



SIGNS

Planning and Building permits are required to preserve and promote diverse and dynamic commercial advertising activities while enhancing safety, welfare, and the aesthetic appearance of Sunnyvale. See SMC 19.44 for additional information.

The following is a summary of the sign requirements for commercial, industrial, or other non-residential uses. Sign requirements are found in both the Sunnyvale Municipal Code and applicable plans and documents (such as Downtown Specific Plan, Precise Plan for El Camino Real, Moffett Park Specific Plan, etc.)

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

<input type="checkbox"/> Wall Sign	Any sign attached to or erected against a wall, awning, canopy, fascia, fence or roof of a building or structure, with the exposed face of the sign approximately parallel to and extending no more than twelve inches from the surface of the structure.
<input type="checkbox"/> Ground Sign	A sign which is supported by a free-standing base or one or more poles, uprights or braces in or upon the ground.
<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Wall Sign	A wall sign located adjacent to each public entrance other than the main entrance of a building, or adjacent to the main entrance of a building which is identified by a ground sign only.
<input type="checkbox"/> Logo	A distinctive graphic symbol identifying a use, product or company.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sign Area	The area (sq. ft.) of the smallest geometric shape (circle, oval, rectangle, triangle or combination thereof) within which a sign face can be enclosed. Signs with more than one face have an area equal to the sum of the two faces. Address numbers are exempt from sign area. The center name for multi-tenant centers is exempt up to 15 sq. ft.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sign Face	The portion of a sign that is used for displaying sign copy, including any frame, color, panel, or condition used to differentiate the sign copy from any wall or background. Sign supports, uprights or sign bases that does not convey information are not considered sign face.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sign Height	The vertical distance from the highest point of the sign structure to the top of the nearest public street curb.
<input type="checkbox"/> Copy Height	The height of the tallest number or letter on a sign. For wall signs mounted on multiple-tenant buildings and not consisting of individual letters (i.e. a "can" or "cabinet" sign), the copy height is the height of the sign face. Logos are not included in height calculations.
<input type="checkbox"/> Fundamental Business Identification	All commercial signs shall be allowed to display fundamental business identification, which includes business name, use, and one logo.
<input type="checkbox"/> Allowable Items of Information	A syllable of a word, an abbreviation, an abstract symbol, or a number is considered to be an item of information. Signs are limited to ten items of information per sign face when signs are displaying related but nonessential information in addition to fundamental business identification.
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Signs	Any sign, banner, valance or advertising display constructed of cloth, canvas, fabric, cardboard, plywood or other light material with or without a frame, and designed or intended to be displayed for a short period of time. See the <i>Temporary Signs</i> handout for more information on temporary sign requirements.

LOGOS

The logo can be detached from the copy but must be mounted on the same building elevation. Logos are counted in sign area. On wall signs, logo height is limited to allowed copy height for minor tenants but unlimited for major tenants. Height is unlimited for ground signs.

ADDRESS DISPLAY REQUIREMENT

Addresses must be displayed on the building with minimum 4 in. copy height. Addresses must be displayed on all ground signs with a minimum 6 in. copy height, and must include the street direction (N, S, E, W) if applicable.

Address numbers on ground signs are encouraged to be located at the top of the sign except for signs taller than 15 ft., and cannot be located lower than 4 ft. unless otherwise approved.

DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

- New buildings should be designed with appropriate areas on the site and building façade for signage.
- Each sign shall manifest balanced scale and proportion in its design and in its visual relationship to nearby buildings, its site, other visible signs and surrounding land uses.
- Each sign shall be compatible with the general appearance of other signs visible from its site, and shall not compete for attention in a manner taking advantage of extreme, disharmonious, or clashing colors, shape, location or materials.
- Conceal all sign raceways and attachment hardware. Exposed raceways are prohibited.
- Select sign colors to blend with the building and storefront colors. Select from color ranges which are analogous and complementary to them.

NON-RESIDENTIAL USES

NUMBER OF SIGNS PERMITTED

One business on a site	Non-Corner Lots	One ground sign or one wall sign. If the business >10,000 sq. ft., both a ground and a wall sign are permitted.
	Corner Lots	Two wall signs (one per street frontage) or one ground sign and one wall sign. The ground sign must be visible from both streets or be located on a frontage with no wall sign.
Two or more businesses on a site	One wall sign per main tenant entrance and one wall sign for each building elevation of a tenant space that faces a street and one ground sign per street frontage. A Master Sign Program is required if more than two businesses are located on a property. See the <i>Master Sign Programs</i> handout for more information.	

WALL SIGN REQUIREMENTS - NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

Wall Sign Size	0.66 sq. ft. of sign area per 1 linear ft. of tenant frontage (minimum of 25 sq. ft. regardless of frontage). For Major Tenants (>10,000 sq. ft. in gross floor area) you may add a bonus 50 sq. ft. of sign area (not to exceed 250 sq. ft. total sign area).	
Secondary Wall Sign	12 sq. ft. maximum. See sidebar for more information.	
Wall Sign Copy Height	Businesses < 10,000 sq. ft.	Sign setback is 0-15 ft. = 1.5 ft. max. Sign setback is 16 ft. or more = 2 ft. max.
	Businesses > 10,000 sq. ft. (Major Tenants)	Sign setback is 0-15 ft. = 1.5 ft. max. copy height Sign setback is 16-69 ft. = 3 ft. max. copy height Sign setback is 70 ft. or more = unlimited copy height
Wall Sign Length	Two-thirds of the length of the tenant frontage maximum. The limit can be exceeded to accommodate the minimum 25 sq. ft. allowed for tenant frontages of 50 feet or less.	

SECONDARY WALL SIGN OPTION

If the business has only ground sign identification, a secondary wall sign (max 12 sq. ft.) may be located adjacent to the main entrance. If there is more than one public entrance to the business, a secondary wall sign may be located adjacent to any public entrance other than the main entrance of the building. Secondary wall signs are not permitted for residential uses.

CENTER IDENTIFICATION

One wall sign may be installed to identify the center name if a multi-tenant center has no ground sign. In industrial zoning districts, ground signs can identify all tenants and/or the center name. In all other zoning districts, ground signs can display the center name and up to four tenant names. The center name is exempt from sign area calculation up to 15 sq. ft.

GROUND SIGN REQUIREMENTS - NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

Ground Sign Height and Setback	10 ft. maximum height, except along El Camino Real where 25 ft. height is permitted. If 2 ground signs are permitted on El Camino Real (see sidebar), the second ground sign may only be 15 ft. in height. 1 ft. minimum setback from property line.	
Ground Sign Size	Adjacent to El Camino Real and in the Precise Plan for El Camino Real	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One tenant name and/or a center name - 50 sq. ft. per sign face maximum (100 sq. ft. total). 10 additional sq. ft. is allowed if sign displays 2-4 tenant names OR is set back 10 ft. or more from the property line. (Not to exceed 70 sq. ft./face).
	All other locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One tenant name and/or a center name - 40 sq. ft. per sign face maximum (80 sq. ft. total). 10 additional sq. ft. if sign displays two or more tenant names OR is set back 10 ft. or more from the property line. (Not to exceed 60 sq. ft./face).
Ground Sign Copy Height	4 inches minimum. 20 inches maximum.	
Address	All ground signs must display the street address number with minimum 6 in. copy height (maximum 2 ft.), followed by the street direction (N, S, E, W) if applicable.	

SIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR A NON-RESIDENTIAL USE IN A RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICT

Wall Sign Size	Half of area permitted above in non-residential zoning districts. Secondary wall signs are included in this area. (See sidebar for more information.)
Wall Sign Length	Maximum of two-thirds of the tenant frontage on which the sign is displayed. The limit can be exceeded to accommodate the minimum 25 sq. ft. allowed for tenant frontages of 50 ft. or less.
Copy Height for Wall or Ground sign	Wall signs: 1 ft. maximum. Ground signs: 4 in. minimum, 20 in. maximum.
Ground Sign Setback	1 ft. minimum from property line. (Check with Public Works to verify the property line location.)
Ground Sign Height	5 ft. maximum
Ground Sign Size	Half of area permitted above in non-residential zoning districts maximum.
Address	All ground signs must display the street address number with minimum 6 in. copy height (maximum 2 ft.), followed by the street direction (N, S, E, W) if applicable.

RESIDENTIAL USES

Signs for residential uses in any zoning district are permitted, with reduced size and location requirements. Please refer to SMC 19.44.140(b)(1) for more information.

BUILDING PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

The Building Division reviews signs for safe construction and conformance with the above requirements. Building permits are required for all new or replacement ground and walls signs, including sign face changes.

ADDITIONAL GROUND SIGN OPTION

If the ground sign option is selected, a second ground sign may be installed along any street frontage which measures 300 ft. or greater.

<p>PERMIT PROCESS</p> <p>PLANNING DIVISION REVIEW</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For wall or ground signs in an existing shopping center, obtain a copy of the Master Sign Program from the Planning Division. If all requirements of the Master Sign Program are met, no further Planning Division review is required. You will still need to obtain a Building Permit. 2. For properties not part of a Master Sign Program, a Miscellaneous Plan Permit is required. MPPs usually take two weeks to review. 	<p>PLANNING REVIEW APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS (2 copies of each item except application)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Application signed by the property owner. <input type="checkbox"/> Site Plan showing the location of the building(s), length of street frontage, all existing sign locations and proposed sign locations. <input type="checkbox"/> For wall signs, elevation of building showing placement of the sign(s) and tenant frontage length. <input type="checkbox"/> Details of the proposed signage including overall sign and copy dimensions, total sign area, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Fee (non refundable) _____
<p>BUILDING PERMIT REVIEW</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Once your Planning Permit has been approved, submit for a building permit. 4. Building permits are issued between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon, Monday through Friday. 5. After a Building Permit is issued, wall signs typically require one inspection after the sign is installed. Ground signs typically require two inspections, one for the footing and a final inspection after the sign is installed. 	<p>BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS (3 copies of each item)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Site Plan showing the location of the building(s), length of street frontage, all existing sign locations and proposed sign locations. <input type="checkbox"/> For wall signs, elevation of building showing placement of the sign(s). <input type="checkbox"/> Details of the proposed signage including overall sign and copy dimensions. <input type="checkbox"/> For ground signs, provide structural calculations and construction details for the footing and attachment details for the sign cabinet. <input type="checkbox"/> For all illuminated signs, provide Title 24 Energy Calculations Form OLTG-4-C. <input type="checkbox"/> Fee _____