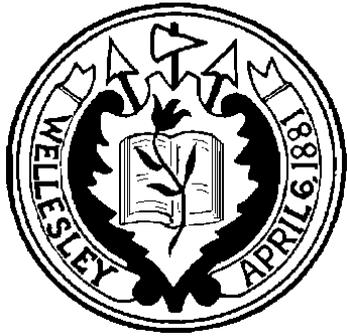


Wellesley Signage Guide

for Business Owners and Sign Contractors



Town of Wellesley, Massachusetts
Planning Department
525 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02484

781-431-1019 x2230

This guide is intended to serve as a helpful supplement to Wellesley's Sign Bylaw for business owners and sign contractors seeking a sign permit. It includes important signage term definitions from the Town's [Sign Bylaw](#), an overview of the signage permitting process, an illustrated set of tables that depict each sign type and their corresponding requirements, and finally a list of frequently asked questions.

Applicants should consult this guide and meet with Planning Department staff prior to finalizing any signage designs or modifications to existing signage. For questions about signage, or to schedule a meeting with the Planning Department staff, call (781) 431-1019 ext. 2230.

KEY SIGNAGE DEFINITIONS

- * Sign type is exempt from Design Review and does not count towards the total amount of signage allowed for a business establishment.
 - ** Sign type is prohibited.
 - *** Sign type requires a Special Permit.
-
- **Address Sign***: A sign indicating the numerical location, or numerical and street location, of a particular property. Letters must not exceed 8 inches in height.
 - **Animated Sign****: Any sign, or part of a sign, that uses any movement or change of lighting or color to depict action or create a special effect or scene.
 - **Awning**: Any device, fixed or retractable, of any material, which extends over or otherwise covers a sidewalk, courtyard, walkway, eating area, driveway, or other area or space whether that area or space is intended for pedestrians, vehicles or other purposes. Also known as a “canopy.”
 - **Awning Sign**: Any sign that is a part of, attached to, or displayed on an awning, canopy or other fabric, plastic or structural protective cover over a door, entrance, window, or outdoor service area.
 - **Building Sign**: Any sign attached to any part of a building, as contrasted to a ground sign.
 - **Directional Sign***: Any sign limited solely to directing both vehicular and pedestrian traffic within or setting out restrictions on the use of parking areas. Must be no greater than 4 sq. ft. in area.
 - **Directory Sign**: A sign which may be utilized by multiple business establishments occupying a single building with a shared public entrance.
 - **Externally Illuminated Sign**: A sign illuminated by an external light source directed solely toward such a sign.
 - **Flashing Sign****: A sign, the illumination of which is not kept constant in intensity at all times when in use or which exhibits marked changes in lighting effects.
 - **Ground Sign**: Any sign, supported by structures or supports that are placed on or anchored in the ground, independent from any building or other structure.

- **Internally Illuminated Sign*****: A sign illuminated by an internal light source, utilizing translucent panels, canvas or other fabric, letters, devices or other similar components to create an image by allowing light to pass through. *Note: A “reverse lit” sign is not an internally illuminated sign.*
- **Moving Sign****: Any and every sign any part of which moves, is designed to move, or to be moved, by any means.
- **Non-Conforming Sign**: Any sign legally erected prior to the adoption of this section, or any amendment thereof, which does not conform to the requirements of this section or such future amendments.
- **Permanent Sign**: Any sign of a type and construction as not to be easily or readily removed, which, when installed, is intended for permanent use. Types of permanent signs include, but are not limited to, standing signs, wall signs, awning signs, and window signs.
- **Portable Sign****: A sign which is not permanently affixed to the ground or to a structure, including but not limited to signs on trailers which are parked in such a manner as to serve the purpose of a sign.
- **Projecting Sign**: A type of wall sign which is perpendicular to the wall to which it is attached and projects away from such wall.
- **Reverse Lit**: A type of sign and/or illumination using an opaque face and sides, generally constructed of aluminum and a clear polycarbonate back or no back. Light does not pass through the face of the sign, but rather comes out of the back of the sign and is cast off the wall behind the sign, thereby creating a silhouette of the outline of the sign face. Also known and referred to as “Reverse Back Lit”, “Halo”, or “Halo Lit” sign or sign illumination.
- **Roof Sign****: Any sign erected and constructed above, or projecting above, the lowest point of the eave or the top of a parapet wall of any building, or which is pointed or otherwise attached or affixed to a roof.
- **Standard Informational Sign**: A sign with no one side consisting of an area greater than six (6) square feet, with a sign face made for short term use, containing no reflecting elements, flags, or projections and which, when erect, stands at a height not greater than six (6) feet. Sandwich board signs shall be considered to be a type of standard informational sign.
- **Standing Sign**: A Permanent sign erected on or affixed to the ground and not attached to a building.

Wellesley Signage Guide

Town of Wellesley Planning Department

- **Temporary Sign:** Any and every sign which by its design and/or use is temporary in nature and/or is not permanently mounted.
- **Wall Sign:** A permanent building sign not considered to be a roof sign, window sign, temporary sign, temporary window sign, or directory, attached to or erected and confided within the limits of an outside wall of any building or structure, which is supported by such wall or building. Wall signs may be mounted parallel or perpendicular to a wall.
- **Window Sign:** Any sign attached, painted or otherwise similarly affixed directly to the glass surface of a window or door, either inside or outside the building, and/or any illuminated sign installed inside the building within one (1) foot of the glass surface of a window or door, and designed to be visible from the exterior of the structure.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the key elements to consider when designing a sign in Wellesley?

The [Sign Bylaw](#) sets forth a number of allowances for each sign type per zoning district. Included in these allowances are number of signs, location, maximum size of all permanent signage and individual signage, maximum letter size, maximum height, and illumination (see tables beginning on page 8). A sign that meets the allowances is considered by right. A sign that exceeds the allowances requires a special permit.

What types of signs are prohibited?

Examples of prohibited signs include: audible signs, moving signs, animated signs, portable signs, and pennants. Additionally, any sign located in the right-of-way, other than those signs belonging to a government, public service agency, or railroad are also prohibited. It is important to note where your property line is

because the sidewalk is often within the right-of-way, and therefore, placing signs on the sidewalk in the right-of-way is prohibited.

My existing sign or awning is damaged or worn. Can I replace it without a permit?

Normal maintenance and in-kind replacement of signs and awnings is allowed if they are worn or damaged. In-kind replacement means that the sign or awning will be replaced with exactly the same sign or awning. Although Design Review Board (DRB) review is not required for in-kind replacements, a sign permit may still be required. Prior to replacing your sign or awning, confirm with the Planning Department if DRB review is needed and with the Building Department if a permit is required.

If the previous business in my location had a sign(s) that does not comply with the Sign Bylaw, can I put a sign(s) up that matches?

No. Every new business must request a new sign permit following Design Review Board (DRB) review. Any sign proposed must comply with the [Sign Bylaw](#) in effect at the time of an application unless a special permit is requested. In other words, there are no grandfathering provisions in the Sign Bylaw.

What is the process to receive a sign permit?

To receive a sign permit, there is a two step process starting with Design Review Board (DRB) review of the proposed sign(s) and/or awning(s). Following DRB review, depending on whether the proposal is by right or requires a special permit, the applicant requests a sign permit from the Building Department or a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (see flow chart on page 6).

How do I apply for sign permit review by the Design Review Board?

You can apply for sign permit review in three ways:

- Online: Download the [application form](#), [design guidelines](#), and [Sign Bylaw](#) from the Town of [Wellesley Design Review Board webpage](#): http://www.wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_Design/index
- Phone: Call the Planning Department at 781-431-1019 x 2230. We can mail you the application form with a list of required application materials and the Sign Bylaw.
- In Person: Visit the Planning Department (Town Hall, Lower Level) between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Note that in July and August 2015 the office will be closed on Fridays.

What do I need for a complete sign application?

The following materials are required to make the application complete:

- A scanned copy of the completed [application form](#);
- Application fee in the form of a check made out to the Town of Wellesley
- Nine (9) copies of the following:
 - Scaled, dimensioned drawings of the sign/awning including lettering, borders, and other design elements (min. scale 3/4”);
 - Location plan for standing signs showing setback from property lines (min. scale 1/16”); and
 - Drawing of façade showing proposed placement of sign/awning in relation to trim/significant architectural elements (min. scale 1/4”).
 - Color photographs of the façade and facades of adjacent buildings;
 - Samples of all colors proposed to be used on sign or awning;

What are the application fees for sign review by the Design Review Board?

- By right signs (signs that meet the Sign Bylaw allowances): \$50
- Special permit signs (signs that exceed the Sign Bylaw allowances): \$150

When should I submit applications for review by the Design Review Board?

You can submit an application anytime but complete applications are due two Fridays prior to the Design Review Board (DRB) meetings at which you plan to present to the Board (see submittal calendar below).

Submittal & Meeting Calendar: July 2015 – June 2016

Submittal Deadline		Meeting Date
New Application*	Revised Application**	
June 26, 2015	July 1, 2015	July 15, 2015***
July 31, 2015	August 5, 2015	August 12, 2015***
August 28, 2015	September 2, 2015	September 9, 2015
September 11, 2015	September 16, 2015	September 23, 2015
October 2, 2015	October 7, 2015	October 14, 2015
October 16, 2015	October 21, 2015	October 28, 2015
November 6, 2015	November 10, 2015***	November 18, 2015
November 27, 2015	December 2, 2015	December 9, 2015***
December 11, 2015	December 16, 2015	December 23, 2015
December 30, 2015***	January 8, 2016	January 13, 2016
January 15, 2016	January 20, 2016	January 27, 2016
January 29, 2016	February 3, 2016	February 10, 2016
February 12, 2016	February 17, 2016	February 24, 2016
February 26, 2016	March 2, 2016	March 9, 2016
March 11, 2016	March 16, 2016	March 23, 2016
March 25, 2016	March 30, 2016	April 13, 2016
April 15, 2016	April 20, 2016	April 27, 2016
April 29, 2016	May 4, 2016	May 11, 2016
May 13, 2016	May 18, 2016	May 25, 2016
May 27, 2016	June 1, 2016	June 8, 2016
June 10, 2016	June 15, 2016	June 22, 2016

When does the Design Review Board meet?

The Design Review Board (DRB) typically meets every second and fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the Town Hall's Great Hall room (see table on previous page). The DRB's meeting announcements, agendas, and minutes are posted on the [Board's website](#):

http://www.wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_Design/index

What happens after Design Review Board review?

Following Design Review Board (DRB) review, the Planning Department staff will produce a recommendation letter summarizing the decision of the DRB. Staff will provide the recommendation to the Building Department and/or the Zoning Board of Appeals, depending on the type of application. A copy of the recommendation will also be sent to the project applicant. The entire process is summarized by the adjacent flowchart.

OVERVIEW OF SIGN PERMITTING PROCESS

Step 1: Applicant submits complete application to Planning Department Office **12 days prior** to the next Design Review Board meeting (see adjacent table). Planning Department Staff reviews application and follows up with applicant to resolve any issues.

Step 2: Design Review Board reviews application at regularly scheduled meeting while applicant is present, and will determine whether to vote to recommend the application.

Step 3: Design Review Board votes to recommend the application. Planning Department staff emails recommendation to the applicant 1 to 3 days after the meeting.

Step 4: Applicant takes recommendation, plans and original copy of permit application to Building Dept. to apply for building permit.

Step 5: Applicant obtains Building Permit and may install sign(s).

Design Review Board chooses not to issue recommendation or votes not to recommend the application. Applicant may revise the application and resubmit for review at another Design Review Board meeting.

SIGN TYPES IN WELLESLEY

Each business establishment is allowed two (2) permanent signs consisting of no more than one wall sign, one window sign, or one awning sign, and each lot is allowed one (1) standing sign. These are the most common types of signs in Wellesley, however the Sign Bylaw does allow for other sign types. Signage generally falls under one of the four following categories:

1. **Allowed Signs Not Requiring a Permit** – These signs are generally used on a temporary basis or are necessary for traffic control and way-finding. These signs are allowed to be installed without a Sign Permit; however, regulations pertaining to the total number of signs, size, height, and time of use may apply to the specific sign type and must be followed.
2. **Allowed Signs Requiring a Permit** – These signs are generally allowed for each business in the Town. Prior to installation of the sign it is necessary that a Sign Permit be applied for and issued. The Town’s Design Review Board must first review the Sign Permit application before a permit is issued and may recommend that changes be made to the sign.
3. **Design Elements Requiring a Permit** – These design elements are generally allowed and encouraged. Beyond obtaining a Sign Permit, no additional processes are required for the use of these design elements for your business or property.
4. **Prohibited Signs and/or Design Elements** – These signs and design elements are not allowed. In some instances a Special Permit or Variance may be sought from the Zoning Board of Appeals to allow prohibited signs or design elements.

The following tables provide further details and photo examples for the four categories described above.

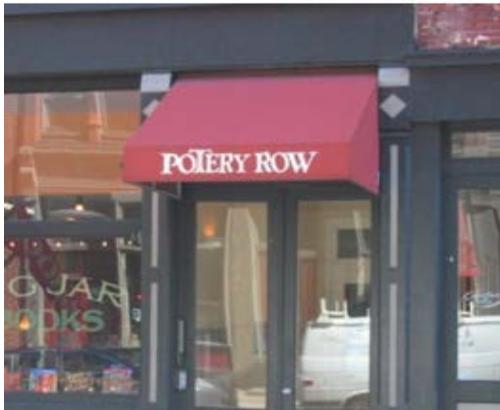
1. Allowed Signs, Sign Permit Not Required

The signs included in this table do not require permitting or the review of the Design Review Board, so long as such signs meet the specific criteria regarding their use.

Temporary Signs	Temporary Window Signs	Directional Signs	Directory Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to three (3) 30-day periods per calendar year. 30-day periods may be used consecutively. One (1) sign per lot. Size and height of the sign from the ground varies depending on zoning and location (see Table 22A.1)  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to three 30-day periods per calendar year. Size not to exceed twenty-five percent (25%) of the area of the window in which it is located. One (1) per business.  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage that is limited solely to directing vehicular or pedestrian traffic within the site or defining parking restrictions. Area shall not exceed four (4) square feet in area.  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed for buildings occupied by more than one (1) business establishment sharing a public entrance. Must be attached to the exterior wall of the building. Must not exceed one (1) sf for each business establishment occupying the building or six (6) sf, whichever is less.  

2. Allowed Signs, Sign Permit Required

Each business is limited to no more than 2 of the 4 following sign types. Sign Permits for the following sign types must first be reviewed by the Design Review Board.

Standing Signs	Wall Signs	Awning Signs	Window Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One (1) per lot. – Maximum size and letter height varies depending on zoning and location (see page XX). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One (1) per business; an additional wall sign may be allowed with additional public entrances. – Maximum size and letter height varies depending on zoning and location (see page XX). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One (1) per business. – Signage limited to valance area only. – Letter height limited to a maximum of eight (8) inches. – Additional regulations when used with a wall sign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two per business where one sign has area of 1 sq. ft. or less and one sign has area greater than 1 sq. ft. – Limited to a maximum area of 10 sq. ft. or 25% of the area of the window in which it is located.
			
			

3. Permitted Design Elements

The following are some examples of design elements allowed for both signs requiring a permit and those that do not.

Illumination	Letter Height	Address Numerals	Landscaping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Signs may be illuminated by exterior illumination or by silhouette (halo) illumination. – Illumination shall be by white, steady, stationary light. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The use of individual letters without a sign band may allow for increased letter height (varies by district and location). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The use of address numerals for the identification of a property is exempt from permitting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Landscaping may be used around the base of standing signs.
			
			

4. Prohibited Signs and/or Design Elements

The following signs and design elements are prohibited in the Town, except as may be allowed by the issuance of a Special Permit or variance.

Internal Illumination	Roof Signs	Signs in the R.O.W.	Internally Illuminated Window Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signs may not use internal illumination where light passes through translucent panels, etc. to create an image. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sign may be attached or affixed to the roof, or project above the wall to which it is attached. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sign shall be located on a public sidewalk, street or way. Signs must be located on the same lot as the principal building which they are associated with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The illumination regulations for wall signs also apply to window signs.
			
			

Signage Allowances Based on Zoning District or Use

Table 22A.1, SIGNAGE ALLOWANCES BASED ON ZONING DISTRICT OR USE							
Sign Type	Standard	Zoning Districts and Uses					
		Residential Districts	Office and Professional Districts	Commercial Districts Fronting Streets Other Than Worcester Street	Commercial Districts Fronting Worcester Street	Gasoline Filling Stations	Institutional Uses
TOTAL PERMANENT SIGNAGE	Number of Signs	1 per lot	2 per building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 standing sign per lot. • 2 permanent signs, consisting of no more than 1 wall sign, 1 awning sign, or 1 window sign (not to include window signs 1 sq. ft. or less in area) per business establishment. 		NA	1 standing sign per lot
	Maximum Total Area	1 sq. ft.	30 sq. ft. (per building)	For the sum of all wall, awning, and window signs, 50 sq. ft. or 10% of the area of the façade of the business establishment, whichever is less, per business establishment; for standing signs, 25 sq. ft.	For the sum of all wall, awning, and window signs, 75 sq. ft. or 10% of the area of the façade of the business establishment, whichever is less, per business establishment; For standing signs, 50 sq. ft.	100 sq. ft.	25 sq. ft. for lots fronting on streets other than Worcester Street; 50 sq. ft. for lots fronting on Worcester Street

Table 22A.1, SIGNAGE ALLOWANCES BASED ON ZONING DISTRICT OR USE							
Sign Type	Standard	Zoning Districts and Uses					
		Residential Districts	Office and Professional Districts	Commercial Districts Fronting Streets Other Than Worcester Street	Commercial Districts Fronting Worcester Street	Gasoline Filling Stations	Institutional Uses
STANDING SIGNS	Permit Required	No	Yes				
	Number of Signs	1 per lot	1 per building	1 per lot			
	Maximum Area	1 sq. ft.	15 sq. ft.	25 sq. ft.	50 sq. ft.	50 sq. ft. for lots fronting on streets other than Worcester Street; 75 sq. ft. for lots fronting on Worcester Street	25 sq. ft. for lots fronting on streets other than Worcester Street; 50 sq. ft. for lots fronting on Worcester Street
	Maximum Letter Height	NA	14 inches	14 inches	18 inches	14 inches for lots fronting on streets other than Worcester Street; 18 inches for lots fronting on Worcester Street	
	Maximum Height	4 feet	6 feet		10 feet	6 feet for lots fronting on streets other than Worcester Street; 10 feet for lots fronting on Worcester Street	

Wellesley Signage Guide

Town of Wellesley Planning Department

Table 22A.1, SIGNAGE ALLOWANCES BASED ON ZONING DISTRICT OR USE							
Sign Type	Standard	Zoning Districts and Uses					
		Residential Districts	Office and Professional Districts	Commercial Districts Fronting Streets Other Than Worcester Street	Commercial Districts Fronting Worcester Street	Gasoline Filling Stations	Institutional Uses
WALL SIGNS	Permit Required	No	Yes				
	Number of Signs	1 per lot	1 per building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 per business establishment • 1 additional sign shall be allowed for each additional street level public entrance, beyond the principal entrance, utilized by the business establishment. • For business establishments occupying more than 1 building, 1 additional sign shall be affixed to such additional building. • For buildings occupied by more than 1 business establishment which share a common public entrance, 1 additional wall sign may be displayed on the building and such sign may be located on one or more business establishment's facade. 	NA		

Table 22A.1, SIGNAGE ALLOWANCES BASED ON ZONING DISTRICT OR USE							
Sign Type	Standard	Zoning Districts and Uses					
		Residential Districts	Office and Professional Districts	Commercial Districts Fronting Streets Other Than Worcester Street	Commercial Districts Fronting Worcester Street	Gasoline Filling Stations	Institutional Uses
WALL SIGNS	Maximum Area	1 sq. ft.	15 sq. ft.	50 sq. ft. or 10% of the area of the façade of the business establishment, whichever is less.	75 sq. ft. or 10% of the area of the façade of the business establishment, whichever is less.	50 sq. ft. for lots fronting on streets other than Worcester Street; 75 sq. ft. for lots fronting on Worcester Street	
	Maximum Letter Height	NA	14 inches	Additional signs allowed per additional public entrances and additional signs allowed for building occupied by more than 1 business establishment, shall not exceed 25 sq. ft. or 10% of the area of the wall to which attached.			14 inches for lots fronting on streets other than Worcester Street; 18 inches for lots fronting on Worcester Street
	Maximum Height	4 feet	15 feet	20 feet		NA	

Wellesley Signage Guide

Town of Wellesley Planning Department

Table 22A.1, SIGNAGE ALLOWANCES BASED ON ZONING DISTRICT OR USE							
Sign Type	Standard	Zoning Districts and Uses					
		Residential Districts	Office and Professional Districts	Commercial Districts Fronting Streets Other Than Worcester Street	Commercial Districts Fronting Worcester Street	Gasoline Filling Stations	Institutional Uses
AWNING SIGNS	Permit Required			Yes			
	Number of Signs			1 per business establishment			
	Maximum Area			25% of the area of the portion of the awning to which such sign is affixed or 10% of the façade of the business establishment, whichever is less.			
	Maximum Letter Height			8 inches			
WINDOW SIGNS	Permit Required			Yes; No, if sign area is 1 sq. ft. or less			
	Number of Signs			2 per business establishment, consisting of 1 sign, 1 sq. ft. or less in area, and 1 sign greater than 1 sq. ft. in area. Window signs 1 sq. ft. or less in area shall not count toward the Maximum Total Area of all Permanent Signage.			
	Maximum Area			10 sq. ft. or 10% of the area of all exterior windows (excluding doors) of the business establishment, whichever is less.			
	Maximum Letter Height			8 inches			
DIRECTORY SIGNS	Permit Required		No				
	Number of Signs		1 per shared public entrance to a building occupied by more than 1 business establishment				
	Maximum Area		1 sq. ft. per business establishment occupying the building or 6 sq. ft., whichever is less				

Table 22A.1, SIGNAGE ALLOWANCES BASED ON ZONING DISTRICT OR USE							
Sign Type	Standard	Zoning Districts and Uses					
		Residential Districts	Office and Professional Districts	Commercial Districts Fronting Streets Other Than Worcester Street	Commercial Districts Fronting Worcester Street	Gasoline Filling Stations	Institutional Uses
DIRECTIONAL SIGNS	Permit Required		No				
	Maximum Area		4 sq. ft.				
STANDARD INFORMATIONAL SIGNS	Permit Required	No					
	Number of Signs	1 per lot; lots shall be allowed an unlimited number of signs during a period beginning thirty (30) days before and ending five (5) days after any federal, state or local election, ballot initiative and/or referendum					
	Maximum Area	No single sign face shall exceed 6 sq. ft.					
	Maximum Height	3 feet or 6 feet for post and arm type signs					
TEMPORARY SIGNS	Permit Required		No Sign Permit is required, but the sign must be registered consistent with L.4.a. of this Section				
	Number of Signs		1 per lot. Refer to L.4.b of this Section for time limits on the display of such signs				
	Maximum Area		25 sq. ft.	12 sq. ft.	25 sq. ft.	12 sq. ft. for lots fronting on streets other than Worcester Street; 25 sq. ft. for lots fronting on Worcester Street	6 sq. ft.
	Maximum Height		15 feet				6 feet

Wellesley Signage Guide

Town of Wellesley Planning Department

Table 22A.1, SIGNAGE ALLOWANCES BASED ON ZONING DISTRICT OR USE							
Sign Type	Standard	Zoning Districts and Uses					
		Residential Districts	Office and Professional Districts	Commercial Districts Fronting Streets Other Than Worcester Street	Commercial Districts Fronting Worcester Street	Gasoline Filling Stations	Institutional Uses
TEMPORARY WINDOW SIGNS	Permit Required			No Sign Permit is required, but the sign must be registered consistent with L.4.a. of this Section			
	Number of Signs			1 per business establishment. Refer to L.4.b of this Section for time limits on the display of such signs			
	Maximum Area			25% of the area of the window on which it is attached			
OUT OF STORE MARKETING DEVICE SIGNS	Permit Required			No			
	Number of Signs			1 sign shall be allowed on each out-of-store marketing device			
	Maximum Area			14 sq. ft.			
	Maximum Height			No more than 2 feet above the device			
MENU SIGN	Permit Required			Yes			
	Number of Signs			1 sign per drive-thru facility			
	Maximum Area			10 sq. ft.			
	Maximum Height			6 feet			

