



# Sign Tool Kit for Local Area Businesses

Village of Arlington Heights

Prepared by the Planning & Community Development Department

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## Check out the Sign Tool Kit on YOU TUBE:

Go to [www.discoverarlington.com](http://www.discoverarlington.com), under Business Promos tab you will find the link for the You Tube presentation on the Sign Tool Kit.

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# 1 introduction & advice on signs

## introduction:

The Village would like to assist local area businesses in understanding the current sign regulations. In an on-going effort to better partner with local businesses, the Village is outlining basic code areas to inform local businesses so that signage requests can be processed in a more efficient and positive manner. A letter was also sent to local areas sign companies to inform them of Sign Code regulations.

This toolkit outlines the most frequently requested signage and a brief explanation of the most common types of signs allowed for a business. *For specific regulations regarding types and size of signage allowed within certain zoning districts please refer to Chapter 30 of the Municipal Code.* This toolkit does not replace the Sign Code, it offers a brief overview of the varying types of signs a business may have.

Signage should be used in a positive manner to attract potential clients. Good signage if done in a pleasing way can promote a business. There are many good examples throughout this tool kit that emphasize signage that is tasteful, conveys a message and meets code.

*As a reminder, please do not approve fabrication of a sign for your business until a permit is reviewed and approved.* Once a permit is issued the sign may be fabricated. This will help avoid potential costs and delays to a business owner and sign companies for a sign that may not meet Village code.

The Sign Code, Chapter 30, is available on line in a PDF format on the Village website at [www.vah.com](http://www.vah.com) under the Village Code tab at the top of the homepage. A copy may also be purchased at the Finance counter at Village Hall.

If after reviewing the Sign Code on line, questions still remain then the Department of Planning and Community Development is available to assist in any questions regarding the sign code and its application. The number to call is 847-368-5200.

## advice on signs:

The Village of Arlington Heights offers many options to local businesses to promote and advertise their establishments. Signage should be used as a positive tool to help identify a business, create an image, and also to brand an identity. The Sign Code provides a level playing field with established sign sizes for similar businesses.

The current sign code has numerous options through which a business may employ signage as a marketing tool. For example, a tenant in a multi-tenant strip mall may use several techniques to draw attention through signage, such as a wall sign, awning sign, window sign, and if permitted a panel on a ground sign for the center. Signage should be thought of as a part of a package to compliment the overall image of the business.

Good signs should regard the placement, alignment, and overall image. Good signage will focus on the theme of the business and accentuate the positive features of the architecture. For example a window sign that covers the entire window area in multiple posters in various sizes and colors may not appear attractive to potential customers.

The Sign Tool Kit is divided into two sections, the first section applies to the regulations in the downtown, and the second section focuses on signs Village wide. The Village is always ready to assist a new and or a potential business with questions regarding the Sign Code and the process to obtain a permit.

### HELPFUL NUMBERS:

Questions regarding the Sign Code:

847-368-5200 : The Planning & Community Development Department

Questions regarding the permit, status of a permit & inspection,  
Sign Code enforcement :

847-368-5560 : The Building Department

## 2 downtown : article II chapter 30 municipal code

### signs in the downtown:

In the downtown signage should relate to the overall context and or the architecture. Signage is encouraged that is of high quality, creative utilization of graphics, and is compatible with the downtown. The major consideration in selecting sign materials is compatibility with the building's overall architecture and adjacent streetscape. It is encouraged to develop a sign package that is attractive, visually pleasing and highlights positive aspects of the retail establishment, business and or restaurant.

### project highlight:

A business in the downtown may incorporate an array of options to develop an attractive sign package. The business highlighted below has used several simple yet powerful techniques to improve the storefront.



pedestrian friendly blade sign



branding through wall sign  
colorful awnings

other design elements:  
gooseneck lighting  
ornamental entrance

### ground signs:

Ground signs are allowed when a development parcel is 25,000 sf or greater, and there is a 20 foot setback area for the ground sign placement.

Regulations: 6 foot height  
30 square feet

Landscaping: Two feet out from the sign face or proportional amounts.



Well designed ground signs will compliment the building and have ample amounts of landscaping. Landscaping around the base of the sign is encouraged to have year round color to be comprised of evergreens, drought tolerant perennials and annuals.

### parcels on Northwest Highway or Arlington Heights Road:



For parcels located on Northwest Highway or Arlington Heights Road, a ground sign shall be no taller than 10 feet in height and no greater than 35 square feet.

It is encouraged that the sign match the detailing and the architecture of the development.

## 2 downtown : article II chapter 30 municipal code

### facade signs:

There are 4 types of signs from which a business may choose for the facade. Of these 4 types, 2 may be selected for the facade, subject to the maximum square footage permitted.

- a. wall signs
- b. blade signs
- c. plaque signs
- d. awning signs

#### a. wall signs

**Number:** One is permitted per street frontage.

**Square Footage:** A ratio of one square foot of sign area for each linear foot of storefront shall determine the maximum signable area. The size of the wall sign shall be in proportion to the storefront and the building facade.

**Location:** Wall signs fit best on the sign frieze. The wall sign shall be designed to be an integral part of the building on which it is mounted. It shall be harmonious with adjacent signs and structures. A sign shall not cover or interfere with architectural details or windows.



Wall sign relates to architectural details, and compliments the streetscape.



Wall sign above is creative and compliments facade.

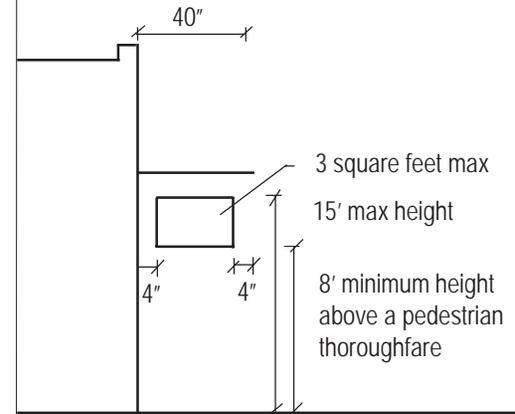
#### b. blade signs

A blade sign is mounted so that it is perpendicular to the face of the building and projects out.

**Number:** One is permitted per street frontage.

**Message:** Only name and or logo is permitted.

**Regulations:** See diagram below



Good example of a blade sign

#### c. plaque signs

A plaque sign may be mounted flush to a wall or near the base of a building.

**Number:** 2 allowed per street frontage.

**Location:** At the base of a building or architecturally significant area.

**Square Footage:** Maximum of one and one-half square feet per sign.



Plaque sign example.

#### d. awning signs

Awnings should be compatible with the architecture of the building.

**Signage:** Shall not exceed 20% of the awning surface.

**Message:** Name, address and or logo  
**Logo:** Restricted to 25% of the permitted signable area.



Awning as a positive feature.

## 2 downtown : article II chapter 30 municipal code

### corner projecting blade signs in the downtown:

In the downtown an additional type of wall signage is allowed, a 45 degree corner projecting blade sign. To qualify for this type of a sign, the building that the sign is to be mounted on shall define the corner and have frontages on two public rights-of-way. Each corner is permitted one sign in exchange for all other types of wall signs. The design of the sign must be reviewed by the Design Commission.

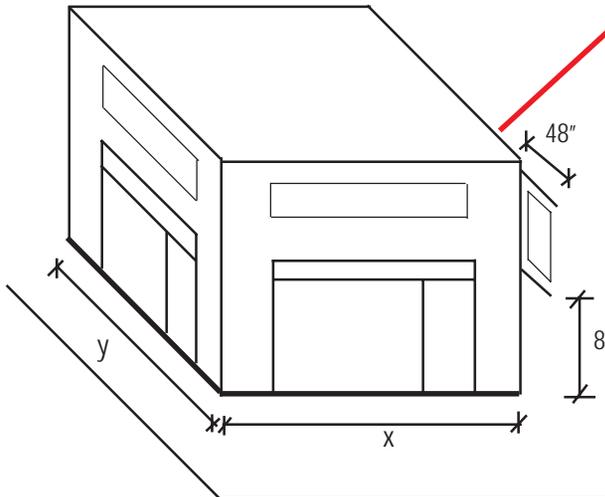


#### Design:

Design, alignments and amount of proportion must be compatible with the architecture of the building. The sign shall be of a high quality, durable material and construction.

#### Regulations:

Single identity tenant only, located on a corner. Entrance at or adjacent to a corner. Petitioner shall forego all other wall signs. Each corner is permitted one. Only name or logo is permitted.



Sign shall not be higher than top of second story ceiling line or the roof top.

48 inch maximum projection to outside face.

For corner projecting blade signs the square footage allowed would be 50% of the linear feet of the storefront, for example:  $\frac{x + y}{2}$

Maintain an 8 foot clearance from pedestrian thoroughfare.

### menu boards for restaurants:

Restaurants may also utilize a menu board mounted on a wall near the main entrance. Each restaurant is permitted one menu board for the purpose of listing items available for consumption.

**Regulations:** 6 square feet maximum.  
May be internally illuminated.  
May not be free standing.



A menu board displays the food items and specials that are being served.

A menu board is a way to promote and attract new clients to your establishment.



An example of a menu board mounted near the entrance of a restaurant.

## 2 downtown : additional marketing & branding approaches

### window display:

An additional strategy employed for marketing is the use of window displays. A thoughtfully put together window display can seasonally rotate new products. A window display can add additional appeal and strengthen the branding approach.

Window displays are a bonus since they do not require a permit and are not considered signage.

### project highlight:

Another way to promote retail is through attractive window display. This is a way to use existing window elements to display products. A creative and organized window display appeals at the pedestrian level.



branding through logo on awning  
elegantly designed awnings



branding through window display  
organized product display

### window signs in the downtown:

Window signs are a bonus to the types of wall signs allowed for a business in the downtown. A business can format a window sign and graphics to reflect its image. A window sign can be used in addition to other types of signs and does not require a permit.



#### Regulations:

Permanent Window Signs:  
maximum 20% of the glass area.

Temporary Window Signs:  
maximum 20% of the glass area.

Total: Cannot exceed a maximum of 40%.

A window sign can be used to strengthen the image and identity of a business



Tastefully done window signs are a boost to existing types of signs allowed in the downtown. Good graphics use the logo, colors, & typeface to brand the image of a business and create an inviting atmosphere.

# 3 ground signs : article III chapter 30 municipal code

## ground sign:

A ground sign is a free standing sign, except temporary signs, that is placed in the ground or supported by uprights or braces. It is not attached to a building, fence or other permanent structure.

A monument sign is a ground sign which may be displayed on a decorative wall or structure. A height of 6 feet is the maximum permitted.

**Number:** One ground sign shall be installed per frontage of a building or buildings which share a common wall. An additional ground sign may be permitted, provided there is a minimum of 800 feet of separation between ground signs as measured along the right-of-way line.

**Dimension:** A height of 16 feet 6 inches is the maximum permitted.

**Setbacks:** B-1 thru B-5 district: 3 feet  
All other districts: 15 feet  
Monument signs are exempt if a 6 foot height is met and visibility is not obscured.

**Landscaping:** The area around a ground sign must be landscaped two feet out from the base of the sign.

**Square Footage:** Use Table A below for all zoning districts :

width of public ROW	35 mph or less	over 35 mph
up to 66 feet	40 sf total sign area per face	60 sf total sign area per face
over 66 feet	66 sf total sign area per face	80 sf total sign area per face

**Visibility:** A sign placed within 12 feet of an intersection must provide for proper visibility.



A monument sign that is well designed.

A monument sign with a base that fits the surrounding context is encouraged. Landscaping is seasonally changed.



The above ground signs are well landscaped & maintained. Esplanade sign is a multi-tenant sign that fits with the contemporary style of architecture.

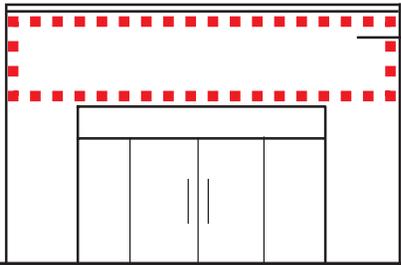


Positive example of a manual change bulletin board sign.

When incorporating a manual change bulletin board into a ground sign, the text should preferably be balanced, either centered or right or left justified, Consider one consistent font color and type.

# 3 wall signs : article IV chapter 30 municipal code

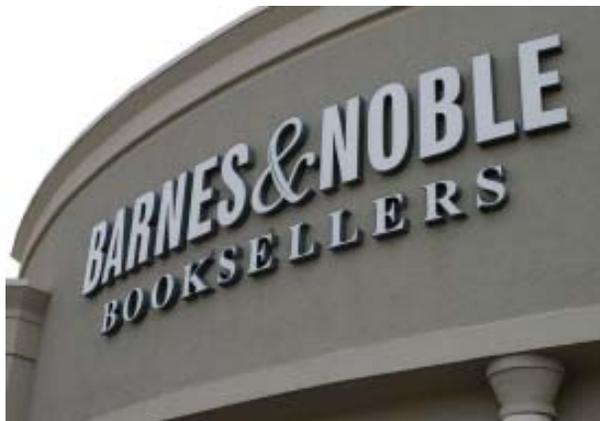
A wall sign is placed flat against, or no more than 12 inches from an exterior wall of a building. Typically it is above the storefront.



SIGNABLE AREA is a continuous space designated for signage. The architecture of the building is the guiding principal when determining signable area.

**Number:** Each business establishment is permitted one wall sign per street frontage it faces.  
An additional smaller wall sign is permitted on an additional wall facing a privately owned parking lot, no larger than 25% of the signable area or 60 square feet, whichever is less.

**Dimensions:** A wall sign may be 25% of the signable area or 150 square feet, whichever is less.  
If a building is setback from the property line more than 150 feet, the wall sign is permitted to be one square foot larger for each foot of setback beyond the 150 feet, but in no instance can the sign exceed 25% of the signable area.



Examples of well proportioned wall signs that relate to the facade and market an identity program.

## project highlight:

The business featured below uses several successful signage techniques to brand its identity and draw in customers.



The type face selected is unique & fun. The type face recalls an old world aesthetic with each letter looking as if it was hand cut. The logo appears hand drawn and sits symmetrically on top to emphasize the type.



Awnings selected are a bold stripe pattern that call attention to the corner location. The material selected for the awnings is a durable sunbrella material.

The window graphics tastefully list select products that are featured in the establishment.



The finished signage program is a package of many types of signs that are put together creatively.

# 3 window signs & temporary signs

## window signs:

Window signs are exempt from a permit, however compliance with regulations is required.

Percentage: Window signs shall not exceed a maximum of 40% of the window or surface area through which or on which they are seen.



Good window graphics will promote the sale of products through tasteful advertising.



Window graphics can be a powerful tool to attract the eye through good arrangement and color.



Windows that are completely covered are not allowed.



Window graphics can add to the overall sign package and compliment the marketing program.

## temporary signs:

A temporary sign is a non-permanent sign installed, affixed or maintained on premises for a short, fixed, period of time.

### Residential District Regulations:

Single Family Lot: 8 sf maximum  
 Development Site: 16 sf for individual signs  
 32 sf maximum for all signs combined

All Other districts: 32 sf for individual signs  
 64 sf maximum for all signs combined

A temporary sign must be removed 7 days after the conclusion of the sale or event that the sign is promoting.



A temporary sign located in a residential district.



A temporary sign advertising an event.

## 4 prohibited signs

The following types of signs are not permitted by the code.

- Flashing, moving, rotating signs or signs that create illusion of movement.
- Signs in the public right of way.
- Roof signs.
- An Off-premise sign, or a sign advertising a business or service not located on the same property as the sign.
- Portable sign or sandwich board signs are prohibited throughout the Village.



Electronic message board signs are not allowed.



Sandwich board signs are prohibited.

Avoid code enforcement and removal of an illegal sign by obtaining Village approvals prior to fabrication and installation of any sign.

## 5 sign permit process

### step 1:

- Obtain the zoning district in which the building is located.
- Analyze the regulations in Chapter 30 of the Municipal Code in accordance with the zoning district.
- Does the proposed sign meet the regulations?
- If the sign does not meet the regulations, what modifications can be made to the sign so that it conforms with the code?

### step 2:

- Obtain a permit application on line at [www.vah.com](http://www.vah.com), or at the Building Department Front Counter.
- Once all required application materials are submitted, the Building Department will coordinate the processing of the application and distribute to the respective reviewing departments.
- The Planning & Community Development Department will review for compliance with Chapter 30 regulations.
- If an approval is received from the Planning & Community Development Department, a staff member will contact you via email for an upload of images to the Village File Transfer Portal (FTP) site.
- Once a final approval is received the Building Department will contact you for fees and picking up the permit.

### step 3:

- If a project is rejected, the Building Department will contact you with a response sheet.
- Modify the proposed sign so that it meets regulations from Chapter 30 of the Municipal Code.
- If a variation is determined necessary, then please contact the Planning & Community Development Department for Design Commission Sign Variation forms and application.
- Meet with the staff liaison to the Design Commission in the Planning & Community Development to discuss the variation and process the application.
- A meeting with the Design Commission will be scheduled to review the proposed variation.
- Once a recommendation is made by the Design Commission, a meeting with the Village Board will be scheduled for final action, which may be denied.