

# City of Newburyport

## Signage Standards for Downtown Newburyport

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### Applicability, Purpose & History

The following requirements are applicable to all signs and other advertising devices within the B-2, B-3 and WMU zoning districts.

These standards were developed by the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority (NRA) as part of the 1965 "Central Business Urban Renewal Project," the first of its kind in the country to use urban renewal funds for preservation – to restore its Federal era downtown marketplace buildings. The Urban Renewal Plan contained mandatory design standards applying to both redeveloped buildings and those buildings retained by their owners. One of the important reasons the downtown restoration and renewal have continued to be so successful so many years later is because owners have worked diligently over the years since the redevelopment to maintain and enhance these buildings. Until 2011, the Newburyport Zoning Ordinance delegated authority to the NRA for review of signage in the Urban Renewal Project Area (consistent with the broad powers contained in the now expired Urban Renewal Plan). Section VIII of the City's Zoning Ordinance now incorporates the signage standards developed by the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority (below) which continue to apply to downtown Newburyport (in the B-2, B-3 and WMU zoning districts). These standards also apply to vinyl lettering on windows and doors within the B-2, B-3 and WMU zoning districts.

Signs in the B-2, B-3 and WMU zoning districts require approval from the Building Commissioner in accordance with these standards before being issued a permit. Anyone seeking an exception from these requirements must apply to the Newburyport Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for a Variance.

For additional requirements relative to signage in Newburyport, please refer to the City of Newburyport Zoning Ordinance, Section VIII.

### Method of Calculating Allowable Signage

Measure the street frontage of your business's façade: Front: \_\_\_\_\_ Side (if any): \_\_\_\_\_ Back (if any): \_\_\_\_\_  
Multiply each length by 1.5. That is your TOTAL allowable signage for each side of the building facing a street or way. Therefore, if you have 20 linear feet of frontage on State Street and 24 linear feet of frontage on Threadneedle Alley, you are allowed a total of 30 square feet of signage on State Street and 36 square feet of signage on Threadneedle Alley. This includes wall signs, projecting signs, lettering on awnings, lettering, or graphics on walls, windows, or doors.

### Permanent Signs

National trademarks, brand names, or symbols are not allowed as elements of signs, except with the express approval of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Internally lit signs and signs with lighting elements that move or flash are prohibited. The maximum size of a sign shall be 12 square feet or less, unless otherwise indicated below. In no case shall an individual sign exceed 12 square feet.

### FIRST FLOOR SIGNAGE

- **Projecting Hanging Sign**  
Any sign attached by a bracket perpendicular to the building wall.  
*Projection:* Not more than 4'8" from a building or 2/3 the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less.  
*Clearance:* Not less than ten feet clear space between the bottom of the sign and the ground. In the case of 1 story buildings that do not allow for attachment at that height, this clearance requirement may be modified.
- **Window Sign**  
A sign hung inside a window or graphics applied to the window itself.
- **Banners**  
Flags or other signs constructed of fabric or vinyl. Permanent or semi-permanent (to remain longer than 30 days) require review by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and must be removed on the agreed upon date. Because of the potential for deterioration of banners, the ZBA reserves the right to order the removal at the owner's expense of any banner not adequately maintained.
- **Wall Sign**  
A sign attached to a building, but not projecting from it.  
*Independent:* Graphics are painted, applied, or carved onto a sign to be attached to the building.  
*Direct Applied:* Graphics directly applied to the building: vinyl, 3 dimensional, or painted on the building's surface.
- **Awnings**  
Lettering on awnings counts in total allowed signage.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR SIGNAGE

Individual wall, windows, or projecting signs for second and third floor businesses are not allowed. Allowable signs are:

- **Door Sign**  
Door signs are allowed only where the door provides the only access to a single commercial establishment not on the street level.  
*Maximum Size:* 1 square foot
- **Directory Sign**  
Listings of two or more businesses not on the street level who share a common entrance are to be installed and maintained by building owners. Exterior directories and their locations are to be approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals.  
*Maximum Size:* 4 square feet

## TEMPORARY SIGNS

Any sign intended for a limited period of display. See time limitations on each sign type.

- **Posters**  
Related to use conducted or goods available.  
Maximum Size: not more than a total of 20% of window area  
*Maximum length of time:* not more than 21 days
- **Construction Signs**  
Identifies parties involved in construction project  
Maximum length of time: not more than 1 year, or duration of work  
Other restrictions: must contain no advertising; must be removed promptly by contractor at completion of construction
- **Real Estate Signs**  
Related to sale, lease, or rental of premises.  
Maximum length of time: must be removed within 7 days after sale, rental, or lease  
*Maximum size:* 3 square feet
- **Banners**  
Used to announce a new business prior to installation of permanent signage, a sale, or other promotional event of less than 30 days duration. May not contain product/brand advertising or brand logos.  
*Maximum length of time:* 30 days  
*Maximum size:* 12 square feet total per business  
Note: Stock brand advertising banners are not allowed to be hung on the outside of a building or immediately inside the building's windows.