



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR

# Sign Plan Check to Permit Issuance

CITY OF SAN DIEGO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 301 SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-4101

INFORMATION  
BULLETIN

111

JUNE 2015

This Information Bulletin describes the minimum requirements for obtaining sign permits in the City of San Diego. General sign regulations can be found in [Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 12](#) of the San Diego Municipal Code. For information regarding sign procedures, see [Chapter 12, Article 9, Division 8](#).

## I. WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?

A separate sign permit is required for the installation or alteration of any sign except for the following exemptions:

## II. EXEMPTIONS

A sign permit is not required for the following:

- A. Changing the copy of a sign or maintenance of a sign that does not involve structural or electrical changes;
- B. Interior signs, except for theater lobby signs;
- C. Public utility and safety signs that are required by law;
- D. Signs that are required by law, other than public utility and safety signs, that do not exceed the minimum dimensions specified by law;
- E. Real estate signs that are not illuminated;
- F. Construction site signs that are not illuminated,
- G. Name plate identification signs and combination name plates and address signs with letters that do not exceed 3 inches in height, are not illuminated, and do not exceed 4 square feet in area;
- H. Accessory warning signs that provide warnings such as "no parking," "watch dogs," and "security service" that are not illuminated, do not exceed 12 square feet in area, and do not project over a public right-of-way;
- I. Window signs;
- J. Signs required by the Fire Department to designate fire lanes;
- K. Tablets, memorials, and cornerstones that are built into the walls of a building, and provide information such as the name of the building and the date of construction;

## Documents referenced in this Information Bulletin

- San Diego Municipal Code, [\(SDMC\)](#)
- General Application, [DS-3032](#)
- Owner - Builder Verification, [DS-3042](#)
- [Information Bulletin 223](#), Specifications for Wood and Masonry Fences
- [Building Newsletter 17-3](#), Special Inspection Requirements for Structural Welding

L. Bulletin boards for charitable or religious organizations provided the signs do not exceed 16 square feet in area, do not project over a public right-of-way, and are not illuminated;

M. Temporary on-site banners, streamers, and pennants.

## III. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

An electrical permit will be required for an electric sign. A building permit may be required for some signs. If a structural or electrical engineering analysis is required, the analysis must be approved by the Building Official.

Signs are not inspected unless a building permit or electrical permit is required for the sign installation.

## IV. PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Site plan and elevation plan are necessary for staff to perform a complete plan check.

Plans lacking the minimum requirements will not be accepted for plan check.

A site plan is a drawing that shows the entire construction site and all structures existing and proposed including signs. These plans must be legible and drawn to scale and the scope of work must be clearly defined. The minimum page size is 11" x 17".

The following is a list of items required for a complete sign plan check:

- A. Completed General Application (DS-3032).
- B. A completed Owner-Builder Verification form (DS-3042), when required.

- C. Two copies of a site plan including all listed and illustrated information shown on Figure 1.
- D. Two copies of elevation plans including the following information:
  - 1. Sign dimensions
  - 2. Sign copy (words, symbols or emblems on the sign surface)
  - 3. Tenant frontage for wall signs
  - 4. Connection details/attachment methods, footing details, if applicable, and in some cases a structural design may be required
- E. Two copies of structural calculations when required. See Section VII.
- F. Two copies of electrical engineering analysis when required.

Illustrations of the different types of elevation plans are provided on Figures 2 through 6 of this Information Bulletin.

**V. OPTIONS FOR SERVICE**

**A. Appointment**

To schedule an appointment, call (619) 446-5300.

**B. Walk-In Service**

Visit the Development Services Department at 1222 1st Avenue, 3rd Floor, Check-In counter.

- 1. Properties with a prior discretionary permit and proposals requiring research will be taken in by staff for review.
- 2. Properties containing either historical resources or structures that are 45 or more years old will also be taken in by staff for review.

**VI. FEES**

In addition to the fees listed in the attached Table 1, the following administration fees will be added.

Issuance Fee.....	\$39
Records Fee.....	\$20
Mapping Fee.....	\$10
General Plan Maintenance Fee .....	\$275

**VII. STRUCTURAL CALCULATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SIGNS**

Structural calculations shall be prepared by a registered design professional (an architect or engineer) in the State of California to justify the adequacy of the structural system to resist seismic, wind, and dead loads of the sign.

Structural calculations are required for the following:

**A. Ground Signs (monument and pole signs)**

- 1. Monument sign more than 6 feet in height when measured from the top of the footing to the top of the sign. See Figure 4.
- 2. Pole sign more than 8 feet in height measured from the lowest grade to the top of the sign, with sign areas more than 50 square feet. See Figure 3.

**B. Wall signs**

Wall sign with an area more than 70 square feet (per sign box or channel letter) or weight more than 600 pounds (per sign box or channel letter). The maximum fastener spacing to the building structure shall not be more than 4 feet on center each way unless structural calculations are provided. See Figure 2.

**C. Projecting signs**

Projecting sign with an area more than 20 square feet or weight more than 250 pounds or more than 30 feet in height. See Figure 5.

**D. Awning or canopy signs**

Awning or canopy sign greater than 6 feet in height.

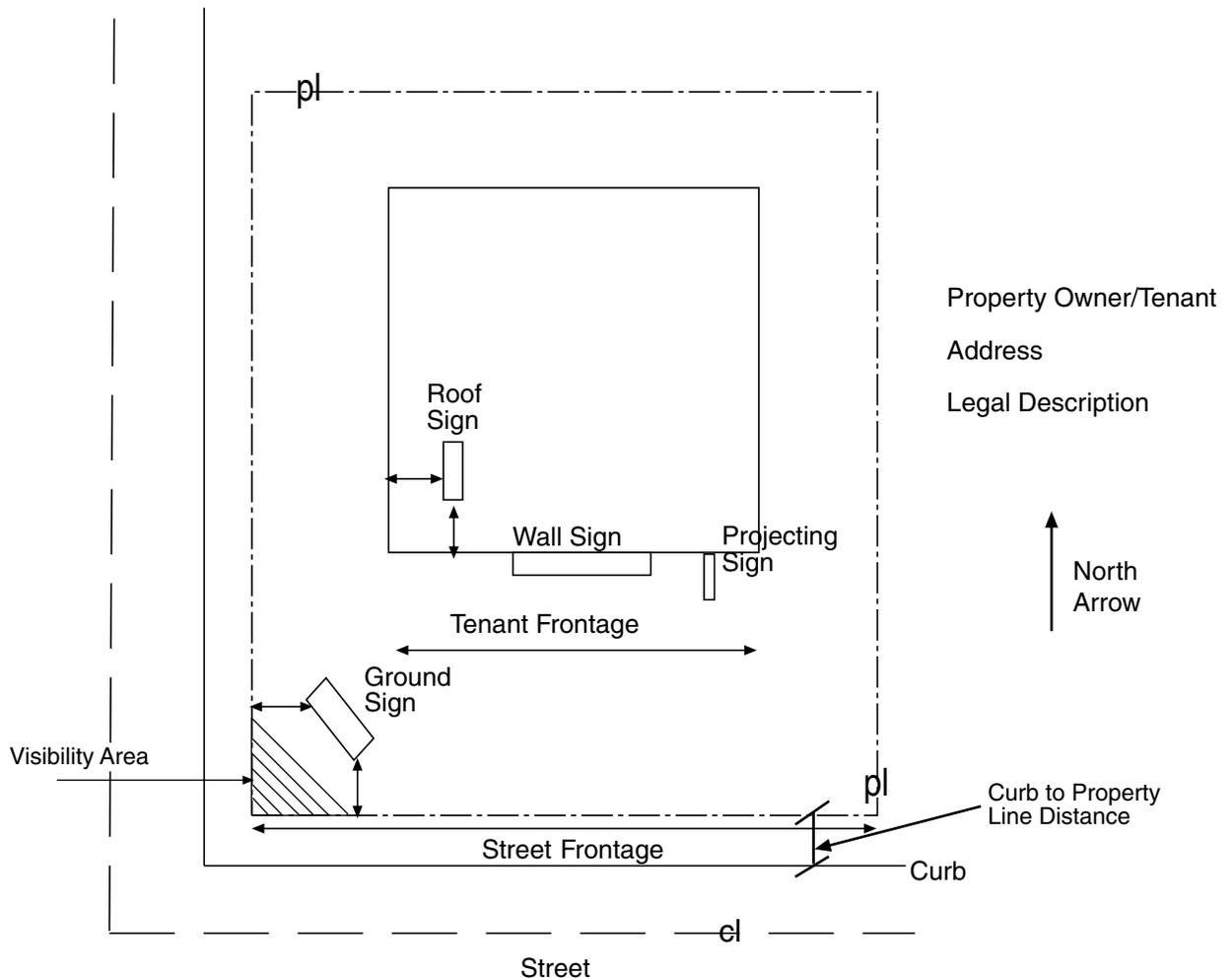
**E. Roof signs**

A sign mounted at or above the roof line. See Figure 6.

Figure 1 / Sample Site Plan

Checklist

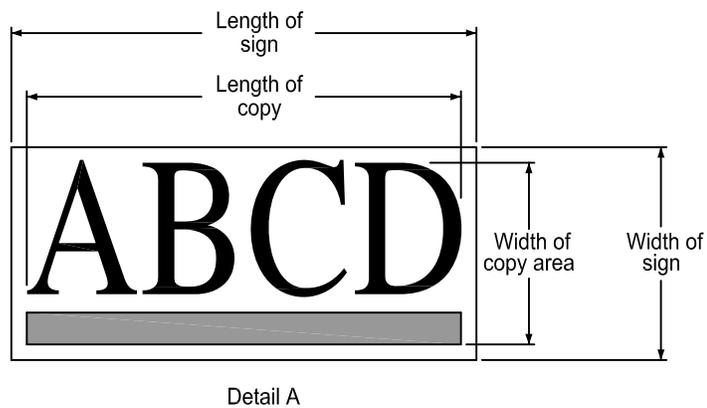
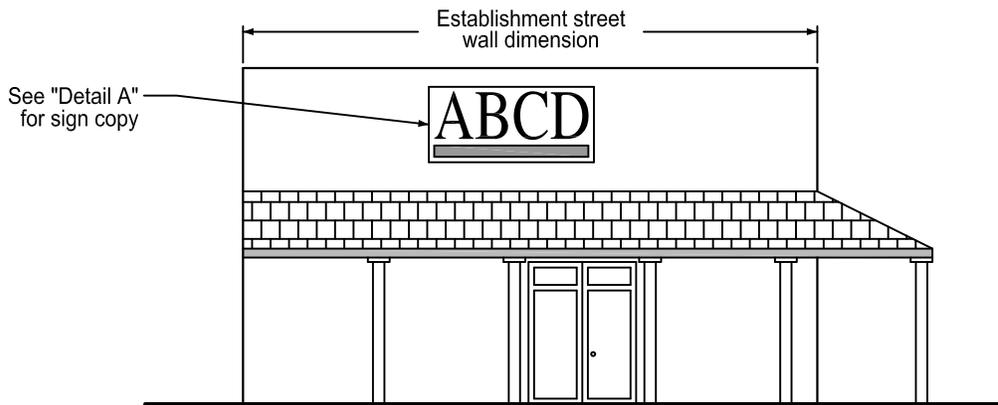
1. Vicinity Map
2. Dimension property lines.
3. Show and dimension all structures.
4. Dimension all signs existing and proposed.
5. Dimension the curb to property line distance or center line of street to property line.
6. Show public right-of-way width and speed limit.
7. Dimension the 25'-0" visibility area if proposing a ground sign.
8. Dimension the distance of the proposed roof sign to the edge of the roof.
9. Dimension the distance between the proposed ground sign and the property lines.
10. North arrow.
11. Provide a legal description of the property.  
This can be obtained at the County Assessor's Office located at 1600 Pacific Highway or by calling (619) 236-3771.
12. Provide the property owner/tenant information.
13. Provide the property address.



**Figure 2 / Typical wall sign**

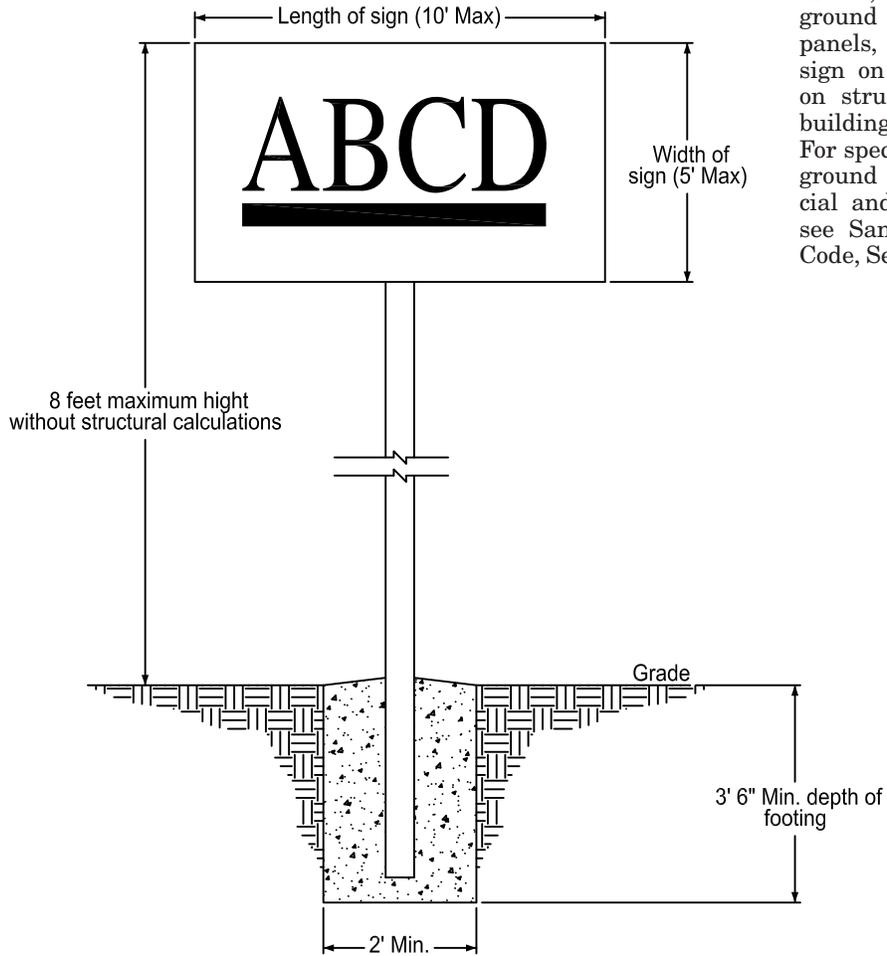
Wall sign means a sign attached to, or a sign copy area on, a structure or adjunct of a structure, including an equipment screen or dormer that completely screens the mechanical equipment of the structure, and has its exposed sign face parallel or approximately parallel to the plane of the structure to which the sign is attached.

For specific information on wall signs in commercial and industrial zones, see San Diego Municipal Code, Section 142.1225.

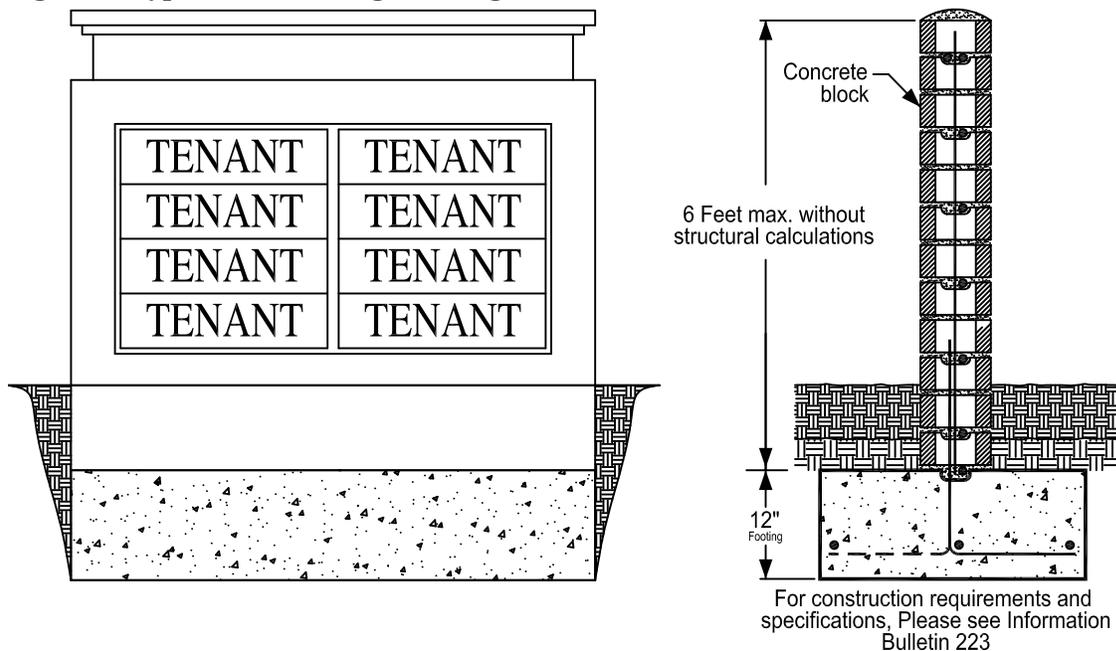


**Figure 3 / Typical pole ground sign**

Ground sign means any sign supported wholly by uprights, braces, or poles in or on the ground including poster panels, painted bulletins, sign on fences, and signs on structures other than buildings and canopies. For specific information on ground signs in commercial and industrial zones, see San Diego Municipal Code, Section 142.1240.

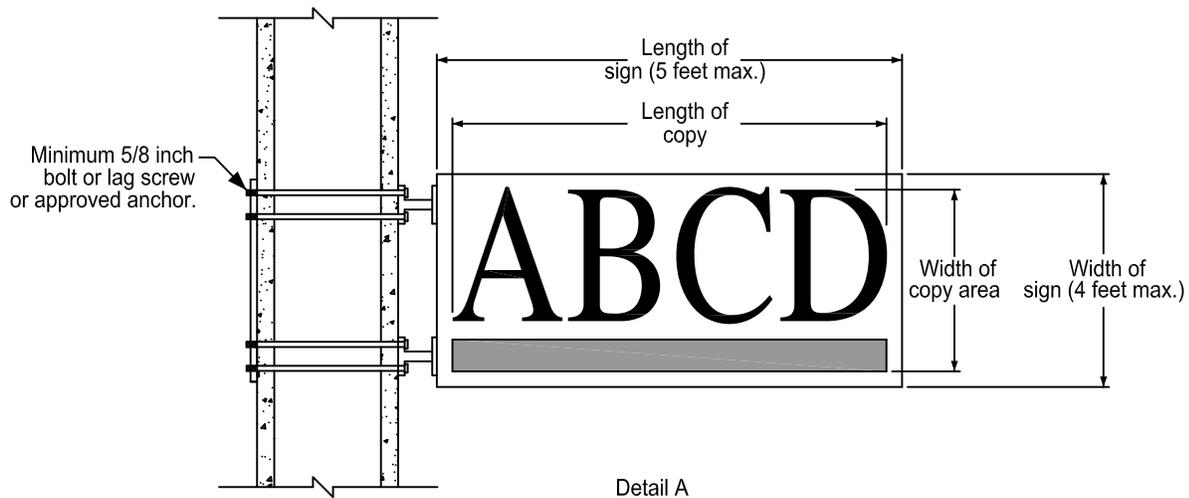
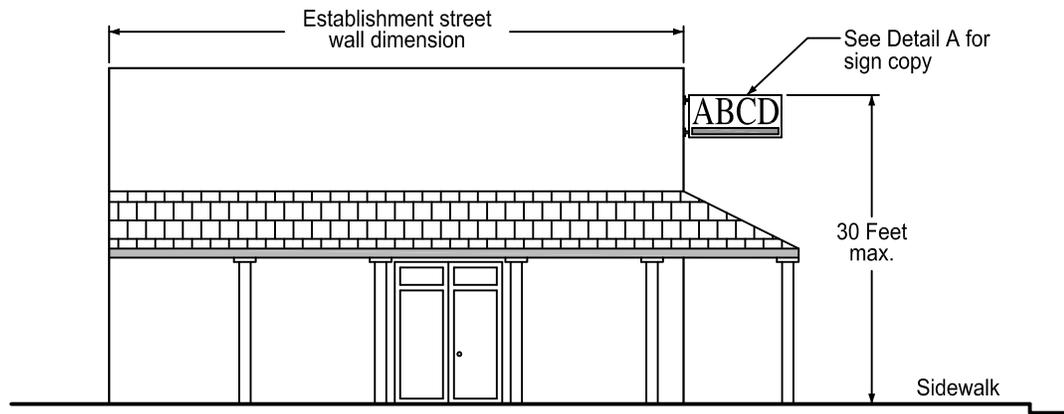


**Figure 4 / Typical monument ground sign**



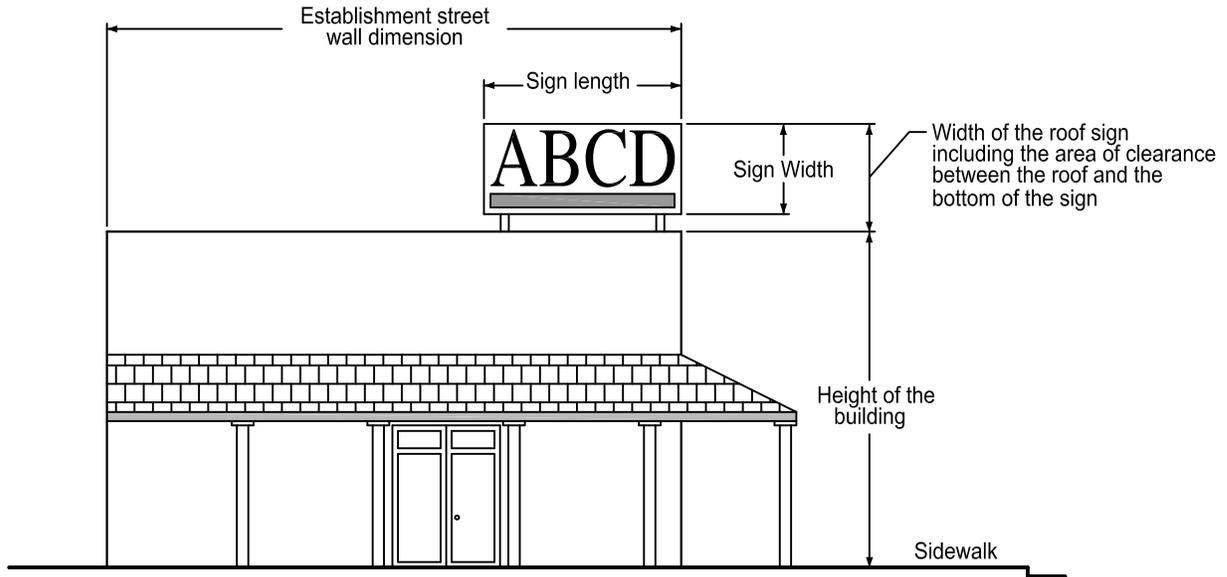
**Figure 5 / Typical projecting sign**

A projecting sign is any sign, other than a wall sign, that is attached to the wall and projects more than 18" from the building wall. One projecting sign is permitted for each premises with accessible street frontage. Projecting signs are not permitted in addition to a ground sign or a roof signs. For specific information on projecting signs in commercial and industrial zones, see San Diego Municipal Code, Section 142.1230.



**Figure 6 / Typical roof sign**

A roof sign is any sign that is attached to the roof and projects above the roof or roof eave. One roof sign is permitted for each premises with accessible street frontage. Roof signs are not permitted in addition to a ground sign or projecting sign, nor are they permitted in the coastal zones. For specific information on roof signs in commercial and industrial zones, see San Diego Municipal Code, Section 142.1235.



**Table 1  
Sign Permit Fees**

Type of Sign	Plan Check	Inspection*
Awning, Directional or Wall Sign, Non-Electric Or Electric self Contained - First	\$100.00	\$139.00
Awning, Directional or Wall Sign, Non-Electric Or Electric self Contained - Additional 2-5	\$63.00	\$76.00
Awning, Directional or Wall Sign, Non-Electric Or Electric self Contained - Each additional >5	\$50.00	\$50.00
Banner Signs - Each per banner district	\$125.00	\$101.00
Freeway Signs - Each	\$114.00	\$580.00
Ground/Roof/Projecting Signs - First	\$125.00	\$228.00
Ground/Roof/Projecting Signs - Additional 2-5	\$50.00	\$101.00
Ground/Roof/Projecting Signs -Each additional >5	\$37.00	\$101.00
Master Plan Sign Check - Each	\$187.00	-
Wall Sign Electric (component, remote supply) - Each	\$125.00	\$228.00
Wall Sign Electric (component, remote supply) - Additional 2-5	\$63.00	\$63.00
Wall Sign Electric (component, remote supply) - Each >5	\$37.00	\$63.00
Subdivision Directional Sign Permit - Each	\$495.00	\$89.00

\* No inspection fee is charged unless a building permit or electrical permit is required for the sign installation.