



A Guide to Responsible Signage in San Marcos



In January 2012, the San Marcos City Council adopted a revised ordinance dealing with the permitted use of signs within the city.

WHO IS AFFECTED?

The ordinance affects the commercial and non-commercial use of signs on private property as well as the public right-of-way. Business owners and residents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the municipal code to avoid running into issues that are contrary to the rules.

WHY WAS THE REVISED ORDINANCE NECESSARY?

In creating the revised sign ordinance, the city council sought to balance a number of competing interests. Ensuring that regulations are content-neutral was a high priority. However, protecting the collective rights of the community was also an important consideration.

The cumulative impact of everyone expressing themselves without limits would lead to a chaotic collection of signs and advertisements, which would adversely affect the community's economic vitality, visual aesthetics and public safety.

Therefore, the city has established a practical set of standards under which community members can freely discuss issues and ideas. These rules put sensible limits on the size and form of the media, but do not limit the message conveyed.

WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE?



Businesses in commercial zones are generally allowed signs at a ratio of two square feet per linear foot of building frontage, subject to permit approval, or 300 feet – whichever is less.

In industrial zones, businesses are permitted signs at a ratio of one and one half square feet per linear foot of building frontage, subject to approval, or 200 feet – whichever is less.

Additionally, one sign for non-commercial or real estate purposes is allowed per frontage.

Temporary signs, banners and balloons are allowed within specific timeframes and may require a permit.

Keep in mind that sign space in buildings occupied by several businesses is shared, so the available space for any one tenant may be limited under other agreements.

Some commercial centers have a comprehensive sign program that varies slightly from these standards. Always check with your landlord or the city prior to establishing your sign.

In agricultural zones, one freestanding or wall mounted sign is allowed. For parcels up to two acres, a sign up to four square feet is allowed without a sign permit. Parcels over two acres are allowed 16 square feet. The signs must be non-commercial or promote an on-site business.

In residential zones, signs of a non-commercial nature, real estate or garage sale signs are allowed up to a maximum of four square feet. A flag, up to 40 square feet may be mounted on a pole up to the maximum height limitations allowed in that zone. If the flag is mounted to the structure, it cannot exceed the roofline.

Institutions such as schools, churches and hospitals may display a single monument sign up to 20 square feet as well as wall signs with certain restrictions.

Most warning, informational, construction and real estate signs within specific size constraints do not require sign permits; however, there are certain regulations related to locations, size, number, etc.

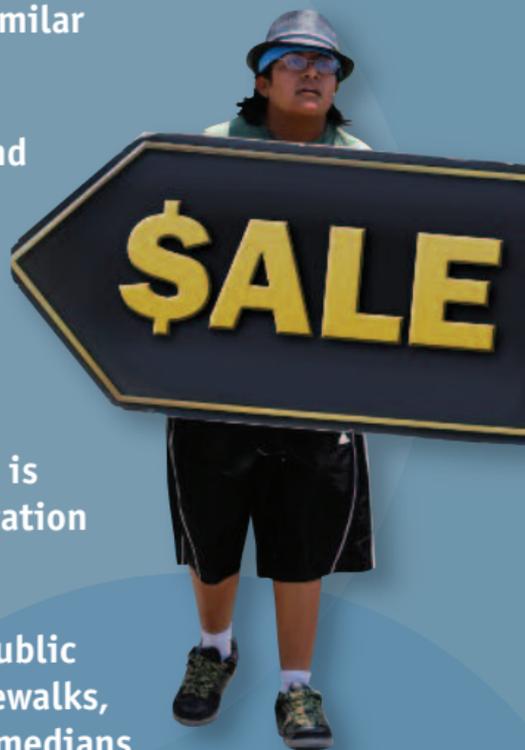
WHAT IS PROHIBITED?



- Flashing, blinking or gyrating signs that simulate motion
- Searchlights, beacons and bunting used for advertising
- Digital billboards and other digital displays capable of showing multiple images either in motion or stationary
- Freestanding pole signs



- Signs attached or applied to vehicles primarily for the purpose of advertising
- Feather banners and similar promotional flags
- Commercial mascots and sign twirlers whose primary purpose is to draw attention
- Any sign promoting a commercial product, service or activity that is not provided at the location of the sign
- Commercial signs on public property including sidewalks, utility poles, roadway medians and similar objects
- Commercial flags in residential areas



Signs that currently have a valid permit but are now not acceptable under the revised ordinance may remain as long as the sign is structurally sound.

Following these standards is the responsibility of everyone associated with the sign: the sign owner, the permit holder and the property owner.

Businesses and individuals who do not follow the city's sign ordinance are subject to penalties that range from sign removal to significant fines.

Violators may be charged with a separate offense for each day a sign(s) remains in non-compliance, so it is important to deal with any violations in a timely manner.



This pamphlet is intended to provide a brief overview of the city's sign ordinance. Please refer the San Marcos Municipal Code for the complete text of regulations.

The municipal code is available on the city's website. Political signs have their own guidelines in the sign ordinance. Please call the City Clerk's office at (760) 744-1050, ext. 3100 if you need specific assistance with political signage.

For more information on the sign ordinance or to obtain a sign permit, please contact the city's planning division at (760) 744-1050, ext. 3204.



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