

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
SIGN PERMIT APPLICATION

MUNICIPALITY BRISTOL ISSUED _____ NUMERICAL CODE _____ PERMIT NO. _____
 APPLICATION DATE _____ CENSUS TRACT _____ FEE RECEIVED: \$ _____ BY _____

APPLICANT _____ CONTACT INFORMATION _____

1. STREET LOCATION _____ 2. ZONING DISTRICT _____
 3. 4. 5. PARCEL ID _____ 6. AREA _____ 7. FIRE DISTRICT NO. _____
 8. PROPERTY USE: _____
 9. OWNER _____ TEL. NO. _____
 10. CONTRACTOR _____ TEL. NO. _____
 11. CONTRACTOR ADDRESS _____ 12. RI CONTR. REG. # _____ 13. EXPIR. _____
 14. ARCH. OR ENG. _____ ADDRESS _____ TEL. NO. _____
 15. RHODE ISLAND REG. NO. _____ 16. Stamped Prints (Circle one) Yes No

TYPE OF SIGN

Check all that apply

- This is a temporary sign
- A detailed drawing has been submitted

Area of Sign: _____ sqft

Height: _____ ft Width: _____ ft Depth: _____ ft

Material of which sign is to be constructed: _____

How sign is to be illuminated: _____

Location of Sign: _____
in relation to the building and all property lines

I/we certify the information provided on this application is correctly described. I/we agree this application, if approved, applies only to the sign and location described on this application.

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Building Official: _____ Date: _____

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

APPROVALS

FEEES

Zoning Official

Municipal Building Fee _____

CE/ADA FEE _____

TOTAL PERMIT FEE _____



TOWN OF BRISTOL

Article X - SIGNS

- **Sec. 28-371. - Purpose and intent.**

The purpose of this article is to:

- (1) Improve pedestrian and traffic safety;
- (2) Encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication and ensure that signs adequately identify uses and activities to the public;
- (3) Preserve and enhance the town's character; protect property values; and maintain and improve the visual quality of commercial areas, which promotes the economic interests of the town, by requiring new and replacement signs which:
 - a. Are well-designed;
 - b. Are compatible with the surroundings;
 - c. Express the identity of the individual business owner;
 - d. Have a style and form which relate to the place of business;
 - e. Are of a size which is in scale with the building and the streetscape as a whole; and
 - f. Are appropriately sized in context, so as to be easily readable.

- **Sec. 28-372. - Design guidelines.**

- (a) Signs are one of the most prominent visual elements of a street. Well-designed signs add interest and variety to building facades and help to attract customers. In general, the sign is the best representation of the business to the passing pedestrian or motorist.
- (b) Before starting to design a sign, take a careful look at the building. Is there an obvious space on the building where the sign would look appropriate without covering architectural details? Some of the town's historic buildings were designed with a horizontal "sign space" stretching across the top of the storefront which should be used. If this "sign space" does not exist perhaps there is adequate wall area for a wall sign with a vertical character or a projecting sign.
- (c) Take a look at neighboring buildings. Is there a predominant type of sign or a size precedent? In designing a sign, it is important to have an understanding not only of the building but also of the compatibility within the neighborhood. The basis for decisions on sign type, size and location should come from architectural concerns. The specific definitions and regulations governing the various types of signs in this article should be studied before actual design begins. For reference purposes, the department of community development has examples and illustrations of signs which also may be reviewed.
- (d) To achieve the objectives of this article, the guidelines for sign details include the following:

- (1) *Simplicity.* An effectively designed sign with bold, easily recognized symbols and clear crisp lettering will identify a business or activity efficiently and attractively, enhance the area in which it is located and complement the general appearance of the street and town.
- (2) *Color.* Restraint should be exercised when selecting colors. On most signs, no more than three colors should be used: one for background, a contrasting color for lettering, and a third for perhaps emphasis (such as for borders, motifs, or shading letter to give it a three-dimensional look). Colors should be chosen which complement each other as well as the general tone of the building.
- (3) *Message.* Messages should be simple for rapid comprehension by the public. Pictures, symbols, and logos can add individuality and character to signs, in addition to making them easier to read.
- (4) *Materials.* Sign materials shall be compatible with the surrounding area. Sign materials shall be consistent with or at least complement the original construction material and architectural style of the building facade on which they are to be displayed. For these reasons, material such as wood and metal are more appropriate than plastic. Although the historic district commission encourages creativity which respects the historic surroundings, internally-lit plastic signs are usually out of context with the period and style of historic buildings and are therefore not allowed.
- (5) *Continuity of treatment.* Signs on adjacent storefronts shall be coordinated in height and proportion.
- (6) *Lettering.* Lettering styles should complement the style and period of the building on which they appear. Traditional block and curvilinear styles which are easy to read are preferred. Generally, different type styles should not be used on the same sign to avoid a cluttered appearance.

- **Sec. 28-373. - General requirements.**

- (a) *Permitted signs.* The following signs are permitted provided that they conform to the district requirements contained herein: (For signs in existence prior to the adoption of this article, refer to [section 28-378.](#))
 - (1) Signs which identify a permitted use or an approved special use as set forth in Table A in [section 28-82](#);
 - (2) Signs which identify a lawfully maintained nonconforming use.
- (b) *Number of signs.* The general requirements for the number of signs shall be as follows:
 - (1) In residential zones, there may be one sign per use or occupancy for any nonresidential use allowed by right or by special use permit.
 - (2) In commercial districts, either one wall sign or one awning/canopy sign may be used in conjunction with either a window sign or a projecting sign for each use or occupancy. For buildings with a public entrance and parking in the rear as well as in the front, there may be an additional wall, projecting, window or awning/canopy sign placed at the rear building entrance.
 - (3) On corner lots there may be a second wall sign facing a secondary street side in addition to the one wall sign facing a main street. The main street shall be where the front entrance to the building is located or as designated by the zoning enforcement officer.
 - (4) There may be only one freestanding sign per lot, if the area in front of a building allows, in lieu of a projecting sign.
 - (5) Where two or more structures are located on the same or contiguous lots, owned and operated as a unit, or where a number of commercial or industrial uses share a common entrance (building or driveway), a directory sign may be required.

(c)

District requirements. Table 1 in this article lists the types of signs permitted in each of the zoning districts.

(d)

Measurement of sign area. The measurement of the sign area shall be as follows:

(1)

Sign measurement shall be based upon the entire area of the sign, with a single continuous perimeter enclosing the extreme limits of the actual sign surface.

(2)

For a sign painted on or applied to a building or window, the area shall be considered to include all lettering, wording or accompanying designs or symbols, together with any background of different color than the natural color, or finish material of the building.

(3)

For a sign consisting of individual letters or symbols attached to or painted on a surface, building, wall or window, the area shall be considered to be that of the smallest rectangle or other shape which encompasses all of the letters and symbols.

(4)

The area of supporting framework (for example brackets, posts, etc.) shall not be included in the area if such framework is incidental to the display.

(5)

When a sign has two or more faces, the area of all faces shall be included in determining the area, except where two faces are placed back to back and are at no point more than one foot from each other. In this case, the sign area shall be taken as the area of either face, and if the faces are unequal, the larger shall determine the area.

(e)

Measurement of height. The height of any sign shall be measured from the grade, as defined in this chapter, up to the highest point of the sign.

(f)

Illumination standards. Illumination standards shall be as follows:

(1)

Signs shall not be illuminated directly or indirectly between one hour after the closing of the business and 6:00 a.m. unless the premises is open for business during such hours.

(2)

Signs shall be illuminated only with a continuous, stationary, shielded, white light source directed solely onto the sign without causing glare or shining onto residential properties and streets.

(3)

No signs which are internally illuminated shall be located in the historic district.

(g)

Placement standards. Placement standards shall be as follows:

(1)

Signs shall not be erected or affixed to a utility pole, traffic or regulating sign, tree, shrub, rock or other natural object.

(2)

No sign shall extend more than five feet above the roof line of the main use except in the federally designated downtown historic district no sign shall extend above the roof line. Wall and projecting signs shall not extend beyond the ends of the wall to which they are attached except on corner lots where a primary and secondary street sign meet at right angles.

(3)

Signs shall not cover architectural details such as, but not limited to arches, sills, moldings, cornices and transom windows. It may be required that existing sign boards or sign bands be used for placement of signs. (See illustrative diagram in section 28-378.)

(4)

Signs shall not be placed in any manner which impede vision or obstruct access to any street, sidewalk, driveway, off-street parking or loading facility or any other required access.

(5)

Signs shall not extend over any street or public right-of-way without prior approval of the town administrator. The town administrator shall require the applicant to maintain sufficient insurance coverage

to protect both the town and the applicant from all claims for personal injuries which may arise from such sign. Banners shall not extend over any street or public right-of-way except in the authorized areas and with the approval of the town administrator.

(6)

Signs shall not be placed within the "site triangle" as stated in section 28-144.

(7)

Names and street address numbers shall be displayed so they can be viewed by passing traffic.

- **Sec. 28-374. - Prohibited signs.**

(a)

Billboards shall not be constructed, posted or erected in any zone.

(b)

Flashing signs, signs with an intermittent or flashing light source, signs containing moving parts, and signs containing reflective elements which sparkle or twinkle in the sunlight are not permitted.

(c)

Electronic message center, a variable message sign that utilizes computer-generated messages or some other electronic means of changing copy. These signs include displays using incandescent lamps, LEDs, LCDs, or a flipper matrix.

(d)

Temporary inflatable signs or inflatable objects displayed as a form of advertising.

(e)

Any sign advertising or identifying a business or organization which is either defunct or no longer located on the premises are not permitted. In such instances, the signs must be physically removed, not just covered over, within 30 days of the business or organization closing or moving. Exceptions are granted to landmark signs which may be preserved and maintained even if they no longer pertain to the present use of the premises.

(f)

With the exception of traffic, regulatory, or informational signs, signs shall not use the words "stop", "caution", or "danger"; shall not incorporate red, amber, green, or blue lights resembling traffic signals or emergency vehicles; and/or shall not resemble "stop" or "yield" signs in shape or color.

(g)

Portable signs Type (a) as defined in article X are not permitted.

(h)

Any off-premises sign is not permitted, except open house real estate signs [see subsection 28-376(a)(4)b].

(i)

Signs which are affixed to, or painted on, any parked vehicle which is not registered or not roadworthy are not permitted.

(j)

In the historic district, signs which advertise products for sale within a premises which are not part of a sign that is permanently affixed to a window or wall are not permitted.

- **Sec. 28-375. - Safety standards.**

No sign may be erected or maintained which:

(1)

Is structurally unsafe;

(2)

Constitutes a hazard to public safety and health by reason of inadequate maintenance, dilapidation or abandonment;

(3)

Obstructs free entrance or exit from a required door, window or fire escape;

(4)

Obstructs light or air or interferes with proper functioning of the building;

(5)

- Is capable of causing electric shock; or
- (6) Blocks pedestrian or vehicular rights-of-way or access.

- **Sec. 28-376. - Exemptions.**

For the purposes of this article, the term "sign" shall not include the following which are permitted in any zoning district without the necessity of obtaining a sign permit, except in the historic district. Noncompliance with the terms below shall cause such a sign to forfeit its exempt status and require the owner to follow the permit procedure set forth in this article.

- (1) Signs erected or posted and maintained for public safety and welfare or pursuant to any governmental function, law, ordinance or other regulation.
- (2) Information and directional signs containing no advertising to direct traffic flow, indicate parking spaces, identify points of interest, or provide other essential information to guide vehicular or pedestrian traffic flow.
- (3) Signs relating to trespassing and hunting, not exceeding two square feet in area.
- (4)

- a. One real estate sign, no larger than six square feet in area in residential district and no larger than 32 square feet in other zoning districts, advertising only the property on which the sign is located. A real estate sign may be maintained on any property being sold or rented but shall be removed by the owner, or agent, within 30 days of the sale, rental, or lease.

- b. Open house real estate signs when not exceeding six square feet and erected only one day out of every seven days.

- (5) A memorial sign or tablet, or a sign indicating the name of a building or the date of its erection.
- (6) Time/temperature clocks when bearing no commercial advertising and not exceeding two square feet in surface area.
- (7) Flags of all nations, states, counties, towns and cities when flown in compliance with the U.S. Flag Code and flags and bunting exhibited to commemorate national patriotic holidays.

- **Sec. 28-377. - Administration.**

- (a) *Permits.* It shall be unlawful for any person to erect, display, alter or enlarge any sign as defined in this article without first obtaining a permit from the building inspector and paying the fee required by this section. Any signs erected within the historic district shall be reviewed and approved by the historic district prior to the issuance of a permit. No permit need be applied for and no fee shall be charged for exempt signs as stated in section 28-376, except in the historic district.

- (1) Applicants for sign permits are directed to review the design guidelines which are included with this article.
- (2)

Applications shall be on forms prescribed by the building inspector and shall contain or have attached the following information:

- a. Name, address and telephone number of the applicant;
- b. Name of person performing the work;
- c.

A scale drawing of the proposed sign, giving dimensions, colors, materials, and details including the size of the letters and graphics;

d.

A scale drawing of the building or lot showing where the proposed sign is to be located on it;

e.

A scale drawing of the plans and specifications and method of construction and attachment to the building or in the ground;

f.

Any electrical permit required and issued for such sign;

g.

Written consent of the owner of the building, structure or land to which or on which the sign is to be erected;

h.

Written approval from the historic district commission for signs within the district.

(b)

Sign permit fees. Every applicant, before being granted a permit thereunder, shall pay to the town building inspector's office a permit fee according to the fee schedule in the town Code for each sign regulated by this article.

(c)

Issuance of sign permit. Permits shall be issued only if the building inspector determines the sign complies or will comply with all applicable provisions of this article. The building inspector's action or failure to act may be appealed to the zoning board of appeals under the provisions of section 28-410. If the work authorized under the sign permit has not been completed within six months after the date of issuance, the permit shall become null and void.

• **Sec. 28-378. - Nonconforming signs.**

(a)

Continuance. A nonconforming sign lawfully existing at the time of adoption or subsequent amendment of this article may continue, although such sign does not conform to the provisions of this article.

(b)

Replacement. Any sign replacing a nonconforming sign shall conform with the provisions of the article, and the nonconforming sign shall no longer be displayed.

ILLUSTRATIVE DIAGRAM—SIGN BOARD

Copy from "Dealing with Change in the Connecticut River Valley: A Design Manual for Conservation and Development."

TABLE 1—SIGNS BY TYPE AND BY ZONING DISTRICT

Wall: A sign which is painted on or permanently affixed to the wall of a building or structure and not extending more than 6 inches from the surface of the wall				
Primary—Facing the main street. Vertical format—Width smaller or equal to height	Not to exceed 4 square feet	Not to exceed 8 square feet	15 square feet; however, signs may increase 25 percent for every 100 feet of building setback from the street line	15 square feet; however, signs may increase 25 percent for every 100 feet of building setback from the street line
Horizontal format—Width greater than height	Not to exceed 6 square feet	Not to exceed 8 square feet	15 square feet; however, signs may increase 25 percent for	15 square feet; however, signs may increase 25 percent for

			every 100 feet of building setback from the street line	every 100 feet of building setback from the street line
Signboards: Not exceeding 2 feet in height with lettering not to exceed ¾ of the total sign height	Not to exceed 6 square feet	1 square foot per lineal foot of building face; not to exceed 20 square feet	1.5 square foot per lineal foot of building face; not to exceed 20 square feet	1.5 square foot per lineal foot of building face; not to exceed 20 square feet
Secondary—Facing a second street (corner lots only). Vertical format—Width smaller or equal to height	Not to exceed 2 square feet	Not to exceed 6 square feet	Not to exceed 6 square feet	Not to exceed 6 square feet
Horizontal format—width greater than height	Not to exceed 4 square feet	Not to exceed 6 square feet	Not to exceed 6 square feet	Not to exceed 6 square feet
Window: Any sign which is painted directly inside the window.	Not to exceed 4 square feet	Not to exceed 10 percent of window area	Not to exceed 15 percent of window area	Not to exceed 15 percent of window area
Projecting: Any sign supported by a building wall which projects from the wall. See also subsection 28-373(g)(5) regarding signs over public streets or rights-of-way	Not to exceed 4 square feet; minimum clearance 10 feet over sidewalks and 13 feet over driveways	Not to exceed 6 square feet; minimum clearance 10 feet over sidewalks and 13 feet over driveways	Not to exceed 15 square feet; minimum clearance 10 feet over sidewalks and 13 feet over driveways	Not to exceed 15 square feet; minimum clearance 10 feet over sidewalks and 13 feet over driveways
Awning/canopy: A sign painted on or attached to the cover of a structural frame; movably hinged, rollable, folding or rigid. The sign text shall be only on the vertical portion of the apron which is parallel to the building. See also section 28-373 regarding signs over any street or public right-of-way	Not permitted	Not to exceed 6 square feet; minimum clearance 10 feet over sidewalks and 13 feet over driveways	Not to exceed 6 square feet; minimum clearance 10 feet over sidewalks and 13 feet over driveways	Not to exceed 6 square feet; minimum clearance 10 feet over sidewalks and 13 feet over driveways
Freestanding: A self-supporting sign not attached to any building wall or fence but in a fixed location. See also section 28-373 regarding number and placement of freestanding signs	Not to exceed 6 square feet; maximum height 10 feet; minimum ground clearance 6 feet; minimum 5 feet from all lot lines	Not to exceed 6 square feet; maximum height 10 feet; minimum ground clearance 6 feet; minimum 5 feet from all lot lines	Not to exceed 15 square feet; maximum height 12 feet; minimum ground clearance 8 feet; minimum 10 feet from lot lines—50 feet from residential zones	Not to exceed 15 square feet; maximum height 12 feet; minimum ground clearance 8 feet; minimum 10 feet from lot lines—50 feet from residential zones
Directory: A projecting, wall or freestanding sign for 2 or more commercial establishments which are located on the same site or which share a common entrance (building or driveway)	Not permitted	Wall, projecting or freestanding not to exceed 6 square feet in total. Freestanding signs refer to above	Freestanding not to exceed 15 square feet for plaza name and 8 square feet for each business name: Refer to above for height, ground clearance and location	Freestanding not to exceed 15 square feet for plaza name and 8 square feet for each business name: Refer to above for height, ground clearance and location
Bulletin board: In connection with any church, museum, library, school, or similar public or semi-public structure	Not to exceed 6 square feet and not blocking any views	Not to exceed 6 square feet and not blocking any views	Not to exceed 12 square feet	Not to exceed 12 square feet
Home occupation sign:	See section 28-153	See section 28-153	Not permitted	Not permitted

Residential subdivision or land development sign: To identify each of the entrances to the development from each direction of a major roadway	Not to exceed 6 square feet in R-6 or R-8, or 15 square feet in all other R zoning districts	Not to exceed 8 square feet	Not to exceed 15 square feet	Not permitted
Temporary signs:				
Banners and portable signs— Type b, as defined in this chapter, may be erected by nonprofit and civic organizations for an upcoming event for a period not to exceed 2 weeks prior to the event. See also subsection 28-373(g)(5) regarding signs over any street or public right-of-way. Note: Portable signs—Type a, as defined in this chapter, are prohibited in all districts. (See section 28-374)	There shall be no more than 3 such signs advertising such event; and they shall not be directly or indirectly illuminated	There shall be no more than 3 such signs advertising such event; and they shall not be directly or indirectly illuminated	There shall be no more than 3 such signs advertising such event; and they shall not be directly or indirectly illuminated	There shall be no more than 3 such signs advertising such event; and they shall not be directly or indirectly illuminated
Banners and portable signs— Type b, as defined in this chapter erected by commercial businesses. See also subsection 28-373(g)(5) regarding signs over any street or public right-of-way. Note: Portable signs—Type a, as defined in this chapter, are prohibited in all districts. (See section 28-374)	Not permitted	There shall be no more than 1 such sign, located on the subject property, advertising such event. The sign may be displayed up to 4 times per year for a period not to exceed 1 week per time	There shall be no more than 1 such sign, located on the subject property, advertising such event. The sign may be displayed up to 4 times per year for a period not to exceed 1 week per time	There shall be no more than 1 such sign, located on the subject property, advertising such event. The sign may be displayed up to 4 times per year for a period not to exceed 1 week per time.
On-site construction sign as defined in this chapter may be maintained on the building or property for the interim of construction, but shall not be maintained for more than 30 days following the completion of such construction	There shall be no more than 1 such sign per contractor. Signs shall not exceed 9 square feet and shall be set back at least ½ the building setback	There shall be no more than 1 such sign per contractor. Signs shall not exceed 9 square feet and shall be set back at least 10 feet from the street; or, affixed to the building	There shall be no more than 1 such sign per contractor. Signs shall not exceed 12 square feet and shall be set back at least ½ the building setback	There shall be no more than 1 such sign per contractor. Signs shall not exceed 12 square feet and shall be set back at least ½ the building setback
Type of Sign	Residential*	Downtown, Waterfront, and Limited Business*	General Business*	Manufacturing*

* All signs in the historic district must also be reviewed and approved by the historic district commission for design and scale in relation to the building. Creativity is encouraged.