

Article 12 – Signs

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- Do the City's sign regulations regulate the content of signs?
 - No
 - The sign regulations cover type, number, location, and size of signs on private property in order to maintain and enhance the character of the City's neighborhoods and to protect the public from potentially hazardous and distracting displays

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- What types of signs can I have on my property?
 - Permanent signs (all of the following are allowed in residential districts)
 - Wall signs
 - Projecting signs
 - Temporary signs (all of the following are allowed in residential districts)
 - Flags (no limit on duration)
 - Decorative lighting and displays associated with holidays, festivals, special events
 - When a dwelling unit on the property is being advertised for sale or lease
 - For a period of 120 days prior to and 14 days after an election
 - Up to 7 days immediately preceding and during a special event that is occurring on the property

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- I thought you said the City doesn't regulate content of signs?
 - Correct, the City's sign ordinance does not regulate the content of signs. So, the temporary sign regulations only place restrictions on WHEN a sign can be placed on a property, not WHAT the sign can say.
 - For example, you can have a sign on your property during an election period, but it doesn't necessarily have to have anything to do with the election.

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- Are flags considered signs?
 - Yes
 - A flag is defined as “a piece of durable fabric of other flexible material containing distinctive colors, patterns, standards, words, or emblems which hangs loose from a staff or pole or is attached directly to a building”

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- More about flags...
 - Each individual property is permitted up to 3 flags, plus 1 per each dwelling unit on the property
 - Flags on properties in residential districts can't be larger than 12 sq. ft.
 - Flags attached to a pole on a building can't project more than 6 sq. ft. from the building
 - There are no time limitations on how long flags can be displayed

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- Are there any limitations on the size of signs in residential districts?
 - A temporary sign (excluding flags or special event signs) can be up to 6 sq. ft. in area and can't be higher than 4' off the ground
 - If your temporary sign is larger, you can apply for a sign permit from the City to allow your sign to be up to 16 sq. ft. in area.
 - Flags can't be larger than 12 sq. ft.
 - Special event signs have no size or location limits
 - Wall signs can be a maximum of 4 sq. ft.
 - Projecting signs can be a maximum of 2 sq. ft.

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- Are there any restrictions on where signs can be located in residential districts?
 - A temporary freestanding sign must be setback 7' from any property line
 - Wall signs or projecting signs may only be located on the side of the building that has frontage on a street
 - No signs can be placed in such a manner as to create a traffic safety hazard

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- Can I illuminate my signs?
 - Permanent wall signs or projecting signs in residential districts can not be illuminated
 - Any temporary signs can have illumination

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- Do I need permission to put up a sign on my property?
 - In residential districts, the following signs DO NOT REQUIRE A SIGN PERMIT
 - Any permanent sign that is no larger than 4 sq. ft. that is for a general directive or informational nature (e.g. property address)
 - Flags
 - Decorative lighting and displays associated with holidays, festivals, special events
 - Temporary signs that are no larger than 6 sq. ft.
 - All other signs require a sign permit issued by the City of Portsmouth

FAQ's for Residential Properties

- Where can I find more information about what signs are allowed on my property?
 - Article 12 of the City's Zoning Ordinance --
http://files.cityofportsmouth.com/files/planning/zoning/ZoningOrd_190101.pdf
 - Contact the Planning Department directly at 603-610-7216, Vincent Hayes is the Planning Department staff person in charge of sign review