

The Importance of Signage for Commercial-Industrial Tenants

Identity signage is important for tenants. Yet few tenants consider their ability to erect optimum signage until after their lease has been signed. There may be some local zoning constraints and landlord guidelines that affect the placement and size of tenant identity signage that affect each tenant's ability to erect delivery door signage and front door signage that can become apparent after the lease has already been signed. Once the lease has been signed, a tenant's ability to install signage can be limited. This is why tenants should consider signage as an item to be negotiated prior to the signing of their lease. It can take as much as 8 weeks for custom signs to be made and installed. The timeline should also be considered as part of the move planning process.

After the short list of properties that are still under consideration has been identified, prospective tenants should inquire about the signage regulations that pertain to each property location. When various rental units are being inspected, tenants should pay attention to the signs used by other occupants in the building and other businesses that are located along the same street. This should give some initial indication as to what that tenant's options can be for their own identity signage. Signage should be one of the items that is weighed in the property evaluation process in making the final building selection. The more visible the identity signage is to clients and delivery services, the better.

Tenants should consider their signage options prior to executing their lease agreement. Prospective tenants should request information about local signage regulations and the landlord's policies after they have determined that a given property has made it to their short list. Usually, the landlord's prototypical lease has a specific clause that defines a tenant's signage guidelines, size, and placement criteria. A summary of signage regulations to consider is as follows.

- **Exterior Signage:** The size of each tenant's sign may be regulated by the percentage of a building that the tenant intends to occupy.
- **Exclusive Building Signage:** If a tenant intends to occupy an entire building or their percentage of space within a given building is high, then they may be able to obtain a prominent position and size rights for their identity signage.
- **Fees:** Some municipalities require the payment of a sign permit fee. Tenants should ask their agent to advise them as to whether or not there are any sign permit fees required for the property that they intend to lease.
- **Additional Signage Regulations:** A landlord may have park or building covenants that require a uniformity of sign size, placement, and specifications (logo, colors). Landlords often will request an illustration of the tenant's sign design prior to giving the tenant their written consent for installation.

These are some of the reasons why tenants need to give careful consideration to the issue of their identity signage rights for each property that is on their short list of options.