

Town of Milton

Sign and Facade
Design Handbook





Town of Milton

To the Merchants and Property Owners of Milton:

This guidebook has been prepared by the Milton Sign Bylaw Review Subcommittee to help outline the design review process for signs and other storefront improvements in the business districts.

The design goal for Milton's business districts is to have a series of storefronts that are on the one hand individualized and on the other sufficiently controlled to present a unified and coherent image in the district. These criteria have been written as a guide for both renovation of existing buildings and new construction. The major tools used to ensure coherence and unity in the final design are: appropriate use of materials and architectural expression, the introduction of awnings and other pedestrian friendly elements, transparency of the storefront windows, reserved use of signage and regular maintenance of all storefront elements. When dealing with buildings of historical significance, Merchants and Property Owners are discouraged from altering the existing building elements in any way and are encouraged to restore deteriorated facades.

If you are planning to erect a new sign, awning or make other improvements; or to modify an existing sign or awning, this guidebook will acquaint you with the provisions of the Milton Zoning bylaw that apply to signs. The Building Commissioner and Design Review Committee are available to assist you and answer any questions you may have regarding storefront design for your business property.

The Board of Selectmen is confident that an improved visual environment in the Town's business districts is an asset for the individual business as well as for the entire community. We encourage you to use this booklet and welcome your comments on how we can further assist you.

Sincerely,

James G. Mullen
Marion McEttrick
Charles J. McCarthy

Do You Need a New Sign?

Are you opening a new business? Are you expanding your business into more storefront space?

Are you remodeling? Is your old sign in a state of disrepair? Maybe your sign does not convey the message or the image that you want. If, for any reason, you feel that your sign is inadequate, you should consider the value of a new sign.

What are the functions of good signs?

1. To communicate messages: Who occupies the establishment.
2. To furnish information about goods and services: Is it a coffee shop or a real estate office? Is there a special sale going on.
3. To convey an image: Is it an elegant place or a modest place? Is it a solemn place such as a funeral home or a lively place such as a video store.

Poorly designed or maintained signs can have a detrimental impact.

1. They may be a distraction to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
2. They often decrease property values.
3. They may conceal and confuse other permitted signs.
4. They often degrade the visual quality of the town.

Attractive, coordinated, well-designed signs have a beneficial impact.

1. They provide clear identification of the merchant's business.
2. They stimulate business activity.
3. They create a pleasant environment.
4. They enhance the image of the town.

Think it over. You may need a new sign. That sign could make a significant contribution to the visual and economic vitality of your business and to the Town of Milton.

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NOTE: Non-compliance with the Zoning Bylaw is punishable by fines up to \$300 per day!

Steps to Acquire a Sign Permit

A. Getting Started

Go to the Building Department in Milton Town Hall at 525 Canton Ave. for information on permits that you may need. This guidebook contains the sections of the Town of Milton Zoning Bylaws which relate to signs (pages 13 and 14). If your sign falls within the allowances of the bylaws, the Building Commissioner is authorized to grant a permit. If you wish a sign that exceeds the as-of-right allowances, your sign application will be referred to the Board of Selectmen.

Generally, the Building Commissioner, on behalf of the Board of Selectmen, will refer non-conforming signs and facade treatments to the Milton Sign Review Committee.

This handbook was developed by the Sign Review Committee to assist merchants design their facade and signage treatments. Easy-to-understand formulas determine acceptable signage area; and guidelines are offered for the representation, fabrication and installation of signs, awnings and lighting. Following the formulas and guidelines typically afford the Merchant the opportunity for more signage than is allowed under the bylaws, but require preparing and submitting the requested drawings and photographs specified under Section A, items 1–3. The Sign Review committee will review the submittal and assist the Merchant in developing a facade/signage package that has the support of the Committee. The Sign Review Committee will then make a formal recommendation suggesting approval by the Board of Selectmen.

B. Determine Sign Sizes and Develop a Good Design

The Town of Milton spends considerable effort in the review and enforcement of our sign regulations. As merchants are sometimes unaware of the rules governing signs we offer this explanation. Inappropriate signs detract from the visual quality of your commercial area and have a negative impact on neighbor's store as well as your own. Store facades and windows filled with signs interfere with communicating the store names and services they offer. The Building Commissioner and Sign Review Committee are available for assistance.

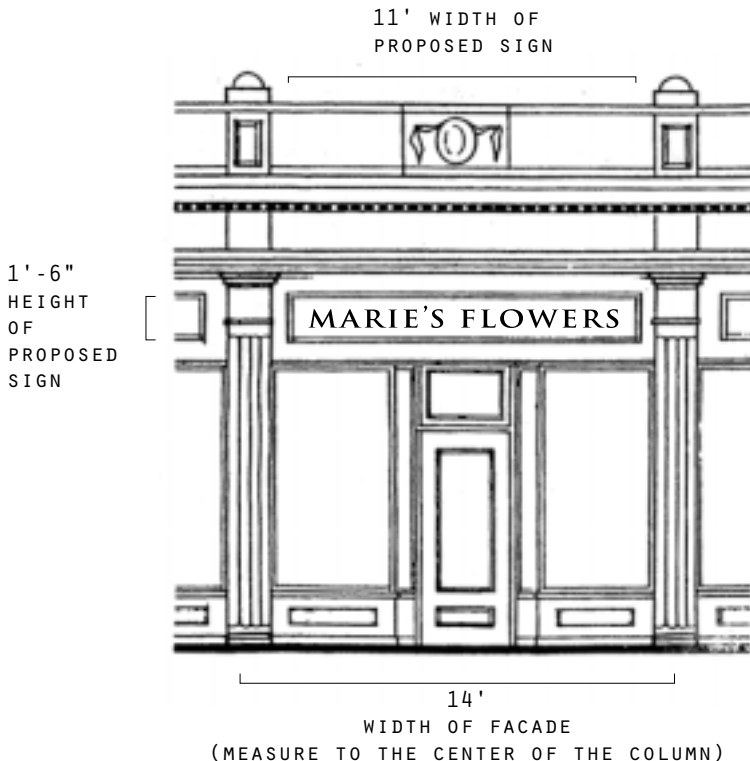
1. Signs, temporary and permanent

All permanent signs, including permanent window signs, flags, banners and awnings, require review by the Building Commissioner and/or the Board of Selectmen. Temporary signs, or those which advertise a sale or event, do not require review but do require a permit and must be removed after 45 days.

2. Allowable Sign Area

The amount of sign allowed is dependent on the store width.

- Measure width of store front and multiply by two to get total sign area (square feet) allowance.
- Design and measure the main sign to determine how much of your allowance has been used. Subtract this amount from your allowance to find the square footage you are allowed for window signs.



Example: Multiply the width of the store front by 2.

If the storefront is 14' wide you are allowed 28 square feet of sign area. If your main sign is 1.5' tall and 11' wide, the main sign area is 16.5 sq. ft. Subtract this amount from your allowance to find the remainder allowed for window signs (28' - 16.5' = 11.5') Window signs in total may not exceed 11.5 sq. ft. or 30% of the total glass area, whichever is smaller.



Measure the extreme limits of any sign background or trim.

$$\text{Sign area} = A \times B$$



When letters are attached directly to a wall or window surface, measure the extreme limits of the message.

$$\text{Sign area} = A \times B$$

C. Application to the Building Department

Requirements are:

1. Submit your permit application to the Building Commissioner.

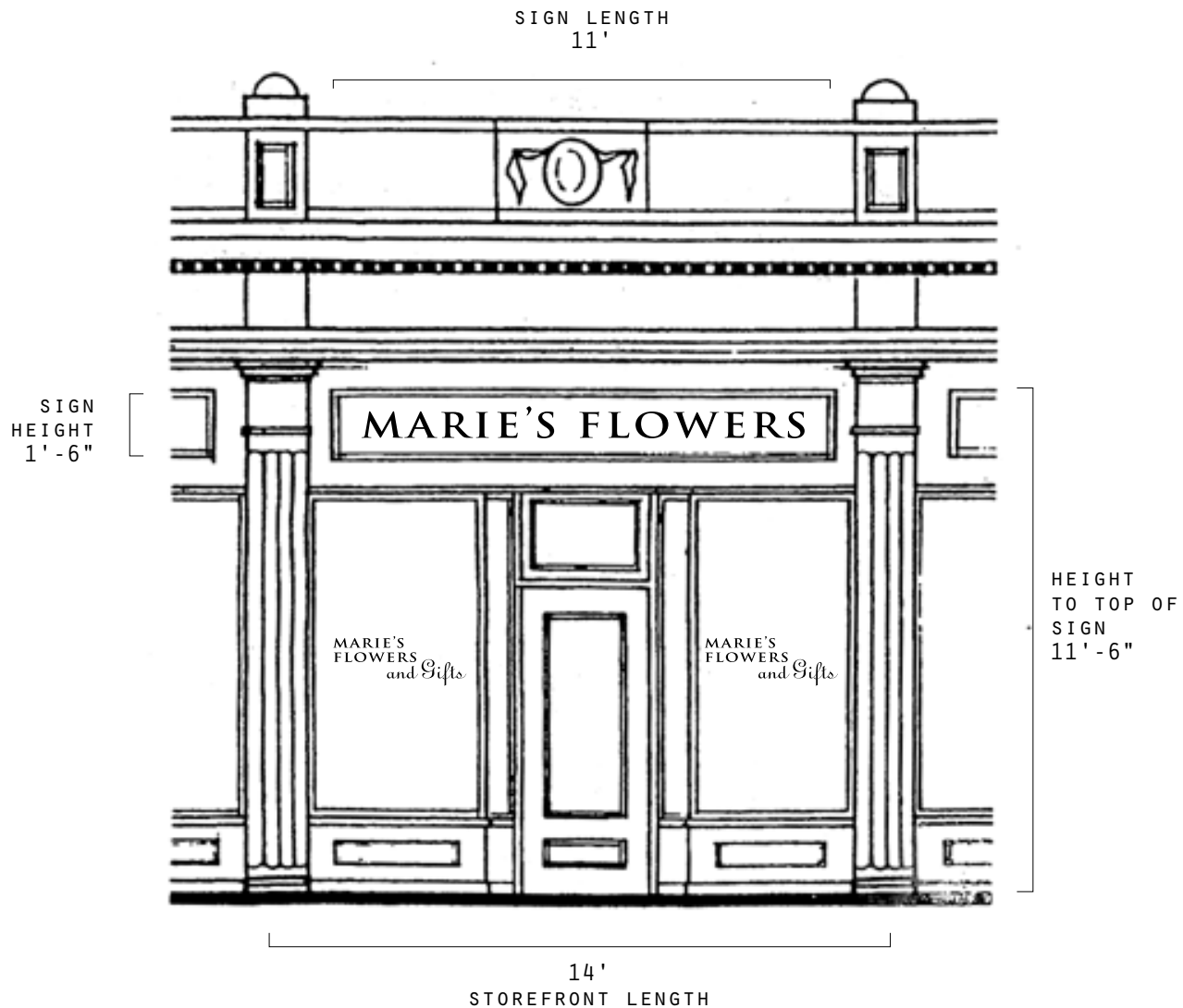
Make sure you have included name, address and phone number where you can be reached during the day. Please include the owner's name, address and phone number if you are a contractor.

2. Fee payment

Pay any filing fees required.

3. Submit three copies of elevation drawing.

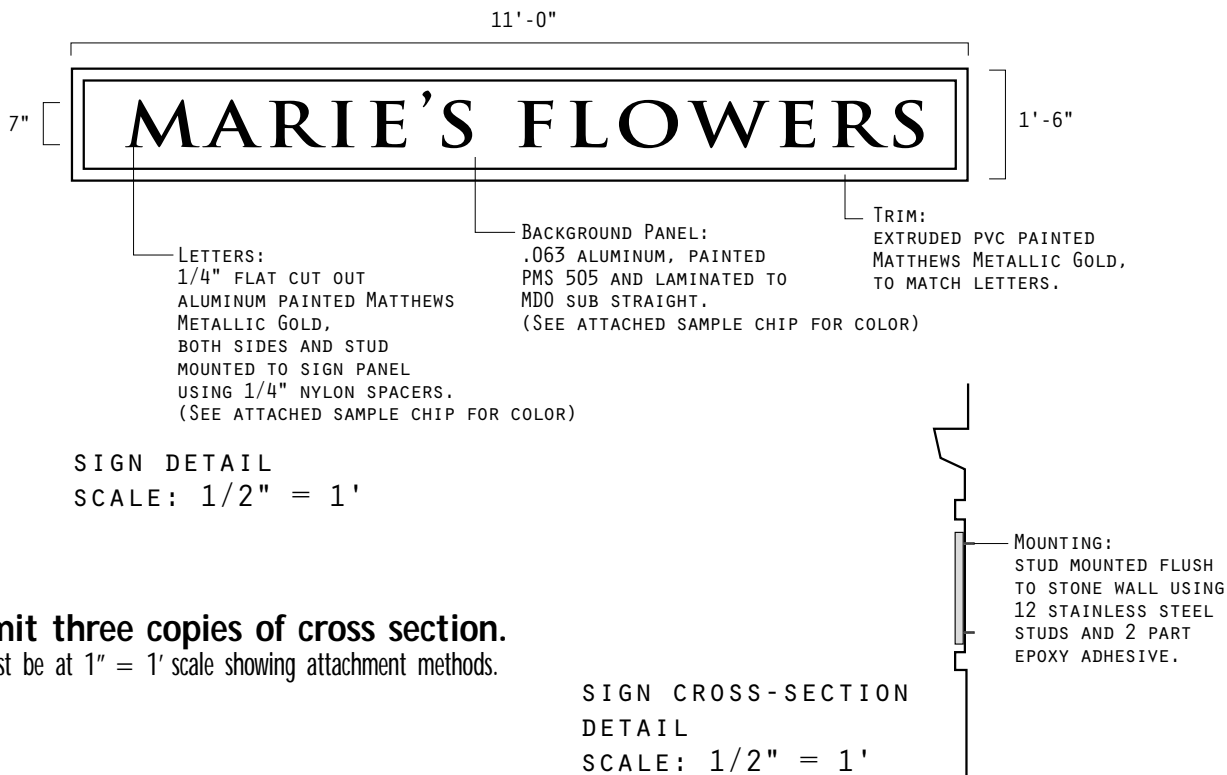
Drawings must be at $1/4" = 1'$ scale showing existing building with sign located on it as shown in drawing below. Please include specifications of the materials, color swatches, construction and attachment methods. You must also include dimensions to the top of the sign and the frontage on the street. If your storefront shares a column with the adjoining store, measure to the middle of the column.



SIGN ELEVATION
SCALE: $1/4" = 1'$

4. Submit three copies of sign drawing.

Drawings must be at 1/2" = 1' scale showing exact lettering style and size. Indicate how the sign is lighted, colors of background and lettering and all materials being used. Please submit color swatches.



5. Submit three copies of cross section.

Drawings must be at 1" = 1' scale showing attachment methods.

6. Submit two copies of color photograph.

Photo must show existing building and a portion of the adjacent surrounding businesses as shown. Photo must be of good quality, in focus and using good lighting.



7. Submit two copies of photo illustration.

This photo illustration is optional but is extremely helpful in giving the Board of Selectmen and Sign Review Committee a clear picture of your intent.

D. Board of Selectman Review

Upon completion of the Sign Review Process and a recommendation from the Sign Review Committee, the Board of Selectmen will review and vote on your proposal at a scheduled meeting, which generally occurs on Monday evenings at 7:30 P.M. You may contact the Selectmen's office at 617-696-5604 to learn when your application will be considered. You or your representative will have the opportunity to present and explain your application. Citizens can attend to voice support or opposition.

E. Obtain a Building Permit

The Building Commissioner may issue a permit, providing that all applicable building code regulations and zoning regulations within his jurisdiction have been met and you have received approval from the Board of Selectmen.

F. Proceed with Construction

You will be responsible for the future maintenance of your sign. Make sure that your manufacturer and installer does a good job. The Building Commissioner will inspect the work after it is completed.

Steps to Acquire an Awning Permit

Note: The same steps are required to apply for awning permits.

Use the design guidelines on the following pages to help you develop a good design.

Sign Design Guidelines

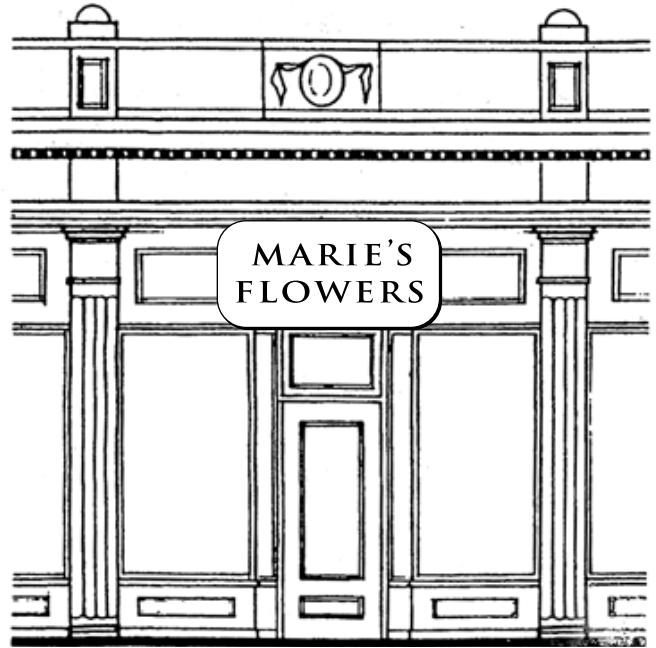
Enhance Architectural Elements, Utilize Building Surfaces and Existing Sign Bands

The sign should serve to define or enhance architectural elements of the building, not obscure or obliterate them. Where feasible, sign letters should be attached directly to building surfaces without superfluous back-facing. Use existing sign bands for placement as well.

This



Not This



Identification of Business

The sign should identify the name of the business, not advertise brand names.

This



Not This



Consolidate Information on Main Sign

Eliminate visual clutter by consolidating information in an organized manner.

This



Not This



Simplicity

Sign graphics should reflect simplicity, neatness and minimal information. Simplicity of graphics will improve readability and communicate the message faster.

This



Not This



Placement of information

Products and services information should be displayed in an organized manner and should be applied to windows as vinyl die cut decals. Signs and posters should not be taped in windows. Only professional display systems should be used to display posters or banners.

This



Not This



The following pages show examples of sign placement and sign materials in relationship to neighboring businesses .

Signs

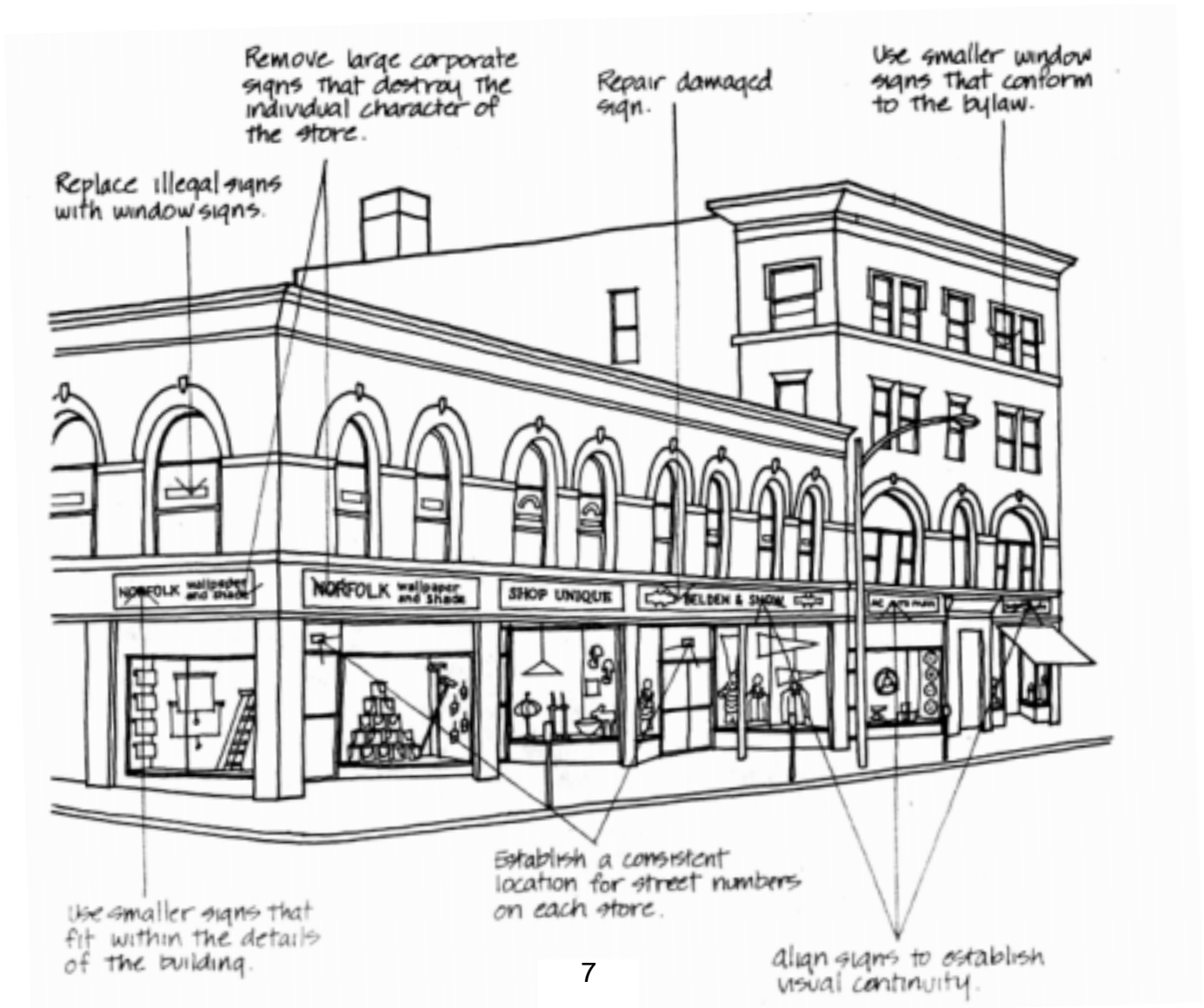
The most common element of a business is its use of signage and other decorative treatment to advertise a products or service. When used properly these elements can be a very effective means of communicating a message and drawing new customers. When used improperly, the effect can be one of confusion and ambiguity, adding clutter to the environment. The design goal for Milton's business districts is to have a series of storefronts that are individualized but also present a unified and attractive image. For individual businesses in other areas of town, compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods is an important consideration.

The primary rule in applying any type of decorative treatment to a building is to fit the new elements to the existing architectural detailing of the building.

PLACEMENT AND SIZE

Most older buildings were designed with a horizontal zone over the storefront to contain signage. This zone should be used for attaching individual letters or a continuous colored signage band. On rows of storefronts within the same building, neighboring signs should align and be placed on the same colored background.

The size of the signs should be determined by the size of the existing signage band and should never obscure the detailing of the building. Newer buildings which usually do not have a signage zone should place their signage band to relate to the neighboring buildings in the manner illustrated in this guidebook. Lettering on signs for neighboring businesses within the same building should relate closely in size and materials.



Materials

Signs can be fabricated from a variety of materials including wood, metal, glass, or plastic. The choice of material depends on the character of the business and the building and the cost and maintenance factors for the sign. Good signage is possible for any of these materials, but it must be designed in a sensitive manner based on the properties and appropriateness of the material.

Wood vs. High Density Urethane

Wooden signs are the most traditional type of signage. Wood is very flexible and can be carved into letters or used as a background for letters in relief. Wood signs should be made of a solid wood ie. cedar, redwood. As an alternative to wood, high density urethane, sometimes referred to as high density sign foam, can be used to simulate carved wood.

We do not recommend the use of any type of wood or medium density overlay (MDO) because over time it will delaminate, crack and peel and you will be responsible for the long term maintenance of your sign.



Metal

Metal signs can also be made in a variety of shapes, colors and finishes. It is often used as individual painted aluminum, stainless steel, bronze or brass letters mounted to the surface of a building. Painted aluminum is an excellent sign material.

Sheet metal signs can rust easily if damage destroys its protective coating. Metal signage is not always compatible with older building materials.

Metal coatings such as gold and silver leafing can be a way to add an image of quality and elegance to a sign. Color coatings such as anodized aluminum or baked enamels greatly expand the life of your investment.



Glass

The use of lettering or symbols on the glass of the storefront can be a very effective way to attract pedestrians and add color and life to the streetscape. Only vinyl die cut, hand painted or screen printed letters with opaque backing should be used for the best effect.



Plastic

The most common signage material these days is plastic due to its cost and availability. These signs come in all shapes, sizes and colors and can be internally illuminated because of their translucent properties. However, mass produced plastic signs are often poorly constructed, overly illuminated, and tell little of the unique character of the individual business. They are often poorly scaled in size to the proportions of the building and are more appropriate to a commercial strip and high speed traffic than to the East Milton Square, Milton Village, Central Avenue and other areas of Milton. Illuminated signs are not allowed under the bylaw.

Plastic signage carries a more modern image and is less suited to an older building, but can be creatively used if the characteristics of the building and the business are considered.



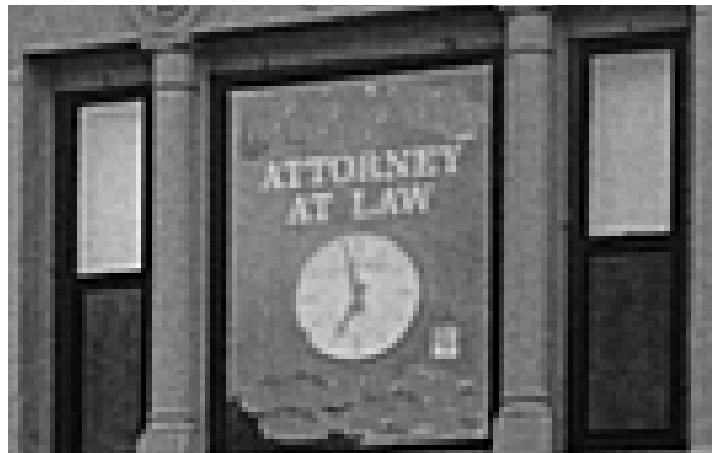
Stone

Signs made from these materials are very durable and invoke a sense of permanence. They may actually become part of the building itself and should be chosen carefully to match the building materials.



Upper Story Signs

Windows on upper stories of buildings can accommodate small painted or vinyl application glass messages. No other attached signage should be applied above the first story of a building unless it is within the signage band above the first floor storefront level. Building addresses should be limited to numbers placed in the signage band or at the cornice level. All signage should be appropriate for the architecture and character of the buildings, especially older buildings.



Color

Color is one of the most important components of visual communication. The color of a sign can send many messages to the customer. Bright colors may catch your eye and imply gaiety while more muted colors may express dignity or repose.

Too many colors can work against getting the message across, creating confusion and visual disarray. Remember that black and white are strong colors when combined with others. Limit the number of colors used in one sign and try to match them to the color scheme of the materials in the building. Matching the colors of adjacent signs can create an attractive and unified appearance. Use discretion in selecting colors. Even the most attractive sign can look unattractive due to an inappropriate color choice or conflict with adjacent signage.



Logos and Symbols

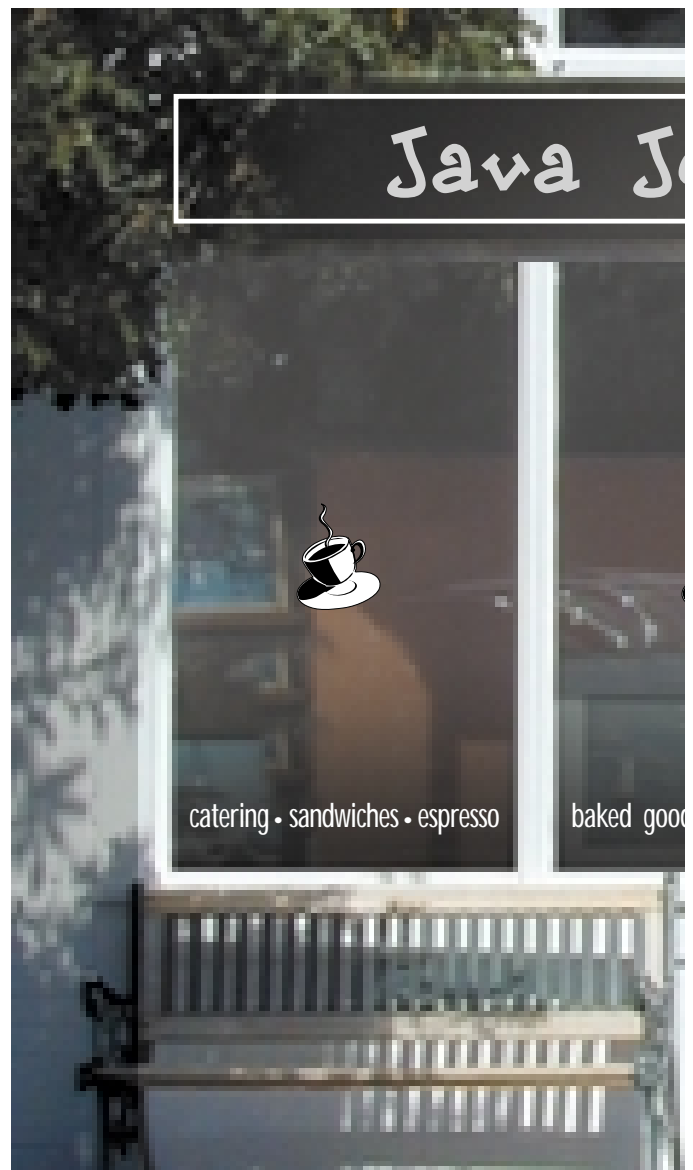
A picture can be worth a thousand words and symbols are an effective way to get your message across. Symbol signs should be appropriately scaled to the building, and when used as a projecting sign should be placed in the signage band. Brand name logos should be avoided unless the product mentioned comprises a principal part of the business.

Legibility

The style, size, spacing and weight of the letters on your sign contribute to the legibility and interpretation of your message. Different type styles (fonts) evoke different messages about the business. Colors can be used to contrast letters from their background for increased legibility. Dark letters on a light background or vice versa are more effective than colors with similar values.

Upper and lower case letters as well as script styles have varying degrees of legibility in different applications. Look at signs that convey a strong business image and try to understand the characteristics of lettering and style that make a good sign.

Letter sizes that leave some unused space on the top, bottom, left and right of the lettering create an attractive appearance that is legible while avoiding a bold billboard-type look.



Lights and Fixtures

Lighting can be an additional factor in communicating the nature of a business. When done well, the lighting should not impose glare on a passerby or upon street traffic. It can be most effective by focusing attention upon a message or display rather than creating a block of light which distracts and is visually irritating.

In many cases, no lighting is necessary because there is adequate street lighting. Consider whether you need the up front and long term expenses of lighting. If lighting is desired, take care to avoid red and green or other lighting near traffic signals that could confuse drivers. Lighting should be turned off when the business is not open, except for moderate window lighting to display goods during evening hours. Lighting should not be a nuisance to nearby residents.

Indirect lighting is an effective way to cast light on a sign and can also be used to illuminate attractive details of the building. There are many styles of exterior illumination which can enhance the appearance of the building, such as the gooseneck lamps which have become popular in East Milton Square. These lights should be carefully placed so as not to interfere with the details of the building.

Internally illuminated signs, usually plastic, contain lighting and supports within the sign, but it is more difficult to replace burned out lamps. These signs can overwhelm the building surface when both the letters and the background are lit, and appear to be attached rather than integral with the building surface.

All illuminated signs require Board of Selectmen approval . In recent years, the Board has approved indirect, externally illuminated signs, but has not approved internal illumination.





Awnings and Window Displays

Awnings

The principal purpose of awnings is to reduce sunlight. Awnings should complement the style and age of the building. Older buildings look best with a fabric awning on a retractable shed-roofed frame. These fabric awnings usually have a free moving valance at the bottom. Fixed awnings with newer shapes including rounded and bullnose often detract from the character of the building. By copying the size and shape of the traditional fabric awnings, fixed awnings can be compatible with some older buildings.

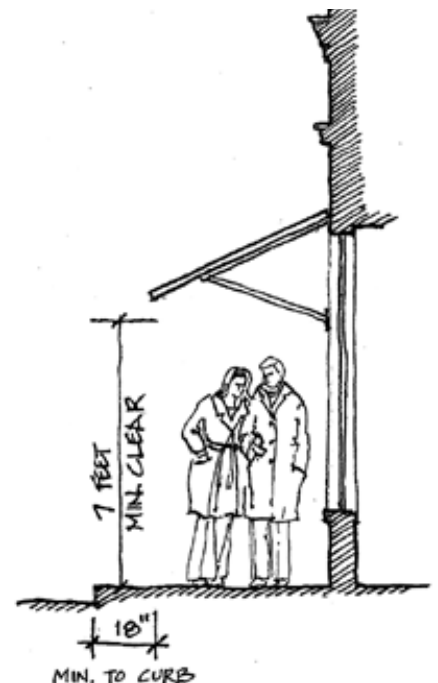
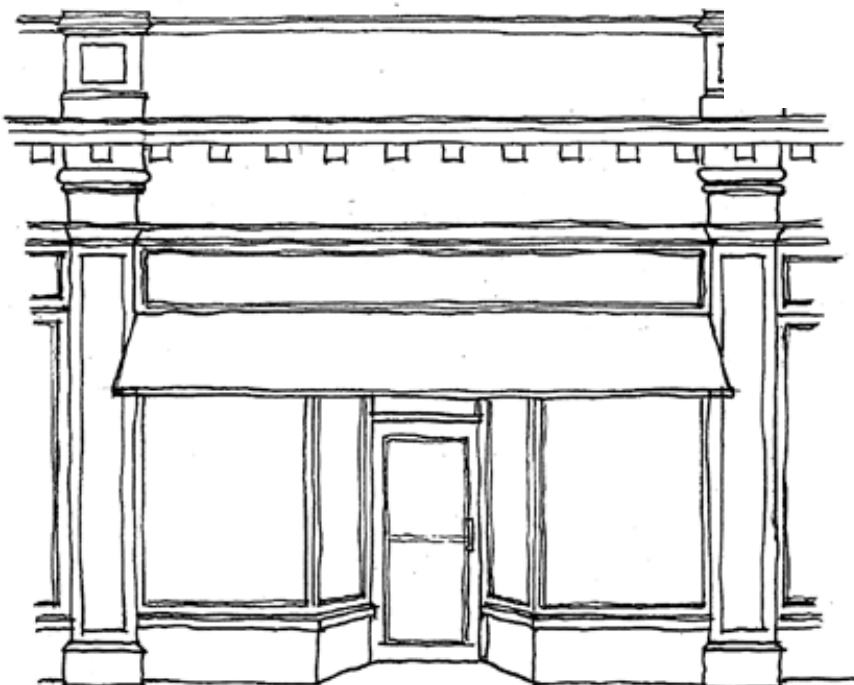
Awnings should relate geometrically to the space where they are placed to define and enhance the architectural details. Adjacent businesses in the same building should coordinate their awning type and

color for the greatest effect in unifying the block.

Awnings should be properly maintained and replaced when damaged or faded.

Window Displays

Window displays are the most direct form of advertisement to attract pedestrians. Creative and changing displays add an element of color and vitality to the shopping district. Simple and organized displays are the most effective. The use of many paper signs in the window should be avoided as it tends to confuse rather than inform. Displays that have become outdated or obsolete should be removed.



Town of Milton Bylaws Relating to Signs

Sections of Bylaws, Chapter 10, Zoning

SECTION I. Definitions.

A. In this bylaw the following terms, unless a contrary meaning is required by the context or is specifically prescribed, shall have the following meanings:

10. Sign -- The word "sign" (whether exterior, interior, permanent or temporary) means any object, board, placard, paper, symbol, banner, streamer, letter, number, emblem, logo, color, display or light or any combination thereof which identifies or attracts attention to any property or premises or provides information.
11. Exterior sign -- The term "exterior sign" means a sign, temporary or permanent, which is (a) located outside of a building, whether apart from or attached to a building; (b) located on vacant property; or (c) painted on or attached to the outside of a window or door.
12. Interior sign -- The term "interior sign" means a sign, temporary or permanent, which is (a) located inside a building within twelve inches of or attached to the inside of the door or window glass of such building, and visible through such glass from any public right of way or from any outside area open to the public.
13. Permanent sign -- The term "permanent sign" means a sign, exterior or interior, other than a temporary sign.
14. Temporary sign -- The term "temporary sign" means a sign, exterior or interior, which provides information regarding any special event or offering of a non-permanent nature, including, but not limited to a yard sale at the same location authorized by the Board of Selectmen, an activity involving the public health, safety, or welfare, an election or referendum, or an offering for sale or lease of the real property upon which the temporary sign is located. Governmental, seasonal, or decorative flags displayed on residential premises are temporary signs.

SECTION III. Use Regulations.

B. Accessory Use in Residence AA, A, B and C Districts

3. Signs and Billboards -- This Bylaw is intended to serve the following objectives:

To preserve, promote, and advance the aesthetically pleasing environment of the community by prohibiting permanent signs in residential zones except such as are necessary for the public health or the public safety.

- (a) No person shall erect any permanent sign of any type in any residential district of the town.
- (b) Temporary signs are permitted for 45 days.
- (c) Exceptions: Notwithstanding Subsection (a) above the following will be allowed:
 1. Any permanent sign erected and existing as of the date of adoption of this Bylaw.
 2. Any sign permitted by the Board of Selectmen as necessary for public safety or the public health.

C. Business District Uses -- In a Business District no building shall be erected, altered or used and no land shall be used for any purpose injurious, noxious or offensive to a neighborhood by reason of the emission or odor, fumes, dust, smoke, vibration, or noise, or other cause, or for any purpose whatsoever except the following purposes:

3. Signs permitted in any residence district and advertising signs not illuminated (directly or indirectly) and erected or posted by the occupant of the premises to advertise goods or services offered on the premises for sale, hire or use, and meeting all of the following criteria as determined by the Building Commissioner.

- (a) **Maximum Aggregate Area:**
 The aggregate area of all exterior signs shall not exceed: (i) the number of square feet equal to the product resulting from multiplying the number of linear feet of the width of the facade by four-tenths (0.4) of a foot or (ii) forty (40) square feet, whichever is smaller.
 Nor shall the aggregate area of interior signs exceed (i) thirty (30) percent of the total area of door and window glass of the building facade, or (ii) twenty (20) square feet, whichever is smaller.
 Nor shall the aggregate area of all exterior and interior signs exceed ten (10) percent of the area of the building facade.
 The area of a building facade shall be calculated by multiplying the width of the building front by the height of the building front as measured from ground level to the underside of any eaves or parapet line. In calculating maximum permitted aggregate sign area in cases where the signs relate to a business occupying only a part of the building, the area of a facade shall be calculated by multiplying the width of the front of that part of the building occupied by the business by the height of the front of that part of the building occupied by the business.
- (b) **Height:**
 All portions of an exterior sign attached to a business building, including supporting bracket, shall be a minimum of seven (7) feet above adjoining ground level except that one exterior directory sign of less than one square foot shall be permitted between ground level and seven (7) feet.
- (c) **Number:**
 In addition to the exterior directory sign permitted under Section III.C.3 above, the number of exterior signs attached to or apart from each business premises shall be no more than one (1) except when in the judgment of the Board of Selectmen acting under paragraph 5 below an unusual circumstance is found to exist such as, but not limited to, business premises with entrances located on two rights of way. Business premises are a building or buildings or part of a building occupied by one business.
- (d) **Calculation of Sign Area:**
- (1) Each face of a multi-faced sign or of a double faced sign shall be included so long as it can be seen from a public way or area open to the public.
 - (2) For irregularly shaped signs, the area shall be that of the smallest rectangle that wholly contains the sign.
 - (3) The area of a sign shall include the board or other material, including framing (visual or otherwise) of which the sign is a part. Areas of signs which are permitted to be painted on walls, doors, and windows shall be calculated the same as irregularly shaped signs.
- (e) **Sign Location:**
- (1) Signs shall be located below the eaves or parapet line of the building on which they are mounted.
 - (2) Signs shall be mounted flush to the building facade and shall not be mounted so as to be at an angle to or extending out from the building. Pole signs or exterior signs standing apart from a building are not allowed unless approved by the Board of Selectmen under Paragraph 5 below.

5. Signs or illuminated signs erected or posted by the occupant of the premises to

advertise goods or services offered on the premises for sale, hire or use, and approved by the Board of Selectmen subject to appropriate conditions, limitations, and safeguards stated in writing by the Board of Selectmen and made a part of the sign permit. For approval of a sign not otherwise allowed in the Chapter, the Board of Selectmen shall determine that (a) the applicant has a reasonable need for the sign, (b) there is a reasonable basis for exempting the sign from the applicable standards, and (c) the exemption of the sign from such standards will not have a substantial detrimental effect on the community. The owner and lessee(if any) shall make written application for such sign permit to the Board of Selectmen.