



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ BROCHURES

PLANNING DEPARTMENT • 701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR • SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
ZONING INFORMATION: planning.zoninginfo@santacruzcounty.us • (831) 454-2130

Signs

Santa Cruz County Code Sections 13.10.580-587

The County's commercial sign regulations help to reduce sign clutter, improve design, and limit sign impacts on scenic roads. For additional sign policies, see Chapter 5, Section 5.10 of the County General Plan.

Signs in C, CT, VA, PA, PF and M

No sign, advertising structure or display shall be permitted except the following:

- One business or identification sign and one small pedestrian-oriented sign per site as provided below.
- Signs pertaining to a use conducted on the site, with aggregate areas according to the table on the next page.

TOTAL SIGN AREA ALLOWED*

Basis for Calculation	Total Sign Area Allowed
Front width of building on an interior lot or front width plus street side width of building on a corner lot.	½ square foot (72 square inches) of sign area per foot of building width.
Width of site along the street (interior or corner lot).	¼ sq. ft. (36 square inches) of sign area per foot of site width.
Maximum allowable area.	50 square feet (30 square feet when opposite residential)
Maximum allowable area on an interior lot less than 40 feet wide at the street.	20 square feet.

*Sign area is defined as: The area within a well-defined border or the area of one side of a double-sided sign. On a sign with no defined border, measure the area within the perimeter which encloses the letters, symbols.

- Signs directly across the street from a residential zone are limited to 30 square feet in area as consistent with above table, and shall not contain interior illumination or flashing lights.
- Direction signs are excluded from the above limits but limited to 4 sq.ft.
- Signs pertaining to the sale or lease of property shall not exceed 6 sq.ft.

- Up to two gas station price displays are excluded, but are limited to numerals, logo, and discount information. Branding elements such as fascia are not signage but subject to design review.
- Permanent and temporary window signs are each limited to a maximum of 20% of the window area of the building, and are counted as part of total allowed sign area. Temporary window signs *not displayed for more than two weeks* are not included in the total sign size limitation.

Attached Signs

- Signs located on a wall or fascia shall be designed as an integral part of the building and located on or below the upper line of the roof fascia.

Freestanding Signs

- Freestanding signs shall reflect the building's architecture and be integrated into the landscape plan.
- Freestanding signs shall not exceed 7 feet in height, measured from the existing grade at the edge of the road. Where on street parking limits the visibility of free-standing signs, such signs may be up to 12 feet high.
- No sign other than a directional sign shall project more than 12 inches into a required rear yard or required interior side yard.
- Signs and supports shall be set back a minimum of 5 feet from the edge of the right of way or roadway, whichever is greater, and shall not obstruct vehicular sight distance or pedestrian or bicycle circulation.

Illumination

- No illuminated signs are allowed in the viewshed of a scenic road or in a mapped scenic area. Visibility of signs within a scenic corridor shall be minimized by the use of appropriate material, size, location, and orientation.
- Where sign lighting is allowed, only indirect illumination or low-intensity interior illumination shall be used. It is preferred that lighted signs be designed with light-colored translucent letters and logos, on a semi-opaque dark background. Box signs are discouraged. Sign lighting shall be unobtrusive to adjacent properties and glare shall be directed onto the site.

Shopping Centers

A sign program shall be developed for any shopping, business or service center with shared sign facilities. The program shall include the name of the center, a directory sign (separate or combined with the name sign) and one small pedestrian-oriented sign for each shop. The sign program shall specify sign designs, dimensions, materials, colors, lighting, if any, and placement.

The total area of the center's name sign(s) and directory sign shall not exceed 50 square feet. The area of each individual shop sign shall not exceed one half square foot per foot of building width measured across the front of the building, and shall not exceed a maximum of 18 square feet, whichever is smaller.

Signs in the PR District

- One identification sign, not directly illuminated, not larger than 12 square feet in area, located on the site of the use and included in the permit for said use.
- Direction signs for off-street parking or other facilities not exceeding 4 square feet.
- Sign design in the PR District shall follow 13.10.581 (d) through (f), Commercial Signs.

Temporary Signs in All Districts

Temporary signs that are to be used in conjunction with a special event or an approved temporary use are permitted subject to the following restrictions:

- Maximum sign area permitted shall be 6 square feet in a residential zone district and 18 square feet in all other zone districts.
- Temporary signs shall not be placed so as to constitute a traffic hazard.
- Temporary signs shall be removed not more than 10 days after the special event or temporary use ceases.

Political Signs

Political signs are not limited as to size or location, provided that they not constitute a traffic hazard and are removed not more than 10 days after the target election.

Directional Signs

- Directional and informational signs, including signs for village areas and signs giving directions to properties not situated adjacent to a street, are allowed with a Level IV Approval. No such sign shall be larger than 12" by 42" and no village name or directional sign shall be larger than 12 square feet. Such signs shall contain only the name of the site and a direction arrow.
- Illumination provided for such directional signs shall be stationary and constant in intensity and color.
- The joint use of single structures for directional signs is encouraged. Where multiple use of a single structure to display signs is allowed, the outside dimensions of the structure shall not exceed 10' by 10' and shall not obstruct traffic visibility.

Sign Exceptions

An any district, exceptions to sign standards may be considered where warranted by site-specific circumstances such as restricted visibility, location on a corner, large structure, or historic preservation concerns.

The exception shall vary from sign standards only to the extent necessary and appropriate to address site-specific circumstances. Exceptions are processed as a Level 4 review, except that a Level 5 review is required if more than three business name signs are proposed or an area standard exceeded by more than 50 sq.ft.

Signs in the R-1, RB, RR, RA, RM, A, AP, and CA Districts

No signs or outdoor advertising structure or display of any kind shall be permitted in the R-1, RB, RR, RA, RM, A, AP, or CA Districts except the following:

- One nonilluminated sign or nameplate, not larger than one square foot in area, pertaining to a home occupation.
- One nonilluminated sign not larger than six square feet in area pertaining to the sale, lease, rental, or display of a structure or land.
- One identification sign, not directly illuminated, not larger than 12 square feet in area, on the site of a discretionary use and included in the development permit for said use.
- One or two nonilluminated signs, single- or double-faced, with a total area not larger than 50 square feet, pertaining to the sale of subdivision lots and included in the permit.

General Plan Policy

5.10.18 - Within the rural Highway 1 corridor, allow only access signs, Caltrans signs and business identification signs. (Davenport commercial area exempt from this limitation.)

5.10.21 - Allow illuminated signs to be visible from scenic roads only in designated commercial and visitor-serving areas. Exception: State and County directional and informational signs may be illuminated in any location.

Nonconforming Signs

Owners of nonconforming signs, except those signs which have been designated as historic resources pursuant to County Code Chapter 16.42, shall make such signs conform to these regulations (Sections 13.10.580 through 13.10.586). All signs shall be removed, altered or otherwise made to comply unless a variance is obtained.

- Signs appurtenant to any use shall be removed within 30 days of the discontinuance of said use.
- Failure to make a nonconforming sign conform to these requirements shall be deemed a violation subject to abatement per County Code Ch. 1.14.

Historic Identification Plaques

Non-illuminated historic identification plaques approved by the Historic Resources Commission, not exceeding 2 sq.ft. in size, are permitted on designated historic resources.

Questions?

For more info about sign permits, email

Planning.ZoningInfo@santacruzcounty.us or call Zoning Info at (831) 454-2130.

**County of Santa Cruz
Planning Department**
701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060

831-454-2130, OR Planning.ZoningInfo@santacruzcounty.us