

DORCHESTER AVENUE PROJECT INITIATIVE

SIGNAGE REGULATIONS CURRENT PERMITTING PROCESS

DORCHESTER AVENUE PROJECT



CITY OF BOSTON
Thomas M. Menino
MAYOR



**Boston
Redevelopment
Authority**
Mark Maloney, Director

*NOTE: This brochure is meant to be illustrative, it is not a comprehensive representation of the regulations for Dorchester Avenue

EXAMPLES OF PERMANENT SIGNS

- ATTACHED FLAT SIGNS • SIGN PAINTED DIRECTLY ON A BUILDING
- BANNER • CANOPY • AWNING • BLADE SIGN
- INTERIOR WINDOW SIGN • TRADE FLAG

EXAMPLES OF TEMPORARY SIGNS

- INTERIOR WINDOW SIGN • SANDWICH BOARD • TRADE FLAG • BANNER

**Temporary signs also require a permit*

If the temporary sign projects 12 inches or more above a public right-of-way, the sign must be approved by the city's Public Works Department. Applications for approval are available at the Public Works Department, Boston City Hall, Room 714, Boston, MA 02201.

DEFINITIONS

1. SIGN FRONTAGE

(see figs. 7 and 8 in *The Boston Sign Code*)

- The length in feet of the ground floor level of a building front or side facing a street (or facing a right-of-way that is accessible from a street) that is occupied by an individual business

2. AREA OF A SIGN

a) FREE STANDING OR ATTACHED SIGN
(see figs. 1 and 3 in *The Boston Sign Code*)

- The area includes:
 - all the lettering, symbols and background
 - the space between sections of a paneled sign
 - decorative structure
- The area does not include:
 - supports or braces

b) SIGNS PAINTED DIRECTLY ON OR APPLIED TO A BUILDING
(see figs. 4 and 5 in *The Boston Sign Code*)

- The area includes:
 - all the lettering and symbols
 - any background that is a different color than the natural color of a building

c) INDIVIDUAL LETTERS OR FIGURES ATTACHED OR PAINTED ON A BUILDING, CANOPY, AWNING, WALL OR WINDOW
(see fig. 6 in *The Boston Sign Code*)

- The area is:
 - the smallest rectangle or other geometric shape that includes all of the letters and symbols

****On a two-sided sign, only one face is counted in calculating the sign's area****

3. TOTAL SIGN AREA

- May not exceed the Sign Frontage multiplied by 2

TYPES OF SIGNS

1. WALL SIGN ATTACHED PARALLEL TO A BUILDING

(see fig. 11 in *The Boston Sign Code*)

- Can project no more than 15 inches from the building surface
- Cannot exceed 30 inches from top to bottom
- Bottom of sign shall be at least 8 feet above ground level
- No part of sign shall be less than 2 feet from either edge of the building wall
- Total sign area cannot exceed whichever of the following is the lowest:
 - a) In square feet, Sign Frontage multiplied by 2
 - b) 45 square feet
- Cannot extend higher than whichever of the following is the lowest:
 - a) 25 feet above grade
 - b) The top of the sills of the first level of window above the first story
 - c) The lowest point of the roof, except if the building is one-story and has a continuous horizontal parapet (continuation of the exterior wall of a building that extends above the roof line) above the roof, in which case a sign may be as high as the top of the parapet
- Cannot be attached to roofs, chimneys, smokestacks, elevator towers or penthouses

2. SIGN ATTACHED AT RIGHT ANGLES TO A BUILDING

(see fig. 11 in *The Boston Sign Code*)

- Can have a maximum of two faces
- Can project a maximum of six feet from the building, plus fasteners
- Each entrance to a business is allowed one right-angle sign
- The business that has the sign must occupy at least 18 feet of sign frontage
- The bottom of the sign must be at least 10 feet above ground level
- The top of the sign may not extend higher than whichever of the following is the lowest:
 - a) 25 feet above grade
 - b) The top of the sills of the first level of windows above the first story
 - c) The lowest point of the roof except horizontal parapet
- The area of each sign cannot exceed 4 square feet on either side, except that an additional 4 square feet is allowed for incorporating a public service message device that operates no less than 75% of every hour.

****Any sign, parallel or right-angle, that will project 12 inches or more above a public right-of-way must also be approved by the city's Public Works Department. Applications for approval are available at the Public Works Department, Boston City Hall, Room 714, Boston, MA 02201, and online at www.cityofboston.gov/publicworks****

3. FREE STANDING SIGNS

- Free standing signs shall be allowed only for:
 - a) Uses located in a Community Commercial Subdistrict
 - b) Gasoline Stations
 - One free standing sign on a lot
 - Sign area of no more than 15 square feet
 - Bottom of sign No higher than 10 feet above ground level, but no lower than 8 feet above ground level
 - Top of sign cannot exceed 18 feet above ground level

4. PERMANENT SIGNS ON THE GLASS INSIDE OF A WINDOW

- May not exceed more than 30% of the total glass area of the windows on the front of the building occupied by the business, that displays the sign, except:
 - a) Retail, Restaurant, Service, and Trade uses may not exceed 40% of the total glass area
 - b) Office and Entertainment uses may not exceed 50% of the total glass area
 - c) Industrial and Vehicular uses may not exceed 50% of the total glass area
- Must be included in calculating the total sign area allowed for a business

5. TEMPORARY WINDOW SIGNS

- Are permitted only if they advertise special sales lasting no more than 15 days
- May cover no more than 30% of the area of the window in which they appear

No building permit is required for a temporary window sign

6. DIRECTIONAL SIGNS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND CONVENIENCE

- May not exceed 12 square feet in area
- Cannot contain advertising
- Not counted towards businesses' total sign area

7. BILLBOARDS

- Billboards are forbidden, except those grandfathered under the law

8. DISPLAY OF PERMIT NUMBER AND POSTING DATE

- Each permanent sign, including any sign painted on or affixed to an awning, a canopy, or a marquee, shall display the sign's building permit number clearly
- Temporary signs shall display the date of posting

GENERAL REGULATIONS THAT APPLY TO ALL SIGNS

1. SIGN MESSAGE

- May include only the following:
 - street number
 - name and kind of business
 - service or facility conducted on the premises
 - year the business was established
 - slogan
 - hours of operation
 - time and temperature
 - lettering that is part of a trademark

2. TRADEMARKS

(see fig. 15 in *The Boston Sign Code*)

- Registered trademark of a product may occupy no more than 25% of the area of a sign face
- If the sale of a specific product is the major business conducted on the premises, there is no restriction on the size of the trademark

3. MOTION/LIGHTING

- Signs must be stationary
- Signs must have continuous illumination, except in an adult entertainment district

4. SUPPORTS

(see fig. 16 in *The Boston Sign Code*)

- No support for a sign may extend above the cornice line of the building to which it is attached

HOW TO OBTAIN YOUR SIGN PERMIT

- ALL SIGNS REQUIRE A PERMIT

- Signage rules and regulations not governed by ARTICLE 52, Section 24, and ARTICLE 11 of the Boston Zoning Code ("Signage Code"). If regulations in these two articles conflict, Article 52's regulations govern.

STEP 1

Apply for a permit by filling out an application at the city's Inspectional Services Department, 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA, for a sign permit.

STEP 2

Your application will be reviewed for compliance. If the sign meets all the zoning regulations, you may pick up the permit for the installation of the sign.

If the application is rejected for not complying with the sign code, you have two options:

OPTION A

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY COMPREHENSIVE SIGN DESIGN REVIEW

- Contact Michael Cannizzo, Senior Architect, Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), 9th floor, Boston City Hall, 617.918.4386, to schedule a design review meeting with a member of the BRA's Urban Design staff.
- Once the BRA's Urban Design staff person has reviewed the design, the staff person will either approve or suggest changes to be incorporated before a BRA comprehensive sign approval is granted.
- The applicant needs to take his/her BRA approved sign drawings to the Inspectional Services Department.
- The Inspectional Services Department will then decide whether additional information is needed before issuing a sign permit.

OPTION B

ZONING BOARD OF APPEAL AND

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY COMPREHENSIVE SIGN DESIGN REVIEW

- Apply for an appeal by obtaining an appeal form at the city's Inspectional Services Department, 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, 5th floor.
- Once you fill out the appropriate paper work, you will receive a letter in the mail with a date for your Zoning Board of Appeal hearing, which are held in Room 801, 8th floor of Boston City Hall.
- At the Zoning Board of Appeal hearing, your appeal for your sign will either be approved, denied or deferred to a later hearing.
- If your appeal is approved, you will then work with a member of the BRA's Urban Design staff who will review the design of the sign.
- Contact Michael Cannizzo, Senior Architect, BRA, 9th floor, Boston City Hall, 617.918.4386, to schedule a design review meeting with a member of the BRA's Urban Design staff.
- Once the BRA's Urban Design staff person has reviewed the design, the staff person will either approve or suggest changes to be incorporated before a BRA comprehensive sign approval is granted.
- The applicant needs to take his/her BRA approved sign drawings to the Inspectional Services Department.
- The Inspectional Services Department will then decide whether additional information is needed before issuing a sign permit.

Any sign, parallel or right-angle, that will project 12 inches or more above a public right-of-way must also be approved by the city's Public Works Department.

MAIN SIGNAGE REGULATION CONTACTS

Inspectional Services Department (ISD)

1010 Massachusetts Avenue, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02118
617.635.5300 • www.cityofboston.gov/isd

Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)

Boston City Hall, 9th Floor
One City Hall Square,
Boston, MA 02201
617.722.4300 • Urban Design Department Contact: Michael Cannizzo, 617.918.4386
www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org

FOR BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

Boston Business Assistance Center (BBAC)

2201 Washington Street
Roxbury, MA 02119
Main Telephone Number: 617.989.9100
www.cityofboston.gov/dnd/OBD/1_BBAC.asp

Boston Local Development Corporation (BLDC)

Boston City Hall
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
Main Telephone Number: 617.722.4300
BLDC Contact: William Nickerson, 617.541.2692
www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org

FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services

One City Hall Square, Room 708
Boston, MA 02201
617.635.3485 • www.cityofboston.gov/neighborhoods/ons.asp

FOR ALL OTHER PUBLIC WAY ISSUES

Basic City Services (BCS)

One City Hall Square, Room 811
Boston, MA 02201
617.635.4100
www.cityofboston.gov/basiccityservices/

Public Works Department (PWD)

Boston City Hall
One City Hall Square, Room 714
Boston, MA 02201
617.635.4900 • Anne McNeil, 617.635.4911
www.cityofboston.gov/publicworks

