

Grand Opening Signage Timeline Planner

Work backwards from your opening date — start the permit process the day you sign your lease

Target opening date: _____	City/municipality: _____
Sign type(s) planned: _____	Illuminated? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Historic district? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Large city (300K+)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

REALISTIC SIGNAGE TIMELINE BY CITY SIZE

Work backward from your planned opening date. Add the total weeks in each scenario to find your "start by" date.

Phase	Task	Small City	Mid-Size City	Large City (300K+)	Historic District
Phase 1	Zoning check + sign code research	1–2 days	2–3 days	3–5 days	3–5 days
Phase 1	Sign design and drawings	1–3 days	3–5 days	5–7 days	7–14 days
Phase 1	Gather application documents	1–2 days	2–3 days	3–5 days	5–7 days
Phase 2	Permit application submission	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day
Phase 2	Sign permit review	3–7 bus. days	10–15 bus. days	15–25 bus. days	4–8 weeks
Phase 2	Electrical permit review (if illuminated)	3–5 bus. days	5–10 bus. days	10–15 bus. days	10–15 bus. days
Phase 3	Sign fabrication (after permit approval)	7–14 days	10–21 days	14–28 days	14–28 days
Phase 3	Installation	1–2 days	1–3 days	1–3 days	1–3 days
Phase 3	Electrical inspection (if illuminated)	1–3 days	2–5 days	3–7 days	3–7 days
TOTAL	Best-case minimum	~3 weeks	~5 weeks	~7 weeks	~10 weeks
TOTAL	Realistic average	4–5 weeks	7–9 weeks	10–14 weeks	14–20 weeks

YOUR PERSONAL TIMELINE — FILL IN YOUR DATES

Opening date target: _____	(Your goal)
Subtract sign fabrication time: - ____ weeks	(7–28 days depending on sign complexity)
Subtract permit review time: - ____ weeks	(See table above for your city type)
Subtract drawings & prep time: - ____ weeks	(Usually 1–2 weeks)
= PERMIT APPLICATION DUE BY: _____	This is your hard deadline to submit your permit application.

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= START SIGN DESIGN BY:	_____	This is when you must begin working with your sign company.
= START PROCESS BY:	_____	Ideally: the day you sign your lease.

TEMPORARY BANNER STRATEGY (BRIDGE TO PERMANENT SIGN)

The Problem	Permanent signs take weeks. You need to identify your business on opening day.
The Solution	Apply for a temporary banner permit at the same time you apply for your permanent sign permit. Most cities process temporary permits in 1–5 business days.
Grand Opening Exception	Many cities allow new businesses a 60–90 day banner period. Ask specifically: "What is the grand opening banner allowance for a new business?"
Limit Awareness	Most cities allow only 3–4 temporary sign permits per year. Don't burn them all in your first month — save permits for major promotional periods.
Banner → Permit Bridge	Banner permit: apply Week 1. Permanent permit: apply Week 1. Banner goes up: opening day. Permanent sign goes up: 6–12 weeks later. Remove banner the day permanent sign is installed.

INFORMATIONAL USE ONLY. Timelines are estimates based on typical municipal permit processing times. Actual timelines vary by city, current workload, and sign complexity. Verify current processing times directly with your local planning department before scheduling your opening. — SignPermitGuide.com