



CITY OF ONEIDA
Department of Planning &
Development



CITY OF ONEIDA
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
109 North Main Street
Oneida, New York 13421
Tel.: 315-363-7467

SIGN VARIANCE REQUIREMENTS

City of Oneida – Chapter 190 (Zoning)

Applicant / Surveyor / Engineer / Applicant Submission Guide

Important:

This handout must be provided to the applicant and any consultant preparing submission materials.

Sign variance applications may be delayed, deemed incomplete, tabled, or denied if the submitted materials do not satisfy the requirements of Chapter 190 (Zoning), applicable provisions of the City Code, and New York State General City Law §81-b.

This document is a guide. It does not replace the requirements of Chapter 190 or applicable law.

Start Here: Determine What Type of Relief Is Required

Under Chapter 190 (Zoning – Sign Regulations), applicants must first determine whether the proposed sign complies with all applicable regulations or requires relief.

Most sign-related requests are:

A. Area Variance (Most Common)

Required when the proposed sign does not comply with dimensional requirements such as sign area, height, number of signs, or setbacks. Area variances are reviewed by the Planning Commission / Zoning Board of Appeals (PCZBA) pursuant to Chapter 190 and New York State General City Law §81-b.



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B. Use Variance (Rare)

Required only if the proposed sign is not permitted in the zoning district. Use variances are subject to a higher legal standard.

Submission Package Basics

A complete sign variance application must include, as applicable:

- completed variance application
- required application fee
- assessor/location map
- site plan or site sketch (required – see Section 3)
- sign details (cut sheets, elevations, specifications)
- photographs of the site and surrounding area
- SEQR documentation (as determined by the City)
- any additional materials identified during staff review

Important: The City's intake checklist does not replace required submission content. All required information must be provided clearly and accurately.

Site Plan / Site Sketch Requirements **(Chapter 190 – Zoning Compliance and Sign Regulation Context)**

All sign variance applications must include a site plan or site sketch sufficient for the PCZBA to evaluate the request.

The plan must be drawn to scale where applicable and must show:

A. Property Information

- property boundaries with dimensions
- tax parcel number
- zoning district

B. Existing Conditions

- all existing buildings and structures
- existing signs on the property
- adjacent streets and right-of-way
- driveways and access points



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C. Proposed Sign Location

exact location of proposed sign
sign type (freestanding, wall, monument, etc.)
distance from the sign to front, side, and rear property lines
distance to nearest building

D. Dimensional Information

sign height
sign area
setback distances
relationship to roadway or right-of-way

E. Additional Context (Recommended / May Be Required)

adjacent properties and structures
nearby signage
general site layout sufficient to evaluate visual and physical impacts

Failure to provide a clear and dimensioned site plan or sketch is one of the most common causes of delay or denial.

Sign-Specific Requirements (Chapter 190 – Sign Regulations)

All applications must include detailed information about the proposed sign, including:

type of sign (freestanding, wall, monument, projecting, etc.)
overall dimensions (height and sign face area)
number of signs proposed on the parcel
materials and construction
method of mounting or installation
illumination (if any), including type and shielding

Applicants must demonstrate compliance with all portions of Chapter 190 not requiring relief.

Zoning Compliance Table (Required)

All applications must include a zoning comparison table clearly identifying:

Requirement | Allowed | Proposed | Relief Requested



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Maximum Sign Area
Maximum Height
Setback Requirements
Number of Signs

This table must be consistent with Chapter 190 sign regulations and zoning district standards.

Failure to clearly identify the requested relief may result in the application being deemed incomplete.

Area Variance Criteria

(New York State General City Law §81-b)

The PCZBA must apply the statutory balancing test when reviewing area variances.

Applicants must address each of the following factors in writing:

Whether an undesirable change will be produced in the character of the neighborhood or a detriment to nearby properties will be created

Whether the benefit sought by the applicant can be achieved by some method feasible other than a variance

Whether the requested variance is substantial

Whether the proposed variance will have an adverse effect or impact on the physical or environmental conditions in the neighborhood

Whether the alleged difficulty was self-created

Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide detailed responses. Failure to address these criteria may negatively affect the Board's ability to grant the variance.

Visual Context Requirements

Applications must include:

photographs of the subject property
photographs of adjacent properties
photographs of the surrounding streetscape



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Applicants are encouraged to provide visual renderings or mockups showing the proposed sign in context.

Relationship to Site Plan Review (Chapter 190 – Site Plan Review Provisions)

A sign variance application does not automatically require site plan review.

However, site plan review may be required if the proposed sign is part of new construction, building expansion, change in use, or a Conditional Use Permit application.

The City will determine whether a separate site plan application is required pursuant to Chapter 190.

SEQR (State Environmental Quality Review Act)

Sign variance applications must be reviewed under SEQR.

The City will determine the appropriate classification and required documentation.

Common Reasons Applications Are Delayed or Deemed Incomplete

- missing or unclear site plan or sketch
- no dimensions or setbacks shown
- missing zoning compliance table
- incomplete sign specifications
- lack of photographs or context
- failure to address area variance criteria
- inconsistencies between plans and application materials

What the City Recommends Before Submission

Before submitting, applicants should confirm:

- all Chapter 190 sign requirements have been reviewed
- requested relief is clearly identified
- site plan or sketch is complete and dimensioned



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zoning compliance table is accurate
variance criteria responses are included
photographs and supporting materials are provided

Final Note to Applicants

Providing this handout does not guarantee approval.

All sign variance applications remain subject to Chapter 190 (Zoning), New York State General City Law §81-b, SEQR, zoning compliance, PCZBA review and determination, and any conditions imposed by the Board.