



# Fremont BUSINESS SIGN GUIDE

This handout is intended to guide most businesses through the process of determining sign allowance(s), types of signs, and possible locations for signs in most situations. If your business is located in a multi-tenant building, a shopping center or is a service station there is likely a Master Sign Program that will take precedence over this guide. Your property owner, your property management company or the City can assist you if you are uncertain. There are also a number of unique sign options that may allow for alternative/special signage. These are discussed at the end of this guide.

Before you get started you will need to know some facts about your property. Development Services Center staff can assist you with items denoted in ***bold italics***.

## Here is what you will need to know to get started:

1. My property's ***General Plan land use designation*** is: \_\_\_\_\_.  
You can also identify your designation on this map [www.fremont.gov/landuse](http://www.fremont.gov/landuse)
2. I have \_\_\_\_\_ lineal feet of building frontage (BF) facing a street.
  - This allows you to calculate how many square feet of sign area you may have on your building.
  - Each building frontage creates its own allowable sign area. Sign area may not be transferred.
3. I have \_\_\_\_\_ lineal feet of property ***street frontage (SF)*** on which the building is located.
  - This allows you to calculate how many square feet of sign area you may have available for a freestanding sign.
  - Each street frontage creates its own allowable sign area. Sign area may not be transferred.
4. Locate your land use designation in either the commercial or industrial table to determine:
  - a) The type of signs you may be allowed
  - b) The allowable area (square feet) for both building and freestanding signs, and
  - c) Permitting requirements for your proposed sign(s).
5. Once you have decided on a sign or sign types, review the standards for that type of sign on the pages that follow.

## Need Assistance?

Requests made via the following two methods are typically **responded to within 24 hours**:

- Contact [planning@fremont.gov](mailto:planning@fremont.gov) and leave the address for the sign and asking for assistance with specific questions.
- Leave a message on the “Zoning Line” at (510) 494-4555 leaving the address for the sign and asking for assistance with specific questions.

OR

Visit the Development Services Center at 39550 Liberty Street

- Make an appointment (recommended) by calling (510) 494-4443
- Stop in Monday-Thursday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday 8 a.m. to 12 noon  
Please note that wait times vary depending on volume of business.

## Commercial Sign Table

General Plan Land Use Designation (Location)	Building Mounted Signs					Freestanding Signs		
	Basic Permittable Area (BPA)	Walls & Windows	Awning & Canopy	Marquee	Projecting or Suspended (Blade) <sup>1</sup>	Basic Permittable Area (BPA)	Pole	Monument
<b>City Center<sup>2</sup> &amp; Downtown<sup>3</sup></b>	1.3 x BF	P Only surface / halo illumination	P	MSP / D	P	0.5 x SF Max 130 sq. ft.	X	P <sup>4</sup> D by MSP
<b>Regional Commercial</b>	1.7 x BF, Max 300 sq.ft.	P	X	MSP / D	X	0.5 x SF Max 130 sq.ft.	CUP	P D by MSP
<b>General Commercial</b>	1.2 x BF	P	X	MSP / D	X	0.5 x SF Max 130 sq.ft.	MSP	P D by MSP
<b>Centerville Town Center<sup>5</sup></b>	1.2 & no greater than 1/3 width of storefront	P	P on vertical surfaces of awning	MSP	P	0.5 x SF Max 130 sq.ft.	MSP	P
<b>Irvington Town Center<sup>6</sup></b>	1.2 x BF	P (external illumination only)	P on vertical surfaces of awning	MSP	P	0.5 x SF Max 130 sq.ft.	MSP	P
<b>Mission San Jose Town Center<sup>7</sup></b>	1 X BF	P (wall signs limited to 10sf & external illumination only)	P on vertical surfaces of awning	MSP	P	0.5 x SF Max 100 sq.ft.	X	MSP
<b>Niles Town Center<sup>8</sup></b>	1 X BF	P (wall signs limited to 10 sq.ft. & external illumination only, excepting one exposed neon sign ≤ 3 sq.ft.)	P on vertical surfaces of awning	MSP	P	0.5 x SF Max 130 sq.ft.	X	X Directional signs for parking lots only
<b>Warm Springs Town Center</b>	1.2 x BF	P	X	MSP/D	P	0.5 x SF Max 130 sq.ft.	MSP	P D by MSP

Key		Permit Types	
BF	Building Frontage	CUP	Subject to Conditional Use Permit
SF	Street Frontage	MSP	Allowable only with a Master Sign Program
sq.ft.	square feet	P	Permitted with sign/building permit
D	Digital sign for assembly use only	X	Prohibited

<sup>1</sup> Only one projecting or suspended/blade sign is permitted per tenant.

<sup>2</sup> See City Center Plan

<sup>3</sup> See Downtown Community Plan & Design Guidelines

<sup>4</sup> Monument signs in the Downtown area are only permitted on Mowry, Fremont, Paseo Padre and Walnut

<sup>5</sup> See Centerville Sign Design Guidelines

<sup>6</sup> See Irvington Design Guidelines

<sup>7</sup> See Mission San Jose Design Guidelines

<sup>8</sup> See Niles Design Guidelines and Regulations

## Industrial Sign Table

General Plan Land Use Designation  (Location)	Building Mounted Signs			Freestanding Signs		
	Basic Permittable Area (BPA)	Wall & Window	Marquee	Basic Permittable Area BPA	Pole	Monument
<b>Service &amp; Tech Industrial</b>	1 x BF Max 200 sq.ft.	P D by MSP	MSP / D	0.5 x SF Max 120 sq.ft.	MSP	P D by MSP
<b>General Industrial</b>	1 x BF Max 200 sq.ft.	P	X	0.5 x SF Max 120 sq.ft.	MSP	P
<b>Industrial Sites with Freeway Frontage</b>	0.5 x BF (Parallel with FF) Max 200 sq.ft.	P	X	0.5 x FF Max 120 sq.ft.	CUP	P

Key		Permit Types	
BF	Building Frontage	CUP	Subject to Conditional Use Permit
FF	Freeway Frontage	MSP	Allowable only with a Master Sign Program
SF	Street Frontage	P	Permitted with sign/building permit
sq.ft.	square feet	X	Prohibited
D	Digital sign for assembly use only		

## Sign Standards:

You will need to demonstrate that you can meet the requirements set forth below before you may obtain you sign/building permit.

### Freestanding Signs.



Freestanding signs are subject to the following standards:

- (1) Maximum Number: No more than one freestanding sign per street frontage may be permitted. Sign area may not be transferred.
- (2) Type: Freestanding signs shall be monument signs unless traffic safety requires a pole sign. Pole signs may also be considered by Conditional Use Permit in Regional Commercial land use designations.
- (3) Landscaping: All freestanding signs shall require automatic irrigated landscape at the base at least three feet in all directions.
- (4) Setback: All freestanding signs shall be set back from the street frontage property line by at least three feet and from all other property lines by at least five feet.
- (5) Cladding: Cladding that covers the pole is required in the case of pole signs. Cladding may not be used to display copy. Cladding shall be a complementary color to the main building on the site.
- (6) Height: Freestanding sign height is subject to the following standards:
  - (A) Monument signs shall have a maximum height of six feet or eight feet with minimum 18-inch high decorative base.
  - (B) Pole signs (when allowed) shall have a maximum height of 20 feet but in no case shall they exceed the height of the ridgeline or parapet of the building roof.

## Wall Signs.



Wall signs, when allowed under the land use rules, are subject to the following standards:

- (1) **Number:** Each establishment may display only one wall sign per building frontage or one per tenant space.
- (2) **Number Exception:** Additional Wall Signs for Multi-Story Buildings: When a building has three or more floors that are not used for residential purposes, a maximum of one additional wall sign per building frontage is allowed. The additional wall sign may be mounted on the top floor level.
- (3) **Height:** Wall signs shall not extend higher than the building wall upon which they are attached. Signs may not be placed on mansard or other roof forms.
- (4) **Coverage:** Wall sign copy shall not occupy more than 75 percent of the length of the wall to which the sign is attached.
- (5) **Placement:** Each sign shall be placed flat against the building wall. No wall sign may cover, wholly or partially, any required wall opening, such as a door, window, or fire escape.
- (6) **Projection:** Wall signs cannot extend more than 12 inches beyond the face of the wall to which they are attached unless authorized through a Master Sign Program.
- (7) **Physical Types:** Wall signs shall consist of painted or other flat panel type signs, or signs with individual letters directly affixed to the wall of a building. No “can signs” (*i.e.*, a metal/plastic box with an interior light fixture and plastic face) shall be allowed. Existing can signs with valid permits may be maintained and repaired.

## Window Signs.



Permanent window signs painted or otherwise adhered directly onto the interior or exterior of a window are subject to the provisions set forth in the Table and the following standards:

- (1) **Height:** Window signs shall not be mounted or placed on windows higher than the second story.
- (2) **Size:** Window signs may not occupy more than 20 percent of the total window area.

## Awning & Canopy Signs.



Awning and canopy signs may be attached to or painted on the vertical edges of awnings, canopies, arcades, or similar features or structures in accordance with the standards found in the Commercial Table and the following standards:

- (1) Height: Maximum 12 feet.
- (2) Clearance between sidewalk and bottom of awning or canopy: Minimum eight feet.
- (3) Clearance between canopy and curb: Minimum two feet.
- (4) Illumination: None allowed.

## Projecting Signs.



Projecting signs are only authorized in areas where specific sign design guidelines have been adopted and where the sign complies with the provisions of the Commercial Table and the following standards:

- (1) Number: A maximum of one projecting or suspended/blade sign per building or tenant space.
- (2) Size: Maximum 9 square feet per sign face.
- (3) Clearance between the sidewalk and the bottom of the sign: Minimum of eight feet.
- (4) Illumination: External only.

## Suspended or Blade Signs.



Signs suspended beneath a covered walkway, awning, or canopy in conjunction with pedestrian walkways, are allowed where the sign complies with the provisions of the Commercial Table and the following standards:

- (1) Number: A maximum of one projecting or suspended/blade sign per building or tenant space.
- (2) Size: Maximum three square feet per sign face.
- (3) Clearance between sidewalk and bottom of sign: Minimum eight feet.
- (4) Illumination: External only.

## Marquee Signs.



Marquee signs are only allowed subject to a Master Sign Program and when in conformance with the provisions in the Tables and following standards:

- (1) Number: Maximum one per site.
- (2) Qualifying Land Uses: Marquee signs are permitted for movie theaters, performance theaters, concert halls, convention centers, and similar uses characterized by human assembly and periodically changing programs.
- (3) Location: No portion of the changeable copy section of the marquee sign shall be higher than the eave line or parapet wall of a building.
- (4) Height: Maximum four feet in vertical dimension, excepting movie and performance theaters in which case, additional vertical dimension up to six feet may be authorized by a Master Sign Program.
- (5) Clearance between the sidewalk and the bottom of the sign: Minimum of eight feet.
- (6) Projections: A marquee sign may extend from the building to which it is attached but no closer than two feet from the curb line.
- (7) Changeable Copy: Changeable copy may occupy up to 75 percent of the area of a marquee sign.

## Special sign standards

**Digital Signs.** Digital signs are only allowed for assembly uses. As used here the term “assembly use” shall mean a land use that is characterized by human assembly and periodically changing programs, such as meeting halls, convention centers, theaters (both live and film presentation), night clubs, and religious facilities.

### Digital sign standards.



When digital signs are allowed under land use rules, such signs shall be subject to the following:

- (1) Size. The digital display area may not exceed 50 percent of the applicable Basic Permittable Area (BPA).
- (2) Dwell Time. When allowed, digital signs shall display only “slide show” images (*i.e.*, a series of still images), each of which is on display for at least eight seconds. Digital

display devices may not be used to create the appearance of moving images, or flashing, blinking or intermittent lighting. Transitions of images are to be gradual (e.g., images shall fade in and out). There shall be no abrupt changes in images or lighting levels.

- (3) No General Advertising. When allowed, digital signs may be used to display any combination of non-commercial messages and on-site commercial messages, but may not be used for off-site commercial messages or general advertising for hire.
- (4) Cell Replacement. Digital signs must keep at least 98 percent of the display face in good working order at all times.
- (5) Light Intensity. Digital signs shall not exceed a surface brightness of 5,000 nits when measured from the sign face at its maximum brightness during daylight hours and 500 nits from sunset to sunrise. However, when a digital sign is visible from legal residential dwelling units, then the maximum surface brightness shall not exceed 250 nits from sunset to sunrise.
- (6) Glare. The zoning administrator may impose a condition that the display face be shielded on the sides, top and bottom (or any combination thereof) to reduce potential glare.
- (7) Animated Copy. Unless otherwise specifically allowed, signs shall not contain animation, rolling or running letters or message, flashing lights or displays as part of the display.

**Special Situations:**

Type of Sign	FMC Reference(s)
Digital (For Assembly Use Only)	Sections <a href="#">18.25.2600(dd)</a> & <a href="#">18.193.450</a>
Exempt signs	Section <a href="#">18.193.200</a>
Mixed Use Developments	Section <a href="#">18.193.130</a>
Multi-Story or Multi-Tenant Building signs	Sections <a href="#">18.193.570</a> , <a href="#">18.193.580</a> , <a href="#">18.193.620</a> , <a href="#">18.193.630</a> <a href="#">Article VII</a> (Master Sign Programs)
Nonconforming, existing	Section <a href="#">18.193.205</a>
Open Space uses, signs for	<a href="#">Article VIII</a>
Prohibited	Section <a href="#">18.193.190</a>
Residential uses, signs for	<a href="#">Article IX</a>
Service Stations, signs for	Section <a href="#">18.193.460</a>
Temporary (e.g., banners)	Sections <a href="#">18.25.2600(kkk)</a> & <a href="#">18.193.480</a>
Private Property Sign Ordinance (entire)	<a href="#">Chapter 18.193</a>

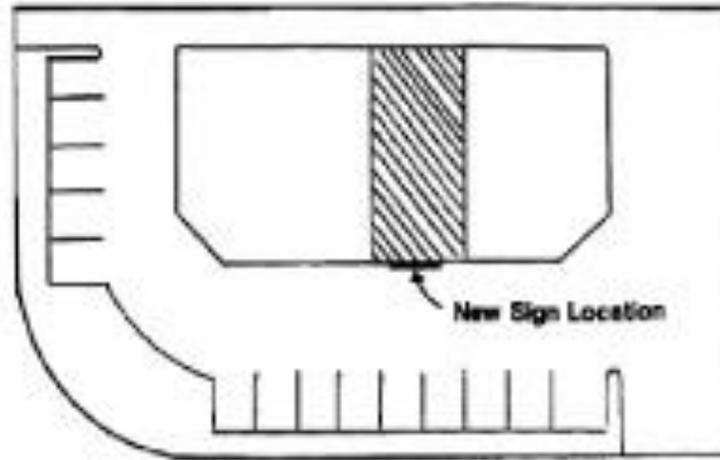
**Application for signs:**

Building/Sign Permit  
Master Sign Program Permit

Sample Illustration:

EXAMPLE SIGN PLANS

SITE PLAN



STOREFRONT ELEVATION



SIGN DETAILS



Non-Illuminated Sign

COLORS:

- The - Red PMS #813C
- Someday Cafe - Blue PMS #726A
- Letter Returns - White

MATERIALS:

- Plastic Faces
- Alum. Returns

- 3/16" pin mounted
- 2" long pins
- 4 per letter

6" concrete wall

