

DRAFT for Discussion 2/28/2021
Revised 5/7/2021

Town of Dedham Sign Code

Approved XX XX, 2021

Town Seal

PLEASE NOTE: Existing or regulations to maintained from the current Dedham Sign Code Bylaw are underlined.

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Article I: General Provisions

§237-1. Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to ensure that the design, construction, installation, and maintenance of all exterior signs in the Town of Dedham are compatible with the unique character and environment of the community through a comprehensive system of reasonable, effective, consistent, content-neutral, and non-discriminatory sign standards and requirements, including the following specific purposes:

- A. Ensure that all signs are compatible with the unique character and environment of the Town of Dedham, and that they support the desired ambience and development patterns of the various districts, overlay districts, and historic areas within the Town.
- B. Balance public and private objectives by allowing adequate avenues for both commercial and non-commercial messages.
- C. Improve pedestrian and traffic safety by promoting the free flow of traffic and the protection of pedestrians and motorists from injury and property damage caused by, or which may be fully or partially attributable to, cluttered, distracting, and/or illegible signage.
- D. Prevent property damage, personal injury, and litter caused by signs that are improperly constructed or poorly maintained.
- E. Protect property values, the local economy, and quality of life by preserving and enhancing the appearance of the streetscape.
- F. Provide consistent sign design standards that enable the fair and consistent enforcement of these sign regulations.
- G. Assist with the implementation of adopted plans, guidelines, and regulatory requirements of the Town, including the Town's master plan and zoning bylaws.

§237-2. Authority.

This chapter is adopted pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c.93 and G.L. c.43B.

§237-3. Applicability and effect.

- A. A sign may be erected, placed, established, painted, created, or maintained in the Town only in conformance with the standards, procedures, exemptions, and other requirements of this chapter.
- B. The effect of this chapter as more specifically set forth herein is:
 - 1. To establish a permit system to allow a variety of types of signs subject to the standards and the permit procedures of this chapter.
 - 2. To allow signs that are not expressly prohibited by this chapter; and
 - 3. To provide for the enforcement of the provisions of this chapter.

- C. Non-communicative aspects of all signs, not related to the content of the sign, must comply with the provisions of this article. “Non-communicative aspects” include the time, place, manner, location, size, height, illumination, spacing, and orientation of signs.

§237-4. Substitutions and interpretations.

This Section is not intended to, and does not, restrict speech on the basis of its content, viewpoint, or message. No part of this chapter shall be construed to favor commercial speech over non-commercial speech. A non-commercial message may be substituted for any commercial or non-commercial message displayed on a sign without the need for any approval or sign permit, provided that the sign is otherwise permissible under this Section. If a commercial message is substituted for any other commercial message, a sign permit is required pursuant to **§237-4**. To the extent any provision of this Section is ambiguous, the term will be interpreted not to regulate on the basis of the content of the message.

Article II: Administration

§237-4. Applicability

- A. No sign shall be erected, enlarged, redesigned, structurally altered, or used without the advisory review of DRAB and a sign permit issued by the Building Department, except as provided for elsewhere in this chapter. Permits shall be issued only for sign in conformance with this chapter
- B. The following sign types are not subject to DRAB review, but are subject to review and approval by the Building Department:
 1. Awning Sign
 2. Directory Sign
 3. Identification Sign, except as provided in **§237-16**.
 4. Incidental Sign
 5. Temporary Signs over nine (9) square feet in area.
 6. Sandwich Board
 7. All other sign types, and all Illuminated Signs, are subject to review and approval by DRAB. Any sign subject to Administrative Review that does not meet the requirements of this chapter are also subject to review and approval by DRAB.
- C. Where a proposed sign does not meet the requirements of this chapter, a waiver request shall be submitted to DRAB.

§237-5. DRAB Application; review; issuance of permits.

- A. A Sign Permit Application shall be submitted to the Building Department.
- B. A DRAB Application shall be submitted to the Planning & Zoning Department.
- C. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss the requirements of this chapter with the Building Department prior to submitting either a Sign Permit Application or a DRAB Application.
- D. In cases where a submitted Sign Permit Application does not comply with the Sign Code, the Applicant shall be notified by the Building Department of non-compliance.
 1. The Applicant may resubmit the Sign Permit Application, bringing the proposed sign into compliance with this chapter.
 2. A DRAB application is required for a waiver for a noncomplying sign. See **§237-8** and **§237-24**.
- E. Once a DRAB Application is deemed complete, it will be placed on the next available agenda.
 1. DRAB shall hold a meeting within 30 days of submittal of a complete DRAB Application to review the application. DRAB shall approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application.

1. Upon the written assent of the Applicant, the review period may be extended to provide additional time for review of the application.
2. For signs requiring advisory review, DRAB shall provide a written decision to the Building Commissioner and the Applicant within 10 business days after the decision is so voted. The failure of DRAB to provide a recommendation within 10 business days shall be deemed a favorable recommendation.
3. The Building Department shall issue the appropriate sign permit to the Applicant upon a favorable decision by DRAB or upon confirmation that all conditions required by DRAB have been met.

§237-6. Inspection; certificate of compliance; notice of deficiencies.

During the sixth month after the issuance of a permit or at such earlier date as the Applicant may request, the Commissioner shall cause an inspection of the lot for which each such permit for a new sign or for modification of an existing sign has been issued. If the construction is complete and in full compliance with this chapter and with the building and electrical codes, the Commissioner shall issue a certificate of compliance. If construction is not substantially complete or not in full compliance with this chapter and applicable codes, the Commissioner shall give the owner or Applicant notice of the deficiencies and shall allow an additional 30 days from the date of inspection for the deficiencies to be corrected. If the deficiencies are not corrected by such date, the permit shall lapse. If construction is completed within said 30 days and the deficiencies corrected, the Commissioner shall issue a certificate of compliance.

§237-7. Replacing signs shown on sign package.

Where the owner of a property has a Sign Package on file with DRAB, the Building Department shall issue a sign permit for a sign that conforms to that Sign Package.

§237-8. Waiver from requirements.

- A. No waiver may be granted by DRAB or the Board from **§237-17 Prohibited sign types.**
- B. If the Building Department and/or Planning & Zoning Department determines that a waiver(s) is required, the Applicant shall submit a DRAB Application, requesting such waiver(s). The Planning & Zoning Department may determine which information is required to support a waiver(s) request and list the requirements on the DRAB Application.
- C. DRAB shall hold a hearing for any waiver request within 45 days from the date of filing the DRAB Application with the Planning & Zoning Department.
- D. DRAB shall cause notice of such hearing to be published in a newspaper of general circulation and said notice shall be sent to the Applicant, abutters, and abutters to abutters within 300 feet of the property line of the application as they appear on the most recent applicable tax list, notwithstanding that the land of any such owner is located in another city or town.
- E. A decision shall be made within 60 days from the date of filing. However, the required time for said action may be extended by written agreement between the applicant and DRAB

- F. DRAB may by an affirmative vote of four of its members grant waivers from the provisions of this chapter, subject to the criteria in this chapter.

§237-9. Waiver criteria.

- A. Sections of this chapter may be waived for holidays and celebrations at the discretion of the Commissioner.
- B. DRAB may grant a waiver upon making a written finding that undue hardship may result from strict compliance with the submittal requirements or review standards of this article, provided that such variation will not have the effect of nullifying the intent of this chapter. Hardship may exist when the conditions of the site do not allow for an appropriate sign type that meets the requirements of this chapter.
- C. DRAB may grant a waiver for a Creative Sign based on the following criteria:
 - 1. The sign creates a clear connection with the shapes, textures, colors, and materials used in the appearance of the buildings of the premise.
 - 2. The sign creates proportional sizes of signs placed on or integrated into a building's architecture.
 - 3. The sign improves the legibility of sign(s).
 - 4. The sign enhances driver reaction time to the sign(s).
 - 5. The sign creates an organized wayfinding and identification or messaging program.
 - 6. The sign protects significant scenic views.
 - 7. The sign promotes a well-organized visual environment through appropriate sizes.
 - 8. The sign represents a best practice of the design of dark sky sign illumination.
 - 9. The sign is consistent with approved design guidelines for the district or area in which it will be located.
 - 10. The sign is consistent with industry standards or best practices as defined by one or more of the following:
 - a. Award-winning sign designs, a document on signage best practices published by the American Planning Association or the American Institute of Architects
 - b. Design standards from the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, the National Association of City Transportation Officials' *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*, or other guide to design standards and legibility of signage.
- D. DRAB may extend the duration of a Limited Duration Sign for longer than 90 days but for not more than six (6) months.

§237-10. Appeal.

Any person aggrieved by the Building Commissioner's action or failure to act may file an appeal within 30 days with the Town Clerk. An appeal from the provisions of the Sign

Code is heard by the ZBA. A hearing for any appeal shall be held within 65 days from the date of filing with the Town Clerk. A written decision shall be made 100 days from the date of filing. The ZBA shall cause notice of such hearing to be published in a newspaper of general circulation and said notice sent to Applicant, abutters, and abutters to abutters within 300 feet of the property line of the application, and parties of interest within 300 feet of the property line of the application as they appear on the most recent applicable tax list, notwithstanding that the land of any such owner is located in another city or town.

Article III: General Regulations

§237-11. Permits required.

Signs identified as "A" in Table 1 shall be erected, installed, or created only in conformance with a duly issued and valid sign permit. Such permits shall be issued only in accordance with the following requirements and procedures. Any sign not authorized pursuant to this Section is prohibited.

§237-12. Public right-of-way signs.

No sign shall be allowed in the public right-of-way, except as follows and in conformance with the following conditions:

- A. Permanent bus stop signs erected by a public transit company.
- B. Permanent informational signs of a public utility regarding its poles, lines, pipes, or facilities.
- C. Awning, Projecting, and Suspended Signs projecting over a public right-of-way in conformance with all other regulations of this chapter.
- D. Temporary emergency warning signs erected by a governmental agency, a public utility company, or a contractor doing authorized or permitted work within the public right-of-way.
- E. Sandwich Board Signs in conformance with all other regulations of this chapter.
- F. Banner Signs on public land or over public rights-of-way as approved by the Select Board. A Banner Sign so approved may not be in place for more than 30 days.

§237-13. Town-owned property — temporary signs.

Temporary Signs promoting events, programs or functions sponsored by charitable, cultural, educational or religious organizations based in Dedham are permitted on Town-owned property upon 15 days' notice to the Town agency with jurisdiction for the property, subject to space availability at places designated by the agency; provided, however, that an organization may at each location place a single sign not to exceed nine square feet; provided, further, that such signs may be installed only during the period from 30 days prior to the event to three days subsequent to the event. For the purposes of this section multi-day events occurring at least once per week may be treated as a single event.

§237-14. Town-owned property — sponsorship signs.

Notwithstanding the prohibitions in §237-17.D and §237-17.J, sponsorship signs supporting municipal recreational facilities and activities are permitted on Town-owned property subject to the approval of the Town agency with the jurisdiction for such property, provided in the case of roof signs that such signs be limited to 40 square feet in size and shall be limited to the following locations, with no more than one sign allowed at each such location: Memorial Field, Condon Park, Rustcraft Road, and Stone Park.

§237-15. Exempt signs.

The following signs do not require a permit under this chapter:

- A. Any sign erected or required by public agencies pursuant to federal, state, or local law.
- B. Public signs erected by or on behalf of a governmental body to post legal notices, to identify public property, to convey public information, and to direct or regulate pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
- C. Signs that are not illuminated and are not visible from any area to which the public has the right to access.
- D. Any sign inside a building, not attached to a window or door, that is not visible from a distance of more than three feet beyond the lot line of the lot or parcel on which such sign is located.
- E. On-premises traffic control devices on private property, the faces of which meet Department of Transportation standards and which additionally contain only the name or logo of the business.
- F. Flags of city, state, or country.
- G. Memorials such as gravestones and corner stones.
- H. Historical Markers installed or approved by a Public Agency or duly established historical society.
- I. Awning Sign limited to a single line of lettering no more than 6 inches high.
- J. Identification Sign of no more than two square feet in area for a residence.

§237-16. Private property — exempt signs.

The following signs are allowed on private property without sign permits:

- A. On all residential properties, one Identification Sign of no more than two (2) square feet.
- B. On all properties, Temporary Signs not to exceed nine square feet in area. Temporary Signs are limited to a duration of less than 30 days and shall not be illuminated.

§237-17. Prohibited sign types.

The following are prohibited:

- A. Animated Signs, except as provided for under Article V. Special Regulations. This includes wind-driven, inflated, whirling, turning, spinning devices that serve as a Commercial Message.
- B. Beacon.
- C. Billboard.
- D. Commercial Messages that are not mounted on a Building, Awning/Canopy, Freestanding Sign or other expressly permitted sign or mounting condition.
- E. Digital Display Sign except as provided for under Article IV. Special Regulations.
- F. Neon-type Sign, except as provided for under Article IV. Special Regulations.

- G. Off-premises Sign, except as provided for under Article IV. Special Regulations
- H. Pennant Sign.
- I. Portable Sign, other than Sandwich Board Signs as provided for under Article IV. Special Regulations.
- J. Roof Signs, unless granted as a waiver by DRAB for a Creative Sign.
- K. Signs having red or green lights erected within sight of a traffic signal unless approved as non-hazardous by the Chief of Police.
- L. Signs which obscure or tend to block a clear view of traffic, warning and control signs or signals, pedestrian crosswalks, or handicapped access ramps, or any sign that the Commissioner determines may endanger public safety.

Article IV: Special Regulations

§237-18. Design standards.

In reviewing signs, DRAB shall apply the following standards in this section. Signs that do not meet these criteria will require a waiver(s) from DRAB.

A. Awnings and Awning Signs:

1. The awning location on the building shall not obscure or cover the architectural Sign Band of the building.
2. Awnings must be made of canvas or duck cloth and be completely opaque.
3. The color of the awning shall be consistent with the overall design scheme for the building.
4. Awning signs shall only be permitted on awnings installed on the ground floor of the building.
5. Awning signs shall be painted on or attached to the surface of the awning or its valance.
6. The area of an awning sign shall not exceed 25% of the surface area of the awning. This area does not include the exempt single line of lettering noted in **§237-15**.
7. Awning signs shall not extend beyond the valance or any other part of the awning, nor be attached at an angle projecting through the awning, nor be attached to or displayed on the sides or underside of the awning.
8. Awning signs shall not be back lit or internally illuminated.

B. Banner Sign: A Banner Sign on private land may be approved for up to 30 days by the Building Commissioner without DRAB review.

C. Changeable Copy Sign:

1. The area of the changeable copy may not be greater than thirty (30) percent of the area of the sign on which it is located.
2. The sign on which it is located must indicate the business, establishment, product, or services to which the commercial message refers.

D. Creative Sign: A Creative Sign requires a waiver from DRAB and must meet the criteria in **§237-9.C**.

E. Digital Display Signs:

1. Digital Display Signs are restricted to approved Signage Packages.
2. These signs shall have a maximum Sign Area no greater than that of a Freestanding Sign in the respective district.
3. Digital Display Signs shall not be Visible as defined in this Code.
4. No Digital Display Sign shall indicate movement or animation; static displays must be employed with image changes at least five (5) minutes in duration and included transition times between images of at least one (1) second.
5. Nighttime illumination levels must be lower than daytime illumination levels to reduce glare and reflected light.

6. A default display must be provided in the case of failure of the system.
 7. The Applicant must demonstrate that the programming and control of the sign is secure.
- F. Free-standing Sign: If not located in a larger landscaped area, all Freestanding Signs shall be located within a curbed, landscaped area extending a minimum of three feet on all sides of the sign base.
- G. Identification Sign:
1. The Sign Area of an Identification Sign shall not exceed four (4) square feet.
 2. Identification Signs may be wall-mounted or freestanding.
 3. Freestanding Identification Signs shall be no greater than five (5) feet in height.
- H. Incidental Sign: An Incidental Window Sign that is more than two (2) square feet in area shall be regulated as a Window Sign.
- I. Historical Marker: An Historical Marker shall include only building name, date of construction, or historical data on historic site and must be cut or etched into masonry, bronze, wood, or similar material.
- J. Limited Duration Sign: A Limited Duration Sign of any size may be displayed for between 30 and 90 days. DRAB may grant a waiver for a longer defined duration.
- K. Off-Premises Sign: DRAB may grant a waiver for an application that demonstrates a hardship that requires a sign(s) to not be located on the premise. The application form must provide information about the lease for the land, define who maintains the sign, and indicate that compliance with this Sign Code is the responsibility of the owner of the sign.
- L. Projecting Sign and Suspended Sign: A sign projecting more than twelve (12) inches from the face of a building shall be at least 8 feet above Normal Grade and its upper edge no more than fourteen (14) feet above Normal Grade.
- M. Sandwich Board Signs:
1. Each business is allowed one sandwich board sign within thirty (30) feet of the main entrance of said premises whether on a public sidewalk or private property.
 2. The sign may be displayed only during business hours and must be removed after business hours. A sandwich board sign shall not be included in the calculation of total signage allowed on the site.
 3. The sign frame shall be no greater in size than two (2) feet wide and three (3) feet six (6) inches high. The message panels attached to the frame shall be no greater than two (2) feet wide by three (3) feet high.
 4. The sign must be located in front of the establishment it advertises. Under no circumstances shall a sign obstruct vehicular/bus stops, benches, fire hydrants, or other features legally in the right of way, nor shall it obstruct parking access, handicapped parking access or vehicular paths of travel. A

minimum clear sidewalk width of forty-eight (48) inches shall be maintained.

5. The sign frames must be constructed of materials that present a finished appearance and use durable weather resistant materials including, but not limited to, painted or decay-resistant wood, metal or wrought iron. Natural chalkboard or corkboard shall be used for message area.
6. Sign lettering shall either be painted in a professional looking manner, computer-generated or handwritten on a chalkboard. Lettering and number characters shall not exceed eight inches in height.
7. Logos are encouraged.
8. The following are prohibited: sign frames constructed of rough-cut plywood, cardboard, paper, fabric or non-rigid materials, or use of whiteboards, magnetic letters, illumination, or changeable letters on tracks.

N. Sign Package:

An approved Sign Package allows for a streamlined process to acquire a sign permit for multiple tenants in a single building or on a single lot. All signs within a Sign Package must follow the regulations in this Sign Code. Sign Packages that contain noncomplying signs require one or more waivers from DRAB.

1. A Sign Package may be requested for the following:
 - a. Planned Commercial Development.
 - b. All multi-tenant buildings with more than six tenants.
 - c. All lots with more than one building.
2. Requirements for a Sign Package:
 - a. Sign regulations specific to the location.
 - b. Administration of the Sign Package, including process for review, approval, and enforcement.
 - c. Relationship of landlord approval process to town's approval process.
 - d. Definition of signs by ownership/responsibility (Tenant, Landlord).
 - e. Sign types and definitions.
 - f. Requirements for the design and construction of signs.
 - g. Criteria for approval.

O. Temporary Signs: A Temporary Sign of any size may only be displayed for less than 30 days, except as provided for in **§237-13**.

P. Wall Signs:

1. Any wall sign installed on a building with an architectural Sign Band shall be located within that Sign Band which is the horizontal plane of the façade of the building defined by architectural details such as cornices, lintels, pediments, pilasters, and windows.
2. On a building without an architectural sign band, no wall sign, except window signs which identify a business occupying space in a level above the ground floor level, shall extend higher than the lowest of (i) 25 feet above

grade or (ii) below the second-floor window frame unless DRAB grants a waiver for a Creative Sign. See **§237-9.C**.

1. No Wall Sign shall extend above the lowest point of the roof unless it has been integrated into the architecture of the roofline, for example, a parapet.

Q. Window Signs:

1. The maximum area of a Window Sign is 25% of the transparent, glazed windows and doors in a façade.
2. For Window Signs, one sign may consist of a Digital Display Sign or Edge Lit Sign up to a maximum area of two (2) square feet, or one Neon-Type Sign with a maximum area of six (6) square feet.
3. An Incidental Window Sign shall be informational only and shall not contain a commercial message. Any such sign larger than 2 square feet in area shall be considered a Window Sign.

§237-19. Illumination.

- A. No sign shall be lighted except by a steady, stationary source shielded and directed at the sign except as specifically provide for in this chapter.
- B. External illumination shall be by white, steady, stationary source shielded and directed at the sign or backlighted. The foregoing is also applicable to permanent interior signs which are designed to be visible through a door or window.
- C. Internal illumination shall be by whiter steady, stationary source directed on translucent materials to illuminate the sign except as specifically provide for in this chapter.
- D. Neon-type illumination components of signs may be employed up to a maximum of five (5) percent of the allowable sign area for Marquees and Wall Signs.
- E. Illumination of Awning Signs is restricted to External Illumination.
- F. Sandwich Boards shall not be illuminated.
- G. Illumination of Digital Display Signs and Changeable Copy Signs may use LCD, LED, or other illumination technologies.
- H. Times of illumination. No sign shall be illuminated in any district beyond the business hours of the establishment to which it pertains nor between 12:00 a.m. midnight and 6:00 a.m. unless allowable business hours extend into such period.
- I. No Internally Illuminated, Digital Display, or Changeable Copy Signs shall be permitted in any residential districts or Limited Manufacturing district.
- J. No illumination shall be permitted which casts direct light or glare beyond the perimeter of the property on which the sign is located.

- K. No illumination shall be permitted which casts direct light or glare onto any residential premises or onto any portion of a way as to create a traffic hazard.
- L. No pylon, pole, or sign-supporting structure shall be illuminated, except as required by other applicable state or federal law.

§237-20. District restrictions.

Signs permitted in each zoning district are identified in Table 1. The maximum total area of all signs on a lot, except an Incidental Sign, Historical Marker, Window Sign, and flags shall not exceed the lesser of the listed calculations.

A. Residential Districts:

- 1. A residence shall have no more than one Identification Sign.
- 2. A multi-tenant residential project may have one additional Freestanding or Wall Sign per lot. The Sign Area of each sign shall be no more than fifteen (15) square feet.
- 3. For institutional uses (items B. 1-8 of the Use Regulation Table in Section II-2 of Chapter 18 of Dedham Zoning By-laws) in a residential district, sign area for any commercial message on a sign may not exceed twenty (20) square feet, with a maximum vertical dimension of six (6) feet.
- 4. The height of a Freestanding Sign shall be no greater than five (5) feet, and the sign shall be set back from the front lot line by a minimum of three (3) feet and from the side lot line by a minimum of five (5) feet.
- 5. Signs for non-conforming uses in a Residential District require a waiver from DRAB.

B. Central Business, Local Business, and General Business:

- 1. The maximum total sign area per lot is one (1) square foot per one (1) linear foot of the principal façade. If the building has two or more façades that are both visible and serve as approaches for customers from travel ways or parking lots, the maximum sign area per lot may be increased by 50%.
- 2. One Identification Sign is permitted per lot.
- 3. A Wall Sign is limited to 10% of the total wall area.
- 4. One Freestanding Sign is allowed per lot. The Sign Area shall be no more than 20 square feet. The height shall be no greater than eight (8) feet, and the sign shall be set back from the front and side lot lines by a minimum of five (5) feet. In no case shall the actual sign height exceed the actual sign setback from any adjacent lot that is zoned and used for residential purposes.

C. Highway Business:

- 1. The maximum total sign area per lot is two (2) square feet per one (1) linear foot of the principal façade. If the building has two or more façades that are both visible and serve as approaches for customers from travel ways or parking lots, the maximum sign area per lot may be increased by 50%.
- 2. A Wall Sign is limited to 10% of the total wall area.

3. One Freestanding Sign is allowed per lot. The Sign Area shall be no more than 100 square feet. The height shall be no greater than twenty (20) feet, and the sign shall be set back from the front and side lot lines by a minimum of ten (10) feet. In no case shall the actual sign height exceed the actual sign setback from any adjacent lot that is zoned and used for residential purposes.
- D. Limited Manufacturing A & B:
1. The maximum total sign area per lot is one (1) square foot per one (1) linear foot of the principal façade. If the building has two or more façades that are both visible and serve as approaches for customers from travel ways or parking lots, the maximum sign area per lot may be increased by 50%.
 2. One Identification Sign is permitted per lot.
 3. A Wall Sign is limited to 10% of the total wall area.
 4. One Freestanding Sign is allowed per lot. The Sign Area shall be no more than 100 square feet. The height shall be no greater than twelve (12) feet, and the sign shall be set back from the front and side lot lines by a minimum of ten (10) feet. In no case shall the actual sign height exceed the actual sign setback from any adjacent lot that is zoned and used for residential purposes.
- E. Research Development & Office:
1. The maximum total sign area per lot is two (2) square feet per one (1) linear foot of the principal façade. If the building has two or more façades that are both visible and serve as approaches for customers from travel ways or parking lots, the maximum sign area per lot may be increased by 50%.
 2. A Wall Sign is limited to 5% of the total wall area.
 3. One Freestanding Sign is allowed per lot. The Sign Area shall be no more than forty (40) square feet. The height shall be no greater than twelve (12) feet, and the sign shall be set back from the front and side lot lines by a minimum of ten (10) feet. In no case shall the actual sign height exceed the actual sign setback from any adjacent lot that is zoned and used for residential purposes.
- F. Planned Commercial:
1. A Sign Package shall be required for a Planned Commercial Development and permitted sign types and locations shall be as defined by the Sign Package approved by DRAB. See **§237-18.N**.
- G. Senior Campus:
1. The maximum total sign area per lot is one (1) square foot per one (1) linear foot of the principal façade. If the building has two or more façades that are both visible and serve as approaches for customers from travel ways or parking lots, the maximum sign area per lot may be increased by 50%.
 2. One Identification Sign is allowed.
 3. A Wall Sign is limited to 10% of the total wall area.

4. One Freestanding Sign is allowed per lot. The Sign Area shall be no more than forty (40) square feet. The height shall be no greater than twelve (12) feet, and the sign shall be set back from the front lot line by a minimum of five (5) feet and from the side lot lines by a minimum of ten (10) feet. In no case shall the actual sign height exceed the actual sign setback from any adjacent lot that is zoned and used for residential purposes.
5. Lighted or unlighted signs visible from a position outside of the SC District, provided that each such sign shall not exceed 15 square feet, are exempt from the provisions set forth in Table 1 and §237-16.

§237-21. Computation of sign area.

The following principles shall control the computation of sign area:

- A. The area of a sign face (which is also called the sign area of a wall sign or other sign with only one face) shall be computed by means of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or combination thereof that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representations, emblem, or other display for applied lettering, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or structure against which it is placed for all other signs, but not including any supporting framework, bracing, or decorative fence or wall when such fence or wall otherwise meets all applicable regulations and is clearly incidental to the display itself.
- B. The sign area of a sign with more than one face shall be computed by adding together the area of all sign faces visible from any one point. When two identical sign faces are placed back-to-back so that both faces cannot be viewed from any point at the same time, and when such faces are part of the same sign structure, the sign area shall be computed by the measurement of one of the faces.

§237-22. Construction and maintenance standards.

All signs shall be constructed and maintained in accordance with the following standards:

- A. All signs shall comply with applicable provisions of the state building code, General By- Laws, and the electrical code of the Town at all times.
- B. Except for Banners, Flags, Limited Duration Signs, Temporary Signs, and Window Signs conforming in all respects with the requirements of this chapter, all signs shall be constructed of permanent materials and shall be permanently attached to the ground, a building, or another structure by direct attachment to a rigid wall, frame, or structure.

Article V: Noncomplying Signs and Signs without Permits

§237-23. Removal of illegal existing sign; permit for conforming signs.

- A. The owner or person in control of any lot or other premises on which exists a sign for which there is no current and valid permit, shall remove such sign.
- B. The owner or person in control of any lot or other premises on which exists a sign without a permit but which or would otherwise comply with this chapter shall apply for a permit.

§237-24. Continuation of pre-existing noncomplying signs.

- A. Signs legally in existence at the time of the adoption of this Ordinance, which do not comply with the requirements of this Ordinance, shall be considered noncomplying signs. Illegal signs shall not be considered to be noncomplying signs.
- B. All permanent signs and sign structures shall be brought into conformance with the sign regulations when and if the following occurs:
 1. The sign is removed, relocated, or significantly altered. Significant alterations include changes in the size or dimension of the sign. Changes to the sign copy or the replacement of a sign face on a noncomplying sign shall not be considered a significant alteration.
 2. If more than 50% of the sign area is damaged, it shall be repaired to conform to this Ordinance.
 3. An alteration in the structure, or significant damage of a sign support.
 4. A change in the mechanical facilities or type of illumination
 5. A change in the material of the sign face.
 6. The property on which the noncomplying sign is located submits a subdivision or land development application requiring municipal review and approval.
 7. The property on which the noncomplying sign is located undergoes a change of land use requiring the issuance of either a use and occupancy permit or a change of use and occupancy permit by the Town of Dedham.
- C. To determine the legal status of existing signs in each of the cases listed in **§237-24.B.**, the Applicant shall submit the following information to the Planning & Zoning Department:
 1. Type(s) of existing sign(s) located on the property.
 2. The area and height of all signs.
 3. For freestanding signs, the distance between the lot line and the nearest portion of the sign.
 4. Type of sign illumination.
 5. The material of which the sign is constructed.
 6. The building frontage.
- D. Prior to the events listed in **§237-24.B.**, noncomplying signs may be repainted or repaired up to 50% of the replacement cost of the sign, the sign copy may be

changed, and sign faces may be replaced provided that these actions do not increase the dimensions of the existing sign, and do not in any way increase the extent of the sign's non-compliance.

- E. Noncomplying signs shall be exempt from the provisions of **§237-23.B.**, under the following conditions:
 - 1. The noncomplying sign possesses documented historic value.
 - 2. The noncomplying sign is of a unique nature or type by virtue of its architectural value or design, as determined by the National Park Service, Massachusetts Historic Commission, or Town of Dedham Historic Districts Commission.
 - 3. When a noncomplying sign is required to be moved because of public right of way improvements.
- F. All noncomplying Temporary Signs, Portable Signs, and Banners must be permanently removed within 90 days of the effective date of this Article, unless specific approval is granted as provided for herein.

§237-25. Requirements for sign modifications.

A sign permit shall lapse and become void whenever there are modifications to a Pre-existing Noncomplying Sign other than as described in **§237-24**. Upon notification by the Building Commissioner of such modification, the owner shall, within 45 days, make the sign conform to the prior permit, remove the sign, or re-apply for a new sign with review by DRAB and a sign permit.

§237-26. Removal of sign when business is discontinued.

A sign permit shall lapse and become void when there has been a discontinuance of the activities, business, goods, or services described on the sign. The owner shall remove a sign within 30 days of discontinuance of the activities, business, goods, or services described on the sign. A Freestanding Pre-existing Noncomplying Sign structure shall be removed after 365 days have elapsed where all signage on said structure has been or is required to be removed for discontinuance of the activities, business, goods, or services.

§237-27. Previously noncomplying sign still in violation.

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to make permissible a preexisting sign which was constructed or displayed in violation of this chapter or any predecessor to this chapter and which continues not to be in conformance with the requirements of this chapter.

§237-28. Waiver of sign area and/or setback.

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary, a Pre-existing Noncomplying Sign with a sign area greater than allowable under this chapter and/or with a setback from a public way less than allowable under this chapter may be replaced with a sign erected on the same lot with a sign area greater than allowable under this chapter or a setback less than allowable under this chapter upon the issuance of a waiver by DRAB; provided, that the maximum sign area of any sign waived under this paragraph shall be no greater than 70% of the sign area of the noncomplying sign being replaced and the minimum

setback of any sign erected under this paragraph shall be no less than the current setback of the noncomplying sign being replaced.

Article VI: Enforcement

§237-29. Violations.

- A. The placement of a sign that requires a sign permit, without a sign permit, shall be unlawful.
- B. Permits issued for work commenced without a sign permit, or any work beyond the authorized scope of a sign permit shall be assessed double the required permit fees for the sign(s).
- C. Each sign installed, created, erected, or maintained in violation of this chapter shall be considered a separate violation for the purposes of this chapter.
- D. Each such day of a continued violation shall be considered a separate violation for the purposes of this chapter.

§237-30. Enforcement and remedies.

- A. The Commissioner may enforce the provisions of this chapter in accordance with §1-6 of these By-laws.
- B. If the Commissioner finds that any provision of this Ordinance is being violated, he shall notify by registered or certified mail the person determined to be responsible for the violation, indicating the nature of the violation and ordering the action necessary to correct it.
- C. The Commissioner has the authority to order the repair, maintenance, or removal of any sign or sign structure that has become dilapidated or represents a hazard to public health, safety, or welfare.
- D. All such remedies provided herein shall be cumulative and shall not impair the authority of the Commissioner to take any action authorized or required by the State Building Code or other local, state, or federal law.

§237-31. Severability.

If any provision of this chapter, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance, shall be held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity shall not affect the other provisions, or application thereof, of this chapter which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this chapter are hereby declared to be severable.

Article VII: Definitions

§237-32. Definitions and interpretation.

Words and phrases used in this chapter shall have the meanings set forth in this section. Words and phrases not defined in this section but defined in Massachusetts Building Code shall be given the meanings set forth therein.

§237-33. Sign Types.

ABANDONED SIGN — A sign which no longer identifies or advertises a bona fide business, lessor, service, identifiable owner, product, or activity that is located on the premises.

ANIMATED SIGN — A sign, or any portion of a sign, made or equipped to move or give the appearance of moving, either by the movement of any light used in conjunction with a sign, such as blinking, traveling, flashing, or changing degree of intensity, or by mechanical means, or that is wind-driven and is designed to move with the movement of the air. See **§237-17.A** and **§237-17.E**.

ART/MURAL SIGN — A sign that provides an artistic expression that does not include in whole or in part the name, text, logo, or illustration depicting any business, establishment, service, or product.

AWNING SIGN — Any and every sign displayed on an awning or canopy. See **§237-12.C**, **§237-15.I**, **§237-18.A**, and **§237-19.E**.

BANNER SIGN— Any sign of lightweight fabric or similar material that is mounted to a pole or a building at one or more edges. National flags, state, or the official flag of any institution or business shall not be considered Banners. See **FLAG, TRADE FLAG, §237-12.F** and **§237-18.B**.

BILLBOARD SIGN — A freestanding sign larger than 100 square feet of sign panel area, or a sign affixed to a building covering more than 20% of the wall area to which it is affixed. See **§237-17.C**. Roof-mounted Billboards shall not qualify as a Creative Sign.

BUILDING SIGN— Any wall sign, projecting sign, suspended sign, or any sign attached to any exterior part of a building.

CENTER IDENTIFICATION SIGN — A sign identifying only the name and location of an entire planned commercial, office or industrial complex developed or managed under one ownership or single control.

CHANGEABLE COPY SIGN — A sign with changeable portions limited to portions that contain characters or letters using electronic or other technologies that can be changed without altering the face or the surface of the sign. Except for messages that indicate time or temperature, a sign on which the message changes more than once per day shall be considered an Animated Sign. See **§237-18.C**, **§237-19.G**, and **§237-19.I**.

CREATIVE SIGN — A sign that does not meet the strict requirements of this chapter but provides a superior design for the specific requirements of the premises on which it is located. See **§237-9.B** and **§237-18.D**.

DIRECTORY SIGN — A sign located at or near the entrance of a multi-tenant building, lot, park or campus, the sole purpose of which is to provide a listing of the names of the individual tenants or users located therein.

FREESTANDING SIGN — Any sign supported by dedicated structures or supports that are placed on or anchored in the ground and that are independent from any building or other structure. An Awning Sign is not a Freestanding Sign. See **§237-18.F**.

HISTORICAL MARKER SIGN — Any sign indicating the name of a building, date of construction or other incidental information about its construction or history. See also **§237-15.H** and **§237-18.I**.

IDENTIFICATION SIGN — A sign whose copy is limited to the name and address of the building, institution or person being identified. In a Residential District, an Identification Sign may include a commercial message that advertising for goods and services offered on the premises where the sign is located, provided that offering such goods or services conforms with all requirements of applicable zoning and Town regulations. See **§237-16.A** and **§237-18.G**.

ILLEGAL SIGN — A sign erected or installed without municipal approval that is not otherwise exempt. See **§237-23**.

ILLUMINATED SIGN — A sign with electrical equipment installed for illumination, either internally illuminated through its sign face by a light source contained inside the sign or externally illuminated by a light source aimed at its surface. See **§237-19** for all Illuminated Signs.

ILLUMINATED SIGN - BACK-LIGHTED — Any wall mounted sign which is illuminated by a diffused light source projected on the mounting surface to allow light to extend beyond the actual limits of an opaque sign panel or individual letters.

ILLUMINATED SIGN - DIGITAL DISPLAY — A sign utilizing an electronic digital display. This sign type utilizes a light source derived from LCD, LED, or other electronic display technologies to compose the sign surface and messages. The sign may consist of changeable or program-controlled content. Changeable Copy Signs with digital display of letters or characters are not considered Digital Display Signs. See **§237-17.E**, **§237-18.E**, **§237-19.G**, and **§237-19.I**.

ILLUMINATED SIGN - EDGE-LIT — Sign composed of transparent material with letters or illustrations illuminated through concealed edge-mounted LED or other light sources.

ILLUMINATED SIGN - EXTERNAL — A sign which is lighted from a source which is outside of the sign panel, with the light source mounted on the building face, the sign structure, or on the ground. See **§237-19.B**.

ILLUMINATED SIGN - INTERNAL — A sign that is lighted by a source concealed behind a translucent sign panel. See **§237-19.C** and **§237-19.I**.

ILLUMINATED SIGN - NEON-TYPE — A sign comprised of narrow lines, letters or shapes emitting light using either electric discharge tubing filled with inert gas or light-emitting diodes mimicking the characteristics of neon technology. See §237-17.F and §237-19.D.

ILLUMINATED SIGN - SINGLE-COLOR LED — A sign composed of single-color LEDs, including signs with fixed and changeable copy.

INCIDENTAL SIGN — A sign that displays general site information, instructions, directives, or restrictions that are primarily oriented to pedestrians and motor vehicle operators who have entered a property from a public street. These signs shall not contain any commercial message. See §237-18.H.

LIMITED DURATION — Any on-premises sign that is not permanently affixed to the ground. See §237-9.D and §237-18.J.

MARQUEE SIGN — Any permanent roof-like structure projecting horizontally and projecting beyond the wall of the building, generally designed and constructed to provide protection from the weather. See §237-19.D.

MONUMENT SIGN — Any detached sign whose sign surface is attached to a proportionate base or structural frame, the width of which shall be a minimum of 1/2 the width of the widest part of the sign face. Said base shall not exceed a height of three feet above the average finished grade. An enclosed or solid sign base shall not be required if the sign face is within one foot of the average finished grade. A Monument Sign is a Freestanding Sign.

NONCOMPLYING SIGN — A sign which was erected legally but which does not comply with subsequently enacted regulations. See Article V.

OFF-PREMISES SIGN — A sign pertaining to products, accommodations, services, or activities not located on the premises. See §237-17.G and §237-18.K.

ON-PREMISES SIGN — A sign pertaining exclusively to the premises on which it is located or to the products, accommodations, services, or activities on the premises.

PENNANT SIGN — Any lightweight plastic, fabric, or other material, whether containing a message of any kind, fixed or attached on one or two sides from a support so as to allow the sign to move in the wind. See §237-17.H.

POLE OR PYLON SIGN — Any sign that is supported by uprights, braces, columns, poles, or other vertical members which are not attached to a building and where the bottom edge of the sign face is located three feet or more above the normal grade at the base of the sign. A Pole or Pylon Sign is a Freestanding Sign

PORTABLE SIGN — A sign designed to be transported or moved and not permanently attached to the ground, a building, or other structure. See §237-17.I.

PROJECTING SIGN — Any sign affixed to a building or wall in such a manner that its leading edge extends more than 12 inches beyond the surface of the building or wall. A

projecting sign may be either perpendicular or parallel to a wall and may have a message on more than one face. See **§237-12.C** and **§237-18.L**.

ROOF SIGN — Any sign erected upon a roof and wholly or partially supported by the sign structure placed upon the roof. See **§237-17.J**.

SANDWICH BOARD SIGN — A non-illuminated, Portable Sign located on an A- or T-frame support that is not attached to the ground or adjacent structures, and which has a Commercial Message limited to advertising goods or services sold or available on or within directly adjacent premises. See **§237-12.E**, **§237-18.M**, and **§237-19.F**.

SUSPENDED SIGN — A sign that is suspended from the underside of a horizontal plane surface and is supported by that surface. See **§237-12.C** and **§237-18.L**.

TEMPORARY SIGN — Any on-premises sign that is not permanently mounted. See **§237-13** and **§237-18.O**.

TRADE FIGURE OR SYMBOL SIGN — A three-dimensional representation of a business that is used to indicate the type of merchandise or services offered by the business.

TRADE FLAG SIGN — Any sign consisting of lightweight fabric that is affixed to a pole displaying letters, designs, or icons exemplary of the business displaying the flag.

V-SHAPED SIGN — A sign with two faces or panels not supported by one common structural member and which faces are not back-to-back.

WALL SIGN — Any sign parallel and attached to a wall, painted on the wall surface of, or erected and confined within the limits of an outside wall of any building or structure, which is supported by such wall or building, and displays only one sign surface. See **§237-18.P** and **§237-19.D**.

WINDOW SIGN — Any sign that is applied, painted, or affixed to a window, or placed inside a window, within three (3) feet of the glass, facing the outside of the building, and easily seen from the outside. Customary displays of merchandise or objects and material without lettering behind a store window are not considered signs. See **§237-18.Q**.

WINDOW SIGN – ILLUMINATED — A sign that is located within the interior of a window and is either a Digital Display Sign, Neon-Type Sign, or an Edge-Lit Sign. See **§237-18.Q** and **§237-19**.

WINDOW SIGN - INCIDENTAL — Signs displayed in the window displaying information such as the hours of operation, open or closed status, credit institutions accepted, commercial and civic affiliations, and similar information. See **§237-18.Q**.

§237-34. Other Definitions.

APPLICATION, DRAB — An application for a sign permit for a sign type that requires review by DRAB. This application shall also be used for a request for a waiver of this chapter by DRAB, including a waiver for a Creative Sign. The application form and content shall be as determined by the Planning & Zoning Department and the Building Department. See **§237-5**, **§237-8**, and **§237-9**.

APPLIED LETTERING — A sign or informative text, which is created by applying each letter individually, adhering them directly to a wall or the surface of a window, without any contrasting sign panel background material.

AWNING/CANOPY — An awning or canopy is any device with a sloped or curved surface that extends over or otherwise covers a sidewalk, courtyard, walkway, eating area, driveway, or other area or space.

BEACON — Any light with one or more beams directed into the atmosphere or directed at one or more points not on the same lot as the light source or any light with one or more beams that rotate or move. See §237-17.B.

BUSINESS OR ESTABLISHMENT — A business or establishment occupying an entire building or a part of a building. A business occupying part of a building must meet the following conditions to be eligible for Signage as provided in this Code: accessed by its own separate entrance door and surrounded by permanent floor to ceiling walls.

COMMERCIAL MESSAGE — Any content of a sign that includes text, wording, logos, or illustrations and building or site-mounted features that directly identifies or promotes a specific business, establishment, product, or service.

COMMISSIONER — The Building Commissioner of the Town or a designee of the Commissioner.

DRAB — Design Review Advisory Board.

FLAG — Any fabric, containing distinctive colors, patterns, or symbols used as a symbol of a government, political subdivision, or other non-commercial entity on a pole or suspended from a building. See **Trade Flag** for businesses. See also **§237-15.F**.

LOT — An area of land in single ownership with definite boundaries, established by a recorded plan or deed, including a lot created by combining several previously recorded lots, and used or available for use as the site of one or more buildings or for any other purpose.

LOT, MULTI-BUILDING — Any lot with more than one Principal Building.

LOT, MULTI-TENANT — Any lot with more than one business or more than one use with exterior signs.

NORMAL GRADE — Normal grade shall be construed to be the average adjacent grade as measured along the face of the sign and shall be either (i) the existing grade if there is no new construction or (ii) the newly established grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign.

PREMISES — One or more lots as defined in this chapter which are in the same ownership and are contiguous.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING — The building in which is conducted the principal use of the lot on which it is located. Lots with multiple principal uses may have multiple principal

buildings, but storage buildings, garages, and other clearly accessory uses shall not be considered principal buildings.

PRINCIPAL FAÇADE — Any façade that constitutes the primary visual and functional orientation of the building or tenant space, characterized by a combination of such features as principal entry, storefront, and visibility from streets or parking areas.

PUBLIC WAY — Any way designed for vehicular or pedestrian use and is maintained with public funds.

SETBACK — The distance from the property line to the nearest part of the applicable building, structure, or sign, measured perpendicularly to the property line.

SIGN — Any device, structure, fixture, painting, emblem, or visual effect that uses words, graphics, colors, illumination, symbols, numbers, or letters for the purpose of communicating a message. Sign includes the sign faces as well as any sign supporting structure.

SIGN AREA — The total dimensions of a sign surface used to display information, messages, advertising, logos, or symbols.

SIGN BAND — A horizontal plane that is the top-most component of a storefront, distinguishing the storefront from the remainder of the upper portion of the building façade. Wall Signs related to the storefront are located within the sign band.

SIGN HEIGHT — The height of a sign shall be computed as the distance from the base of the sign at the normal grade to the top of the highest attached component of the sign.

SIGN PACKAGE — An optional master sign plan for an entire lot and/or multi-tenant building that includes drawings, material, color specifications, number of signs, types of signs and locations, as recommended by DRAB. See §237-18.N.

SIGN PANEL — The integral and adjacent contents of a sign including all associated backing, borders, text, images, or other commercial messages.

VISIBLE — Capable of being seen without visual aid by a person of normal visual acuity.

WALL AREA — The combined area of a wall or walls consisting of and aligned with the Principal Façade.

ZBA — Zoning Board of Appeals.

Table 1: Permitted Sign Types by Zoning District

Sign Type	All Resid.	Local Bus.	General Bus.	Central Bus.	Highway Bus.	Limited Manufact. A & B	Research Development Office	Senior Campus
Art /Mural	N	A	A	A	A	N	A	N
Awning	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	N
Banner	N	A	A	A	A	A	A	N
Center Identification	N	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Changeable Copy	N	N	N	N	N	N	A	N
Creative Sign	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Digital Display	N	N	N	N	N	N	A	N
Directory	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Freestanding	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Identification	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Illuminated	N	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Limited Duration	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Marquee	N	A	A	A	A	N	N	N
Monument	N	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Pole or Pylon	N	N	A	A	A	A	A	N
Projecting	A	A	A	A	A	N	N	N
Sandwich Board	A	A	A	A	A	N	A	N
Suspended	N	A	A	A	A	N	N	N
Temporary	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Trade Figure or Symbol	N	A	A	A	A	N	A	N
Trade Flag	N	A	A	A	A	N	N	N
V-Shaped	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	N
Wall	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Window	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Window - Incidental	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	N

Notes

1. A = Allowed; N = Not allowed
2. See §237-13. *Exempt signs* and §237-14. *Private property - exempt signs* for signs that are exempt from a sign permit in all districts.
3. 2. See §237-15. *Prohibited sign types* for signs prohibited in all districts.

