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As Crowds Return, City Works with Merchants to Clear Obstacles from Sidewalks

Charleston, S.C. — Following a suspension of enforcement due to the Covid-19 pandemic, city of Charleston enforcement officers will begin citing businesses using sandwich boards and pedestal signs within sidewalks' rights-of-way on Monday, May 16, 2022. Between now and then, officers will continue to issue warnings in place of citations.

Recently, the city's Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator received complaints from citizens regarding the proliferation of sandwich board signs on sidewalks. The ADA requires all public sidewalks be accessible and usable by people with disabilities. Items such as sandwich boards and pedestal signs create barriers for safe access by blocking a sidewalk or causing a sidewalk to become too narrow for citizens to traverse.

As a result, sandwich boards and pedestal signs within public rights-of-way in the city of Charleston have long been prohibited by city ordinance ([Sec. 54-404](#)).

While, as a general rule, signage and other items should not block public rights-of-way, there are some circumstances where citizens and businesses can apply for a permit to do so. Common examples include encroachment permits and the city's Sidewalk Café program.

An encroachment permit may be issued to allow for some items, such as planters and benches, to be placed in the right-of-way if certain criteria are met. Information about encroachments and how to apply can be found, here: <https://charleston-sc.gov/1959/Encroachments>.

Additionally, restaurants can apply for a Sidewalk Café permit to authorize food and beverage service on a public right-of-way directly adjacent to the establishment. More information on the Sidewalk Café program can be found, here: <https://charleston-sc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4473/Sidewalk-Cafe-Rules-and-Regulations>.

City of Charleston Director of Livability and Tourism Dan Riccio said, "Given the narrow nature of our sidewalks and the large number of people using them, obstacles such as sandwich boards and pedestal signs can present a serious impediment, and sometimes a real danger, for citizens. We will continue working with merchants throughout this week-long grace period to ensure we're able to avoid any unnecessary citations."

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