

# **City of Fitchburg**

## **Sign Regulations – The Basics**

The rules and regulations described in this pamphlet are from Chapter 26, the City of Fitchburg Sign Code.

The purpose of the sign code is to provide standards to safeguard life, health and property, to eliminate hazards to pedestrians and motorists brought about by distracting sign displays, to preserve and improve the appearance of the City, and to promote the public welfare by regulating and controlling the design, area, number, construction, location and installation of signs within the City.

**This page only deals with the general requirements of the code and some of the most often asked questions about particular signs. It covers only the basics and there may be additional rules and regulations about other types of signs.**

Because the sign you wish to display is not dealt with in this page does not mean there are not regulations regarding it.

Businesses or individuals who wish to display a sign or signs in the City of Fitchburg also should be aware that, though this pamphlet deals with the City's regulations, there may be additional restrictions on leased space.

In addition to the information provided in this page, and in the sign code, it is also highly recommended that businesses or individuals discuss their proposed sign needs with the Planning/Zoning Department prior to ordering or installing signs. It is distressing to everyone involved, including city personnel, to have to deny a sign that someone has already ordered or installed. It will save time, money and aggravation to get your sign permit first.

For additional information, and to have questions answered regarding your particular sign project, please contact the Planning/Zoning Department at Fitchburg City hall, 5520 Lacy Road, Fitchburg, WI 53711. Phone number; 608-270-4200.

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### **When is a sign permit needed?**

Permits are required before placing, erecting, altering, or relocating any sign in the City of Fitchburg, unless the sign is exempt.

### **What kind of signs are exempt?**

Exempt signs, providing they meet the standards listed in the ordinance, do not require permits and are not counted as part of the total signage a business is allowed. Listed below are some of the most common exempt signs. The following standards apply to these exempt signs:

Real estate signs advertise the sale or rental of the premises on which the sign is located. The sign shall not exceed 7 square feet in residential and agricultural zoning districts, and 32 square feet in commercial, business or industrial zoning districts. No more than two real estate signs are permitted for a property, one of which may be an off-premise directional sign. Off-premise signs shall not be located in the right-of-way, and the agent shall have permission of any property owner prior to placing signs on private property.

Construction signs pertain to the building of a structure on the property where the sign is located. The maximum allowed size for these signs is 32 square feet. They can be displayed only during the construction period.

Window display signs are displayed in the window of a business and are incorporated into a display of merchandise or they relate to a service offered on the premises.

Employment signs refer to job openings on the premises. They should not exceed 12 square feet and can be displayed for up to 30 days in a one year period.

Temporary signs that do not exceed 4 square feet and which are not displayed for more than 48 hours do not require a sign permit.

Auxiliary signs identify parts of a property such as entries, exits, addresses, or parking areas. They also can provide secondary information such as price, hours of operation, warnings, or directories. The maximum size for auxiliary signs is 16 square feet.

Other exempt signs include traffic signs, public service signs, decorative holiday signs, crop signs and farm signs.

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### **Other than exempt signs, what are some basic rules and regulations regarding signs in Fitchburg?**

The maximum permitted sign area per business is 150 square feet. Back-to-back signs are considered as one sign for square footage purposes.

A flat on-site sign displayed on the face or side of a building shall not exceed 1/10 of the area of the face or side of building on which it is displayed, provided such signs do not exceed 150 square feet.

No part of any sign can be more than 25 feet above street grade.

Two detached signs shall be permitted for any building provided that no detached sign shall be greater than 150 square feet on either side, nor taller than 25 feet. Detached signs shall not project closer than one foot from the street right-of-way.

Businesses may use both detached and attached signs, providing the total area of the signs does not exceed 150 square feet.

Projects in Planned Development Districts (PDD) may have different limitations and requirements which were determined at the time of PDD approval. Please contact the Planning/Zoning Department about specific restrictions in a PDD.

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### **What are regulations regarding specific types of signs?**

Temporary signs, not meeting the standards for exempt signs, require a sign permit. Such signs may not exceed 16 square feet and can not be displayed for more than 45 days. (The applicant for a temporary permit is required to state in writing that the sign shall not be displayed for a period exceeding 45 days.)

Portable signs, except temporary signs, are prohibited. An existing portable sign may be permanently mounted if it complies with setback requirements, safety regulations and other applicable provisions of the sign code.

Banners, inflatable signs, and beacons may be used in accord with the following regulations: Professionally printed advertising banners may be used by businesses on a temporary basis only. A banner shall not exceed 40 square feet, and shall not be used for more than 45 days in any twelve month period. Each new banner shall require a separate permit. The use of any inflatable signs, beacons and searchlights is prohibited, except by special permit issued by the City Council for specific events not to exceed 10 days in any 12 month period.

Flashing, alternating, swinging, or rotating signs are prohibited. Time and temperature signs may be permitted, provided a conditional use permit is granted by the Plan Commission. Flood or spot lights illuminating any sign must be located so as not to permit their beams or glare of light to be directed to surrounding properties or roads.

Subdivision signs may be located at the main entrance to a subdivision, shall state the name of the subdivision only and shall not exceed 40 square feet.

### **How do I apply for a sign permit?**

Sign permit application forms are available from the Planning/Zoning Department office at Fitchburg City Hall. In addition to a completed application form, the applicant will need to submit a scale drawing of the proposed sign, a map showing its location on the site and the proposed colors of the sign. Temporary sign permit applications also require a written statement that the sign will be displayed no more than 45 days.

Check the Fee Schedule for Permit fees or contact the Planning/Zoning Department.