Accurate estimating for both fabrication and installation rely on a comprehensive information package. Every item is also crucial for submitting to the city for electrical, building and sign permits. This has to be done later-so it might as well be done in a single-1st visit to the site.

The ideal site/sign survey needs to supply enough information so that the estimator/designer can fully visualize the building with the proposed signs-as though he/she were actually standing in front of the project themselves.

This step is vital for reducing or eliminating expensive oversights after the job is sold.

Here’s a checklist to help create a comprehensive site survey and permit package.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.</th>
<th>Tools to bring:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-MAPS &amp; DIRECTIONS</td>
<td>Download a Mapquest map and also an Aerial map view (Google Earth) of the project. (Save both as PDF file for the designer and installer (E-mailing) and useful in the permitting package)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-DIGITAL CAMERA</td>
<td>Fully charged or bring spare batteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-GRAPH or PLAIN PAPER with clipboard</td>
<td>TIP: Also bring a straight edge to help keep straight lines neat and distinguishable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-MEASURING WHEEL</td>
<td>Walking/rolling tape measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIP:</td>
<td>If a wheel device is not available-measure your own normal walking stride-then count the number of strides along the lot perimeter and approximate the distances that way. (Better than nothing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-TAPE MEASURE with WIDE BLADE</td>
<td>For extending up the sides of walls or sign poles when needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-TIP: Use a reference stick</td>
<td>This can be a pre-cut length of wood (6’ or 8’) with a bright line or tape on the end. Include it in photos when not able to reach tall signs or walls. Designer can also determine other dimensions from using the known stick length as a reference. Be sure to take close up and straight on photos in order to avoid dimension distortions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. Pages/Schedules to include in the survey/permit package:

1) PLOT MAP & DIRECTIONS- A bird’s eye view of the subject building as it sets on the property. It can consist of a map with street names (like a Mapquest) or an aerial map (Google Earth) with a North arrow indicator in relationship to site and the following information included on the face of the map:
   - Indicate lot lines and close dimensions for each side. Indicate lot and building frontages with the building shape/outlined with all existing and proposed signs indicated on the building outline (use a red rectangle) for all sign placements. It is typical to include the subject lot and both adjacent lots for a reference.
   - Building dimensions, all streets-named, all walkways, driveways, parking lots, building doorways and main entrances, measurements for setbacks of building and signs from walkways and paved areas, landscaped areas and trees.
   - Some sign permit allowances are based on the building elevation (frontages) and others are based on lot frontages. Get them all-since it only takes a few extra minutes to walk off the lot using a rolling tape wheel.

2) DIGITAL PHOTOS - Take plenty of photos (“Worth 1000 words”) - Planners love to see the photos.
   - Make sure you get straight on shots-which allow the sign designer to overlay a sign image without distortion. It also allows for estimating other building dimensions.
   - Take various perspective shots looking at the building corners and from across the street.
   - It is also very helpful to see the big picture-so show any adjacent or surrounding buildings and their relationship to the subject project. Not all photos need to be included in the permit package-but designers like to have the whole scene in their mind.

3) PROJECT DESCRIPTION - Information to include in drawings
   Describe the general use of the property. Commercial or Office Building, Storefront, Shopping Center, Strip Mall, other descriptions as they apply. Indicate other stores or businesses located in the general area.

4) BUILDING ELEVATIONS with DIMENSIONS--Photos/drawings should show both the existing signs in photos-along side separate photos of the same elevations showing the Proposed or replacement signs for comparison.
   - Indicate and show measurements for all doors, windows and awnings or canopies-if present.
   - Indicate the Wall construction and composition materials of wall: Wood, siding, stucco, foam wall surface, concrete, block, brick, sheet metal, flat or corrugated.
   - Indicate if wall surface is smooth or textured-If wall surface is stucco-determine if it is fine, medium or coarse in texture.
   - Paint finish: Match the existing paint finish colors (and proposed if different). Use “Kelly Moore”, “Sherwin Williams” or other common paint color reference chart for closest color matching. Don’t forget to indicate whether it’s a gloss, semi-gloss or flat paint luster finish (Makes a huge difference in the final appearance).

DIMENSION CALLOUTS: include building elevation height, length and elevation area (in sq ft), sign cabinet ht, length and depth or letter and logo ht, and overall sign length (call out sign area in sq ft), distance from grade to bottom of sign, if projecting out from building-sign extends out from building or over walkways (side view required).

5) SIGN CONSTRUCTION DRAWING
   Indicates how sign is made, sign materials used, sign colors, if electrical or illuminated, indicate electrical specs-voltage amp requirements. Graphics and sign material details.

6) ATTACHMENT METHOD & WIRING DIAGRAM (Front and side views)
   The method of attaching the sign to the wall is critical to permit approval-and accurate installation quotes. The installer can assist in determining the specific type and sizes of all required fasteners, help indicate where they are to be located and also assist in the wiring diagram and determine sign codes as they apply.
   (Typical calling out a dedicated circuit of 120 volts/20 amp on timer or solar sensor with emergency shut off switch visible from front of sign). UL labels must appear on each sign element or channel letter if separate.

AWESOME SITE SURVEY FORM & CHECKLIST
USWEST Sign Services 707/363-4340; E-Mail: uswestsigns@comcast.net
Website: www.uswestsigns.com

III. AVOIDING COMMON PROBLEMS & PITFALLS - Wasted time and cost add-ons

A) DESIGN/PERMIT FACTORS: Cities don’t like certain types of signs in certain areas. A good permit package often helps get past the counter person when good photos and sign drawings are presented for review. Use quality color renderings/photo prints.

Pitfall #1 Proposed Sign types are not allowed by the city.
Pole signs, cabinets, monument signs, height restrictions, exposed neon or even electrical signs all together are increasingly frowned upon and heavily regulated by city sign codes. Especially when located in a downtown or historic district.
HELPFUL TIP: Download city sign codes before visiting the site. Sign Permit application forms also sometimes available online.

Pitfall #2 Failure to obtain live or original signatures on each page of the design drawings.
Sometimes an authorization letter from the landlord or management co. will do. Better to be prepared with the originals. Letterhead should mention by name the person or sign contractor/company who will be pulling the sign permit. (Usually the installer is the same as the permit applicant).

Pitfall #3 City determines a “Design Review” is in order. Can delay obtaining the permits by several weeks or months-adds review costs to the permit process and additional trips (costs) by the permit pulling party.

Pitfall #4 City requires an Engineering Stamp.
On occasion-(more complex signs, and in areas such as: San Francisco, Oakland) The permit applicant must also hire an outside Engineering firm to review and calculate the sign specifications-Must be Certified within California and calculations and stamp must appear on the submitted drawings. (Extra costs)

Pitfall #5 Special Inspections Required: Some cities require that a ‘SPECIAL INSPECTOR” be hired by the applicant to inspect on site welds or certain wall sign installations in earthquake prone areas (larger cities).

B) INSTALLATION FACTORS (Imagine the installation as it happens and you’ll think of most issues)

Pitfall #1 NO ACCESS FOR PARKING A BOOM TRUCK UNDERNEATH THE PROPOSED SIGN
COST FACTOR: Note if only ladders may be used for installation or if possible access limitations exist for the installer.

Pitfall #2 NO REAR ACCESS FOR HUMAN BODY BEHIND WALL AT SIGN LOCATION
Is there adequate space behind the sign/s for a (Medium build) human body to fit for wiring and hookup. (Believe it or not-some buildings do not allow for signs or installers)

Pitfall #3 RESTRICTED HOURS for installation work (Specific times of the day)
Overtime labor after normal business hours are charged a premium rate. Indicate what hours are allowable if that’s the case. Shopping centers, stores, restaurants, etc. do not like to have workers present when open for business.

Pitfall #4 IMAGINE YOU ARE THE INSTALLER-What would you want to know about the job?
If conducting a surveyor and you are not an experienced installer-try to imagine you are installing the signs/s and ask your self some obvious questions: “Can this sign go here?” . . .“Is there electrical access behind the wall or does it need an exposed raceway behind the letters”, “Does it require special equipment?” (Crane?).