

Guide to Storefront Improvements

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Photo Courtesy of Milwaukee Development Center

How do you make your business visible to customers?

Most businesses answer that question with one word: signs. They know signs promote awareness of their business name, product, hours and special features that attract customers.

However, when it comes to signs, "more" isn't "better." Research shows signs that clutter windows, and obstruct a view into the store do not at-

tract shoppers. The message is lost when there is too much information for one person to process. A window display directly reflects the business, therefore if your display is disorganized, people might assume your business is that way as well.

The City of Somerville regulates the amount and type of signs that businesses may dis-

play. Businesses are subject to citations from a building inspector if they have more signs than the code allows, types of signs not allowed by the code, signs installed without permits and damaged or abandoned signs.

So what are those regulations? This guide will tell you everything you need to know about sign requirements and restrictions!



SimplePlans.com - Photos, Animals and Logos for Neighbor Cartoonville

Guide to Storefront Improvements

www.eastsomervillemainstreets.org

What kind of permanent signs may I have for my business?

Signs are permitted as long as they fall under the categories of the city's zoning requirements.

Sign attached parallel to the building:

-It may not project more than 15 ft. from the side of the building.

-Top of sign is no more than 25 ft. off ground

Sign attached at right angles to building:

-It must not have more than two faces.

-Only 1 of these types of signs are permitted per entrance

-May not project more than 6 ft. from building plus fastening hardware.

-Bottom of sign is at least 10 ft. off ground

-Area of sign cannot exceed 24 ft.

-Additional 10 ft. is allowed for public service message device such as a time and temperature sign.

Permanent sign on the inside of the glass:

-Must not be illuminated

-Must not exceed 30 percent of total glass area of windows

Free standing sign:

-May not have more than two faces

-If 1 sign on the premises:

-the area of each face may not exceed 65 sq. ft.

-top of the sign may not be higher than 25 sq. ft.

-If 2 signs on premises:

- area of each face may not exceed 125 sq. ft.

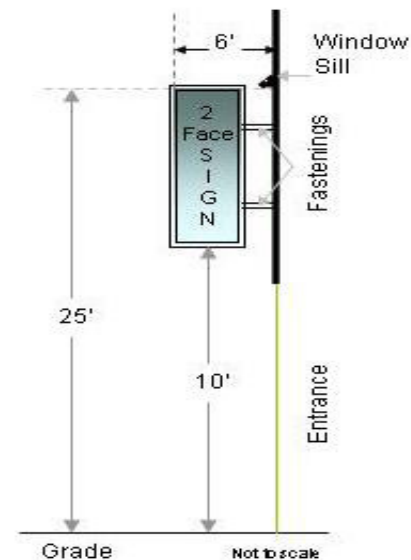


Diagram of sign attached at a right angle to building

Photo Courtesy of City of Somerville

Can my signs be lighted?

Signs may only be lighted by a continuous light, except in the case of signs that display public service messages, such as the time and temperature.



What kind of temporary signs can I have for my business?

Temporary signs advertising special sales or events are permitted within these parameters:

-Total area doesn't exceed 30 percent of window area

-Sign may not be up longer than 30 days.

-Permit is not required for temporary signs posted for less than 15 days.

How do you calculate the area of a sign?

For every sign the area includes all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs and symbols, together with the background of the sign. If the sign is painted on the building, the area includes the background color if it is different than the color of the building. If the sign is made up of individual letters, than the area is the smallest shape that encompasses all the letters and symbols of the sign.

When calculating the area of a sign it is important to keep in mind the building length, or the sign frontage. The total area in square feet of all permanent signs on a sign frontage shall not exceed from sign frontage multiplied by the appropriate factor from the table below.

Average Distance of Sign (ft)	Sign Frontage Multiplied by:
0-99	2
100-399	3
400 +	5

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What happens if I have an illegal sign?

The Building Official is in charge of enforcing sign laws. Anyone in violating on the article is subject to a fine of up to 300 dollars. Each day that a violation continues can be considered a different offense and is subject to be punishable.

Where do I apply for sign permits?

To apply for a sign permit contact the Inspectional Services Department located on the 1st floor of 1 Franey Rd. Call the office at 617-625-6600 ext. 5600 or email ISD@somervillema.gov. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am—4:00pm.

How can I improve my business storefront?

The regulations placed on signage for businesses are to create a clean, inviting and vibrant neighborhood for East Somerville residents, workers and visitors. They are also to help your business attract more customers and sell more products! It has been said the “last 3 feet of the sale” is the most important because 70% of the buying decision is at retail. This means presentation is vital! Below are tips to help you create compelling storefronts and to sell your products even after your shop has closed!



Tips for the perfect window displays

Keep the display neat, simple and cohesive.

NEAT: Window displays are the first impression to your customers and they reflect the type of business you run. If the window display is messy, it gives the impression your store in general is also messy. Make sure you are keeping the window display organized and clean!

SIMPLE: In the case of window displays, *less is better!* The display should tell a story of your products instead of being a place to showcase every item. The goal of the window display is to attract customers into your shop, so once they enter the store they can view the rest of your products.

COHESIVE: Everything in the display should be tied together in a way that is compelling to your shoppers. Sometimes it helps to create a theme and use props to make a consistent display.

Sell your merchandise even when you aren't at work!

Create a display that allows you to sell your product after hours. Allowing customers to see inside your business even when it is closed is important to your sales. Keep a small light on at night to illuminate the window display. That way when people walk or drive by they are able to see your products and come back when you are open.

Maintain your store's character in window display.

The best way to draw customers into your store is to show that your store is unique and special to the area. Create a display that is fun, exciting and reflects what your store offers to the area. *Make sure you change your display every two months to keep customers interested!*

Storefront Improvement Program

The City of Somerville offers financial assistance and design guidance to business and retail property owners through the Storefront Improvement Program (SIP). This program exists to keep the local business districts vital and to set a design standard for retail shops in Somerville.

*Eligible improvements for SIP projects include repair of masonry or wood exteriors, new signs, windows, doors, lighting, awnings, new ADA-compliant entryways and general repair of the exterior storefront visible from the public way.

*For more information and to determine your business' eligibility, please contact the Program Coordinator at the **Major's** Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development at 617-625-6600 x2546.



Resources

Somerville's Zoning Ordinances

<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=14682&stateId=21&stateName=Massachusetts>

City of Somerville's Sign and Façade Design Guidelines

http://www.somervillema.gov/CoS_Content/documents/SignAndFacadeGuidelines.pdf

Best Retail Practices Workshop, Christine Graber Presentation

Milwaukee Development Center, Guide to Storefront Signs

<http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Public/DNS/pdf/broc/SignBrochure.pdf>

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Come discover the world down the street!