

DRAFT “USER’S GUIDE” TO DEDHAM’S SIGNAGE CODE

This is a draft “user’s guide” providing an overview of the Town of Dedham’s Signage Code based on the draft revisions currently under study and discussion within the Town. This document will be refined to match and actual changes that are adopted at a Town Meeting. The final version of this guide will become an information resource available on the Town’s website for residents, businesses, applicants, and designers of signage in Dedham.

A Brief Guide to Signs and Dedham's Signage Code

This is an overview of Dedham's Signage Code for exterior signage, including window signs. It summarizes how the Signage Code is organized to address different types of signs, their location, and key characteristics like size and illumination. This summary describes permit application and approval steps and how you can get more information.

The Signage Code is *Chapter 237 of the Town of Dedham By-laws* as adopted by Town Meeting. The Signage Code contains the specific provisions and requirements for exterior signs. You can get a copy through the Town's website, or through the Town Clerk.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SIGNAGE CODE?

The Signage Code has many purposes, including ensuring that signs are compatible with the unique character and environment of Dedham. It seeks to balance public and private objectives for both commercial and non-commercial messages. With its consistent design standards, it is intended to promote pedestrian and traffic safety, protect property values and the local economy, and enhance the quality of life. The Signage Code is not intended to restrict speech based on content, viewpoint, or message. *Article I: General Provisions* of the Signage Code has a complete list of its purposes.

WHAT SIGNS ARE ALLOWED AND WHAT SIGNS ARE PROHIBITED?

Article III: General Regulations describes what is allowed and prohibited in detail. The Signage Code allows for approvals of many other types of signs, including both permanent and temporary signs, contingent upon meeting its standards and requirements. However, certain types of signs are not allowed including animated signs, billboards, beacons, pennant signs, and signs that would interfere with traffic control.

DO ALL EXTERIOR SIGNS NEED A PERMIT?

No, some types of signs are exempt from permitting if they are within certain categories and requirements. For example, signs are exempt if they are not visible from any area to which the public has typical access. Temporary signs of limited size and duration are exempt. No permits are required for an identification sign for residences or for certain awning signs. Memorial signs and historical markers are also exempt from permitting. These and other exempt signs are described in *Article III: General Regulations*.

WILL MY EXISTING SIGN NEED TO COMPLY WITH THE UPDATED SIGNAGE CODE?

Pre-existing signs can remain in place if permits were issued for them when they were installed. But signs without permits must be shown to be compliant with the current Signage Code or be granted an Exception by the Town. The owners of signs without valid permits are responsible for obtaining permits or must remove them. More specific information about these circumstances is contained in *Article V: Noncomplying Signs and Signs without Permits*.

WHAT TYPES OF SIGNS ARE ADDRESSED?

The Signage Code has specific definitions and standards for a wide variety of signs which are defined in *Article VII: Definitions*. The sign types are then linked to requirements including design standards and illumination in *Article IV: Special Regulations*. A series of illustrations are included at the end of this Guide to indicate some of the typical sign types and standards that are contained in the Signage Code.

CAN NEW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND SPECIAL ILLUMINATION METHODS LIKE LED'S AND NEON BE USED ON SIGNS IN DEDHAM?

The Signage Code provides for targeted application of certain LED digital signage, neon signs and changeable message signs. In every case, their use has specific standards that can be found in *Article VII: Definitions* and *Article IV: Special Regulations*.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS FOR DIFFERENT LOCATIONS IN DEDHAM?

Some of the requirements depend on the location within Dedham, to make sure that the types and amount of signage are appropriate for their surrounding context. The different requirements are organized to correspond to the zoning categories. These location-linked rules are described in *Article IV: Special Regulations* and in a table at the end of the Code.

WHAT IS A “SIGNAGE PACKAGE” AND HOW CAN IT BE HELPFUL?

For large, multi-tenant buildings and properties, the owners can prepare and seek approvals through a “Signage Package”. This is like a signage master plan that sets the size, location, and design characteristics of multiple signs in one document. Once the Signage Package is approved, then the process for obtaining individual permits for the subsequent signs is greatly streamlined. The description of signage packages and the associated eligibility is contained in *Article IV: Special Regulations*.

WHO REVIEWS APPLICATIONS AND ISSUES PERMITS?

The final permits for all signs are issued by the Building Department, but the route for applications, reviews, and approvals varies, depending on the type of sign and type of approval being sought. The key processes are discussed in *Article II: Administration* and can be further explained by contacting the two Departments responsible for them.

Some signage types require only staff-level review by the Building Department and the Planning & Zoning Department. The application forms and process are managed by the Building Department, and an application can proceed directly to approval if they meet the associated standards. This process is used for Awning Signs, Directory Signs, Identification Signs, Incidental Signs, Temporary Signs over 9 square feet in area, and Sandwich Board Signs.

Other signs will need to be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Advisory Board (DRAB) before a permit is issued. Applications for the DRAB reviews and approvals are managed by the Planning & Zoning Department, who coordinates them with the Building Department.

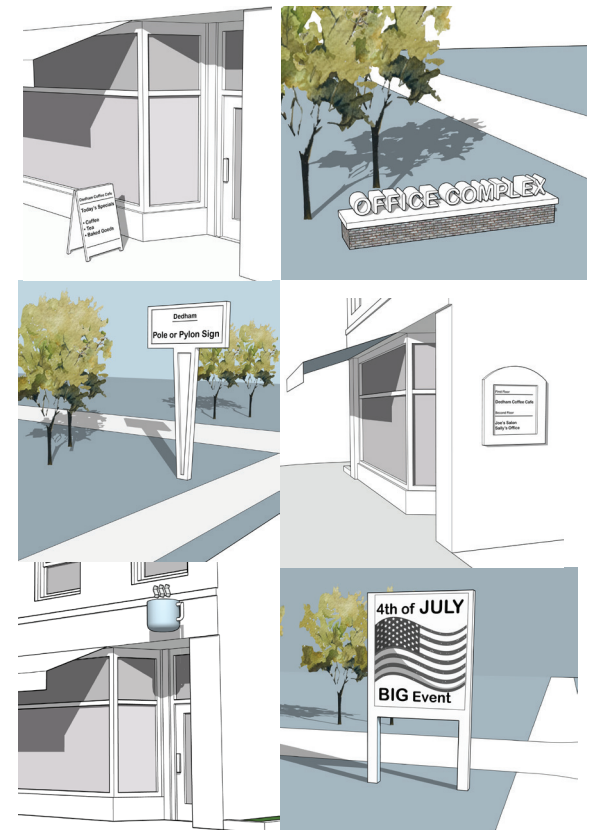
If there are special circumstances that would require an Exception to certain standards, DRAB is responsible for reviewing and approving any associated request by the applicant.

WHERE AND HOW DO I APPLY FOR A PERMIT?

Application information and forms are available on the Town’s website. There are different forms and requirements for signs needing only staff review can be obtained through the Building Department; forms for other signs and Exception requests are obtained through the Department of Planning & Zoning.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For further questions and guidance regarding the Code’s interpretation and administration, you may contact staff at either the Building Department or the Department of Planning & Zoning: (contact numbers and e-mail addresses to be inserted).



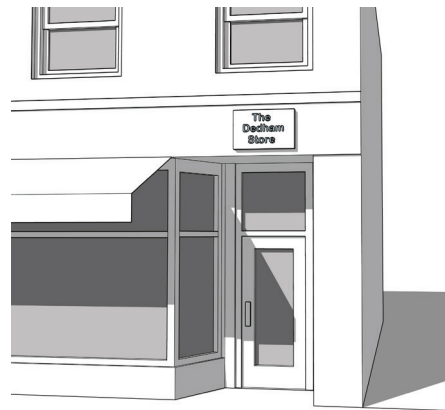
Illustrations of Sign Types in the Dedham Signage Code

These are illustrations of many of the sign types that the Dedham Signage Code addresses. They are simplified examples corresponding to definitions that can be found in *Article VI: Definitions* of the Code. As illustrations, they are not intended to replace or alter the definitions or their interpretation; in every instance, the text of the Signage Code and its interpretation by the Town will govern reviews and approvals.

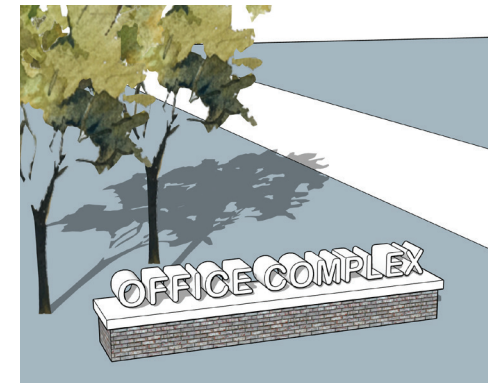
ART/MURAL SIGN



BUILDING IDENTIFICATION SIGN



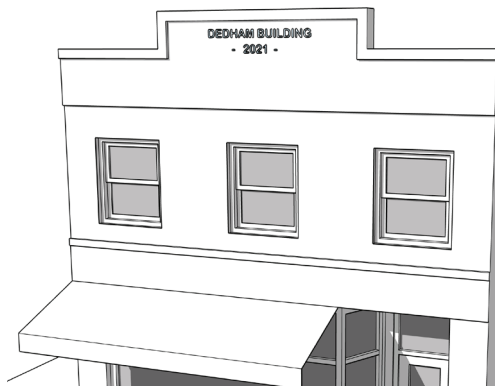
CENTER IDENTIFICATION SIGN



AWNING SIGN



BUILDING MARKER



DIGITAL DISPLAY SIGN



Matrix of digitally-controlled light sources

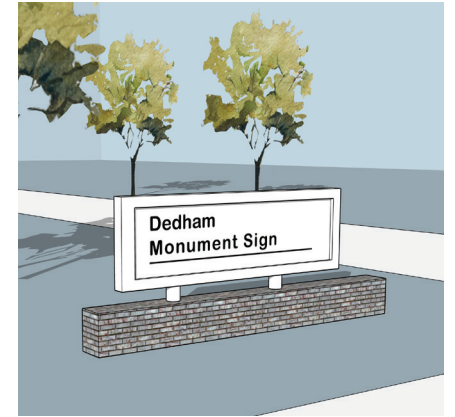
DIRECTORY SIGN



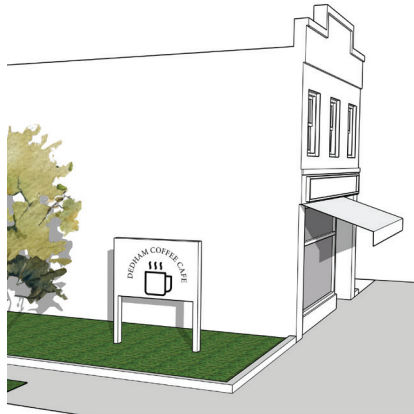
INCIDENTAL SIGN



MONUMENT SIGN



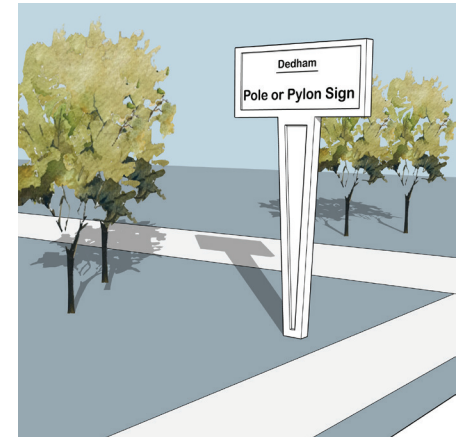
FREESTANDING SIGN



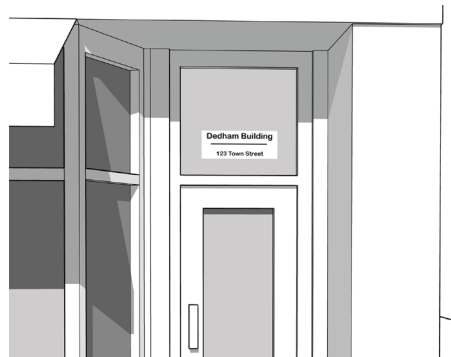
INCIDENTAL WINDOW SIGN



POLE OR PYLON SIGN



IDENTIFICATION SIGN



MARQUEE SIGN



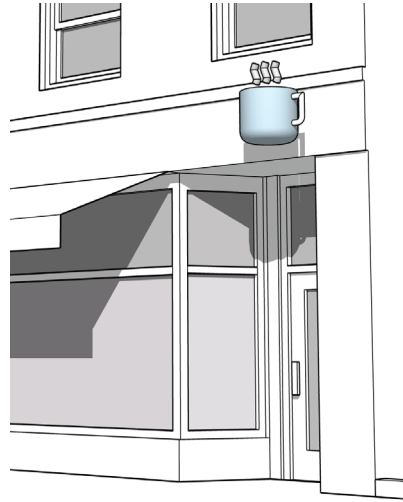
PROJECTING SIGN



SANDWICH SIGN



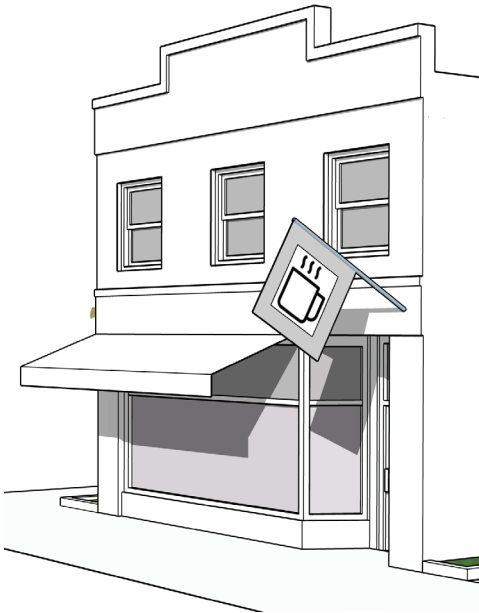
TRADE FIGURE OR SYMBOL



WINDOW SIGNS



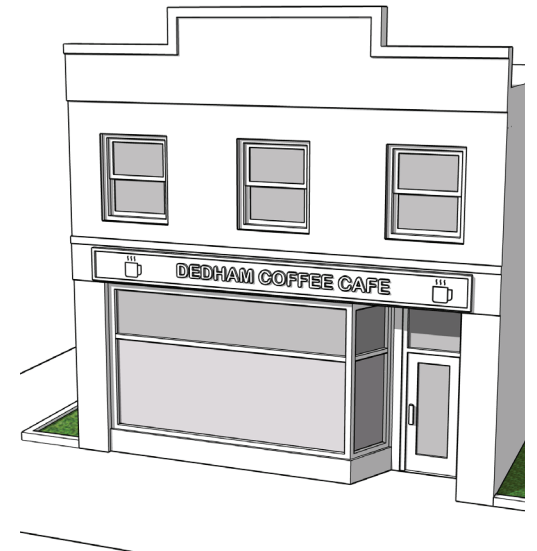
TRADE FLAG



V-SHAPED SIGN



WALL SIGN

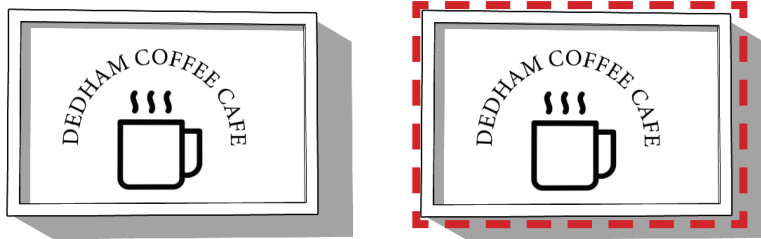


Illustrations of Selected Sign Standards in the Dedham Signage Code

To assist in understanding some of the specific standards within the Dedham Signage Code, these illustrations indicate how typical circumstances may be applied. As illustrations, they are not intended to replace or alter the design standards or their interpretation; in every instance, the text of the Signage Code and its interpretation by the Town will govern reviews and approvals.

1. Calculating the Area of Individual Signs
2. Calculating the Maximum Area for Window Signs
3. Calculating the Maximum Sign Area: Length of Principal Facades along Streets
4. Calculating the Maximum Sign Area: Length of Tenant Frontages along Parking Areas or Private Ways
5. Identifying and Using Sign Bands
6. Awning Sign Area Standards
7. Incorporating Wall Signs within Parapets and Facade Architecture
8. Awnings: Exempt Signs

1. CALCULATING THE AREA OF INDIVIDUALS SIGNS

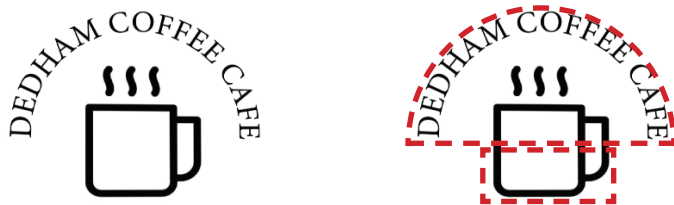


For signs with borders or backing surface integral to the sign, the sign area is calculated by including them.

Dedham Coffee Cafe

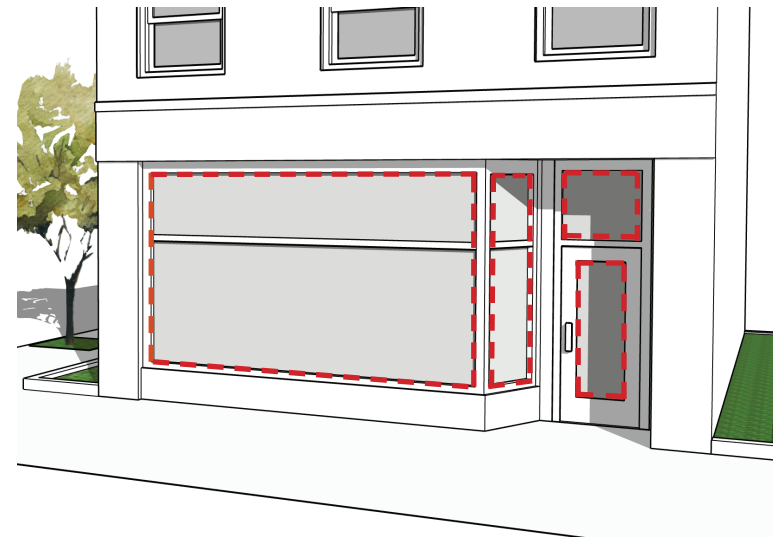
Dedham Coffee Cafe

For signs with individual letters, the calculation is based on an outline that encompasses them.



For complex sign shapes, the sign area is calculated by adding together the areas of simple geometries that encompass the sign text and graphics.

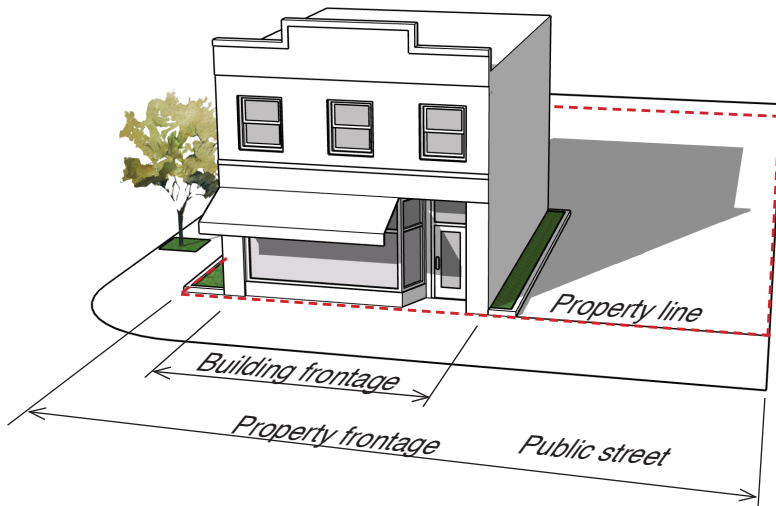
2. CALCULATING THE MAXIMUM AREA FOR WINDOW SIGNS



The maximum area of window signs may not exceed 25% of the total window and door glazing area of a business or establishment. The total window area is the sum of the glazing of the components of a storefront.

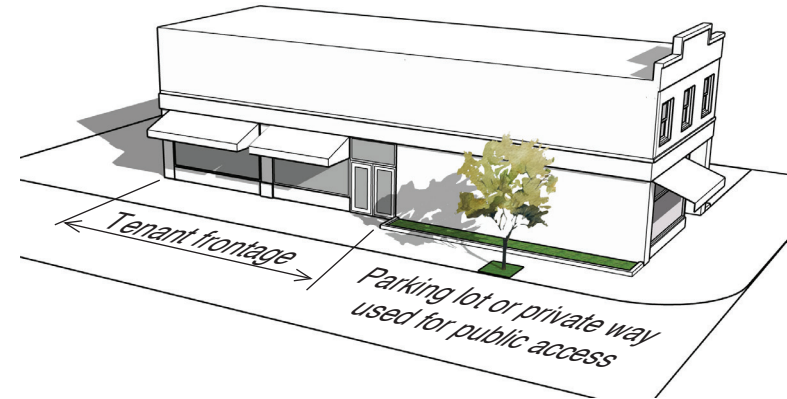
For any business or establishment and as part of this maximum sign area, one window sign may consist of a Digital Display Sign or Edge Lit Sign up to a maximum area of 2 square feet, or 1 Neon-Type Sign with a maximum area of 6 square feet.

3. CALCULATING THE MAXIMUM SIGN AREA USING THE LENGTH OF PRINCIPAL FACADES ALONG STREETS



The basis for establishing certain sign areas for lots and buildings is based on length of the building frontage of the principal facade facing a street, not the length of the lot frontage along the street.

4. CALCULATING THE MAXIMUM SIGN AREA USING THE LENGTH OF TENANT FRONTAGES ALONG PARKING AREAS OR PRIVATE WAYS



For some buildings, the frontage and principal entrance of tenants face onto parking areas or private ways normally used by the public. The sign area for those uses is based on that tenant's frontage, as though it were along a street.

5. IDENTIFYING AND USING SIGN BANDS



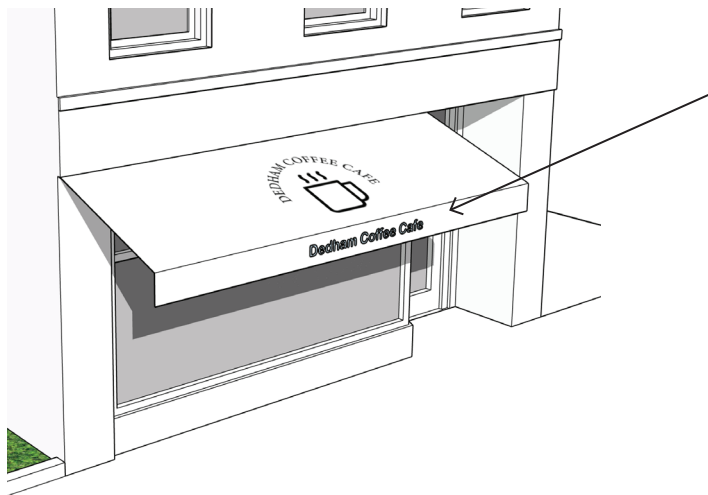
Some architectural styles include a distinctive band between the storefront and the upper portions of a facade. Called a "sign band", it may be marked by changes in materials, borders, or other features. These are appropriate locations for signs so that they do not obscure the storefronts or the other portions of the facade.

6. AWNING STANDARDS



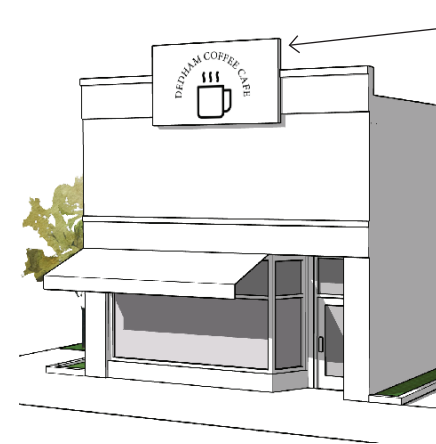
Awning sign area is limited to 25% of the awning on which it is located, including the calculation for any vertical signs that may be attached to an awning.

8. AWNINGS: EXEMPT SIGNS

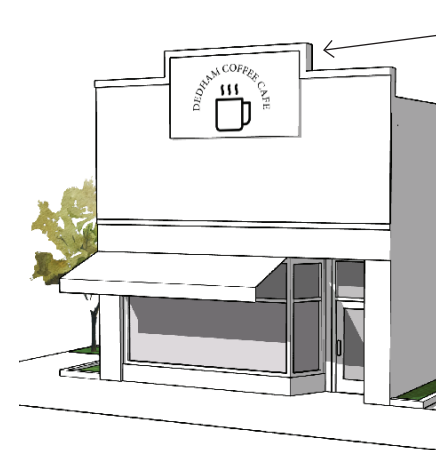


A single line of text is exempt from permitting if the letters are no greater than 6" tall.

7. INCORPORATING WALL SIGNS WITHIN PARAPETS AND FACADE ARCHITECTURE



Sign applied to the facade and protruding above the adjacent roof line is considered a roof sign.



Wall Sign contained within an extended parapet or architectural feature of the facade.

Signs that protrude above the parapet or edge of a roof are considered Roof Signs and are not permitted except for a category called "Creative Signs", if they are approved by the Design Review Advisory Board.

By altering the parapet or architectural features of the facade, an appropriate setting can be created for a sign so that it is incorporated into the architectural character of the building and its facades. Such a sign is considered to be a Wall Sign.