

# Using the Commercial Signs Ordinance

## Ambridge Borough Zoning Update

This guide is designed as an illustrative aid to understand the borough's adopted sign regulations for commercial districts. It shall not be used for a legal interpretation of the regulations.

### What are the rules in my zoning district?

#### Community Business District (CBD)

#### Midtown District (MID)

#### Gateway South District (GWS)

#### All Other Commercial Areas

All three downtown subdistricts have sign regulations designed to reinforce a **pedestrian scale and orientation**. Each business is allotted a maximum total area (2 square feet per one linear foot of building frontage), which may be used flexibly to identify the business using wall, projecting and/or awning/canopy signs, subject to specific size, placement and other rules. Additionally, first-floor occupants may use window and marquee signs. Upper-floor occupants may erect only projecting and/or window signs.

A more general set of sign rules applies to every commercially zoned area of the borough outside of the downtown subdistricts. Max area combined area for wall, projecting and/or awning/canopy signs is 1.5 square feet per linear foot of building frontage.

Type	CBD	MID	GWS	ALL OTHER COMMERCIAL
<b>Permanent</b>				
Free-Standing Signs				
Monument: Max 6' height	Not permitted	Not permitted	Permitted	One (of either type) per street frontage
Pole: Max 20' height	Not permitted	Permitted	Not permitted	
Building Signs				
Wall Signs	One per street-level tenant, max. 24 square feet in area.			One per street-level tenant, max. 32 square feet in area
Projecting Signs	One per establishment, not to exceed 6 square feet in area. Projecting signs for upper-floor establishments may be up to 9 square feet in area.			One per establishment, not to exceed 8 square feet in area.
Window Signs	Max 15% of total window area of a single storefront may be used for permanent signs. Max 25% of the total window area may be covered by a combination of permanent and temporary window signs.			Max 25% may be used for permanent; max 35% of total window area for both permanent and temporary
Canopy/Awning Signs	Fit within structural constraints.			
Marquee Signs				
Off-Premises Signs (Billboard)	Not permitted			See §27-903.7 for rules
Electronic Changeable Signs	Conditional use			
<b>Portable: May be displayed indefinitely, but only during certain hours</b>				
Sandwich Board (A-Frame) Signs	One per establishment, max 7.5 square feet area and 3.5 feet height.			
3D Figures	One per establishment, max 6 feet height.			

Note: Further rules apply to each type, such as illumination, placement, special exceptions, etc.

## How do I get a permit?

A permit is required to erect, install, relocate, modify or change any sign within the commercial districts unless otherwise indicated in the ordinance. This includes changing the cabinet or face of a sign due to a change in the name, nature or ownership of a business or the replacement of supporting structures.

The borough requires the following information in order to issue a sign permit:

- A drawing prepared to scale of the proposed sign showing all sign dimensions, including the height of the sign, the grade level of base of sign or pole(s) and sign materials and colors.
- Lot plan showing proposed sign locations.
- Any building elevations showing proposed sign locations
- The sources of sign illumination and applicable details of the fixture and screening.

Borough Council determines the fees associated with sign permits.

## Which signs don't require a permit?

### **Exempt**

(See full list at §27-901.C)

- Non-commercial art and murals
- Non-commercial holiday/seasonal decor
- Non-commercial personal expression signs up to three square feet in area
- Indoor signs not attached to a window or door that are not legible from more than three feet beyond the lot line
- Non-commercial flags
- Conventional "no trespassing" and similar warning signs up to two square feet in area
- Indoor electronic ticker displays with a maximum height of 5 inches.
- Incidental and directional signs that convey instructions with respect to the use of a premises

### **Temporary Signs**

(See details at §27-903.8.)

- May be displayed for up to 30 consecutive days up to three times per calendar year
- Rules by district on size, placement, etc.
- Relate to activities on the property where they are erected, such as a yard sale, festival or special event
- Shall be labeled with the date of erection
- Only one permitted at a time

## Which signs are prohibited?

### **Prohibited in all districts**

(See full list at §27-901.D)

- Abandoned signs
- Animated, flashing or scrolling signs (with the exception of indoor ticker displays up to 5" high)
- Any sign affixed or attached to trees, poles, stakes, fences, public benches, streetlights or other objects, or places on any public property or in the public right of way, or on any private property without the permission of the property owner.
- Signs that promote illegal activity or contain obscene or pornographic subjects
- Balloon signs (see ordinance for exceptions)
- Roof signs
- Signs that emit sound, smoke, vapors, particulate matter, odor or contain open flames
- Signs that resemble, interfere with or obstruct official traffic lights, signs or signals
- Interactive signs
- Mechanical movement signs, such as revolving signs
- Reflective signs or signs containing mirrors