

Landmark Signs – Frequently Asked Questions



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1. *Why would I want to designate my sign as a Landmark Sign?*

Sometimes older signs are not compliant with the current standards of the Metro Zoning Code. When you want to add more signs to your building or property, you may not be allowed to do so. If your sign is designated as Landmark Sign, you are allowed to keep the Landmark Sign *and* add new signs. (See Section 17.32.145 F)

Landmark Sign designation is not a “preservation tool.” Designation does not take away your right to demolish the sign. It simply incentivizes you to keep the sign by allowing you to have additional signs.

2. *Who can submit an application for designation?*

The owner of the sign, who may be the property owner or the owner of the business, institution, etc.

3. *What is the application process? How long does it take? What does it cost?*

The application process follows the Planning Commission deadlines. (The deadline schedule is available at: <http://nashville.gov/mpc/appsfees/index.asp>) The process typically takes six weeks from the filing deadline to Planning Commission meeting. The Planning Commission makes the final decision about designation, with recommendations by Planning staff and Historic staff. The application fee is \$160.00.

4. *Are there different kinds of Landmark Signs?*

Yes, there are three categories of Landmark Signs: Historic, Vintage, and Replica. If the sign is more than 50 years old, it is a Landmark Sign. If the sign is 25-50 years old, it is a Vintage Sign. If it is a new sign, made exactly like an iconic sign that no longer exists, it is a Replica Sign. There are different criteria for each designation. (See Metro Zoning Code, Sections 17.32.145 B, C, and D)

5. *I have a sign that may be eligible for designation, but I want to move it. Is that possible?*

Yes. In the application, you can indicate if you will be moving the sign to another place on the same property or to another property. Depending on the conditions, moving the sign may detract or enhance its likelihood for designation. This should be discussed with Planning staff during the application process. (See Metro Zoning Code, Section 17.32.145 E)

6. *Name some signs that may be eligible for designation as a Landmark Sign.*

There are many eligible signs throughout Nashville. The Planning Department and the Historic Commission have not compiled a list all of the eligible signs. Each property owner or business owner must seek the designation individually. Each application will be judged on its own merits.

1. Many of the old movie theaters have large marquees that may be eligible for designation. The Belle Meade Theater is a good example.
2. Many of the signs on Lower Broadway may be eligible for designation.

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3. Many of the old motels, bowling alleys, liquor stores, and car dealerships have iconic signs that may be eligible for designation. The Drake Motel, Madison Bowling, Hermitage Liquors Drive-in, and the Jim Reed cowboy are some good examples.

7. *How is my total allowable sign area and number of signs calculated once my sign is designated as a Landmark Sign?*

It depends on the nature of the sign. The Metro Zoning Code regulates the square footage of sign content you are allowed to have and the number of signs you are allowed to have.

1. Where the Landmark Sign does not identify the business occupying the premises, and is not used by an owner or occupant of the premises to advertise a business currently occupying the premises, the Landmark Sign shall not count against the total allowable sign area for the premises and shall not count against the number of signs allowed for the premises.
2. Where the Landmark Sign does identify the business occupying the premises or is used or adaptively reused by an owner or occupant of the premises to advertise a business currently occupying the premises, fifty percent (50%) of the square footage of the Landmark Sign shall count toward the total allowable sign area and shall count against the number of signs allowed for the premises.
3. One hundred percent (100%) of the square footage of a Replica Sign shall count toward the total allowable sign area for the premises and shall count against the number of signs allowed for the premises.

8. *My sign is now a Landmark Sign; can I make alterations to it and retain the designation?*

It depends. The Landmark Sign application requires that you submit a plan for the restoration, adaptive reuse, construction, maintenance and/or relocation of the sign. Any planned alterations should be noted in the application. If you decide to make alterations after the designation, and you want to keep the designation, please contact the Planning Department for a consultation.

9. *My sign is now a Landmark Sign; can I demolish it?*

Yes. Designation does not protect the sign from demolition. Keep in mind, however, any additional sign area or number of signs allowed on your property because of the designation of your Landmark Sign may be revoked upon demolition.

10. *Can designation as a Landmark Sign be removed or revoked?*

Yes. If you remove the Landmark Sign designation from your sign, please contact the Planning Department. If the Landmark Sign has been significantly altered and is no longer in compliance with the plans approved by the Planning Commission, the designation may be revoked.

For additional information, please visit the applications page of the Planning Department's website at <http://nashville.gov/mpc/appsfees/index.asp> or call (615) 862-7190.