

## Section 326. Signs

326.A **Purpose.** By encouraging the orderly and appropriate design, scale, and placement of signs, the provisions of this section are intended to:

- (1) Protect public safety;
- (2) Promote effective identification, communication and wayfinding; and
- (3) Maintain and enhance an attractive visual environment that fosters a healthy economy.

326.B **Applicability.** All signs must be designed and installed in accordance with the provisions of this section. The Administrative Officer must issue a zoning permit before any sign is erected, enlarged, replaced, reworded, redesigned, or altered in any way except as specifically exempted in Paragraph 326.D.

326.C **Prohibited Signs.** The following signs are prohibited:

- (1) Off-premise signs.
- (2) Abandoned signs.
- (3) Signs attached to trees, utility poles, or streetlights.
- (4) Signs placed on any public property or public right-of-way, except for a political sign in accordance with Paragraph 326.D(3) or a seasonal sign in accordance with Paragraph 326.D(6). Note that the Town of Westford prohibits all private signs, including political signs, in the Town Common.
- (5) Signs that obstruct pedestrian traffic or visibility.
- (6) Signs that limit drivers' sight distance, that could be confused with official highway signs or signals, that unduly distract drivers' attention, or that otherwise impair public safety.
- (7) Signs illuminated by, composed of, or containing flashing, intermittent, rotating, or moving lights.

~~(8) Signs illuminated by, composed of, or containing luminous tube lighting.~~

~~(9)~~(8) Internally illuminated ~~free-standing~~ signs.

~~(10)~~(9) Signs that move or that incorporate any pennant, ribbon, streamer, spinner, balloon, inflatable, or other similar moving, fluttering, or revolving device.

~~(11)~~(10) Signs that use obscene, lewd, vulgar, or indecent words or images.

~~(12)~~(11) Signs more than 1,500 feet from the main entrance of the advertised business or use.

~~(13)~~(12) Signs, flags, or banners mounted or extending more than 20 feet above the ground or, if building mounted, above the building's roofline.

~~(14)~~(13) Signs placed on vehicles or trailers that are parked or located for the primary purpose of displaying the sign.

326.D **Exempt Signs.** The following signs do not require a zoning permit:

- (1) Government Signs. Public signs or notices erected or required by the Town or State.

- (2) Government Flags. Flags or insignia of a government when displayed in accordance with applicable federal and state codes and when not displayed in connection with commercial promotion.
- (3) Political Signs. Political campaign signs displayed in accordance with state regulations.
- (4) Special Event Signs. Signs for a special event, which is sponsored by a public or nonprofit organization and will be open to the general public, that are not more than 20 square feet in area and are displayed not more than 1 week prior to the event and are removed within 24 hours after the event.
- (5) Temporary Signs. Temporary signs are defined as signs that advertise openings, sales, or similar special events in accordance with the following:
  - (a) There must not be more than one temporary sign per lot.
  - (b) A temporary sign must not be displayed more than 7 consecutive days and more than a total of 14 days in any calendar year.
  - (c) A temporary sign must be securely attached to a building or a permanent free-standing sign.
  - (d) A temporary sign must not be more than 8 square feet in area. Temporary signs will not count towards the total amount of signs allowed under 0.
  - (e) A temporary sign must not be illuminated.
- (6) Seasonal Signs. Seasonal signs are defined as signs for farms and agricultural enterprises to advertise products currently available in accordance with the following:
  - (a) There must not be more than 4 seasonal signs per business displayed at any time.
  - (b) Each seasonal sign must not be more than 8 square feet in area or 6 feet in height.
  - (c) Each seasonal sign must not be displayed for more than 90 days in any calendar year.
  - (d) Seasonal signs will not count towards the total amount of signs allowed under 0.
  - (e) Seasonal signs must not be illuminated.
- (7) Open Flags. Open flags are defined as signs not more than 15 square feet or open/closed sign not more than 2 square feet in area per business. The flag must be displayed only when the business is open. An open sign may be illuminated only when the business is open. Only one flag is permitted per use.
- (8) Real Estate Signs. Real estate signs are defined as one real estate or construction sign not more than 6 square feet in area per lot. For lots fronting on more than one road, one sign is allowed per road. For lots where multiple contractors are working, each contractor may display one sign. Such signs must be removed within 1 week following the sale or lease of the property or the completion of work on the property.
- (9) Residential Identification Signs. A residential identification sign is defined as a non-illuminated name, address or similar identification signs not more than 2 square feet in area.

- (10) Residential Decorative Sign/Flags. A residential decorative sign/flag is defined as non-advertising, decorative signs, or banners on single-family or two-family residential property.
- (11) Posted Signs. A posted sign is defined as posted, trespassing, hunting or similar signs not more than 2 square feet in area.
- (12) Garage Sale Signs. A garage sale sign is defined as signs for a garage sale, yard sale or similar sale of personal property that are not more than 4 square feet in area and are displayed not more than 2 days prior to the sale and removed within 24 hours after the sale.
- (13) Internally Illuminated Signs. An internally illuminated sign must be mounted on the interior side of a commercial window to be primarily viewed from the outside, in accordance with the following:
  - (a) There must not be more than 2 internally illuminated signs per commercial parcel.
  - (b) Each internally illuminated sign must not be more than 2 square feet in size.
  - (c) Sign illumination must be solid color with a non-reflective backing. All flashing, blinking, shimmering, scrolling, animation, and video types of illumination are prohibited.
  - (d) All branded product advertisement signs are prohibited.
  - (e) Signs can only be illuminated during business hours and must be turned off when the business is closed.
- (12)

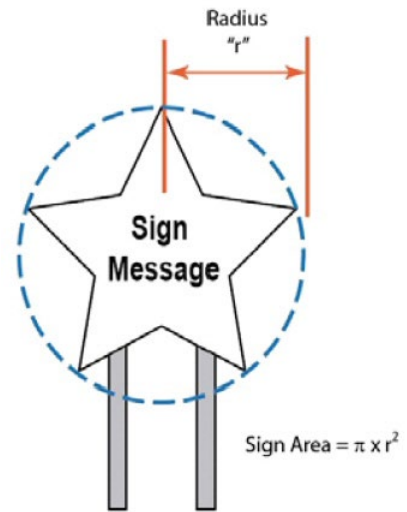
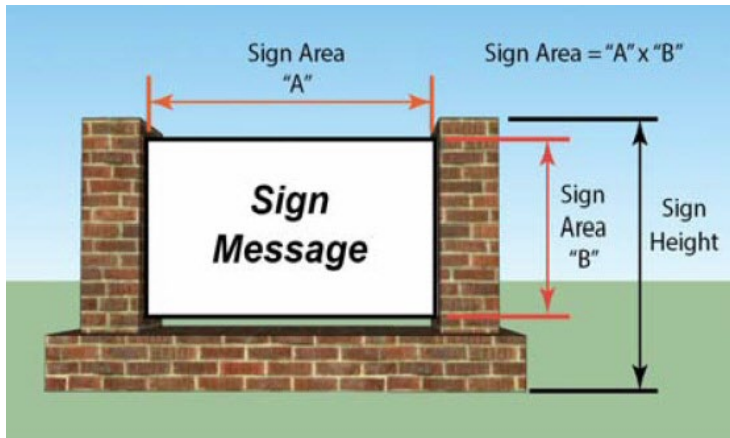
**Figure 3-11. Maximum Sign Area and Height**

	VILLAGE AND COMMON DISTRICTS	RURAL DISTRICTS
<b>Building-Mounted Sign Area</b> (per foot of building/tenant frontage)	2.0 sf	1.0 sf
<b>Free-Standing Sign Area</b> (single use)	8 sf	16 sf
<b>Free-Standing Sign Area</b> (multiple uses)	extra 2 sf per use	extra 4 sf per use
<b>Free-Standing Sign Height</b>	6 ft	12 ft

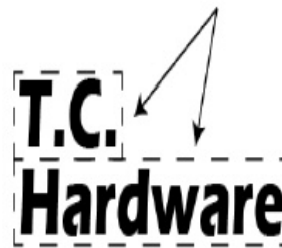
*Building-mounted sign types include wall signs, projecting or hanging signs, internally illuminated signs, window signs and awning signs.*

**Figure 3-11-A. Sign Area Calculation**

For a sign mounted or painted on a background panel or surface distinctively painted or constructed to serve as the background for the sign, the sign area shall be computed by means of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or combination thereof that encompasses the extreme limits of the background panel or surface. For a sign where individual letters or elements are mounted or painted on a building façade where there is no background panel or surface distinctively painted or constructed to serve as the background for the sign, the sign area shall be computed by means of the combination of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or combination thereof that encloses all the letters or elements associated with the sign.



Sign Area =  
Combined total area of two rectangles



326.E **General Standards.** All signs must conform to the following:

- (1) Signs must be structurally sound and located so that they do not pose a threat to pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
- (2) Permanent free-standing signs must be self-supporting structures built on and attached to concrete foundations.
- (3) Signs must be designed to withstand a wind pressure of at least 30 pounds per square foot.
- (4) Signs must not be designed or located in a manner that would obscure architectural features (ex: cornices, arches, columns, etc.). Signs must not be designed or located in a manner that would obstruct access to any fire escape, required exit, window, or door.

326.F **Specific Standards.** All signs must conform to the following:

- (1) Wall Signs. Wall signs are allowed in accordance with the following:
  - (a) A building or tenant may have multiple wall signs.
  - (b) Wall signs may be mounted on any facade facing a road, public right-of-way, or parking lot.
  - (c) The total area of all wall signs will be counted towards the maximum amount of building-mounted signs specified in Figure 3-11.

- (d) A wall sign must not exceed 80% of the length of the tenant space (for multi-use buildings) or building frontage (for single-use buildings).
  - (e) Wall signs that project more than 6 inches from the wall must have a minimum clearance of 8 feet from the bottom of the sign to the grade below.
- (2) Projecting Signs. Projecting signs are allowed in the Common and Village Districts when designed and placed for the purpose of identifying the business by a pedestrian walking along the same side of the road as the business or under a building arcade or canopy in accordance with the following:
- (a) There must not be more than one projecting sign per customer entrance.
  - (b) The sign must not exceed 12 square feet in area.
  - (c) The area of a projecting sign will be counted towards the maximum amount of building-mounted signs specified in Figure 3-11.
  - (d) The sign must have a minimum clearance of 8 feet from the bottom of the sign to the grade below.
  - (e) The sign must not project more than 6 feet from the wall of the building on which it is mounted.
  - (f) The sign may encroach over required yards or sidewalks.
  - (g) Projecting signs must not be located closer than 24 feet to each other.
  - (h) If there will be multiple projecting signs mounted on a building, they must be compatible in type, scale, and placement.
- (3) Free-Standing Signs. Free-standing signs are allowed in accordance with the following:
- (a) There must not be more than one free-standing sign per lot, except that lots with frontage on more than one road may have one free-standing sign along each road.
  - (b) The size and height of a free-standing sign is as specified in Figure 3-11.
  - (c) The sign may be located within required yards, but must be set back at least 3 feet from the property line. Signs more than 6 feet in height must be set back from the property line at least a distance equal to 50% of their height.
  - (d) Free-standing signs must not be located closer than 50 feet to one another.
  - (e) Multi-use free-standing signs must not include any information other than the name of the site, its address and/or the name of tenants.
- (4) Directory Signs. A single development site that consists of multiple lots sharing a common entrance from the road may have a multi-use free-standing sign, irrespective of whether the advertised use is located on the same lot as the sign or the ownership of the lots.
- (5) Window Signs. Permanent window signs will be considered wall signs for the purposes of determining the total number and area of signs allowed. No more than 25% of any ground-level window may be obscured by signs, whether permanent or temporary, whether on the interior or exterior of the window, and whether physically mounted on the window or otherwise mounted so as to be primarily viewed through the window.

- (6) Awnings and Similar Accessory Structures. Signs on awnings or similar accessory structures attached to a building will be considered wall signs for the purposes of determining the total number and area of signs allowed. Umbrellas or similar detached accessory structures will also be considered wall signs if more than 10% of their surface area is covered with advertising messages intended to be visible from off the premises.
- (7) Instructional and Wayfinding Signs. Instructional and wayfinding signs not designed to be legible from off the premises or for advertising purposes are allowed without limitation and will not be counted when determining the total number and area of signs allowed on a site.
- (8) Portable Signs. Portable signs are allowed to advertise daily specials, sales, or similar information in the Common and Village zoning districts in accordance with the following:
  - (a) There must not be more than one portable sign per business.
  - (b) A portable sign may only be placed out when the business is open.
  - (c) A portable sign must not be more than 16 square feet in area or 4 feet in height. A portable sign will not count towards the total amount of signs allowed under 0.
  - (d) A portable sign may be placed on the public sidewalk not more than 12 feet from the associated customer entrance provided that the sign does not restrict the sidewalk to a clear width of less than 3 feet.
  - (e) A portable sign must not be illuminated.

326.G **Sign Maintenance.** All signs must be maintained in a safe, legible and well-kept condition.

326.H **Sign Removal.** All signs must be removed within 90 days of the associated use being changed or terminated (if the sign is nonconforming see Paragraph 326.I). For lawful, conforming signs, only the message components of the sign associated with the changed or terminated use must be removed or covered and the support components may remain.

326.I **Nonconforming Signs.** The following apply to lawfully existing, nonconforming signs:

- (1) A nonconforming sign must not be altered, modified or reconstructed unless the alteration, modification, reconstruction, or relocation will bring the sign into conformance with these regulations; or it will be limited to normal repair and maintenance with no change in the sign's area or content.
- (2) A nonconforming sign must be removed within 7 days of its associated use being changed or terminated. Both the message and support elements of the sign must be removed.
- (3) Any previously developed site requiring site plan or conditional use review must bring the entire site, including any nonconforming signs, into conformance with this section