

THE SIGN BOOK

Regulations and Guidelines for Signs on Nantucket Island

NANTUCKET HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

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Table of Contents

1.	Legal Background	2
2.	Procedures	
	2.1 Who needs to Apply	3
	2.2 Review Process and Recommendations	3
	2.3 Owner Responsibility.....	3
3.	General Guidelines	
	3.1 Colors	4
	3.2 Content	4
	3.3 Sign Support.....	4
	3.4 Lettering.....	4
	3.5 Lighting.....	5
	3.6 Materials	5
	3.7 Paint	5
	3.8 Placement.....	5
	3.9 Prohibited Signs	5
4.	Sign Types	
	4.1 Awning Signs	6
	4.2 Construction and Site Signs	7
	4.3 Directory Signs	7
	4.4 Fence Signs	8
	4.5 Flag Signs.....	8
	4.6 Historical Markers.....	9
	4.7 Menu Boxes	9
	4.8 Projecting Signs	10
	4.9 Public Information Signs	11
	4.10 Quarterboards.....	11
	4.11 Street Name Signs.....	12
	4.12 Suspended Signs	13
	4.13 Symbol Signs	13
	4.14 Temporary Signs	14
	4.15 Traffic/Directional Signs.....	15
	4.16 Vehicle Signs	15
	4.17 Vending Machines	15
	4.18 Wall Signs.....	15
	4.19 Wharf Signs	17
	4.20 Window Signs	17
5.	Commercial Building Master Sign Plan	
	5.1 Commercial Buildings and Multiple Tenants	19
	5.2 Master Sign Plan	19
6.	Pre-Existing Nonconforming Signs	20
7.	Appendices	
	A. Glossary	21
	B. Violation Procedure.....	23
	C. Historical Notes.....	24
	D. Sign Advisory Council	25
	E. Bibliography.....	26
	F. Example of Sign Application	27
	G. Example of Master Sign Plan.....	28

1. Legal Background

Sign control has existed in the historic districts of Nantucket and Siasconset since 1956 and throughout the island since 1972. In 1981 the Historic District Commission (HDC) of Nantucket adopted its first comprehensive set of regulations governing the design and use of signage across the island. The Historic District Commission created a committee, the Sign Advisory Council (SAC), to review all Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications involving signage. These sign regulations are supplementary to the architectural regulations, which were brought into being by the Historic Districts Act of 1972.

Excerpts from: “An Act Establishing an Historic District Commission for the Town of Nantucket and establishing Nantucket as the Historic District,” The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Acts, 1970, Chapter 395, Section 4, defining boundaries:

There is hereby established in the Town of Nantucket an historic Nantucket District, which shall include the land and waters comprising the Town of Nantucket.

Excerpts from Sections 7 (Duplicated in Town By-laws, Chapter 124-1):

The erection or display of an occupational or other sign exceeding two feet in length and six inches in width or the erection or display of more than one such sign, irrespective of size, on any lot, building or structure located within the Historic Nantucket District must be approved in advance by the Historic District Commission. Evidence of such approval shall be a certificate of appropriateness issued by said commission.

Excerpts from “By-Law: Enforcement of Sign Requirements,” Chapter 124-2 & 124-3:

... Any person who violates any of the provisions... of this chapter shall be fined as follows: the penalty shall be \$10 for the first offense, \$50 for the second offense, and \$300 for the third or subsequent offenses. Each day that a violation continues to exist shall constitute a separate offense... Enforcement shall be through the process of non-criminal disposition under MGL c.40 Section 21D and Article II of Chapter I of the Code of the Town of Nantucket. Enforcement shall be by any police officer or by an enforcing agent designated by the Historic District Commission.”

The effective date for this By-law was November 27, 1990.

Generally, a sign includes any structure, device, letter, word, model, banner, pennant, insignia, trade flag or representation used as, or which is in the nature of, an advertisement, announcement, or direction. Ideally signs enhance the architectural features and proportions of a building and its neighborhood. The HDC guidelines seek to promote harmonious, respectful, functional, and varied signs. Signs should express the special character of the associated business and be of a size that is in scale with the building and surrounding streetscape.

While not restricting content, signage on Nantucket generally should not be used to advertise the business or to list specific products or services. Businesses should advertise and market utilizing other media, such as websites, newspapers, tourist publications, radio, and television.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 Who Needs to Apply

Any residential, commercial, or municipal property owner or tenant wishing to display a sign exceeding 2' by 6" in width or a second sign of any size on any lot, building, or structure must apply. Signs that are displayed on a building or a window and are visible from a traveled way (including temporary signs or the relocation or alteration of existing signs) must receive approval from the Historic District Commission. If more than one (1) sign is desired, each sign shall require an application. Master sign plans may be required for large projects involving many signs. Signs, which do not require an application (under 2' by 6"), nevertheless must conform to general design guidelines (See Section 3).

2.2 Review Process and Recommendations

- A. Obtain a sign application and a copy of the sign guidelines at the office of the Historic District Commission, Town Annex Building, 37 Washington Street, 2nd floor.
- B. Address questions about the regulations or application to the HDC staff or to members of the SAC at one of its meetings at 9 a.m. on Tuesdays at the HDC office. Applicants are encouraged to meet with the SAC for a discussion of preliminary design ideas prior to a formal application.
- C. When designing a sign, give careful consideration to the material, location, and mounting of the sign. Do not have the sign constructed until it has received HDC approval.
- D. Submit the completed application form, photographs, drawings, and color samples to the staff at the HDC office the Monday prior to the SAC meeting.
- E. Prior to review by the HDC, the SAC will meet and review the application and provide the HDC with a written recommendation. See Appendix E for more information on the SAC. Applicants are encouraged to attend the SAC meeting as revisions and/or additional information may be requested.
- F. The HDC must act within sixty (60) days of the date an application was submitted. Most decisions are made well within that period.
- G. Signs must be built according to the specifications in the approved application; any changes require a new application. Changes made without prior approval will be deemed a violation, and the business or property owner displaying such sign may be subject to a fine of up to \$300 per day.

2.3 Owner Responsibility

The term "applicant" is used throughout this book and refers specifically to the building owner, who ultimately is responsible for any changes to the exterior of the structure. The building owner also is responsible for providing information on signs to current and prospective tenants. The SAC and the HDC urge building owners to have restrictions regarding signs outlined in the lease agreement. However, we also recognize that the tenant usually makes the application and represents the owner throughout the process. Responsibility falls to the tenant to work out violations with the owner and the HDC.

3. GENERAL GUIDELINES

Sign design begins with the building. Is there an obvious space on the building where the sign would look appropriate? Many of Nantucket's nineteenth century commercial buildings were designed with a horizontal lintel "sign space" across the top of the storefront. A building's proportions, as well as the street character and neighboring buildings, will determine the appropriate size of the sign.

Where no "sign space" exists on a building, a wall sign with a vertical format or a projecting sign may be appropriate. Signs should be located at or near the public entrance and should not cover, obscure, or become inharmonious with existing architectural features and proportions. Any sign that is moved to another location, either on the same structure or to another shall be considered a new sign and a new permit shall be required. Signs on town property shall conform to the sign code and shall be submitted to the Commission for approval.

Sign detail requires careful attention, often involving input from a designer or sign builder. A scaled drawing of the proposed sign must be produced and must include the lettering type, layout, artwork, and colors. A scaled drawing or photograph should depict the sign's location on the building.

All signs and parts thereof, including but not limited to framework, supports, background, anchors, and wiring system, shall be constructed and maintained in compliance with applicable building, electrical, and fire- prevention codes.

3.1 COLORS:

The use of subdued colors is encouraged. In order to allow for creative artwork there is no specific limitation on the number of colors used. A darker background with lighter lettering and graphics is encouraged as a traditional and aesthetically pleasing presentation.

3.2 CONTENT:

- A. A sign may provide the name of a business or facility, the nature of the business or service conducted on the premises, the street number of the premises, and the year the business was established.
- B. No sign shall include the telephone number, email, or web address of a business, rates, other business locations on or off the island, or list more than one (1) specific product or service.
- C. A sign designed with a registered trademark of a specific commodity that uses a non-historical font style may be used provided that the trademark occupies no more than fifteen per cent (15%) of the total area of the sign.

3.3 SIGN SUPPORT:

Sign brackets and standards traditionally are made of wrought iron or wood. A sign bracket shall extend the full length of the sign.

3.4 LETTERING:

Lettering which is traditional in appearance and style and has an historic precedent is preferred. Lettering that is too bold, too harsh in its simplicity, or "trendy," is discouraged and rarely approved. The application of Section 3.2, subsection C is relevant to the design of lettering on signs.

3.5 LIGHTING:

A sign may be illuminated for a business operating after sunset, provided that the wattage used not exceed 450 Lumens (under a 30 Watt incandescent bulb), not fluorescent in style, and that the source of illumination shall be shielded and directed downward at the sign. Lighting options can be further discussed with the office.

3.6 MATERIALS:

Signs shall be made of wood except as required by state or federal law. No particleboard, plastic, or baked enamel on metal shall be used. "Medium Density Overlay" plywood or marine plywood may be used, but it must be edge banded. Solid wood is recommended over plywood since plywood tends to delaminate with age. Other materials will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3.7 PAINT:

All surfaces must be painted. No vinyl lettering is permitted. If gold lettering or ornamentation is desired, 23K gold leaf should be considered. Gold paint will tarnish in a very short period of time. If necessary, tan paint is preferable to gold paint.

3.8 PLACEMENT:

- A. No sign shall be positioned on a structure so that it obscures any architectural feature including but not limited to the cornice, window trim, door trim, or porch railings. Temporary signage exceptions are considered on a case-by-case basis.
- B. A sign shall not interfere with, or obstruct, any official traffic sign, signal, or marking for any reason.

3.9 PROHIBITED SIGNS

The following signs SHALL NOT be permitted, constructed, erected, or maintained:

- 1. Signs with flashing, moving, or intermittent lighting of any kind. For example, such signs displaying time and temperature. This includes signs that are backlit and signs that are electric or neon.
- 2. Portable signs including any sign mounted on wheels.
- 3. Signs that are erected in such a way as to obstruct a door, window, or fire escape of the building to which the sign is affixed.
- 6. Signs that are tacked, posted, or painted to poles, benches, barrels, buildings, posts, trees, sidewalks, curbs, rocks, or any structure.
- 7. Off- premises signs, which advertise commercial activities taking place on another lot.
- 8. Signs that are placed on the public sidewalks or public property, e.g. sandwich boards, menu boards, and chalk boards, except for signs erected by the town.
- 9. Vending Machine signs (See Section 4.17).
- 10. Roof signs.
- 11. Signs that name a complex of buildings or businesses.
- 12. Freestanding signs, except for those that are grandfathered (See Appendix D).
- 13. Vehicle Signs (See Section 4.16).
- 14. Attachment Signs.
- 15. Real Estate Signs.
- 16. Subdivision Signs.

4. SPECIFIC SIGN TYPES

4.1 AWNING SIGNS

4.1.1 DEFINITION:

An awning sign is a sign painted on or sewn directly to a roof-like covering of canvas that often is adjustable.

4.1.2 SIZE:

No awning sign shall extend beyond the edges of the awning, or have a total area in excess of one-half (1/2) square foot for each linear foot of the front of the awning.

4.1.3 PLACEMENT:

- A. The lowest portion of any awning bearing an awning sign shall not be less than seven feet, six inches (7' - 6") above the level of a sidewalk or public way.
- B. An awning sign for each of two (2) awnings shall be permitted for each business on the first floor.

4.1.4 COMBINATIONS:

An awning sign may be combined with a menu box, wall sign, or window sign.

4.1.5 PROVISIONS:

- A. Awnings require separate or previous approval from the HDC. The HDC will not approve umbrella- style, bubble, ellipse and ribbed awnings. They recommend that awnings colors and materials should follow traditional examples. Furthermore they should not extend above the portion of the structure to which they are attached, and should extend from the structure in a manner that maintains the aesthetic lines of the building.
- B. Attaching a patch of fabric that has the sign painted or sewn onto it to an existing awning is not permitted.
- C. The business name and/or nature of the business may be painted on the vertical portion of the apron, which is parallel to the building front.
- D. Awnings shall be non-illuminated and non- electric.



4.2 CONSTRUCTION AND SITE SIGNS

4.2.1 DEFINITION:

Construction Signs are temporary signs erected on the premises on which construction is taking place, during the time period of such construction, indicating the name of the architect, engineer, landscape architect, contractor, or similar artisans involved in the project. (see section 4.14)

4.2.2 SIZE:

Construction signs shall not exceed one (1) square foot.

4.2.3 PLACEMENT:

Construction signs shall be attached or affixed to a structure or building and shall not be freestanding.

4.2.4 PROVISIONS:

- A. Only one (1) construction sign is permitted per lot.
- B. Construction signs must be removed within thirty days of the substantial completion of work on site.

4.3 DIRECTORY SIGNS

4.3.1 DEFINITION:

A directory sign contains listings of two or more commercial establishments that share a common entrance.

4.3.2 SIZE AND PLACEMENT:

- A. One directory sign will be permitted at the entrance of a building with multiple commercial establishments and one common entrance.
- B. A directory sign for two (2) businesses may be either a projecting sign or a wall sign mounted near the common entrance, which does not exceed four (4) square feet. (See sections 4.8 and 4.18) A directory sign for three (3) or more businesses shall be a wall sign mounted near the common entrance that does not exceed (6) square feet.
- C. When two (2) tenants occupy a symmetrically designed building with adequate and appropriate space for the display of two (2) separate signs, two (2) signs symmetrically placed on the building may be permitted in lieu of a directory sign. These signs may be either wall signs or projecting signs and shall not exceed four (4) square feet each.

4.3.3 COMBINATIONS:

No combinations of any signs are permitted for any business utilizing a directory sign.

4.4 FENCE SIGNS

4.4.1 DEFINITION:

A fence sign is any sign attached to a fence. Fence design is determined by the Historic District Commission.

4.4.2 SIZE:

- A. A sign on a picket fence shall be three (3) square feet or less.
- B. A sign on a fence of five (5) feet or more in height shall be four (4) square feet or less.
- C. A sign on a split rail fence shall be less than three (3) square feet.

4.4.3 PLACEMENT:

A fence sign shall be placed against the surface of the fence and shall not project above the top of the fence or off the side of the fence.

4.4.4 COMBINATIONS:

A fence sign may be combined with one (1) of the following: menu box or wall sign not exceeding one (1) square foot in area and located at the business entrance or one (1) projecting sign not exceeding two (2) square feet and located at the business entrance.

4.4.5 PROVISIONS:

- A. Prior approval of the fence is required from the HDC.
- B. One (1) fence sign will be permitted per building lot.
- C. A sign on a split rail fence must maintain the rural characteristics inherent in the fence.

4.5 FLAG SIGNS

4.5.1 DEFINITION:

Any sign constructed of fabric bearing information relating to or identifying a business is defined as a flag sign with the exception of a national or state flag.

4.5.2 SIZE:

Flag signs shall be of such a size that will not obscure any architectural features.

4.5.3 PLACEMENT:

The lowest point of a flag sign shall be not less than seven feet, six inches (7'- 6"), above the sidewalk.

4.5.4 COMBINATIONS:

A flag sign may be used in combination with one (1) of the following: menu box, wall sign, or window sign.

4.5.5 PROVISIONS:

- A. One flag sign is permitted for each public entrance of a building, with a maximum of one (1) flag sign per business.
- B. Flag signs should be designed to have similar character, color, and style as other signs of the business and must conform to general guidelines regarding context.
- C. “Open/Closed” and “Sale” flags are not permitted.

4.6 HISTORICAL MARKERS

4.6.1 DEFINITION:

A historical marker is a sign indicating date of construction, as well as early owners and builders, located on residential and commercial buildings.

4.6.2 SIZE:

Historical markers shall be no larger than two (2) square feet. Signs shall be of a rectangular shape.

4.6.3 CONSTRUCTION:

Historical markers shall be constructed of wood with painted lettering. Bronze markers may be permitted with embossed lettering. Lettering and colors should be of a muted tone to respect the architecture of the buildings.

4.6.4 PLACEMENT

Historical markers shall be placed in such a way as to not obscure architectural features. Locations may include areas to the far left or right of the structure away from main entrances and generally about 1/3 to 1/2 of the way up the structure.

4.6.5 COMBINATIONS

Historical markers may be combined with one (1) other historical marker on residential properties. Commercial properties may have the allowable combinations of other signs, plus one historical marker. As noted in section 2.1, all signs over 2' x 6" or more than one sign must apply to the Historic District Commission.

4.7 MENU BOXES

4.7.1 DEFINITION:

A menu box is a weather-tight box constructed of wood with a glass or plexiglass front which is used to display menus, signs, bulletins, photographs, or other information.

4.7.2 SIZE:

The menu box shall be no larger than five (5) square feet.

4.7.3 CONSTRUCTION:

A menu box shall be constructed of wood, which may be painted or left natural. The front of the box shall use safety glass or plexiglass. Interior lighting should be no brighter than 450 Lumens (30 watts) of incandescent light.

4.7.4 PLACEMENT:

A menu box shall be placed on a structure and may not be freestanding. (See Appendix D.1)

4.7.5 COMBINATIONS:

A menu box may be used in combination with one (1) of the following: awning sign, fence sign, flag sign, projecting sign, symbol sign, wall sign, or window sign.

4.7.6 PROVISIONS:

A description of proposed illumination must be included with application.

4.8 PROJECTING SIGNS

4.8.1 DEFINITION:

A projecting sign is any sign projecting outward from a building wall.

4.8.2 SIZE:

- A. The maximum total area of a projecting sign on a one-story building shall be no more than four (4) square feet per sign face.
- B. The maximum total area of a projecting sign on a building with a street front exceeding one (1) story shall be no more than five (5) square feet per sign face.

4.8.3 PLACEMENT:

- A. A projecting sign must be located at or near the public entrance.
- B. The lowest point of a projecting sign shall not be less than seven feet, six inches (7'-6"), above the sidewalk.
- C. A projecting sign shall be separated from the building face from which it projects by no less than three (3) inches and shall project not more than four (4) feet from that face or two-thirds (2/3) of the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less.
- E. The highest point of a projecting sign and its supporting frame shall be no higher than the top of the second - story window sills of the building from which the sign projects.
- F. All projecting signs over a public way, such as a sidewalk, come under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Nantucket and may at any time be reviewed by that board for compliance with town regulations.

4.8.4 SIGN SUPPORT:

- A. A projecting sign or its supporting bracket shall not extend above the top cornice line of the building from which the sign projects.
- B. No sign shall project beyond the bracket on which it is hung.

4.8.5 COMBINATIONS:

- A. A projecting sign may be combined with a window sign or a menu box.
- B. A projecting sign that does not exceed two (2) square feet may be used in combination with a wall sign except in residential neighborhoods.
- A. A projecting sign may incorporate a symbol sign. See Section 4.13.

4.8.6 PROVISIONS:

A projecting sign shall be allowed for each entrance door or set of entrances of a building, with a maximum of one (1) projecting sign per business.

4.9 PUBLIC INFORMATION SIGNS

4.9.1 DEFINITION:

A public information sign is a sign that is used by religious organizations and municipal or public services.

4.9.2 SIZE:

Public information signs may not exceed six (6) square feet.

4.9.3 PLACEMENT:

A public information sign may be supported by two (2) posts as a completely self-supporting structure or in an approvable location on a buildings or fence (See sections 4.4 and 4.18). The top of the sign shall be no more than four (4) feet above the ground.

4.9.4 COMBINATIONS:

No combinations are permitted.

4.9.5 PROVISIONS

No more than one (1) public information sign will be permitted on any lot.

4.10 QUARTERBOARDS

4.10.1 DEFINITION:

A quarterboard was a narrow rectangular board attached on the quarters of a vessel and used to designate the vessel's name, which was carved into the thickness of the board. More commonly quarterboards are used on residential structures to name the building. The ends of a quarterboard are typically decorated with carved motifs. Quarterboards for residential structures do not need formal approval.

4.10.2 PROVISIONS:

- A. Quarterboards, as narrowly defined, may be used only to provide the name of a residence.
- B. When designed for commercial purposes, quarterboards must comply with wall sign guidelines

4.11 STREET NAME SIGNS

4.11.1 DEFINITION:

A street name sign is a sign, usually supplied by the Department of Public Works (DPW), located at the intersection of two streets, displaying the name of a street.

4.11.2 SIZE:

Street name signs must be five and a half inches (5 ½") in height.

4.11.3 PLACEMENT:

Street name signs shall be placed at the intersection of the main road and the new street and may be attached to a fence, the wall of a building, or on a four (4) inch by four (4) inch wolmanized freestanding post with beveled top, seven feet, six inches (7' - 6"), above grade.

4.11.4 PAINT COLORS:

Background should be cream. Lettering and Posts should be gray. There also should be one half (1/2) inch gray border around the edge of the sign.

4.11.5 LETTERING TYPE:

Shall be in three inches (3") in height. The lettering may be sans-serifed *if* it is all cap and block lettered.

4.11.6 ALTERNATIVE STREET NAME SIGNS

Outside the ROH the following alternative street name sign types are permitted:

- A. Recommended for rural areas (such as those zoned LUG- 2 or LUG- 3) that have low-lying vegetation: two (2) four (4) inch by four (4) inch posts. Secure sign with four (4) carriage bolts. The height shall not exceed thirty (30) inches. The sign face shall not exceed twelve (12) inches in height and forty- two (42) inches in length.
- B. Four (4) foot high post set twelve (12) inches below grade with street names painted directly on a vertical layout or wood plates mounted with expansion bolts bearing street names.
- C. Four (4) inch by four (4) inch wolmanized post set into concrete base with street signs set through the post and secured with wood dowels. This is recommended for areas where theft of signs is a problem.
- D. Within the ROH, only signs complying with sections 4.12.3-5 are permitted.

4.11.7 PROVISIONS

- A. Rocks and stone posts are not permitted as street name signs.
- B. Metal signs and posts are not permitted.

4.12 SUSPENDED SIGNS

4.12.1 DEFINITION:

A suspended sign is a sign that hangs from below a porch roof or eave and hangs in a horizontal orientation.

4.12.2 SIZE:

- A. The maximum total area of a suspended sign on a one-story building shall be no more than four (4) square feet per sign face.
- B. The maximum total area of a suspended sign on a building with a street front exceeding one (1) story shall be no more than five (5) square feet per sign face.

4.12.3 PLACEMENT:

- A. A suspended sign must be located at or near a public entrance.
- B. The lowest point of a suspended sign shall be not less than seven feet- six inches (7'- 6") above the sidewalk.
- C. The highest point of a suspended sign and its supporting frame shall be no higher than the eave line of the roof.

4.12.4 COMBINATIONS:

A suspended sign may be combined with a window sign or a menu box.

4.12.5 PROVISIONS:

Attachments to suspended signs are not permitted.

4.13 SYMBOL SIGNS

4.13.1 DEFINITION:

A symbol sign is a three-dimensional representation of a product or service that a business sells.

4.13.2 SIZE:

- A. The area of a symbol sign shall be no more than one-half the allowable area for a projecting sign (See Section 4.8).
- B. The size shall be calculated by adding one (1) front view and one side view of the object.
- C. The front and side views are considered to be that which will fit into a rectangle or other geometric shape.

4.13.3 PLACEMENT:

- A. A symbol sign must be located at or near the public entrance.
- B. A symbol sign shall be allowed for each entrance door or set of entrances of a building, with a maximum of one symbol sign per business.
- C. The lowest point of a symbol sign shall be not less than seven feet, six inches (7'-6"), above the sidewalk.

- D. A symbol sign shall be separated from the building face from which it projects by no less than three (3) inches and shall project not more than four (4) feet from that face, or two-thirds (2/3) of the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less.
- E. The highest point of a symbol sign and its supporting frame shall be no higher than the top of the second - story window sills of the building from which the sign projects.
- F. All symbol signs over a public way, such as a sidewalk, come under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Nantucket and may at any time be reviewed by that board for compliance with town regulations.

4.13.4 SIGN SUPPORT:

- A. The symbol sign shall be attached to the bracket on which it is hung so that the sign will not swing.
- B. A symbol sign or its supporting bracket shall not extend above the top cornice line of the building from which the sign projects.

4.13.5 COMBINATIONS:

- A. A symbol sign may be used in combination with one (1) of the following: menu box, wall sign or window sign.
- B. A symbol sign may be incorporated as part of a projecting sign, the area of which is calculated by adding the area of the projecting sign and symbol sign (See Section 4.8).

4.14 TEMPORARY SIGNS

4.14.1 DEFINITION:

A temporary sign is any sign, including its supporting structure, maintained for less than thirty (30) days.

4.14.2 PROVISIONS:

General regulations governing other sign types apply to temporary signs as well.

4.14.3 DATE SPECIFIC SIGNAGE

Signage intended to inform the public about date specific events, shall be permitted provided they comply with the provisions of this section and section 3.9 (section 6). Size shall be limited to smaller or equal to 11" x 17." Signage over 11" x 17" shall require an application to the Historic District Commission. Only one sign per event, per commercial location shall be permitted.

4.14.4 BANNERS:

Banners are large format temporary signage. While banners have a historical precedent, the proliferation of banners is to be avoided. Banners should fit within an architectural area so as to not obscure larger architectural articulation. (Examples include false doorways, niches, or between columns.) Sizes must conform to wall sign dimensions. Design should conform to the other standards. Sail canvas or other fabric should be considered for the material.

4.14.5 POLITICAL SIGNS:

A political sign is a temporary sign used to advertise candidates for public office or to address public concerns. The HDC encourages political signs to be tasteful and sensitive to the character and community of Nantucket. Political candidate signs should be removed immediately following an election. Political signs do not require prior approval.

4.15 TRAFFIC/ DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

4.15.1 DEFINITION:

Signs that are necessary for the safety and direction of pedestrians and automobiles, including but not limited to, stop signs, pedestrian crossing signs, one-way street signs, do not enter signs, etc.

4.15.2 SIZE:

Within the ROH, a horizontal sign that shall not exceed one (1) square foot in area and must comply with the DPW standards for street signage.

4.15.3 PROVISIONS:

Traffic/ directional signs shall not carry the name of any business or product.

4.16 VEHICLE SIGNS

4.16.1 DEFINITION:

A vehicle sign is any permanent or temporary sign affixed to, painted on, or placed in or upon any parked vehicle, parked trailer, or other parked device capable of being towed, which is obviously and conspicuously parked so as to advertise the business to the passing motorist or pedestrian; and the primary purpose of which is to provide additional on-site signage, or is to serve the function of an outdoor advertising sign.

4.16.2 PROVISIONS:

In order to not be deemed a vehicle sign, the vehicle must be parked in a legal parking space. Otherwise, all vehicle signs are prohibited.

4.17 VENDING MACHINES:

4.17.1 DEFINITION:

A vending machine is a coin-operated machine that dispenses merchandise.

4.17.2 PROVISIONS:

- A. Vending machines shall be hidden from a traveled way.
- B. The HDC encourages the use of fencing and/or lattice to conceal vending machines from sight of a traveled way, which must be separately or previously approved by the HDC.
- C. Vending machines shall not be illuminated.

4.18 WALL SIGNS

4.18.1 DEFINITION:

A wall sign is a sign securely affixed to a wall, or painted on a wall, and not projecting beyond the building face fronting on a street or parking lot, and not above the highest line of the building to which it is attached.

4.18.2 SIZE AND FORMAT RESTRICTIONS:

- A. Horizontal Format Signs:
 - 1. Horizontal format signs shall not exceed two (2) feet in height.
 - 2. One wall sign with a horizontal format for a first- floor establishment shall have a square footage not exceeding one (1) square foot per linear foot of building face, not exceeding twenty (20) square feet. The building face is the primary entrance facade. (See section 4.1.6 for regulations governing second story business signs).
 - 3. On a sign with a horizontal format, the maximum allowable height for lettering shall not be more than three-fourths (3/4) of the total height of the sign.
- B. Vertical format signs shall not exceed six (6) square feet.

4.18.3 PLACEMENT:

- A. A wall sign must be located at or near a public entrance.
- B. One wall sign is permitted for each public entrance of a building.
- C. When located on a corner lot, a wall sign will be permitted for each building side of a business, with a maximum of two (2) signs. The second sign, located on the side without an entrance, shall be twenty percent smaller than the main entrance sign.
- D. Outside the Residential Old Historic District (ROH), if all of the business parking is located behind the building and the building or rented portion thereof maintains street frontage: one (1) wall sign may be used at the entry/ parking facade and one (1) wall sign at the street facade. Within the ROH, only one wall sign is permitted. Applicant also must comply with Section 4.18.4: Combinations.

4.18.4 COMBINATIONS:

- A. A wall sign may be used in combination with an awning sign, flag sign, menu box, symbol sign, or window sign.
- B. Except in residential neighborhoods, a wall sign may be used in combination with a projecting sign that does not exceed two (2) square feet

4.18.5 SIGNAGE FOR SECOND- STORY BUSINESSES:

- A. Total wall sign area allowed for a business establishment located on an upper floor shall not exceed one- half (1/2) square foot per linear foot of building face nor more than ten (10) square feet in the area above the first story window trim, cornice, or lintel. A building face may have up to fifteen (15) square feet of total sign area for two or more businesses located on upper floors, provided each business has its own entrance. (The “building face” for second floor establishments is to be measured at the second floor).
- B. If one business is located on an upper floor served by its own entrance, a wall sign not to exceed one (1) square foot in size may be used at the first floor entrance.
- C. If two or more businesses are located on the upper floor(s), sharing a common first floor entrance, the applicant must use a directory sign (See Section 4.3.).

4.18.6 SIGNAGE FOR BASEMENT - LEVEL BUSINESS:

A sign is permitted for each business located in a building where the first floor is substantially above street grade and the basement level is only partially below street grade. This provision is provided that the aggregate square footage of the signs on a facade does not exceed the area described in section 4.1: Wall Signs.

4.19 WHARF SIGNS

4.19.1 DEFINITION:

A wharf sign is a sign used to identify a business operating from a boat with slip privileges. A wharf sign may be attached to a wharf or a boat.

4.19.2 SIZE AND PLACEMENT:

A wharf sign shall conform to any one of three (3) types of wharf signs as follows:

- A. A one-sided horizontal wharf sign shall be placed between two (2) pilings at the end of an individual slip and shall run parallel to the wharf. A horizontal sign shall be the width of the space between the two (2) pilings and shall not exceed four (4) feet in width, and one (1) foot in height.
- B. A one- sided vertical [face] wharf sign shall be attached to the face of a piling at the entrance to an individual slip and shall not be higher or wider than the piling.
- C. A two- sided vertical wharf sign shall be attached to a piling at the entrance of an individual slip on the water side, and shall be no higher than the piling to which it is attached and not exceed ten (10) inches in width.

4.19.4 COMBINATIONS:

No combinations are permitted.

4.19.3 PROVISIONS:

- A. Signs may not include rates.

4.20 WINDOW SIGNS

4.20.1 DEFINITION:

A window sign is any sign affixed to the surface of the glass or visible through a window or door on a permanent basis within one (1) foot of the glass and visible from a traveled way.

4.20.2 SIZE:

The area of window signs shall not exceed fifteen per cent (15%) of the window area or ten per cent (10%) of the glass area of any required exit door (See Section 4.18). No window sign shall exceed the maximum allowable space for a wall sign when visible from the exterior.

4.20.3 COMBINATIONS:

Window signs may be used in combination with one (1) of the following: awning sign, flag sign, menu box, projecting sign, symbol sign, or wall sign.

4.20.4 PROVISIONS:

- A. Permanent basis is defined as more than thirty (30) days.
- B. Window signs, indicating hours of operation, business affiliations, emergency information and the like (excluding product or service information) are permitted provided the aggregate area of all such signs for a single business does not exceed (1) square foot per entrance and that bright or fluorescent colors are not used.

4.20.5 TEMPORARY WINDOW SIGNS:

Temporary window signs pertaining to special sales or events are permitted for no more than fifteen (15) days and may be affixed to windows provided that the total area of such sign(s) shall not cover more than fifteen per cent (15%) of the area of the window to which it is affixed.

The Signs of Nantucket are many and varied, but always in harmony with the strong history and character of the island. Lets work together to achieve these goals!

5. COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AND THE MASTER SIGN PLAN

5.1 COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AND MULTIPLE TENANTS

5.1.1 DEFINITION:

Commercial buildings include all buildings that are constructed to contain businesses and services. A multiple tenant commercial building is a commercial building with multiple commercial spaces.

5.2 MASTER SIGN PLAN

5.2.1 DEFINITION:

A master sign plan is a proposal submitted by the owner of a building with multiple tenants, or a group of buildings, to create a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing signage effect within a commercial building or buildings with multiple tenants.

5.2.2 REVIEW PROCESS:

A Master Sign Plan shall be developed for all multiple tenant commercial buildings in advance of sign applications being submitted for individual tenants. The Master Sign Plan should contain proposals for sign types, sizes, and locations, and will be reviewed by the SAC prior to approval by the HDC. Applications for individual tenants will depict the sign's content and color scheme. Existing signage as of August 15, 2004, in the sizes, types, formats, and locations should be considered part of a Master Sign Plan for any changes of use.

5.2.3 REQUIREMENTS:

A master sign plan should contain the following:

1. A detailed listing of all sign types and locations keyed into the plot plan.
2. An accurate indication on the plot plan of the proposed location, types, and sizes of each present and future sign.
3. Elevations and/or photographs of buildings and existing signage.
4. An accurate plot plan of the site, showing the location of the building, or buildings, parking lots, driveways, etc.

5.2.4 AMENDMENT:

Master Sign Plans may be amended by submitting a new Master Sign Plan that conforms to all other requirements of this section. The new application will then be reviewed by the SAC prior to HDC's review.

5.2.5 PROVISIONS:

- A. After approval of a master sign plan, no sign shall be erected, placed, or modified, except in conformance with such plan, or amended plan.
- B. No permit shall be issued for an individual sign in a multiple tenant commercial building until a master sign plan has been approved by the HDC.

6. PRE- EXISTING NONCONFORMING SIGNS

On-premises signs or other advertising devices erected before the effective date of the Historic District Act of 1959 in the Historic Districts of Nantucket and Siasconset, or before the Historic District Act of 1970 elsewhere may continue to be maintained, unless any such sign is enlarged, reworded, redesigned, or altered in any way, including repainting in a different color. If and when the sign cannot continue to be maintained pursuant to the foregoing, immediate application must be made for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new sign. As part of the application, reuse of a freestanding sign armature with the proposed new sign may be approved provided that:

1. A. The armature was in use before the effective date of the Historic District Act of 1959 in the Historic Districts of Nantucket and Siasconset, or before the Historic District Act of 1970 elsewhere

or

B. There exists a Certificate of Appropriateness issued by the HDC for the armature and a sign.
2. An approved or pre- existing sign and armature was maintained within three years of the date of application.
3. The size of the new sign shall be equal to the size of the previously approved sign for that armature. Documentation of the previously approved and/or erected sign shall be submitted.
4. The location of the armature has not changed.
5. The proposed new sign is otherwise appropriate and approvable under the regulations set forth in this Sign Book.
6. See Section 3 – General Regulations for further information.

APPENDIX A- GLOSSARY

The words listed below shall have the definitions listed below when those words are used or referred to in these rules and regulations.

AGGREGATE: Square footage; the total or collective amount of square footage.

ARMATURE: The support from which a sign is hung or suspended.

ATTACHMENT SIGN: A sign attached or affixed to a larger sign.

BUILDING FACE OR FACADE: The side of a building where the main entrance is located. The side of a building which is parallel or substantially parallel to the lot line of a street or traveled way accessible from a street.

BRACKET: The supporting frame of a sign.

COMBINATIONS: The use of more than one sign on a structure.

CORNER LOT: Any lot defined by two (2) traveled ways.

CORNICE: Any continuous molded projection that crowns or finishes the part to which it is affixed, such as a wall or door opening; most notably, the exterior trim of a structure at the meeting of the roof and wall; in classical terms, the upper projecting part of the entablature. The entablature is the horizontal member carried by the columns.

FREESTANDING SIGN: A sign, which is attached to, or part of, a completely self- supporting structure, other than a building, fence, or rock.

GRANDFATHERED SIGN: Any sign or advertising device, which may or may not be nonconforming, erected before the effective date of the Historic District Act of 1955 or 1970, and which has been maintained and unaltered.

LINTEL: A horizontal architectural member supporting the weight above an opening such as a window or a door.

MASTER SIGN PLAN: A signage proposal submitted by the owner of a building with multiple tenants, or a group of buildings.

MULTIPLE TENANT COMMERCIAL BUILDING: A building with multiple commercial spaces.

NON- CONFORMING SIGN: A sign existing at the effective date of the Historic District Act of 1959 in the Historic Districts of Nantucket and Siasconset, or before the Historic District Act of 1970 elsewhere, which could not be built under the terms of the current regulations.

OFF- PREMISES SIGNS: A sign that advertises or announces a use conducted, goods available, businesses conducted, or business located elsewhere than the lot or building where the sign is located.

OLD HISTORIC DISTRICT (OHD): As defined by the Historic District Commission.

PERMANENT SIGN: Any sign, as defined above, intended to be erected or maintained for more than thirty (30) days.

PORTABLE SIGN: A freestanding sign not permanently affixed, anchored, or secured to the ground or a structure on the lot it occupies, or any sign mounted on wheels, excluding signs affixed to or painted on a vehicle the primary purpose of which is other than to be a sign. Examples include, but are not limited to sandwich boards and blackboards.

PLYWOOD: A structural material made of layers of wood glued together, usually with the grains of adjoining layers at right angles to each other.

REAL ESTATE SIGN: A sign advertising property for sale or rent.

RESIDENTIAL SIGN: A sign, other than the name and address of the resident, that identifies the residential premises on which it is located.

RESIDENTIAL OLD HISTORIC (ROH): The district as defined by Nantucket's Zoning By-law.

ROCK SIGN: A rock or stone used for commercial purposes to advertise a business and/or complex of buildings.

ROOF SIGN: Any sign erected, constructed, and maintained upon or over the roof of any building.

SIGN: Any privately or publicly-owned, permanent or temporary structure, light, letter, word, model, banner, pennant, insignia, trade flag, or representation, or any other device used to advertise, inform, or attract the attention of the public, which is designed to be seen from outside a building, including any sign in windows or on doors, but excluding window displays of merchandise and informational material incidental to the display or sale of merchandise (such as price tags and similar informational matter).

SIGN AREA: Determined by the following:

- A. The area shall be considered to include all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs and symbols together with the background, whether open or enclosed, on which they are displayed. It shall not include any supporting framework, decorative framing, or bracing that is incidental to the display itself.
- B. For a sign painted upon or applied/attached to a building, the area is considered to include all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs or symbols, together with any background of a different color than the natural or primary color of the building.
- C. Where the sign consists of individual letters or symbols attached to or painted on a surface, building, awning, wall, or window, the area shall be considered to be that of the smallest rectangle or other geometric shape that encompasses all of the letters or symbols.
- D. Only one side of a double-faced sign will be counted in computing the area of that sign.
- E. The area of a sign consisting of a three-dimensional object (such as a symbol sign) shall be no more than one-half the allowable area for a projecting sign. The area shall be calculated by measuring both the front view and one side view of the object. The front and side views are considered to be that which will fit into a rectangle or other geometric shape.
- F. The area of a flat, irregularly shaped sign shall be the smallest plane geometric figure that will wholly contain it.

SUBDIVISION SIGN: A sign by any means, which designates a subdivision.

SYMMETRICALLY DESIGNED BUILDING: A building designed with the same architectural features and fenestration on one side of the front facade as can be found on the other side of the same front facade. Typically, a symmetrically designed building has a central entrance.

TRAVELED WAY: A beach, public way, public park, public body of water, street or way shown on a land court plan or shown on a plan recorded in the registry of deeds, a proprietors road or a street or way shown on a plan approved and endorsed in accordance with the Subdivision Control Law

USE: The purpose for which land or a building is arranged, designed, or intended and for which either land or a building is or may be occupied or maintained.

VENDING MACHINE SIGN: Any sign displayed on or integral to a vending machine.

APPENDIX B – VIOLATION PROCEEDURE

The intent of the HDC Sign Violation Procedure is to reinforce general compliance according to HDC Sign Guidelines and with voluntary compliance through proper notification of violation and possible fines.

The fine structure is referenced through the Nantucket Town By-Laws. The office maintains a list of violations with a record of correspondence between HDC, SAC, and a violator for purposes of record keeping. The procedure for violations is as follows:

- Step 1: A violation is brought to the attention of the Historic District Commission or the Sign Advisory Council by concerned citizens thorough a citizen concern form or by view from the HDC, SAC, or office staff.
- Step 2: A letter, signed by the sign administrator and reviewed by the SAC, is sent to a tenant or owner for initial contact. The letter is logged and a response is required within two SAC meetings (14 calendar days).
- Step 3: A second letter is written, signed by the sign administrator and reviewed by SAC and the administrator, for the tenant and the building owner, if they can be determined. This letter is sent certified with return receipt. The letter is logged. If a receipt is not received within two SAC meetings a final notice is filed.
- Step 4: A final notice, signed by the HDC Chairperson, is sent. This notice includes a violation citation, signed by the HDC Chairperson. The violation is logged with the Town Clerk and office, at which time fines may increase up to the maximum allowable rate.

If any violation could be approved under normal circumstances, an application is provided to the owner and tenant. The as-built fee of four times the regular amount will be assessed. The applicant must show progress through an application, not just through verbal acknowledgement of progress.

APPENDIX C - HISTORICAL NOTES

1. FREESTANDING SIGNS

In the 1981 set of Regulations and Guidelines for Signs, Section IV. Part 7, it was stated:

Freestanding Signs will generally not be allowed except as Directory Signs at the entrance to a complex of commercial establishments or as Signs for open-lot Uses, such as parking. Application for other Freestanding Signs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Although this regulation had existed for some time, it became controversial with the increased commercial development outside of town. Several approvals were issued for freestanding signs in the early 1980's on Lower Washington Street. The SAC soon recognized its error when four of five freestanding signs began to line the street, changing the simple and historic character of the area.

A moratorium was placed on freestanding signs in October of 1985, meaning that no approvals would be given while the SAC studied the issue. A study was submitted by the SAC to the HDC in January of 1986 recommending that no freestanding signs be permitted. The Planning Board and the HDC concurred with the recommendations. A policy decision was made by the HDC on September 24, 1986, revising the 1981 sign regulations.

The recommendations of the SAC were based in part upon the following:

- That historically, commercial signs on Nantucket were mounted on the building of the business it identified and that very often businesses displayed no signs at all, relying on word-of-mouth or their well-known presence in a small community.
- That Nantucket is still a small community and unlike large, sprawling mainland towns, businesses are still known more by word-of-mouth, reputation, newspaper advertising, and yellow pages, than by visibility from a passing car.
- That consistent with the Planning Board's design approach of encouraging commercial building sitting near the street with parking behind, wall-mounted signs can be near enough the street to be effective.

The complete Freestanding Sign Study is on file at the office of the HDC for those seeking greater understanding.

Freestanding signs are no longer permitted. The HDC defines freestanding signs to include any sign attached to, or part of a completely self-supporting structure, other than a building or a fence, including rock signs for commercial purposes.

2. QUARTERBOARDS

Quarterboards are not permitted as commercial business signs because historically they were not used except as ships' name boards. Their use on Nantucket as commercial signs postdates 1945.

“Names of the vessels inscribed in boards very frequently were fastened to the fore and after quarters along the rail. Forward they were at times called ‘head’ boards and aft, ‘quarter’ boards. They were usually simple to make them easily legible but fancy ends or scrolled decorations were to be found and some were highly carved. Laws stipulating that every documented vessel carry her name clearly lettered at least on the stern gave the carver another chance to show his skill with individual letters which were fastened to the transom or occasionally cut into planking.”
M.V. Brewington Shipcarvers of North America (Barre, MA: Barre Publishing Co., 1962) p. 105.

3. REGISTRATION OF SIGNS PRE- DATING TOWN BY-LAW

The submittal, to the sign administrator prior to May 1, 1991, of a photograph of a sign accompanied by a letter stating that sign's location and purpose and certifying its presence prior to November 27, 1990, shall be prima facie evidence that the sign submitted was erected and maintained prior to November 27, 1990. Failure to submit such photo and letter prior to May 1, 1991, shall be prima facie evidence that the sign was not erected and maintained prior to November 27, 1990.

All photos and letters are available for review at the HDC office.

APPENIX D - SIGN ADVISORY COUNCIL

A Sign Advisory Council shall be selected by the Historic District Commission to review all sign applications for compliance with the sign regulations, to discuss and meet with applicants on an advisory basis only, and to notify the HDC of sign violations. Once the Commission has adopted these regulations, they will supersede all other regulations.

The SAC shall be composed of five (5) full-time members and two (2) alternates. Each will be chosen by majority vote of the members of the HDC. Each will serve the SAC for a minimum of three years. The original appointment will be one member for one year, two members for two years, and two members for three years. One member will serve as a chairperson, appointed annually at the first SAC meeting following Town Meeting. The chairperson shall maintain a channel of communication with the HDC.

The SAC shall consist of members drawn from the community and shall when possible include professionals, active or inactive, in the fields of architecture, history, design, historic preservation, and landscape architecture. Business people, particularly those who understand design and historic signs, will also be appointed.

The SAC will meet regularly in the office of the HDC to process applications and discuss pertinent issues in a timely fashion.

The SAC encourages applicants to attend sign meetings, as well as HDC meetings. A dialogue with applicants is always the most expedient way to resolve issues. Preliminary schematic consultation with the SAC is beneficial and encouraged particularly for larger scaled projects.

The HDC and SAC shall meet on a regular basis as needed with all members present, to discuss common issues.

For research purposes, the Commission has available books, catalogs, photographs of period signs, and detailed drawings. These materials are for use in the office of the Commission and shall not be removed from the premises.

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