

Candidates and ballot measure proponents have new sign ordinance to follow

As campaign season heats up and political signs are prominent throughout the city, residents may not be aware that the City Council adopted a new ordinance this year governing the placement of campaign signs.

Under the new ordinance, political campaign signs are now considered “non-commercial portable signs” in the City of Costa Mesa. Non-commercial portable signs are defined as: Any sign which can be moved from place to place which is not permanently affixed to the ground or to a building that is not used for commercial purposes.

Examples of non-commercial signs generally include, but are not limited to, signs that promote a political or religious viewpoint, and signs commenting on public officials(s) or matter(s) of public discourse.

Non-commercial portable signs may be displayed in Costa Mesa if they comply with Costa Mesa Municipal Code Section 13-123.

To learn more about **non-commercial portable signs** and **commercial portable signs**, **here is the link** to the Sign Code.

Below are answers to some Frequently Asked Questions about political signs and the new ordinance:

Q: When may non-commercial portable signs be posted?

A: In the six weeks before the upcoming Nov. 8 election, non-commercial portable signs may remain in the public parkways without any weekday restrictions. Non-commercial portable signs may also be placed on private

properties, subject to the same time frames as those placed in public parkways – including the six-week extension before the election. Commercial portable signs are still only allowed to be installed in the public rights-of-ways between 6 a.m. Friday and 6 p.m. Sunday.

Q: Where may the non-commercial portable signs be posted?

A: The signs may be posted on any landscaped parkway, or on private property with the consent of the property owner, lessee, or occupant.

Q: Where are non-commercial portable signs not allowed to be posted?

A: Signs may not be posted on: Utility poles; roadway signs; traffic control boxes; bus shelters; in tree wells; center median islands; overhanging a curb, sidewalk, or driveway or anywhere that obstructs visibility of pedestrian or vehicular traffic; within 15 feet of a fire hydrant, intersection of an alley, street, or highway; or within 15 feet of a driveway. Additionally, they may not be posted in front of public facilities such as libraries, schools, city hall, and parks and must be placed a minimum of 100 feet away from any polling place.

Q: What happens to non-commercial portable signs that are not legally posted?

A: City staff will remove signs posted in violation of the Municipal Code. Signs will be stored for 10 days and then can be disposed of unless the owner of the seized sign contacts the City's Code Enforcement Division within that 10-day period.

Q: When must non-commercial portable signs be removed?

A: Signs must be removed within 10 days after the election.

Q: How will a sign owner know whether the City or a vandal

removed a sign?

A: Signs removed by the City are tracked and stored as noted above. The owner can contact the Code Enforcement Division at 714-754-5623.

Q: What are the size limits for non-commercial portable signs?

A: In public rights-of-ways, signs may not exceed 5 square feet in area with a maximum height of 3 feet above grade. On private properties, non-commercial portable signs may not exceed 5 square feet in area with a maximum height of 6 feet above grade.

Q: Are there any restrictions regarding non-commercial banners?

A: Since the Sign Code is currently silent as regards to non-commercial banners, they are subject to the same requirements as a commercial banner except that no permit is required. They may be placed only on a building or freestanding sign; identification must be placed on signs; they may be installed up to 6 weeks before the applicable election; and they must be removed within 10 days after the election.

Q: Does the City require a security bond to be posted to ensure removal of non-commercial portable signs following the election?

A: No, the City does not require a security bond for non-commercial portable signs. However, the owner of the signs must affix their name, address, and telephone number on the sign prior to installation.

Maximum area permitted for:

- Residential zones: 0.5 square feet per dwelling unit/100 square feet maximum per site
- All other zones: 0.5 square feet per lineal foot of building frontage facing the street; minimum 25 square

feet per tenant with a maximum of 75 square feet per tenant.

If you have any further questions, please call Code Enforcement at 714-754-5623.