

Process for Obtaining a City Permit for a Neighborhood Entrance Sign

Neighborhood entrance signs are community assets for a variety of reasons. An attractive and well-maintained entrance sign is a point of pride for residents. Designing, building, and maintaining an entrance sign is a community activity that brings neighbors together. Entrance signs serve as way-finding landmarks. Entrance signs help drivers understand that they have entered a residential neighborhood and need to slow down.

All neighborhood entrance signs require City approval. Some signs may be permissible in the City's right-of-way (ROW) and receive a ROW permit from the Department of Engineering. Other signs may need to be permitted using the City's sign ordinance. The details for each approval process are described below.

Entrance Signs in City Right-of-Way

This is a step-by-step process for obtaining a permit for neighborhood entrance sign in City managed ROW. The City does not have authority to approve a sign in the ROW along state routes, such as Kingston Pike or Chapman Highway.

1. **Application.** A neighborhood organization recognized by the Office of Neighborhoods (OON) submits a request to the OON for a neighborhood entrance sign. The request form is attached and is self-explanatory.
2. **Office of Neighborhoods Review.** After verifying above information, the OON will:
 - a. Request that the Neighborhood Organization stake out the preferred location(s) of the sign;
 - b. Require the neighborhood organization to call 811 to mark any underground utilities; and
 - c. Refer the request to the Department of Engineering.
3. **Engineering Review.** The Department of Engineering inspects the proposed sign site to:
 - a. Verify that the location is in the ROW;
 - b. Confirm that the sign and planned landscaping will not block sight distance for vehicles;
 - c. Identify any other issues or obstacles; and
 - d. Advise and consult with the neighborhood representative(s).
4. **Issuance of Permit.** If there is enough ROW to accommodate the sign and all other conditions are met, the Department of Engineering issues a ROW permit (approximate cost is \$20).

Note: If the sign cannot be located in the ROW, the Neighborhood Organization has the option of applying for a sign outside of the ROW and on private property through the regular sign permitting process. Neighborhood banners may also be considered. See below for more information on these alternatives.

5. **Site Inspection.** Upon receiving the permit, the Neighborhood Organization digs the holes for the sign and calls Engineering for an inspection. This inspection is to ensure that the sign is sited correctly. There is no additional cost for this inspection.
6. **Sign Installation.** If the Engineering Department approves the site, the Neighborhood Organization can proceed with constructing and completing the sign installation. After sign installation is complete, the Neighborhood Organization must call the Department of Engineering for a final inspection. There is no additional cost for this inspection.

Entrance Signs on Private Property outside of City ROW

If the entrance sign cannot be located in City ROW, the neighborhood organization can apply for a sign permit under the City's standard sign regulations. Please note that the neighborhood organization must have the property owner's notarized, written permission to apply for and place the sign on private property.

If the proposed area for the entrance sign is zoned residential according to [KGIS Maps](#), the following steps apply. If the property is not zoned residential, please contact the City's Zoning Inspector at 215-3669 to discuss regulations applicable in the non-residential district.

1. **Application.** A neighborhood organization recognized by the Office of Neighborhoods (OON) should apply for a sign permit through the Plans Review & Inspection Department (located in Suite 505 of the City County Building). The sign cannot be larger than 36 square feet and 6 feet tall. The sign must also be at least 10 feet from the right-of-way line or 15 feet from road, whichever is greater. If the Neighborhood Organization desires a sign that does not comply with these stated requirements, the Neighborhood Organization may apply for a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals.

At the time of application, the Neighborhood Organization must have the following:

- a. A rendering or drawing of the sign; the rendering should include dimensions and a site plan showing where the sign is proposed to be located on the property, including dimensioned setbacks;
- b. The notarized, written permission letter from the property owner authorizing the Neighborhood Organization to apply for and place the sign on their property; and
- c. The applicable sign permit fee.

The applicable sign permit fee is the sum of a base permit fee (\$75) and a fee based on the value of the construction (\$5 for every \$1000 or fraction thereof of construction costs).

2. **Issuance of Permit.** Once the application has been determined to meet the requirements of the City sign ordinance, the permit will be issued. Permits expire after one year if the work allowed by the permit has not commenced.
3. **Site Inspection.** Once the Neighborhood Organization receives the permit, it must call 811 to have the area marked for underground utilities. Once this has been done, the Neighborhood Organization can dig the holes for the sign posts. Before installation of the sign, the

Neighborhood Organization must call to schedule an inspector to ensure the sign is sited correctly. The number to call for this inspection is 215-4830 and there is no additional charge for this inspection.

- 4. Sign Installation.** If the inspector approves the site, the Neighborhood Organization can proceed with constructing and completing the sign installation. After sign installation is complete, the Neighborhood Organization must call for a final inspection. There is no additional cost for this inspection.

Banner Signs

Neighborhood Banner Signs are administered by the Office of Special Events. If your neighborhood is interested in this type of signage, which typically hangs vertically along light poles in the ROW, please refer to the [Banner Request Form](#). Please note that all final banner designs must be approved by the Office of Special Events, and all banners must be installed by the City of Knoxville.