

# advertising + business signs

**Outdoor advertising regulations and zoning laws reduce visual clutter and protect people from dangerous and illegally installed signs.**

**Residential, commercial and manufacturing zoning districts each have distinct regulations for outdoor signage. The NYC Construction Codes regulate sign installation and construction for safety. The NYC Zoning Resolution governs many aspects of an outdoor sign's appearance, including location, size and illumination.**

***Business signs* — called accessory signs in the Zoning Resolution — identify the business where the sign is located. For example, a retail store may have its name above its door. *Advertising signs* promote goods and services offered elsewhere — such as a billboard for a movie. The regulations for each type of signage are vastly different, and advertising is permitted in only certain zoning districts.**

## Sign Regulation

Advertising signs must comply with the Zoning Resolution. Property owners who are considering selling or leasing their outdoor space to advertisers should speak with a New York State registered architect or licensed professional engineer before making any agreements. There are substantial penalties for illegal outdoor advertising — which start at \$10,000 per violation — and most illegal signs have multiple violations. These violations are typically issued directly to the property owner. Business signs must also comply with the Zoning Resolution, and violations carry penalties.

## Obtaining a Sign Permit

Signs must meet the safety standards outlined in the Construction Codes and, unless the signs are painted or smaller than six square feet and not illuminated, the Department must approve design plans and issue permits for these signs before they're installed. (All business signs must also comply with the Zoning Resolution.)

Depending upon the type of sign, a New York State registered architect, licensed professional engineer or licensed sign hanger must prepare the design plans. Illuminated awnings and those with images or certain text must comply with the sign regulations. For an overview of the permit process, read the Construction Permits page in the Homeowners and Industry Professional Tool Kits. You can also use the License Search program at [nyc.gov/buildings](http://nyc.gov/buildings) to verify that a sign hanger is licensed.

A proposed sign requiring an electrical connection must have a separate work permit to install it. This permit is filed by a licensed electrician and issued by the Electrical Division in each of the Department's borough offices. Owners of illuminated signs that extend beyond the building line will be automatically billed for an Annual Illuminated Sign Permit.

## Zoning Districts + Landmarks

For your property's zoning district and its applicable zoning regulations, see the Zoning Resolution at [nyc.gov/planning](http://nyc.gov/planning). You may also contact the Department of City Planning's Zoning Help Desk at (212) 720 – 3291. Be sure to have the property's block and lot information when you call. In addition, the Landmarks Preservation Commission must give approval and/or issue permits for work on landmarked properties. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/landmarks](http://nyc.gov/landmarks).