

3. Signage

3.A Relationship to Town’s Zoning By-Laws

The Town’s **Zoning By-laws, Section 5360**, include regulations for Signs Permitted in the BR Districts. Note in particular:

(Section 5310) Signs may not be erected, enlarged, or structurally altered without a sign permit from the Building Commission, with the exception of unlighted signs one square foot or smaller.

(Section 5360) Total signage area may not exceed 32 square feet. The allowable sign area may be divided between two signs. The number of signs may be increased for buildings with multiple occupants, or for buildings having two or more street frontages.

The text below provides additional guidelines for the Town’s permitted “attached signs” to supplement the Zoning By-laws.

3.B General Guidelines for all Signage Types

Typefaces used in signage should be compatible with the building architectural style, either a period font that echoes the style of the building, or a modern font that provides a clean contrast.

Lighting

Signs with opaque backgrounds should be lit from the exterior by wall-mounted, focused, directional lights such as goose neck lights or sconces. The lighting source should be shielded and the bulb exposure limited to that sufficient to illuminate the sign content.

Internally-lit signs require a special permit from the Planning Board (Town **Zoning By-laws, Section 5315, Illumination**). If approved, they should have a dark and opaque background, with the lighted areas are only used for the lettering and/or logos. Signage on doors and windows does not need additional lighting, because the interior business lighting will provide sufficient back lighting to render numbers legible.

Colors

Colors for signage should be tasteful and muted, compatible with the traditional historic downtown character. No more than two or three colors should be used. Classic, historic, and muted colors are ideal – black, brown, white, gold and silver, dark blue, red. The use of bright or garish colors – such as yellow or pink -- should be reserved for accent color only. Neon is prohibited except on marquees.



A good example of exterior lighting of façade signs using gooseneck lights.

Materials

Matte or flat backgrounds should be used for opaque sign backgrounds to reduce reflective glare and enhance legibility. Façade signs must be printed on durable wood, metal, or composite. Signage with “depth”— applied graphic elements or lettering, or recessed/ routed lettering, banding, or borders— is strongly encouraged.

Content

Merchandising or advertising messages, logos, or other content should only be provided in Temporary Signs.

3.C Guidelines for Specific Signage Types

Building Identification Signs

- **Purpose** - Building identification signs may list any or all of the following: the building address, building name, and the building owner or property manager.
- **Location** - Building Identification signs should be located on the front façade, within the ground floor level, next to an entrance to the building.
- **Mounting Type** - Mounting hardware should be concealed.
- **Size**: Only one building identification sign is permitted per building, not to exceed one square foot in size.
- **Materials** - Building identification signs should be made of a durable material such as metal, wood, or composite. The weight and form should convey a sense of substance and permanence.

Street Address Number Signs

- **Purpose** - Street address numbers should be provided on all buildings, or at all storefront entrances having different address numbers, in order to aid in navigation.
- **Location** - Address numbers should be painted upon the glazed portion of a door, applied or affixed to solid doors, or mounted on the façade near the primary entrance.
- **Mounting Type** - Painted, screw-mounted, or screened.
- **Size** - Numbers should be legible from the far side of the street. Suggested height is four to six inches high.
- **Materials** - Against an opaque background, numbers should be individual metal figures pin-mounted to the façade or punched from a metal panel that is mounted to the facade. Interior-lit plastic numbers are permitted as well. When used on a glazed background, address numbers should be painted or screened.



Example of an attractive wall-mounted street address sign.

Building Plaque Signs

- **Purpose** - To indicate the building’s architectural provenance, namely the year of construction, the architect or builder, and original purpose or occupants.

- **Location** - On front or side façade, within the ground level of the building.
- **Mounting Type** - Flush mounted to facade.
- **Size** - Not to exceed one square foot.
- **Materials** - For durability, building plaques must be made of metal. Suggested materials are bronze, stainless steel, cast iron, or other metal.
- **Colors** - In addition to the general color guidelines above, no more than two colors, including the background materials and the lettering, should be used. Colors should be subdued and discreet, for example black-rubbed letters on a brass plaque.

Business Signs

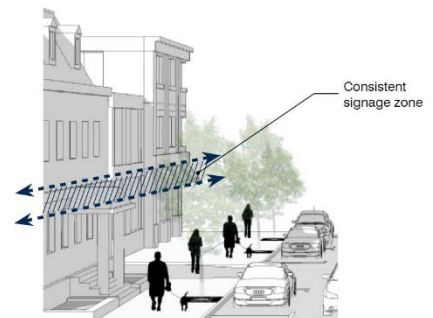
Business signs provide the name and optionally, the role or function of the business. They may also include a logo graphic. They should not include name brands of products or services offered in the business unless it is the primary role of the business.

Façade Signs

- **Purpose** - To identify the name of the occupant of the building, typically a retail or other commercial tenant, in a flat area on the façade designed to be legible to pedestrians on the far sidewalk of the street, as well as drivers.
- **Location** - Façade signs should be affixed flat to the building façade. Typically, they are placed in the sign band or *entablature* that extends in a consistent zone across the façade above the windows and doors. Buildings having such signage areas should place the most prominent signage here. Signs should not obscure architectural features of the buildings such as columns, windows, or recessed entries. Signs for buildings with multiple tenants should use a consistent height and line for the sign band. Signage should not be placed on the upper façade of multi-story buildings.
- **Mounting Type** - Individual pin-mounted letters, or letters painted on or affixed to a signage board. Dimensional signs (such as carved relief or individually-pin-mounted lettering) are encouraged.
- **Size** - Façade signs area should not exceed two square feet for each linear foot of storefront width. Sign height should be chosen to fit comfortably within the area above the windows, or on any awning or canopy or marquee. Per **Zoning By-Laws Section 5323**, signs extending above 12 feet in height require a special permit from the Planning Board.
- **Materials** - Signs materials should be compatible with the materials of the façade. They should be easily-maintainable and capable of withstanding climate variations. Painted wood or metal is



Example of a unique business name sign that conveys the character of the business while using only two colors. Note the exterior gooseneck lighting.



Where the architectural style permits, façade signage should be placed in a consistent sign band zone across buildings.

the preferred background, and letters may be painted, carved into wood, or individually mounted.

Door Signs

- **Purpose** - Door signs present at pedestrian eye-height the name of the business(es) using that door.
- **Location** - At eye-height upon each door to a retail business.
- **Mounting Type** - Door signs may be upon a hanging sign mounted on the inside of the door, or painted, screened, or etched upon the glazing.
- **Size** - Door signs should not exceed one square foot in area.
- **Materials** - Screened or painted onto glass

Window Signs

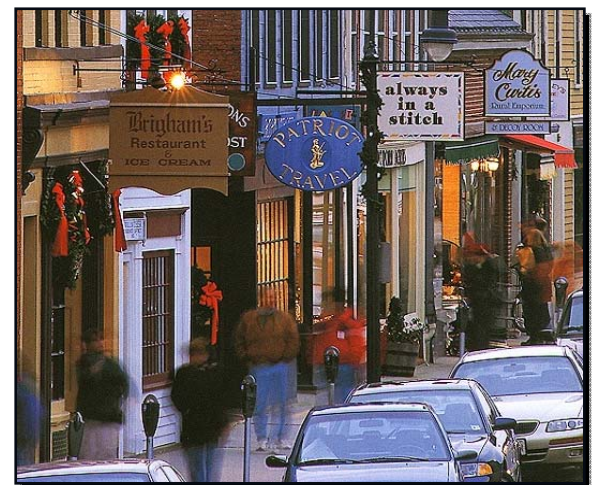
- **Purpose** - Window signs present the name of the ground-floor business, typically a retail store, and sometimes the logo or graphic associated with the business name. For example, a café might have its name as well as a stylized coffee cup.
- **Location** - Window signs should be painted or screened on the inside of retail or storefront-style windows.
- **Mounting Type** - Decals or painted lettering and graphics that permit views into the interior space.
- **Size** - No more than one sign for each window. The sign should be “airy,” with letters and graphics generously spaced so as to preserve the view into the ground-floor space even through a large sign. Alternately, a compact, largely opaque window sign should not occupy more than 10 percent of the glass area.
- **Materials** - Screened or painted onto glass.



Example of a large window sign combining text and a logo that maintains the visibility into the storefront.

Projecting and Hanging Signs

- **Purpose** - To provide smaller-scale information on the business name and specialty for pedestrians walking on the sidewalk on the same side of the street as the business.
- **Location** - Projecting and hanging signs should be placed at least 7 feet above the sidewalk grade, but below any awning or canopy, and above or close to business entries. Alternately, hanging signs are permitted inside the window or door of a business.
- **Mounting type** - Projecting signs are immovable, fixed to the façade with brackets attached on one side. Hanging



Projecting and hanging signs provide information to pedestrians on the sidewalk. A wide variety of shapes and styles may be created while remaining with common formats – here, one or two colors on a wooden board.

signs are secured to the façade, window, or door with chains or pins attached the top.

- **Size:** Each projecting or hanging sign should not exceed four square feet in area, and should not extend over the public sidewalk by more than two feet (per **Zoning By-laws, Section 5324**). Signage content should be applied to both sides of a projecting sign.
- **Materials** - Wood and metal are preferred materials for projecting and hanging signs. Interior-lit styles are discouraged.

Awning Signs

- **Purpose** - Awning sign content should be limited to business names and/or logos. Other information should not be included on awnings.
- **Location** - Awning Signs may be provided on an awning where a flat façade sign is not possible above the ground-floor windows. Lettering and a logo may be located on the top awning panel. Lettering may also be located on the front *valance*, if it exists.
- **Size** - Lettering on awning valances should leave “breathing room” space at top and bottom. Lettering should be spaced out across the valance rather than crowded together. Lettering on the top portion of an awning should be no more than 75 percent of the height and 50 percent of the width of the top plane.
- **Materials** - Awning signs should be painted or screened directly onto the fabric.
- **Color** - Lettering and logos on awnings should be provided in one color only, selected to enhance contrast and readability against the fabric background. White lettering should be used against dark awning colors, and black or a dark, muted color against a lighter-color awning.

Canopy Signs

- **Purpose** - Canopy signs should be limited to the name of the building or business or the numerical building address. Logos and other graphics should not be included on canopies.
- **Location** - Canopy sign lettering should be mounted at on the top of the canopy, at the front edge. Only one canopy sign per building is permitted.
- **Size** - Lettering for canopy signs should not exceed two (2) feet in height. Width may vary with the information presented. s
- **Materials** - Lettering should be in the form of individual, channel-cut characters of metal, wood, or composite. Internally-lit, translucent lettering is acceptable. Visible structural brackets or pins are encouraged, in keeping with the canopy character.
- **Colors** - Canopy sign lettering should use only one or two colors.



Example of signage mounted vertically above a canopy.

Marquee Signs

- **Purpose** - Marquee sign painted on or attached to a marquee are intended to provide the venue or facility’s name as well as changeable copy related to current and future attractions.

- **Location** - Marquee signs should be located on marquees. No more than one marquee sign is permitted upon a marquee, provided that the building does not also have a Façade Sign on the same façade.
- **Size** - If changeable copy is provided on the venue, the venue or facility name should not occupy more than roughly a third of the total marquee sign area. The changeable copy may occupy up to two-thirds of the total marquee sign area. If no changeable copy is provided on the marquee, the venue or facility name may occupy up to 75 percent of the sign area.
- **Materials** - Changeable copy should use moveable black lettering. Venue name may be rendered in neon tube or individually-shaped letters that are either internally-lit or lit from concealed external sources.
- **Colors** - Bright colors that draw from traditional neon colors are common for the venue / facility name on marquees. Changeable copy should be simple black lettering against a white background.



A typical theater marquee including venue name and changeable copy.

Signs for Upper-story Uses

- **Purpose** - Signage for upper-story commercial occupants identifies the business to pedestrians on the sidewalk. It is not intended to be legible from across the street or by a driver in a car.
- **Location** - Signage may be located on the door to the upper story, and should meet the guidelines for **Door Signs**, above. The names of any upper-story occupant(s) may also be included in one tenant sign per building, to be placed on the ground level façade, and meeting the guidelines for **Building Identification Signs**, above.
- **Size** - See the Section on **Door Signs** or the section on **Building Identification Signs**, as appropriate.
- **Materials** - See the Section on **Door Signs** or the section on **Building Identification Signs**, as appropriate.

Signage to Parking Areas

Signage to rear parking areas should be visible from the middle of the street. The content of the sign should be easy to read amidst all the other distractions from a car driving down the street. A simple and iconic symbol such as a large blue “P” is often the most effective.

Temporary Signs

Per **Zoning By-laws Section 5330, Temporary Signs**, temporary signs may be posted for up to 45 days prior to an event, and should be removed within 7 days after the event. Such signs should not exceed 20

square feet in the BR District. The following additional guidelines are suggested below for these sign types.

- **Location** - Temporary signs are permitted to be hung inside ground-floor windows and doors to advertise temporary events, sales, and promotions. Temporary signs should not be hung on other areas of the façade.
- **Size** - Each signs should not exceed two feet in height, and should be placed below eye-height within the window or door. The total area of all such signs for each business at any one time should not exceed 20 percent of the business' glazed window and door area, or 20 square feet, whichever is smaller.
- **Materials** - Signs may be printed on paper, vinyl, or other solid material, or screened directly on windows and doors. To maintain views into ground floor spaces, signs that consist only of lettering applied directly to the glazing are encouraged.
- **Duration** - Signs may not be posted longer than 15 days. After their removal, no additional signs of the same type may be mounted for at least 15 days.

Freestanding Signs

Sandwich Signs

The Town's **Zoning By-laws, Section 5325, Sandwich Signs**, prohibit "wood sandwich or A-frame type signs" as well as "metal or plastic framed temporary advertising signs on light gauge brackets and/or wheels."

Other Freestanding Signs

Size and Placement: Per Zoning By-laws, Section 5366, Freestanding Signs, one freestanding sign up to 32 square feet may be placed in the front yard, but only if the building has a minimum setback of 30 feet and the sign is set back 15 feet from the street line and 20 feet from any side lot line. Given the placement of most existing buildings downtown, freestanding signs may only be located in a few locations.

Materials - Freestanding signs should not obscure views of the building's principal entry. Signs should be set within a landscaped area. Lighting should be indirect rather than internal.



Attractive recessed entrance and hanging business sign. Note that this chalkboard-style sandwich signs is prohibited within the Clinton Zoning.