

CITY OF ATLANTA sign ordinance

what you need to know to be in compliance

"Signs, signs, everywhere a sign, blockin' out the scenery, breakin' my mind..."

So begins an old song from the 70s, but it's even more true today with the proliferation of quick sign printing shops and sign placement "bandits." The City of Atlanta, in cooperation with Keep Atlanta Beautiful, is working hard to educate the public about, and enforce compliance with, the City's Sign Ordinance. Below is a brief overview of what you need to know to be in compliance.

No signs in the public right of way or other public property.

When it comes to our parks, streets, traffic intersections, and other public property, it's really very simple -- the placement of signs anywhere in the public right of way (a distance generally within 6 - 7 feet of the curb) or other public property, other than by a governmental entity, is illegal at all times. That applies to any signs and posters nailed to telephone poles and to any signs placed along the road, at highway off-ramps, at intersections, or on traffic islands, such as real estate "directional" signs, political campaign signs, civic campaign signs (such as church and charity fundraiser and event signs), yard sale signs, etc.

Limits on signs on residential property.

On residential property, the following signs are allowed with a setback out of the public right of way (generally at least 6 -7 feet from the street):

- a) one "for sale" or "for rent" sign on the property that is itself for sale or rent.
The sign cannot be larger than 6 square feet (2' x 3').
- b) one contractor sign while a house is under construction or renovation.
- c) civic campaign signs during a time-limited civic campaign.
- d) political campaign signs during a campaign.

Limits on signs on commercial property.

Before any sign or banner can be placed outside of a building on commercial property, the owner of the property must obtain a sign permit from the City's Bureau of Buildings. In most cases, the only signs that will be allowed are durable

permanent signs, with no more than 3 signs allowed per property. The biggest offenders are foam board advertising signs, such as cigarette, alcohol, and soft drink ads at gas stations, and advertising banners and foam board signs at fast food restaurants and strip shopping centers.

Penalties.

Placement of an illegal sign is a criminal misdemeanor, punishable by fines up to \$1000 per sign per day and/or jail time up to 6 months. With limited enforcement staff, the City was awarded over \$40,000 in fines for illegal signs by the Municipal Court during just one recent 6 month period. The City has now ramped up its enforcement staffing, so we expect even larger fines until compliance improves.

How can you help?

1) If it is on public right of way or other public property, take a digital photo of the sign, and email it with date and the nearest street address or intersection to **eandrews@atlantaga.gov**. Or just email the name and location of an illegal sign or a particularly bad stretch of road or intersection and ask the City to send its sign enforcement squad to that area. The City should then remove the sign(s) and issue a citation to the violator to appear in court.

2) Help educate people about the sign ordinance. For more information and to download this flyer, visit **www.keeptlantabeautiful.org**.

3) Neighborhood organizations can designate one or more people to be sign monitors to report illegal signs to the City.