

# Downtown Hyannis Signage Design Guidelines

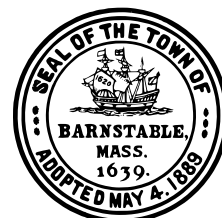
July 26, 2024

Prepared for:  
Town of Barnstable  
Planning and Development Department

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# Project Overview

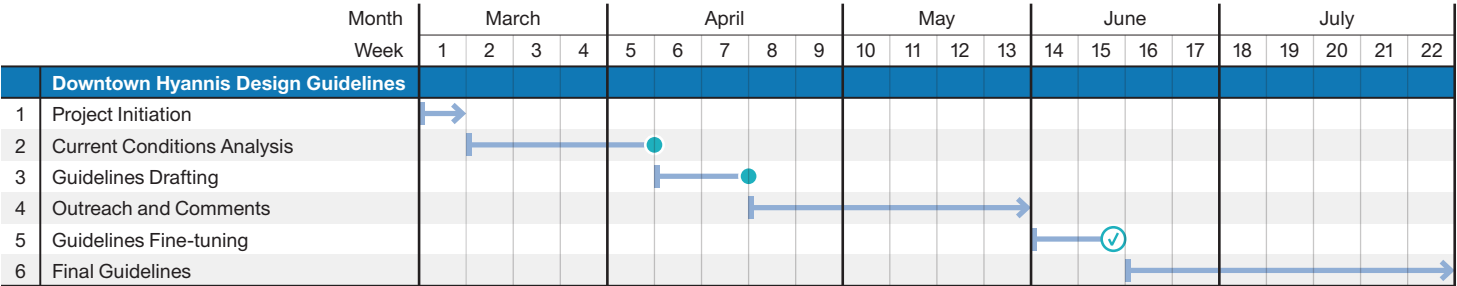
This report was compiled on behalf of the Planning & Development Department of the Town of Barnstable to outline the project strategy and outcomes for Hyannis Signage Design Guidelines project. The project is supported by funding from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance Program.

The Town of Barnstable collaborated with Utile, a planning and architecture firm based in Boston, to integrate updated signage design standards into the Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines for Downtown Hyannis. These standards were developed with the goal of ensuring future signage in Downtown Hyannis is visually consistent and suitable for the historic character of the area, enhancing the experience of residents and visitors alike. By setting clear and consistent expectations, the updated standards foster a more welcoming regulatory environment streamlining the processes for local businesses and decision makers to develop signage design concepts and approve signage proposals.

In close collaboration with the Town, the consultant team studied good and bad examples of existing signage through a virtual site visit with Town staff, discussed the methodology of other successful signage guidelines, and developed a signage taxonomy and produced illustrations for Downtown Hyannis as a way of re-organizing signage-related clauses in the Downtown Hyannis Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines.

Throughout the project the Town has served as liaison between the consultant team and a working group comprising key stakeholders, including members from the Historic Commission and the Planning Board, to garner feedback on draft deliverables. The final draft of the Sign Regulations and Guidelines was submitted by the consultant team in June 2024 and will be finetuned by the Town before being adopted.

# Project Scope and Timeline



- Interim Deliverable
- ✓ Milestone Deliverable

The project took place between March and June 2024 and progressed through six key phases:

## 1. Project Initiation

- The Town met with the consultant team to confirm the scope of work, define the study area, and establish the project schedule.
- The consultant reviewed existing information including the existing Downtown Hyannis Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines.
- The Town outlined for the consultant team feedback from the Hyannis Historic District Commission and the Planning Board on priorities and aspirations for historic preservation, signage design and character, and the form and function of the final deliverable.
- The consultant collected precedents on other signage regulations and guidelines for the Town’s review.
- The Town assembled a Working Group comprising key stakeholders, including members from the Historic Commission and the Planning Board, to garner feedback on draft deliverables.

## 2. Current Conditions Analysis

- The Town led a virtual site visit for the consultant team to visually document the existing signage conditions in Downtown Hyannis and collect good and bad examples of existing signage. The consultant produced the Current Conditions Analysis report for the Town’s and Working Group’s review and for use in presentation and the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines document.

## 3. Guidelines Drafting

- Referencing the Current Conditions Analysis report and the successful signage guidelines precedents, the consultant team generated a Signage Guidelines document template, including draft illustrations and placeholder document sections, for the Town’s and the Working Groups’ feedback.
- Based on the feedback from the Town and the Working Group, the consultant produced an updated draft, including revised illustrations and populating the placeholder document sections of the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines document using clauses in the existing Unified Design Guidelines.

## 4. Outreach and Comments

- The Town circulated the draft Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines document to various stakeholders for comments.

## 5. Guidelines Fine-tuning

- Based on the feedback collected, the consultant team produced the final deliverable, including another round of edits on the illustrations and text and incorporated previous and new contents into the Downtown Hyannis Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines.

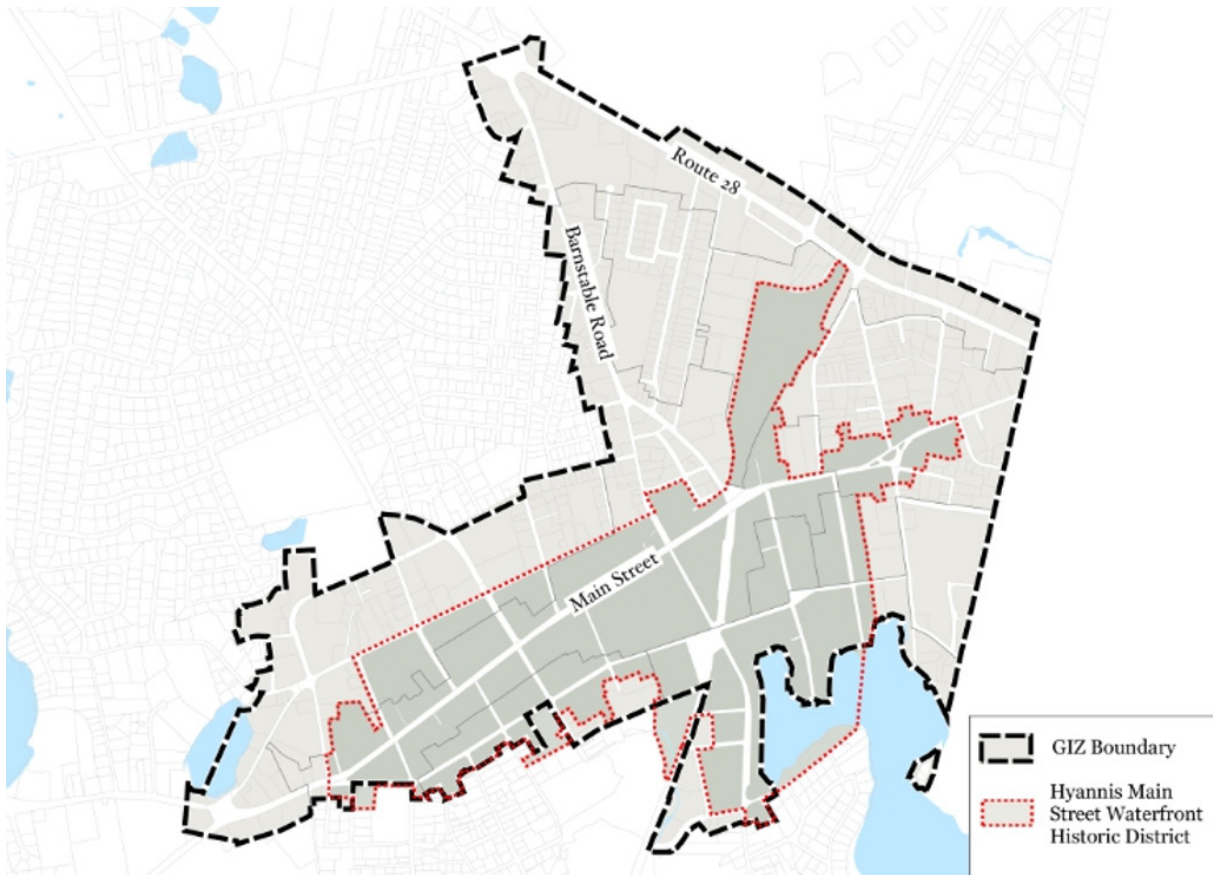
## 6. Final Guidelines

- Using the final deliverable from the consultant team, the Town will discuss final modifications needed and finalize the document for presentation to the Historic Commission and the Planning Board for approval.

# Study Area

The study area for the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines is consistent with the jurisdictional boundaries of the Downtown Hyannis Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines. The design standards for the Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines apply differently to the two areas outline in the following map, the Hyannis Main Street Waterfront Historic District and the Growth Incentive Zone (GIZ). The

Hyannis Main Street Waterfront Historic District falls under the purview of the Hyannis Main Street Waterfront Historic District Commission, whereas the Growth Incentive Zone falls under the purview of the Planning Board. The two areas combined form the unified Downtown area to which the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines would apply.



Study area map from the Downtown Hyannis Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines showing Hyannis Main Street Waterfront Historic District and Growth Incentive Zone (GIZ) .

# Current Conditions Analysis

The consultant team documented the variety of existing sign types in the study area and noted which signs were most appropriate for different neighborhoods during a virtual site tour. The findings from this site tour and lessons learned from previous signage guidelines documents informed the project methodology for the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines.

## Key Takeaways from Virtual Site Tour

The virtual site tour, led by James Kupfer, AICP, MPA, Assistant Director of Planning & Development in March 2024, started with traveling west down Main Street between Old Colony Road and Bassett Lane, where it was observed that most businesses were sited along or near the sidewalk edge. The majority of signs on Main Street were blade and flat signs designed to be read by pedestrians and motorists traveling at low to moderate speeds.

Next, the team traveled south down Ocean Street from Old Colony Road to Nantucket Street. Building entrances on this stretch of Ocean Street were set back from the road, making free-standing, monument signs the most common sign choice. The large scale and positioning perpendicular to Ocean Street allowed these free-standing signs to be read by pedestrians and motorists traveling at moderate to high speeds.

Lastly, the team traveled north along Center Street from Main Street to Barnstable Road. From there, the team traveled north on Barnstable Road until reaching Winter Street. Free-standing signs and large, flat signs were the most common sign choice along this corridor due to a combination of deep building setbacks, wide road width, high vehicle traffic, and low pedestrian volume.

Throughout the site tour, the consultant team observed signage stock of varying age, quality, and adherence to the guidelines laid out in Article VII Sign Regulations in the Town of Barnstable zoning code and the proposed Downtown Hyannis Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines (abbreviated as “UDG” from here on).

Sign compliance was then grouped into three main categories.

**1: Allowed by Article VII and the UDG and encouraged by the Town of Barnstable Planning and Development Department and Utile**

These signs advertised businesses / communicated information clearly while contributing positively to a cohesive, “Hyannis-aesthetic.”

**2: Allowed by Article VII and the UDG but discouraged by the Town of Barnstable Planning and Development Department and Utile**

These signs, while not explicitly prohibited, should be discouraged in the Downtown Hyannis Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines (abbreviated as “SDRG” from here on). These signs might negatively impact businesses by becoming easily weathered/ damaged or by blocking daylight and views to the business interiors. Subjectively, these signs might detract from the Hyannis aesthetic that the SDRG would try to achieve.

**3: Prohibited by Article VII and the UDG Prohibited by Article VII and the UDG**

These signs were explicitly prohibited by the proposed UDG. Once damaged or uninstalled, these signs would need to be replaced by a UDG-compliant sign. It should be noted in the SDRG that any existing prohibited signs predated the UDG and should not be looked to as signage precedents.

The following pages document initial findings from the tour. The intent was neither to discourage business owners with non-compliant signs nor commend those with successful signs, but to capture and sort feedback from the Town on existing signage conditions.



Google Street views of the two different neighborhoods explored during the virtual site tour: Main St (left) and Ocean Street (right)

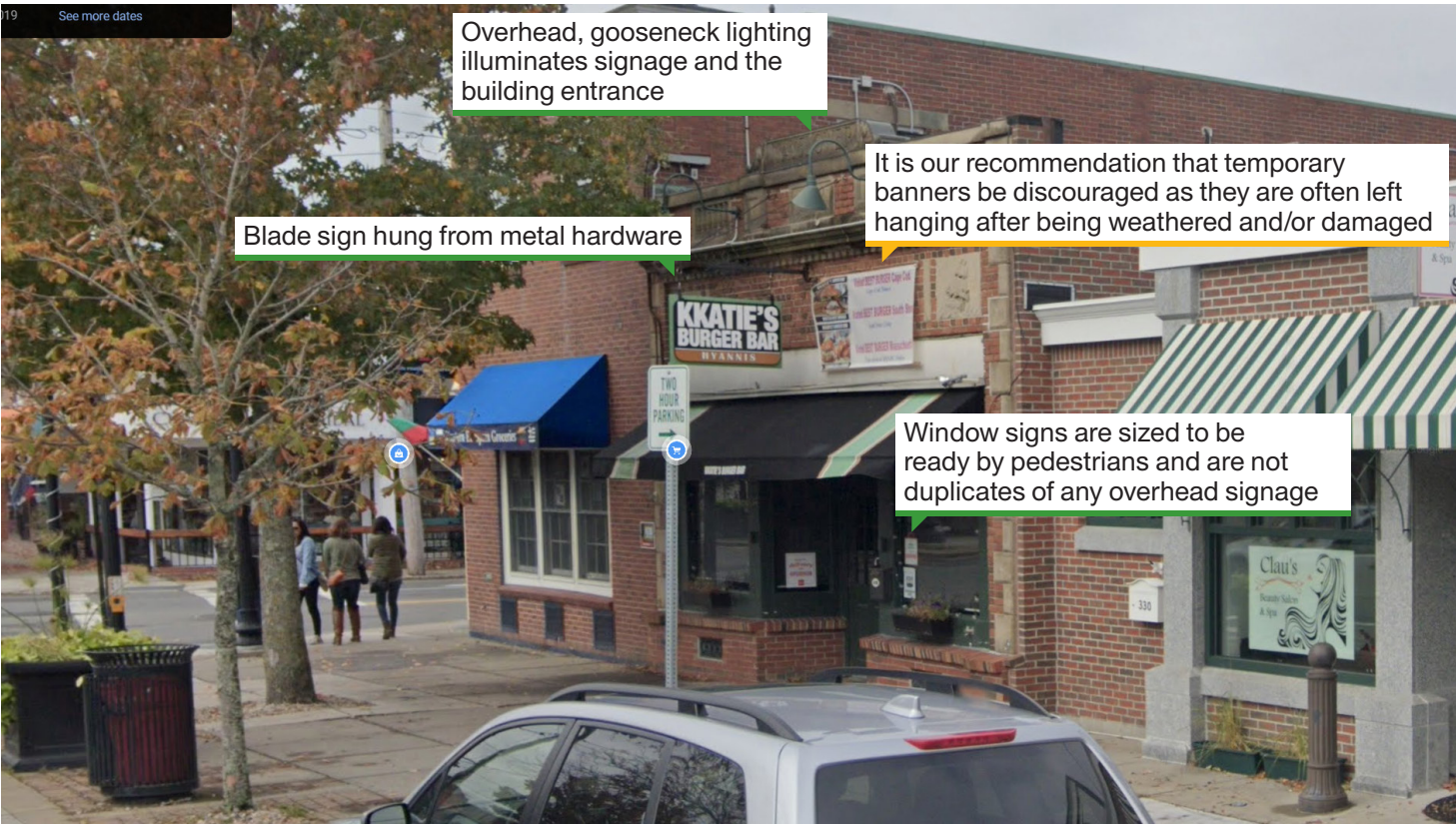


Examples of successful, compliant signage

331 Main St



336 Main St





# Examples of successful, compliant signage

131 Ocean St



179 Barnstable Rd





Examples of compliant but discouraged signage

364 – 366 Main St



505 – 511 Main St





Examples of non-compliant signage

1 Barnstable Rd



Avoid multiple signs that obscure views to the interior of a business

330 Main St



It is advised that window signs not be duplicated of overhead signage.

Blade signs mounted directly to buildings are allowed, but not encouraged. Preferably, blade signs should hang from metal hardware (see 336 Main St.).

Oversized signage blocks view to interior



# Examples of compliant and non-compliant signage

199 Barnstable Rd



Dimensional letters applied directly to a facade are encouraged\*

\*Although the sign type pictured here is successful, corrugated metal facades are discouraged. We are not suggesting that a facade needs to be metal and/or corrugated to use dimensional lettering.

130 Center St



Dimensional letters applied to a visible track are prohibited

## Taxonomy of Existing Sign Types

Based on findings from the current conditions analysis, the consultant team proposed the following list of existing sign types with which to organize the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines:

- Wall Signs
- Projecting Signs
- Freestanding Signs
- Under Canopy Signs
- Window Signs
- Awning Signs
- Open / Closed Signs
- A-Frame Signs
- Trade Flags

## Signage Checklist

A draft Signage Checklist was proposed to help developers and business owners determine if their signs are compliant with the proposed UDG. Through the Downtown Hyannis Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines, the team aimed to show that adherence to the Unified Design Guidelines will benefit businesses by making their building frontages more neat and attractive as well as benefit neighborhoods by creating a more cohesive streetscape.

Downtown Hyannis Signage Design Guidelines

Prepared for the Town of Barnstable

Downtown Hyannis Signage Design Guidelines: Sign Checklist

1: Applicant

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

2: Building Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3: Business Type:

\_\_\_\_\_

4: Sign Type

☐ Wall

☐ Awning

☐ Horizontal Blade

☐ Vertical Blade

☐ Icon

☐ Window

☐ Banner

☐ Neon

☐ A-Frame

☐ Trade Flag

☐ Other (Describe): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Prohibited:

☐ Simulated neon

☐ Cabinet/box

☐ Molded plastic A-Frame

5: Sign Material

☐ Wood

☐ PVC

☐ Other (Requires approval by Design Commission): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Prohibited:

☐ Plastic

☐ Vinyl

6: Illumination Strategy

☐ None

☐ Backlit / Halo Lit

☐ External Gooseneck

☐ Prohibited:

☐ Internally lit

☐ Flashing, blinking, scrolling, or digital

7: Sign Dimensions (in inches)

Height: \_\_\_\_\_

Width: \_\_\_\_\_

Depth: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign Checklist

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Signage Checklist

## Signage Guideline Precedents

The consultant team referenced Boston’s Downtown Crossing Signage Guidelines, also designed by Utile, as a helpful precedent to illustrate permitted and prohibited sign types attached to generic buildings. After the site tour, the consultant team proposed using a similar approach to illustrate allowed and prohibited sign types in two scenarios:

- 1: On buildings located near the sidewalk in pedestrian-heavy areas like Center Street
- 2: On buildings set back from the road like on Ocean Street and Barnstable Road whose target audience is motorists.





# Design Regulations and Guidelines

The production of the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines consisted of two key steps: (1) create illustrations of allowed and prohibited sign types in two street scenes, and (2) incorporate new illustrations into the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines section of the Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines.

## Street Level Illustrations

Street level illustrations were produced for the Signage Design Regulations and Guidelines to visualize the benefits of allowed sign types and drawbacks of prohibited sign types.

The two illustrated street scenes capture various existing characters of Downtown Hyannis, one depicting a pedestrian-centric area and the other depicting an auto-centric area. These street scenes were intentionally abstracted so that they were not exact representations of specific streets in Downtown Hyannis. Rather, they serve to emphasize the typical characteristics of the study area.

The allowed and prohibited sign types overlaid on the street scenes were determined in consultation with the Town and based on the existing clauses in the Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines.



Base illustrations for the two street scenes, a typical pedestrian-centric area (top) and a typical auto-centric area (bottom), on which allowed and prohibited sign types were overlaid.

# Typical Pedestrian-centric Area



Illustration of permitted signs in pedestrian-centric areas, including wall signs, window signs, A-frame signs, blade signs, awning signs, and neon signs.

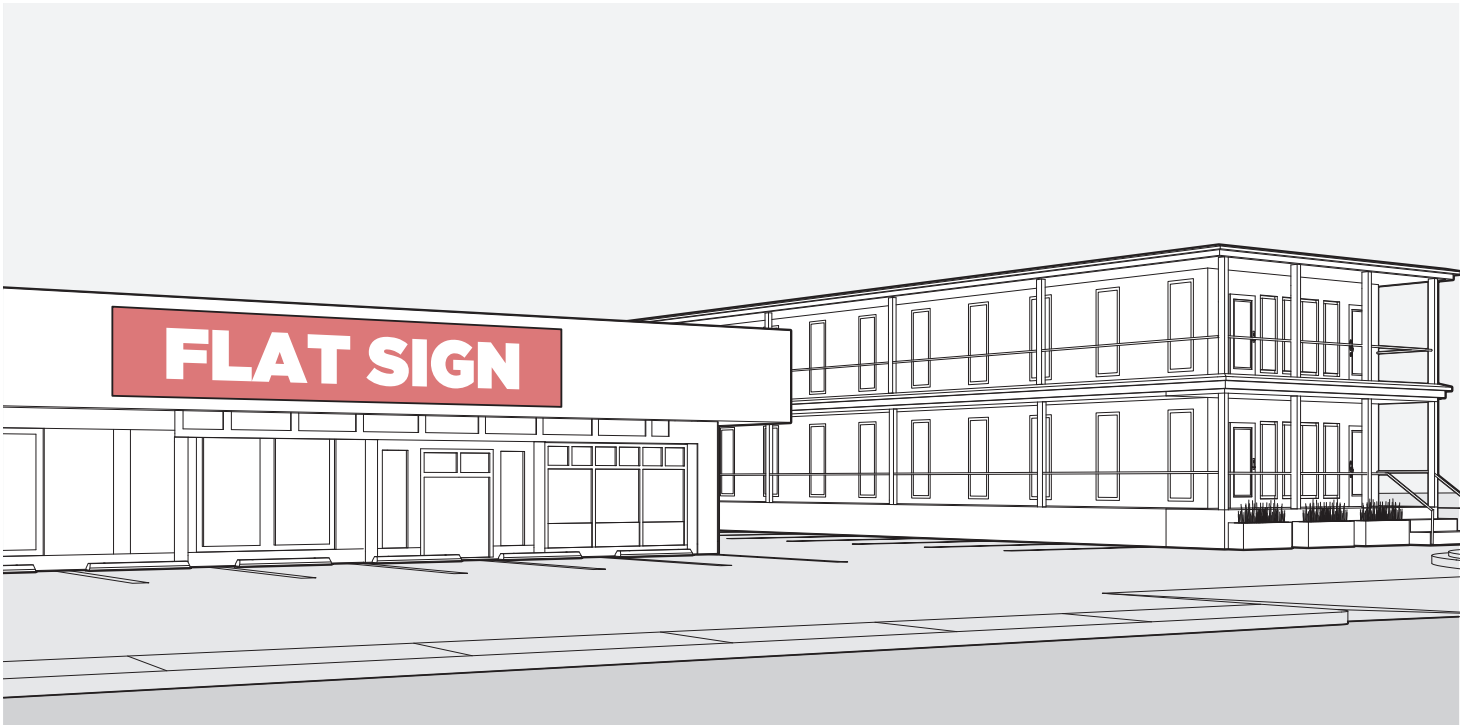


Illustration of prohibited signs in pedestrian-centric areas, including internally luminated signs, simulated neon signs, box signs, and molded plastic A-frame signs.

## Typical Auto-centric Area



Illustration of permitted signs in vehicle-centric areas, including free-standing signs and dimensional lettering directly mounted on the building.

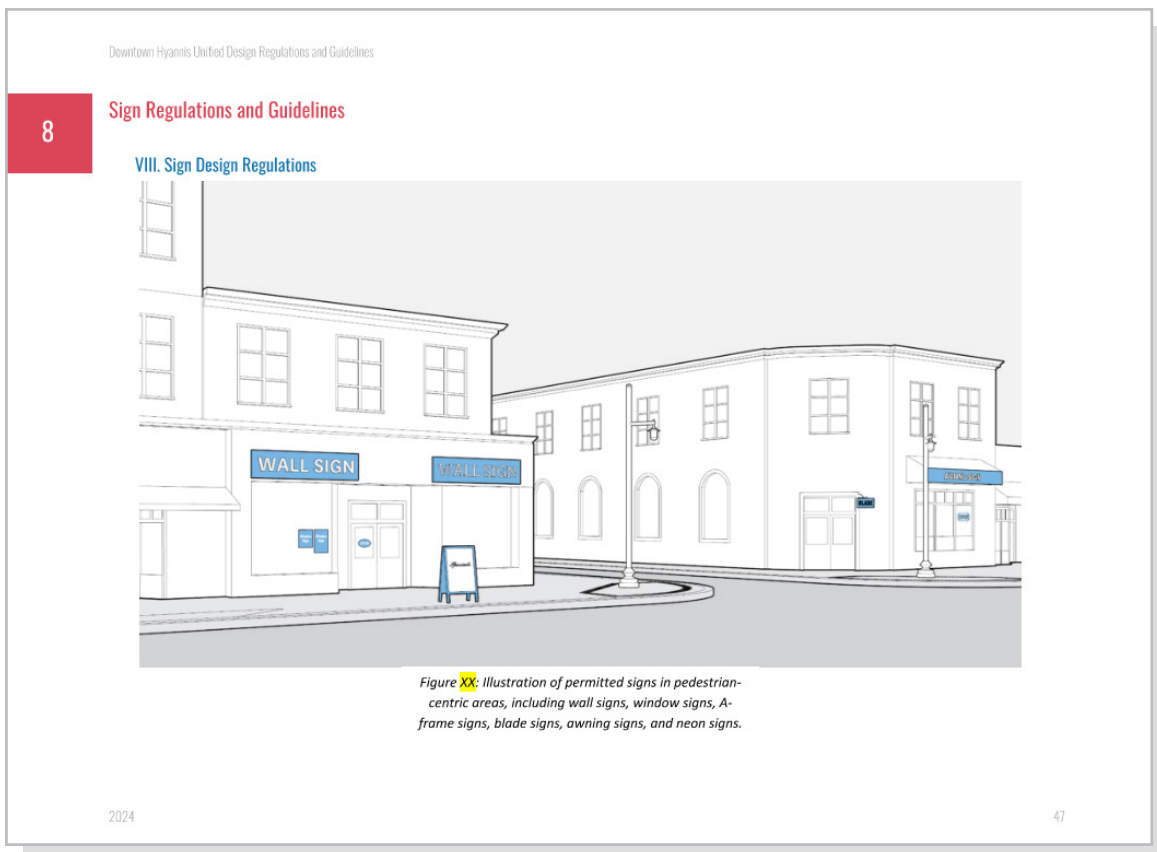


Flat banner signs are prohibited.

## Incorporating New Contents into the Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines

The new illustrations and taxonomy of sign types were incorporated into the Signage Regulations and Guidelines section of the Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines with the following considerations:

- Separating the Regulations from the Guidelines. The Regulations are requirements for all applications whereas the Guidelines are recommendations to be considered by the Planning Board for all Special Permit applications.
- Keeping all clauses and photo examples in the existing Signage Regulations and Guidelines section.
- Using street view illustrations in the Regulations section to depict allowed and prohibited sign types and using zoomed-in sign type illustrations in the Guidelines section to depict recommended configurations for each sign type.
- Reformatting and re-organizing the text in Word format to improve legibility and preserve flexibility for future edits.



Sample page from the final draft of the Sign Regulations and Guidelines, showing how overall street level illustrations were used to depict allowed and prohibited signs



## 2. Wall Signs

- Wall-mounted signs in traditional styles and colors are appropriate.
- Wall signs that showcase a business' unique character are also appropriate (Figure XX).
- Individual letters mounted directly on the building are recommended, especially where the building has a sign fascia.
- Individual letters mounted on a visible track or "raceway" are not appropriate (Figure XX).
- Individual letters mounted directly to the façade may be back-lit or halo-lit as determined by the Commission, depending on the type and color of the illumination proposed.



Figure XX: Wall-mounted signs in traditional styles and colors are appropriate.



Figure XX: Individual letters mounted directly on the building are recommended, especially where the building has a sign fascia.



Figure XX: Example of wall sign that is inappropriately mounted on a track and not recommended.



Figure XX: Example of wall sign that is appropriately mounted on the building.

## 3. Projecting Signs

- Projecting signs are encouraged in the districts. Projecting signs have been shown to be effective in drawing the attention of pedestrians.
- Mounting hardware should be attractive and an integral part of the overall design of the sign (Figure XX).

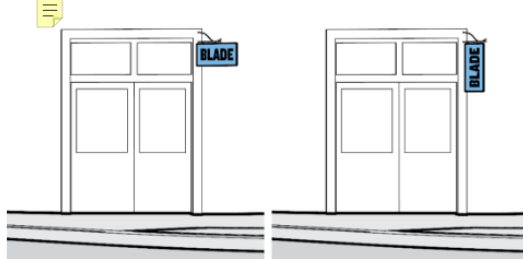


Figure XX: Projecting signs with attractive mounting hardware are encouraged.

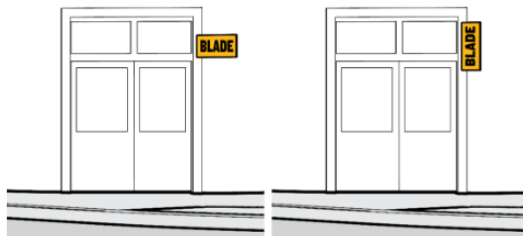


Figure XX: Projecting signs without mounting hardware are not recommended.



Figure XX: Example of a great hardware projecting sign

Source: [fit Small Business.com](http://fit Small Business.com)

Sample pages from the final draft of the Sign Regulations and Guidelines, showing how zoomed-in illustrations of sign types were used to depict recommended configurations for each sign type and how the existing Word document was reformatted to preserve existing contents while improving legibility.

# Next Steps

The final deliverable by the consultant team, a Word document with the latest draft of the Signage Regulations and Guidelines section, was shared with the Town in June 2024. The Town will discuss final modifications and finalize the document before a formal presentation on the updates to the Unified Design Regulations and Guidelines to the Historic Commission and the Planning Board for approval.

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Signage Design Guidelines

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