



SIGNS

A sign is defined as any visual communication device, structure, or fixture which is visible from off premises and which directs attention to an object, product, place, activity, facility, service, event, attraction, person, institution, organization, business, or building.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S ALLOWED

Signs are regulated by the Des Moines Municipal Code (DMMC), Chapter 18.200. To maintain the character and purpose of distinct areas in Des Moines, the City's geography has been divided into distinct zoning use districts (view these zoning use districts on the Des Moines Zoning Map - available online). There are general standards which apply to the entire city and also standards specific to the zoning districts. Refer to the DMMC for these specific standards.

- All Residential Zones: DMMC 18.200.280.
- Neighborhood Commercial Zone (N-C) and commercially zoned properties located in the Redondo neighborhood: DMMC 18.200.290.
- PR-C, B-P, and all commercial zones abutting Pacific Highway South that are not within the Pacific Ridge neighborhood: DMMC 18.200.300.
- Marina District: DMMC 18.200.310.

EXEMPT SIGNS

Exempt signs shall not require a sign permit; however exemptions shall not be construed as relieving the owner of a sign from the responsibility of its erection and maintenance and its compliance with the provisions of DMMC chapter 18.200 or any other law or ordinance regulating the same. Depending on the type sign, a building permit may be required. Please contact the Building Department prior to sign installation.

The following is a sample of exempt signs. The full list and additional standards may be found in DMMC 18.200.070:

- Painting, repainting or cleaning of a lawfully erected sign structure.

- Real estate signs not exceeding 8 sq. ft. in residential zones and 24 sq. ft. in commercial zones. Limited to one sign/street frontage on the premises and five directional.
- On-premises information signs directing traffic onto or off of a lot or within a lot, not over 8 sq. ft. in area and 6 ft. in height.
- Political signs within public right-of-way limited to 4 sq. ft. in area and a height of 5 ft.
- One nonelectrical and nonilluminated business identification sign not over 36 sq ft.
- One on-premises nonilluminated bulletin board not over 24 sq. ft. in area for a charitable or religious organization.
- For each street frontage, one nonilluminated temporary construction sign denoting the architect, engineer, and/or contractor when placed on work under construction, and not exceeding 32 sq. ft.
- Nonelectrical identification signs which contain the name and address of the dweller or tenant of a residence not over 2 sq. ft.
- Signs not intended to be viewed from and not readable from off premises.
- Window merchandise displays.
- Sculptures, fountains, mosaics, or other public art features that do not incorporate advertising of a business or product.
- No more than one temporary construction sign per street frontage not exceeding 32 sq. ft.

EXEMPT PORTABLE SIGNS (A-BOARDS)

Portable signs located in the public right-of-way are exempt from obtaining a Sign Permit, but are subject to the following requirements:

- Signs shall not be affixed to the ground.
- No more than two signs are allowed per business.
- Sign area shall not exceed 6 sq. ft. or 36 in. in height.
- Signs are allowed only during the hours of operation of the business or for the duration of special events and must be taken indoors each day.



Disclaimer: This PAM should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant is responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described in this PAM. Please see the City of Des Moines Municipal Code for complete text and requirements: www.codepublishing.com/wa/desmoines/

- Signs may not be placed on or attached to other objects, including but not limited to buildings, structures, trees, plants, utility poles, utility boxes, utility equipment, other signs, or interfere with any official traffic control device and their support structures.
- Signs shall not be placed in a manner that interferes with vehicle, bicycle, wheelchair, or pedestrian sight line views, or travel.
- Signs shall not be placed in street medians or traffic islands.
- Signs shall not be placed in a manner that will damage City landscaping, irrigation or other City infrastructure or obstruct a drainage system.
- Signs shall have a professional appearance and be maintained in good condition.
- Signs shall have a name and contact phone number or other contact information on them.
- Signs placed in violation are subject to immediate removal and may be subject to destruction by the City, without prior notice.

PROHIBITED SIGNS

- Signs or sign structures, which by coloring, shape, wording, or location resemble or conflict with official traffic control signs or devices.
- Signs that create a safety hazard for pedestrian, wheelchair, bicycle, or vehicular traffic.
- All flashing signs.
- Signs attached to or placed on a vehicle or trailer parked on public or private property or public right-of-way.
- Off-premises signs, except as provided in DMMC 18.200.260.
- Any sign affixed to or painted on trees, rocks, or other natural features, or utility poles.
- Roof signs, except in Pacific Ridge; provided, that signs do not exceed the allowable building height or freestanding signs standards in DMMC 18.200.300(1).
- All portable reader board signs.
- Home occupation signs.
- Strings of pennants, banners, posters, ribbons, streamers, balloons, spinners, searchlights,

or other devices of a carnival nature, except as provided in DMMC 18.200.110.

PERMITS

As permit is required for signs to control visual clutter and assure signs are safely and properly installed. Before a temporary or permanent sign is installed, a permit must be obtained. To obtain a permit complete either the Sign Special Use Permit or Sign Permit Application for review to the Planning, Building, and Public Works Department. The sign will be routed to applicable staff for review and upon approval the applicant will be contacted.

INSPECTIONS REQUIRED

For all inspections contact the Planning, Building, and Public Works Department at (206) 870-7576.

- Foundation inspection: required if a footing is needed. Must be inspected for depth and size before the concrete is placed.
- Sign mounting/attachment inspection: required if the sign is attached to other structures.
- Electrical inspection: required if the sign is illuminated or wired for electricity.
- Landscaping inspection: required if landscaping is required around a freestanding or monument sign.
- Final inspection: required when all work is done.

MAINTENANCE

All signs, together with all of their supports, braces, guys, and anchors, shall be maintained in good repair and in a safe, neat, clean, and attractive condition.

ABANDONED SIGNS

Abandoned signs shall be removed by the owner or lessee of the premises upon which the sign is located within 90 days after the business or service advertised by the sign is no longer conducted on the premises.

SPECIAL USE/TEMPORARY SIGN PERMIT

Temporary signs, inflatable displays, banners, posters, strings of pennants, ribbons, flags, streamers, balloons, spinners, off premise direction signs for temporary or special events require a Special Use Permit pursuant to DMMC 18.200.110