

## Chapter 17.120

# SIGN REGULATIONS

### Sections:

- 17.120.010 Purpose, intent, and applicability.**
- 17.120.020 Permits, fees, and exceptions.**
- 17.120.030 Exempted signs.**
- 17.120.040 Prohibited signs.**
- 17.120.050 General sign standards and regulations.**
- 17.120.060 Permitted signs.**
- 17.120.070 Miscellaneous sign categories.**
- 17.120.080 Nonconforming signs.**
- 17.120.090 Abandoned signs.**
- 17.120.100 Construction specifications, safety, and maintenance.**
- 17.120.110 Violations.**
- 17.120.120 Appeals and enforcement – Removal and disposition of signs.**

### **17.120.010 Purpose, intent, and applicability.**

- 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)

### **17.120.020 Permits, fees, and exceptions.**

- 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)

### **17.120.030 Exempted signs.**

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 directional 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)

### **17.120.040 Prohibited signs.**

- 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)

## **17.120.050 General sign standards and regulations.**

### *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:

$$\text{Sign Area} = \frac{\text{Total Allowable Sign Area (based on total building frontage)}}{\text{Number of Tenant Spaces}}$$

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.)**

<b>Building Frontage</b>	<b>Max. Allowable Sign Area</b>	<b>Building Frontage</b>	<b>Max. Allowable Sign Area</b>	<b>Building Frontage</b>	<b>Max. Allowable Sign Area</b>
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

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

<b>Building Frontage</b>	<b>Max. Allowable Sign Area</b>	<b>Building Frontage</b>	<b>Max. Allowable Sign Area</b>	<b>Building Frontage</b>	<b>Max. Allowable Sign Area</b>
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.**

1. Freestanding signs must be located a minimum of five feet behind the back of the sidewalk (or right-of-way if there is no sidewalk). Freestanding signs may not project into any public right-of-way.
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)



## 17.120.060 Permitted 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)

### **17.120.070 Miscellaneous sign categories.**

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)

### **17.120.080 Nonconforming 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)

### **17.120.090 Abandoned signs.**

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)

### **17.120.100 Construction specifications, safety, 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)

### **17.120.110 Violations.**

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)

### **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)

**The Sebastopol Municipal Code is current through Ordinance 1149, passed October 3, 2023.**

Disclaimer: The City Clerk's Office has the official version of the Sebastopol Municipal Code. Users should contact the City Clerk's Office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

[City Website: www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us](http://www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us)

[Hosted by General Code.](#)