



December 16, 2021

Dear Shoreline Business Owner,

The City of Shoreline is issuing this letter to businesses in Shoreline to provide information about the City's sign regulations. These can be found in our municipal code: [SMC 20.50.530](#), (the "sign code"), which regulates the effective use of signs while minimizing adverse effects on nearby properties and traffic safety. The purpose of regulating signs is to provide standards for effective use of signs for economic viability and aesthetics of business properties, to protect public interest and to minimize adverse effects of signage, and to establish regulations for the type, number, location, size, and lighting of signs which are compatible with their surroundings.

The City of Shoreline appreciates businesses that operate in our city and want to make sure that our businesses are aware of the regulations in the sign code. This letter summarizes what types are allowed and not allowed in our community. We encourage you to read the sign code and familiarize yourself with all signage regulations applicable to your business. The City's [Zoning Map](#) may be useful as you read through this letter, as some signs are only allowed in certain zones. Additionally, if your business is in [Shoreline Place](#) (Aurora Square Community Renewal Area), please review the [Shoreline Place specific design standards and guidelines](#) recently approved by the Shoreline Planning Commission.

If you have questions regarding the sign code regulations listed here or elsewhere in [SMC 20.50.530](#), please contact the Planning & Community Department at (206) 801-2500 or pcd@shorelinewa.gov.

Thank you,

Bob Crozier
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Summary of allowed and prohibited signs. See details about specific sign types below.

Allowed Signs, if sign meets requirements:

- Monument
- Building-mounted
- Under-awning
- Driveway entrance/exit
- Window Signs
- A-Frame
- Temporary Signs
- Electronic reader board or changing message signs
- Portable signs allowed in limited situations detailed below
- Exempt Signs under [SMC 20.50.610](#)

Prohibited Signs:

- Spinning devices, flashing lights, searchlights
- Pennants, swooper flags, feather flags, pole banners, inflatables
- Outdoor off-premise advertising signs (billboards)
- Signs mounted on the roof or on vehicles
- Pole signs
- Backlit awnings used as signs
- Portable signs that do not meet specific exceptions

Permits Required and Signs Exempt from Permit

All signs require a sign permit or temporary use permit unless specifically exempted in [SMC 20.50.530](#). Signs that are exempt from permit must still follow the standards for that type of sign.

Examples of exempt signs include:

- Building addresses
- Window signs which are not illuminated, maximum 25 percent of window area, and do not need a building permit
- A-Frame signs in nonresidential zones only
- Copy replacement when illumination standards are met, except for signs within Shoreline Place (Aurora Square Community Renewal Area)
- Small signs for home occupations, day cares, adult family homes, and bed and breakfasts if not more than four square feet in area and maximum one sign per business

See [SMC 20.50.610](#) for more exemptions.

Details and forms related to applying for a sign permit are on the [Planning & Community Development](#) website under “Sign Permit.”

Details about common types of signs (allowed and not allowed):

Window Signs (Allowed when meeting sign requirements in [SMC 20.50.540](#))

Window signs are permitted to occupy maximum 25% of the total window area in zones MUR-45', MUR-70', NB, CB, MB, TC-1, TC-2, and TC-3. Window signs are exempt from permit if non-illuminated and do not require a permit under the building code.

A-Frame Signs (Allowed when meeting sign requirements in [SMC 20.50.540](#))

Allowed in MUR-45', MUR-70', NB, CB, MB, and TC-1, TC-2, and TC-3 zones with no permit required. Prohibited in all other zones. A business may only have one A-Frame sign and it shall be removed from display when the business closes each day. *Example: Shoreline Farmers Market A-Frame:*



Temporary Signs (Allowed when meeting sign requirements in [SMC 20.50.600](#))

Temporary signs, such as yard signs, are prohibited on public property and in the right-of-way. Temporary signs are permitted on business premises in MUR-45', MUR-70', NB, CB, TC-1, TC-2, and TC-3 zones but must be limited to one sign per street frontage, 32 square feet in area, be displayed for not more than 60 days, and removed immediately upon conclusion of the sale, event, or installation of permanent business signage.

Prohibited Specialty Signs (Prohibited per [SMC 20.50.550](#))

In all zones, spinning devices, flashing lights, and searchlights are prohibited. Portable signs are prohibited, except A-frames, allowed in accordance with [SMC 20.50.540 \(I\)](#). Additionally, signs mounted on the roof, pole signs, backlit awnings used as signs, pennants, swooper flags, feather flags, pole banners, inflatables, and signs mounted on vehicles are prohibited in all zones.



Pennant flags (any shape)



swooper/feather flags



inflatables



pole signs

Monument Signs (Allowed, subject to sign requirements in [SMC 20.50.560](#) and permit)

Must be double-sided if the back is visible from the street. A solid-appearing base is required under at least 75% of the sign width from the ground to the base of the sign or the sign itself may start at grade. Monument signs must use materials and architectural design elements that are consistent with the architecture of the buildings. *Example: Shoreline City Hall Monument Sign:*



Electronic Signs (Allowed, subject to sign requirements in [SMC 20.50.550](#) and permit)

Electronic changing message or reader board signs are allowed **only in CB and MB zones**, except Shoreline Place (Aurora Square Community Renewal Area) where they are not allowed. Only one such sign is allowed per parcel. **All** electronic reader board or changing message signs require a permit to install and may only change messages at an interval of at least 20 seconds. These signs also may not flash or animate. Existing, legally established electronic signs in other zones may remain, but must still comply with the 20-second minimum message duration.

Illumination (Allowed, subject to sign requirements and permit)

Where illumination is permitted, per [Table 20.50.540\(G\)](#) in the sign code, there are certain standards that must be met. If this applies to your signs, please see details in [online resources](#).

Examples of permitted illumination, meeting other sign requirements, include:



Individual backlit letters (left image), opaque signs where only the light shines through the copy (center image), and neon signs (right image).

Nonconforming signs

A sign that was permitted under previous standards but is now larger, taller, or otherwise does not meet current standards is considered nonconforming. Nonconforming signs may not be changed in size, shape, height, location, or structural components without meeting current standards.

Repair and maintenance are allowable, but may require a permit if structural components require repair or replacement or if you need to take the sign down temporarily do to the work. Except for signs within Shoreline Place (Aurora Square Community Renewal Area) where a permit may be required, copy replacement within an existing cabinet does not require a permit; however, the illumination standards must be met by the new copy.

Departures from sign standards

Departures from the sign standards in [SMC 20.50.530](#) through 20.50.610 can be considered through an Administrative Design Review application (per [SMC 20.30.297](#)) where the proposal is consistent with the purposes or intent of the sign design standards or is justified due to unusual site constraints. In order for departures to be considered a full site signage plan must be submitted so that the departure can be considered in the full context of existing and future signage for the site. Modification of existing signs may be required for a design departure of a new sign.

Applying for a Sign Permit

Visit the [Permit Checklists & Application Packets website](#) and scroll down to “Sign Permit” to find the most up-to-date versions of forms related to applying for a sign permit:

- [Sign Permit Submittal Checklist](#) outlines information needed and steps for the process.
- [Application Form](#) is the permit application form businesses need to submit.
- [Sign Development Handout](#) contains similar information to this letter about sign standards.