



SIGNS

Sunnyvale

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 Sunnyvale’s Sign Code for all commercial signs in the City. Sign regulations are found in the Sunnyvale Municipal Code ([SMC 19.44](#)). Additional information on signage in special areas and Specific Plans can be found in the specific documents such as Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines, Downtown Specific Plan, Precise Plan for El Camino Real, Moffett Park Specific Plan, etc.

TERMS, DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS

WALL SIGN: A permanent sign that is attached to the exterior of a wall including fin-signs, awnings or canopies. See attached Table for maximum wall sign area and copy height. A minimum of 25 s.f. of wall sign area is allowed regardless of the building/tenant frontage.

Location: Wall signs may be split into separate signs that can be placed on any building frontage. Illumination of signs is generally permitted, except illuminated wall signs on side or rear elevations that are within 150 ft. from any residentially zoned properties shall only be illuminated between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Wall signs shall be located on the same story as the primary entrance; except wall signs on multi-story buildings may be placed on the top floor. No sign shall extend above the top of a roof structure.

GROUND SIGN: A permanent sign which is self-supporting in a fixed location and not attached to a building. See attached Tables for ground sign requirements. Ground signs shall be located at least one foot away from the property line and outside of the required Vision Triangles ([SMC 19.34.060](#)) or see Vision Triangle handout.

Site Address Requirement: Addresses shall be displayed on all ground signs with 6” min. to 24” max. copy height, and if applicable, will include the street direction (N, S, E, W), and be located between 2’ to 15’. from the ground. Address is not counted towards allowable sign area.

TEMPORARY PORTABLE/A-FRAME SIGNS: Only one portable sign per tenant is allowed as long as it meets the following criteria:

- Max. sign area of 8 s.f.;
- Sign shall be located on private property and displayed only during business hours with a min. clearance of 3’ for pedestrian travel and be oriented only to on-site vehicles and pedestrians;
- Height of the sign can be max. 3’6” tall (as measured from the adjacent ground); Signs that do not meet the above criteria are not allowed.

SIGN DESIGN: Ensure all sign design is compatible with the surrounding area, minimizes visual clutter and minimizes safety hazard to drivers and pedestrians and should be well maintained. *Conceal all sign raceways and attachment hardware.*

DEFINITIONS:

Sign Area: The area (s.f.) of the smallest geometric shape (circle, oval, rectangle, triangle or combination thereof) within which all visually communicative sign elements 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 s.f.

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 do not convey information are not considered a part of the sign face.

Copy Height: Sunnyvale code requires a minimum of 6” copy height on ground or wall signs. Refer to attached Table for maximum copy height allowed.

SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMIT REQUIREMENTS:

Several types of signs that meet size and location criteria do not need a sign permit. Please refer to [SMC 19.44.050](#) and [19.44.180](#) for detailed information and requirements on these signs:

- Address numbers on a building,
- Warning signs,
- Window signs,
- Residential Open House signs,
- Information signs,
- Non-commercial flags,
- Directional signs,
- Residential name plate,
- Traffic signs, and
- Balloons.

PROHIBITED SIGNS:

- Moving signs,
- Commercial mascots,
- Wind activated signs,
- Audible signs and
- Billboards

TEMPORARY SIGNS: Any sign, banner, valance, large inflatable objects, ground sign sleeve, building wrap, non-commercial message, flags with commercial messages intended to be displayed for a short period of time. See Temporary Signs code ([SMC 19.44.180](#) and [19.44.190](#))

s.f. = square feet

Logos: The logo can be detached from the copy. Logos are counted in sign area. Logo height is not restricted by maximum copy height.

Sign Height: The vertical distance from the highest point of the sign structure to the top of the nearest top of curb.

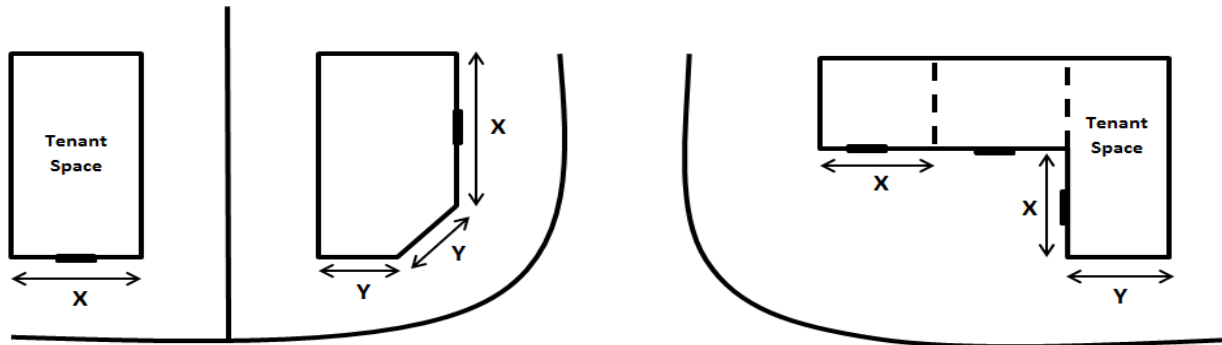
MASTER SIGN PROGRAM: If the business space is in a multi-tenant building/center, it is likely a **Master Sign Program** has been adopted. Check with the property owner/leasing agent or the City for information for the Master Sign Program for a specific site. A master sign program harmonizes signs by noting specific location, size, and design style. For new multi-tenant (6 or more tenants) centers, a Master Sign Program must be established as noted in Master Sign Program handout (SMC [19.44.220](#)).

SPECIALIZED SIGNS: Electronic Message Centers (EMC), Freeway Adjacent Establishments, Gas Station signs, and Reader board Signs have specific requirements as noted in SMC [19.44.160. \(c\)](#) and [19.44.200](#).

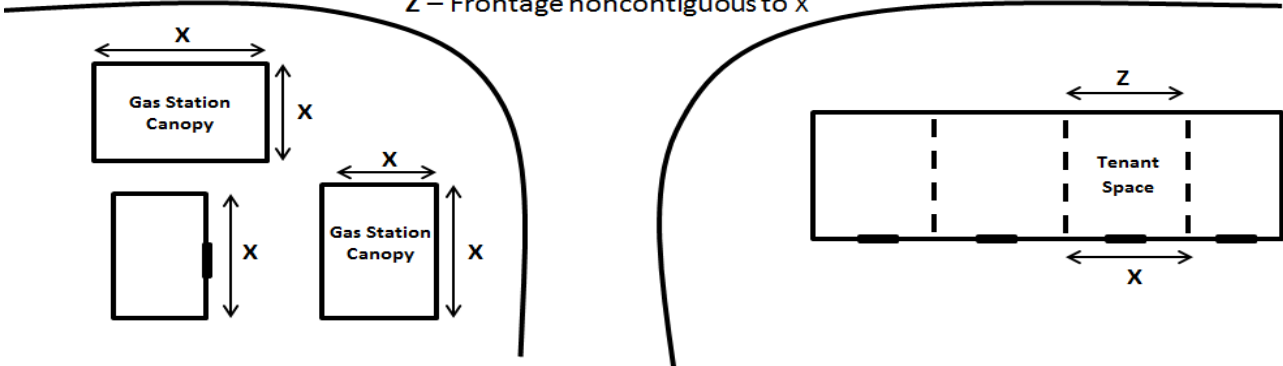
ALLOWABLE WALL AND GROUND SIGN AREA

The amount and size of signage is determined by the site’s zoning district, tenant location and building/tenant street frontage.

Tenant Street Frontage. The width of a tenant space, measured in lineal feet on a building elevation, occupied by the use to be identified. Tenant frontage includes the wall with the primary entrance as well as the wall directly facing a public street. See the graphic for further demonstration of this standard.



X – Frontage with primary entrance
 Y – Frontage with no primary entrance, contiguous to X
 Z – Frontage noncontiguous to X



Worksheet

<p>Information</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>Zoning District: _____</p> <p>Total frontage of your tenant space: (X+Y+Z) = _____ lineal ft.</p>	<p>Wall Sign</p> <p>Max. Wall Sign area allowed: _____ x _____ (s.f. from table) x (tenant’s lineal ft)</p> <p>= _____ (total s.f. of wall sign area allowed);</p> <p>Copy ht. = min. 6” and max. _____” (as noted in table)</p>	<p>Ground Sign</p> <p>Street frontages: _____; Or If frontage is greater than 300’ = 2 signs max.</p> <p>Number of signs allowed: _____;</p> <p>Area of sign: _____ s.f. per side;</p> <p>Copy ht. = 6” min and _____” max.;</p> <p>Sign ht. = _____ ft.</p>
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**SIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR
COMMERCIAL, OFFICE AND PUBLIC-FACILITY ZONING DISTRICTS
(C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, O, DSP blocks 1, 2, 3, 20 and 21, PF)**

Type	Number	Maximum Area	Copy Height	Sign Height	Special Requirements
Wall	No limit	0.66 s. f. of sign for every one lineal foot of building frontage. 200 s.f. maximum sign area.	6" min. - 48"max.	Cannot extend above the top of the building.	Multiple wall signs cannot exceed max. wall sign area. Fin signs are calculated towards overall wall sign area. Buildings over 100'. tall may have a max. Copy ht. of 60".
Ground	One per street frontage, two if lot is wider than 300 ft.	60 s.f. per side 120 s.f. on both sides.	6" min. - 48"max.	10 ft. high max. as measured from top of nearest curb	None
Under-canopy	One per entrance	5 s.f. per side, 10 s. f. on both sides.	No limit	Lower edge must be at least 8 ft. above walkway	None

**REGIONAL RETAIL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL ZONING DISTRICTS
(C-2/ECR, DSP blocks 1a, 18 and 22 and MS, M-3, MP-TOD, MP-I, MP-C)**

Type	Number	Maximum Area	Copy Height	Sign Height	Special Requirements
Wall	No limit	1 s.f. of sign for every one lineal foot of building frontage. 300 s.f. max. sign area.	6" min. - 48"max.	Cannot extend above the top of the building.	Multiple wall signs cannot exceed max. wall sign area. Fin signs are calculated towards overall wall sign area
Ground	One per street frontage, two if lot is wider than 300 ft.	70 s.f. per side, 140 s. f. on both sides.	6" min. - 48"max.	25'. high max. as measured from top of nearest curb.	None
Under-canopy	One per entrance	5 s.f. per side, 10 s. f. on both sides.	No limit	Lower edge must be at least 8'. above walkway	None

**NONRESIDENTIAL USES AND MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL USES IN
RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS**

(R-0, R-1, R-1.5, R-1.7/PD, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, R-MH, DSP blocks 4-7, 8a-b, 9, 9a, 10-17, 23)

Type	Number	Maximum Area	Copy Height	Sign Height	Special Requirements
Wall	No limit	0.33 s.f. of sign for every one lineal foot of building frontage. 75 s.f. max. sign area.	6"min.-24" max.	Cannot extend above the top of the building.	Multiple wall signs cannot exceed max. wall sign area.
Ground	One per street frontage, two if lot is wider than 300 ft.	32 s.f. per side, 64 s. f. on both sides.	6"min.-24" max.	5'. high max. as measured from nearest top of curb.	None
Under-canopy	One per entrance	5 s.f. per side, 10 s.f. on both sides.	No limit	Lower edge must be at least 8 ft. above walkway	None

PERMIT PROCESS

<p>Planning Division Review</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. For properties not part of a Master Sign Program, a Sign Permit is required and generally takes two weeks to review2. For sign(s) in a shopping center or where a Master Sign Program is in place: Obtain a copy of the Master Sign Program from the property owner or the City's Planning Division. If all requirements of the Master Sign Program and Sunnyvale Sign Code are met, Planning Division review will check for compliance as part of the building permit submittal and no additional Sign Permit from the Planning Division is required.	<p>Planning Review Application Requirements</p> <p>2 copies of each item except application form</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(s), vision triangle for ground signs, and existing and proposed sign locations.<input type="checkbox"/> For wall signs, elevation of building showing placement of the sign(s) and tenant frontage length(s).<input type="checkbox"/> For ground signs, sign elevation with dimensions showing sign area, copy heights and sign height measured from Top of Curb, and height of required site address measured from grade.<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, apply 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</p> <p>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 \$ _____

One-Stop Permit Center at City Hall, 456 W. Olive Ave., 408-730-7444
Planning and Building Division representatives are available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunnyvale.ca.gov - Search "Planning and Building"