

# THE BRECKENRIDGE SIGN CODE USERS HANDBOOK



**WITH A CODE**



**WITHOUT A CODE**

Prepared by the  
Community Development Department  
Town of Breckenridge

Illustrations by  
Bob Matatall

Sign Code Summary by  
The Breckenridge Community Development Department

Call (970) 453-3160 for assistance

*The Breckenridge Sign Code  
Users Handbook*

Dear Merchant:

The Town of Breckenridge is an attractive community that has frequently been described in travel articles published throughout the country. Those descriptions usually give lofty praise for the appearance of our community, including adjectives like “charming, beautiful, quaint, and picturesque.”

While that image is the result of many various efforts, it is the goal of the Breckenridge Sign Code to preserve and enhance that image by preventing the “tourist trap” atmosphere that exists in many resort areas. This fairly strict Sign Code can be difficult for individual businesses at times, but it helps to promote Breckenridge in its competition with other vacation spots. The Sign Code works to strengthen the overall economy of Breckenridge by maintaining the Town’s charm, and by making the Town a very special place that continues to draw ever larger numbers of visitors.

Attached is a summary of some of the key provisions of the Breckenridge Sign Code. Please take a moment to read through these and contact the Community Development Department if you require assistance, need a sign permit, or just have questions.

Good luck in the coming season.

Sincerely,

The Community Development Department  
Town of Breckenridge

## ***Provisions of the Breckenridge Sign Code***

In general, all signs displaying a business name or describing the types of products sold or business activity being conducted require a sign permit. Most temporary signs, particularly those displayed outdoors, are prohibited. There are some minor types of temporary signs allowed by the Sign Code, which may be used without having to get a permit. While there are a few types of temporary signs allowed without having to get a permit, there are a number of limits on these.

**What is a sign?** A sign includes any device or message which is intended to attract attention or propose a commercial transaction. The sign may be located either outside or indoors. Any commercial advertisement which is visible to the public as they pass by a business and which functions to attract attention and draw people into the shop is considered to be a sign, and must either have a sign permit, or comply with the Sign Code limits on exempt signs.

**What is not a sign?** A commercial advertisement that can only be seen after one enters a building is not considered to be a sign. If the advertisement cannot be seen from outside of a building and does not function to draw people into a business, the advertisement is not considered a sign and is not restricted by the Sign Code.

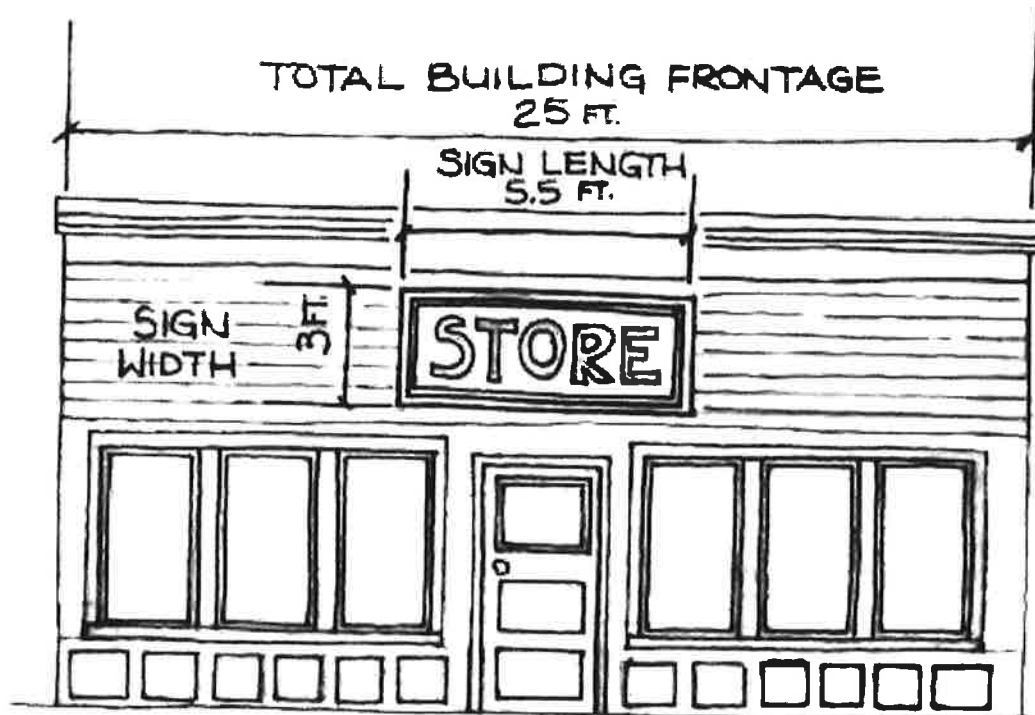
**What about merchandise?** Window displays of merchandise available for sale is allowed and is *not* considered a sign. Attractive, colorful, artfully arranged window displays are encouraged; it is the advertisement or commercial message often displayed with the merchandise which is restricted by the Sign Code.

**Can I display merchandise outdoors?** Yes, with limitations. There is a separate ordinance which regulates displaying merchandise outside. Generally, this ordinance allows the display of one piece of merchandise or one mannequin per business, as long as the display is on private property. The ordinance also allows a Town-wide "sidewalk sale" during two summer weekends each year. The dates are set by the Town Council in February. Bicycles may be displayed outdoors with a permit.

**How large can my permanent sign be?** The linear frontage of a building (its width) determines the amount of allowable sign area for that building. A single tenant in an individual building is allowed sign area as follows:

$$\text{Building frontage} \times 0.66 = \text{total square feet of allowable sign area}$$

No business may display more than 20 square feet of sign area visible from one location. Buildings with more than two tenants must have an approved master sign plan which specifies how much sign area can be displayed on the entire building, and indicates how that sign area is divided among tenants. If you are opening a business in a building with a number of other tenants, stop by the Town Community Development Department and ask to see the master sign plan for that building.

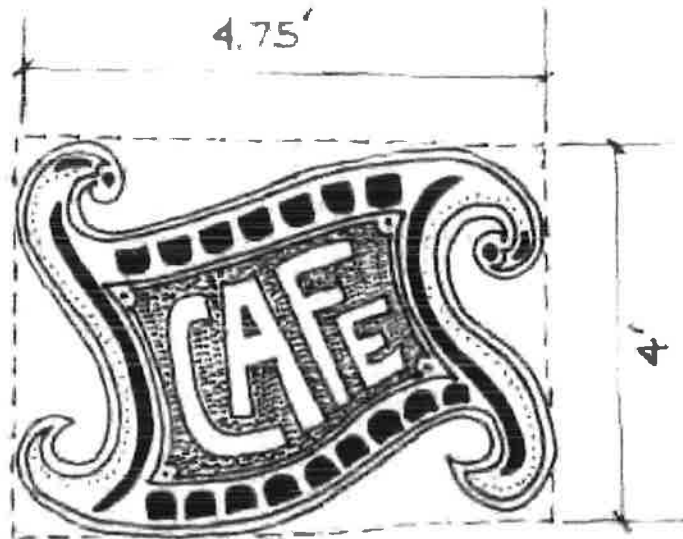


**Building Frontage x Allowed Percentage = Total Allowed Sign Area**  
 i.e., 25 ft. x 0.66 = 16.5 sq. ft. allowed sign area

**Sign Dimensions: 16.5 sq. ft. ÷ 3 ft. = 5.5 ft.**

**Note: Maximum Square Footage Allowed Per Sign = 20 sq. ft.**

**Is there a way to get a larger sign?** Yes. By making a high quality carved wood sign you can get a sign that is up to 15 percent larger. Highly textured wood signs which are extensively carved or sandblasted for example, are encouraged this way.



**Total Allowed Sign Area x 1.15 (15% bonus) = New Total Allowed Sign Area  
(carved wood signs)**

**i.e., 16.5 sq. ft. x 1.15 = 19 sq. ft. allowed sign area**

**Sign Dimensions: 19 sq. ft. ÷ 4 = 4.75**

**Note: For Double Sided Signs**

**(Side 1 Area x .66) + (Side 2 Area x .66) = Total Allowed Area**

**Can I install lighting fixtures for my sign?** Yes, but care must be taken to avoid excessive illumination and to shield the light source. The lighting fixture must be painted a flat dark color, or to blend with its background. The amount of light may not be greater than is necessary to illuminate the face of the sign. Shielding which effectively prevents passing motorists from seeing the light bulb or light source is required.

**How can I advertise a sale?** Temporary signs are allowed without a permit to advertise special commercial sales and events, such as a grand opening sale, going out of business sale, or Mothers Day sale. The use of these signs is very limited, however, by the following restrictions:

- Temporary signs must be in the window, not outdoors.
- Each business may display no more than two temporary sale signs.
- The signs can not exceed a total of three square feet in area.
- Dayglo or reflective surface signs are not allowed.

The Town wanted to let merchants advertise their occasional special sales. An allowance to display temporary signs every day of the year was specifically ruled out. Signs that simply identify the type of products available or the name of the business are not considered exempt temporary signs; a permit is needed and the size of these signs is deducted from the buildings allowable sign area.

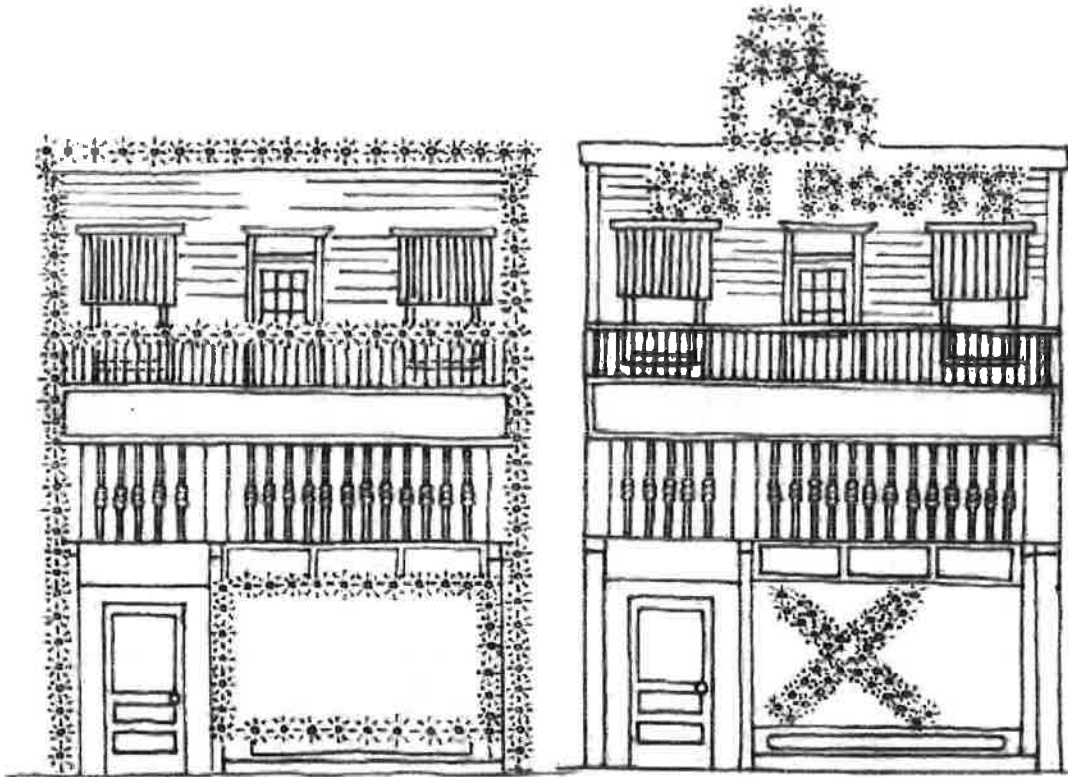
Of course, special sales may be advertised on the radio, in newspapers, and as advertisements stuffed in Post Office boxes, without being restricted by the Sign Code.



**Legal Window Signage**  
3 sq. ft. per sign  
2 signs per business  
1 sign per window

**Illegal Window Signage**  
Too big!  
Too many per business!  
Too many per window!

**Can I decorate my business with strings of lights?** Strings of lights or lighting tubes which outline windows, the shape of the building, or are used to decorate trees are allowed, but only during the winter season. Specifically, such lighting is allowed from November 1 to the end of the ski season at the Breckenridge Ski Resort the following spring. If this decorative lighting is arranged in the shape of a product being sold or to spell out a commercial message, it becomes a sign rather than just a festive decoration and is not allowed. These allowed decorative lights include those that blink randomly. The decorative lights may not simulate motion, nor flash on and off all at once.



**Legal Lighting Decorations**

**Illegal Lighting Decorations**

**What kinds of signs are prohibited?**

- Backlit signs, such as internally lit plastic signs.
- Neon signs.
- Signs on trees, utility poles, street lights, etc.
- Temporary signs displayed outdoors or on the exterior of a building.
- Signs on public property or public rights-of-way.
- Off site signs, not located on the property where the business activity being advertised is taking place.
- Attention getting devices, including balloons, streamers, flashing lights, and some flags.
- Moving signs, signs with reflective surfaces, flashing signs.
- Sandwich board signs.
- Costumed characters, stuffed animals, etc.





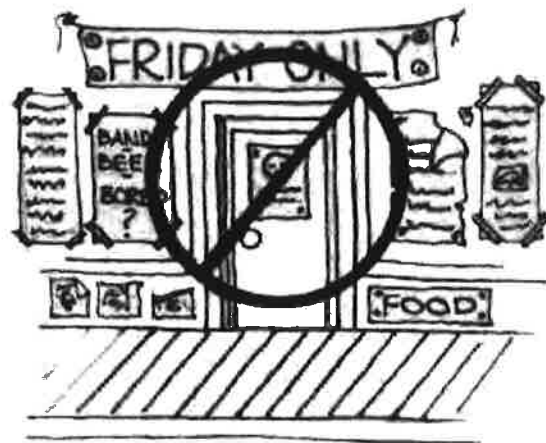
**No Backlit Signs**



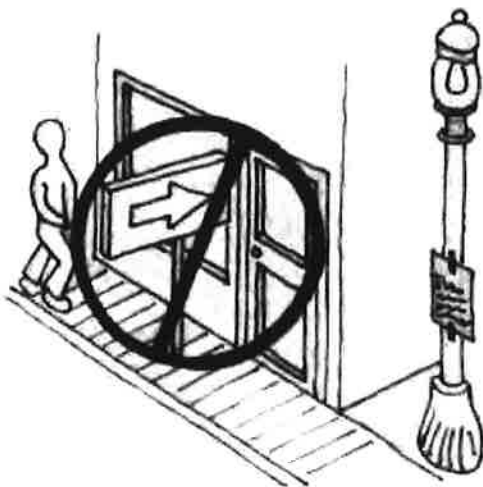
**No Neon Signs**



**No Signs on Trees or Poles**



**No Temporary Signs  
Beyond Allowed Limits**



**No Signs on Public Property  
or Public Rights-of-way**

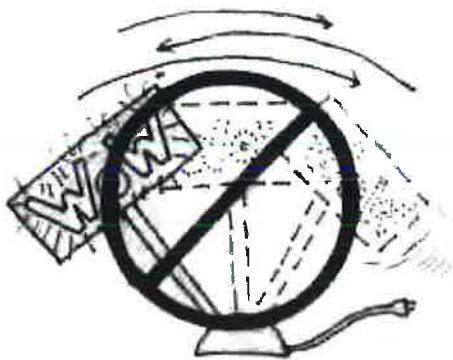


**No Off Site Signs  
Advertising Businesses**

**What are attention getting devices?** This includes any display, device or ornamentation that is used primarily to attract attention to a commercial activity. For example, streamers, pennants, balloons, costumed characters, advertising flags and similar displays are included. Attention getting devices are prohibited.



**No Attention Getting Devices**



**No Moving Signs**



**No Sandwich Board Signs**



**No Costumed Characters  
or Stuffed Animals**



**No Merchandise  
Displayed Outdoors  
(unless exempt under Section 9-7-6  
of the Breckenridge Town Code)**

**What are the penalties for violations of the Sign Code?** Anyone who is responsible for an illegal sign may be cited. This will require an appearance at municipal court. The fine for each sign violation may be up to \$500, and for each day the illegal sign is displayed, is considered a separate violation.

The Town will issue a warning citation before an actual citation is issued. The Sign Code allows 24 hours for a sign owner to bring the sign into compliance before a citation requiring a court appearance is issued. In addition, the Town may remove an illegal sign if it still remains 24 hours after a warning citation has been issued. The cost of removal may be billed to the sign owner by the Town.

