

§ 550-132. Permitted sign rules.

A. Signs shall be allowed on private property in the City of Watertown in accordance with Tables 550-132A(1) through 550-132A(4), which addresses permitted signage as it relates to permits, quantity, area, location, lighting, and zoning districts. The requirements set forth in Tables 550-132A(1) through 550-132A(4) shall be declared to be part of this chapter. Figure 550-132A illustrates the specific sign types. **[Amended 8-1-2023 by Ord. No. 23-19; 9-19-2023 by Ord. No. 23-22]**

- (1) The rules for permanent signs are located in Table 550-132A(1).
- (2) The rules for temporary signs are located in Table 550-132A(2).
- (3) The rules for permanent miscellaneous signs are located in Table 550-132A(3).
- (4) The rules for temporary miscellaneous signs are located in Table 550-132A(4).

Table 550-132A(1): Permanent Sign Group¹						Sign Area and Height Maximums for Zoning Districts		
Sign Categories and Sign Types	Sign Permit Needed	Number of Signs Allowed	Sign Area Formula (each side)	Sign Location Requirements	Sign Lighting Allowed	ER, CR, SR, TR	MR, SNR, RH, NO, NB	PO, PB, GB, CB, PI, GI, HI
A. Freestanding Sign Category:*								
1. Monument sign	Sign Permit required for each new sign.	Limit of 1 freestanding sign for every 330 feet of street frontage or 1 sign per each site entrance, regardless of the number of tenants	Maximum of 1 square foot of sign area for every foot of the site's street frontage - up to the District maximum	Minimum sign setback from each property line shall be greater than or equal to the sign height	Standard²	2 square feet maximum area per sign 5 feet maximum height per sign	50 square feet maximum area per sign 6 feet maximum height per sign	100 square feet maximum area per sign 15 feet maximum height per sign
2. Dual post sign							50 square feet maximum area per sign 6 feet maximum height per sign	100 square feet maximum area per sign 6 feet maximum height per sign
3. Pylon sign		Limit of 1 pylon sign for each site, regardless of the number of tenants				Not allowed		See § 550-132C
B. On-Building Sign Category: * All on-building signs on the same building facade shall be the same type of sign (1-5), below.								
1. Wall sign	Sign permit required for each new sign	Limit of 1 on-building sign for each tenant, on each building facade that faces (roughly parallel to) a public street	Maximum of 1 square foot of sign area for every foot of building's facade length - up to the District maximum	No part of any sign shall extend higher than the building parapet or eave and minimum overhang clearance required	Standard²	2 square feet maximum area per sign	100 square feet maximum area per sign	200 square feet maximum area per sign
2. Awning sign					Ambient only			
3. Canopy sign				Ambient and internal	100 square feet maximum area per sign	200 square feet maximum area per sign		
4. Marquee sign					100 square feet maximum area per sign	200 square feet maximum area per sign		
5. Projecting sign					Not allowed			

Table 550-132A(1): Permanent Sign Group ¹						Sign Area and Height Maximums for Zoning Districts		
Sign Categories and Sign Types	Sign Permit Needed	Number of Signs Allowed	Sign Area Formula (each side)	Sign Location Requirements	Sign Lighting Allowed	ER, CR, SR, TR	MR, SNR, RH, NO, NB	PO, PB, GB, CB, PL, GI, HI
C. Pedestrian Sign Category:* All pedestrian signs on the same building facade shall be the same type of sign (1-2), below.								
1. Blade sign	Sign permit required for each new sign	Limit of 1 pedestrian sign for each tenant.	None needed. Use maximum area limit	On-building. Must be located in front of a customer entrance.	Ambient only	Not allowed	14 square feet maximum area per sign	16 square feet maximum area per sign
2. Suspended sign								
D. Permanent Changeable Sign Category:*								
1. Wall-mounted changeable sign	Sign permit required for each new sign	Limit of 1 permanent wall-mounted changeable sign for each tenant	None needed. Use max area limit	On-building. Maximum 4 inches from wall	Ambient only	Not allowed	8 feet maximum area per sign	
2. Freestanding changeable sign		Limit of 1 permanent freestanding changeable sign for each tenant unless used in conjunction with a drive through Drive through use limit of 1 permanent freestanding changeable sign per drive through lane		Freestanding. Within 10 feet of public entrance When used in conjunction with a drive-through per C.U.P.	Standard ²		15 square feet maximum area per sign 8 feet maximum height per sign	
3. Drive-through sign		Limit of 1 drive-through sign per drive-through lane		Per C.U.P.		Not allowed		40 square feet maximum area per sign 8 feet maximum height per sign

* Refer to § 550-131A for definition and rules for each sign category (lettered) and each sign type (numbered).

¹ Available to land uses identified in Article IV of this chapter as agricultural, institutional, commercial, storage or disposal, transportation, and industrial.

² "Standard" means the following forms of sign lighting: ambient, backlit, internal character or cabinet, and gooseneck.

Table 550-132A(2): Temporary Sign Group¹						Sign Area and Height Maximums for Zoning Districts		
Sign Categories and Sign Types	Sign Permit Needed	Number of Signs Allowed	Sign Area Formula (each side)	Sign Location Requirements	Sign Lighting Allowed	ER, CR, SR, TR	MR, SNR, RH, NO, NB	PO, PB, GB, CB, PI, GI, HI
A. Temporary Board & Banner Sign Category:* Temporary board, banner, or feather sign maybe displayed permanently, but typically are not.								
1. Board sign	Sign permit not required	Any combination of sign type, not to exceed 2 signs per site, or 1 sign per each site entrance, or Limit 1 sign type per each tenant	None needed. Use maximum area limit	On-building or free-standing. Minimum sign setback from each property line shall be greater or equal to the sign height.	Ambient only	32 square feet maximum area per sign	40 square feet maximum area per sign	
2. Banner sign						6 feet maximum height per sign	6 feet maximum height per sign	
3. Feather sign						Not allowed	30 square feet maximum area per sign 10 feet maximum height per sign	
B. Temporary Changeable Sign Category:* Temporary changeable signs may be displayed daily³								
1. Sandwich board sign	Sign permit not required	Limit of 1 Sandwich Board Sign per sidewalk entrance during owner/tenant occupation of the property.	Shall not be more than four feet high or more than two feet wide, including frame or supporting structure.	Street terrace or on private property within the Central Business (CB) Zoning District	Ambient only	Not allowed		Allowed in CB Zoning District Only 8 square feet maximum area per sign 4 feet maximum height per sign
C. Temporary Approved Development Sign Category:*								
1. Active building board sign	Sign permit not required	Limit of 1 for each approved building with a valid Building Permit	None needed. Use max area limit	On-building or free-standing. Minimum sign setback from each property line shall be greater or equal to the sign height	Ambient only	32 square feet maximum area per sign 6 feet maximum height per sign		
2. Active plat board sign		Limit of 1 for each public street intersection at the perimeter of any active plat phase				32 square feet maximum area per sign 6 feet maximum height per sign		

* Refer to § 550-131B for definition and rules for each sign category (lettered) and each sign type (numbered).

¹ Available to land uses identified in Article IV of this chapter as agricultural, institutional, commercial, storage or disposal, transportation, and industrial.

³ Shall be kept inside the principal structure when the property owner or tenant is not occupying the principal structure.

Table 550-132A(3): Permanent Misc. Sign Group ¹						Sign Area and Height Maximums for Zoning Districts		
Sign Categories and Sign Types	Sign Permit Needed	Number of Signs Allowed	Sign Area Formula (each side)	Sign Location Requirements	Sign Lighting Allowed	ER, CR, SR, TR, MR, SNR	RH, NO, NB	PO, PB, GB, CB, PI, GI, HI
B. Optional Miscellaneous Sign Category:*								
1. Plaque sign	Sign permit required for each new sign	Up to 3 per designated historic property, site, or district	None needed. Use max area limit	On-building, within 10 feet of the main entrance.	Ambient only	6 square feet maximum area per sign 8 feet maximum height per sign		
2. Permanent plat sign		Per final plat or Certified Survey Map		In plat or Certified Survey Map Outlot		100 square feet maximum area per sign 8 feet maximum height per sign		
3. Auxiliary freestanding sign.		Not to exceed the total number of required parking stalls		3 feet from any street, side, or rear lot line 0 feet for parcels located within the CB Zoning District		2 square feet maximum area per sign 8 feet maximum height per sign		
4. Auxiliary wall sign.						6 square feet maximum area per sign		

* Refer to § 550-131C for definition and rules for each sign category (lettered) and each sign type (numbered).

¹ Available to all land uses.

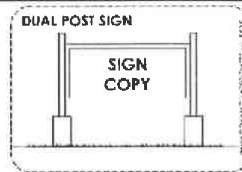
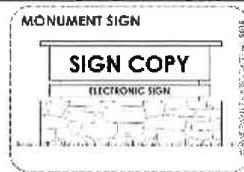
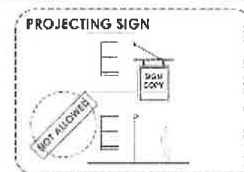
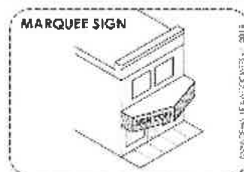
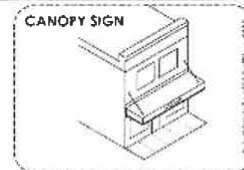
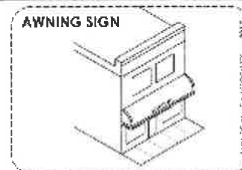
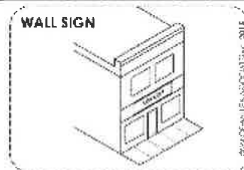
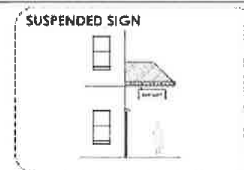
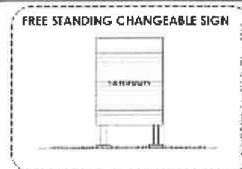
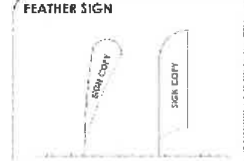
² "Standard" means the following forms of sign lighting: ambient, backlit, internal character or cabinet, and gooseneck

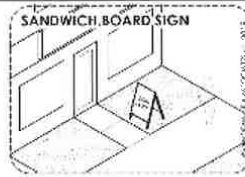
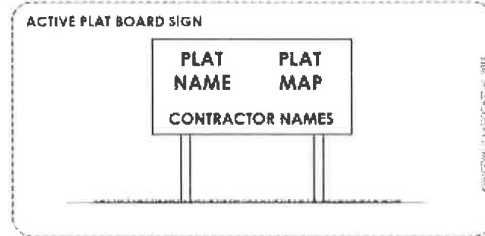
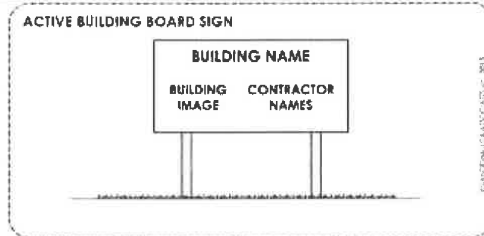
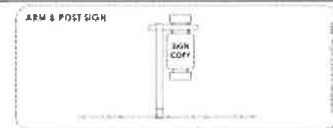
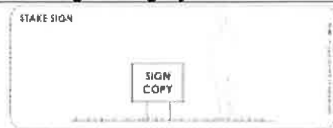
Table 550-132A(4): Temporary Misc. Sign Group ¹						Sign Area and Height Maximums for Zoning Districts		
Sign Categories and Sign Types	Sign Permit Needed	Number of Signs Allowed	Sign Area Formula (each side)	Sign Location Requirements	Sign Lighting Allowed	ER, CR, SR, TR, MR, SNR	RH, NO, NB	PO, PB, GB, CB, PI, GI, HI
A. Yard Sign Category:* A Yard Sign may be displayed permanently, but typically is not.								
1. Stake sign	Sign permit not required	Unlimited	None needed. Use maximum area limit. ²	Must be located on-site. ²	Ambient only	6 square feet maximum area per sign 4 feet maximum height per sign		
2. Frame sign				Minimum sign setback from each property line shall be greater than or equal to sign height.		9 square feet maximum area per sign 6 feet maximum height per sign		
3. Arm and post sign								

* Refer to § 550-131D for definition and rules for each sign category (lettered) and each sign type (numbered).

¹ Available to all land uses.

² Sign must be located on-site and must not be located within any street right-of-way (which includes the entire public sidewalk and street terrace area).

Figure 550-132A: Illustration of Sign Types**Freestanding Sign Category****On-Building Sign Category****Pedestrian Sign Category****Permanent Changeable Sign Category****Temporary Board & Banner Sign Category**

Temporary Changeable Sign Category**Temporary Approved Development Sign Category****Optional Miscellaneous Sign Category****Yard Sign Category****B. Signs in historic and special districts.**

- (1) In designated historic districts and special districts, in addition to the sign regulations in this article, all signs within any historic district and special district shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 325, Historic Preservation, of the City's Municipal Code.
- (2) Prior to the issuance of a sign permit, as defined in § 550-134C the applicant shall have the design reviewed by the Historic Preservation and Downtown Design Commission prior to approval.
- (3) All internally illuminated signs, plastic or otherwise, are strictly prohibited within a historic district.
 - (a) Except marquee signs, defined under § 550-131A(2)(d).
- (4) Marquee signs.
 - (a) Marquee signs shall be permitted on a historic site or a contributing property with evidence, historic photos and any other documentation of a prior marquee sign.
 - (b) Marquee signs on a historic site or a contributing property shall be restored to their original appearance and dimensions based on historic photos and any other

documentation.

- [1] The City of Watertown Historic Preservation and Downtown Design Commission may, with the granting of a certificate of appropriateness, allow a marquee sign to deviate from the original appearance and dimension based on historic photos and any other documentation.
- (c) Marquee signs on a historic site or a contributing property may have lighting restored to their original appearance and dimensions based on historic photos and any other documentation.
- (d) Marquee signs on a noncontributing property may be allowed pending a certificate of appropriateness from the City of Watertown Historic Preservation and Downtown Design Commission.
- (5) All pedestrian category signs within an historic district or a special district shall be designed to enhance and complement the historic character of the buildings within the historic district or special district and shall be subject to the following guidelines:
- (a) No building may have more than one pedestrian category sign per customer entrance and no more than one pedestrian category sign per tenant for each street frontage where the building is built up to the sidewalk.
- (b) No pedestrian category sign shall be more than four feet in width, with a maximum total outward extension, including bracketry, of five feet from the building to which it is attached. The pedestrian category sign itself shall not be closer than six inches to the building to which it is attached.
- (c) Three-dimensional signs are allowed but may not exceed two feet at their largest cross section. The sign message shall be limited to the two surfaces perpendicular to the building.
- (d) All fasteners and bracketry shall be securely fastened to the building at both the top and bottom of the sign. All bracketry shall be part of the overall design and shall be made to enhance the sign. The fasteners shall be bolted to masonry joints wherever possible to avoid damage to brick or stonework.
- (e) Pedestrian category signs shall be positioned so they are an integral design feature of the building and should help to define and enhance architectural features. Signs shall only be placed in the horizontal lintels or "sign space" above the storefront windows or in other historically appropriate areas approved by the Historic Preservation and Downtown Design Commission.
- (f) No pedestrian category signs shall be placed, mounted or erected in such a manner as to interfere with any exit, fire escape, window or architectural ornamentation.
- (g) Pedestrian category signs may be externally illuminated only as follows:
- [1] Gooseneck lighting from above the sign.
- [2] Lighting shall be directed onto the sign and no other part of the building.

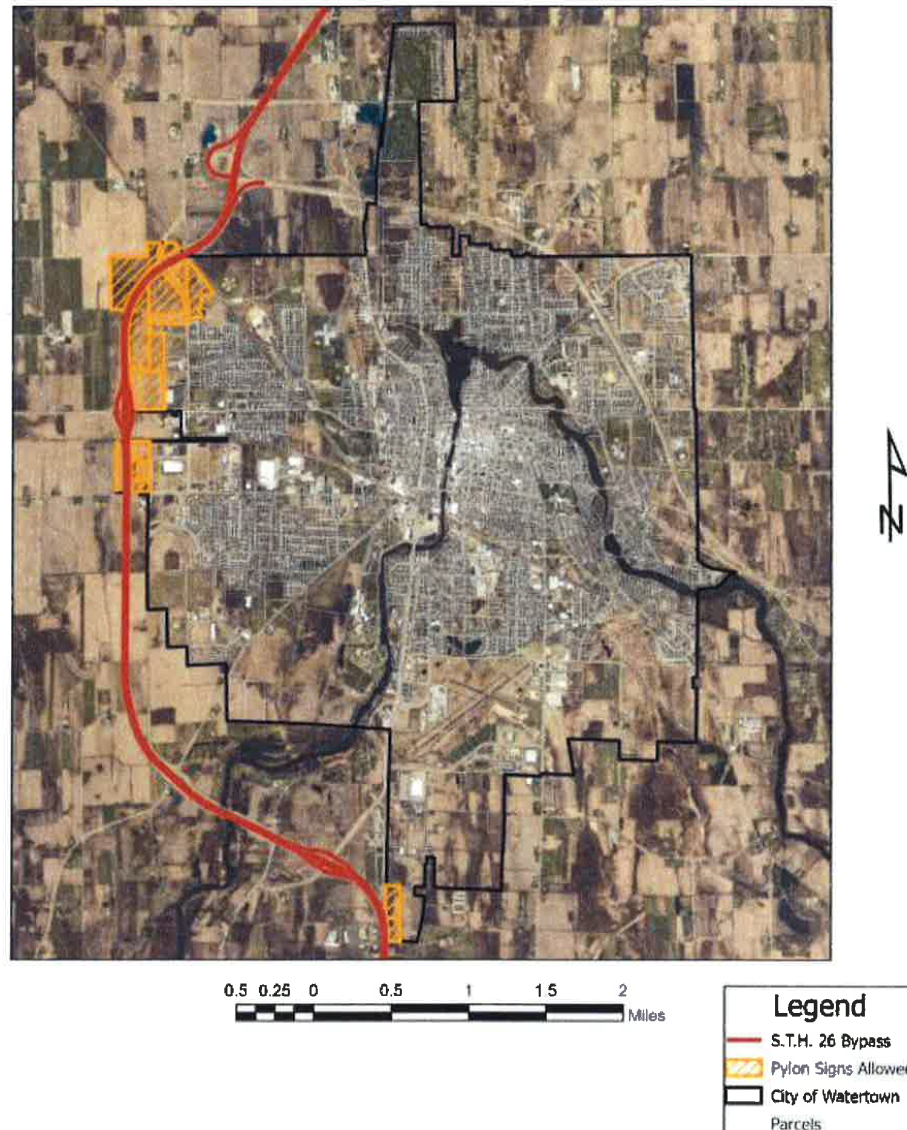
- (h) Sign colors should blend with the building facade to which the sign is attached. No more than six colors shall be used. Colors shall be selected from the low-intensity colors on the color chart provided by the Historic Preservation and Downtown Design Commission.
- (i) Allowable pedestrian category sign materials shall be made of a rigid standardized sign material (e.g., wood, wood laminate, metal, etc.).

C. S.T.H. 26 pylon sign allowance areas.

- (1) Location. Pylon signs shall only be permitted within the S.T.H. 26 pylon sign allowance areas in Figure 550-132C.
- (2) Height. Pylon signs may not exceed the maximum building height bulk requirement for the corresponding Zoning District for the property upon which the pylon sign is being erected.
 - (a) Pylon signs may exceed said maximum height regulations with the granting of a conditional use permit which specifically states the maximum permitted height of the proposed pylon sign.
 - (b) In no instance shall a pylon sign extend into the Airport Approach Protection Zone or Height Limitation Zone identified in Chapter 211 of the City of Watertown Municipal Code.
- (3) Maximum permitted sign area: one square foot of signage for every foot of the adjacent public street frontage selected for the lot — up to a maximum sign area of 150 square feet.
- (4) Pylon signs shall have signage plans approved and stamped by a professional engineer registered in the State of Wisconsin and accompanied by a statement of compliance with state laws.
- (5) Pylon signs shall meet all other requirements for the freestanding sign category in Table 550-132A(1).

Figure 550-132C: S.T.H. 26 Pylon Sign Allowance Area

S.T.H. 26 Pylon Sign Allowance Areas City of Watertown, WI



Section § 550-133: Sign Setback, Height, Measurement, and Flexibility