

6.3. Sign Regulations (12-7-18)

A. FINDINGS, APPLICABILITY AND PURPOSE

1. Findings

Signs have a strong visual impact on the character and quality of the community and perform an important function in identifying and promoting properties, businesses, services, residences, events and other matters of interest to the public. However, the uncontrolled proliferation of permanent and temporary signs may obstruct views, distract motorists, displace alternative land use, create aesthetic eyesores and litter along the roadways and streets of the Town and pose other problems that legitimately call for regulation.

2. Applicability

The regulations in this article are applicable to all signs located in the Town of Wethersfield. This article regulates signs which are placed on private property or on property owned by public agencies including the Town. This article is not intended to extend regulatory authority to objects that are not traditionally considered signs for purpose of government regulation.

3. Purpose

It is the stated purpose of these regulations that the Town of Wethersfield has defined the sign types which are permitted in the various zoning districts and those signs that are prohibited and to establish the minimum requirements for on-site and off-site signs in order to achieve, among other things, the following:

- a. To provide minimum standards to protect the public health, safety, general welfare, property values and promote traffic safety by regulating the number, size, color, type, design, location, height, motion, material quality, illumination, construction, installation, enforcement, condition, maintenance and repair of signs through a comprehensive system of reasonable, consistent and nondiscriminatory standards and requirements.
- b. To serve substantial governmental interests and, in some cases, compelling governmental interests such as traffic safety and signs that warn of threats to bodily injury or death.
- c. That in order to preserve the Town as a desirable community in which to live, visit and do business, a pleasing, aesthetically attractive environment is of foremost importance.
- d. To encourage signs and messages of sufficient size to be visible and legible.
- e. To encourage and permit signs that are appropriate and compatible with the various zoning districts in which they are located and enable the identification of places of residence and business.
- f. To promote the economic viability of the business community by allowing for the efficient and effective use of signs as a means of communication necessary for the conduct of commerce while protecting property values by minimizing the possible adverse effect of signs on nearby public and private property.
- g. To promote and accomplish the goals, policies, and objectives of the Plan of Conservation and Development.
- h. To recognize the right to free speech by regulating signs in a content neutral manner that is consistent with the Constitution and provides for adequate means of expression.
- i. Reduce the visual distractions and hazards to pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists that may be caused by the indiscriminate placement and clutter that may be caused by temporary signs.
- j. To prevent property damage, personal injury, and litter from signs which are improperly constructed, poorly maintained, or of flimsy materials.
- k. To prevent the inadvertent favoring of commercial speech over non-commercial speech, or favoring of any non-commercial speech over any other non-commercial speech based upon its content.
- l. Encourage signs which are well designed and pleasing in appearance and to provide incentives and flexibility for good design and relationship to the building and site it identifies.

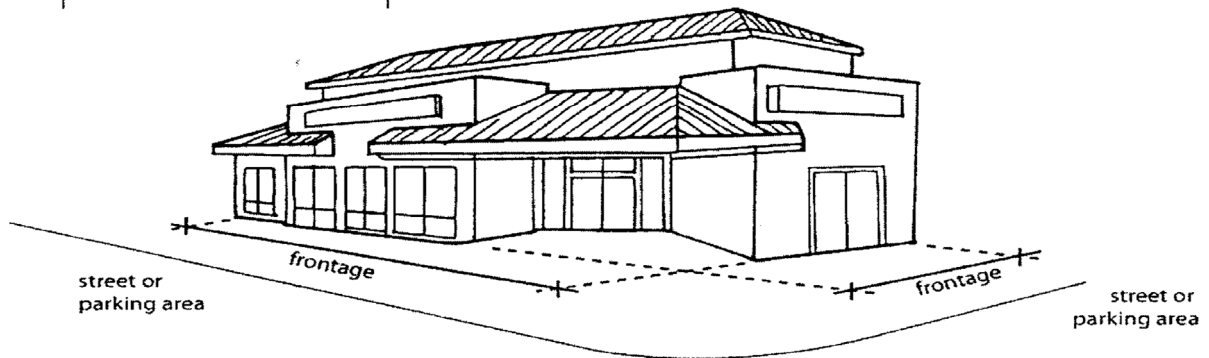
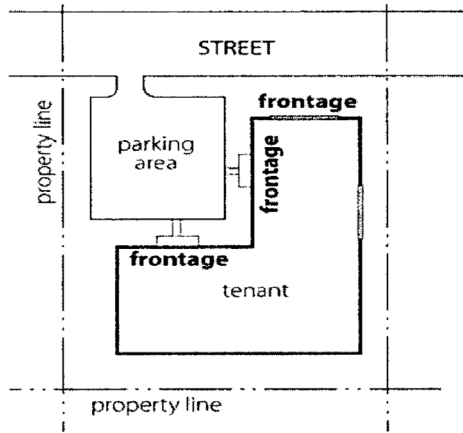
B. MEASUREMENT OF SIGN AREA AND SIGN HEIGHT

1. Sign area shall be measured as the entire area within the smallest, single geometric shape that encompasses the extreme limits of all letters, designs, symbols, logos or other elements of the display including the advertising surface of any material, color, illumination, panel or frame used for displaying a message and any applied background that is not part of the architecture of the building.
2. Sign area shall be measured by the standard mathematical formula for that geometric shape.
3. Sign area shall include the frame, if any, but shall not include:
 - a. A pole or other structural support such as the solid base of a monument sign unless such pole or structural support is internally illuminated or otherwise so designed to constitute a display device, or a part of a display device.
 - b. Architectural features that are part of a freestanding structure, and not an integral part of the sign, and which may consist of building or structural forms complementing the site in general.
 - c. Supports which affix a sign to a building unless such supports are obviously designed to be part of the sign message.
4. When a wall sign consists of individual words, figures or symbols painted on or affixed to a building wall, and where such individual components are not included in an integrated background or sign frame the area of such sign shall be measured as the composite of the smallest geometric shape or combination of geometric shapes which would contain each separate word, figure or symbol. When separate elements are organized to form a single sign, but are separated by open space, or a separate line, the sign area and dimensions shall be calculated by determining the geometric form, or combination of forms, which comprises all of the display areas, excluding the space between different elements. Minor protrusions to a particular regular shape, as determined by the ZEO or the Commission, shall not be included in the total area of a wall sign.
5. For the purposes of determining the maximum permitted sign area for a wall sign each business shall be allowed a total sign area that is the linear measurement of the distance between the outermost edges of the tenant business frontage facing the street and running along the ground level for that portion of the building that the business or use occupies.

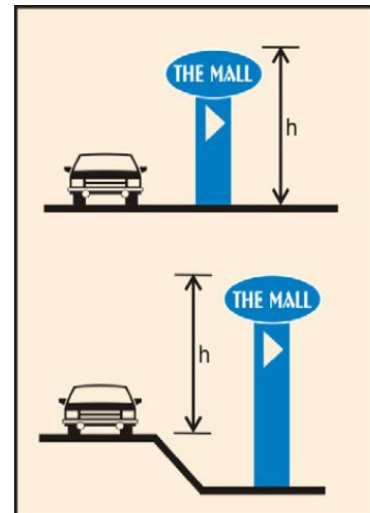


Wall signs

6. Where a business does not face a street, the maximum permitted wall sign area shall be determined by the linear measurement of the tenant business frontage occupied by the particular business or use that has the main entrance facing the primary parking lot.



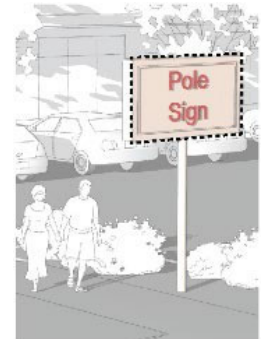
7. When a business has frontage on more than one (1) street, additional wall sign area is permitted for each facade of the business that fronts on a separate street. The sign area permitted for each street shall be computed separately. The area of signage allowed for each separate frontage may not be combined and placed on a single frontage. Only the square footage computed for each street frontage must face that street frontage.
8. Any sign may be double-faced (back to back) provided that both sides are equal in area and both faces are parallel and only one face shall be counted in determining conformity to sign area limitations. Sign faces that are back to back but not parallel to each other shall be considered as two (2) signs.
9. Sign area for signs that have three (3) or four (4) faces shall be calculated by totaling the sum of all sign faces and dividing by two (2).
10. The height of a sign shall be measured as the vertical distance from the average finished grade at the base of the sign to the highest point of the sign, except if the sign location has an average finished grade lower than the adjoining grade of the sidewalk or road, the sign height is measured from the top of the sidewalk or curb (or highest point of the road nearest the property if no curb exists) to the highest point of the sign. The use of berms, grading, or other means in order to achieve a greater sign height shall not be permitted except where site conditions are such that the proposed sign location is below the grade of the closest adjacent roadway.



C. PROHIBITED SIGNS

The following signs and sign types are prohibited within the Town and shall not be erected, operated or placed on any property unless otherwise permitted elsewhere in these regulations:

1. Any sign not otherwise expressly permitted by these regulations.
2. Billboards.
3. Inflatable signs, balloon signs, or wind activated graphics.
4. Pennant strings and streamers.
5. Roof signs.
6. Permanent pole signs over four (4) feet in height.
7. Snipe or blade signs.
8. Cabinet signs unless the cabinet is a stylized, non-rectangular shape to accommodate the sign copy.
9. Any sign carried by a person for the purpose of attracting attention to any business or commercial activity.
10. Holographic signs or projected image signs that are projected on to walls or buildings via lasers, beams of light or motion pictures.
11. Vehicle signs, except as specifically provided below. Vehicle signs are allowed only where all of the following conditions are met:
 - a. The primary purpose of such vehicle or equipment is not the display of signs.
 - b. Signs are painted upon or applied directly to an integral part of the vehicle or equipment, do not extend beyond the horizontal or vertical profile of the vehicle, and are not mounted on the truck bed.
 - c. Vehicle/equipment is in operating condition, currently registered and licensed to operate on public streets when applicable, and actively used in the daily function of the business to which such signs relate.
 - d. Vehicles and equipment are not used primarily as static displays advertising a product or service, nor utilized as storage, shelter or distribution points for commercial products or services for the public.
 - e. Vehicles and equipment engaged in active construction projects and on-premises storage of equipment and vehicles leased or rented to the general public by a business engaged in vehicle leasing shall not be subject to this condition.



D. SIGN RESTRICTIONS

1. No sign or any part thereof shall have visible moving parts, mechanical movement, or any effects that create the illusion of motion such as swinging, spinning, oscillating, rotating or revolving whether by mechanical or other means.
2. No sign shall contain any flashing, fluttering, blinking, exposed light sources, revolving or pulsating lighting or may change luminance, light intensity, brightness or color.
3. No sign may utilize revolving beams or beacons, search lights, strobe light or lights customarily associated with police, fire or ambulance, or animation.
4. Colored lights shall not be used where they simulate or imitate a traffic signal or conflict with traffic safety.
5. No sign shall be located or maintained at the intersection of any street or driveway, in such a manner so as to conflict with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) sight distance triangle specifications or otherwise interfere with traffic or pedestrian circulation.
6. No sign may emit sound, odor, smoke, fire, vapor, or other visible matter.
7. No sign shall unreasonably obscure or obstruct any other sign or any architectural features such as a pilaster, arch, cornice, door, stairway, window, ventilation system, fire escape or exit or interfere with the view of, or is confused with, or imitates any traffic control sign or device.
8. No sign, window, door, outdoor eating or drinking areas, canopy or building or any portion thereof, shall be outlined in tube lighting, strings of light bulbs, rope lighting, LED lighting or other similar lighting, where such lighting is intended to be visible from the exterior of the building, unless for temporary, seasonal decorations and lighting or unless specifically approved by the Commission under the provisions of Section R of these regulations.

E. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Multiple sign types as authorized by these regulations may be permitted for any property.
2. All permanent signs shall be constructed of durable materials, such as metal, wood, high quality plastic or other similar material, securely attached, structurally sound, firmly supported and capable of withstanding continuous exposure to the elements.
3. No permit shall be issued for signs that conflict with a master sign program approved per the provisions of Section Q of these regulations.
4. Unless otherwise specified, signs shall not be located in the right of way or on town property, except for governmental signs erected by, or on behalf of, a unit of government, or for temporary signs under the provisions of Section K of these regulations. Signs placed within the public right-of-way or on town property are subject to confiscation by the Town or the State.
5. Notwithstanding anything in this regulation to the contrary, no sign or sign structure shall be subject to any restriction of speech or limitations based upon its content, viewpoint or message. The owner of any sign which is otherwise allowed and lawfully displayed may substitute any ideological, political or other noncommercial message in lieu of any other commercial or noncommercial message without consideration of the content of the sign. This substitution of message may be made without any additional approval or permitting. The purpose of this provision is to prevent any inadvertent favoring of commercial speech over noncommercial speech or the favoring of one type of non-commercial speech over another. This provision does not create a right to increase the total amount of signage on a parcel or allow the substitution of an off-site commercial message in place of an on-site commercial message.

F. SIGNS NOT REQUIRING A SIGN PERMIT

Although these regulations do not apply to signs erected, maintained or posted by the State or Federal Government, these regulations clarify that government signs which form the expression of that government are allowed and include the signs described and regulated below when erected and maintained pursuant to law. The signs described below are an important component of measures necessary to protect the public safety and serve the compelling governmental interest of protecting traffic safety, complying with legal requirements, serving the requirements of emergency response and protecting property rights or the rights of persons on property.

A sign permit is not required prior to the display and erection of any of the following signs subject to the following requirements:

1. In order to assist with efficient emergency vehicle operations by identifying the location of residential and business addresses, each property is required to display the street address on a sign in a prominent location so as to allow said number to be clearly readable from the street. The numbers and letters of the address shall not exceed six (6) square feet in area and must be at least three (3) inches in height so that public safety services, mail delivery and official governmental notification can be more easily provided.
2. Where a federal, state or local law requires a property owner to post a sign to warn of a danger or to prohibit access to the property either generally or specifically, the owner shall comply with the federal, state or local law to exercise that authority by posting a sign on the property. If the federal, state or local regulation describes the form and dimensions of the sign, the property owner shall comply with those requirements, otherwise, when not defined, the sign shall be no larger than four (4) square feet and located in a place on the property to provide the notice that is required to be made. Warning, security, emergency, utility, or other government signs necessary for public safety, traffic or civil defense or signs required to be displayed by law on either public or private property including signs identifying parking spaces or signs necessary for traffic safety, control, and circulation that do not display a commercial message.
3. Notices or advertisements posted or displayed by or under the direction of any public or court official in the performance of official or directed duties; provided, that all such signs shall be removed by the property owner no more than ten (10) days after their purpose has been accomplished or as otherwise required by law. Signs posted under this Section are not snipe signs.
4. Commemorative plaques, memorials, tablets, building cornerstones, emblems, insignias, or symbols that do not display a commercial message for a community, historic or religious property and do not exceed ten (10) sf.
5. Graphics, murals and works of art that in no way advertise or call attention to a product or business.
6. Signs placed by a transit agency to identify stops and routes.
7. For each automobile fueling station gas pump a non-illuminated topper sign of four (4) sf. each.

8. Each property may display as many as three (3) flags each not to exceed fifty (50) sf. each.
9. Two (2) internally illuminated window signs for any business in a business district (except the VB District). The signs may utilize LED technology but may not flash, scroll or change message content and may not utilize monitors (such as TV screens) and shall not exceed four (4) sf. in area each.
10. Vending machine signs in any business district, except for the VB District.
11. The change to the face or copy of a sign panel provided that the sign was previously permitted and there is no change in size. Change of copy refers to the situation where the message or design of an existing sign face is modified or changed, but the size, shape, framework or structure of the sign is not modified or changed.
12. One (1) banner for each business that may hang from a pole or staff during business hours only not larger than twelve (12) sf.

G. TEMPORARY SIGNS

1. GENERAL STANDARDS FOR ALL TEMPORARY SIGNS:
 - a. Illumination is prohibited for all temporary signs.
 - b. Must be removed within the time frames established by these regulations.
 - c. May be constructed of paper, cloth, canvas, light fabric, cardboard, wallboard, plastic or other lightweight, non-rigid materials but shall be rigidly and securely installed to the ground or attached to a building.
 - d. No temporary sign may be used as a permanent sign.
 - e. Do not require approval from the DRAC or the Historic District Commission.
 - f. Are permitted in addition to other signs allowed by other provision of these regulations.
 - g. Are not allowed on any Town owned property unless reviewed and approved by the Town Manager in compliance with these regulations.

2. TEMPORARY SIGNS NOT REQUIRING A SIGN PERMIT IN ANY ZONE

The following signs do not require the ZEO to issue a zoning permit as long as the signs are in accordance with the following requirements:

	Sign Type	Description	Max Area	Max Ht.	Max #	Time Limits	Additional Requirements
a.	Yard sign	During the time that a residence or property is being offered for sale, rental or lease or during the time when a property is under construction, remodeling, maintenance, repairs or improvements	6 sf.	6 ft.	1	Must be removed within ten (10) days after the property transaction or construction has been completed.	
b.	Yard sign	On a residential property during the period of time when the owner or resident is opening the property to the public	6 sf.	6 ft.	1	For not more than three (3) consecutive days or more than a total of nine (9) days during a calendar year	All such signs shall be removed immediately upon conclusion of the event.
c.	Yard sign or banner	For a personal event such as a birth, birthday, anniversary or graduation	32 sf.	6 ft.	1	For not more than thirty (30) days	
d.	Yard sign	Noncommercial speech signs that are used to express political or ideological speech or are used for elections	For any individual or the combination of several signs shall	6 ft.	6		

			not exceed 32 sf.				
e.	Seasonal Decorations and Lighting	Decorations and lighting that are clearly incidental to and customary and commonly associated with a national, local, religious or cultural holiday and does not display any commercial advertising.					For a period of not more than ninety (90) consecutive days.

3. TEMPORARY SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT IN RESIDENTIAL AND CONSERVATION ZONES

The ZEO may grant a zoning permit for a limited period of time for the following signs in the AA, A-1, A, B, C, AA-OS, SRD and AG Zones in accordance with the following:

	Sign Type	Description	Max Area	Max Height	Max #	Time Limits	Additional Requirements
a.	Banners	On the site of a municipal athletic field	32 sf. per banner		8	During the playing season	Attached to the inside area of the fence or scoreboard, facing the playing field, intended for on-premises viewing, shall be uniform in design and size
b.	Yard sign or banner	On the site of an approved residential development	32 sf. per sign or banner	6 ft.	1/10 lots or units or no more than 2	Up to 12 months, unless extended by the ZEO.	During the period of time when work is under construction or when development is under way with lots, homes, apartments or condominiums for sale.
c.	Banner or yard sign	On the site of a municipal, historic, civic, religious, institutional or educational property advertising a community event	32 sf.	6 ft.	1	Not to exceed 30 days and up to three (3) times per year	Removed immediately after the event
d.	Portable sign	At the site of a farm stand. Signs must be constructed of durable, weatherproof materials, including wood, metal, or composite wood or synthetic materials and supported by a base of sufficient weight to withstand wind gusts. May include changeable copy, such as chalkboards, or the like.	8 sf. per sign	4 ft.	2	During business hours only, must be removed from the street at the close of business each day and at the end of the season	Located directly in front of the farm stand and shall not be placed where the paved area for pedestrians is reduced to less than four (4) feet in width. Any such sign shall not be placed within the town right-of-way except if it is subject to a license agreement indemnifying the liability of the Town.

4. TEMPORARY SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT IN BUSINESS ZONES

The ZEO may grant a zoning permit for a limited period of time for the following signs in the GB, RC, O, BP, VB and TC Zones in accordance with the following:

	Sign Type	Description	Max Area	Max Height	Max #	Time Limits	Additional Requirements
a.	Banners or yard signs	For a business opening, relocation, closing, future use, change of ownership or management, or during a special event, promotions, sale or similar activity.	60 sf. total	8 ft.	2	Up to 30 consecutive days per installation, two (2) times per year	
b.	Portable sign	During a special event, promotion or sale. Must be constructed of durable, weatherproof materials, such as wood, metal, or composite wood or synthetic materials. May include changeable copy, such as chalkboards, or the like.	8 sf.	4 ft.	1	Up to 30 consecutive days per installation two (2) times per year. Must be removed from the street at the close of the business day. Shall be weighted, temporarily secured, and supported by a base of sufficient weight to withstand wind gusts.	Shall be located directly in front of the establishment and shall not be placed where the paved area for pedestrians is reduced to less than four (4) feet in width. Any such sign shall not be placed within the town right-of-way except in the VB zone and is subject to a license agreement indemnifying the liability of the Town.
c.	Yard sign or banner	When a property is under construction.	32 sf.	8 ft.	2	Must be removed within ten (10) days after construction is concluded.	Building improvements or site development is under way.
d.	Café umbrella	For an approved outdoor seating area	3 sf.		2 per umbrella		

5. TEMPORARY SIGNS NOT REQUIRING A PERMIT IN BUSINESS ZONES

A sign permit is not required prior to the display and erection of any of the following signs in the GB, RC, O, BP, VB and TC Zones in accordance with the following requirements:

	Sign Type	Description	Max Area	Max Height	Max #	Time Limits
a.	Yard, wall or banner sign	On the site of a property when it is being offered for sale, lease or rent.	32 sf.	8 ft.	1	Must be removed within ten (10) days after the property transaction.
b.	Window signs	For ground floor businesses only	50% of the area of any one window or door and 25% of the area of all windows and doors combined			

H. PERMANENT DETACHED SIGNS

1. GENERAL STANDARDS FOR ALL DETACHED SIGNS:

- a. Detached signs shall be located at least five (5) feet from any property line. The setback is measured from the closest portion of the sign or sign structure to the property line.
- b. No detached sign shall be higher than ten (10) feet from the ground to the top of the sign.
- c. All permanent detached signs shall be erected on, or permanently attached to concrete foundations.
- d. The base of all detached signs shall be placed within a landscaped area. The landscaped area shall be a minimum area of 2.5 sf. for every sf. of sign area. The area beneath and around a sign shall be landscaped with a combination of shrubs, perennials, ground cover and other materials so as to complement the site, screen any light fixtures from view and integrate the sign with buildings, parking areas, surrounding vegetation and natural features of the landscape. Where the required landscape area adjoins a paved surface accessible to vehicular traffic, a raised concrete curb, suitable to prevent the encroachment of vehicles, shall be required.
- e. No detached sign may occupy an area designated for parking, loading, walkways, driveways, fire lanes, easements, rights-of-way or other areas required to remain unobstructed.

2. PERMANENT DETACHED SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT IN RESIDENTIAL AND CONSERVATION ZONES

Following the review by the Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) or the Historic District Commission, the ZEO may grant a zoning permit for the following signs in the AA, A-1, A, B, C, AA-OS, SRD and AG Zones in accordance with the following:

	Description	Max area	Max Height	Max #	Illumination	Additional Requirements
a.	On the site of a Bed and Breakfast	12 sf.	6 ft.	1	external	
b.	Manually changeable copy sign on the site of a municipal, educational, historic, civic, religious or institutional use.	The changeable copy portion of the sign shall not exceed 50% of the total sign area or 12 sf. whichever is less	6 ft.	1	external	Attached to or made part of an otherwise permitted detached sign.
c.	A legally existing non-conforming use.	12 sf.	6 ft.	1	external	
d.	An open space, recreational, institutional or community principal use	24 sf.	6 ft.	1 per entrance	external	Provided the use is permitted by the ZEO, site plan, special permit or variance.
e.	An accessory use	4 sf.	6 ft.	1	external	Provided the use is permitted by the ZEO, site plan, special permit or variance.
f.	An SRD, single-family subdivision or congregate residential development	24 sf.	6 ft.	1 per street access/2 max	external	Masonry, stone, or other low maintenance sign(s)
g.	Scoreboards at athletic facilities that are not visible from any residential property or public street.					

3. PERMANENT DETACHED SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT IN BUSINESS ZONES

Following the review by the Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) or the Historic District Commission, the ZEO may grant a zoning permit for the following signs in the GB, RC, O, BP, VB and TC Zones in accordance with the following:

	Description	Max area	Max Height	Max #	Illumination	Additional Requirements
a.	Non-residential buildings with a single tenant or business.	24 sf.	8 ft.	1 per building	internal or external	
b.	Non-residential multi-tenant or mixed-use buildings.	32 sf.	10 ft.	1 per building	internal or external	
c.	Non-residential multi-tenant shopping centers	50 sf.	10 ft.	1 per building	internal or external	On lots of over 6 acres in size
d.	A manual or electronic changeable copy sign for a fueling station or a financial use.	The changeable copy portion of the sign shall not exceed 50% of the total sign area or 12 sf. whichever is less	8 ft.	1	internal	In the GB and RC zones, mounted on the main detached sign. If electronic, must remain static, 1 color display with black background, letters and numbers shall not exceed 15 inches in height.
e.	Electronic fuel/gas pump top signs.	4 sf.		1 per pump	internal	Must remain static, 1 color display with black background.
f.	Manual changeable copy signs on properties with a drive-up or drive-through lane	32 sf. each	8 ft.	2	internal	In the TC, GB and RC zones only and located to the rear or side of the building
g.	Non-residential uses with frontage on more than one street or highway may have a secondary sign.	18 sf.	8 ft.	1	internal or external	The signs must be located on different street frontages and separated by a minimum of 150 feet measured along the street frontage
h.	Non-residential buildings in the Village Business (VB) District.	24 sf.	8 ft.	1	external	

I. PERMANENT WALL SIGNS

1. GENERAL STANDARDS FOR ALL WALL SIGNS

- a. Each ground floor business is permitted at least one (1) wall sign on each façade that has tenant business frontage.
- b. Permitted sign area for a wall sign is based upon the length of the tenant business frontage.
- c. Shall be parallel to the wall, and shall not be located within or hang over the right-of-way of any street, nor project or hang over any driveway, roadway or access way unless it is a projecting sign in the Village Business Zone.
- d. Shall not project above the top of the wall, parapet or fascia on which the sign is affixed.
- e. May not be attached to a penthouse or any roof structure including but not limited to mechanical equipment or roof screening.
- f. Must be located at or near the public entrance to a business at the ground floor level.

- g. Each tenant may have multiple wall signs as long as no single sign or the combination of multiple wall sign areas exceeds one-hundred and twenty-five (125) sf.
- h. Wall signs for businesses occupying space above the ground floor of a multi-story building are generally not permitted except under the provisions of Section R of these regulations.

2. PERMANENT WALL SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT IN RESIDENTIAL AND CONSERVATION ZONES

Following the review by the DRAC or the Historic District Commission, the ZEO may grant a zoning permit for the following signs in the AA, A-1, A, B, C, AA-OS, SRD and AG Zones in accordance with the following:

	Description	Max area	Illumination	Additional Requirements
a.	An open space, recreational, institutional or community principal use.	1sf. per linear foot of building frontage or 24 sf. whichever is less	external	
b.	An SRD or congregate residential development	1sf. per linear foot of building frontage or 24 sf. whichever is less	external	
c.	An accessory use	4 sf.	external	Such as a home occupation provided the use was approved by a zoning permit, site plan, special permit or variance.
d.	A legally existing non-conforming use	12 sf.	external	

3. WALL SIGNS REQUIRING A PERMIT IN BUSINESS ZONES

Following the review by the DRAC or the Historic District Commission, the ZEO may grant a zoning permit for the following signs in the GB, RC, O, BP, VB and TC Zones in accordance with the following:

	Description	Max area	Max #	Height Restrictions	Illumination	Additional Requirements
a.	Non-residential principal uses	125 sf. for any individual sign or the combination of all wall signs			internal or external	The maximum sign area is determined as 2 sf. for each linear foot of tenant business frontage
b.	Directory sign	10 sf.	1	Shall be located on an exterior wall adjacent to the principal common entrance	internal or external	For each building façade that has a public entrance to identify tenants that do not have building frontage on the ground floor of a building
c.	Awning and attached canopy signs	2 sf. for each linear foot of awning or canopy length Each sign shall not exceed 24 sf.	2	Shall not extend above the first floor. At least eight (8) feet of clearance to the ground	internal	If the entire awning or canopy is illuminated the entire surface shall be counted as sign area.
d.	Detached canopy sign	In addition to any permitted wall signage 2 sf. for each linear foot of awning or canopy length Each sign shall not exceed 24 sf.	2	The sign shall not extend above or below the vertical edge of the canopy to which it is attached.	internal	In the GB and RC zones only. If the entire canopy is illuminated, the entire surface shall be counted as sign area.

e.	Projecting sign for first floor tenants.	10 sf.	1	Maintain eight (8) feet of clearance to the ground.	external only	In the VB District only and may not project more than 4 feet from the wall face. No projecting sign shall be located higher than the ground story.
f.	Suspended sign	4 sf.	1	The sign shall maintain eight (8) feet of clearance to the ground or sidewalk.	internal	Adjacent to the business the sign identifies.
g.	A manual changeable copy sign or wall plaque	6 sf.	1		No	
h.	Non-residential principal uses in the VB District	50 sf.			external only	The maximum sign area is determined as 2 sf. for each linear foot of tenant business frontage

J. PERMANENT SIGNS REQUIRING A SPECIAL PERMIT IN BUSINESS ZONES

Following the review by the DRAC or the Historic District Commission the PZC may grant a Special Permit for the following signs in the GB, RC, O, BP, VB and TC Zones subject to the following restrictions:

1. Wall signs for businesses occupying space above the ground floor are generally not allowed, however, the Commission may grant approval for wall signs on the upper stories of a building under the provisions of the sign exception provisions of Section R of these regulations. No wall sign permitted under this provision shall exceed 125 sf.
2. In the RC and GB Zones only, one (1) detached, electronic changeable message sign subject to the following:
 - a. The sign shall not change copy more than once in a twelve (12) second period.
 - b. The electronic message portion of the sign shall not exceed 50% of the total area of the sign.
 - c. Shall be equipped and programmed to have automatic dimming capability that adjusts the brightness to the ambient light at all times of the day and night. Brightness shall be limited to 0.3 foot candles above ambient light when measured using a foot candle meter at a preset distance based upon the size of the electronic message sign area measured based upon the following formula: Measurement Distance = $\sqrt{(\text{Area of Sign sf.} \times 100)}$
 - d. Shall be turned off during non-business hours.
 - e. The sign face must be oriented away from adjacent residential uses and any residential zoning district.
 - f. The electronic sign copy shall not depict or give the appearance of action, motion, movement, or rotation, have any transitions, fades, dissolves or animations, or contain text or images which flash, blink, strobe, flicker, pulsate, move, or scroll, therefore the content must change instantly. Only static text and graphics shall be permitted. A display change between messages that takes place in 0.25 seconds or less is not considered motion.
 - g. The sign shall have a default setting which shall turn off the sign, or freeze the sign message in one static position, or display a full black screen if a malfunction or failure should occur.
 - h. Each complete message must fit on one screen.
 - i. Applications shall include the following:
 - 1.) Specifications from the manufacturer providing the maximum foot candle rating for the sign and a photometric matrix that illustrates the light dispersal in foot candles.
 - 2.) Information from the manufacturer describing the dimming control that will be provided with the sign.

K. OFF PREMISES SIGNS

The following off-premises signs do not require the ZEO to issue a zoning permit (unless otherwise noted) as long as the signs are in accordance with the following:

	Sign Type	Description	Location	Max Area	Max #	Time Limits	Additional Requirements
1.	Yard or portable sign	During an open house or inspection of a property.	May be placed within the right-of-way	4 sf.	6	Shall be removed promptly upon the conclusion of the event and before sunset.	For each property advertised for sale or rent.
2.	Yard or portable sign	During the sale of personal property.	May be placed within the right-of-way	4 sf.	6	For a period not exceeding three (3) consecutive days and for not more than a total of six (6) days during a calendar year	Removed upon conclusion of the sale.
3.	Yard sign or banner	Prior to and during an event sponsored by any municipal, civic, charitable, non-profit, philanthropic, fraternal, educational, historic, civic, community, religious or institutional organization.	May not be placed without the consent of the property owner.	32 sf. each, or 4 sf. each	2 or 6	For not more than thirty (30) consecutive days prior to and during the event.	Issuance of a zoning permit from the ZEO.
4.	Welcome, way finding or visitor interest or neighborhood identification sign		May be placed within the right-of-way with the consent of the Town Manager.	24 sf.			8 ft. height maximum. Issuance of a zoning permit from the ZEO.
5.	Street banners	Prior to and during celebrations, exhibitions, fairs or other similar events of municipal, charitable, philanthropic, fraternal, educational, historic, non-profit, civic or community, religious or institutional organizations.		60 sf.			Sponsored or installed by the Town of Wethersfield.
6.	Bus shelter signs	Attached to a bus shelter approved as part of the Town bus shelter program.	Only in Business districts	12 sf.	1		May be internally illuminated.

L. SIGN ILLUMINATION

1. Signs permitted by these regulations, may be non-illuminated, internally or externally illuminated as specified in these regulations.

2. All external illumination shall be “full cut-off luminaires” or equivalent as defined by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) and shall have fully shielded or recessed luminaires with horizontal mount flat lenses that prevent upright light scatter and protect the dark night sky.
3. Externally illuminated signs shall have the light source mounted above the sign, directed down, concentrated on the sign, shielded as to prevent light from being directed at motorists, pedestrians or the inhabitants of adjacent property.
4. Internally illuminated signs are not permitted in the VB, AG, OS, AA, A-1, A, B, or C zones.
5. Signs may be illuminated from 5 am until 11 pm, or ½ hour past the close of business, whichever is later. A business that is open 24 hours per day is not required to turn off sign illumination.
6. All illuminated signs are required to have functioning and properly adjusted automatic shut-off timers.
7. Raceway cabinets, electrical service, conduit, housings and wire shall be concealed or, when necessary, painted to match the color of the wall or structure upon which it is mounted.
8. When electrical service is provided to detached signs, all such electrical service is required to be underground and concealed.
9. An illuminated sign on a lot abutting and located within 100 feet of a residential zoning district shall be so designed, located, shielded, and directed so as to prevent the casting of direct light upon adjacent residential properties.

M. PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

1. Except as may be provided in these regulations, it shall be unlawful for any person to erect, relocate, reconstruct, redesign, enlarge, post, display, alter or change any permanent or temporary sign without having first obtained a zoning permit issued by the ZEO.
2. Prior to the submission of a sign application it is recommended that applicants contact the ZEO to discuss the Town’s sign regulations, requirements and procedures.
3. All proposed permanent signs shall be reviewed by the DRAC for conformance to the Design Guidelines found in Appendix C. of these regulations. Applications for Design Review approval shall be submitted to the Planning Department. Section 6.12 of these regulations details the permit requirements and process for the DRAC. Written notice of the Design Review decision shall be provided to the applicant.
4. Any permanent signs located in the Historic District shall, in addition to the provisions of these regulations, obtain any necessary approvals from the Historic District Commission and shall not require DRAC review.
5. Applications for sign approval shall be made on forms provided by the ZEO which must include the written consent of the legal owner of the property on which the sign is to be displayed.
6. A nonrefundable fee as set forth in the Town’s fee schedule must accompany all sign permit applications.
7. The applicant shall submit two (2) copies of all sign drawings and plans for each proposed sign.
8. Applications and supporting documents and drawings may also be submitted on a CD, flash drive or may be emailed to assist with the expedited review of sign permit applications. All electronic documents and plans/drawings must be submitted in “Portable Document Format” (PDF). Plans/Drawings with multiple pages and sets must be combined into a single electronic document (PDF) in the same order as the submitted paper document.
9. All applications for a sign permit shall include the following information:
 - a. For detached signs, an accurate plot plan signed and sealed by a land surveyor or engineer licensed in Connecticut showing the proposed location of the sign, property lines, proposed landscaping details, adjacent streets, driveways, and adjacent buildings.
 - b. For wall signs, an elevation drawing of the facade or a photograph of the façade of the building showing the proposed sign location, existing windows and doors, other openings and the dimensions of the tenant business frontage.
 - c. The dimensions and sign area in square feet of all proposed signs.
 - d. A scaled colored rendering or drawing of the sign including dimensions of all sign faces, and the height, width, colors, size and type of all copy including lettering and layout.
 - e. Plans and specifications of the sign and method of construction, descriptions of materials and associated trim caps, fixtures, support structure, electrical connections and attachment to the building or ground and, if applicable, foundation design.
 - f. Sign illumination, specifying fixture type, wattage, lamp type, placement and intensity.
 - g. Samples of materials when required by the DRAC.

- h. Photographs of the building and site showing the dimensions and area in square feet of any existing signage and the total area of all existing signs on the parcel that will remain on the site or building.
 - i. Proposed height and minimum clearance of the sign measured from finished grade.
 - j. Any other information required for a complete understanding of the proposal.
 - k. Based upon the type of sign permit application, the ZEO or the Commission may, where applicable, waive some of the submission requirements of this section.
10. Within fifteen (15) calendar days from receipt of a sign application the ZEO shall review the application and information submitted and shall determine if the application complies with the requirements of these regulations.
 11. The ZEO shall issue a zoning permit for all sign applications that comply with these regulations which may be subject to necessary, reasonable and appropriate conditions.
 12. If the ZEO determines that the application does not comply with the requirements of these regulation, or if the application is incomplete or if the application contains any false material statements or omissions the application shall be denied. The ZEO shall provide written notice of the denial with reasons to the applicant.
 13. If the ZEO denies a sign permit application the decision may be appealed to the ZBA per the provisions of Section 10.4 of these regulations.
 14. Approved plans and specifications shall not be changed, modified or altered without authorization from the ZEO, and all work shall be done in accordance with the approved plans.
 15. The ZEO may, in writing, suspend or revoke a permit under the provisions of these regulations whenever the permit is issued in error, on the basis of incorrect information supplied, the information in the application was materially false or misleading, or upon finding that the permit holder has failed to comply with any provisions of these regulations or the permit application and its conditions.
 16. A sign permit shall become null and void if the work for which the permit was issued has not commenced within a period of 6 months after the date of the permit. Upon written request by the applicant, the ZEO may extend by three (3) months the date by which the sign work must be commenced.
 17. Nothing in this section shall exempt a sign from the necessity of obtaining a building permit as required by the Building Code. Permit fees for a building permit shall be paid in accordance with the applicable fee schedules. The requirement of a building permit under the Building Code and Electrical Code is separate and independent of the requirement for a sign permit under these regulations.
 18. The person erecting, altering or relocating a sign shall request the following inspections:
 - a. Foundation inspection shall be made after the hole is excavated, forms erected, and reinforcing steel is in place.
 - b. Illuminated and electronic signs require an electrical inspection to be made after the electrical work is complete. Underground wiring requires an inspection to be made after all conduits, raceways or other components are installed and prior to the soil being replaced.
 - c. Final inspections on installed signs must be completed prior to the issuance of a certificate of zoning compliance or certificate of occupancy.

N. ADMINISTRATION, ENFORCEMENT AND INTERPRETATION

1. The ZEO shall interpret, apply, administer and enforce the sign regulations.
2. Where there is a conflict between provisions of the sign regulations and other provisions of the zoning regulations, the more restrictive provisions shall prevail.
3. The ZEO shall have the authority to order the repair, maintenance, or removal of any sign which is unlawful, which has become dilapidated, defective, damaged, presents a hazard to safety, health or public welfare or which is not currently in use.
4. If the ZEO determines that any sign is found not to be in compliance with these regulations written notice shall be given to the owner of the property and the business owner.
5. In case of emergency, the ZEO may require the immediate removal of any dangerous sign that creates the potential for an imminent threat to public safety.
6. Any sign face now or hereafter existing which no longer advertises an active tenancy, product sold or activity or campaign being conducted shall be removed within sixty (60) days after the business vacates the premises. The face of the sign shall be replaced with a blank face until use of the building or premises has resumed. Upon failure to comply within the timeframe specified, the ZEO is hereby authorized to order removal of such sign, upon written notification.

7. Any person who erects, reconstructs or moves any sign for which a sign permit is required and has not obtained such approval shall be deemed a violation of these regulations and subject to the procedures and penalties described in Section 10.3 of these regulations.

O. MAINTENANCE

1. All signs and components including supports, braces, guys and anchors shall be maintained in good repair and in a safe, neat, clean, and attractive condition and shall not show evidence of deterioration, defective or broken parts, including peeling, rust, dirt, fading, damage or discoloration.
2. Sign maintenance shall include cleaning, painting, repainting, replacement of burned out or broken bulbs, light emitting diodes and tubes or defective parts and other normal maintenance and repair.
3. When a sign is removed or replaced, any holes, or evidence of fading or discoloration caused by the existence or removal of the sign shall be patched, filled, repaired or repainted in a quality manner so as to conceal any and all evidence or damage resulting from removal of the sign.
4. Required sign landscaping shall be maintained in a healthy condition and any dead or diseased plantings shall be replaced in accordance with approved plans.

P. NON-CONFORMING SIGNS

1. It is the intent of this section to recognize that the eventual elimination, as expeditiously and fairly as possible, of nonconforming signs is as much a subject of health, safety and welfare as is the prohibition of new signs that would violate the provisions of this regulation. It is also the intent of this section that any elimination of nonconforming signs shall be effected so as to avoid any unreasonable invasion of established property rights.
2. Signs lawfully existing prior to the time of the adoption or amendment to these regulations and not in compliance to its provisions but which were constructed in compliance with previous regulations shall be regarded as non-conforming signs and shall be permitted to remain as approved.
3. This regulation does not require that a legal nonconforming sign be made to comply with the regulation or be removed by the owner or occupant of the land or premises.
4. Any nonconforming sign which has been damaged by fire, explosion, accident, other casualty or natural disaster may be repaired, rebuilt, or replaced within one year of such damage if the damage is less than or equal to the assessed value of the sign at the time of such damage provided that such repairs, rebuilding, or replacement does not increase nor enlarge the previously existing non-conforming conditions.
5. Removable faces or sign panel inserts in a cabinet style sign may be changed and does not trigger a loss of nonconforming status.
6. Repairs, modifications or structural alterations to non-conforming signs are permitted with a permit from the ZEO provided that the nonconformity is not increased or enlarged.
7. Nonconforming signs that are moved, removed or replaced must be brought into conformance with these regulations.

Q. MASTER SIGN PLAN

1. This section of the regulations provides for incentives to encourage innovative, creative and effective signage design as an alternative to the minimum sign requirements that would normally be permitted under these regulations.
2. Where multiple signs are proposed for a non-residential or mixed use development, a master sign plan may be approved in order to unify and coordinate multiple tenant signs within a property.



3. The Commission, may, after approval of a Special Permit, modify the requirements for the height, area, setback, location and number of signs. A master sign plan may be submitted, after, or concurrently with a special permit application for a project.
4. The DRAC shall review all requests for a master sign program and may provide a recommendation to the Commission.
5. The applicant shall submit a graphic and narrative statement for the proposed signage plan proposed for the site that shall include all of the details required by the permit requirements Section M. of these regulations. The narrative shall include the purpose and intent of the proposed master sign plan, a general overview of the signs requested, and justification for any modifications requested..
6. Before granting Special Permit approval for a master sign program the Commission shall find that:
 - a. The signs are part of a unified signage plan designed to reflect a coordinated theme for the entire building or site that is architecturally similar and visually related to each other through the incorporation of common design elements.
 - b. The signs will provide for a more innovative, creative, effective or aesthetically pleasing sign program.
 - c. The location, size and other aspects of the proposed sign will be in harmony with the orderly development of the area and will not alter the essential characteristics of the area.
 - d. The landscaping, lighting, materials and design elements of the proposed signs are integrated in relation to site characteristics.
7. The Commission may attach appropriate and reasonable conditions to any Special Permit issued for a master sign program.
8. Upon approval of a master sign program an agreement shall be prepared that establishes the terms and details of all proposed signs for the property. The agreement shall include the details for all of the approved sign elements including: permitted maximum sign height and widths, sign design and materials, sign locations, sign colors, permitted illumination and any other requirements include in the approval. No sign may be erected, placed, painted or maintained, except in conformance with such agreement and a copy of the master sign program details shall be attached to the lease agreements for all leasable space within the project that is subject to the agreement.
9. The master signage program may be amended and resubmitted for approval to reflect changing tenants and changing styles.
10. Signs approved under a master sign program require individual zoning permits prior to construction.

R. SIGN EXCEPTIONS

1. The Commission may, by Special Permit, grant increases to the allowable number, location, area and height requirements of these sign regulations to provide for situations of special, unique or unusual signage needs as specified below.
 - a. The Commission may approve the use of tube, rope, strings lights, or other similar lighting composed of electrical wiring encased or enclosed inside a plastic tube or casing, where such lighting is intended to be visible from the exterior of the building, for the purposes of outlining of any sign, window, canopy or building or any portion thereof. All lighting used for this purpose must not be obtrusive or garish, and must enhance the building architecture.
 - b. The Commission may approve a wall sign for an upper story tenant, with no ground floor presence if the sign is to be used to advertise the primary tenant in such a building.
 - c. Off-premise signs may be permitted on some parcels to compensate for certain locational problems that create severe practical difficulties with adherence to this chapter such as a situation where the location of the business or building precludes the placement of a sign that is visible from a street.
2. Signs that meet the overall intent and purposes of this chapter but that are not in strict compliance with the regulations of this chapter may be approved when the Commission finds that the approval would result in a superior design for the overall site in terms of the quality of materials, lighting, and overall coordination of the design of signs on the site.
3. Special permit applications for a sign exception shall be evaluated based upon the following:
 - a. There are unusual factors and conditions that exist which would impact the legibility and effectiveness of the sign as viewed from the Town street system, such as, but not limited to, building orientation, building setback, building design, visibility, vehicular circulation, the location and visibility of the business within the building floor plan or other obstructions that are peculiar to the land, structure or building that create a specific justification for the request.
 - b. When the owner forgoes the use of other permitted sign types.
 - c. The proposed signs will utilize design features that are encouraged and recommended by the Design Guidelines.
 - d. The sign would be more appropriate in scale to the building, use or site frontage.
 - e. The exception shall not adversely impact the character or appearance of the building, lot, surrounding area, and the zoning district.
 - f. The exception shall not impair the intent and purposes of this regulation.
 - g. The exception shall be the minimum necessary to provide for reasonable use, visibility or legibility of the sign.

S. SEVERABILITY

If any section, paragraph, provision, sentence, phrase, clause, word or term of this regulation, or any portion thereof, for any reason shall be determined by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, such decision shall not otherwise affect the validity of the remaining portions of this regulation. All portions of this regulation not declared to be invalid or unconstitutional shall remain in full force and effect.