



**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE**  
Community Development Department

**SIGN CERTIFICATION FORM  
COVER SHEET**

**IRAM FAROOQ**  
Assistant City Manager for  
Community Development

**SANDRA CLARKE**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Administration

**KHALIL MOGASSABI**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Planning

Sign Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Zoning District: \_\_\_\_\_ Overlay District: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Special Planning Concern: (Sec. 19.46 & 19.42.1) \_\_\_\_\_

Application Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sketch of sign enclosed: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE NOTE: All signs must receive a permit from the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) before installation. Community Development Department Certification action does NOT constitute issuance of a permit or certification that all other code requirements have been met. Do not contract for the fabrication of a sign until all permits have been issued including City Council approval, if necessary for signs in the public way\*.

\* Any sign or portion of a sign extending more than six (6) inches into the public way/sidewalk, must receive approval from the Cambridge City Council; a bond must be posted with the City Clerk.

The Sign Ordinance is available online under Article 7.000 at <https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/zoninganddevelopment/Zoning/Ordinance>

Contact Liza Paden at 617 349 4647 or [lpaden@cambridgema.gov](mailto:lpaden@cambridgema.gov) for further information.

**Proposed PROJECTING Sign (including signs on awnings)**

Area in Square feet: \_\_\_\_\_ Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

Illumination: Natural \_\_\_ Internal \_\_\_ External \_\_\_

Height (from ground to the top of the sign): \_\_\_\_\_

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**1. COMPLETE WHEN SIGN IS ACCESSORY TO A FIRST FLOOR STORE**

Length in feet of store front facing street: (a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of signs allowed accessory to store: outside (1 x a) \_\_\_\_\_, behind windows (0.5 x a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of all existing signs on the store front to remain (including any freestanding sign): \_\_\_\_\_. Area of additional signs permitted: \_\_\_\_\_.

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**2. COMPLETE FOR ANY OTHER SIGN**

Length in feet of building facade facing street: (a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of signs allowed accessory to the building facade: outside (1 x a) \_\_\_\_\_, behind windows (0.5 x a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of all existing signs on the building facade to remain (including any freestanding sign): \_\_\_\_\_. Area of additional signs permitted: \_\_\_\_\_.

**SUMMARY OF LIMITATIONS FOR PROJECTING SIGNS (see reverse side for more general summary of the sign regulations; review Article 7.000 of the Zoning Ordinance for all zoning requirements.)**

**AREA: 13 square feet maximum. HEIGHT ABOVE THE GROUND: 20 feet but below the sills of second floor windows. ILLUMINATION: Natural or external only. NUMBER: one per store plus one per entry to the remainder of the building.**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CERTIFICATION**

Sign conforms to requirements of Article 7.000: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Sign requires a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal: YES \_\_\_\_\_

Relevant sections: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CDD Representative \_\_\_\_\_

## Proposed WALL Sign

Area in Square feet: \_\_\_\_\_ Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

Illumination: Natural \_\_\_\_\_ Internal \_\_\_\_\_ External \_\_\_\_\_

Height (from ground to the top of the sign): \_\_\_\_\_

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### 1. COMPLETE WHEN SIGN IS ACCESSORY TO A FIRST FLOOR STORE

Length in feet of store front facing street: (a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of signs allowed accessory to store: outside (1 x a) \_\_\_\_\_, behind windows (0.5 x a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of all existing signs on the store front to remain (including any freestanding sign): \_\_\_\_\_. Area of additional signs permitted: \_\_\_\_\_.

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### 2. COMPLETE FOR ANY OTHER SIGN

Length in feet of building facade facing street: (a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of signs allowed accessory to the building facade: outside (1 x a) \_\_\_\_\_, behind windows (0.5 x a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of all existing signs on the building facade to remain (including any freestanding sign): \_\_\_\_\_. Area of additional signs permitted: \_\_\_\_\_.

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**SUMMARY OF LIMITATIONS FOR WALL SIGNS (see reverse side for more general summary of the sign regulations; review Article 7.000 of the Zoning Ordinance for all zoning requirements.)**

**AREA: 60 square feet maximum. HEIGHT ABOVE THE GROUND: 20 feet but below the sills of second floor windows. ILLUMINATION: Natural or external, or internal illumination with significant limitations. NUMBER: No limit.**

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CERTIFICATION

Sign conforms to requirements of Article 7.000: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Sign requires a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal: YES \_\_\_\_\_

Relevant sections: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CDD Representative \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed FREESTANDING Sign**

Area in Square feet: \_\_\_\_\_ Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

Illumination: Natural \_\_\_ Internal \_\_\_ External \_\_\_

Height (from ground to the top of the sign): \_\_\_\_\_

**1. COMPLETE WHEN SIGN IS ACCESSORY TO A FIRST FLOOR STORE**

Length in feet of store front facing street: (a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of signs allowed accessory to store: outside (1 x a) \_\_\_\_\_, behind windows (0.5 x a) \_\_\_\_\_. Area of all existing signs on the store front to remain (including any freestanding sign): \_\_\_\_\_. Area of additional signs permitted: \_\_\_\_\_.

**2. COMPLETE FOR ANY OTHER SIGN**

Length in feet of building facade facing street: (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Area of signs allowed accessory to the building facade: outside (1 x a) \_\_\_\_\_, behind windows (0.5 x a) \_\_\_\_\_ Area of all existing signs on the building facade to remain (including any freestanding sign): \_\_\_\_\_ Area of additional signs permitted: \_\_\_\_\_.

**SUMMARY OF LIMITATIONS FOR FREESTANDING SIGNS (see reverse side for more general summary of the sign regulations; review Article 7.000 of the Zoning Ordinance for all zoning requirements.)**  
**AREA: 30 square feet maximum. HEIGHT ABOVE THE GROUND: 15 feet. ILLUMINATION: Natural or external only. NUMBER: Two per lot (but not exceeding 30 square feet in total area).**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CERTIFICATION**

Sign conforms to requirements of Article 7.000: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Sign requires a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal: YES \_\_\_\_\_

Relevant sections: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CDD Representative \_\_\_\_\_

**Existing Legally Established NONCONFORMING Sign**

Area in Square feet: \_\_\_\_\_ Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

Illumination: Natural \_\_\_\_\_ Internal \_\_\_\_\_ External \_\_\_\_\_

Height (from ground to the top of the sign): \_\_\_\_\_

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1. TYPE OF SIGN

a. wall \_\_\_\_\_ b. projecting \_\_\_\_\_ c. freestanding \_\_\_\_\_

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2. REASON FOR NONCONFORMITY

a. dimensions \_\_\_\_\_ b. illumination \_\_\_\_\_ c. other \_\_\_\_\_

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3. NATURE OF ALTERATIONS

a. replacement of plastic face \_\_\_\_\_ b. repainting of face \_\_\_\_\_ c. other \_\_\_\_\_

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**I certify that the above referenced sign was legally erected and in conformance with the requirements of Article 7.000 at that time and further that the alterations now proposed, and any others made within the last three (3) years, do not exceed fifty (50%) percent of the current replacement value of the sign.)**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CERTIFICATION

Sign conforms to requirements of Article 7.000: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Sign requires a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal: YES \_\_\_\_\_

Relevant sections: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CDD Representative \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGN CERTIFICATION FORM  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

***CERTIFICATION OF EXEMPTION***

**Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **FAX:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Premises:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Zoning District:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Overlay District:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Application Submitted:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sketch of Sign Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**PLEASE NOTE:** Signs, even if exempt under Article 7.000, may require a permit from the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) before installation. Community Development Department (CDD) action does NOT constitute issuance of a permit or certification that all other code requirements have been met. Awnings of any kind projecting over a city sidewalk require City Council approval.

**REASON FOR EXEMPTION:** *Awning without graphics* \_\_\_\_\_ *Exempt signs in Section 7.16.11 (including directional signs)* \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CDD Representative** \_\_\_\_\_

**Copies:** ISD \_\_\_\_\_ City Clerk\* \_\_\_\_\_ CDD \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary of Major Provisions for Office, Business and Industrial Districts

(Please consult Article 7.000 of the Zoning Ordinance for specific requirements)

### Limitations on Total Area of the Signs on a Building

(See definition of sign frontage)

1. **For Ground Floor stores:** Width of store x 1 square foot equals area of all signs permitted on the outside of the storefront
2. **For all signs on a single façade of a building:** (including those in paragraph 1 above): Width of building façade facing a street x 1 square foot equals area of all signs permitted on that façade. \* \*

(Note: An additional 0.5 square feet per foot of sign frontage is permitted for signs located behind the glass of a window).

### Limitations on the Height of Signs Above the Ground

Fifteen (15) for free-standing signs; twenty (20) feet for all other signs with expectation for certain hotel and theater signs.

### Limitations on Area of Individual Signs

1. Wall signs: Sixty (60) Square feet Maximum. \*
2. Projecting Signs: Thirteen (13) square feet maximum. \*
3. Free-standing signs: Thirty (30) Square feet maximum. \*

\* However no sign may exceed that area determined by the formula: sign frontage x 1 square foot.

### Limitations on Number of Signs Permitted

1. No limit
2. Projecting signs: one per ground floor establishment plus one per door serving the remainder of the building.
3. Free-standing Signs: Two per lot.

### Limitations on Kinds of Illumination

1. Projecting (including awning signs) and free-standing signs: Natural and external only.
2. Wall signs: Natural or external without limit. Internal under the following conditions:
  - a. At least one dimension is 30" or less; and
  - b. The sign is located behind window glass or projects no more than 2" from the building face; or the sign consists only of individual letters, or channel letters, or only the letters in a box sign illuminated.

\*\* Where the sign frontage is more than 100 feet from a street the multiplier may be increased to 2 square feet.



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## City of Cambridge Community Development Department STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

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The City of Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD) established the Storefront Improvement Program to provide financial assistance to property owners or retail tenants seeking to **remove architectural barriers, renovate the commercial building façade and enhance exterior signage**. The Program's objectives are to improve accessibility and physical appearance of retail establishments and enhance commercial districts.

The Program provides a **matching grant for the funding of well-designed improvements** that will coordinate all the important features of the storefront into a more attractive image while creating an accessible entrance for the public. This may include removal of physical barriers, restoration of architectural details, better windows and doors, and well-proportioned signage and lighting. Past matching grants have ranged from \$2,500 to \$35,000 with accessible design upgrades getting 90% reimbursement based on scope of work and available funds. Grants vary each year so contact CDD for further information.

Applicants are responsible for hiring licensed designers, architects, contractors, and sign fabricators. A retail tenant is defined as a commercial establishment selling goods or services directly to members of the public for personal use and whose use is not solely for re-sale purposes (wholesale). Included in this definition are food and creative for-profit businesses.

**Improvements made prior to a signed contract with the City of Cambridge will not be funded.**

The following criteria must be met for participation in the Program:

1. Applicants must be property owners or commercial retail tenants whose storefronts face onto a Cambridge street;
2. Commercial retail tenants must offer goods or services that are open to the public;
3. Preference will be given to independent businesses not required by contractual arrangement to maintain standardized décor, architecture, signs or similar features;
4. Preference will be given to commercial retail tenants in a commercial district or corridor;
5. Tenants must have written approval from property owners to participate in program;
6. Billboards on property, if applicable, must be permanently removed as part of the improvement;
7. Property owners must be up to date on all municipal taxes prior to participation in the program;
8. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements.

The City of Cambridge reserves the right to apply additional criteria before accepting a project if program demand exceeds budgeted resources.

For more information, please contact Christina DiLisio, (617) 349-4601, [cdilisio@cambridgema.gov](mailto:cdilisio@cambridgema.gov)