City of Sebastopol
Planning Department

Date: November 24, 2026
Agenda Item: 6B
To: Design Review/Tree Board
From: Eli Arreola, Associate Planner
Subject: Sign Ordinance Proposed Updates

BACKGROUND:

The Design Review/Tree Board (DRB) re-established a subcommittee of two (2) members on April 28, 2026, to propose updates to the Sebastopol Sign Ordinance. The subcommittee is comprised of two members, Lynn Deedler and Blake McDowall.

The subcommittee has met multiple times to discuss proposed changes in the Sign Regulations Ordinance, Chapter 17.120 of the Sebastopol Municipal Code.

At the Design Review/Tree Board meetings of June 23, 2026, July 28, 2026, and September 22, 2026, the subcommittee presented their updates to the Board and gained feedback from members of the Board and the public. This item is intended to revisit those updates.

The Sign Ordinance is a part of the Zoning Ordinance; therefore any amendments must also be considered by the Planning Commission for recommendation to the City Council. Pursuant to Section 17.445.020 of the Municipal Code, Zoning Ordinance amendments must be initiated by a Resolution of Intention adopted by either the Planning Commission or City Council. If the Design Review Board proposes to forward the ordinance to staff for review, staff recommend that the DRB appoint a member who may speak on behalf of the Board on this item, who may attend future Planning Commission or City Council meetings to provide feedback and the perspective of the DRB when the ordinance is formally presented.

NEXT STEPS:

1. The Subcommittee will present their suggested updates to the full DRB
2. The Board will discuss and make any recommendations
3. If the Board agrees on all recommended changes, the redlined updates will go to staff for review
4. Staff will prepare a Resolution of Intention for the Planning Commission to consider initiating the ordinance amendments
5. Upon approval of the Resolution of Intention, staff will review the ordinance redlines and prepare a final draft ordinance
6. Staff will bring the item back to the DRB for review and recommendation to the Planning Commission to recommend City Council approval

7. City Council will hear a first reading of the item and either provide edits, changes, and/or recommendations and direct staff to bring back for a second reading and adoption. Major amendments may require the ordinance to be remitted to the Planning Commission for further reconsideration.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SMC Chapter 17.120 Sign Regulations Ordinance (redlined)
2. SMC Chapter 17.120 Sign Regulations Ordinance (clean version)
3. Sign Ordinance Guide

Proposed replacement of Chapter 17.120 (Sign Regulations)

Redline for Design Review Board review. Prepared November 19, 2026.

How to read this redline

Deleted text is struck through and new text is underlined, using tracked changes. The redline compares the proposed replacement chapter (Draft 2) with the existing chapter. Draft 2 replaces the chapter as a whole and reorganizes it into 11 sections, so very little existing text carries forward word for word. For each section number, the existing text appears struck through, followed by its replacement. Section numbers do not retain their former subjects. The table below shows where each existing section went.

The existing text is the chapter as current through Ordinance 1149, passed October 3, 2023. It is to be confirmed against the current official code before adoption. This page is not part of the proposed code text. Policy decisions, proposed numbers, and required coordination are in the companion drafting notes.

Existing section	Where it went in the proposed chapter
17.120.010 Purpose, intent, and applicability	New 17.120.010. The design-guideline consistency requirement is replaced by 17.120.010(E)(4).
17.120.020 Permits, fees, and exceptions	New 17.120.030 (permits), 17.120.090(B) (exceptions), and 17.120.110(A) (decisions and appeals).
17.120.030 Exempted signs	New 17.120.010(C) (items outside the chapter), 17.120.030(B) (changes without a sign permit), and specific allowances in 17.120.050 through 17.120.060.
17.120.040 Prohibited signs	Placement in 17.120.040(D); devices in 17.120.060(A); lighting and electronic displays in 17.120.070; off-premises commercial signs in 17.120.010(D)(3). The content-based prohibition is not carried forward (17.120.010(D)(2)).
17.120.050 General standards	Measurement and placement in 17.120.040; area formula in 17.120.050(B); illumination in 17.120.070.
17.120.060 Permitted signs	New 17.120.050 tables; sign programs in 17.120.090(A).
17.120.070 Miscellaneous categories	Construction and real estate signs in 17.120.060(F) and (G); temporary signs in 17.120.060; neon in 17.120.070(A); murals, sculpture, and historic signs in 17.120.080; merchandise in 17.120.010(C)(7).
17.120.080 Nonconforming signs	New 17.120.100(A).
17.120.090 Abandoned signs	New 17.120.100(C).
17.120.100 Construction and maintenance	New 17.120.040(D) and 17.120.100(B).
17.120.110 Violations	New 17.120.110(B) and (C).
17.120.120 Appeals and enforcement	New 17.120.110, with reference to Chapter 17.455 for permit appeals. Sign-specific notice, hearing, removal, disposal, and cost-recovery text is not carried forward.

Chapter 17.120
SIGN REGULATIONS

Sections:

17.120.010 Purpose~~, intent, and applicability.~~ and scope
17.120.020 ~~Permits, fees, and exceptions.~~Definitions
17.120.030 ~~Exempted signs.~~Permits and exemptions
17.120.040 ~~Prohibited signs.~~Measurement and placement
17.120.050 ~~General sign standards and regulations.~~Permanent signs
17.120.060 ~~Permitted~~Portable, window, and temporary signs~~.~~
17.120.070 ~~Miscellaneous sign categories.~~Illumination and electronic displays
17.120.080 ~~Nonconforming~~Murals, sculptural signs~~.~~, and historic signs
17.120.090 ~~Abandoned signs.~~Sign programs and exceptions
17.120.100 ~~Construction specifications, safety,~~Existing signs and maintenance~~.~~
17.120.110 ~~Violations.~~Decisions, appeals, and enforcement
~~17.120.120 Appeals and enforcement – Removal and disposition of signs.~~

17.120.010 Purpose~~, intent, and applicability.~~ and scope

~~A. Purpose. The purpose of this chapter is to establish signing standards appropriate to the City of Sebastopol, which will allow for adequate identification of businesses and provision of public information, and will reduce hazards to motorists and pedestrians, while avoiding excessive and confusing signing.~~

~~B. Intent. It is the intent of these standards to encourage well-designed and creative signs, which are integral to, and harmonious with, the adjacent neighborhood, as well as with buildings and sites. Signs should be aesthetically pleasing and consistent with the sign portion of the design guidelines, as the Design Review Board may adopt them.~~

~~C. Applicability. The provisions set forth in this chapter shall be applicable to all signs permitted by this chapter, except where specific regulations contrary to this section are established. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Purpose

This chapter provides clear sign allowances for businesses, residents, and other lawful uses. It allows legible and creative signs while protecting pedestrian access, traffic visibility, neighboring properties, and the character of Sebastopol's streets.

B. Applicability

This chapter applies to outdoor signs and window signs within the City. It also applies to electronic displays as provided in Section 17.120.070. A sign must meet the standards for its type and location unless this chapter expressly provides an exemption, an existing approval remains effective, or an exception is approved under Section 17.120.090.

C. Items outside this chapter

The following are not regulated by this chapter:

1. Interior signs other than window signs and electronic displays subject to Section 17.120.070.

2. Signs that are not visible from a public right-of-way or another property, except for the safety and maintenance requirements of Section 17.120.100(B).

3. Signs installed by a public agency for traffic control, emergency response, or another governmental function. Private advertising on public property is not exempt under this paragraph.

4. Signs required by law, to the extent of the required number, area, location, content, and illumination. Additional voluntary signage is subject to this chapter.

5. Signs carried by a person or worn on clothing, unless installed as a fixed display.

6. Signs on vehicles and trailers regularly used for transportation or delivery. A vehicle or trailer stationed as a fixed advertising display is subject to this chapter.

7. Merchandise displayed for sale and ordinary building materials, colors, and architectural details. Outdoor merchandise displays remain subject to applicable outdoor-use and right-of-way requirements.

8. Decorative lighting and seasonal decorations that do not contain a sign. Applicable electrical, fire, and nuisance regulations continue to apply.

D. Messages and private consent

1. A noncommercial message may replace any message on a lawful sign without a new sign permit. The sign remains subject to its applicable physical and operating limits. The substitution does not make the sign off-premises or abandoned.

2. The City shall not approve or deny a sign based on agreement or disagreement with its message or viewpoint. This chapter does not authorize speech prohibited by applicable law.

3. Commercial signs must relate to a business, product, service, or activity on the site, except as provided for real estate signs in Section 17.120.060(F) and off-site temporary signs in Section 17.120.060(H). New off-premises commercial advertising signs are prohibited. Lawful existing signs are governed by Section 17.120.100.

4. A sign allowance does not grant a right to use another person's property or the public right-of-way. The person displaying a sign must have lawful authority to use its location.

E. Relationship to other requirements

1. Building, electrical, fire, accessibility, historic-resource, and right-of-way requirements continue to apply. A sign permit does not waive those requirements or authorize an otherwise prohibited land use.

2. A sign allowed without a sign permit may still require another permit. The City shall identify any additional City permit required when responding to a sign-permit application.

3. The definitions, sign allowances, and sign-review procedures in this chapter control over conflicting general sign definitions or sign-review provisions elsewhere in Title 17. A specific state or federal requirement controls where it conflicts with this chapter.

4. Design guidelines provide examples and recommendations. Failure to follow a recommendation is not grounds to deny a sign that meets this chapter and other applicable mandatory requirements.

17.120.020 ~~Permits, fees, and exceptions.~~Definitions

~~A. Sign Permit Required. Except as otherwise provided within this chapter, it shall be unlawful for any person to erect, construct, enlarge, move or convert any sign within the City limits, or cause the same to be done, without first obtaining a sign permit for each such sign from the Planning Director or Design Review Board, as required by this chapter.~~

~~1. Application for sign permit(s) shall be made upon forms prescribed by the Planning Department, and shall be submitted with supplemental application materials specified by the Planning Department. Fees will be charged for services provided by City staff in conjunction with the processing of a sign permit, as set forth and amended by resolution of the City Council.~~

~~2. Each sign permit application shall be reviewed to ensure compliance with the provisions of this chapter and the sign portion of the design guidelines, as they may be adopted by the Design Review Board.~~

~~3. In general, sign permit applications shall be reviewed for approval, conditional approval, or denial by the Design Review Board. However, signs which can be categorized as any one of the following, which comply with all development standards defined in this chapter, and are consistent with the sign portion of the design guidelines, as they may be adopted by the Design Review Board, shall be reviewed for approval, conditional approval, or denial by the Planning Director or his/her designee:~~

~~a. Replacement sign(s) which are part of an approved sign program for a shopping center or multi-tenant building, and which conform to said program. Replacement signs which do not conform to the approved sign program are subject to review by the Design Review Board.~~

~~b. Nonilluminated signs of 25 square feet or less, which do not require an exception to any provision of this chapter.~~

~~c. Projecting (hanging) signs which do not exceed six square feet in area, are installed with a minimum clearance of seven and one-half feet above the ground surface, project not more than three feet from the wall of a building, and which do not require an exception to any provision of this chapter.~~

~~d. Portable signs, subject to the following criteria:~~

~~i. No more than one (double-faced) sign per parcel of property.~~

~~ii. Each sign face shall not exceed six square feet in area.~~

~~iii. Height of sign shall not exceed three feet.~~

~~iv. Location of sign shall not reduce the width of any pedestrian sidewalk or way to less than four and one-half feet.~~

~~v. If located within the public right-of-way, an encroachment permit shall be secured from the State (for State Highways 116 and 12), or from the City.~~

~~e. Change of copy only on an existing, approved sign if the same sign structure will be used, the area of lettering is substantially the same as that previously approved, and no change in illumination is proposed. Change of copy requests for signs that previously received sign exception approval are not eligible for administrative review and shall be reviewed by the Design Review Board.~~

~~**B. Exceptions.**~~

~~1. Purpose. Sign exceptions are intended to allow flexibility to the sign regulations while still fulfilling the purpose of the regulations. Creative design is encouraged by the provisions of this chapter, therefore an exception from these regulations may be approved consistent with the following findings. The findings below allow for modifications to address unusual site conditions, and/or allow signs that enhance the overall character of an area or building or are appropriate for a particular business.~~

~~2. Applications for exceptions from the provisions of this section may be filed in writing with the Planning Department for action by the Design Review Board. Such applications shall be made upon forms prescribed by the Planning Department, and shall be submitted with supplemental application material specified by the Planning Department. Fees will be charged for services provided by City staff in conjunction with the processing of a sign permit exception.~~

~~3. The supplemental application material, including statements, plans and other evidence, shall show that:~~

~~a. The exception will allow a unique sign of exceptional design or style that will enhance the area or building, or that will be a visible landmark; or~~

~~b. The exception will allow a sign that is more consistent with the architecture and development of the site, or site context, or is appropriate given the nature of the business; or~~

~~c. The granting of the exception will not constitute the granting of a special privilege inconsistent with the sign limitations upon other properties in the same vicinity and district. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

The following definitions apply to this chapter. Other terms have the meanings given in Chapter 17.08.

Banner. A sign made of flexible material secured to a building or temporary construction barrier. An ordinary flag is not a banner.

Board. The Design Review Board.

Commercial message. A message advertising a business or offering goods, property, or services for sale, lease, or exchange. Payment to create artwork does not, by itself, make the artwork a commercial message.

Director. The Planning Director or the Director's designee.

Electronic display. A sign or portion of a sign whose words or images can be changed electronically, including a screen, electronic message board, or projected image. Ordinary controls that switch or dim lighting on a fixed sign do not make it an electronic display.

Eligible frontage. A tenant's exterior frontage measured under Section 17.120.040(B) and used for that tenant's sign allowance. A tenant may use no more than two eligible frontages.

Feather flag. A flexible sign stretched along a vertical or curved pole to form a blade, feather, or teardrop shape, whether or not it moves in the wind.

Freestanding sign. A permanently installed sign supported from the ground rather than attached to a building. A portable sign is not a freestanding sign for purposes of this chapter.

Frontage. The horizontal width of the exterior wall enclosing a tenant space or building, measured under Section 17.120.040(B).

Mural. An image painted, tiled, or otherwise applied directly to an exterior wall. A mural may contain words. A mural may be lit by external light fixtures. A banner, an internally illuminated sign, and an electronic display are not murals.

Noncommercial message. A message other than a commercial message, including personal, political, religious, artistic, and community expression.

Ordinary flag. A rectangular flag of flexible fabric attached along one edge to a pole or building-mounted bracket, hanging freely and moving naturally in the wind. National, state, regional, civic, institutional, and decorative flags are ordinary flags. A flag bearing a business name, logo, or other business information is a sign and is not an ordinary flag. A feather flag is not an ordinary flag.

Portable sign. A movable, self-supporting sign placed on the ground, such as an A-frame or sandwich board, without permanent attachment.

Primary sign. A wall, fascia, or awning sign using the primary sign allowance in Section 17.120.050.

Projecting sign. A sign attached to a building with its display face extending outward from the wall, including a hanging sign under an awning or canopy. An ordinary wall or awning sign is not a projecting sign.

Public entrance. An exterior entrance regularly available to customers or other visitors. An emergency exit, service-only door, or door not regularly used by visitors does not establish an additional sign allowance.

Sign. An object, surface, or display installed or arranged to communicate a message visually. The exclusions in Section 17.120.010(C) and the mural rules in Section 17.120.080 apply to this definition.

Site. A lot, or adjoining lots operated as one development with shared access or common facilities. A shared site does not combine individual tenants' frontage allowances.

Temporary sign. A sign made or mounted for limited-duration display, including a banner or removable panel. Display periods are established in Section 17.120.060; the term does not impose a separate time limit.

Tenant space. A separately occupied or leasable space for one lawful business or other use, whether occupied by an owner or a tenant. Internal departments, counters, and concessions without separate enclosed premises are not separate tenant spaces.

Window sign. A sign attached to glazing, or an outward-facing sign located within two feet of the interior surface of the glazing and visible from outside the building. Measure the shortest horizontal distance from the glazing to the nearest part of the display face. If any part of the face is within two feet, the entire face is a window sign. Merchandise is not a window sign. Electronic displays are governed by Section 17.120.070, which uses the same two-foot measurement.

17.120.030 ~~Exempted signs.~~Permits and exemptions

~~A sign permit is not required for any of the following types of signs, as determined by the Planning Director. Such signs shall otherwise be erected and maintained in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. Unless otherwise specified, the signs described below are in reference to on-site signage:~~

~~A. Changing of the advertising copy or message on an existing approved changeable copy sign.~~

~~B. Painting, repainting, cleaning, exact replacement, or normal maintenance and repair of a sign.~~

C. Changes in the content of temporary window signs that have been approved as part of an overall sign program.

D. Directional signs, such as signs identifying restrooms, public telephones, walkways, parking lot entrances and exits and signs of a similar nature, which are located entirely on the property to which they pertain, do not in any way advertise a business, and do not exceed two square feet in area, and five feet in height.

E. Governmental signs for control of traffic or other regulatory purpose; street signs, danger signs, railroad crossing signs, and signs of public service companies.

F. Holiday decorations commonly associated with any national, local, or religious holiday; provided, that such decorations be displayed for a period of no more than 45 consecutive days or no more than 60 days in any one calendar year.

G. Signs located within the interior of any building and/or not visible from a public right-of-way. Such signs are not, however, exempt from structural, electrical or material specifications as set forth in the International Building Code.

H. Memorial signs, subject to size limitations and a site visibility analysis.

I. Notice bulletins and bulletin boards for medical, public, charitable or religious institutions where the same are located on the premises of said institution(s) or public property, at the discretion of the Planning Director.

J. Off-site real estate signs and open house signs may be erected for up to 48 hours, except for off-site direction real estate signs (red arrows), as described in SMC 17.120.070(E)(3).

Off-site real estate signs which do not meet the criteria of SMC 17.120.070(E)(3), and which are erected for longer than a 48-hour period, may be permitted with a sign permit issued by the Design Review Board.

K. On-site real estate signs which promote the sale, rental, or lease of a building, and which meet the following criteria:

1. Material. Sign and sign post must be constructed of wood with painted or vinyl letters.

2. Size and Height. Sign shall be a hanging sign with a minimum clearance of three feet between the bottom of the sign and the existing grade. The height of the sign, including post, may not exceed six feet. All real estate signs are permitted to be six square feet maximum in size; however, commercial and industrial signs may be a maximum 40 square feet if located on a 20,000-square-foot lot or larger.

L. Plaques or nameplate signs which are less than two square feet in area and are permanently affixed to a building wall.

M. Public signs required or specifically authorized for a public purpose by law, statute, or ordinance. Such signs may be of any type, number, area, height above grade, location, illumination as required by law, statute or ordinance under which the signs are erected.

N. Off-premises directional signs for public or community facilities, as approved by the Planning Director.

O. Special events signs and temporary signs pertaining to promotions or events of civic, philanthropic, educational or religious organizations. Such signs may be posted no more than 30 days before the event, and must be removed no more than seven days after the event.

~~P. Garage sale signs; provided, that such signs do not exceed four square feet in area, are displayed not more than one day before the sale and removed not later than one day after the sale, and are not on a public property. (See also City Ordinance No. 693.)~~

~~Q. Political/political campaign signs.~~

~~R. Automotive service station price signs, as required by the Department of Weights and Measures. Any additional signs which are used to identify the service station, or to advertise a service or product offered by that business, are subject to the development standards of SMC 17.120.060(I).~~

~~S. Temporary interior window signs; provided, that the signs are not illuminated, are no more than two square feet in size, and remain in place for not more than 30 days.~~

~~T. Permanent window signs which are clearly incidental to the conduct of business, such as the days and hours of operation, and payment decals; provided, that the signs are not illuminated and are no more than one square foot in size.~~

~~U. Neon "open" signs which are no more than two square feet in size. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Which approval is required?

Table 17.120-1 identifies sign-permit requirements. An exemption from a sign permit does not exempt a sign from its listed standards.

Table 17.120-1. Sign approvals

Work or sign type	Sign approval	Standards
An item outside this chapter	None	Section 17.120.010(C)
Maintenance, message changes, or equivalent replacement described in subsection B	None	Subsection B and Section 17.120.100
Entrance plaques and small entrance signs	None	Section 17.120.050(C)
On-site circulation signs	None	Section 17.120.050(C)
Portable signs	None; right-of-way authorization is separate	Section 17.120.060(B)
Non-electronic window signs, including fixed illuminated window signs	None	Sections 17.120.060(C) and 17.120.070
Small removable signs on private property	None	Section 17.120.060(D)
Ordinary flags	None	Section 17.120.060(A)
Temporary banners	Simple registration; noncommercial banners need no registration	Section 17.120.060(E)
Real estate signs	None	Section 17.120.060(F)
Off-site temporary signs	None	Section 17.120.060(H)
Construction-site signs	Staff sign permit	Section 17.120.060(G)
Other new permanent signs and physical changes to permanent signs	Staff sign permit	Sections 17.120.040, 17.120.050, and 17.120.070

Murals	Staff sign permit for any counted sign component; no sign permit for the remainder	Section 17.120.080(A)
Sculptural signs	Staff sign permit, or Board review where an exception is required	Sections 17.120.080(B) and 17.120.090
Retention of a historic sign not previously identified as a historic resource	Board approval	Section 17.120.080(C)
Sign programs that meet this chapter	Staff approval	Section 17.120.090(A)
A departure from an eligible standard	Design Review Board exception	Section 17.120.090(B)

B. Changes that do not require a sign permit

1. Cleaning, repainting, and repair, including customary repair of a lawful nonconforming sign, that do not enlarge or relocate the sign or increase its approved illumination.
2. Changing the message within an existing lawful sign's approved display area, including manual copy changes and permitted electronic message changes. A change may not introduce an otherwise prohibited sign or operating feature.
3. Replacing a lawful sign face or nonstructural sign components with components of the same dimensions and substantially equivalent durability, without changing the sign's location, supports, or approved illumination. A different message, color, or lettering style does not by itself require a permit.
4. Replacing a damaged conforming sign in the same location with a sign of the same dimensions and approved illumination, using sound existing supports. Historic-resource requirements still apply.

A change in the business name, use, or sign face of a lawful nonconforming sign is governed by Section 17.120.100(A)(2), rather than paragraphs 2 and 3. Replacement of a nonconforming structure is governed by Section 17.120.100, rather than paragraph 4. Structural or electrical work may require a building or electrical permit even when no sign permit is required.

C. Applying for a staff sign permit

One application may include all proposed signs for a tenant or site. The application must include:

1. The applicant's contact information and evidence of authority to install the sign, such as owner consent or a lease provision authorizing signage.
2. A photograph or drawing showing the sign's location and dimensions, the relevant frontage, existing signs using the same allowance, and required clearances.
3. The sign's materials, attachment method, and any illumination or electronic components.
4. The fee established by City Council resolution.

The City shall accept clear, dimensioned photographs or drawings. Professionally prepared plans may be required only when required by another applicable code or necessary to demonstrate a structural or other technical requirement.

D. Staff approval

The Director shall approve a complete application that meets this chapter and applicable mandatory requirements. Approval may include conditions only as necessary to meet an identified requirement. A compliant application shall not be referred to the Board solely because of its size, style, material, or illumination.

Review deadlines, written decisions, and appeals are governed by Section 17.120.110.

17.120.040 ~~Prohibited signs.~~Measurement and placement

~~A. The following signs are prohibited on any property within the City:~~

~~1. Flashing, rotating, animated, blinking and moving signs. However, upon referral from the Planning Director, the Design Review Board may determine that such a sign is necessary in order to portray an appropriate and distinct image in a unique situation.~~

~~2. Miscellaneous signs and posters and the affixing of signs of a miscellaneous character visible from a public right-of-way. Signs located on the wall(s) of buildings, barns, sheds, trees, poles, posts, fences or other structures are prohibited unless provided for under the provisions of this chapter. (See also City Ordinance No. 693.)~~

~~3. Any sign affixed to any vehicle or trailer either on a public right-of-way or on public or private property for the sole purpose of attracting people to a place of business.~~

~~4. Banners, pennants, search lights, balloons or other gas-filled figures except that banners may be permitted, for a period of time not to exceed 30 days in any calendar year, at the opening of a new business, or for special events, with prior written approval of the Planning Director, in accordance with SMC 17.120.030(O).~~

~~5. Portable or wheeled signs, unless used for real estate purposes, pursuant to SMC 17.120.030(K), or as permitted on commercially zoned properties, pursuant to SMC 17.120.060(C).~~

~~6. Signs which bear or contain statements, words, or pictures of an obscene, pornographic, immoral character, or which contain advertising matter which is untruthful or misleading.~~

~~7. Signs emitting audible sounds, odor or visible matter. However, upon referral from the Planning Director, the Design Review Board may determine that such a sign is necessary in order to portray an appropriate and distinct image in a unique situation.~~

~~8. Signs which purport to be, or are, an imitation of, or resemble, an official traffic sign or signal, or which bear the words: “go slow,” “caution,” “danger,” “warning,” or similar words.~~

~~9. Signs which may by reason of their size, location, movement, content, coloring or manner of illumination, be confused with or construed as a traffic control sign, signal or device, or the light of a road or emergency equipment vehicle.~~

~~10. Signs which may by reason of size, location, movement, content, coloring, or manner of illumination, cause a dangerous situation or otherwise pose a threat to the public health, safety, or welfare. If a sign is prohibited based on this criteria, the Design Review Board shall make~~

~~specific findings regarding the sign characteristic(s) which create a dangerous situation or otherwise pose a threat to the public health, safety, or welfare.~~

~~11. Off-premises signs, except off-premises real estate signs as permitted by SMC 17.120.030(J), and off-premises community directional signs as permitted by SMC 17.120.030(N).~~

~~B. Posting on public property is prohibited. No person, except a duly authorized public officer or employee, shall erect, construct or maintain, paste, paint, print, nail, tack or otherwise fasten or affix, any card, banner, handbill, campaign sign, poster, sign, advertisement, or notice of any kind, or cause or suffer the same to be done, on any curbstone, lamppost, pole, bench, hydrant, bridge, wall, tree, sidewalk or structure in or upon any public street, alley, or upon other public property, except as may be required or permitted by ordinance or law. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Sign area and number

1. **Panels and backgrounds.** Measure the entire display panel, including its frame and a contrasting background made specifically for the sign. Do not count a supporting post, foundation, or ordinary architectural feature unless it carries sign copy.

2. **Separate letters and graphics.** Without a display panel, measure the smallest rectangle enclosing each distinct group of letters or graphics. Add the rectangles. Do not include blank wall between separate groups. Letters in one word or line of text are one group.

3. **Signs with multiple faces.** For a flat projecting sign with two parallel, back-to-back display faces, count the larger face once; do not add the two faces. Apply the same rule to other signs with two parallel, back-to-back faces and to A-frames whose faces meet only at their upper edges. For signs with three or more display faces, or two faces arranged otherwise, add the area of every display face. An unlettered panel edge is not a display face. Each sign must meet its applicable area limit using this calculation.

4. **Sculpture.** Measure the largest projected outline of the sign from its front, side, or rear, as provided in Section 17.120.080(B).

5. **One installation.** A coordinated set of letters and graphics on one mounting area is one sign. Opposite faces on one support are one sign. Separate freestanding structures or display panels at separate locations are separate signs.

6. **Separate allowances.** Add signs only within the allowance that applies to them. Projecting signs, entrance signs, directories, freestanding signs, on-site circulation signs, window signs, portable signs, and temporary signs do not reduce the primary sign allowance unless this chapter expressly states otherwise.

B. Frontage

1. Measure the tenant's exterior wall along a public street, public pedestrian passage, or on-site pedestrian route serving its public entrance. Measure in a straight horizontal line; do not add recesses, returns, or internal walls.

2. A tenant may use no more than two exterior frontages. Signs allocated to a frontage must be installed on that frontage. A corner does not allow the same length of wall to be counted twice.

3. Ground-floor tenants use their own frontage. Do not divide a building's allowance equally among tenants or count upper-floor tenants when calculating a ground-floor tenant's allowance.

4. Measure fractional feet to the nearest tenth of a foot. Do not round an allowance upward to the next whole square foot.

C. Height and projection

1. Measure freestanding-sign height from the existing grade at the base to the top of the sign and its supports. A mound or raised planter installed for the sign does not increase the height allowance.

2. Measure projection horizontally from the building wall to the outermost part of the sign or support.

3. Measure overhead clearance from the walking surface directly below the sign to its lowest part.

D. Placement and safety

1. A sign must not obstruct a required exit, accessible route, entrance maneuvering area, fire equipment, required ventilation opening, or required traffic sight distance.

2. A sign must not conceal a traffic-control device or imitate its placement, shape, color, or illumination in a way that would reasonably confuse road users.

3. A sign must not be attached to a tree, utility pole, or public fixture without authorization from the responsible owner or agency.

4. Required overhead and electrical clearances apply to signs and their supports. This chapter does not authorize a reduction in clearances required by another applicable code or the agency controlling a right-of-way.

~~1~~5. Freestanding permanent signs must ~~be located a minimum of~~remain at least five feet behind the back of the sidewalk ~~(or~~, or behind the right-of-way ~~if~~line where there is no sidewalk~~). Freestanding signs may~~. They must not project into ~~any~~the public right-of-way. This setback does not apply to portable or small removable signs governed by Section 17.120.060.

6. Wall, fascia, and awning signs must remain within the surface to which they are attached. New roof signs and signs extending above the roof or parapet are prohibited. Projecting signs must meet Section 17.120.050(C).

7. A sign must be securely attached or stable against ordinary wind and contact. Permanent exterior signs must use materials and finishes suitable for outdoor exposure. Except for portable signs under Section 17.120.060(B)(7), no particular lettering method or material is required if the sign meets these standards.

8. A sign must not emit sound, odor, or visible matter such as smoke, steam, or vapor. This paragraph does not restrict a sign's illumination, which is governed by Section 17.120.070.

17.120.050 ~~General sign standards and regulations.~~Permanent signs

~~**A. Computation of Frontage and Sign Area Calculations.**~~

~~1. "Sign area" is defined as the area of a rectangle drawn around the outermost area of sign copy, graphics, background materials, and borders or frame, and any similar display area which is capable of receiving copy at a future time. The structure supporting a sign is not included in determining the sign area, unless the structure contains advertising copy or business logo.~~

~~2. The area of all signs which are governed by this chapter shall be included when determining compliance with the maximum allowable sign area.~~

~~3. The width of a building frontage on a public street or right-of-way, excluding alleys or service ways, shall be used to calculate the allowable sign area. (See Table 17.120-1.) If a building~~

houses more than one tenant space, the total sign area permitted for each tenant space shall be calculated as follows:

Sign Area = Total Allowable Sign Area (based on total building frontage) ÷ Number of Tenant Spaces

Example: If a building has 50 feet of frontage and four tenant spaces, including two on the ground floor area and two on the second story, the sign area for each tenant space would be calculated as follows: 15.625 square feet/tenant space. The proportional distribution of sign area that is allowed for each individual tenant space may be modified through a comprehensive approved sign program.

4. For buildings fronting on more than one public right-of-way, the length of two frontages may be used to calculate the total allowable sign area for all signs on the premises.

5. Both sides of a double-faced sign shall be used for the calculation of allowable sign area.

6. For monument signs proposed as part of a sign program, the maximum sign size thresholds shall comply with SMC 17.120.060(B), and shall not be counted toward the overall sign allowances outlined in Table 17.120-1.

Table 17.120-1. Maximum Allowable Sign Area (Sq. Ft.)

Building Frontage	Max. Allowable Sign Area	Building Frontage	Max. Allowable Sign Area	Building Frontage	Max. Allowable Sign Area
Up to 25'	25.0	43'	52.0	61'	79.0
26'	26.5	44'	53.5	62'	80.5
27'	28.0	45'	55.0	63'	82.0
28'	29.5	46'	56.5	64'	83.5
29'	31.0	47'	58.0	65'	85.0
30'	32.5	48'	59.5	66'	86.5
31'	34.0	49'	61.0	67'	88.0
32'	35.5	50'	62.5	68'	89.5
33'	37.0	51'	64.0	69'	91.0
34'	38.5	52'	65.5	70'	92.5
35'	40.0	53'	67.0	71'	94.0
36'	41.5	54'	68.5	72'	95.5
37'	43.0	55'	70.0	73'	97.0
38'	44.5	56'	71.5	74'	98.5
39'	46.0	57'	73.0	75'	100.0
40'	47.5	58'	74.5	76' – 100'	125.0
41'	49.0	59'	76.0	101' – 125'	150.0
42'	50.5	60'	77.5	126' +	175.0

B. Projection Limits and Sign Clearances.

2. The height of a freestanding sign shall be measured from the natural grade at the base of the sign to the highest portion of the sign.

~~3. Projecting signs (hanging signs) may not exceed six square feet in area, and may not project more than three feet from the wall of a building. The bottom of projecting signs shall be at least seven and one-half feet above the ground.~~

~~**C. Lighting of Signs.**~~

~~1. No sign shall be illuminated with such intensity as to prevent normal perception of objects, buildings, streets and other signs in the immediate area.~~

~~2. External illumination is preferred over internal illumination in all zoning districts. Internally illuminated signs must be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Board, and are generally not allowed within the CD Central Core District, within any residential district, or in proximity to an existing residential use.~~

~~3. No backlighting of the panel(s) is allowed on internally illuminated signs unless the background has been rendered opaque, allowing light through the letters and logo only. This limitation does not apply to theater marquee signs or similar signs, as determined by the Planning Director.~~

~~4. Identification signs in a single-family or multifamily residential district, or which are located within 25 feet of a residential use may not be illuminated. However, internally illuminated address signs which do not exceed one square foot in size, and which display only the address numbers of the residence upon which the sign is affixed are allowed. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Select the applicable allowance

Commercial, office, industrial, community-facility, and other lawful nonresidential uses use subsections B and C, except as provided in subsection D. Residential uses use subsection D. Signs do not authorize a land use that is otherwise prohibited.

B. Primary signs for nonresidential tenant spaces

1. Each ground-floor tenant may have up to two primary signs on each eligible frontage. Their combined area on that frontage must not exceed Table 17.120-2. The combined primary sign area for one tenant on all frontages must not exceed 175 square feet.

2. A tenant above or below the ground floor, or without an eligible exterior frontage, may have primary signs totaling 10 square feet on the exterior wall enclosing its space or at its public entrance. Entrance signs and directories under subsection C are additional.

3. A tenant may divide its primary allowance among wall, fascia, and awning signs. There is no limit on the number of words.

4. A shared sign program is not required to use these allowances. Voluntary coordination and redistribution are addressed in Section 17.120.090.

Table 17.120-2. Primary sign area per frontage

Frontage width	Maximum combined primary sign area on that frontage
25 feet or less	25 square feet
More than 25 feet	25 square feet, plus 1.5 square feet for each foot over 25 feet, up to 175 square feet

C. Additional signs for nonresidential uses

Each allowance below is separate from the primary sign allowance. All signs remain subject to placement and illumination standards.

Table 17.120-3. Additional permanent signs

Type	Number and area	Placement and height
Projecting sign	One per public entrance on an eligible frontage; no more than two per tenant; six square feet of counted sign area, measured under Section 17.120.040(A)(3)	Maximum projection three feet, including supports; minimum overhead clearance 7.5 feet; entirely below the roof or parapet
Small entrance signs and plaques	Each sign no more than two square feet; combined area no more than six square feet per public entrance	On the wall or door within five feet of the entrance; shared entrances share this allowance; signs on glazing also count toward the window-coverage limit
Shared directory	One per shared public entrance; 16 square feet maximum	Wall-mounted, or freestanding no more than five feet high; a freestanding directory must be inside the site at the entrance it serves
Freestanding site sign	One per public street frontage, no more than two per site; 32 square feet per sign for a single-tenant site; for a multi-tenant site, 10 square feet per tenant space, with a minimum of 32 and maximum of 100 square feet per sign	Eight feet maximum height; subject to the permanent-sign setback in Section 17.120.040(D)(5)
On-site circulation sign	One per on-site circulation decision point, meaning a driveway entrance, parking-aisle junction, or loading entrance; four square feet maximum; no sign permit required	Four feet maximum height if freestanding; subject to the access and sight-distance rules in Section 17.120.040(D); not counted toward the primary or freestanding site-sign allowances

The freestanding site-sign allowance replaces, rather than adds to, a separate shopping-center, area-identification, or monument-sign allowance for the same nonresidential site. A shared directory is not an additional street-front site sign and may not be placed at the street frontage unless the shared building entrance is there.

D. Residential and special settings

The allowances in Table 17.120-4 replace subsections B and C unless a row expressly provides otherwise. Signs under Section 17.120.060 remain available where that section allows them. A home-based business may display only the commercial sign authorized in this table; this restriction does not limit noncommercial expression or real estate signs unrelated to that business.

Table 17.120-4. Residential and special settings

Setting	Permanent allowance
Home-based business	One nonilluminated wall or window sign, up to five square feet in area. No portable commercial sign.
Multifamily residential building	One wall or freestanding sign, eight square feet maximum; freestanding height six feet maximum
Residential development entrance	Up to two signs per entrance, 16 square feet combined; height five feet maximum; these are additional to individual building signs
Lawful nonresidential principal use in a residential district, other than a bed and breakfast	Up to two wall or freestanding signs, 32 square feet combined; freestanding height eight feet maximum

Bed and breakfast in a residential district	One wall or freestanding sign, eight square feet maximum; freestanding height five feet maximum
CF Community Facility or OS Open Space district	Primary wall or fascia signs totaling 30 square feet per tenant or principal use; the additional allowances in subsection C apply, except freestanding site signs are limited to 32 square feet and six feet in height
PC Planned Community district	A specific sign standard in an approved development plan controls. Where the plan is silent, apply this section according to each use; residential and nonresidential uses are evaluated separately
Motor-fuel service station	Up to two primary or freestanding signs, 100 square feet combined; no more than one freestanding sign, limited to 32 square feet and eight feet in height. Small entrance signs and signs under Section 17.120.060 are additional; the other allowances in subsection C do not apply

Required address and fuel-price signs are addressed in Section 17.120.010(C)(4). Residential window and small removable signs are addressed in Section 17.120.060.

17.120.060 ~~Permitted~~Portable, window, and temporary signs~~.~~

~~**A. Signs Permitted in Single-Family or Multifamily Residential Districts.**~~

~~1. One home occupation identification sign, which is nonilluminated and does not exceed five square feet in area.~~

~~2. A maximum of two area identification signs per entry, with a maximum height of five feet, and maximum total area of 16 square feet. An "area identification sign" is a sign which identifies a development area, such as the name of a subdivision or office park.~~

~~3. One identification sign for churches, schools, public and quasi-public buildings. Such signs shall not exceed 32 square feet in area, and eight feet in height, unless the nature of the site and the surrounding environment warrants a larger sign. An applicant may request that the Design Review Board determine whether a larger sign is warranted.~~

~~4. One identification sign for bed and breakfast inns, not to exceed eight square feet in area, and five feet in height.~~

~~5. In multifamily residential districts (R6 and R7) or residential developments in the PC districts only, one identification sign or building address number sign for purposes of identifying a multifamily building, not to exceed eight square feet in area, and six feet in height.~~

~~B. An integrated sign program, which provides for a consistency and continuity of materials, design, location, and manner of attachment for tenant signs, is required for all office or light industrial centers or parks, multi-tenant commercial or industrial buildings, or shopping centers. Individual tenant signs proposed as part of a multi-tenant sign shall include the business name and not more than three additional words to identify the purpose of the business, for example "SMITH'S Bar and Grill" or "LENS CRAFTERS one hour service" For sign programs that include a monument sign, the maximum square footage of the sign shall be limited to 50 square feet for signs representing five or fewer tenants, and 100 square feet for signs representing six or more tenants. The monument sign square footage shall be in addition to the maximum allowable sign square footage per Table 17.120-1. The sign program shall be consistent with the standards defined below for the zoning district in which the development is located, and shall be approved by the Design Review Board prior to the approval of any individual sign within said center, park, or building.~~

C. Signs Permitted in Commercial and Office Districts.

1. Each building is permitted to have one freestanding business identification sign. This sign may not exceed eight feet in height.
2. A maximum of two window, awning, wall, or fascia business identification signs are permitted for each ground floor use or tenant. One of those two signs may be a projecting sign, providing that the sign does not exceed six square feet in area or 18 inches in height, and has a minimum clearance of seven and one-half feet above the sidewalk.
3. Commercial or professional uses located above the main floor of the building may display permanent window, awning, or wall signs. The total sign area for each use shall be determined in accordance with SMC 17.120.050(A)(3).
4. Temporary window signs related to special events, sales promotions, and the sale of merchandise are permitted for a period of 30 days only.
5. Portable signs, consistent with SMC 17.120.020(A)(3)(d).
6. A maximum of two area identification signs per entry, with a maximum height of eight feet and maximum total area of 32 square feet.

D. Signs Permitted in the OLI Office/Light Industrial District.

1. Individual business frontage shall be considered as "building frontage" for the purposes of establishing maximum sign area pursuant to Table 17.120-1. The sign area for the "major" or "anchor" tenant(s) may be increased by the Design Review Board.
2. In addition to the individual tenant signage, there may be one freestanding sign identifying the center and its tenants. Such sign shall not exceed eight feet in height or 32 square feet in area.
3. In addition to the signage allowed above, one on-site directory is permitted. This sign may be freestanding or affixed to a building, but may not exceed five feet in height, if it is freestanding, or 16 square feet in area.

E. Signs Permitted in M Industrial District.

1. Each building is permitted to have one freestanding business identification sign. This sign may not exceed eight feet in height.
2. Each business is permitted to have a maximum of two window, awning, wall or fascia business identification signs.
3. A maximum of two area identification signs per entry, with a maximum height of eight feet, and maximum total area of 32 square feet may be permitted.
4. Portable signs, consistent with SMC 17.120.020(A)(3)(d).

F. Signs Permitted in CF Community Facility and OS Open Space Districts.

1. Each building is permitted to have one freestanding business identification sign. This sign may not exceed six feet in height.
2. Each business is permitted to have one wall or fascia sign which does not exceed 30 square feet in area.
3. Temporary signs are permitted in accordance with SMC 17.120.070(E).

4. A maximum of two area identification signs per entry, with a maximum height of eight feet, and maximum total area of 32 square feet are permitted.

G. Signs Permitted in PC Planned Community District. Regulations for permanent and temporary signs will be established by the Design Review Board after the Planning Commission has rendered its determination of land use. The project proponent must submit a comprehensive sign program package for review by the Design Review Board. The Design Review Board will evaluate the proposed sign program within the parameters of the sign regulations of the predominant land use approved for the specific development.

H. Shopping Center Signs.

1. Individual business frontage shall be considered as "building frontage" for the purposes of establishing maximum sign area pursuant to Table 17.120-1. The sign area for the "major" or "anchor" tenant(s) may be increased by the Design Review Board.

2. In addition to the individual tenant signage, there may be one freestanding sign identifying the center and its tenants. Such sign shall not exceed eight feet in height.

I. Service Station Signs.

1. Two business identification signs are allowed, including a maximum of one freestanding sign. A freestanding sign may not exceed eight feet in height or 32 square feet in area.

2. Incidental signs are permitted in addition to the two identification signs.

3. The aggregate sign area of identification and incidental signs shall not exceed 100 square feet.

4. Price signs shall be in accordance with State requirements as to wording, size and number, and shall not be included in the calculation of total sign area. (Ord. 1111, 2018)

A. General rule

The allowances in this section are separate from permanent-sign allowances. Signs must meet Section 17.120.040(D). The time limits in this section apply only where expressly stated. A change of message does not restart a display period. A portable sign cannot use the removable-sign allowance to avoid portable-sign requirements.

Feather flags, pennants used as signs, searchlights used as signs, and inflatable advertising devices are prohibited. Each dwelling or nonresidential tenant may display up to two ordinary flags, each no more than 15 square feet, from a building-mounted bracket or permanent flagpole on private property without a sign permit or a time limit. This allowance is separate from other allowances. A flagpole remains subject to applicable height and construction requirements. The flag and its supports must not obstruct pedestrian clearance or traffic sight distance.

B. Portable signs

1. **Eligibility and number.** No more than one portable sign may be displayed per building containing a lawful nonresidential use other than a home-based business. This limit applies to all entrances, frontages, and tenants of the building combined, including signs on private property and in the adjoining public right-of-way. Additional tenants or entrances do not create additional allowances. The property owner shall designate the responsible operator in writing. The sign may serve one tenant or several tenants within that building. A portable sign may not be shared among separate buildings.

2. **Size.** Each face may be no more than six square feet. Overall height may be no more than three feet. The base, braces, and feet must fit within a ground footprint no more than three feet wide by two feet deep.

3. **Location.** Place the sign beside a public entrance or within the building's frontage. Maintain at least 10 feet between portable signs along the same common pedestrian route, measured between their closest edges. Where that spacing cannot be maintained, the sign may not be placed in the public right-of-way, and may be placed only on private property outside the pedestrian route. Relocating a sign does not increase the one-per-building limit.

4. **Walking space.** Maintain a continuous unobstructed pedestrian route at least 4.5 feet wide, or any greater width required by applicable accessibility standards or the right-of-way permit. Do not place a sign in an entrance maneuvering area, curb ramp, transit boarding area, or access to a marked crossing. The sign must be detectable by a person using a cane and must not create a protruding-object hazard.

5. **Public right-of-way.** Obtain authorization from the City or other agency controlling the right-of-way before placement. A City sign allowance does not authorize placement within a state highway right-of-way. Right-of-way authorization does not increase, transfer, or create an exception to the one-per-building limit.

6. **Operation.** Remove the sign from the public right-of-way when all businesses it serves are closed to the public. Portable signs must be nonilluminated, stable, and maintained in good repair. Electronic displays are not allowed in portable signs.

7. **Materials and finish.** Portable signs must have wood frames and wood or chalkboard display faces. Metal hinges, fasteners, and stabilizing hardware are allowed. Stone, ceramic, or metal decorative details may be incorporated into the wood frame. Plastic frames, plastic display faces, plastic lettering, and vinyl lettering, decals, or wraps are prohibited. Use painted, carved, stenciled, or chalk lettering. Surfaces must have a finished appearance, with no exposed unfinished panel edges, peeling finishes, or makeshift attachments. Ordinary paint, chalkboard coatings, and protective finishes are allowed.

C. Window signs

1. Window signs may cover no more than 25 percent of the glazing on each exterior elevation of a nonresidential tenant space. Include door glazing. Calculate each elevation separately; do not transfer unused coverage to another elevation.

2. Count both permanent and temporary window signs as defined in Section 17.120.020. Count overlapping signs once for coverage. Do not count merchandise, required signs, or ordinary window treatments that contain no sign.

3. There is no display-period limit and no limit on message changes. Window signs do not reduce the primary sign allowance.

4. A non-electronic illuminated window sign may have no more than two square feet of illuminated display area. No more than one illuminated window sign is allowed per public entrance. It counts toward window coverage and must meet Section 17.120.070. This allowance does not depend on its message or whether it uses neon or another fixed light source.

5. Noncommercial signs in dwelling windows do not require a sign permit and are not subject to the percentage limit. They must not obstruct an opening required for emergency escape or ventilation. A commercial window sign for a home-based business uses the single sign allowed in Table 17.120-4 and does not add to a wall sign.

D. Small removable signs on private property

1. Nonilluminated removable signs may be displayed on private property without a sign permit. Each sign may have no more than six square feet per face and, if ground-mounted, may be no more than four feet high.
2. Commercial signs under this subsection are limited to two per site and are not allowed for home-based businesses. Their messages must meet Section 17.120.010(D)(3).
3. Noncommercial signs under this subsection have no numerical or calendar limit. They must be maintained and located outside required sight-distance areas and pedestrian routes. Larger noncommercial signs may use another applicable sign allowance or an exception under Section 17.120.090.
4. A sign mounted on a building must remain below its roof or parapet. No sign under this subsection may be installed in the public right-of-way. Banners are governed by subsection E, and window signs by subsection C.

E. Temporary banners

1. **Allowance.** Each nonresidential tenant may display one banner at a time, no more than 32 square feet, for up to 30 calendar days in a calendar year. Display may be divided among several periods. Each day of display counts once, regardless of message changes. Each tenant has its own allowance.
2. **Location.** Secure the banner to the building, below the roof or parapet. Where construction prevents use of the building frontage, it may be secured to a permitted construction fence or barrier on the site. It must not block required access or sight distance. Banners may not be installed on vehicles, in landscaping, or above a roof or parapet.
3. **Registration.** Before display, submit the location, dimensions, and intended display dates to the Director on a City form. Registration is effective upon submission of a complete form identifying a compliant banner. Registration does not authorize a noncompliant sign. No separate discretionary approval or sign-registration fee is required.
4. **Noncommercial banners.** A noncommercial banner on private property may use the same size and placement allowance without registration or a calendar limit. One is allowed per dwelling or nonresidential tenant space. The exception from calendar limits does not authorize a prohibited device.
5. **Condition.** Banners must be nonilluminated, securely fastened, and replaced or removed when torn or detached.

F. Real estate signs

1. Signs protected by California Civil Code Section 713 may be displayed on the owner's property, or another owner's private property with consent, subject to reasonable location, dimensions, design, and public-safety requirements. They may contain the information protected by that section. No particular color, material, or hanging-post design is required.
2. A sign meets this chapter's ordinary dimensional standards if it is no more than six square feet per face and six feet high. On a commercial or industrial site of at least 20,000 square feet, an on-site sign may be up to 40 square feet per face and eight feet high. These signs do not use another sign allowance.

3. A request for a different dimension or design protected by Section 713 shall receive a written staff determination under Section 17.120.110(A), without an exception application or sign-permit fee. A departure from paragraph 2 is not, by itself, grounds for denial; the determination must apply Section 713's reasonableness and safety requirements.

4. Remove the sign within seven days after the property is no longer offered for sale, lease, or exchange. Signs placed for an open house must be removed when the open house ends. Off-site signs directing people to an open house are governed by subsection H. A sign may not be placed in a public right-of-way without the controlling agency's authorization.

G. Construction-site signs

During active construction under a valid permit, a site may have up to two nonilluminated temporary wall or freestanding signs, totaling no more than 50 square feet. Freestanding height may be no more than eight feet. Remove them within 30 days after completion or permit expiration unless another provision authorizes continued display. Required construction notices are outside this allowance. A construction fence may carry these signs, subject to Section 17.120.040(D).

H. Off-site temporary signs

1. **Allowance.** Up to four signs per event directing people to a temporary event at a specific location may be displayed away from the event location without a sign permit. An event may last no more than seven days, and a business or organizer may use this allowance for no more than three events in a calendar year. An open house for a property offered for sale, lease, or exchange is an event under this subsection. For an open house, the three-event limit applies per property. Each sign may be no more than four square feet and no more than three feet high. Portable signs and banners remain subject to subsections B and E, respectively. Section 17.120.010(D)(3) does not apply to signs under this subsection.

2. **Consent.** Place the signs only on private property with the owner's consent, or in the public right-of-way where the agency controlling that right-of-way authorizes it.

3. **Other allowances.** A sign allowed under subsection D may use this allowance if it meets the limits in paragraph 1. A sign displayed under this subsection is subject to the timing rule in paragraph 4.

4. **Timing.** Display may begin no more than 14 days before the event begins and must end within 2 days after the event ends. For an event lasting two days or less, display may begin no more than 2 days before. Open house signs may be displayed only on the day of the open house.

5. **Placement.** Signs must be nonilluminated and must meet Section 17.120.040(D). Do not attach a sign to a tree, utility pole, traffic sign, or other public fixture. Do not place a sign in a required sight-distance area, a pedestrian route, a curb ramp, a median, or a transit boarding area.

6. **Responsibility.** The person who places a sign under this subsection is responsible for removing it by the deadline in paragraph 4.

17.120.070 ~~Miscellaneous sign categories.~~Illumination and electronic displays

~~A. Construction Signs. Construction, development, subdivision sales and real estate signs may be permitted to within five feet of the property line if freestanding. The aggregate area for all such signs may not exceed 50 square feet. Sign height for any freestanding sign may not exceed eight feet.~~

Construction signs shall be allowed for the duration of construction. Other development signs may remain for a maximum period of one year.

B. Historic Signs. Unique signs and appurtenances which, due to their architecture or the message displayed on the sign, represent a historical period of the City of Sebastopol may be retained. Approval for retention shall be based on valid historical documentation, provided by a qualified historian or historical architect, which defines the historical attributes of the subject sign, the merits for retaining the sign, and the historical value to the community of preserving the sign. The Design Review Board may approve or deny such a sign, pursuant to SMC 17.120.020(B). Any exception shall not include a waiver from any other regulations of the City of Sebastopol. Whenever the Design Review Board grants an exception, the Board shall make specific findings as to the historic value of the sign or appurtenance.

C. Murals and Graphics.

1. Wherein all, or any part, of any mural or graphic may be considered signing, by reason of the depiction of specific words, symbols, merchandise or services, such mural or graphic, or part thereof, shall be subject to the regulations described in this chapter.

2. When a mural or graphic is not considered signage, as described above, its size will not be included in determining compliance with the maximum allowable sign area for a property.

D. Neon Signs. Neon signs are allowed in all commercial zoning districts, including the CD Central Core District, subject to the approval of the Design Review Board.

E. Temporary Signs. The Planning Director may issue written approval of a temporary sign of the following type, upon receipt of a completed temporary sign permit application packet and the associated processing fee:

1. Banners. Banners for new businesses or for special events may be approved by the Planning Director for a period not to exceed 30 days. The approval may, at the request of the applicant, be extended for an additional 30 days for a new business if a complete sign permit application has been filed with the Planning Department for permanent business identification signage. Banner signs may be installed on the building only, and are not permitted to be installed in the landscaping, on fencing, or on vehicles.

2. Gas Station Signs. Temporary signs of less than one square foot may be displayed above fuel pumps for a period not to exceed 30 days. Any additional temporary signs, including banners or freestanding temporary signs, shall not be allowed, except as otherwise permitted by this chapter, or as may be required by the Department of Weights and Measures.

3. Off-Site Directional Real Estate Signs (Red Arrows). Directional red arrow signs may be approved by the Planning Director for off-site locations for a period not to exceed 90 days, subject to the following criteria:

   a. Materials. Sign and sign post must be constructed of wood, with painted vinyl arrow and letters.

   b. Size and Type. Sign shall be a hanging sign, with a minimum clearance of three feet between the bottom of the sign and the existing grade. The height of the sign, including post, may not exceed five feet. The arrow portion of the sign may not exceed one square foot.

   c. Display. Display shall be limited to a red arrow and the numeric address of the subject property. A sign approved as an off-site directional real estate sign shall in no way

~~identify any person, agency, or agency telephone number, nor shall it include any other advertisement.~~

~~F. Exterior display of merchandise is not allowed, except as may be displayed with a bona fide storefront display enclosure or picture window. Such display of merchandise, or a similar decoration depicting merchandise, goods, or services, may be considered as signage if, in the sole opinion of the Planning Director, such display is made for the purposes of advertising. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Fixed illumination

1. Permanent signs may use shielded external lighting, illuminated individual letters, halo lighting, or static neon or equivalent fixed lighting. On internally illuminated panels, the background must be opaque so that light passes through letters and graphics rather than the whole panel.

2. Light sources must be shielded or directed so that they do not shine into a dwelling window or create disabling glare for pedestrians or drivers. A sign must not obscure the visibility of traffic signals or nearby objects through excessive brightness.

3. Signs for residential uses must be nonilluminated, except required address signs and externally illuminated multifamily or residential-development entrance signs. Home-based-business signs must remain nonilluminated. A lawful nonresidential use is not prohibited from illuminating a sign solely because a dwelling is nearby or above it.

4. Illuminated signs for nonresidential uses must be switched off no later than one hour after closing and may be switched on one hour before opening. Required signs are governed by Section 17.120.010(C)(4).

5. Flashing, scrolling, animated, rotating, and mechanically moving signs are prohibited. Ordinary on/off switching, gradual adjustment of brightness for ambient conditions, and incidental movement of a permitted banner, flag, or suspended sign in the wind are not prohibited animation.

B. Electronic displays

1. New electronic displays are prohibited outdoors and in outward-facing window installations, whether they show still or changing images, except as provided in this subsection.

2. An interior display is subject to the prohibition in paragraph 1 if it is visible from outside the building and any part of its display face is within two feet of the interior surface of exterior glazing, measured as provided in the definition of window sign in Section 17.120.020. The entire display is then subject to this subsection.

3. An interior display not subject to paragraph 2 is not regulated by this chapter, whatever its size, orientation, or visibility from outside the building, and does not require a sign permit.

4. For a projected image, the surface receiving the image is the display location for purposes of paragraph 2.

5. Displays integral to an ATM, point-of-sale terminal, fuel dispenser, or charging station are allowed when limited to the information and controls needed to use the equipment. A separate advertising screen on that equipment is not exempt.

6. Electronic display of information required by state or federal law is allowed to the extent needed to meet that requirement. The exception does not authorize an additional advertising panel or animation. Required signs remain subject to Section 17.120.010(C)(4).

7. An exception under Section 17.120.090 may not authorize a new electronic display. Lawful existing displays and their approved operating conditions are governed by Section 17.120.100. Changing a permitted message within those conditions does not require another permit.

C. Correcting illumination

The City may inspect a sign's illumination. If it violates subsection A or an applicable permit condition, the Director may require shielding, dimming, redirection, repair, or adjustment of operating hours sufficient to correct the violation. The written notice must identify the observed condition and the requirement violated. Notice, correction periods, and appeals follow the City's general code enforcement provisions. A complaint alone does not establish a violation.

17.120.080 ~~Nonconforming~~Murals, sculptural signs~~.~~, and historic signs

~~Except for multiple-tenant signs, existing, legally erected signs which do not conform to the provisions of this chapter may remain in place until such time as a change in name, use, or sign face occurs, at which time all signing shall be made to conform to the provisions of this chapter. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Murals

1. A mural is not a sign. It has no maximum area under this chapter and does not require a sign permit, except for the sign components described in paragraph 2. Applicable building and historic-resource requirements continue to apply.
2. Words, numerals, business names, logos, and trademarks within a mural are sign components. Measure each distinct group under Section 17.120.040(A)(2), add the groups, and count the total against the primary sign allowance for the tenant space the mural serves. If the wall serves more than one tenant space or a vacant space, the property owner must identify, before installation, a primary sign allowance on that frontage with enough available area, and the counted total is charged to that allowance. Do not count any other part of the mural.
3. Depicting a product, occupation, or service does not make an image a sign component. An artist's signature and date are not sign components.
4. A mural may be illuminated only by external light fixtures meeting Section 17.120.070(A). Internal illumination and electronic displays are not permitted in a mural.
5. A mural may not display off-premises commercial advertising prohibited by Section 17.120.010(D)(3). City review addresses the physical requirements of this chapter and the measurement of sign components. It does not address the artistic merit or the viewpoint of the mural.

B. Sculptural signs and ornament

1. A sign may incorporate sculpture, shaped panels, and decorative supports. These features do not require an exception if the complete installation fits within the applicable sign's permitted area, height, projection, and clearances.
2. For a three-dimensional sign, measure the smallest rectangle enclosing its silhouette in each principal direction; use the largest rectangle once. Do not add the surface area of curved or irregular faces.
3. Ordinary decorative brackets, bases, and trim without sign copy do not count toward sign area, but do count toward height, projection, and clearance limits. An enlarged product image or other sculptural display is part of the sign, not an excluded support.

4. An installation exceeding an eligible physical limit may be considered under Section 17.120.090. Independent artwork that is not a sign is not subject to sign-area limits; applicable public-art, historic-resource, structural, and placement requirements remain in effect.

C. Historic signs

1. A sign identified as a historic resource through the City's cultural-heritage process may be retained and repaired notwithstanding this chapter's dimensional or sign-type limits. Required safety work remains applicable.

2. For a sign not previously identified, the Board may approve retention upon written findings that photographs, records, or other substantial evidence establish its historic significance to the building, business district, or City. A professional report may be required only when the available evidence is insufficient to make the determination.

3. Retention approval must identify the sign and the physical features being preserved. Approval does not authorize enlargement, a new electronic display, or a change in operating characteristics.

4. Repair that preserves those features does not require a new sign approval. Separate historic-resource approval, where required, remains applicable. Retained historic signs do not reduce a current tenant's primary sign allowance.

17.120.090 ~~Abandoned signs.~~Sign programs and exceptions

~~A. An abandoned sign is a sign which no longer directs, advertises, or identifies a legal business establishment, product or activity on the premises where such sign is displayed. Any sign which becomes an abandoned sign and remains as such for a period of 12 months or more shall be prohibited, and shall be removed by the owner of the sign or owner of the property at his or her expense.~~

~~B. Permanent signs applicable to a business temporarily suspended because of a change of ownership or management of such business shall not be deemed abandoned, unless the property remains vacant for a period of 12 months or more. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Sign programs

1. A property owner may submit one sign program for a multi-tenant building or site. The program may establish sign locations, mounting methods, common physical features, and allocation of shared signs.

2. The Director shall approve a program that meets this chapter. A separate Board hearing is not required unless an exception is requested.

3. A program may redistribute primary sign area among tenants on the same frontage with the written consent of affected occupants and the property owner. The total may not exceed the sum otherwise allowed, and the program may not transfer area to a different frontage or sign category. An unoccupied space must retain an identified allowance for a future tenant.

4. Compliance with a program may be shown with a dimensioned photograph or drawing. Message changes and work exempt under Section 17.120.030(B) remain exempt.

5. A tenant may apply under the chapter's standard allowances when no program exists. A preexisting program remains effective under Section 17.120.100, but the owner may seek a

staff amendment to use this chapter's standard allowances. The City shall not require a new program solely because a tenant changes.

6. The City shall make approved programs available with the property's permit records.

B. Exceptions

1. **Eligible departures.** The Board may approve a departure from a permanent sign's area, number, height, projection, or location; the placement or size of a mural's counted sign component or a sculptural sign; or the size or height of a noncommercial sign under Section 17.120.060. Temporary-sign duration, portable-sign number, materials, access and spacing, and electronic-display prohibitions are not eligible for an exception.

2. **Application.** Identify the exact standard, the requested departure, and the physical condition that makes the departure necessary. The sign-permit application may include this information; a separate set of sign plans is not required.

3. **Required findings.** The Board may approve only if all of the following are supported by the record:

   a. A building feature, setback, entrance location, visibility obstruction, or the geometry of a sculptural installation prevents a workable sign within the standard allowance.

   b. The departure is limited to what is needed to address that condition.

   c. The sign preserves required access, sight distance, structural safety, and the illumination protections of this chapter.

   d. The approval identifies the dimensions and location allowed and does not depend on the identity of the owner or tenant or approval of the sign's message.

4. **Limits.** No exception may authorize a sign prohibited by Section 17.120.010(D)(3), 17.120.040(D)(6) or (8), 17.120.060(A), or 17.120.070, or waive another agency's approval or an applicable safety requirement. Historic retention is governed separately by Section 17.120.080(C).

5. **Procedure.** The Board shall act under Section 17.120.110. An exception applies to the approved sign and physical conditions. It does not expire solely upon a change of ownership, tenant, or business name.

17.120.100 ~~Construction specifications, safety,~~Existing signs and maintenance~~.~~

~~A. Compliance with Building Code. All signs shall comply with the appropriate detailed provisions of the International Building Code relating to design, structural members and connections. Signs shall also comply with the provisions of the applicable Electrical Code and the additional construction standards set forth in this section.~~

~~**B. Construction of Signs.**~~

~~1. No sign shall be erected, constructed, or maintained so as to obstruct any fire escape, required exit, window or door opening, unless authorized by conditional use permit. No sign shall be attached in any form, shape or manner which will interfere with an opening required for ventilation, except in circumstances when not in violation of the building or fire prevention codes.~~

~~2. No building permit or electrical permit shall be issued for a sign until such time as the Building Official receives written notification from the Planning Director that approval has been granted for a subject sign.~~

~~3. Signs shall be located in such a way that they maintain horizontal and vertical clearance of all overhead electrical conductors in accordance with the Electrical Code and the regulations of the Public Utilities Commission.~~

~~4. All permanent freestanding signs shall be self-supporting structures erected on and permanently attached to concrete foundations. Such structures shall be fabricated only from such materials as approved by the Building Code.~~

~~C. Maintenance. Every sign shall be maintained in a safe, presentable and good structural material condition at all times, including the replacement of defective parts, painting, repainting, cleaning and other acts required for the maintenance of said sign. The owner, or authorized representative, or sign user of the property upon which the sign or advertising structure is located shall be responsible for its proper maintenance and repair. If the sign is not made to comply with adequate safety standards, the Building Inspector shall require its removal in accordance with SMC 17.120.120. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Lawful existing signs

1. A sign lawfully installed before this chapter's effective date may remain under its existing approval. A sign does not become unlawful solely because this chapter changes an allowance or approval procedure.

2. Except for multiple-tenant signs, and subject to paragraph 6, a lawful nonconforming sign may remain until its business name, use, or sign face changes. All signing for that business or use must then conform. Customary repair under Section 17.120.030(B)(1), a copy change that leaves the business name and use unchanged, a noncommercial message under Section 17.120.010(D)(1), and a message change on a lawful electronic display under Section 17.120.070(B)(7) are not changes in sign face. Replacement of a damaged display is governed by paragraph 7.

3. New signs and proposed enlargements, relocations, or changes to illumination or display technology must meet this chapter. Except as provided in paragraph 2, work on one sign does not require correction of unrelated lawful signs.

4. Where an existing sign uses a primary frontage allowance, count its area when determining the remaining allowance for that frontage. Except as provided in paragraph 2, this does not require reduction or removal of a lawful existing sign that already exceeds the new allowance.

5. A lawful exception or sign program remains effective according to its terms. An applicant may request an amendment under this chapter. No existing private agreement is changed by a City sign approval.

6. No removal, limitation on customary use or repair, or denial of replacement of a qualifying on-premises display shall be required contrary to California Business and Professions Code Chapter 2.5, commencing with Section 5490. Before requiring such action, the City shall identify the applicable legal authority and provide any compensation or process required by law. This paragraph does not legalize a sign that was unlawful when installed.

7. The City may require a qualifying on-premises display that has been damaged to conform to this chapter on replacement, without compensation, only if all three of the following are met: (a) the display is more than 50 percent destroyed; (b) the destruction is other than facial copy

replacement; and (c) the display cannot be repaired within 30 days of the date of its destruction. Customary repair under Section 17.120.030(B)(1) remains allowed when any of these conditions is not met. This paragraph does not limit paragraph 6 or the City's existing safety authority.

B. Safety and maintenance

1. Signs and supports must comply with the City's applicable building, electrical, fire, and accessibility codes and must be kept securely attached and structurally sound.
2. Repair loose supports, broken components, exposed electrical wiring, and detached or torn sign faces. Remove or secure an immediate hazard promptly. Normal weathering that does not impair attachment, structural condition, or legibility is not a violation.
3. The owner of a sign is responsible for its maintenance. A property owner is responsible for signs installed or maintained on the property with the owner's authorization. Enforcement against either person must identify the condition that person is responsible for correcting.

C. Vacant premises and abandoned displays

1. A commercial display may be treated as abandoned when the business or activity it advertises has ceased on the site for 12 consecutive months and the display is not being lawfully reused. Noncommercial messages, approved historic signs, and current real estate signs are not abandoned because no business occupies the premises.
2. Before ordering removal, the Director shall give notice under the City's general code enforcement provisions. Evidence of active repairs, permitted reconstruction, or a documented reopening plan must be considered in setting a reasonable correction period.
3. Removal or covering of obsolete copy is sufficient where the remaining support is safe and capable of lawful reuse. The City shall not require removal of the support solely because the copy is obsolete.
4. Any further removal of a qualifying on-premises display must comply with subsection A(6).

17.120.110 ~~Violations.~~Decisions, appeals, and enforcement

~~Any of the following shall be deemed a violation of this chapter, and shall be subject to the enforcement remedies and penalties provided by this chapter, by the Municipal Code, and by State law:~~

~~A. Installing, creating, erecting, or maintaining any sign in a way that is inconsistent with any approved plan or permit governing such a sign or the property on which it is located.~~

~~B. Installing, creating, erecting, or maintaining any sign without an approved sign permit when such a permit is required.~~

~~C. Failing to remove, upon the written request of a City representative, any sign that has been installed, created, erected, or maintained in violation of this chapter.~~

~~D. Continuing any such violation as set forth above. Each day that a violation is continued shall be considered a separate violation for the purposes of applying the penalty portion of this chapter. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

A. Permit decisions

1. **Completeness.** Within 10 business days after a sign-permit application, a sign-program application, or a real estate sign determination request under Section 17.120.060(F) is

submitted, the Director shall identify missing information in one written list or confirm that the application is complete. Later requests must concern missing items, changed plans, or information needed to resolve a newly identified conflict with an applicable requirement. The Director shall respond within 10 business days after each resubmittal by confirming that the application is complete or identifying the specific items that remain missing.

2. **Staff decision.** The Director shall decide a complete staff application, including a sign program or a real estate sign determination under Section 17.120.060(F), within 15 business days. A statutory review or separate approval that must lawfully precede the decision may extend this period; the City must identify that requirement and the expected decision date in writing. Delay does not authorize installation without a required approval.

3. **Board decision.** Board applications shall use the public-notice and hearing procedures of Chapter 17.460. The Board shall decide within 60 calendar days after the application is complete, unless the applicant agrees to an extension or controlling law requires additional review. The notice must identify the requested exception or historic-sign determination.

4. **Written reasons.** An approval, condition, or denial must identify the applicable standard and explain the decision. A denial must identify the change needed for compliance where one is reasonably available. The decision must state the appeal procedure and deadline.

5. **Permit term.** A sign permit authorizes installation for 12 months after the decision becomes final. The Director shall grant one additional 12-month extension requested before expiration if the approved plans remain unchanged and no applicable law prevents installation. Once installed, a sign permit does not require periodic renewal.

6. **Appeals.** Permit, sign program, real estate sign, exception, and historic-sign decisions are appealable under Chapter 17.455 and the decision-making assignments in Table 17.400-1. Mandatory standards in this chapter govern the appeal; an appeal does not create discretion to deny a compliant sign on aesthetic grounds. The appeal period begins on the date of the written decision. If a decision is overdue under paragraph 2 or 3, the applicant may appeal as though the application had been denied, at any time while the decision remains outstanding. A written decision shall state the time for judicial review, including any expedited procedure under Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.8 that applies to the decision.

B. Violations and enforcement

1. Installing or maintaining a sign contrary to this chapter or to an applicable approval is a violation of this Code. Failure to obtain a sign permit is a violation only where this chapter requires a permit.

2. Violations of this chapter are enforced under Chapter 17.470, including abatement under Section 17.470.040. This chapter establishes no separate notice, hearing, storage, or cost-recovery procedure and does not limit any other remedy available to the City.

3. Each sign installed or maintained in violation of this chapter is a separate violation. A single sign is one violation regardless of the number of letters, panels, or display faces it contains.

4. A sign placed in the public right-of-way without authorization from the agency controlling that right-of-way is subject to the City's existing right-of-way and abatement authority.

5. A sign that presents an immediate safety hazard is subject to the City's existing building, fire, and nuisance abatement authority.

C. Penalties

Violations of this chapter are subject to the penalties in Section 17.470.050.

~~17.120.120 Appeals and enforcement – Removal and disposition of signs.~~

~~A. Administration. The sign regulations shall be administered by the Planning Director, who is authorized and directed to enforce all provisions of the regulations. The Planning Director is authorized to promulgate procedures consistent with the purpose of these regulations, and is further empowered to delegate the duties and powers granted to, and imposed upon, him under these regulations.~~

~~B. Construction. Construction of all signs, and their attachments, is governed by the regulations of the Uniform Building Code and these regulations, as adopted by the City of Sebastopol, and shall be inspected and approved by the Building Inspector.~~

~~**C. Notice and Removal of Nonpermitted Signs.**~~

~~1. The Planning Director shall cause to be removed any sign which has been erected without benefit of a permit required by the provisions of this chapter, or any sign which is materially, electrically or structurally defective, or any sign which has been abandoned, or any other sign prohibited by SMC 17.120.040.~~

~~2. The Planning Director shall prepare a notice which shall describe the sign and specify the violation involved, and which shall state that if the sign is not removed or the violation is not corrected within 10 days, said sign shall be removed in accordance with the provisions of these regulations. The recipient of such a violation notice may request a hearing on the matter within 10 days of receipt of the violation notice. Such a request shall be made in writing to the Planning Director.~~

~~3. All violation notices sent by the Planning Director shall be sent by certified mail to the owner of the subject property, as recorded by the Sonoma County Assessor's Office, and to other such persons as deemed necessary by the Planning Director. Any time periods provided in this section shall commence on the date of the receipt of the certified mail.~~

~~4. Any person having an interest in the sign or the property may request an administrative hearing on the matter by filing a written request to the Planning Director within 10 days after the date of mailing the notice, or 10 days after receipt of the notice if the notice was not mailed. If such a request is made, the Planning Director shall cause a hearing to be held within 30 days of the receipt of the request.~~

~~5. The Planning Director may cause the removal of any sign which is located within the public right-of-way or which is affixed to public property, for which prior written approval has not been granted. The Planning Director shall not be required to give notice prior to such removal, and any notice, appeal, or other enforcement provisions of this chapter shall not apply. The Planning Director shall make a report of the cost of removal, and the origin of said sign or other matter, and shall forward a copy of that report to the City Attorney to initiate recovery of such costs.~~

~~D. Removal of Dangerous Signs. When it is determined by the Planning Director or other City agent that a sign poses an imminent danger to the public safety, and contact cannot readily be made with the property owner or the sign owner, no written notice shall be served. In this emergency situation, the Planning Director or other City agent may cause the immediate removal of a dangerous sign without notice.~~

~~E. Disposal of Removed Signs. Any sign removed by the Planning Director or other City agent pursuant to the provisions of this chapter shall become the property of the City, and may be disposed of in any manner deemed appropriate by the City. The cost of removal of the sign by the City shall be considered a debt owed to the City by the owner of the sign and the owner of the property and may be recovered in an appropriate court action by the City or by assessment against the property as hereinafter provided. The cost of removal shall include any and all incidental expenses incurred by the City in connection with the sign's removal. When it is determined by the Building Inspector that said sign would cause an imminent danger to the public safety, and contact cannot be made with a sign owner or building owner, no written notice shall have to be served. In this emergency situation, the Building Inspector may effect correction of the danger.~~

~~F. Penalties. Any person(s) violating any of the provisions of these regulations shall be deemed guilty of an infraction and any person violating the same section or portion of these regulations on a second or subsequent occasion shall thereafter be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction of either an infraction or a misdemeanor, shall be punishable as provided by law. (Ord. 1111, 2018)~~

Sebastopol sign regulations

Draft 2 — Replacement Chapter 17.120

Discussion draft for DRB • November 2026

This document contains proposed replacement chapter text. The companion drafting notes identify proposed policy changes, numerical choices, and related code amendments needed before adoption. This draft replaces the chapter as a whole; its section numbers do not retain their former subjects.

Find the rule you need

Question	Section
Does the chapter apply?	17.120.010
What does a term mean?	17.120.020
Do I need a sign permit?	17.120.030
How do I measure my sign?	17.120.040
What permanent signs can I have?	17.120.050
What about sidewalk signs, window signs, banners, and off-site temporary signs?	17.120.060
Can my sign be illuminated or electronic?	17.120.070
What about murals, sculpture, and historic signs?	17.120.080
Can I use a sign program or request an exception?	17.120.090
Can I keep or repair an existing sign?	17.120.100
How do decisions, appeals, and enforcement work?	17.120.110

17.120.010 Purpose and scope

A. Purpose

This chapter provides clear sign allowances for businesses, residents, and other lawful uses. It allows legible and creative signs while protecting pedestrian access, traffic visibility, neighboring properties, and the character of Sebastopol's streets.

B. Applicability

This chapter applies to outdoor signs and window signs within the City. It also applies to electronic displays as provided in Section 17.120.070. A sign must meet the standards for its type and location unless this chapter expressly provides an exemption, an existing approval remains effective, or an exception is approved under Section 17.120.090.

C. Items outside this chapter

The following are not regulated by this chapter:

1. Interior signs other than window signs and electronic displays subject to Section 17.120.070.
2. Signs that are not visible from a public right-of-way or another property, except for the safety and maintenance requirements of Section 17.120.100(B).
3. Signs installed by a public agency for traffic control, emergency response, or another governmental function. Private advertising on public property is not exempt under this paragraph.
4. Signs required by law, to the extent of the required number, area, location, content, and illumination. Additional voluntary signage is subject to this chapter.
5. Signs carried by a person or worn on clothing, unless installed as a fixed display.
6. Signs on vehicles and trailers regularly used for transportation or delivery. A vehicle or trailer stationed as a fixed advertising display is subject to this chapter.
7. Merchandise displayed for sale and ordinary building materials, colors, and architectural details. Outdoor merchandise displays remain subject to applicable outdoor-use and right-of-way requirements.
8. Decorative lighting and seasonal decorations that do not contain a sign. Applicable electrical, fire, and nuisance regulations continue to apply.

D. Messages and private consent

1. A noncommercial message may replace any message on a lawful sign without a new sign permit. The sign remains subject to its applicable physical and operating limits. The substitution does not make the sign off-premises or abandoned.
2. The City shall not approve or deny a sign based on agreement or disagreement with its message or viewpoint. This chapter does not authorize speech prohibited by applicable law.
3. Commercial signs must relate to a business, product, service, or activity on the site, except as provided for real estate signs in Section 17.120.060(F) and off-site temporary signs in Section 17.120.060(H). New off-premises commercial advertising signs are prohibited. Lawful existing signs are governed by Section 17.120.100.
4. A sign allowance does not grant a right to use another person's property or the public right-of-way. The person displaying a sign must have lawful authority to use its location.

E. Relationship to other requirements

1. Building, electrical, fire, accessibility, historic-resource, and right-of-way requirements continue to apply. A sign permit does not waive those requirements or authorize an otherwise prohibited land use.
2. A sign allowed without a sign permit may still require another permit. The City shall identify any additional City permit required when responding to a sign-permit application.
3. The definitions, sign allowances, and sign-review procedures in this chapter control over conflicting general sign definitions or sign-review provisions elsewhere in Title 17. A specific state or federal requirement controls where it conflicts with this chapter.
4. Design guidelines provide examples and recommendations. Failure to follow a recommendation is not grounds to deny a sign that meets this chapter and other applicable mandatory requirements.

17.120.020 Definitions

The following definitions apply to this chapter. Other terms have the meanings given in Chapter 17.08.

Banner. A sign made of flexible material secured to a building or temporary construction barrier. An ordinary flag is not a banner.

Board. The Design Review Board.

Commercial message. A message advertising a business or offering goods, property, or services for sale, lease, or exchange. Payment to create artwork does not, by itself, make the artwork a commercial message.

Director. The Planning Director or the Director's designee.

Electronic display. A sign or portion of a sign whose words or images can be changed electronically, including a screen, electronic message board, or projected image. Ordinary controls that switch or dim lighting on a fixed sign do not make it an electronic display.

Eligible frontage. A tenant's exterior frontage measured under Section 17.120.040(B) and used for that tenant's sign allowance. A tenant may use no more than two eligible frontages.

Feather flag. A flexible sign stretched along a vertical or curved pole to form a blade, feather, or teardrop shape, whether or not it moves in the wind.

Freestanding sign. A permanently installed sign supported from the ground rather than attached to a building. A portable sign is not a freestanding sign for purposes of this chapter.

Frontage. The horizontal width of the exterior wall enclosing a tenant space or building, measured under Section 17.120.040(B).

Mural. An image painted, tiled, or otherwise applied directly to an exterior wall. A mural may contain words. A mural may be lit by external light fixtures. A banner, an internally illuminated sign, and an electronic display are not murals.

Noncommercial message. A message other than a commercial message, including personal, political, religious, artistic, and community expression.

Ordinary flag. A rectangular flag of flexible fabric attached along one edge to a pole or building-mounted bracket, hanging freely and moving naturally in the wind. National, state, regional, civic, institutional, and decorative flags are ordinary flags. A flag bearing a business name, logo, or other business information is a sign and is not an ordinary flag. A feather flag is not an ordinary flag.

Portable sign. A movable, self-supporting sign placed on the ground, such as an A-frame or sandwich board, without permanent attachment.

Primary sign. A wall, fascia, or awning sign using the primary sign allowance in Section 17.120.050.

Projecting sign. A sign attached to a building with its display face extending outward from the wall, including a hanging sign under an awning or canopy. An ordinary wall or awning sign is not a projecting sign.

Public entrance. An exterior entrance regularly available to customers or other visitors. An emergency exit, service-only door, or door not regularly used by visitors does not establish an additional sign allowance.

Sign. An object, surface, or display installed or arranged to communicate a message visually. The exclusions in Section 17.120.010(C) and the mural rules in Section 17.120.080 apply to this definition.

Site. A lot, or adjoining lots operated as one development with shared access or common facilities. A shared site does not combine individual tenants' frontage allowances.

Temporary sign. A sign made or mounted for limited-duration display, including a banner or removable panel. Display periods are established in Section 17.120.060; the term does not impose a separate time limit.

Tenant space. A separately occupied or leasable space for one lawful business or other use, whether occupied by an owner or a tenant. Internal departments, counters, and concessions without separate enclosed premises are not separate tenant spaces.

Window sign. A sign attached to glazing, or an outward-facing sign located within two feet of the interior surface of the glazing and visible from outside the building. Measure the shortest horizontal distance from the glazing to the nearest part of the display face. If any part of the face is within two feet, the entire face is a window sign. Merchandise is not a window sign. Electronic displays are governed by Section 17.120.070, which uses the same two-foot measurement.

17.120.030 Permits and exemptions

A. Which approval is required?

Table 17.120-1 identifies sign-permit requirements. An exemption from a sign permit does not exempt a sign from its listed standards.

Table 17.120-1. Sign approvals

Work or sign type	Sign approval	Standards
An item outside this chapter	None	Section 17.120.010(C)
Maintenance, message changes, or equivalent replacement described in subsection B	None	Subsection B and Section 17.120.100
Entrance plaques and small entrance signs	None	Section 17.120.050(C)
On-site circulation signs	None	Section 17.120.050(C)
Portable signs	None; right-of-way authorization is separate	Section 17.120.060(B)
Non-electronic window signs, including fixed illuminated window signs	None	Sections 17.120.060(C) and 17.120.070
Small removable signs on private property	None	Section 17.120.060(D)
Ordinary flags	None	Section 17.120.060(A)
Temporary banners	Simple registration; noncommercial banners need no registration	Section 17.120.060(E)
Real estate signs	None	Section 17.120.060(F)
Off-site temporary signs	None	Section 17.120.060(H)
Construction-site signs	Staff sign permit	Section 17.120.060(G)

Work or sign type	Sign approval	Standards
Other new permanent signs and physical changes to permanent signs	Staff sign permit	Sections 17.120.040, 17.120.050, and 17.120.070
Murals	Staff sign permit for any counted sign component; no sign permit for the remainder	Section 17.120.080(A)
Sculptural signs	Staff sign permit, or Board review where an exception is required	Sections 17.120.080(B) and 17.120.090
Retention of a historic sign not previously identified as a historic resource	Board approval	Section 17.120.080(C)
Sign programs that meet this chapter	Staff approval	Section 17.120.090(A)
A departure from an eligible standard	Design Review Board exception	Section 17.120.090(B)

B. Changes that do not require a sign permit

1. Cleaning, repainting, and repair, including customary repair of a lawful nonconforming sign, that do not enlarge or relocate the sign or increase its approved illumination.
2. Changing the message within an existing lawful sign's approved display area, including manual copy changes and permitted electronic message changes. A change may not introduce an otherwise prohibited sign or operating feature.
3. Replacing a lawful sign face or nonstructural sign components with components of the same dimensions and substantially equivalent durability, without changing the sign's location, supports, or approved illumination. A different message, color, or lettering style does not by itself require a permit.
4. Replacing a damaged conforming sign in the same location with a sign of the same dimensions and approved illumination, using sound existing supports. Historic-resource requirements still apply.

A change in the business name, use, or sign face of a lawful nonconforming sign is governed by Section 17.120.100(A)(2), rather than paragraphs 2 and 3. Replacement of a nonconforming structure is governed by Section 17.120.100, rather than paragraph 4. Structural or electrical work may require a building or electrical permit even when no sign permit is required.

C. Applying for a staff sign permit

One application may include all proposed signs for a tenant or site. The application must include:

1. The applicant's contact information and evidence of authority to install the sign, such as owner consent or a lease provision authorizing signage.
2. A photograph or drawing showing the sign's location and dimensions, the relevant frontage, existing signs using the same allowance, and required clearances.

3. The sign's materials, attachment method, and any illumination or electronic components.

4. The fee established by City Council resolution.

The City shall accept clear, dimensioned photographs or drawings. Professionally prepared plans may be required only when required by another applicable code or necessary to demonstrate a structural or other technical requirement.

D. Staff approval

The Director shall approve a complete application that meets this chapter and applicable mandatory requirements. Approval may include conditions only as necessary to meet an identified requirement. A compliant application shall not be referred to the Board solely because of its size, style, material, or illumination.

Review deadlines, written decisions, and appeals are governed by Section 17.120.110.

17.120.040 Measurement and placement

A. Sign area and number

1. **Panels and backgrounds.** Measure the entire display panel, including its frame and a contrasting background made specifically for the sign. Do not count a supporting post, foundation, or ordinary architectural feature unless it carries sign copy.

2. **Separate letters and graphics.** Without a display panel, measure the smallest rectangle enclosing each distinct group of letters or graphics. Add the rectangles. Do not include blank wall between separate groups. Letters in one word or line of text are one group.

3. **Signs with multiple faces.** For a flat projecting sign with two parallel, back-to-back display faces, count the larger face once; do not add the two faces. Apply the same rule to other signs with two parallel, back-to-back faces and to A-frames whose faces meet only at their upper edges. For signs with three or more display faces, or two faces arranged otherwise, add the area of every display face. An unlettered panel edge is not a display face. Each sign must meet its applicable area limit using this calculation.

4. **Sculpture.** Measure the largest projected outline of the sign from its front, side, or rear, as provided in Section 17.120.080(B).

5. **One installation.** A coordinated set of letters and graphics on one mounting area is one sign. Opposite faces on one support are one sign. Separate freestanding structures or display panels at separate locations are separate signs.

6. **Separate allowances.** Add signs only within the allowance that applies to them. Projecting signs, entrance signs, directories, freestanding signs, on-site circulation signs, window signs, portable signs, and temporary signs do not reduce the primary sign allowance unless this chapter expressly states otherwise.

B. Frontage

1. Measure the tenant's exterior wall along a public street, public pedestrian passage, or on-site pedestrian route serving its public entrance. Measure in a straight horizontal line; do not add recesses, returns, or internal walls.

2. A tenant may use no more than two exterior frontages. Signs allocated to a frontage must be installed on that frontage. A corner does not allow the same length of wall to be counted twice.

3. Ground-floor tenants use their own frontage. Do not divide a building's allowance equally among tenants or count upper-floor tenants when calculating a ground-floor tenant's allowance.

4. Measure fractional feet to the nearest tenth of a foot. Do not round an allowance upward to the next whole square foot.

C. Height and projection

1. Measure freestanding-sign height from the existing grade at the base to the top of the sign and its supports. A mound or raised planter installed for the sign does not increase the height allowance.
2. Measure projection horizontally from the building wall to the outermost part of the sign or support.
3. Measure overhead clearance from the walking surface directly below the sign to its lowest part.

D. Placement and safety

1. A sign must not obstruct a required exit, accessible route, entrance maneuvering area, fire equipment, required ventilation opening, or required traffic sight distance.
2. A sign must not conceal a traffic-control device or imitate its placement, shape, color, or illumination in a way that would reasonably confuse road users.
3. A sign must not be attached to a tree, utility pole, or public fixture without authorization from the responsible owner or agency.
4. Required overhead and electrical clearances apply to signs and their supports. This chapter does not authorize a reduction in clearances required by another applicable code or the agency controlling a right-of-way.
5. Freestanding permanent signs must remain at least five feet behind the back of the sidewalk, or behind the right-of-way line where there is no sidewalk. They must not project into the public right-of-way. This setback does not apply to portable or small removable signs governed by Section 17.120.060.
6. Wall, fascia, and awning signs must remain within the surface to which they are attached. New roof signs and signs extending above the roof or parapet are prohibited. Projecting signs must meet Section 17.120.050(C).
7. A sign must be securely attached or stable against ordinary wind and contact. Permanent exterior signs must use materials and finishes suitable for outdoor exposure. Except for portable signs under Section 17.120.060(B)(7), no particular lettering method or material is required if the sign meets these standards.
8. A sign must not emit sound, odor, or visible matter such as smoke, steam, or vapor. This paragraph does not restrict a sign's illumination, which is governed by Section 17.120.070.

17.120.050 Permanent signs

A. Select the applicable allowance

Commercial, office, industrial, community-facility, and other lawful nonresidential uses use subsections B and C, except as provided in subsection D. Residential uses use subsection D. Signs do not authorize a land use that is otherwise prohibited.

B. Primary signs for nonresidential tenant spaces

1. Each ground-floor tenant may have up to two primary signs on each eligible frontage. Their combined area on that frontage must not exceed Table 17.120-2. The combined primary sign area for one tenant on all frontages must not exceed 175 square feet.
2. A tenant above or below the ground floor, or without an eligible exterior frontage, may have primary signs totaling 10 square feet on the exterior wall enclosing its space or at its public entrance. Entrance signs and directories under subsection C are additional.
3. A tenant may divide its primary allowance among wall, fascia, and awning signs. There is no limit on the number of words.

4. A shared sign program is not required to use these allowances. Voluntary coordination and redistribution are addressed in Section 17.120.090.

Table 17.120-2. Primary sign area per frontage

Frontage width	Maximum combined primary sign area on that frontage
25 feet or less	25 square feet
More than 25 feet	25 square feet, plus 1.5 square feet for each foot over 25 feet, up to 175 square feet

C. Additional signs for nonresidential uses

Each allowance below is separate from the primary sign allowance. All signs remain subject to placement and illumination standards.

Table 17.120-3. Additional permanent signs

Type	Number and area	Placement and height
Projecting sign	One per public entrance on an eligible frontage; no more than two per tenant; six square feet of counted sign area, measured under Section 17.120.040(A)(3)	Maximum projection three feet, including supports; minimum overhead clearance 7.5 feet; entirely below the roof or parapet
Small entrance signs and plaques	Each sign no more than two square feet; combined area no more than six square feet per public entrance	On the wall or door within five feet of the entrance; shared entrances share this allowance; signs on glazing also count toward the window-coverage limit
Shared directory	One per shared public entrance; 16 square feet maximum	Wall-mounted, or freestanding no more than five feet high; a freestanding directory must be inside the site at the entrance it serves
Freestanding site sign	One per public street frontage, no more than two per site; 32 square feet per sign for a single-tenant site; for a multi-tenant site, 10 square feet per tenant space, with a minimum of 32 and maximum of 100 square feet per sign	Eight feet maximum height; subject to the permanent-sign setback in Section 17.120.040(D)(5)
On-site circulation sign	One per on-site circulation decision point, meaning a driveway entrance, parking-aisle junction, or loading entrance; four square feet maximum; no sign permit required	Four feet maximum height if freestanding; subject to the access and sight-distance rules in Section 17.120.040(D); not counted toward the primary or freestanding site-sign allowances

The freestanding site-sign allowance replaces, rather than adds to, a separate shopping-center, area-identification, or monument-sign allowance for the same nonresidential site. A shared directory is not an additional street-front site sign and may not be placed at the street frontage unless the shared building entrance is there.

D. Residential and special settings

The allowances in Table 17.120-4 replace subsections B and C unless a row expressly provides otherwise. Signs under Section 17.120.060 remain available where that section allows them. A home-based business may display only the commercial sign authorized in this table; this restriction does not limit noncommercial expression or real estate signs unrelated to that business.

Table 17.120-4. Residential and special settings

Setting	Permanent allowance
Home-based business	One nonilluminated wall or window sign, up to five square feet in area. No portable commercial sign.
Multifamily residential building	One wall or freestanding sign, eight square feet maximum; freestanding height six feet maximum
Residential development entrance	Up to two signs per entrance, 16 square feet combined; height five feet maximum; these are additional to individual building signs
Lawful nonresidential principal use in a residential district, other than a bed and breakfast	Up to two wall or freestanding signs, 32 square feet combined; freestanding height eight feet maximum
Bed and breakfast in a residential district	One wall or freestanding sign, eight square feet maximum; freestanding height five feet maximum
CF Community Facility or OS Open Space district	Primary wall or fascia signs totaling 30 square feet per tenant or principal use; the additional allowances in subsection C apply, except freestanding site signs are limited to 32 square feet and six feet in height
PC Planned Community district	A specific sign standard in an approved development plan controls. Where the plan is silent, apply this section according to each use; residential and nonresidential uses are evaluated separately
Motor-fuel service station	Up to two primary or freestanding signs, 100 square feet combined; no more than one freestanding sign, limited to 32 square feet and eight feet in height. Small entrance signs and signs under Section 17.120.060 are additional; the other allowances in subsection C do not apply

Required address and fuel-price signs are addressed in Section 17.120.010(C)(4). Residential window and small removable signs are addressed in Section 17.120.060.

17.120.060 Portable, window, and temporary signs

A. General rule

The allowances in this section are separate from permanent-sign allowances. Signs must meet Section 17.120.040(D). The time limits in this section apply only where expressly stated. A change of message does not restart a display period. A portable sign cannot use the removable-sign allowance to avoid portable-sign requirements.

Feather flags, pennants used as signs, searchlights used as signs, and inflatable advertising devices are prohibited. Each dwelling or nonresidential tenant may display up to two ordinary flags, each no more than 15 square feet, from a building-mounted bracket or permanent flagpole on private property without a sign permit or a time limit. This allowance is separate from other allowances. A flagpole remains subject to applicable height and construction requirements. The flag and its supports must not obstruct pedestrian clearance or traffic sight distance.

B. Portable signs

1. **Eligibility and number.** No more than one portable sign may be displayed per building containing a lawful nonresidential use other than a home-based business. This limit applies to all entrances, frontages, and tenants of the building combined, including signs on private property and in the adjoining public right-of-way. Additional tenants or entrances do not create additional allowances. The property owner shall designate the responsible operator in writing. The sign may serve one tenant or several tenants within that building. A portable sign may not be shared among separate buildings.
2. **Size.** Each face may be no more than six square feet. Overall height may be no more than three feet. The base, braces, and feet must fit within a ground footprint no more than three feet wide by two feet deep.
3. **Location.** Place the sign beside a public entrance or within the building's frontage. Maintain at least 10 feet between portable signs along the same common pedestrian route, measured between their closest edges. Where that spacing cannot be maintained, the sign may not be placed in the public right-of-way, and may be placed only on private property outside the pedestrian route. Relocating a sign does not increase the one-per-building limit.
4. **Walking space.** Maintain a continuous unobstructed pedestrian route at least 4.5 feet wide, or any greater width required by applicable accessibility standards or the right-of-way permit. Do not place a sign in an entrance maneuvering area, curb ramp, transit boarding area, or access to a marked crossing. The sign must be detectable by a person using a cane and must not create a protruding-object hazard.
5. **Public right-of-way.** Obtain authorization from the City or other agency controlling the right-of-way before placement. A City sign allowance does not authorize placement within a state highway right-of-way. Right-of-way authorization does not increase, transfer, or create an exception to the one-per-building limit.
6. **Operation.** Remove the sign from the public right-of-way when all businesses it serves are closed to the public. Portable signs must be nonilluminated, stable, and maintained in good repair. Electronic displays are not allowed in portable signs.
7. **Materials and finish.** Portable signs must have wood frames and wood or chalkboard display faces. Metal hinges, fasteners, and stabilizing hardware are allowed. Stone, ceramic, or metal decorative details may be incorporated into the wood frame. Plastic frames, plastic display faces, plastic lettering, and vinyl lettering, decals, or wraps are prohibited. Use painted, carved, stenciled, or chalk lettering. Surfaces must have a finished appearance, with no exposed unfinished panel edges, peeling finishes, or makeshift attachments. Ordinary paint, chalkboard coatings, and protective finishes are allowed.

C. Window signs

1. Window signs may cover no more than 25 percent of the glazing on each exterior elevation of a nonresidential tenant space. Include door glazing. Calculate each elevation separately; do not transfer unused coverage to another elevation.

2. Count both permanent and temporary window signs as defined in Section 17.120.020. Count overlapping signs once for coverage. Do not count merchandise, required signs, or ordinary window treatments that contain no sign.

3. There is no display-period limit and no limit on message changes. Window signs do not reduce the primary sign allowance.

4. A non-electronic illuminated window sign may have no more than two square feet of illuminated display area. No more than one illuminated window sign is allowed per public entrance. It counts toward window coverage and must meet Section 17.120.070. This allowance does not depend on its message or whether it uses neon or another fixed light source.

5. Noncommercial signs in dwelling windows do not require a sign permit and are not subject to the percentage limit. They must not obstruct an opening required for emergency escape or ventilation. A commercial window sign for a home-based business uses the single sign allowed in Table 17.120-4 and does not add to a wall sign.

D. Small removable signs on private property

1. Nonilluminated removable signs may be displayed on private property without a sign permit. Each sign may have no more than six square feet per face and, if ground-mounted, may be no more than four feet high.

2. Commercial signs under this subsection are limited to two per site and are not allowed for home-based businesses. Their messages must meet Section 17.120.010(D)(3).

3. Noncommercial signs under this subsection have no numerical or calendar limit. They must be maintained and located outside required sight-distance areas and pedestrian routes. Larger noncommercial signs may use another applicable sign allowance or an exception under Section 17.120.090.

4. A sign mounted on a building must remain below its roof or parapet. No sign under this subsection may be installed in the public right-of-way. Banners are governed by subsection E, and window signs by subsection C.

E. Temporary banners

1. **Allowance.** Each nonresidential tenant may display one banner at a time, no more than 32 square feet, for up to 30 calendar days in a calendar year. Display may be divided among several periods. Each day of display counts once, regardless of message changes. Each tenant has its own allowance.

2. **Location.** Secure the banner to the building, below the roof or parapet. Where construction prevents use of the building frontage, it may be secured to a permitted construction fence or barrier on the site. It must not block required access or sight distance. Banners may not be installed on vehicles, in landscaping, or above a roof or parapet.

3. **Registration.** Before display, submit the location, dimensions, and intended display dates to the Director on a City form. Registration is effective upon submission of a complete form identifying a compliant banner. Registration does not authorize a noncompliant sign. No separate discretionary approval or sign-registration fee is required.

4. **Noncommercial banners.** A noncommercial banner on private property may use the same size and placement allowance without registration or a calendar limit. One is allowed per dwelling or nonresidential tenant space. The exception from calendar limits does not authorize a prohibited device.

5. **Condition.** Banners must be nonilluminated, securely fastened, and replaced or removed when torn or detached.

F. Real estate signs

1. Signs protected by California Civil Code Section 713 may be displayed on the owner's property, or another owner's private property with consent, subject to reasonable location, dimensions, design, and public-safety requirements. They may contain the information protected by that section. No particular color, material, or hanging-post design is required.

2. A sign meets this chapter's ordinary dimensional standards if it is no more than six square feet per face and six feet high. On a commercial or industrial site of at least 20,000 square feet, an on-site sign may be up to 40 square feet per face and eight feet high. These signs do not use another sign allowance.

3. A request for a different dimension or design protected by Section 713 shall receive a written staff determination under Section 17.120.110(A), without an exception application or sign-permit fee. A departure from paragraph 2 is not, by itself, grounds for denial; the determination must apply Section 713's reasonableness and safety requirements.

4. Remove the sign within seven days after the property is no longer offered for sale, lease, or exchange. Signs placed for an open house must be removed when the open house ends. Off-site signs directing people to an open house are governed by subsection H. A sign may not be placed in a public right-of-way without the controlling agency's authorization.

G. Construction-site signs

During active construction under a valid permit, a site may have up to two nonilluminated temporary wall or freestanding signs, totaling no more than 50 square feet. Freestanding height may be no more than eight feet. Remove them within 30 days after completion or permit expiration unless another provision authorizes continued display. Required construction notices are outside this allowance. A construction fence may carry these signs, subject to Section 17.120.040(D).

H. Off-site temporary signs

1. **Allowance.** Up to four signs per event directing people to a temporary event at a specific location may be displayed away from the event location without a sign permit. An event may last no more than seven days, and a business or organizer may use this allowance for no more than three events in a calendar year. An open house for a property offered for sale, lease, or exchange is an event under this subsection. For an open house, the three-event limit applies per property. Each sign may be no more than four square feet and no more than three feet high. Portable signs and banners remain subject to subsections B and E, respectively. Section 17.120.010(D)(3) does not apply to signs under this subsection.

2. **Consent.** Place the signs only on private property with the owner's consent, or in the public right-of-way where the agency controlling that right-of-way authorizes it.

3. **Other allowances.** A sign allowed under subsection D may use this allowance if it meets the limits in paragraph 1. A sign displayed under this subsection is subject to the timing rule in paragraph 4.

4. **Timing.** Display may begin no more than 14 days before the event begins and must end within 2 days after the event ends. For an event lasting two days or less, display may begin no more than 2 days before. Open house signs may be displayed only on the day of the open house.

5. **Placement.** Signs must be nonilluminated and must meet Section 17.120.040(D). Do not attach a sign to a tree, utility pole, traffic sign, or other public fixture. Do not place a sign in a required sight-distance area, a pedestrian route, a curb ramp, a median, or a transit boarding area.

6. **Responsibility.** The person who places a sign under this subsection is responsible for removing it by the deadline in paragraph 4.

17.120.070 Illumination and electronic displays

A. Fixed illumination

1. Permanent signs may use shielded external lighting, illuminated individual letters, halo lighting, or static neon or equivalent fixed lighting. On internally illuminated panels, the background must be opaque so that light passes through letters and graphics rather than the whole panel.

2. Light sources must be shielded or directed so that they do not shine into a dwelling window or create disabling glare for pedestrians or drivers. A sign must not obscure the visibility of traffic signals or nearby objects through excessive brightness.

3. Signs for residential uses must be nonilluminated, except required address signs and externally illuminated multifamily or residential-development entrance signs. Home-based-business signs must remain nonilluminated. A lawful nonresidential use is not prohibited from illuminating a sign solely because a dwelling is nearby or above it.

4. Illuminated signs for nonresidential uses must be switched off no later than one hour after closing and may be switched on one hour before opening. Required signs are governed by Section 17.120.010(C)(4).

5. Flashing, scrolling, animated, rotating, and mechanically moving signs are prohibited. Ordinary on/off switching, gradual adjustment of brightness for ambient conditions, and incidental movement of a permitted banner, flag, or suspended sign in the wind are not prohibited animation.

B. Electronic displays

1. New electronic displays are prohibited outdoors and in outward-facing window installations, whether they show still or changing images, except as provided in this subsection.

2. An interior display is subject to the prohibition in paragraph 1 if it is visible from outside the building and any part of its display face is within two feet of the interior surface of exterior glazing, measured as provided in the definition of window sign in Section 17.120.020. The entire display is then subject to this subsection.

3. An interior display not subject to paragraph 2 is not regulated by this chapter, whatever its size, orientation, or visibility from outside the building, and does not require a sign permit.

4. For a projected image, the surface receiving the image is the display location for purposes of paragraph 2.

5. Displays integral to an ATM, point-of-sale terminal, fuel dispenser, or charging station are allowed when limited to the information and controls needed to use the equipment. A separate advertising screen on that equipment is not exempt.

6. Electronic display of information required by state or federal law is allowed to the extent needed to meet that requirement. The exception does not authorize an additional advertising panel or animation. Required signs remain subject to Section 17.120.010(C)(4).

7. An exception under Section 17.120.090 may not authorize a new electronic display. Lawful existing displays and their approved operating conditions are governed by Section 17.120.100. Changing a permitted message within those conditions does not require another permit.

C. Correcting illumination

The City may inspect a sign's illumination. If it violates subsection A or an applicable permit condition, the Director may require shielding, dimming, redirection, repair, or adjustment of operating hours sufficient to correct the violation. The written notice must identify the observed condition and the requirement violated. Notice, correction periods, and appeals follow the City's general code enforcement provisions. A complaint alone does not establish a violation.

17.120.080 Murals, sculptural signs, and historic signs

A. Murals

1. A mural is not a sign. It has no maximum area under this chapter and does not require a sign permit, except for the sign components described in paragraph 2. Applicable building and historic-resource requirements continue to apply.

2. Words, numerals, business names, logos, and trademarks within a mural are sign components. Measure each distinct group under Section 17.120.040(A)(2), add the groups, and count the total against the primary sign allowance for the tenant space the mural serves. If the wall serves more than one tenant space or a vacant space, the property owner must identify, before installation, a primary sign allowance on that frontage with enough available area, and the counted total is charged to that allowance. Do not count any other part of the mural.

3. Depicting a product, occupation, or service does not make an image a sign component. An artist's signature and date are not sign components.

4. A mural may be illuminated only by external light fixtures meeting Section 17.120.070(A). Internal illumination and electronic displays are not permitted in a mural.

5. A mural may not display off-premises commercial advertising prohibited by Section 17.120.010(D)(3). City review addresses the physical requirements of this chapter and the measurement of sign components. It does not address the artistic merit or the viewpoint of the mural.

B. Sculptural signs and ornament

1. A sign may incorporate sculpture, shaped panels, and decorative supports. These features do not require an exception if the complete installation fits within the applicable sign's permitted area, height, projection, and clearances.

2. For a three-dimensional sign, measure the smallest rectangle enclosing its silhouette in each principal direction; use the largest rectangle once. Do not add the surface area of curved or irregular faces.

3. Ordinary decorative brackets, bases, and trim without sign copy do not count toward sign area, but do count toward height, projection, and clearance limits. An enlarged product image or other sculptural display is part of the sign, not an excluded support.

4. An installation exceeding an eligible physical limit may be considered under Section 17.120.090. Independent artwork that is not a sign is not subject to sign-area limits; applicable public-art, historic-resource, structural, and placement requirements remain in effect.

C. Historic signs

1. A sign identified as a historic resource through the City's cultural-heritage process may be retained and repaired notwithstanding this chapter's dimensional or sign-type limits. Required safety work remains applicable.

2. For a sign not previously identified, the Board may approve retention upon written findings that photographs, records, or other substantial evidence establish its historic significance to the building, business district, or City. A professional report may be required only when the available evidence is insufficient to make the determination.

3. Retention approval must identify the sign and the physical features being preserved. Approval does not authorize enlargement, a new electronic display, or a change in operating characteristics.

4. Repair that preserves those features does not require a new sign approval. Separate historic-resource approval, where required, remains applicable. Retained historic signs do not reduce a current tenant's primary sign allowance.

17.120.090 Sign programs and exceptions

A. Sign programs

1. A property owner may submit one sign program for a multi-tenant building or site. The program may establish sign locations, mounting methods, common physical features, and allocation of shared signs.

2. The Director shall approve a program that meets this chapter. A separate Board hearing is not required unless an exception is requested.

3. A program may redistribute primary sign area among tenants on the same frontage with the written consent of affected occupants and the property owner. The total may not exceed the sum otherwise allowed, and the program may not transfer area to a different frontage or sign category. An unoccupied space must retain an identified allowance for a future tenant.

4. Compliance with a program may be shown with a dimensioned photograph or drawing. Message changes and work exempt under Section 17.120.030(B) remain exempt.

5. A tenant may apply under the chapter's standard allowances when no program exists. A preexisting program remains effective under Section 17.120.100, but the owner may seek a staff amendment to use this chapter's standard allowances. The City shall not require a new program solely because a tenant changes.

6. The City shall make approved programs available with the property's permit records.

B. Exceptions

1. **Eligible departures.** The Board may approve a departure from a permanent sign's area, number, height, projection, or location; the placement or size of a mural's counted sign component or a sculptural sign; or the size or height of a noncommercial sign under Section 17.120.060. Temporary-sign duration, portable-sign number, materials, access and spacing, and electronic-display prohibitions are not eligible for an exception.

2. **Application.** Identify the exact standard, the requested departure, and the physical condition that makes the departure necessary. The sign-permit application may include this information; a separate set of sign plans is not required.

3. **Required findings.** The Board may approve only if all of the following are supported by the record:

- **a.** A building feature, setback, entrance location, visibility obstruction, or the geometry of a sculptural installation prevents a workable sign within the standard allowance.

- **b.** The departure is limited to what is needed to address that condition.

- **c.** The sign preserves required access, sight distance, structural safety, and the illumination protections of this chapter.

- **d.** The approval identifies the dimensions and location allowed and does not depend on the identity of the owner or tenant or approval of the sign's message.

4. **Limits.** No exception may authorize a sign prohibited by Section 17.120.010(D)(3), 17.120.040(D)(6) or (8), 17.120.060(A), or 17.120.070, or waive another agency's approval or an applicable safety requirement. Historic retention is governed separately by Section 17.120.080(C).

5. **Procedure.** The Board shall act under Section 17.120.110. An exception applies to the approved sign and physical conditions. It does not expire solely upon a change of ownership, tenant, or business name.

17.120.100 Existing signs and maintenance

A. Lawful existing signs

1. A sign lawfully installed before this chapter's effective date may remain under its existing approval. A sign does not become unlawful solely because this chapter changes an allowance or approval procedure.

2. Except for multiple-tenant signs, and subject to paragraph 6, a lawful nonconforming sign may remain until its business name, use, or sign face changes. All signing for that business or use must then conform. Customary repair under Section 17.120.030(B)(1), a copy change that leaves the business name and use unchanged, a noncommercial message under Section 17.120.010(D)(1), and a message change on a lawful electronic display under Section 17.120.070(B)(7) are not changes in sign face. Replacement of a damaged display is governed by paragraph 7.

3. New signs and proposed enlargements, relocations, or changes to illumination or display technology must meet this chapter. Except as provided in paragraph 2, work on one sign does not require correction of unrelated lawful signs.

4. Where an existing sign uses a primary frontage allowance, count its area when determining the remaining allowance for that frontage. Except as provided in paragraph 2, this does not require reduction or removal of a lawful existing sign that already exceeds the new allowance.

5. A lawful exception or sign program remains effective according to its terms. An applicant may request an amendment under this chapter. No existing private agreement is changed by a City sign approval.

6. No removal, limitation on customary use or repair, or denial of replacement of a qualifying on-premises display shall be required contrary to California Business and Professions Code Chapter 2.5, commencing with Section 5490. Before requiring such action, the City shall identify the applicable legal authority and provide any compensation or process required by law. This paragraph does not legalize a sign that was unlawful when installed.

7. The City may require a qualifying on-premises display that has been damaged to conform to this chapter on replacement, without compensation, only if all three of the following are met: (a) the display is more than 50 percent destroyed; (b) the destruction is other than facial copy replacement; and (c) the display cannot be repaired within 30 days of the date of its destruction. Customary repair under Section 17.120.030(B)(1) remains allowed when any of these conditions is not met. This paragraph does not limit paragraph 6 or the City's existing safety authority.

B. Safety and maintenance

1. Signs and supports must comply with the City's applicable building, electrical, fire, and accessibility codes and must be kept securely attached and structurally sound.

2. Repair loose supports, broken components, exposed electrical wiring, and detached or torn sign faces. Remove or secure an immediate hazard promptly. Normal weathering that does not impair attachment, structural condition, or legibility is not a violation.

3. The owner of a sign is responsible for its maintenance. A property owner is responsible for signs installed or maintained on the property with the owner's authorization. Enforcement against either person must identify the condition that person is responsible for correcting.

C. Vacant premises and abandoned displays

1. A commercial display may be treated as abandoned when the business or activity it advertises has ceased on the site for 12 consecutive months and the display is not being lawfully reused. Noncommercial messages, approved historic signs, and current real estate signs are not abandoned because no business occupies the premises.

2. Before ordering removal, the Director shall give notice under the City's general code enforcement provisions. Evidence of active repairs, permitted reconstruction, or a documented reopening plan must be considered in setting a reasonable correction period.

3. Removal or covering of obsolete copy is sufficient where the remaining support is safe and capable of lawful reuse. The City shall not require removal of the support solely because the copy is obsolete.

4. Any further removal of a qualifying on-premises display must comply with subsection A(6).

17.120.110 Decisions, appeals, and enforcement

A. Permit decisions

1. **Completeness.** Within 10 business days after a sign-permit application, a sign-program application, or a real estate sign determination request under Section 17.120.060(F) is submitted, the Director shall identify missing information in one written list or confirm that the application is complete. Later requests must concern missing items, changed plans, or information needed to resolve a newly identified conflict with an applicable requirement. The Director shall respond within 10 business days after each resubmittal by confirming that the application is complete or identifying the specific items that remain missing.

2. **Staff decision.** The Director shall decide a complete staff application, including a sign program or a real estate sign determination under Section 17.120.060(F), within 15 business days. A statutory review or separate approval that must lawfully precede the decision may extend this period; the City must identify that requirement and the expected decision date in writing. Delay does not authorize installation without a required approval.

3. **Board decision.** Board applications shall use the public-notice and hearing procedures of Chapter 17.460. The Board shall decide within 60 calendar days after the application is complete, unless the applicant agrees to an extension or controlling law requires additional review. The notice must identify the requested exception or historic-sign determination.

4. **Written reasons.** An approval, condition, or denial must identify the applicable standard and explain the decision. A denial must identify the change needed for compliance where one is reasonably available. The decision must state the appeal procedure and deadline.

5. **Permit term.** A sign permit authorizes installation for 12 months after the decision becomes final. The Director shall grant one additional 12-month extension requested before expiration if the approved plans remain unchanged and no applicable law prevents installation. Once installed, a sign permit does not require periodic renewal.

6. **Appeals.** Permit, sign program, real estate sign, exception, and historic-sign decisions are appealable under Chapter 17.455 and the decision-making assignments in Table 17.400-1. Mandatory standards in this chapter govern the appeal; an appeal does not create discretion to deny a compliant sign on aesthetic grounds. The appeal period begins on the date of the written decision. If a decision is overdue under paragraph 2 or 3, the applicant may appeal as though the application had been denied, at any time while the decision remains outstanding. A written decision shall state the time for judicial review, including any expedited procedure under Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.8 that applies to the decision.

B. Violations and enforcement

1. Installing or maintaining a sign contrary to this chapter or to an applicable approval is a violation of this Code. Failure to obtain a sign permit is a violation only where this chapter requires a permit.

2. Violations of this chapter are enforced under Chapter 17.470, including abatement under Section 17.470.040. This chapter establishes no separate notice, hearing, storage, or cost-recovery procedure and does not limit any other remedy available to the City.

3. Each sign installed or maintained in violation of this chapter is a separate violation. A single sign is one violation regardless of the number of letters, panels, or display faces it contains.

4. A sign placed in the public right-of-way without authorization from the agency controlling that right-of-way is subject to the City's existing right-of-way and abatement authority.

5. A sign that presents an immediate safety hazard is subject to the City's existing building, fire, and nuisance abatement authority.

C. Penalties

Violations of this chapter are subject to the penalties in Section 17.470.050.

End of proposed replacement chapter. Adoption provisions, policy explanations, and coordination instructions are in the companion drafting notes; they are not additional standards for applicants.

Drafting notes and decisions

Companion to Sebastopol Sign Code Draft 2

November 2026 • Discussion material for DRB and Staff

1. Overview

Draft 2 is a complete replacement for Chapter 17.120 (Sign Regulations). It reorganizes the chapter into 11 sections, places each rule in one location, and states allowances in one approvals table and three allowance tables. The draft uses "shall" for duties of City officials and "must" for requirements on applicants. Both are mandatory.

The numerical values in the draft are proposals for review. They are not existing law and have not been approved by the City. Section 2 summarizes the principal differences from the existing chapter, Section 3 lists the policy decisions presented for review, and Section 4 records the proposed numbers and their origins. Section 5 applies the draft to sample situations. Sections 6 through 8 map the existing chapter to the draft, list coordination required before adoption, and identify sources.

Comparisons to the existing chapter use the copy of Chapter 17.120 supplied for this review. Section references in the second column of the comparison tables are to that copy.

2. Principal changes from the existing chapter

A. Summary of the largest changes

The following changes affect the largest number of applicants or the largest amount of signage.

- **Approval authority.** The Planning Director approves every complete application that meets the chapter guidelines. The Design Review Board acts on exceptions and on retention of historic signs not previously identified. In the existing chapter the Board reviews sign permits generally, and the Director reviews only listed categories.
- **Review standard and timing.** Review is limited to mandatory standards, and design guidelines are recommendations. The draft adds deadlines for completeness, decisions, and appeals. The existing chapter requires consistency with the design guidelines and states no review deadlines.
- **Sign area.** Area is calculated from each tenant's own frontage. In the existing chapter a building total is divided equally among tenant spaces. For a 50-foot building with four tenants, the existing chapter allows 15.625 square feet per tenant. The draft allows 25 square feet for each ground-floor tenant with 25 feet of frontage and 10 square feet for each upper-floor tenant.
- **Separate allowances.** Projecting, entrance, directory, freestanding, circulation, window, portable, and temporary signs have their own allowances and do not reduce the primary allowance. In the existing chapter the area of all signs governed by the chapter counts toward one maximum.
- **Window signs.** Window signs are limited to 25 percent of the glazing on each exterior elevation, with no per-sign size limit or display period. The existing chapter limits permanent window signs to one square foot, temporary interior window signs to two square feet and 30 days, and counts window signs among the two permitted signs per ground-floor use.
- **Illumination.** Staff may approve internally illuminated panels with opaque backgrounds, halo lighting, individual illuminated letters, and static neon for nonresidential signs without a district-based restriction, including in the Central Core. The existing chapter requires Board approval for internal illumination and generally does not allow it in the Central Core, in residential districts, or near residential uses.

- **Exceptions and sign programs.** Exceptions are limited to departures supported by a physical condition, and four findings are required. The existing chapter allows exceptions on showings that include exceptional design or consistency with the business. Sign programs are optional. The existing chapter requires a Board-approved program for every multi-tenant building or center.
- **Enforcement.** The chapter contains no sign-specific notice, hearing, removal, disposal, cost-recovery, or penalty procedure. It refers to Chapter 17.470 for enforcement and penalties.
- **Subject-based exemptions.** Exemptions defined by subject, such as political, garage sale, holiday, and organization event signs, are replaced by allowances defined by physical characteristics. The City does not approve or deny a sign based on its message or viewpoint.

B. Changes in form

The existing chapter has 12 sections arranged by process: purpose, permits, exemptions, prohibitions, general standards, permitted signs by district, miscellaneous categories, nonconforming signs, abandoned signs, construction, violations, and appeals and enforcement. Rules for one type of sign appear in several sections. For example, portable signs are addressed in Sections .020(A)(3)(d), .040(A)(5), and .060(C)(5).

The draft has 11 sections arranged by task: scope, definitions, approvals, measurement, permanent signs, portable, window, and temporary signs, illumination and electronic displays, murals, sculpture, and historic signs, programs and exceptions, existing signs and maintenance, and decisions, appeals, and enforcement. The structural differences are listed below.

- A "Find the rule you need" table at the start of the chapter links each question to its section.
- A definitions section (Section .020). The existing chapter has no definitions section, and sign definitions appear in Section 17.08.120.
- An approvals table (Table 17.120-1) that replaces the existing list of exempt signs by subject (Section .030) and the list of categories the Director may review (Section .020(A)(3)).
- Permanent-sign allowances stated in three tables (Tables 17.120-2 through 17.120-4). These replace the district-by-district subsections of existing Section .060 and the frontage-by-frontage table (existing Table 17.120-1).
- Measurement and placement rules in one section (Section .040). The existing chapter places them in Sections .050 and .100.
- Sign-specific enforcement text (existing Sections .110 and .120) replaced by references to the City's general enforcement provisions (Section .110(B) and (C)).

C. Changes in function, by subject

The table compares the existing chapter and Draft 2. Citations in the second column are to the existing chapter. Citations in the third column are to Draft 2.

Subject	Existing chapter	Draft 2
Approving body	The Board reviews sign permit applications. The Director reviews only: replacement signs conforming to an approved sign program; nonilluminated signs of 25 square feet or less; projecting signs of six square feet or less; portable signs; and copy changes on an approved sign (.020(A)(3)).	The Director approves any complete application that meets the chapter. The Board acts only on exceptions and on retention of historic signs not previously identified. A compliant application is not referred to the Board because of its size, style, material, or illumination (.030(D), .080(C), .090(B)).
Review standard	Applications are reviewed for compliance with the chapter and the sign portion of the design guidelines (.020(A)(2)). The stated intent includes	Review is limited to mandatory standards. Design guidelines are recommendations, and failure to follow one is not grounds for denial. Conditions may

	well-designed, creative signs harmonious with the neighborhood (.010(B)).	be imposed only to meet an identified requirement (.010(E)(4), .030(D)).
Process and timing	No deadlines for completeness review, decisions, or permit term are stated for sign permits.	Completeness determination within 10 business days. Staff decision within 15 business days after completeness. Board decision within 60 calendar days after completeness. Written reasons, appeal under Chapter 17.455 (including appeal of an overdue decision), and a 12-month installation period with one 12-month extension (.110(A)).
Sign area and number	Maximum area is set by building frontage (Table 17.120-1) and divided equally among the building's tenant spaces, including upper-story spaces. A building on more than one right-of-way may use the length of two frontages. The area of all signs governed by the chapter counts toward the maximum. A ground-floor use may have two window, awning, wall, or fascia signs (.050(A), .060(C)(2)).	Each ground-floor tenant uses its own frontage and may have two primary signs on each of up to two frontages, subject to Table 17.120-2 and a 175-square-foot total per tenant. An upper-floor tenant has a separate 10-square-foot allowance. Other sign types have separate allowances that do not reduce the primary allowance (.040(A)(6), .040(B), .050(B)).
Projecting, entrance, and circulation signs	A projecting sign is one of a ground-floor use's two permitted signs, with a maximum of six square feet and 18 inches in height, a three-foot projection, and 7.5-foot clearance (.060(C)(2)). Plaques under two square feet are exempt (.030(L)). Directional signs of two square feet and five feet in height that do not advertise are exempt (.030(D)).	Projecting sign: separate allowance of six square feet of counted area, one per public entrance and no more than two per tenant, with no 18-inch height limit. Entrance signs: two square feet each and six square feet per entrance. On-site circulation signs: four square feet and four feet high, one per decision point (.050(C)).
Freestanding and area signs	Commercial: one freestanding sign per building, eight feet high, with no area limit stated (.060(C)(1)). Area identification signs: two per entry, 32 square feet, eight feet high (.060(C)(6)). Shopping centers: one center sign eight feet high (.060(H)). OLI district: one center sign of 32 square feet and a 16-square-foot directory (.060(D)). Monument signs in a sign program: 50 square feet for five or fewer tenants and 100 for six or more, in addition to Table 17.120-1 (.060(B)).	One freestanding site sign per public street frontage, no more than two per site, eight feet high. The limit is 32 square feet for a single-tenant site, and for a multi-tenant site 10 square feet per tenant with a minimum of 32 and a maximum of 100. This allowance replaces the shopping-center, area-identification, and monument allowances. A shared directory of 16 square feet is allowed at a shared entrance (.050(C)).
Two-sided signs	Both faces of a double-faced sign count toward sign area (.050(A)(5)).	The larger face of a sign with two parallel back-to-back faces counts once. A sign with three or more faces counts every face (.040(A)(3)). A 100-square-foot limit therefore permits 100 square feet on each of two back-to-back faces.
Window signs	Permanent window signs incidental to business, such as hours, are nonilluminated and one square foot (.030(T)). Temporary interior window signs are nonilluminated, two square feet, and 30 days (.030(S)). Temporary window signs for events and sales are limited to 30 days (.060(C)(4)). Neon "open" signs are up to two square feet (.030(U)). Window signs are among the two permitted signs per ground-floor use (.060(C)(2)).	Window signs may cover up to 25 percent of the glazing on each exterior elevation of a nonresidential tenant space. There is no per-sign size limit and no display period, and window signs do not reduce the primary allowance. A window sign includes an outward-facing sign within two feet of the glass. One fixed illuminated window sign of two square feet is allowed per public entrance regardless of message (.020, .060(C)).
Illumination	External illumination is preferred. Internally	Permanent nonresidential signs may use shielded

	illuminated signs require Board approval and are generally not allowed in the CD Central Core, in residential districts, or near a residential use. Panels may not be backlit unless the background is opaque. Identification signs in residential districts or within 25 feet of a residential use may not be illuminated. Neon signs are allowed in commercial districts with Board approval (.050(C), .070(D)).	external lighting, individual illuminated letters, halo lighting, static neon, and internally illuminated panels with opaque backgrounds, with staff approval and without a district-based restriction. A nonresidential sign is not prohibited solely because a dwelling is nearby or above it. Illuminated nonresidential signs must be off by one hour after closing and may be on one hour before opening. Residential signs remain nonilluminated except address signs and externally lit entrance signs (.070(A), (C)).
Electronic and animated signs	Flashing, rotating, animated, blinking, and moving signs are prohibited, but the Board may determine that such a sign is necessary to portray an appropriate and distinct image in a unique situation. The same determination is available for signs emitting sound, odor, or visible matter (.040(A)(1), (7)). The chapter does not define electronic displays.	New outdoor electronic displays are prohibited, as are interior electronic displays visible from outside with any part of the face within two feet of the glass. Interior displays beyond two feet are outside the chapter. Flashing, scrolling, animated, rotating, and mechanically moving signs are prohibited. No exception may authorize a new electronic display or one of these signs. Lawful existing displays continue under their approved conditions (.070(A)(5), .070(B), .090(B)(4), .100(A)).
Prohibited signs and content	Prohibits signs with obscene, pornographic, or immoral content and signs with untruthful or misleading advertising (.040(A)(6)). Prohibits signs affixed to vehicles for the sole purpose of attracting people to a business (.040(A)(3)), off-premises signs other than real estate and community directional signs (.040(A)(11)), and signs emitting sound, odor, or visible matter (.040(A)(7)).	The City does not approve or deny a sign based on its message or viewpoint, and the chapter does not authorize speech prohibited by law (.010(D)(2)). Signs on vehicles regularly used for transportation or delivery are outside the chapter, and a vehicle stationed as a fixed display is regulated. New off-premises commercial advertising signs are prohibited. The draft also prohibits a sign from emitting sound, odor, or visible matter such as smoke or steam (.040(D)(8), .010(C)(6), .010(D)).
Subject-based exemptions	Exempt by subject: holiday decorations (45 consecutive days and 60 days per year); memorial signs; institutional bulletin boards; political signs, with no stated limits; garage sale signs (four square feet, one day before and after); event signs of civic, philanthropic, educational, or religious organizations (30 days before and seven days after); and off-site real estate and open house signs (48 hours) (.030(F), (H), (I), (J), (O), (P), (Q)).	Replaced by allowances defined by physical characteristics. Small removable signs on private property are six square feet per face and four feet high, with two commercial signs per site and no numerical or calendar limit for noncommercial signs (.060(D)). Holiday decorations that contain no sign are outside the chapter (.010(C)(8)). The draft has no separate provision for memorial signs or institutional bulletin boards.
Event and real estate signs	On-site real estate signs must be wood and hanging, six square feet, six feet high including the post, or 40 square feet for commercial and industrial signs on lots of 20,000 square feet or more (.030(K)). Off-site directional “red arrow” real estate signs are allowed for up to 90 days (.070(E)(3)). Event and garage sale signs are listed above.	Off-site event signs: up to four per event, four square feet and three feet high each, events up to seven days, three events per year per business or organizer, displayed from 14 days before to two days after (.060(H)). Real estate signs: six square feet and six feet high, or 40 square feet and eight feet high on commercial or industrial sites of 20,000 square feet or more, with no wood or hanging requirement. Civil Code Section 713 applies to other dimensions (.060(F)). Off-site open house signs are events under .060(H), counted per property and displayed only on the day of the open house. The draft has no separate 90-day red arrow provision.

Banners	Banners are prohibited except for up to 30 days per calendar year at the opening of a new business or for special events, with prior written approval of the Director. A new business may receive a 30-day extension if an application for permanent signs is on file. Banners may be installed on the building only. No size limit is stated (.040(A)(4), .070(E)(1)).	Each nonresidential tenant may display one banner of up to 32 square feet for up to 30 days per calendar year, in one or several periods, after submitting a registration form. No approval or fee is required, and no extension applies to new businesses. One noncommercial banner per dwelling or tenant is allowed without registration or a calendar limit (.060(E)).
Portable signs	Portable signs are prohibited except for real estate and on commercial, office, and industrial property under the criteria in .020(A)(3)(d): one double-faced sign per parcel, six square feet per face, three feet high, with at least 4.5 feet of sidewalk width remaining. Placement in the right-of-way requires an encroachment permit. The Director reviews these signs (.040(A)(5), .020(A)(3)(d)).	One portable sign per building for all tenants and entrances, with the same face size and height. The draft adds a three-by-two-foot footprint, 10-foot spacing between portable signs along a common route, wood frames and wood or chalkboard faces, written designation of a responsible operator, and removal from the right-of-way when all businesses served are closed. No sign permit is required, and right-of-way authorization is separate. The count, materials, access, and spacing requirements are not eligible for an exception (.060(B), .090(B)(1)).
Existing nonconforming signs	A lawfully erected nonconforming sign may remain until a change in name, use, or sign face occurs, when all signing must conform. Multiple-tenant signs are excepted (.080).	A lawfully erected nonconforming sign may remain until a change in business name, use, or sign face occurs, when all signing for that business or use must conform. Multiple-tenant signs are excepted. Customary repair, a change of copy that does not change the business name or use, substitution of a noncommercial message, and a message change on a lawful electronic display are not changes in sign face. A qualifying on-premises display that is more than 50 percent destroyed, other than by facial copy replacement, and cannot be repaired within 30 days must also conform on replacement. Removal or limitation of a qualifying on-premises display is subject to Business and Professions Code Section 5490 and following (.100(A)).
Sign programs	A Board-approved program is required for office and light industrial centers, multi-tenant commercial or industrial buildings, and shopping centers, before any individual sign is approved. Tenant signs are limited to the business name and not more than three additional words (.060(B)).	Programs are optional. The Director approves a program that meets the chapter. A program may redistribute primary area among tenants on the same frontage with written consent. Existing programs remain in effect until amended. A tenant may use the standard allowances when no program exists (.090(A)).
Exceptions	The Board may grant an exception for unusual site conditions and for signs that enhance the character of an area. The listed showings are a unique sign of exceptional design or a visible landmark, a sign more consistent with the site architecture or appropriate to the business, and that the exception does not constitute a special privilege (.020(B)).	The Board may approve a departure from the area, number, height, projection, or location of permanent signs, from the placement or size of a mural's counted components or a sculptural sign, or from the size or height of a noncommercial sign. All four findings in .090(B)(3) are required, including a physical condition that prevents a workable sign within the standard allowance. Temporary-sign duration, portable-sign requirements, and electronic-display prohibitions are not eligible. The Board may not authorize a sign prohibited by the sections listed in .090(B)(4).

Murals, sculpture, and merchandise	A mural or graphic is regulated as a sign if any part depicts specific words, symbols, merchandise, or services, and otherwise it does not count toward sign area (.070(C)). The chapter has no provision for sculptural signs. Exterior merchandise display is not allowed except in a storefront display enclosure, and a display or decoration depicting merchandise may be treated as a sign in the sole opinion of the Director (.070(F)).	A mural is not a sign and has no area limit. Words, numerals, business names, logos, and trademarks within a mural count against the primary allowance of the tenant space served. Depictions of products, occupations, or services, and an artist's signature and date, do not count. A mural may be lit only by external fixtures. Sculptural signs are measured by their largest silhouette and are allowed within the physical limits for the sign type. Merchandise displayed for sale is outside the chapter (.080(A), (B), .010(C)(7)).
Residential and other districts	Separate subsections by district for residential, commercial and office, OLI, M, CF and OS, PC, shopping center, and service station signs (.060(A) through (I)).	One set of nonresidential allowances applies to all nonresidential uses, and Table 17.120-4 states the residential and special settings. The values for home-based business signs (five square feet), bed and breakfast signs (eight square feet), multifamily building signs (eight square feet), residential development entrance signs (16 square feet combined), and service stations (100 square feet combined) match the existing values. The CF and OS wall sign allowance is 30 square feet per tenant or use (.050(D)).
Abandoned signs	A sign that no longer identifies a legal business, product, or activity on the premises and has remained abandoned for 12 months or more is prohibited and must be removed at the owner's expense. A sign for a business suspended because of a change of ownership is not abandoned unless the property is vacant for 12 months (.090).	A commercial display may be treated as abandoned after 12 consecutive months without the business on the site. Noncommercial messages, approved historic signs, and current real estate signs are not abandoned. The Director must give notice and consider evidence of repairs or reopening. Removing or covering obsolete copy satisfies the requirement where the support is safe and reusable (.100(C)).
Enforcement and penalties	Violations include installing a sign contrary to an approved plan, without a required permit, or failing to remove a sign on request. Each day of a continuing violation is a separate violation (.110). The chapter provides a notice requiring correction within 10 days, a hearing on request, certified-mail service, removal without notice for signs in the public right-of-way or presenting imminent danger, disposal of removed signs, recovery of removal costs, and penalties of infraction and, for repeat violations, misdemeanor (.120).	The chapter contains no separate notice, hearing, removal, disposal, or cost-recovery procedure. Violations are enforced under Chapter 17.470, which provides for abatement, and penalties are those in Section 17.470.050: an infraction, with a misdemeanor for a fourth or later conviction within one year. Each sign is a separate violation regardless of the number of letters, panels, or faces, and each day a violation continues is a separate offense under Section 17.470.050 (.110(B), (C)).

3. Policy decisions presented for review

1. Approval authority. The draft moves approval of compliant signs from the Board to the Director and limits the Board to exceptions and historic-sign retention. Section .110(A)(6) provides that mandatory standards govern an appeal and that an appeal does not create discretion to deny a compliant sign on aesthetic grounds. Design guidelines become recommendations under Section .010(E)(4).

2. Total sign quantity. Separate projecting, window, and freestanding allowances increase the signage available to a site, and the primary-area formula does not state the total signage a site may display. Counting one face of a two-sided sign

also increases the physical sign surface permitted under some limits. For example, a 100-square-foot limit permits 100 square feet on each of two back-to-back faces. Representative facades and corner sites, where two frontages may be used, have not yet been tested against the combined allowances.

3. Illumination. The draft removes the existing Central Core restriction on internally illuminated signs and the restrictions that apply near residential uses. It adds an operating-hours rule (one hour before opening to one hour after closing) and Director authority to require shielding, dimming, or adjusted hours.

4. Existing signs. The draft keeps the existing rule that a lawful nonconforming sign must conform when its business name, use, or sign face changes, and keeps the exception for multiple-tenant signs. It states that customary repair, a change of copy that does not change the business name or use, substitution of a noncommercial message, and a message change on a lawful electronic display are not changes in sign face. It adds a second trigger: a qualifying on-premises display must conform on replacement if it is more than 50 percent destroyed, other than by facial copy replacement, and cannot be repaired within 30 days. Section .100(A)(6) incorporates the protections of Business and Professions Code Section 5490 and following, and the existing trigger is subject to them.

5. Portable signs. One sign is allowed per building, including where tenants have separate entrances. Tenants within the building may share the sign, and separate buildings may not. The owner designates the responsible operator. Frames must be wood and faces must be wood or chalkboard, with no plastic or vinyl components. The draft adds a three-by-two-foot footprint and 10-foot spacing to the existing 4.5-foot clear-route minimum. Where spacing cannot be maintained, placement is limited to private property outside the pedestrian route. Right-of-way authorization cannot increase or transfer the building allowance, and a shared sign must be removed from the right-of-way when all businesses it serves are closed. The count, material, access, and spacing requirements are not eligible for an exception.

6. Window coverage. The draft limits window signs to 25 percent of the glazing on each exterior elevation and sets no per-sign size limit for ordinary nonilluminated window signs. The existing chapter has no percentage limit. The percentage has not yet been tested on a narrow storefront, a restaurant menu window, or a mostly glazed storefront.

7. New electronic marquees. The draft preserves lawful existing electronic displays and provides no exception for a new electronic theater marquee. The existing chapter exempts theater marquees from its backlighting limit (Section .050(C)(3)) and allows the Board to approve animated or moving signs in unique situations (Section .040(A)(1)). Allowing new electronic marquees would require a narrowly defined allowance in Section .070. Static neon and manual readerboards remain available under the applicable allowances.

8. Murals and sculpture. Mural images have no area limit, and external lighting is allowed under Section .070(A). Words, numerals, names, logos, and trademarks count toward the primary allowance of the tenant space the mural serves, including poems and other noncommercial text. An artist's signature and date do not count. Relief for counted components is available only on the physical findings in Section .090(B), and artistic merit alone does not qualify. Sculptural product images are measured as signs. The draft replaces the existing test of whether a mural depicts specific words, symbols, merchandise, or services. It retains commercial and noncommercial distinctions elsewhere, including for flags and banners.

9. Sign programs. New programs are optional unless needed to redistribute area. Existing programs remain in place until amended. A tenant covered by an older program may need the owner's cooperation to amend it, because the draft does not override private leases or cancel existing approvals.

10. Enforcement. Section .110(B) relies on Chapter 17.470 and creates no separate notice, hearing, storage, or cost-recovery process. Each sign is a separate violation, and Section .110(C) refers to the penalties in Section 17.470.050. Chapter 1.04 (General Penalty) applies only where no other penalty is prescribed and is not cited. Chapter 17.470 contains no notice or correction procedure, which Sections .070(C) and .100(C)(2) assume. Permit decisions and appeals are in Section .110(A).

4. Proposed numbers to review

The table records the principal proposed values and their origins in the existing chapter. “New” means the existing chapter has no corresponding value. Dimensions drawn from the existing chapter are not always applied to the same categories.

Subject	Draft value	Origin / change
Primary frontage area	25 square feet, then 1.5 per foot above 25; 175 square feet total per tenant	Existing: 25 square feet up to 25 feet, 1.5 per foot to 75 feet, then steps of 125, 150, and 175 at 76, 101, and 126 feet. The draft applies one formula per tenant with no steps.
Primary sign count	Up to two per eligible frontage, at most two frontages	Existing: two window, awning, wall, or fascia signs per ground-floor use.
Upper-floor or interior primary area	10 square feet per tenant	New separate allowance. Existing: upper-floor tenants share the building total by equal division.
Entrance signs	Two square feet each; six square feet combined per entrance	Existing: plaques under two square feet are exempt. The draft adds an aggregate limit per entrance.
Projecting sign	Six square feet, counted once for a flat two-sided sign; for three or more faces, combined area within six; three-foot projection; 7.5-foot clearance	Existing: six square feet, three-foot projection, 7.5-foot clearance, 18 inches high, counted among the two permitted signs. The draft removes the height limit and the count against the primary allowance, and adds face counting.
Shared directory	16 square feet; five-foot freestanding height	Existing: OLI directory with the same values. The draft extends it to other nonresidential uses.
Single-tenant freestanding site sign	32 square feet; eight-foot height	Existing: commercial, eight feet with no area limit stated; OLI, 32 square feet.
Multi-tenant freestanding site sign	10 square feet per tenant; minimum 32, maximum 100; one per street frontage, maximum two per site	Existing: monument signs of 50 or 100 square feet by tenant count, center signs of 32 square feet (OLI) or eight feet high with no area stated (shopping center).
On-site circulation sign	Four square feet; four-foot freestanding height; one per driveway entrance, parking-aisle junction, or loading entrance	Existing: directional signs of two square feet and five feet high that do not advertise are exempt. The draft defines the sign by location, with no message test, and outside the primary and freestanding allowances.
Home-based business sign	One nonilluminated wall or window sign; five square feet; no portable commercial sign	Existing: one nonilluminated home occupation sign of up to five square feet.
Portable sign	One per building; six square feet per face; three-foot height; three-by-two-foot footprint; 10-foot spacing; 4.5-foot clear route	Existing: one per parcel, six square feet per face, three-foot height, 4.5-foot sidewalk width. The footprint, spacing, and wood construction are new.
Window coverage	25 percent per nonresidential elevation; outward-facing interior signs within two feet count	New. The existing chapter has per-sign and duration limits and no percentage limit.

Fixed illuminated window sign	Two square feet; one per public entrance	Existing: neon “open” signs of up to two square feet are exempt. The draft has no message restriction.
Small removable sign	Six square feet per face; four-foot height; two commercial signs per site; no numeric limit for noncommercial signs	New category. Existing: garage sale signs of four square feet, and political signs with no stated limit.
Ordinary flags	Two per dwelling or tenant; 15 square feet each	New. The existing chapter has no flag provision. The draft defines ordinary flags as rectangular fabric flags hanging freely and excludes flags with business information and feather flags.
Banner	32 square feet; one per tenant; 30 days per calendar year	Existing: 30 days per year for a new business or special event, a 30-day extension for a new business, and no area limit stated. The draft adds the area limit and a noncommercial exemption.
Real estate dimensional safe harbor	Six square feet and six feet high; on commercial or industrial sites of 20,000 square feet or more, 40 square feet and eight feet high	Existing: six square feet and six feet high including the post, or 40 square feet for commercial and industrial signs on lots of 20,000 square feet or more, as a hanging wood sign. The draft removes the form requirements and changes the height of the larger sign.
Construction signs	Two signs; 50 square feet combined; eight-foot height	Existing: 50 square feet aggregate and eight feet high, for the duration of construction. The draft adds the count and a 30-day removal period.
Off-site event signs	Four signs per event; four square feet and three feet high each; events up to seven days; three events per business or organizer per calendar year	Replaces the existing exemptions for organization event signs (30 days before and seven days after) and garage sale signs. Display begins 14 days before, or two days before an event of two days or less, and ends within two days after.
Lighting hours	One hour before opening to one hour after closing	New. Applies to new approvals, with protection for lawful existing signs.
Application completeness and decision	10 business days; 15 business days after completeness	New. Proposed service obligations, not existing statutory deadlines.
Board decision	60 calendar days after completeness	New. To be reconciled with required notice and environmental review.
Installation deadline	12 months, with one 12-month extension	New permit term.
Abandonment	12 months	Existing period retained. Removal of obsolete copy is separated from removal of a reusable support.
Conformity triggers for nonconforming signs	Change in business name, use, or sign face; or more than 50 percent destroyed, other than facial copy replacement, and not repairable within 30 days	Existing: conformity on a change in name, use, or sign face. The draft keeps that trigger and adds the destruction trigger.

Frontage comparison

The comparison concerns the primary-area formula only, before the draft's separate additional allowances. The existing table applied to the building before division among tenants, with different rules for shopping centers and OLI uses.

Frontage	Existing table	Draft primary formula
20 feet	25 sq. ft.	25 sq. ft.
30 feet	32.5 sq. ft.	32.5 sq. ft.
50 feet	62.5 sq. ft.	62.5 sq. ft.
75 feet	100 sq. ft.	100 sq. ft.
76 feet	125 sq. ft.	101.5 sq. ft.
100 feet	125 sq. ft.	137.5 sq. ft.
101 feet	150 sq. ft.	139 sq. ft.
125 feet	150 sq. ft.	175 sq. ft.
126 feet	175 sq. ft.	175 sq. ft.

The draft formula has no step increases. At the sampled frontages it produces lower values than the existing table at 76 and 101 feet and higher values at 100 and 125 feet. Existing lawful signs remain protected by Section .100.

5. Worked examples

These examples apply the draft to sample situations. They are not additional code requirements.

A. A café in a 20-foot storefront

The café has 25 square feet of primary sign area. It may also have a flat projecting sign with two six-square-foot faces counted as six square feet, compliant window signs, and use of the building's single portable sign if the owner designates it and the placement rules allow it. The portable sign needs no sign permit, but sidewalk placement requires right-of-way authorization. Staff may approve fixed illumination that meets Section .070.

B. Two ground-floor shops and two offices upstairs in a 50-foot building

If each shop has 25 feet of frontage, each receives 25 square feet of primary area, and each upstairs office receives a separate 10-square-foot allowance. A shared entrance may have a directory. Under the existing chapter, the building's 62.5-square-foot total is divided equally among the four tenant spaces, which allows 15.625 square feet each.

C. Several tenants occupy one building

The building receives one portable sign, even if every tenant has a separate entrance. The owner designates its responsible operator, and tenants may share the sign. Additional doors, street frontages, or private-property placements do not increase the count. A shared public entrance may also have a directory under its separate allowance.

D. A shop replaces its name on an existing sign

If the sign is lawful and conforming, and the change stays within its approved display area and operating conditions, no new sign permit is required. If the sign is lawful but nonconforming, a change in the business name is a change under Section .100(A)(2), and all signing for the business must conform, as under the existing chapter (Section .080). Structural work or a change in lighting may require separate approval.

E. A new business is awaiting its permanent sign

The business registers one compliant banner of up to 32 square feet. It may display the banner for up to 30 calendar days in the calendar year, divided among several periods, and a pending permanent-sign application does not extend that period. Noncommercial banners keep their exemption from registration and calendar limits. Under the existing chapter, a new business may receive 30 days of banner display and a further 30 days while a permanent sign application is on file.

F. A mural includes an apple orchard and a shop name

The orchard does not use sign area merely because the shop sells apples. The business name and any other lettering, including a poem, count toward the primary allowance and are measured as distinct groups. The artist's signature and date do not count. The mural has no area limit and may use compliant external lighting. Historic-resource requirements continue to apply.

G. A large sculptural coffee cup projects over the sidewalk

The cup's largest outline is measured as a sign. Decorative mounting hardware does not use sign area but counts toward projection and clearance. If the installation exceeds an eligible sign dimension, the owner may seek a physical exception. Describing the cup as art does not waive pedestrian clearance.

H. A screen is moved from 23 to 25 inches behind glass

A visible interior screen with any part of its face 23 inches from the exterior glazing is subject to the prohibition in Section .070(B) unless a stated exception applies. If its entire face is beyond 24 inches, it is outside this chapter regardless of size or orientation. The distance is the shortest horizontal distance, and for a projected image the receiving surface is measured. For a non-electronic outward-facing sign, the same two-foot boundary determines whether it counts as a window sign.

I. A street-facing illuminated sign has an apartment above it

Proximity alone does not prohibit a new sign. Shielding, glare, and operating-hours requirements apply. A correction order must identify the requirement violated and the observed condition, and a complaint alone does not establish a violation.

J. A real estate sign does not fit the dimensional safe harbor

The applicant receives a written staff determination applying Civil Code Section 713, within the timelines in Section .110(A) and without an exception application or sign-permit fee. The ordinary dimensions provide one compliant route and do not state that other dimensions are prohibited.

K. A weekend event needs directional signs

The organizer may place up to four off-site directional signs of up to four square feet each, subject to the placement and height limits. Display may begin two days before the event and must end within two days after it. Private-property consent or right-of-way authorization is required. Signs at the event itself use the ordinary allowances, such as removable signs, a portable sign, or a banner, each under its own rules. Describing them as event signs does not

increase the portable count or extend a banner's annual display allowance. The same business or organizer may use the off-site allowance for no more than three events in a calendar year, and no event may last more than seven days.

L. A nonconforming sign is damaged in a storm

If the display is more than 50 percent destroyed, the destruction is other than facial copy replacement, and the display cannot be repaired within 30 days, the replacement must conform to the chapter. If any of those conditions is not met, customary repair remains allowed. Separately, a change in the business name, use, or sign face of a nonconforming sign requires all signing for the business to conform under Section .100(A)(2), as in the existing chapter (Section .080).

6. Where the existing chapter went

The table maps each section of the existing chapter to its location in Draft 2. Section numbers in the second column refer to Draft 2 unless stated otherwise.

Existing section	Draft location and treatment
.010 Purpose, intent, and applicability	New .010. The design-guideline consistency requirement is replaced by .010(E)(4).
.020 Permits, fees, and exceptions	New .030 (permits), .090(B) (exceptions), and .110(A) (decisions and appeals).
.030 Exempted signs	New .010(C) (items outside the chapter), .030(B) (changes without a sign permit), and specific allowances in .050 through .060.
.040 Prohibited signs	Placement in .040(D); devices in .060(A); lighting and electronic displays in .070; off-premises commercial signs in .010(D)(3). The content-based prohibition is not carried forward (.010(D)(2)).
.050 General standards	Measurement and placement in .040; area formula in .050(B); illumination in .070.
.060 Permitted signs	New .050 tables; sign programs in .090(A).
.070 Miscellaneous categories	Construction and real estate signs in .060(F) and (G); temporary signs in .060; neon in .070(A); murals, sculpture, and historic signs in .080; merchandise in .010(C)(7).
.080 Nonconforming signs	New .100(A).
.090 Abandoned signs	New .100(C).
.100 Construction and maintenance	New .040(D) and .100(B).
.110 Violations	New .110(B) and (C).
.120 Appeals and enforcement	New .110, with reference to Chapter 17.455 for permit appeals. Sign-specific notice, hearing, removal, disposal, and cost-recovery text is not carried forward.

Exemptions defined by subject in the existing chapter (holiday decorations, political signs, garage sale signs, event signs of civic and religious organizations, memorial signs, institutional bulletin boards, and "open" signs) are replaced by allowances defined by physical characteristics. Holiday decorations that contain no sign are outside the chapter under Section .010(C)(8). The draft has no separate provision for memorial signs or institutional bulletin boards, and those signs use the allowances for their type and location. Existing lawful signs remain protected during the transition under Section .100.

7. Required coordination before adoption

This section is an adoption checklist. The explanations are not proposed chapter text.

A. Current code baseline

The copy of the existing chapter supplied for the comparison in Section 2 states that it is current through Ordinance 1149, October 3, 2023. An earlier supplied copy was identified as current through Ordinance 1159, November 4, 2025, and the official online code identifies Ordinance 1166, July 21, 2026 as its codification cutoff. The online sign chapter has the same section list. A complete comparison of intervening ordinances has not been completed. Staff to confirm the operative text with the City Clerk.

B. Existing sign definitions

Chapter 17.08 contains sign definitions, including changeable-copy, banner, temporary, and off-premises signs. The existing Chapter 17.120 has no definitions section. The draft adds Section .020 and provides in Section .010(E)(3) that its definitions control over conflicting definitions elsewhere in Title 17. Conforming action: replace the sign-specific definitions in Section 17.08.120 with a reference to Chapter 17.120 after checking their use elsewhere, and retain general definitions used by other chapters.

C. Approval and appeal tables

Tables 17.400-1 and 17.400-2 and any relevant design-review provisions require updates to reflect the following:

- Staff approval of compliant sign permits and sign programs.
- Board decisions on exceptions and historic-sign retention determinations.
- No discretionary sign approval for exempt work or banner registration.
- Permit appeals through Chapter 17.455.
- Enforcement under Chapter 17.470 through Section .110(B), with penalties under Section 17.470.050.

The draft relies on Chapter 17.455 for permit appeals. Its existence and section titles were verified, but its full operative provisions and Tables 17.400-1 and 17.400-2 were not retrieved. The draft relies on Chapter 17.460 for Board hearing procedures (Section .110(A)(3)), and that chapter was not separately verified. Staff to confirm appeal bodies, filing deadlines, fees, and hearing scheduling. The City permit form is to state the actual deadline and filing location.

D. Other substantive chapters

Compatibility review is required for home-based business rules (Chapter 17.260), outdoor uses (Chapter 17.300), public art (Chapter 17.310), cultural heritage (Chapter 17.150), PC plans, and any site-specific conditions. The draft does not carry forward the existing chapter's prohibition on exterior merchandise display (Section .070(F)). Deleting it does not itself authorize outdoor retail displays.

Right-of-way treatment is to be confirmed with Public Works and Caltrans, including on Highways 12 and 116. Portable-sign clearances, overhead clearances, and accessibility standards are to be confirmed with the responsible officials. The chapter does not state that an encroachment permit will be granted.

E. Limited legal review

The following issues are identified for City Attorney review:

1. The remaining content-based provisions: the on-premises requirement in Section .010(D)(3), the commercial and noncommercial distinctions in Section .060, the mural sign-component rule, and the ordinary-flag definition. Also the electronic-display prohibition within the defined two-foot window zone.

2. The real estate dimensional safe harbor and staff-determination procedure under Civil Code Section 713.

3. Protection of existing on-premises signs, including repair, replacement, abandonment, and the conformity requirement on a change of business name, use, or sign face, under Business and Professions Code Sections 5490 through 5499. The draft does not assume an automatic removal right. The 50-percent damage rule in Section .100(A)(7) is to be checked against the current text of Section 5497.

4. The references to the City's general enforcement, right-of-way, and emergency abatement authorities. Chapter 17.470 (enforcement and penalties) was checked against the City's code as current through Ordinance 1169. It provides an infraction fine of up to $500, a separate offense for each day, a misdemeanor for a fourth or later conviction within one year, and abatement by court action ordered by the Council. It contains no notice or correction procedure. Chapter 1.04 (General Penalty) applies only where no other penalty is prescribed. The draft creates no separate enforcement process and does not limit remedies available elsewhere.

5. Required adoption findings and environmental review. Administrative approval under the new chapter does not exempt a sign from independently applicable statutory review.

6. Whether sign permit decisions are to be designated for the expedited review procedure in Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.8, to which Section .110(A)(6) refers, and the resulting deadline for filing a petition.

F. Transition and adopting ordinance

The adopting ordinance is to contain separate provisions for repeal and replacement, conforming amendments, environmental findings, severability, effective date, publication, and transition. These enactment provisions are not part of the applicant-facing chapter text. The following transition provisions are proposed:

- Existing lawful signs, permits, and programs remain effective under Section .100.
- New applications use the replacement chapter after its effective date.
- Applicants with pending complete applications may request review under the replacement chapter. Staff is to specify how continued review under prior standards is handled, subject to vested rights and controlling law.
- Existing temporary and portable signs receive a compliance period. A 90-day period is proposed, without extending an expired approval or authorizing an immediate hazard.
- Application forms, banner registration, and public guidance are updated before the effective date.

G. Administrative materials

A short sign guide built from the adopted tables, with photographs showing frontage, two-sided area, window coverage, and a clear pedestrian route, is proposed. The guide is to state where to obtain district information and right-of-way permission and is not to introduce new standards.

8. Source notes

The main drafting sources are three supplied documents: Chapter 17.120 SMC.pdf (16 pages, Ordinance 1159 baseline), Chapter-17.120-SMC_2.pdf (16 pages, current through Ordinance 1149, used for the comparison in Section 2), and Sign_Code_Proposed_Amendments_Final.pdf (17 pages, September 2026). Earlier discussion established the policy direction. The following outside sources were used for targeted coordination and not for a broad legal review:

- Official Sebastopol Municipal Code: current codification cutoff.
- Official Chapter 17.120 and permit section: chapter structure and approval baseline.
- Official Section 17.08.120: existing sign definitions.
- Official Title 17 contents and Chapter 17.455 contents: related chapters and appeal framework. Every cross-referenced procedure was not fully verified.

- California Civil Code Section 713: real estate signs and protected information.
- Business and Professions Code Sections 5491 and 5497: existing on-premises displays and exceptions to compensation requirements. Retrieved statutory text is to be checked against the current official text before enactment.
- Supplied copies of Chapter 17.470 SMC (Enforcement/Penalties) and Chapter 1.04 SMC (General Penalty), each current through Ordinance 1169, September 1, 2026: enforcement and penalty references in Section .110.
- San Rafael Municipal Code, Chapter 14.19 (Signs), Ordinance 1825 (2004), supplied as a Word document: comparison material from another California jurisdiction.
- Mill Valley Municipal Code, Chapter 20.74 (Signs), supplied as a 10-page PDF downloaded from ecode360.com on November 18, 2026: comparison material from another California jurisdiction.
- Healdsburg Community Development Department, Planning Division, “Sign Regulations and Guidelines” (4 pages, last updated July 1, 2023), a handout excerpting Land Use Code Chapter 20.16, Article IX and the Design Review Manual: comparison material from another California jurisdiction. The San Rafael, Mill Valley, and Healdsburg copies were not checked against the current official codes.

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL · BUSINESS GUIDE

PUTTING UP A BUSINESS SIGN?

A step-by-step guide to Sebastopol's sign rules: what you can display, how large it can be, and when you need a sign permit.

Several common sign types do not require a sign permit. All signs must meet the applicable standards.

Four steps

1

Check

Does your sign need a sign permit at all?

Page 2

2

Size

Find your sign allowances and measure your sign.

Pages 3–4

3

Design

Lighting, placement, and signs that are not allowed.

Page 5

4

Apply

Staff sign permits and Board exceptions.

Page 6

Quick answers

Changing your message? A conforming sign needs no sign permit if it keeps its size, location, and lighting. A sign that does not meet current standards must conform when the business name changes.

Window signs need no sign permit. They may cover up to 25 percent of the glass on each side of your space.

One portable sign per building. All tenants in the building share it. It must be wood or chalkboard.

Get approval before installing. A new permanent sign requires a staff sign permit. A sign that exceeds the standards requires a Design Review Board exception.

STEP 1 · CHECK

DO I NEED A SIGN PERMIT?

Approval required for each type of sign and sign work. Exempt signs must still meet the standards.

SIGN OR WORK	APPROVAL	SEE
Repainting, cleaning, or repair of an existing sign, without enlarging it, moving it, or increasing its lighting	Not required	17.120.030(B)(1)
Changing the message within an existing lawful sign, including color or lettering style (for nonconforming signs, see below)	Not required	17.120.030(B)(2)
Replacing the face of a conforming sign with one of the same size and similar durability, on the same supports, with the same lighting	Not required	17.120.030(B)(3)
Window signs, including one small illuminated window sign per public entrance	Not required	p. 4 · 17.120.060(C)
Entrance plaques, small entrance signs, and **on-site circulation signs**	Not required	p. 3 · 17.120.050(C)
Portable sign (A-frame or sandwich board). Sidewalk placement needs separate right-of-way authorization	Not required	p. 4 · 17.120.060(B)
Ordinary flags and **small removable signs** on private property	Not required	p. 4 · 17.120.060(A), (D)
Off-site event signs: four per event, 4 sq ft each, three events per year	Not required	17.120.060(H)
Temporary banner	Registration	p. 4 · 17.120.060(E)
New permanent sign (wall, fascia, awning, projecting, freestanding, or directory), or a change to the size, location, supports, or lighting of one	Staff sign permit	p. 3, 6 · 17.120.050
Words, names, or logos in a mural. The rest of the mural needs no sign permit	Staff sign permit	p. 5 · 17.120.080(A)
A sign larger, taller, or more numerous than the standards allow	Board exception	p. 6 · 17.120.090(B)

Good to know

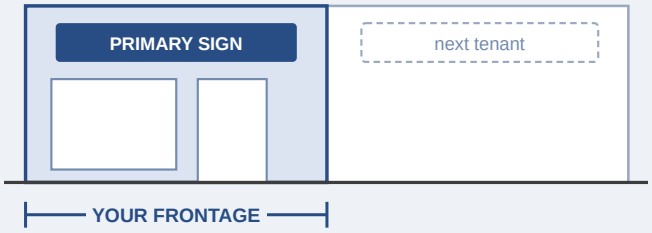
- **Existing signs.** A lawfully installed sign may remain. If it does not meet current standards, all signs for the business must conform when the business name, use, or sign face changes, or when the sign is more than 50 percent destroyed and cannot be repaired within 30 days. Repair and copy changes that keep the same name and use do not trigger conformity. Multiple-tenant signs are excepted. 17.120.100(A)
- **Other permits may still apply.** Structural or electrical work may need a building or electrical permit even when no sign permit is required. 17.120.010(E)
- **You need permission to use the location.** Have the property owner's consent, and authorization from the agency that controls any sidewalk or public right-of-way. 17.120.010(D)(4)
- **The City does not review your message.** Signs are approved or denied on physical features such as size, placement, and lighting. A compliant sign is not sent to the Board because of its style or material. 17.120.010(D)(2), 030(D)

STEP 2 · SIZE

HOW MUCH SIGN CAN I HAVE?

Primary sign area is based on tenant frontage. Projecting signs, entrance signs, directories, and freestanding signs have separate allowances.

Measure your frontage 17.120.040(B)



- Measure your exterior wall along the street, public walkway, or on-site walkway that serves your public entrance. Measure in a straight line.
- Use up to two frontages, such as a corner space. Ground-floor tenants use their own frontage; it is not divided among other tenants.

FRONTAGE WIDTH	PRIMARY SIGN AREA
25 ft or less	**25 sq ft**
50 ft	**62.5 sq ft**
100 ft	**137.5 sq ft**
125 ft or more	**175 sq ft**

The rule: 25 sq ft, plus 1.5 sq ft for each foot of frontage over 25 ft. No more than 175 sq ft per tenant across all frontages. 17.120.050(B)

Up to two primary signs per frontage (wall, fascia, or awning). No limit on the number of words.

Upstairs or interior tenant? 10 sq ft of primary signs on your exterior wall or at your public entrance.

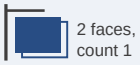
How to measure a sign 17.120.040(A)



Sign on a panel. Measure the whole panel, including its frame and background.



Separate letters. Draw the smallest rectangle around each group of letters or graphics, then add them.



Two-sided flat sign. Count the larger face once. With three or more faces, add every face.

Additional permanent signs 17.120.050(C), Table 17.120-3

SIGN TYPE	NUMBER AND AREA	PLACEMENT AND HEIGHT
Projecting sign	One per public entrance on an eligible frontage; no more than two per tenant; 6 sq ft	Projects no more than 3 ft, including supports; at least 7.5 ft above the walkway; below the roof or parapet
Small entrance signs and plaques	Each no more than 2 sq ft; no more than 6 sq ft combined per public entrance	On the wall or door within 5 ft of the entrance; a shared entrance shares this allowance
Shared directory	One per shared public entrance; 16 sq ft	Wall-mounted, or freestanding no more than 5 ft high at the entrance it serves
Freestanding site sign	One per street frontage, two per site maximum. Single tenant: 32 sq ft. Multi-tenant: 10 sq ft per tenant space, 32 to 100 sq ft	No more than 8 ft high; at least 5 ft behind the back of the sidewalk
On-site circulation sign	One per driveway entrance, aisle junction, or loading entrance; 4 sq ft; no sign permit	No more than 4 ft high if freestanding

STEP 2 · SIZE

WINDOW AND PORTABLE SIGNS

Window signs, portable signs, flags, and small removable signs do not require a sign permit. Banners require registration. None of these reduces the primary sign allowance.

Window signs 17.120.060(C)

- **25 percent of the glass** on each exterior side of your space, door glass included. Unused coverage cannot move to another side.
- **What counts:** signs on the glass, and outward-facing signs within 2 ft behind it. Merchandise and required signs do not count.
- **One illuminated window sign per public entrance**, up to 2 sq ft, using neon or another fixed light. It counts toward the 25 percent.
- **No time limit** and no limit on message changes.

Portable sign (A-frame or sandwich board) 17.120.060(B)

- **One per building**, for all tenants and entrances combined. Tenants in the building may share it. The property owner names the responsible operator in writing.
- **Size:** 6 sq ft per face, 3 ft tall, and a footprint no larger than 3 ft wide by 2 ft deep.
- **Materials:** wood frame with wood or chalkboard faces. Painted, carved, stenciled, or chalk lettering. No plastic, and no vinyl lettering, decals, or wraps.
- **Placement:** beside a public entrance or within the building's frontage. Keep a clear walking route at least 4.5 ft wide, and keep clear of doorways, curb ramps, crosswalk access, and transit stops. Keep 10 ft between portable signs; where that is not possible, the sign stays on private property.
- **On the sidewalk**, get authorization first from the agency that controls it. Bring the sign in when all businesses it serves are closed. No lights.

Banners 17.120.060(E)

- One per tenant at a time, up to 32 sq ft.
- Up to 30 days per calendar year, in one or several periods.
- Register on a City form before display. No fee.
- On the building, below the roof or parapet. No lights.

Flags 17.120.060(A)

- Up to two ordinary flags per tenant, each up to 15 sq ft.
- On a building bracket or permanent flagpole on private property.
- A flag with a business name or logo is a sign. Feather flags are not allowed.

Small removable signs 17.120.060(D)

- Up to two commercial signs per site, on private property.
- Up to 6 sq ft per face; 4 ft high if on the ground.
- No lights, and not on the sidewalk or other right-of-way.

No exceptions for these limits 17.120.090(B)(1)

The Design Review Board cannot grant an exception to banner display time, or to the portable sign count, materials, access, or spacing rules.

STEP 3 · DESIGN

LIGHTING, PLACEMENT, AND LIMITS

These standards apply to all signs, including signs that do not require a sign permit.

Lighting 17.120.070(A)

- **Allowed:** shielded external lights, illuminated individual letters, halo lighting, and static neon or similar fixed lighting.
- **Lit panels:** the background must be opaque, so light shows only through the letters and graphics.
- **Hours:** on no earlier than one hour before opening; off no later than one hour after closing.
- **No glare:** shield or aim lights so they do not shine into a dwelling window or create glare for people walking or driving.

Placement and safety 17.120.040(D), 100(B)

- Keep exits, accessible routes, entrances, fire equipment, and traffic sight lines clear.
- Keep wall and awning signs within the surface they are attached to.
- Do not attach signs to trees, utility poles, or public fixtures without the owner's authorization.
- Attach signs securely, and use materials suited to outdoor exposure. Keep signs in good repair.

Murals 17.120.080(A)

- A mural is not a sign and has no size limit.
- Words, numerals, business names, logos, and trademarks in a mural count toward your primary sign allowance. The artist's signature and date do not.
- A picture of a product or service does not count.
- If the wall serves several tenant spaces or a vacant one, the property owner identifies the allowance used before installation.
- External lighting only.

Electronic displays 17.120.070(B)

- New outdoor screens are not allowed.
- A new screen inside, with any part within 2 ft of a window and visible from outside, is not allowed.
- A screen more than 2 ft back from the glass is not regulated by the sign code.
- Screens built into an ATM, payment terminal, fuel pump, or charger are allowed.

Never allowed 17.120.010(D)(3), 040(D), 060(A), 070

- Feather flags, pennants, searchlights, and inflatable advertising
- Flashing, scrolling, animated, rotating, or moving signs
- New electronic displays, outdoors or within 2 ft of a window
- Roof signs, and signs above the roof or parapet
- New signs advertising a business that is not on the site
- Signs that imitate or hide a traffic signal or sign
- Signs that emit sound, odor, smoke, steam, or vapor

The Design Review Board cannot grant an exception for any item on this list. *17.120.090(B)(4)*

Violations. Each noncompliant sign is a separate violation, and each day it continues is a separate offense. A violation is an infraction with a fine of up to $500. A fourth conviction within one year is a misdemeanor. 17.120.110(B), (C); 17.470.050

STEP 4 · APPLY

STAFF SIGN PERMITS AND EXCEPTIONS

Staff approves a complete application that meets the standards. One application may cover all signs.

What to include 17.120.030(C)

Authority to install

Your contact information, and the property owner's consent or a lease provision that allows the sign.

Photo or drawing

The sign's location and dimensions, your frontage, existing signs using the same allowance, and required clearances. Clear, dimensioned photos or drawings are accepted.

Materials and lighting

What the sign is made of, how it attaches, and any lighting.

Fee

The sign permit fee set by City Council resolution.

What happens next 17.120.110(A)

1. **You submit** — Your application with the items above.
2. **Completeness** — Within 10 business days, and after each resubmittal, staff confirm it is complete or list what is missing.
3. **Decision** — Within 15 business days after it is complete, with written reasons.
4. **Install** — Within 12 months. One 12-month extension is available.

Need more than the standards allow? 17.120.090(B), 110(A)(3)

The Design Review Board may approve an exception to a permanent sign's area, number, height, projection, or location, or to the lettering in a mural. Identify the standard, the change, and the physical condition that requires it. The Board may approve only if a building feature, setback, entrance location, or blocked view prevents a workable sign within the standard; the exception is limited to what that condition requires; and the sign keeps required access, sight lines, safety, and lighting protections.

The Board holds a public hearing and decides within 60 calendar days after the application is complete. An approved exception stays with the sign when the business changes. **Disagree with a decision?** Staff and Board decisions can be appealed. The written decision states the procedure and deadline. An overdue decision may be appealed as if denied. 17.120.110(A)(4), (6)

Questions? Contact Planning.

Planning Department · (707) 823-6167 · planning@cityofsebastopol.gov

7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, CA 95472. Contact Planning before ordering or installing a sign.

Section numbers refer to proposed Sebastopol Municipal Code Chapter 17.120 (Draft 2). The chapter text controls where it differs from this guide.