

^ARTICLE 11

SIGNS

(^Article inserted on December 18, 1972)

SECTION 11-1. **Signs in Residential Districts.** In any residential district there shall not be any sign except as follows:

- (a) One sign, not exceeding two square feet in total area, attached to the building or on a rod or post not more than four feet high and at least three feet in from the street line, and stating only the street number or name of the occupant or occupants of the lot, or both, except that in an H district such sign may also identify the business of a professional person, as defined by Use Item No. 39 of Section 8-7.
- (b) One bulletin or announcement board, name sign or entrance marker for each church or institution not exceeding twenty square feet in area, except that if the street frontage of such church or institution exceeds one hundred feet, one such sign for each hundred feet computed to the nearest hundred but in no event more than three such signs for each church or institution.
- (c) One "For Sale" or "For Rent" sign, not exceeding eight square feet in area, advertising the property on which such sign is located.
- (d) One building contractor's or developer's sign, not exceeding thirty-two square feet in total area, on a lot where a building is actually under construction.
- (e) One sign not exceeding twenty square feet per entrance to a tract of land divided into building lots.
- ^(f) One sign, accessory to a nonconforming use, which conforms with Section 11-2, provided, however, that the area of said sign does not exceed one-half of the area allowed in non-residential districts under said section.

(^As inserted on April 11, 1973)

- ^(g) Official public notices and notices posted by public officers in performance of their duties.

- ^(h) Government signs for the control of traffic and other regulatory purposes, street signs, danger signs; railroad crossing signs, signs indicating transit stops or entrances to transit or railroad stations; and signs of public service companies indicating danger or aids to service and safety.
- ^(i) Temporary display posters, without independent structural support, in connection with political campaigns and with noncommercial civic, health, safety and welfare campaigns, provided such posters are removed within 30 days following the conclusion of such campaign; temporary displays of a patriotic, religious, charitable or civic nature.
- ^(j) Legal display of flags, emblems and insignia of any nation or political subdivision.
- ^(k) Historical or scenic markers approved by a recognized historical or conservation agency.

(^As inserted on February 20, 1975)

SECTION 11-2. On-Premise Signs in all Other Districts. In all other districts, there shall not be any on-premise sign except as follows:

- (a) Signs allowed in residential districts.
- ^(b) A wall sign attached parallel to a building which projects no more than fifteen inches from the building surface, provided that the top of such sign is no higher than whichever of the following is lowest: (i) twenty-five feet above grade; (ii) the top of the sills of the first level of windows above the first story; or (iii) the lowest point of the roof surface, except in the case of a one-story building with a continuous horizontal parapet, the top of said parapet.

(^As amended July 9, 1973, and November 30, 1973)

- ^(c) A permanent non-illuminated sign on the inside of the glass of a window, provided that the total area of the sign does not exceed thirty percent of the total glass area of windows appurtenant to the use to which the sign is accessory, and provided that signs on ground floor

windows be included in calculating the total area of signs on a sign frontage.

(^As amended on April 11, 1973)

- ^(d) A sign attached at right angles to a building, provided that such sign has no more than two faces and (i) there is no more than one such sign for each entrance door to a business establishment; (ii) it projects no more than six feet, plus a reasonable allowance for field fastening, from the building; (iii) the sign advertises a use which occupies at least 18 feet of sign frontage; (iv) the bottom of the sign is at least ten feet from grade and its top is no higher than whichever of the following is lowest: twenty-five feet above grade; the top of the sills of the first level of windows above the first story; or the lowest point of the roof surface, except in the case of a one-story building with a continuous horizontal parapet, the top of said parapet; (v) the area of the sign shall not exceed twenty-four square feet on either side, excepting that an additional ten square feet on each face is allowed for a sign which incorporates a public service message device such as a time and temperature sign; (vi) there are no exposed guy wires or turnbuckles.

(^As amended on April 11, 1973, July 9, 1973, November 30, 1973, and June 7, 1974)

- ^(e) One free standing sign, except in a B-2, B-3-65, B-4, B-6-90a, B-6-90b, B-8, B-8-120a, B-8-120b, B-8-120c, or B-10 district, or the Harborpark District, provided that such sign has no more than two faces and (i) if there is one use, as defined by Article 8, on the lot, the area of each face does not exceed sixty-five square feet and the top of such sign is no higher than twenty-five feet above grade; or (ii) if there are two or more such uses on the lot, the area of each face does not exceed one hundred twenty-five square feet and the top of such sign does not exceed thirty feet above grade; excepting, however, that a lot with a street line or lines of two hundred or more feet may have two free standing signs, or a single sign which is two times the area otherwise permitted.

(^As amended on September 27, 1973, June 7, 1974, October 31, 1980, April 2, 1987, and April 27, 1990)

- (f) Temporary signs pertaining to special sales or events lasting more than fifteen days may be affixed to windows provided that their total area does not exceed thirty percent of the window. No permit is required for such temporary sign or signs.
- (g) Directional signs necessary for public safety and convenience which do not exceed twelve square feet per face and which bear no advertising. Such signs are not counted in computing total sign area allowed by this section.
- (h) A sign painted on or attached to the face of, but not extending above, a canopy or marquee, or a sign attached to the underside of a canopy or marquee.
- (i) A sign painted on or attached to an awning.

A sign may bear lettering to indicate the street number, the name and kind of business, service or facility conducted on the premises, the year the business was established, a slogan, hours of operation, time and temperature, and lettering which is part of a trade mark.

The registered trade mark of a specific commodity may occupy no more than twenty-five percent of the area of a sign, except that if the sale of said commodity is the major business conducted on the premises, there shall be no such restriction.

^Except in an adult entertainment district, and except as provided in Section 11-7, signs shall be lighted only by any continuous light, except that a warning sign or a sign illuminated to show time and temperature may have intermittent illumination. Signs shall remain stationary.

(^As amended on November 27, 1974 and April 25, 2007)

^No support for a sign shall extend above the cornice line of a building to which it is attached.

(^As amended on April 11, 1973)

^The total area⁽¹⁾ in square feet of all permanent signs on a sign frontage, except for signs on windows above the first floor, free standing signs, directional signs and public purpose signs listed in items (g) through (k) inclusive of Section 11-1, shall not exceed:

Average Distance of Sign From Center Line of Abutting Street	Sign Frontage ⁽¹⁾ Multiplied by
0-99	2*
100-399	4
400 and over	5

*Excepting that a use with less than twenty-five feet of sign frontage may have a maximum of fifty square feet of permanent signs.

⁽¹⁾See section 2-1 (40) and (41D).

(^As amended on April 11, 1973, July 9, 1973, and February 20, 1975)

The distance of a sign on or under a canopy, marquee or awning from the center line of an abutting street shall be construed to be the same as if such sign were attached to the building to which the said canopy, marquee or awning is attached.

If the first floor of a building is substantially above street grade and the basement is only partially below street grade, separate occupants of each level may each have one-half the square feet of signage to which a use would be entitled if it were a single ground floor use.

If a building fronts on two or more streets, the sign area of each street frontage shall be computed separately.

^The height and area of signs on a sign frontage may exceed the limits established by this section, provided that a comprehensive sign design, as defined by (41C) of Section 2-1, for said sign frontage is certified by the Urban Design Department of the Boston Redevelopment Authority to be a complementary and harmonious synthesis of signs and architectural features.

(^As inserted on April 11, 1973, and amended on June 7, 1974)

^SECTION 11-3. **Signs in Licensed Parking Lots.** In the interest of public safety and convenience, there shall not be any sign in a parking lot, Use Item 58 of Section 8-7, in any district, except: (1) one sign per parking lot entrance which shall bear thereon in fifty percent or more of its total sign area a blue rectangle with a white letter "P" in sans serif gothic type face, the letter "P" being not less than fifty percent of the area of that blue rectangle; (2) a sign bearing only that information and at that location required by the Traffic and

Parking Department in its Rules Regulating Open-Air Parking Spaces; and (3) directional signs.

The area of the sign containing the "P" shall not exceed twenty-four square feet on each face; it may have only two faces and shall not exceed a height of 25 feet above grade; it may be free standing or attached to a building.

(^As amended on April 11, 1973)

^SECTION 11-4. **Signs on Parking Garages.** In the interest of public safety and convenience, there shall not be any sign on a parking garage, Use Item 59 of Section 8-7, in any district, except: (1) at each vehicular entrance, one sign attached at right angles to the building which shall bear thereon in fifty percent or more of its total sign area a blue rectangle with a white letter "P" in sans serif gothic type face, the letter "P" being not less than fifty percent of the area of that blue rectangle; (2) at each vehicular entrance, one optional sign directly above, and the exact full width of, that entrance, and not to exceed two feet in height; (3) a sign bearing only that information and at that location as may be required by the Traffic and Parking Department; and (4) directional signs.

The area of the sign containing the "P" shall not exceed twenty-four square feet on each face; it may have only two faces and shall not exceed a height of twenty-five feet above grade.

(^As amended July 9, 1973)

^SECTION 11-5. **Alteration, Repair and Replacement of On-Premise Signs.** Except for copy changes on signs with changeable letter panels, no sign shall be reconstructed, extended, changed structurally or in content or replaced except in accordance with this Article. A sign which does not conform with this Article may be repaired provided that the cost of the repair does not exceed thirty-five percent of the replacement cost of the entire sign, except that an electric time and temperature sign which is an integral part of a nonconforming sign may be repaired or replaced with no restriction on the cost of the repair or replacement.

(^As amended July 9, 1973)

^SECTION 11-6. **Signs Subject to Other Regulations.** Billboards, signboards and other outdoor advertising subject to M.G.L Chapter 6C, 93, sections 29-33, 93D sections 1-7 and applicable Code of Massachusetts Regulations, as now in force or hereafter amended, are forbidden in the Downtown and Harborpark Districts, as well as in the L and B districts, and are conditional in the LM, M, I, MER, and W districts.

(^As amended April 11, 1973, August 30, 1988, February 1, 1989, April 27, 1990, September 30, 1993, and December 20, 2012)

^Section 11-7. **Electronic Signs.** Electronic signs shall be conditional uses in the Theater District, Lansdowne Street Entertainment District and the Seaport Convention Center District, as shown on Appendix A. Electronic signs are forbidden elsewhere in the city.

1. The Board of Appeal shall grant a conditional use permit for an Electronic Sign, subject to the provisions of Article 6, only if the electronic sign:
 - (a) has been subject to design review approval by the Authority;
 - (b) is limited to a eight (8) year time period at which time, upon timely and proper appeal, the Board may renew the permit for an additional period of eight (8) years, provided the sign was operated in compliance with the provisions of the conditional use in all material respects;
 - (c) does not project more than five (5') feet from the face of a building or the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less;
 - (d) is limited to hours of operation between 7:00 AM and 2:00 AM;
 - (e) has a luminance at night that does not exceed 500 cd/m₂; and
 - (f) the illuminated side shall not face a residential zoning district if located within one hundred and fifty feet of a residential zoning district.
2. An electronic sign may be found, by ISD, to be in violation of the terms of its conditional use permit if the Authority finds one or more of the following:
 - (a) Content is not appropriate or consistent with the terms of the permit;
 - (b) Animation and motion of images and messages is too fast and distracting and, as such compromises public safety;
 - (c) Sign has a negative impact on pedestrian or vehicular traffic flow and safety;
 - (d) Sign compromises public safety in any way.
3. The owner of an electronic sign shall be required to obtain an annual license and pay an annual fee to the Authority based on size, location and content of the electronic sign. In

addition, the owner of an electronic sign will be required to pay, on an annual basis to the Authority, a percentage of any commercial revenue derived from advertisements or announcements for off-premise events or products displayed on such electronic sign.

4. The owner of a commercial electronic sign (except for building marquees) shall be required to devote ten (10%) percent of the sign's operational time for public service messages (weather, time, temperature, etc.) on a schedule determined and approved by the Authority.
5. Design Guidelines. To ensure that electronic signs are compatible with the character design features of the buildings and neighborhood, the following design guidelines are established:
 - (a) Electronic signs should not exceed five hundred fifty (550) square feet or one-fifth ($1/5^{\text{th}}$) of the frontage of the building, unless the authority determines a larger sign is appropriate to the building and location;
 - (b) The design and content of each electronic sign should be consistent with the established theme or planning vision for the district/area;
 - (c) Electronic signs should respond to their location within the district and to the context of the surrounding district/area;
 - (d) Electronic signs that are interpretive of the district theme and location within the district are highly encouraged;
 - (e) Colors and intensity of illumination should be consistent with the theme of the district;
 - (f) Near and distant views should be taken into consideration when developing the size, location, and design of each electronic sign;
 - (g) The size, location, and design of electronic signs should highlight the specific use and architectural design of the building;

- (h) Electronic signs should be well integrated into the architecture of the building, and not block existing windows or significant architectural features;
- (i) Electronic signs located on a building should be located below the roof line, and preferably at the street level near the first floor;
- (j) Electronic signs should be appropriate to the surrounding architecture of the street;
- (k) Physical design and proportion of electronic signs as well as the design of content and messages should be innovative and not resemble a conventional static billboard;
- (l) Overall dimensions and proportions of the electronic sign should not resemble conventional billboards in shape, size, design and content;
- (m) Electronic signs that replace traditional marquee signs are encouraged;
- (n) All projecting electronic signs that extend over a street are required to have separate approval from the Public Improvements Commission;
- (o) Text on electronic signs should be kept to a minimum and bold use of graphics that reinforce the theme of the district and venue is encouraged;
- (p) The content displayed on electronic signs in terms of both images and text should be appropriate for the general public;
- (q) Abstract images and images that engage the public are encouraged rather than direct conventional product placements/promotions;
- (r) Sponsorship information may be integrated into the graphics as part of the electronic sign;
- (s) Electronic signs with third party sponsorship logo or information should be limited to thirty (30%) percent of the area of the sign or five (5) minutes within any thirty (30) minute cycle of animation;

- (t) Electronic signs that are innovative in design and message delivery are highly encouraged; and
- (u) Animation and motion of images should be slow and smooth. Images should dissolve gradually from one to another to avoid quick and frenetic changes of content that can be distracting and compromise public safety.

(^As inserted on April 25, 2007. Amended on December 20, 2012.)

^SECTION 11-8. **Signs in Urban Renewal Project Areas.** In an urban renewal project area, there shall not be any sign which does not comply with this Article and with the urban renewal plan for such project area.

(^As amended on April 25, 2007)

^SECTION 11-9. **Conditional Sign Permits.** The Board of Appeal may grant conditional use permits in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 6 allowing signs other than those permitted by this regulation where the particular use or location justifies such exceptional treatment.

(^As amended on April 25, 2007)