



**City of Arlington**  
Community and Economic  
Development

Office Hours:  
Monday - Friday  
8:00am - 12:00pm  
1:00pm - 5:00pm



Contact us:  
360-403-3551  
[ced@arlingtonwa.gov](mailto:ced@arlingtonwa.gov)

Visit us:  
18204 59<sup>th</sup> Ave NE  
Arlington, WA 98223



This Assistance Bulletin only  
applies to properties within  
Arlington City Limits

[www.arlingtonwa.gov](http://www.arlingtonwa.gov)  
[Arlington Municipal Code](#)

# SIGNS

# #34

## Q: Are There Signs That Do Not Require a Permit?

**A:** Yes, the following type of signs are allowed on private property in all land use designations without a permit:

- Traffic or pedestrian directional/warning signs
- Memorial signs/tablets or names of buildings and dates of erection, inlaid into the masonry or constructed of bronze material
- Occupant signs in residential designations  
*(limited to occupant name or address only)*
- Signs required by law, statute, or ordinance
- Religious symbols
- Flags bearing the official emblem of a nation, state, municipality, educational institution, or non-commercial organization
- Identification signs for parking lots, 3 square feet in area or less (not for advertising purposes)
- Incidental signs (restrooms, hours of operation, acceptable credit cards, etc.)
- Interior signs

## Q: What Signs Are Not Allowed?

**A:** The following signs are prohibited:

- Signs or sign structures that in any way conflict with traffic control signs or devices
- Signs that create a safety hazard
- Signs that rotate, move, glare, flash, change, reflect, or blink, or appear to do any of those things, including search lights
- Inflatable advertising or attention-getting devices, including balloon signs
- Signs located in the public right-of-way without approval by the City
- Signs with changeable letters/numbers (except price signs at gas stations)
- Off-site signs
- Private signs attached to municipal poles
- Portable signs
- Signs in parks

## Q: Where Can I Put My Sign?

**A:** Signs that are not mounted to a building, or freestanding sign shall only be permitted on the property in which the business is located.

## Q: What is a Temporary Sign?

**A:** A temporary sign is intended to be displayed for a limited period of time and may not be permanently mounted, painted on a structure, or otherwise affixed. Portable signs, banners, and construction site signs are temporary signs.

The following temporary signs have permit exemptions but may require additional regulations:

- **Real Estate, For Sale, Lease or Rent and may contain the owner or agent contact information**
  - Residential Zones: Sign shall not exceed 4 square feet, 2 sides maximum
  - Commercial/Industrial Zones: Sign shall not exceed 32 square feet, 2 sides maximum
  - Signs shall be removed immediately after sale, lease or rental
- **Construction site signs may identify the following:**
  - The project, the owner or developer, architect, engineer, contractor and subcontractors, funding sources, and may contain related information including but not limited to sale or leasing information
  - Sign shall not exceed 32 square feet per side, only 1 sign may be erected per site
  - Building Permit must be issued prior to the sign being erected
  - Sign shall be removed within 10 days after Certificate of Occupancy
- **Window Signs installed to the interior of the building window or door glass:**
  - Such signs, individually or collectively, may not cover more 25% of the surface area of the transparent portion of the window or door to which they are attached
  - Signs shall be removed within 30 days after placement
- **Election and Political Signs:**
  - Sign shall not exceed 32 square feet per side, 2 side maximum
  - Must be removed within 7 days following the election or conclusion of the campaign
- **Holiday Display Signs: Lighting, Flags or Pennants,**
  - Signs shall be removed within 10 days following the holiday or season
- **Special Event Signs: Grand Opening, Fair, Carnival, Circus, Festival, Garage Sale or similar;**
  - May be erected no sooner than 2 weeks before the event
  - Must be removed no later than 3 days after the event
- **Other Temporary Signs**
  - Signs not listed in AMC 20.68.025, shall be regarded and treated as permanent signs
  - Temporary signs shall not be included in calculating the total allowed sign area

## Q: What is a Building Sign?

**A:** A building sign refers to any sign that is painted on, or attached directly to or supported by, an exterior building wall. This includes façade (wall), awning, marquee (canopy), and projecting signs. It does not include window signs.

**Q: How Many Signs Can I Have?**

**A:** In all Zones the general answer is 1 sign per building or business – See [AMC 20.68](#)

- Individual Businesses with Separate Entrances.
  - If your business has a separate individual entrance for public use, you may have a sign on each side of the building that has a public entrance.
- The following information is not all encompassing. For additional information, review the sign code for the appropriate Zoning District.

ZONING DISTRICTS	ZONING DESIGNATION	ARLINGTON SIGN CODE
General Commercial	GC	<a href="#">AMC: General Commercial</a>
Neighborhood Commercial	NC	<a href="#">AMC: Neighborhood Commercial</a>
Highway Commercial	HC	<a href="#">AMC: Highway Commercial</a>
General Industrial	GI	<a href="#">AMC: General Industrial</a>
Light Industrial	LI	<a href="#">AMC: Light Industrial</a>
Business Park	BP	<a href="#">AMC: Business Park</a>
Old Town Business District - 1	OTBD-1	<a href="#">AMC: OTBD-1</a>
Old Town Business District - 2	OTBD-2	<a href="#">AMC: OTBD-2</a>
Old Town Business District - 3	OTBD-3	<a href="#">AMC: OTBD-3</a>
Commercial Corridor	CC	<a href="#">AMC: 20.110</a> <a href="#">AMC: Highway Commercial</a> <a href="#">AMC: General Commercial</a>
Residential Districts	For information on Residential District signs, use the link below. <a href="#">AMC: Residential Districts</a>	

**Q: How Big Can My Sign Be?**

**A:** First you must locate the Zoning District that applies to your building.

- Using the chart on the next page, you can calculate the maximum amount of signage you are allowed.
- There are many regulations regarding signage. Some wall and freestanding sign regulations are listed on page 5.
- If you do not find what you are looking for use the links above to see additional regulations for each Zoning District.

WALL AND PROJECTING SIGNS TOTAL ALLOWED SQUARE FOOTAGE CALCULATION								
GC	NC	HC	GI	LI	BP	OTBD1	OTBD2	OTBD3
Option 1 or 2	Option 1 or 2	Option 1 or 2	Option 1	Option 1	Option 1	Option 1 or 2	Option 1 or 2	Option 1 or 2
Option #1: Multiply the first floor square footage of the building or leased space by 0.025 = Total allowed signage Option #2: Multiply the lineal feet of the building frontage by 1.5 = Total allowed signage								
MARQUEE (CANOPY) SIGNS TOTAL ALLOWED SQUARE FOOTAGE CALCULATION								
GC		HC				OTBD1	OTBD2	OTBD3
The sign shall not exceed 200 square feet or 10% of the buildings or business façade, whichever is less								
BLADE SIGNS TOTAL ALLOWED SQUARE FOOTAGE CALCULATION								
GC		HC				OTBD1	OTBD2	OTBD3
The sign shall not exceed 12 square feet per side. See additional regulation below.								
FREESTANDING SIGN TOTAL ALLOWED SQUARE FOOTAGE CALCULATION								
GC	NC	HC	GI	LI	BP	OTBD1	OTBD2	OTBD3
x 0.3	x 0.3	x 0.75	x 0.3	x 0.3	x 0.3	x 0.3	x 0.3	x 0.3
Street Frontage (lineal feet) multiplied by the number below = Total allowed signage per side. <i>Frontage identified as private drive, easement or panhandle: the width of the lot shall be used for the calculation</i>								

**BLADE AND MARQUEE (CANOPY) SIGNS**

Maximum size for blade and canopy sign shall be six square feet per side. Sign area shall be calculated based on the sign face containing the graphics with the graphics' background and the structural elements comprising the sign's perimeter shall not include the support brackets.

- If the blade signs serve as a primary sign and a wall sign is not present, the sign shall project no more than six feet from the building and may be twelve square feet per side, but shall not include the support brackets.
- Blade or canopy signs shall maintain a minimum clearance of eight feet above sidewalk level to the bottom of the sign.
- Blade and canopy signs shall maintain a minimum setback of eighteen inches behind the curb separating the sidewalk from the street parking area.
- No sign may project closer than two feet from the curb line of a street.

**WALL AND FREESTANDING SIGNS**

- See the spreadsheet on page 5.

<sup>1</sup> AMC 20.68: For general provisions and exceptions that may apply

<sup>2</sup> Regulations vary based on location: See Zoning Districts (CC, GC, HC)

<sup>3</sup> Frontage identified as private drive, easement or panhandle: the width of the lot shall be used for calculation

# SIGNS #34

Square feet = sf Lineal feet = lf	<sup>1</sup> GC	<sup>1</sup> NC	<sup>1</sup> HC	<sup>1</sup> GI	<sup>1</sup> LI	<sup>1</sup> BP	<sup>1</sup> OTBD1	<sup>1</sup> OTBD2	<sup>1</sup> OTBD3	<sup>1</sup> CC
<b>SIGN SIZE LIMITS</b>										
Min. size 20 sf First floor less than 50,000 sf = 500 sf max. 50,001 sf - 100,000 sf = 600 sf max. 100,001 sf - 200,000 sf = 750 sf max. 200,001 sf and more = 1,000 sf max.	✓	✓	✓							✓
Shall not exceed 500 sf per sign	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Shall not exceed 300 sf per sign							✓	✓	✓	
Any sign(s) located on a wall may not exceed 20% of the total surface area of the wall, including windows and doors. The 20% shall be calculated based solely on the area below height limitations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Single-sided drive-through menu sign may not exceed 30 sf	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
<b>BUILDING SIGN LOCATION</b>										
2 story - no sign may be placed higher than the 2 <sup>nd</sup> story windowsill	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1 story with a parapet – no sign may be placed higher than the highest point of the roof	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1 story or more with a parapet – no sign may be placed higher than the highest point of the roof	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1 story or more with a cornice – no sign may be placed on or above the cornice line	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3 stories or more—No sign may be placed higher than the highest point of the roof or lower than the uppermost floor of the uppermost story.			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>2</sup>
No wall sign attached to a building may project more than 12 inches from the building wall	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gas Pump - No sign may be placed on or above the cornice line	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>FREESTANDING SIGN</b>										
Up to 199 lf of frontage = 50 sf max. (per side)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>2</sup>
200 lf - 399 lf of frontage = 75 sf max (per side)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>2</sup>
400 lf plus of frontage = 100 sf max. (per side)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>2</sup>
Shall not exceed 250 sf (per side)			✓							✓ <sup>2</sup>
<b>Freestanding Sign Quantity</b>										
Frontage: public street	1 <sup>3</sup>	1 <sup>3</sup>	1 <sup>3</sup>	1 <sup>3</sup>						
Corner Lot – min. 100ft. of public street frontage	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
2 public streets that do not intersect at the lot's boundaries	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Freestanding Sign Height Limits</b>										
Interstate 5 frontage max. sign height of 45 ft.			✓							✓ <sup>2</sup>
Max. height from ground level is 15 ft.	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Max. height from ground level is 6 ft.		✓		✓	✓	✓				
Single-sided drive-through menu sign may not exceed 10 ft. in height	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
<b>Freestanding Sign Setbacks</b>										
Non-Arterial Street Right-of-Way Line (ft.)	10	10	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	✓ <sup>2</sup>
Arterial Street Right-of-Way Line (ft.)	10	10	5	10	5	5	5	5	5	✓ <sup>2</sup>
Lot Boundary Line or Alley (ft.)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	✓ <sup>2</sup>