1. **What are the different sections of Sign Administration?**

* Plan Review & Inspections – Permitting & Regulation of On-Premises Commercial Advertising Signs
* Administration – Regulation of Fees, Tags, Renewal Notices & Certificates, Database Corrections, Open Records
* Off Premises – Regulation of Remaining Billboards (all of which are grandfathered; new billboards are prohibited)
* Management – Staff Training, Code Interpretation, Special Projects

1. **Can signs be electrical?**

* Yes. Electrical signs may only be permitted & installed by a locally licensed sign contractor.
* Business owners are allowed to permit & install their own *non*-electrical sign under limited circumstances.
* In all circumstances, the permit is issued to whomsoever is performing the work, & only the person to whom the permit is issued can perform the work.

1. **What is a Wall Sign?**

* An on-premises commercial advertising sign attached to an exterior elevation of the business building; Awning Signs (including Canopy Signs) are classified as Wall Signs.

1. **What is an Awning Sign?**

* An on-premises commercial advertising sign constructed of a fabric type material stretched over a rigid metal frame that is attached to the wall, roof or mansard of a building.
* This includes Canopy Signs, which have greater projection than width & commonly include supporting posts on the end farthest from the building. Note: Such Canopy Signs of the Awning & Canopy variety must first be permitted by The Building Department, as it is considered that they change the footprint of the building.

1. **What is a Projecting Sign?**

* An on-premises commercial advertising sign projecting outward from a building wall & typically featuring advertising on two sides.
* Projecting Signs are counted as Ground Signs. Usually, a Projecting Sign is installed in situations where there is no option for a Ground Sign.
* The code only allows one ground or projecting sign per frontage, for a maximum of two.

1. **What signs can a business owner permit & install themselves?**

* A non-electrical Ground Sign no taller than 8 feet & no larger than 60 square feet in size.
* A non-electrical Wall Sign larger than 60 square feet in size & no higher above grade than 16 feet. Note: A sign installed between 8 & 16 feet overall height above grade requires engineering to be present in the plan set.

*• I don’t know what is truly meant by the following question, but it may be best to omit it.*

1. **Is there a list of hired license sign contactor?**

* They may call us for verification or they may ask the contractor "Are you licenses in the City of Houston".

1. **Does Sign Administration provide a list of contractors?**

* Yes; it’s available through Open Records.
* However, the best way to find a licensed sign contractor is word-of-mouth, or a search of local sources (Yellow Pages, landlord, neighboring business owners, internet, etc.)

*• I don’t know what is truly meant by the following question, but it may be best to omit it. Most applicants for sign permits are licensed sign contractors.*

1. **Does an applicant require a license to do business?**

* *The Houston Sign Code* doesn’t’ require that a company be licensed to be in business and there is no license required to make signs. But you do have to have a license to install signs or to do sign work for other people in the field.

1. **What signs are not allowed in Houston?**

* Banner Signs, Portable Signs – including Rolling Billboards & “Bandit” Signs - Roof Signs, Spectacular Signs, & anything prohibited by the Attention Getting Device Ordinance.

1. **Are decals on the door a sign?**

* Typically not. Most of what's on business doors is required by law, which is one of the first exceptions from permitting in *The Houston Sign Code*.

1. **Can you put advertising on a window?**

* Advertising applied directly to a glass storefront or window with paint or vinyl is regulated, in that it’s limited to 20% or less coverage of the glass area, but no permit is required.

1. **Are banners permitted?**

* No. A banner by itself can’t be permitted. But a banner which is backed & framed becomes a Wall Sign and can be permitted as such.

1. **Is there a Houston Sign Code for banners?**

* The Houston Signs Code first and foremost is very banner prohibitive – banner “unfriendly”.
* The singular option for actually permitting a Banner Sign is as a Limited Use Banner.

1. **What is a Limited Use Banner?**

* A Banner Sign permitted for 7-consecutive days in a calendar month.
* A Limited Use Banner must be flush-mounted against a building wall utilizing no ropes or ties.

1. **Are fence signs permitted?**

* Fence Signs are classified as Ground Signs but are not required to comply with the structural requirements of the code.
* Fence Signs can be permitted but cannot exceed the height of the fence or 30 feet in width.

1. **Who is liable for hand-held signs?**

* Holding Signs on the street is regulated by HPD.

1. **Who regulates Election Signs?**

* Election Signs are regulated by the State and are not supposed to be in the right-of-way (ROW). If the sign is in the ROW, COH will confiscated it.

1. **Are there any businesses or activities which are exempt from the sign code?**

* Federal & state government facilities, including political subdivisions of the State of Texas.

1. **How long does a contractor state license last?**

* These renew annually; reminders are sent out when renewal time is approaching.

1. **If someone moves into a new business and the previous owner did not pay for any of the sign operating permit renewals, is the new owner still responsible?**

* No; sign permits are completely & entirely non-transferrable.

1. **What does the new owner of an existing business need to permit existing signs?**

* Notify Sign Administration that ownership of the business has changed & that all existing signs will remain in-place & as-is.
* A Sign Administration Inspector is sent to survey & field-verify that the remaining signs are as originally permitted & that no changes have been made.
* Afterward, the results are submitted to the Sign Administration Admin section, which will generate & mail an invoice.
* Once the invoice is received, payment can be remitted by mail, or made in-person @ the Houston Permitting Center, 1002 Washington Ave. Visit Sign Administration on the 4th floor to get a Sales Order, which is then transacted with the 1st floor Cashiers.

1. **Can signs be refurbished?**

* Refurbishment means to restore to like-new condition & is an option for most signs.
* Note: Refurbishment does not include retrofit, upgrade, modification, etc.

1. **Can the advertising display of an existing sign be changed-out?**

* Commonly referred to as a face change, this is a frequent option for new businesses opening-up in existing buildings with existing Ground, Wall, Projecting or Marquee Signs.
* The new advertising display must be permitted in accordance with Section 4605 (a), & the permit is issued to the licensed sign contractor performing the work.
* Under limited circumstances, a business owner may permit & change-out their own advertising display: Ground Signs no higher above grade than 10 feet, or Wall, Projecting or Marquee Signs no higher above grade than 16 feet.
* In all circumstances, the permit is issued to whomsoever is performing the work, & only the person to whom the permit is issued can perform the work.

1. **When a business moves out of a building or lease space, are they required to take down the sign(s) that they have permitted?**

* The advertising display should be removed or, if that isn’t possible, the sign should be covered-up.

1. **How long until a sign is considered abandoned?**

* A sign is considered abandoned as soon as a business vacates the premises without removing the sign.
* Usually an abandoned sign is identified when an operating permit renewal hasn’t been paid. An Inspector is sent to field-verify that the sign is still up and/or in-operation (advertising display still in-place and/or visible).

1. **What are the limitations placed on the operation of Changeable Message Signs?**

* Messages must remain static and in place for at least 5 minutes at a time. When the message changes it most do so instantaneously, without effects.
* When applying for a Changeable Message Sign permit, the Changeable Message and High Technology Acknowledgement Receipt of the sign permit application form must be completed. It talks about the limitation & has to be completed by the business owner or location manager with a printed name, signature and a valid phone number (so Sign Administration can contact the responsible party in case of a violation.)

1. **Can a person appeal formal rejection of an application for a sign permit?**

* If a proposed sign is deemed by Sign Administration to not be permissible under *The Houston Sign Code*, an applicant and/or business owner can make an appeal to the General Appeals Board, challenging the Sign Administrator’s interpretation of the code.
* Any person wishing so to do must notify the designated contact for the General Appeals Board within 10 business days of the formal rejection.

1. **Does The Houston Sign Code have a variance?**

* No.

*• I don’t know what is truly meant by the following question, but it may be best to omit it.*

1. **When a tenant wants to put a sign but there is a previous red tag from previous tenant is the new tenant responsible**?

* No, the permits are not transferrable.
* There are certain department that will not allow to sell of the new permit such as the Occupancy Department. If you don’t have an occupancy permit, you can’t purchase a sign permit.

1. **What kind of work can you do to Off-Premises Signs?**

* New permits for Off-Premises Signs have been unavailable since 1985.
* Remaining “grandfathered” billboards can only be worked on by the licensed contractor that owns the billboard.

1. **Does putting up a cross need a permit?**

* Religious symbols such as crosses – without advertising – are not signs & are therefore not regulated by *The Houston Sign Code*.
* However, a religious symbol with advertising on it would have to comply with *The Houston Sign Code* regarding placement & size.

1. **Where do I call to schedule an inspection?**

* Sign inspections are scheduled @ 832-394-8890.