

SIGN PERMIT GUIDE

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT



SMITHS FALLS



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Introduction & Overview

This guide explains how the Town's Sign By-law regulates the location, size, number, construction, modification, repair, maintenance of all outdoor signs and window signs that are located on public or private property.

This guide will also explain how residents can put up signs that follow the rules set in the By-law and explain how merchants can utilize the Town's Community Improvement Plan (CIP) programs to fund the revitalization of their signage.



What is a sign?

A sign is a visual notice which attracts attention to a specific subject matter, other than itself. This can be for identification, information, or advertising purposes. The By-law's definition of a sign excludes small stickers that convey a notice in accordance with the regulations of another government agency. The By-law classifies eighteen groups of signs, a glossary attached to the guide will contain definitions for the different types of signs.

What is a sign permit?

A sign permit is a document that gives the holder permission to display, erect, install or maintain a sign on a specific property in accordance with the Sign By-law.

General Regulations

This section details some of the broad rules and regulations that need to be followed in order to get and operate a sign permit.

- Unless stated otherwise in the By-law, a sign permit must be obtained before a sign can go on public or private property.
- The sign must align with the details of the sign permit.
- If the sign is on a heritage designated property it may require additional planning approval from the Development Services Department to install a sign.
 - For more information view the “Municipal Heritage” page on the Town’s website or contact the Planning Clerk at 613-283-4124 ext. 1136 or at melmsley@smithsfalls.ca.



Figure 1: Examples of signs on designated heritage properties.

These signs were approved as they did not obscure any heritage attributes of the buildings.



- Signs need to be inspected after they are installed. The applicant is responsible for arranging an inspection with the Manager of Development Services.
- Sign permits become null and void upon the removal or modification of a sign.
- An application will be considered abandoned if it is incomplete for more than six months after first filed.
- Applications come with a fee outlined in Schedule ‘A’ of the Sign By-law. Fees are paid when a sign permit is collected.
- No permit or exception will be issued without the approval of all Town departments with jurisdiction over the property. Such as the Public Works and Utilities Department and the Community Services Department.
- If a sign is over 7 m tall (23 ft), or 91 kg (200 lbs.) in weight it requires a building permit, in addition to the sign permit.

Application Requirements

To be granted a sign permit, you must apply for one.

A completed sign permit application must have the following:

- The contact information for the property owner.
- The contact information for the permit applicant.
- The contact information for the sign installer.
- Drawings and plans that show the proposed location of the sign on the property or building.
 - The drawings must also include the location of all other signs on the property or building that require a permit, and the details of the sign supplier.
 - The drawings must also include the dimensions, foundations, supports, materials, and electrical components of the sign, and the method and material of attachment.
- If the sign requires a building permit, it also requires an engineering data certificate.
- Proof of possession of all other required permits, such as a building permit.
- A signed hold harmless agreement.
- Proof of insurance coverage in full force and effect with liability coverage not less than two million, naming the Town as additionally insured and covering the premises and business operations.
- Signs that require a permit in accordance with the Ontario Building Code Act may have to show proof of insurance coverage with an increased liability coverage of not less than five million.
 - One proof of insurance can be used to fulfill requirements for both the sign permit and the building permit.



Application Requirements

Once receiving an application, the Town will respond within 15 days, explaining whether the application is approved, rejected, or incomplete.

- The applicant can appeal the results, which done by submitting a written request for an exception. The written request must include the sections of the By-law in which exceptions are requested and an explanation describing why the exception is desired and appropriate.
- If an exception is requested from Section 9 (Signs Within the Downtown Core) of the By-law, the written request must include a rationale demonstrating that the proposal is appropriate for the age and style of the building.
- Any previously constructed signs associated with the building cannot be used to measure the appropriateness of the proposed sign.
- Council has the authority to grant exceptions to the By-law, except when a sign is a “minor deviation”. If the sign is a minor deviation, the Manager of Development Services can grant exceptions

Minor deviations

- Minor deviations from the Sign By-law are exception requests under:
 - Section 7 (Temporary Signs)
 - Section 9 (Signs Within the Downtown Core)
 - Section 11 (Residential Signs) except when the Zoning By-law takes precedence.
- Minor deviations also include exception requests relating to:
 - Signs within the neighborhood commercial zone (apart from Ground signs).
 - Signs that do not encroach onto Town land (except if they are Projecting or Portable signs).

Application and Appealing Flowchart

Application requirements

- The Manager's decision regarding minor deviations can be appealed within 30 days of the notification by a written request to the Town Clerk for consideration by Council.
- Any decision made by council is final.
- Exceptions requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and any decisions regarding an exception to the By-law do not influence any other exception application.

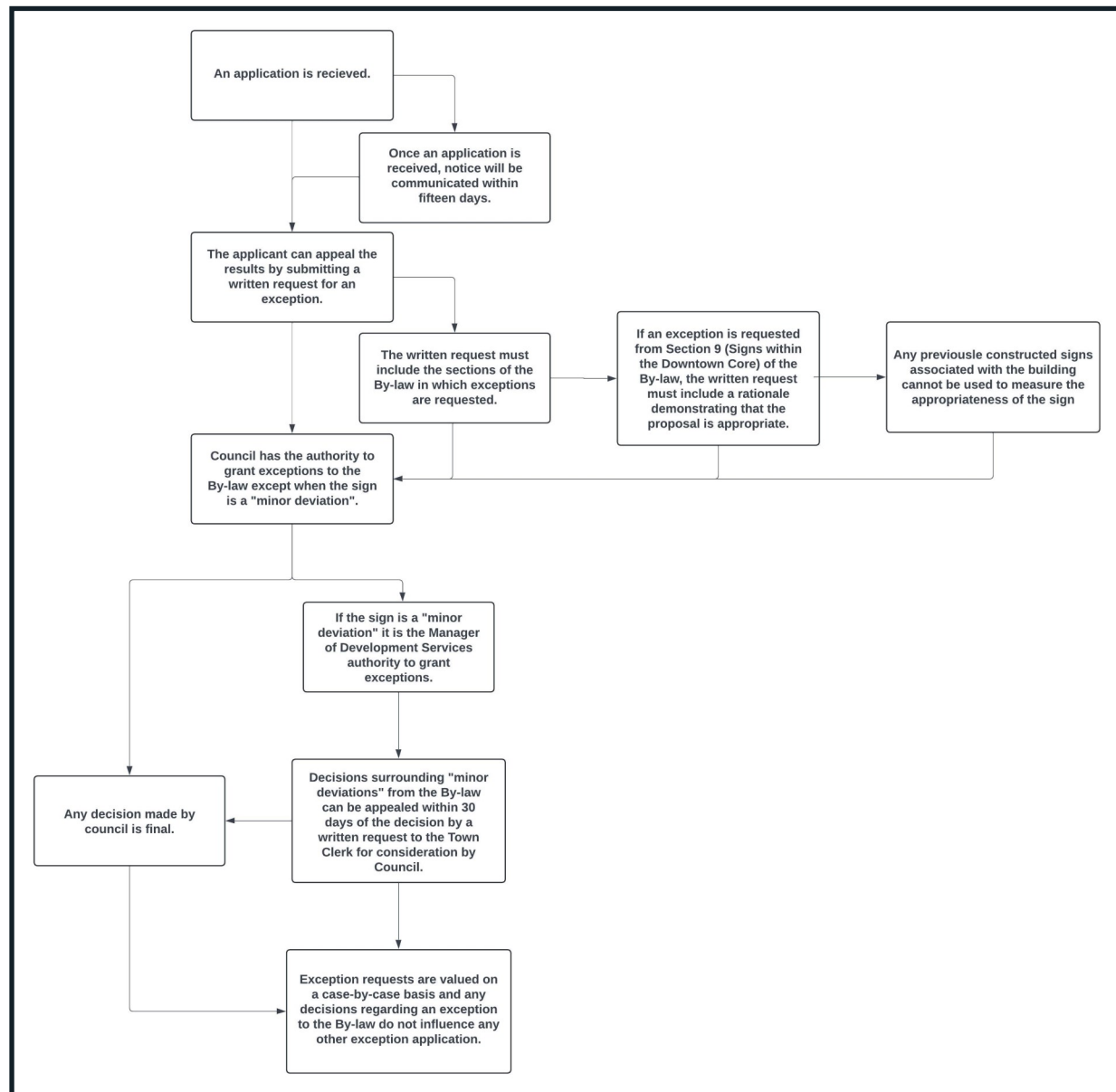


Figure 2: Sign permit application and appealing process.

Exemptions

The following signs do not require a permit:

- Memorial, commemorative, or heritage signs, tablets, and plaques.
- Flags with the crest, logo, or insignia of a political, religious, or charitable organization as long as there is a maximum of 3 flags on a property. This includes national and provincial flags.
- A sign or cornerstone built into the building's wall that states the date the building was erected.
- Signs less than 0.5 m² (5.4 ft²) in area that indicate the property address.
- Warning and other signs less than 0.5 m² (5.4 ft²) in area that regulate the use of a property.
- Directional signs on private property.
- Signs for the purpose of public convenience, such as public washroom signs.
- Election signs
- Town approved public information signs, such as hand washing signs, or no littering signs.
- Mural signs outside the Downtown Core with a width at least 80% of the width of the building's exterior wall that the sign is on.
- Temporary signs that advertise community events run by church, community, charitable, or other non-commercial organizations so long as the sign:
 - Has a maximum face area of 1.5 m² (16 ft²).
 - Is located on private property.
 - Is set back 1 m (3.3 ft) from the property line.
 - Is less than 0.5 m (1.6 ft) in height if it is in a sight triangle.
 - Is up for a maximum of 7 days.
 - Is removed the day after the event.



Figure 3: Example of a Heritage Plaque that does not require a permit.



Figure 4: Example of a sign that regulates the use of a property. This sign does not require a permit.

Exemptions

The following signs do not require a permit:

- Portable signs if:
 - A maximum of one Portable sign is put up for a single business within a non-residential zone.
 - If the property has more than one business, a maximum of one Portable sign is placed per every 15 m (49.2 ft) of lot frontage
 - The signs do not have more than 2 sign faces.
 - The sign does not exceed a maximum sign face area of 1 m² (10.8 ft²).
 - The sign is set back a minimum of 0.5 m (1.6 ft) from a bicycle lane or the driven portion of a road.
 - The sign must maintain at least 1.5 m (5 ft) of clear sidewalk space.
 - The sign is securely placed.
 - The sign does not encroach on the frontage of neighboring properties.
 - The Portable sign is only set out during operating business hours.
 - The sign is removed between November 15th and March 31st if placed within 1 m (3.3 ft) of a sidewalk or road.
- Signs on roads that have been approved by the Director of Public Works and Utilities.
- Signs in parks that have been approved by the Director of Community Services.



Figure 5: Examples of Real Estate Signs that do not require permits.



Figure 6: Example of a Portable Sign that does not require a permit.

Exemptions

The following signs do not require a permit:

- Real Estate Signs under 1 m² (10.8 ft²) within a residential zone as long as:
 - A maximum of 1 real estate sign is erected per 25 m (82 ft) of road frontage.
 - A maximum of 2 real estate signs are erected per 25 m (82 ft) of road frontage if the property has frontage on two roads.
- Real Estate Signs under 3 m² (32.3 ft²) within a residential zone provided that a maximum of 1 real estate sign is erected per 50 m (164 ft) of road frontage.
- Construction Signs
- Posters affixed to poster panels.
- Non-visible signs within a building.
- A permanent, non-illuminated sign that has a sign face area less than 0.5 m² (5.4 ft²).



Figure 7: Example of a Permanent, Non-Illuminated Sign that does not require a permit.

Figure 8: Example of a Internal Sign that does not require a permit.



- Window Signs if:
 - The sign is on the interior side of the window.
 - The sign does not exceed 50% of the window area.
- Yard Sale Signs if:
 - Permission has been granted to put up the sign by the owner of the property.
 - The signs are posted in any permitted location within 72 hours before the event, and the signs are removed before 7:00 pm on the final day of the event.



Figure 9: Example of a Window Sign that does not require a permit.

Prohibited Signs

The following signs are prohibited by the Sign By-law.

- Signs that do not comply with the Sign By-law, Provincial legislation, or Federal legislation.
- Signs that interfere with utility wires or associated supports.
- Signs attached to traffic signs, lights, or control devices unless permitted by the Director of Public Works and Utilities.
- Any sign that obstructs parking spaces or the vision of drivers and pedestrians.
- Signs in sight triangles unless they are less than 0.5 m² (5.4 ft²) or have been approved by the Director of Public Works and Utilities.
- Signs that make use of words and symbols that confuse or mislead traffic.
- Signs that display the Town logo without permission.
- Signs that emit a sound, odor, gas, liquid or solid.
- Signs that have a portion of the sign above the roof of a building.
- Ground signs or free-standing signs taller than 2.5 m (8.2 ft) that are within 15 m (49.2 ft) of a traffic sign.
- Signs that obstruct parking spaces.
- Signs attached to or supported by a tree or other natural object.
- Non-banner signs supported by external wires and cables.
- Signs that obstruct any required fire escapes or delay access to emergency services.
- Signs on Town land that are not approved by the Town.

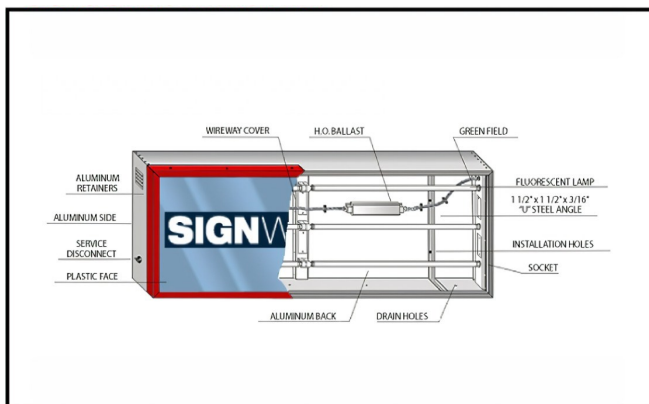


Figure 10: Example of a prohibited sign.

If this Cabinet Box Sign was requested to be built in the Downtown Core today it would not be approved as Cabinet Box Signs are prohibited in the Downtown Core. Multiple Cabinet Box Signs exist in the Downtown Core today as they have been grandfathered in under the current bylaw.

Temporary Signs

A Temporary sign is any sign designed to be used for more than seven days but less than a year is allowed if:

- They have a face area less than 4 m² (43 ft²).
- They are kept in a proper state of repair and are not unsafe, unsightly, or dangerous.
- The signs are free standing under environmental influence.
- If a Temporary sign is on public lands, it cannot be within a sight triangle, nor interfere with municipal operations, and pedestrian or vehicular traffic. The appropriateness of these signs will be determined by the Manager of Development Services.
- Signs are erected for no more than 30 consecutive days and are removed within one day following an event.
- A maximum of 6 banner signs, banners, or portable signs may be erected on any property at any one time.
- Temporary Ground signs designed to be towed by a vehicle will be permitted if:
 - They are in a commercial or industrial zone.
 - It is a minimum of 6 m (19.7 ft) from any driveway.
 - The sign is not on Town land.
 - Only one sign is placed on one property at a time.
- Sign permits for Temporary Ground signs are only valid for periods of 6 months at a time.



Figure 11: Example of a Temporary Sign.



Figure 12: Example of a Portable Sign.

General Provisions

Awning and Canopy Signs

- One Awning or Canopy sign is allowed in accordance with the following requirements:
 - The sign must be located on the side of the building that gives the building access to the road or sidewalk.
 - Businesses within a building that has more than one building face oriented towards a road or sidewalk may be permitted one additional Fascia or Mural sign if the building face does not already contain an Awning or Canopy sign.
 - The sign must be mounted parallel to the exterior wall of the building it is on
 - The sign must not project more than 1.2 m (3.9 ft) horizontally from the exterior wall of the building it is on.
 - The sign is at least 2.6 m (8.5 ft) above the highest point of the finished grade.
 - If the sign is on a multiple storey building, the sign cannot extend above the bottom of the above storey windowsill.

Fascia Signs

- One Fascia sign shall be permitted in accordance with the following:
 - The sign must be mounted parallel to the exterior wall of the building it is on.
 - If a business has multiple building faces oriented towards a road, one Fascia or Mural sign is allowed for each building face that faces towards a road.
 - The sign cannot project more than 0.2 m (0.7 ft) from the exterior wall of the building it is on.
 - In the case of a multiple storey building, the sign shall not extend above the bottom of the above storey windowsill.



General Provisions

Projecting Signs

- One Projecting sign shall be permitted in accordance with the following:
 - The sign shall be located on the side of the building that has direct access to a road or sidewalk.
 - Signs that project more than one meter from the exterior wall of the building need to be reviewed by engineers as required by the Ontario Building Code Act.
 - Signs that project onto a municipal right of way may need further approval from the Town.
 - The bottom edge of the sign face must be a minimum of 2.6 m (8.5 ft) above the highest point of the finished grade.
 - The sign must be double-faced.
 - The sign cannot exceed 1 m² (10.8 ft²) in the total sign face area.
 - The sign cannot be free swinging.
 - The sign cannot be illuminated externally.

Multi-Unit Buildings

- Buildings that house more than one business are subjected to the following requirements.
 - They are limited to one Awning or Canopy sign above each public entrance to the building.
 - Individual businesses are allowed their own signs in accordance with the By-law.
 - Signs must be located on the exterior wall that forms part of the individual business or the exterior wall which provides main access to the individual business.
 - Signs for individual businesses shall have a minimum width which is 80% of the width of the unit occupied by the applicable business.
 - If a building has entrance provides direct access to more than one business, an additional Fascia sign is allowed if used as a business directory. The sign face area is 1 m² (10.8 ft²).

Zoning Based Regulations

Downtown Core

- A maximum of one Projecting Sign and one Portable Sign are allowed per property. These signs must follow the general provisions of the Sign By-law.
- Awning, Canopy, and Fascia Signs must have a minimum width that is at least 80% of the width of the exterior wall of the building.
- Signs cannot obstruct architectural details of buildings.
- Cabinet Box Signs, Readograph Signs, Mural Signs, Moving Signs, and Signs attached to Awning, Canopy, or Projecting Signs are prohibited in the downtown core.



Figure 13: Example of a Proportional Fascia Sign.

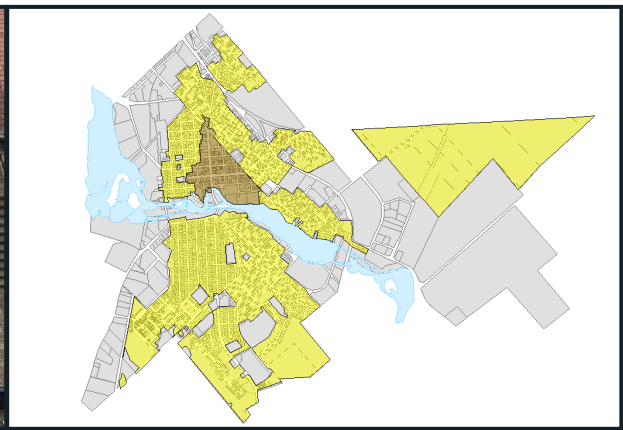


Figure 14: Map of the Downtown Core (Brown) and Residential zones (yellow).

Residential Zones

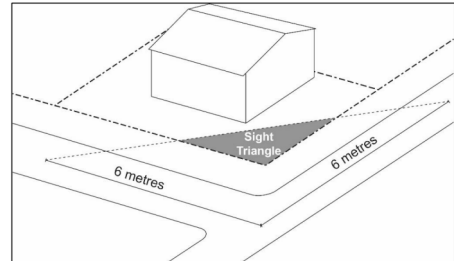
- In general, signs are not allowed within residential zones; the exceptions are:
 - Home occupation signs as long as the sign is less than 0.3 m² (3.3 ft²) in size.
 - One Fascia or Ground Sign is allowed at multi-unit residential buildings. The sign must identify the name of the building and/or the municipal address. The sign cannot exceed 2 m (6.6 ft) in height and 4 m² (43 ft²) in area.
 - One additional Fascia sign per multi-unit building is allowed provided that it advertises residential vacancies within the building, and has contact information for inquirers. These signs are permitted as temporary signs for a period of no more than one year, and are limited to 4 m² (43 ft²) in face area.

Zoning Based Regulations

Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional (ICI) Zones

- In addition to signs mounted on an exterior wall of a building, ICI properties can have up to one permanently affixed Ground Sign if:
 - It has no more than 2 faces, and is not in a sight triangle.
 - The sign has a maximum sign face area of 15 m^2 (161.5 ft^2) per sign face.
 - The outer edge of the sign is set back a minimum of 3 m (9.8 ft) from all property lines along a road or road allowance.
 - The outer edge of the sign is set back a minimum of 1 m (3.3 ft) from all other property lines.
- Signs within an Industrial or Institutional zone are further subject to the following:
 - Canopy signs are only permitted above the designated main entrance to a building.
 - Awning and Projecting signs are prohibited.
 - Projecting signs are prohibited in the Community Shopping Centre Zone.
 - Gas stations and related businesses are allowed to have Fascia signs on the outer edge of a free-standing canopy as long as the sign does not extend more than 0.2 m (0.7 ft) from the canopy's edge.
- One Off-site sign is permitted for a business within the downtown core, the Corridor Commercial or an Industrial zone as long as the off-site sign:
 - Is constructed as a free-standing sign, so it stands upright under environmental influence.
 - Has a sign face area less than 4 m^2 (43 ft^2).
 - Is not within 40 m (131.2 ft) of a residential building.
 - Is on vacant property.
 - Is not within 90 m (295.3 ft) of another Off-site sign.

Figure 15: Diagram of a Sight Triangle.



Entrance Features

Entrance features shall:

- Be set back at least 1.5 m (4.9 ft) from the back edge of a sidewalk or other municipal right-of-way.
 - Not be in a sight triangle.
 - Maintain at least 2 m (6.6 ft) of separation from structure and driveways.
- An Entrance Feature is a sign with ornamental or landscaping features that indicates the entrance to a planned community, development, district or neighbourhood.*
- Signs associated with entrance features shall:
 - Be designed as permanent ground signs.
 - Have a maximum of two sign faces.
 - Not have lights.
 - Be weather resistant.
 - Not interfere with utility wires and supports.
 - A proposal for an entrance feature is a written proposal that outlines:
 - The contact information of the contractor installing the entrance feature.
 - The contact information of the applicant.
 - The contact information of the property owner.
 - Drawings and plans that demonstrate:
 - The location of the entrance features on the property.
 - Details of the sign supplier and manufacturer.
 - The dimensions, foundations, construction supports, sizes, wiring, materials, and components of the sign.
 - The method and materials of attachment.
 - Data engineering certificate (if required).
 - Proof of possession of any other required permits.
 - Signed hold harmless agreement.
 - Proof of insurance coverage in full force and effect with liability coverage of not less than 5 million.
 - A proposal to provide for the financial responsibility of the long-term maintenance of the entrance feature for a period of at least 20 years.



Miscellaneous

Development Signs

- Development signs can only be erected if:
 - The sign exclusively advertises a new or proposed development located on the same property that the sign is on, unless the off-site sign:
 - Is constructed as a free-standing sign, so it stands upright under influence from the environment.
 - Has a sign face area less than 4 m²(43 m²).
 - Is not within 40 m (131.2 ft) of a residential building.
 - Is on vacant property.
 - Is not within 90 m (295.3 ft) of another off-site sign.
 - There is a maximum of 2 development signs on the property of a new or proposed development.
 - The sign is removed within 60 days of construction being completed.

Site Plan Control

- Where a site plan control agreement approved by the Town provides standards for signs at a specific development, such signs shall be deemed to comply with this By-law, however they still need a sign permit.



Figure 16: Example of a Development Sign.

Non-Conformance

- Non-conforming signs that existed before the sign By-law came into effect are grandfathered until the business the sign represents becomes inactive, or the sign changes.
 - A grandfathered sign can be replaced with a sign that has the exact same design, material and configuration.

Maintenance & Enforcement

Maintenance

- The sign permit holder is responsible for maintaining the sign in a proper state of repair so that the sign does not become unsafe, unsightly, or dangerous.
- Signs must be operational.
- Any sign which advertises an inactive business must be removed within sixty days of the business' closing.
- Signs and their structural components must be designed to satisfy the Ontario Building Code Act to effectively resist all potential environmental impacts.

Enforcement

The Sign By-Law is intended to allow people to create safe, structurally sound signs that fit into the appropriate environment. Any sign erected without a sign permit shall be subject to a fee described in Schedule 'A'. Fees are due when a Sign Permit is issued.

- If a sign is put up in violation of an approval, or needs an approval but does not have one, then the Town will have to enforce the By-law. The enforcement process is started by a written order where the sign owner will need to do one of the following actions.
 - Submit a sign permit application.
 - Repair or modify a damaged, unsafe, or inappropriate sign.
 - Remove the offending sign.
- Where the repair, modification, or removal of the sign is a matter of extreme urgency, the Manager of Development Services may opt for a verbal notice with a reduced timeframe.
- If the notice is not complied with within the specified timeframe, the Town reserves the right to enter the property to remove the sign.



Design Guidelines & CIP

Zoning By-law

- Sight Triangles
 - Structures, in this case signs cannot exceed 0.8 m (2.6 ft) above grade within a sign triangle.

Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

The Community Improvement Plan (CIP) intake application is a way for Smiths Falls residents and businesses to get support from the Town when improving their properties. The CIP program allows residents to apply for rebates to improve the façade and signage of their properties among other improvements. Façade and signage improvement rebates are available for property owners, and tenants (with permission from the property owner) within the Downtown and Waterfront Sub-Area as shown in the CIP.

Section 4 (Page 10) of the CIP shows an outline of the general conditions that must be met when applying for funding. Section 5.4 (Page 30) details how program 13 of the CIP has specific conditions that must be met when applying for funding for façade and signage improvements.

The CIP has two intake periods, spring and fall. Merchants can only apply for CIP funding during these intake periods.



Figure 17: Downtown and Waterfront Sub-Area (yellow).

Downtown Core Design Guidelines

The Downtown Core Design Guidelines provide references for merchants looking to update and revitalize their facades. These guidelines indicate what the Town wants from merchants, and what is supported by the community improvement plan.

Page 20 of the Downtown Core Design Guidelines explain the Town's desire for signage in the Downtown Core. Design choices that include easy-to-read lettering, high contrasting backgrounds, and high quality materials are encouraged.

Glossary

Type of Sign	Definition	Photo
Awning Sign	A sign that is on the visible face of a roof like fabric structure supported by the exterior wall.	
Banner	A temporary sign made of lightweight material, so it moves under the influence of the environment. The shape of the sign is not maintained.	
Banner Sign	A sign made of lightweight material, so it moves under environmental influence. The shape of the sign is maintained using some structural elements.	
Cabinet Box Sign	A sign that is enclosed within a rectangular or square structure that projects at least 0.2 meters from the wall. It may have internal lighting.	
Canopy Sign	A sign applied to the visible face of a canopy or a sign hanging from the underside of a canopy.	

Glossary

Type of Sign	Definition	Photo
Construction Sign	A temporary sign that identifies the location of ongoing construction.	
Development Sign	A sign advertising a new multi-unit residential development, a new commercial development, or a new subdivision within the Town.	
Directional Sign	A sign used to instruct or direct pedestrian and/or vehicle traffic on a private property.	
Fascia Sign	A single faced sign secured parallel to the main wall of a building. It is securely located within a sign band or between architectural detailing.	
Free-Swinging Sign	A sign secured to a building or structure by a single side and designed to move with influence from the environment.	

Glossary

Type of Sign

Definition

Photo

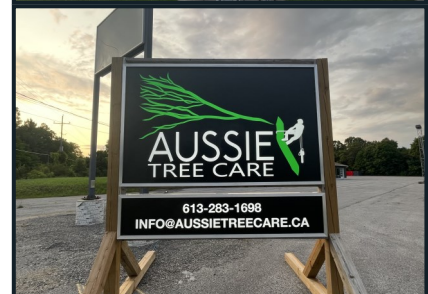
Ground Sign

A sign directly supported by the ground without the aid of any structure other than the sign itself.



Luminous Sign

A backlit or internally illuminated sign.



Mural Sign

A sign applied directly to the surface of a structure without using a mountable surface for backing. Used for advertising, identification, and information. (The example provided is not a proper mural sign, the "sign" portion needs to be more prominent).



Off-Site Sign

A sign used for advertising erected and displayed at a location other than the location at which the goods or services advertised are made, provided, or sold.



Portable Sign

A moveable ground sign with no more than 1 m² of sign face area which is used for the purpose of displaying goods or services offered by a business.



Glossary

Type of Sign	Definition	Photo
Projecting Sign	A sign secured to an exterior wall of a building or structure which projects away from the building, but is not an awning sign.	
Public Information Sign	Signs that identify hospitals, schools, libraries, and other public facilities. A public information sign also includes signs erected by the Town for the purpose of informing the public.	
Readograph Sign	A non-digital sign that allows for the sign's message to be easily rearranged.	
Real Estate Sign	A sign used as a notification that a property is planned to be sold, leased, or rented. Must include contact information.	
Temporary Sign	Any sign which is used on a temporary basis, or is displayed for more than seven days, but less than on year at a time.	

Glossary

Type of Sign

Definition

Photo

Traffic Sign

A sign used to direct vehicle traffic.



Window Sign

A sign applied to a window for the purpose of advertising. Must be translucent.



Yard Sale Sign

A temporary sign created to promote a yard or garage sale.



