



City of Kenosha

Department of Neighborhood Services and Inspections
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What you need to know about signs

Sign Ordinance, Wall Signs, Monument Signs, Off-premise Signs, Construction Signs, Banners, Lights and Prohibited Signs, Window Signs, Nonconforming Signs, Frequently Asked Questions, Yard Sale Signs, Real Estate Signs, and Sales Signs

The City of Kenosha sign ordinance was adopted on November 21, 1994. The ordinance represents a collaborative effort between the Kenosha Chamber of Commerce, Kenosha Area Business Alliance, business owners, and City staff to create an ordinance that enhances the community, promotes pedestrian and vehicular safety, and protects property values by minimizing the adverse affects of signs.

Since that time, further refinements to the sign ordinance have been adopted by the Common Council.

This pamphlet provides an overview of several areas of the sign ordinance of most interest to citizens and business owners.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I know if I need a sign permit?

Exterior signs require a sign permit, with the exception of the following:

- Interior window signs
- Sign cabinet lens (faces)
- Real estate signs
- Yard sale signs
- Political campaign signs

Who do I call with questions concerning signs?

Call the Zoning Division at 262.653.4263. You may view and download the sign ordinance and sign permit applications at www.kenosha.org under Neighborhood Services and Inspections.

What is the cost of a sign permit?

- Permanent signs:
\$90/min. fee or \$1.20 per sq. ft., whichever is greater. Applicants are notified by mail within 5-10 business days of permit status
- Portable (temporary) signs:
\$60 (30-day limit)

Prohibited Signs and Lights:

- Roof signs
- Temporary commercial ground signs
- Signs in public right-of-way
- Revolving signs
- Flashing/animated signs
- Signs attached to gas pumps/islands that are legible from off the property (*see Sign Ordinance for additional restrictions*)

What are the requirements for banners?

Banners may only be affixed to the principal building wall of the business location. Building wall signs shall not exceed 15% of each building wall elevation.

Where can I place a sign?

Signs must be wholly contained on private property and placed so that the visibility of motorists is not obstructed.

What is the penalty for violating the Sign Ordinance?

After receiving notification of a violation, you may be fined a two (2) times permit fee and additional reinspection fees based on noncompliance.

How can signs enhance my business?

- Avoid clutter: Too many signs cause confusion to the consumer and convey a disorganized business image. Don't let your business get lost in the clutter – less is more!!!
- Signs perform two very important functions. They provide direction and express your identity. Don't let dilapidated and inconsistent signs adversely impact your image. First impressions **DO** make a difference.
- Invest in a quality sign. The use of poor quality materials and banners is an indicator to the consumer that the business owner isn't making a committed investment and that the business may not be a long-term venture. This is a strong consideration when the consumer is considering purchasing high-ticket items, such as televisions, and household appliances.

PERMANENT SIGNS

Wall Signs:

Wall signs may cover no more than 15% of the building elevation.

To determine square footage, a rectangle is drawn around all signs on the same architectural elevation; for shopping centers a rectangle is drawn around all signs relating to a single tenant.

Principal Ground/Pylon Signs:

Sign area, height, and setback restrictions apply. Complete information can be accessed at www.kenosha.org under Neighborhood Services and Inspections.

Monument Signs:

Sites restricted to monument signs shall adhere to the following:

- Maximum height: 10'
- Maximum surface area: 80 sq. ft.

A monument sign is a detached freestanding sign whereby the sign surface is attached to a proportionate solid base or structural frame.

Canopy/Awning Signs:

A sign permit and canopy/awning permit is required to install a canopy or awning containing a commercial message.

TEMPORARY SIGNS

Off-premise Signs:

Construction of new off-premise signs is prohibited. Off-premise signs, in existence at the time the sign ordinance was enacted, are licensed on an annual basis in accordance with Section 15 of the Sign Ordinance.

Real Estate Signs (no permit required):

One allowed per street frontage of a lot or premise. Maximum sign area restrictions listed as follows:

- Residential districts: Limited to 8 sq. ft.
- Commercial districts: Limited to 32 sq. ft.
- Industrial districts: Limited to 64 sq. ft.

Construction Signs (no permit required):

One construction sign per street frontage, where work is in progress. Sign shall be removed within ten (10) days of completion of work. Maximum sign area restrictions listed as follows:

- Single-family residence: 16 sq. ft.

Commercial, Industrial, Multi-family, or Planned Development Uses

- Less than 2 acres: 64 sq. ft.
- Greater than 2 acres: 96 sq. ft.

Please note that no signs, except those posted by a governmental agency, may be placed in the right-of-way.

Disclaimer

This pamphlet should not be relied upon as a final source of information. Always refer to the sign ordinance to get complete and up-to-date information concerning sign regulations. The sign ordinance and sign permit applications are available at www.kenosha.org under Neighborhood Services and Inspections.