modification. The designated official shall approve a master sign permit and subsequent modifications. Any deviation from the approved master sign permit such as additional signs, relocating signs, and any other changes (excluding tenant name changes and maintenance) shall require a modification to the master sign permit on file with the city.
- G. Expiration. Master Sign Permits expire in two years from date of issuance unless at least one sign of the Master Sign Permit has been installed prior to that date.

18.15.080 - Signs prohibited.

The following signs are specifically prohibited in the city:

- A. Signs attached to any telephone or utility pole;
- B. Signs located in such a manner so that by location, color, size, shape, nature would tend to obstruct the view or be confused with official traffic signage.
- C. Signs advertising activities that are illegal under state or federal laws, or regulations in effect at the location of such signs, or at the location of such activities.

- D. Signs emitting pollutants (e.g. smoke, or sound).
- E. Posters. The tacking or pasting of posters to exterior walls, which are visible from the public right-of-way, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted as a sign in this chapter.

18.15.090 - Exemptions.

- A. No permit is required for mere repainting; changing the message of a sign, or routine maintenance shall not in and of itself be considered a substantial alteration.
- B. Although no permits will be issued, compliance with this chapter is required.
- C. Signs that are exempt and that do not require a permit are as follows:
 1. Signs not exceeding six square feet in area that are customarily associated with residential use, and that are not of a commercial nature, such as: signs giving property identification names or numbers, or names of occupants; signs on mailboxes or newspaper tubes; and signs posted on private property that warn the public against trespassing or danger from animals;
 2. Integral decorative or architectural features of buildings, or works of art, so long as such features or works do not contain commercial trademarks, moving parts, or lights (e.g. commemorative plaques or inscriptions with the name of a building, its date of construction). Feature must be attached to the face of the building and shall not exceed three square feet in sign area.
 3. Signs painted on or otherwise permanently attached to currently licensed motor vehicles;
 4. Traffic or other municipal signs, signs required by law, legal notices, or signs of public utility companies indicating danger;
 5. Flag, emblem, or insignia of a nation or other governmental unit or institution, or non profit organization subject to the guidelines concerning their use set forth by the government or organization which they represent;
 6. Signs located in the interior of a building or within a sport complex that are designed and located to be viewed exclusively by patrons within the building or sport complex

18.15.100 - Temporary signs.

- A. Temporary signs are exempt from permit requirements as described in this section. Although no permits will be issued, compliance with this chapter is required. Temporary signs may be permitted with a Master Sign Permit as described in this chapter.
 1. Number. One sign per lot, per candidate, issue or event.
 2. Size. Refer to "Table 1" of this chapter for sign dimensions per zoning district and bonuses as allowed with a Master Sign Permit.
 3. Consent. If displayed on private property, the responsible party must obtain consent of property owner.
- B. Temporary signs may not be illuminated.
- C. Removal. Temporary signs shall be removed by sign owner within ten days after occurrence of the event. For example, political signs should therefore be removed within ten days following an election, real estate signs should be removed within ten days following sale or lease of the property, construction signs should be removed within ten days following issuance of the certificate of occupancy for the building, special event signs should be removed within ten days after occurrence of the special event, and yard and garage sale signs should be removed within ten days following the sale.
- D. Confiscation. The city or property owner may confiscate signs installed in violation of this chapter and dispose of it. The property owner is not responsible for notifying owners of confiscation of the illegal sign.

18.15.110 - Sign illumination and electronic message board signs.

Unless otherwise prohibited by this chapter, signs may be illuminated if such illumination is in accordance with this section.

- A. No sign within one hundred fifty feet of a residential district may be illuminated between the hours of midnight and six a.m., unless the impact of such lighting beyond the boundaries of the lot where it is located is entirely inconsequential.
- B. Lighting directed toward a sign shall be hooded or shielded so that it illuminates only the face of the sign and does not shine directly onto a public right-of-way or a residential property.
- C. Except as herein provided, internally illuminated signs are not permitted in residential districts. Where permitted, internally illuminated signs may not be illuminated during hours that the business or enterprise advertised by such sign is not open for business, or in operation.
- D. All electronic message board signs shall be constructed as an integral part of a permanent sign constructed on-site. Integral shall be considered to be incorporated into the framework and architectural design of the permanent sign.
- E. Maximum Luminance:
 - a. Daytime: five thousand nits.
 - a.b. Nighttime (one-half hour before sunset and one-half hour after sunrise): five hundred nits.
 - b.c. Signs shall include ability to adjust brightness and auto-dimming features with light-sensory capabilities to dim the sign to allowable luminance levels.

18.15.120 - Nonconforming signs.

- A. Existing signs which do not conform to the specific provisions of the chapter may be eligible for the designation "legal nonconforming"; provided that:
 - 1. The building department determines that such signs are properly maintained and do not in any way endanger the public;
 - 2. The sign was covered by a permit deemed valid by the city, or complied with all applicable laws on the date on which it was established.
- B. A "legal nonconforming" sign may lose this designation if the following occur:
 - 1. The sign is relocated or replaced;
 - 2. The structure or size of the sign is altered in any way except toward compliance with this chapter. This does not refer to change of copy or normal message;
 - 3. The business, use, or product for which the sign is directed has been abandoned (has not occurred on the property for a period of six consecutive months). The burden of demonstrating non-abandonment shall be on the owner.
- C. Removal of nonconforming signs. A sign which has been removed and held by the city longer than thirty days and not recovered by its owner, shall be declared abandoned and discarded by the city.