



**SPECIAL PERMIT FOR COMPREHENSIVE SIGN PLAN APPROVAL
CHECKLIST & REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPLICATION**

**Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
City Hall, 455 Main Street, Room 404, Worcester, MA 01608
Office 508-799-1400 Ext. 31440 – Fax 508-799-1406**

One original, one electronic and 15 copies of the following documents:

A. Zoning Determination Form

- Form is provided by the Building & Zoning Division of Department of Inspectional Services located at 25 Meade Street.
- Form must be signed by an authorized Building & Zoning Division staff member. There is no fee for the zoning determination form.

B. Application

- An application with original signatures by all petitioners.
- If you are not the owner of the subject property and are a lessee or optionee, you need to provide supporting information such as a lease or a purchase and sale agreement that shows your interest in the property.

C. Certification of Tax/Revenue Collection Compliance

- All current owners of subject property and applicants must certify that all local taxes, fees, assessments, betterments, or any other municipal charges of any kind are current with the City Treasurer's Office (part of the application).

D. A Comprehensive Sign Plan (the CSP may be submitted in conjunction with Definitive Site Plan Approval review).

- See CSPA Submission Requirements below.

E. Certified Map and List of Abutters

- The original, signed by the Assessor (2nd Floor, City Hall at Room 209).

Additionally, submit the following:

F. Two Sets of Stamped Envelopes with Assessor's Address Labels for abutters and applicant.

- Request two (2) sets of Assessor's Address Labels (listing all abutters and abutters to abutters) from the Assessor's Office – there is a fee for this service.
- Create two (2) identical sets of stamped envelopes addressed to the abutters (using the Assessor's labels above).
- The return address on the envelopes should read: City of Worcester, Division of Planning and Regulatory Services; City Hall; 455 Main Street, Room 404; Worcester, MA 01608. (The office has a return address stamp if you'd like to use it).

These envelopes will be used by DPRS staff to send notices of the public hearing and its outcome.

G. Appropriate fee according to the most updated Fee Schedule. Please make checks payable to the City of Worcester.

H. 1 Digital Copy (see Requirement #3 below).

****All Application Deadlines are 2:00 P.M. Unless Otherwise Specified****

City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance
Article 4 Section 6(l)
The Comprehensive Sign Plan Approval Submission Requirements

The Comprehensive Sign Plan may be submitted in conjunction with Definitive Site Plan review or as a stand-alone review. The Comprehensive Sign Plan shall include at a minimum:

- 1) A site plan drawn to scale, with a north arrow, prepared by a registered engineer showing the following:
 - a) Boundary lines of the lot, frontage and other dimensional setbacks of proposed structures on site.
 - b) Proposed contours of the site.
 - c) All vehicular and pedestrian ways throughout the site including parking areas as well as the surrounding street network.
 - d) Location of all existing and proposed signs including proposed instructional signs and existing or proposed non-accessory signs.
 - e) Dimensions of all signs including sign area, height, spacing, clearance, and setbacks as applicable.
 - f) Sign table showing total area of all existing and proposed signage on site.
 - g) Existing and proposed landscaping in relation to proposed structures and signage.
 - h) Existing and proposed illumination for signs including whether illumination will be external or internal.
 - i) Existing and proposed signs with digital display including proposed dimensions of digital display and equipment brochures showing ability to comply with operational standards of the ordinance.
- 2) Photo simulations of existing and proposed signs superimposed on buildings to show what will be viewable from any street within 300 ft if installed.
- 3) **Digital Copy.** All applications, plans and materials must also be submitted as a PDF file to planning@worcesterma.gov prior to or at the time of application submittal to the office. All electronic files must be in the following format:
 - o Portable Document Format (.pdf), readable by Adobe Acrobat v.7.0 and later, named by project address and application type (ex. 455 Main Street – Planning Board Special Permit)
 - o Minimum resolution of 200 dpi
 - o No single file should be greater than 50 MB (collections may be broken into separate files)

Exceptions:

 - o Any application items not produced electronically such as hand drawn plans, drawings or hand written applications are not required to be submitted electronically.
 - o Plans, drawings and applications created prior to March 2013 that are not available to the applicant in electronic format.
- 4) Does your project require a new or upgraded electric system? Contacting National Grid early in the process will assist us in meeting your needs for electrical service and help keep your project on track. Call us today at 800-375-7405.

Modifications to Approved Comprehensive Plan.

Per Zoning Ordinance Article IV, Section 6(l)(4):

“Once a Comprehensive Sign Plan has been approved, subsequent applications for specific signs shall be reviewed administratively by the Building Commissioner when the proposed sign is in compliance with the approved Comprehensive Sign Plan. Any modifications that propose an increase in the number, size, height, a change in location of a freestanding sign closer to residential lots or the addition of digital display that was not initially approved by the SPGA under the comprehensive sign plan shall require an amendment to the special permit. Minor modifications including a reduction in size, number or height or change in text, colors or materials shall not require an amendment to the special permit.”

If you are applying for an Amendment, in addition to the above-mentioned items from the Application Checklist, submit a narrative describing what the proposed changes are.

Useful Definitions

For full list of definitions and sign regulations, please refer to the Zoning Ordinance.

1.) Measurement Standards

Determining Sign Area and Dimensions

- a) Signs Attached to a Building
 - i) For any sign that is framed, outlined, painted or otherwise prepared and intended to provide a background for a sign, the area and dimensions shall include the entire portion within such background or frame.
 - ii) The permitted area of signs comprised of individual letters, figures or elements and attached to a building including but not limited to: awning, building directory, canopy, marquee, roof and wall signs shall be calculated by determining the smallest regular geometric shape (rectangle, circle, trapezoid, triangle, etc.) or combination of regular geometric shapes that encompasses the perimeter of all elements in the display, the frame, and any applied background that is not part of the architecture of the building. When separate elements are organized to form a single sign, but are separated by open space, the sign area and dimensions shall be calculated by determining the geometric shape or combination of shapes which includes all the display areas. Minor appendages to a particular rectangular shape, as determined by the Building Commissioner, shall not be included in the total area of the sign.
- b) Freestanding Signs
 - i) When two identical sign faces are placed back to back so that both faces cannot be viewed from any point at the same time, and are part of the same sign structure, the sign area shall be computed as the measurement of one of the two faces. When the sign has more than two display surfaces, the area of the sign shall be the area of the largest display surfaces that are visible from any single direction.
 - ii) For a freestanding sign, the sign area shall include the frame, if any, but shall not include:
 - aa) A pole or other structural support unless such pole or structural support is internally illuminated or otherwise so designed as to constitute an advertising portion of the sign.
 - bb) Architectural features that are either part of a freestanding structure, and not an integral part of the sign, and which may consist of landscaping, building or structural forms complementing the site in general.

2. **Building Unit** – A building unit is equivalent to a single tenant space. The length of the tenant space on the first floor shall be the basis for determining the allowable area for wall signs.

3. **Primary and Secondary Building Unit Length** – The building unit length shall include the length of the first floor building units of a building facing a street, facing a primary parking area for the building or tenants, or containing the public entrance(s) to the building or building units.

- aa) The primary building unit lengths shall be considered the portion of any building unit length containing the primary public entrance(s) for the building or building units and each building unit length facing a different street.
- bb) Secondary building unit lengths shall be considered the portion of any building unit length that does not meet the criteria of a primary building unit length but that contains:
 - A secondary public entrance(s) to the building or building units
 - All building walls facing a primary parking area accessory to the use.
 - All building walls that do not contain accessory parking areas or secondary entrances but that are substantially visible from a street and are not designated as a primary building unit length by subsection D(3)(b)(i) above.

4. Measuring Building Unit Length

- a) Building unit lengths as defined above shall be the sum of all wall lengths parallel or nearly parallel to street frontage excluding any such wall length determined by the Building Commissioner as clearly unrelated to the building unit length criteria.
- b) For buildings with two or more frontages, the length of the wall and allowable sign area shall be calculated separately for each such building frontage.
- c) The building unit length shall be measured from the centerline of the party walls separating the building unit.

5. **Non-Accessory Sign:** A sign that advertises, directs attention to, or identifies entities, products or activities conducted, sold or offered at a location other than the premises on which the sign is located.(see also Billboard Sign).

CITY OF WORCESTER PLANNING BOARD



SPECIAL PERMIT FOR COMPREHENSIVE SIGN PLAN APPROVAL
APPLICATION FORM

Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
City Hall, 455 Main Street, Room 404, Worcester, MA 01608
Office 508-799-1400 Ext. 31440 – Fax 508-799-1406

- 1. **Street Address of the Property in this Application:** _____
- 2. Name of Applicant: _____
- 3. Address of Applicant: _____
- 4. Telephone: _____
- 5. Interest in Property:
- 6. A. Owner B. Developer C. Other
- 7. Owner of Record: _____
(If different from Applicant)

8. Address of Owner of Record: _____

9. If the applicant is different from the owner, fill out the following:

AUTHORIZATION: I, _____, Owner of Record of the property listed with the Assessing Division of the City of Worcester, Massachusetts as Map _____ Block _____ Lot(s) _____, do hereby authorize _____ to file this application with the Division of Planning & Regulatory Services of the City of Worcester on this the _____ day of _____, 20____.

On this _____ day of _____, 20____, before me personally appeared _____, to me known to be the person described in and who executed the foregoing instrument and acknowledged that he/she executed the same as his/her free act and deed.

NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission Expires: _____

(If there is more than one owner of the land to be considered in this application, a notarized authorization is required for each owner.)

17. Sign Survey Table – Permanent Accessory Signs.

List all permanent, accessory signs you are proposing to retain on site, remove, change, and/or install and include all applicable dimensions and relief requested through the Special Permit. (If you cannot fit information into the table, copy subheadings and/or use additional sheets as necessary):

Sign #	Choose Sign Type: ¹	Location on Lot Include building #, name of business or building name as applicable and cardinal directions (e.g. Building A- north façade or west of driveway). ²	Choose one of the following descriptions of the sign:	Maximum permitted area of sign.	# of Tenants Associated with the Sign (note for freestanding signs, # of tenants impacts maximum permitted area of sign face)	Proposed area of sign in SF	Maximum permitted height (ft) if applicable	For freestanding signs - proposed height of sign in ft. For wall and freestanding signs, proposed height of sign above the wall, eave or roof line.	Required Setbacks e.g.:	Proposed Setbacks	Proposed Illumination	Proposed Digital Display Yes or No?	Dimensional Relief Requested, if any, from the Planning Board for this type of sign including area, setback, height or number permitted
Match sign number in table to references on photo simulations and plans	Awning (A) Building Directory(BD) Canopy (C) e.g. gas station Freestanding Monument (FM) Freestanding Pole (FP) Marquee (M) Projecting (P) Roof (R) Wall (WA) Window (WI) permanent & temporary		Existing to Remain Existing to be Removed Change to Existing Proposed (New)	Include any applicable height, setback or other bonuses					Set back from lot lines Required distance from other signs (e.g. projecting) Required setbacks due to digital display		Exterior or Interior? What type of fixtures is proposed?	If yes, include SF of digital sign	
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													

¹ See Article VI of the Zoning Ordinance for sign type definitions.

² Identification should match submitted photo simulations and site plans.

Sign #	Choose Sign Type: ³	Location on Lot Include building #, name of business or building name as applicable and cardinal directions (e.g. Building A- north façade or west of driveway). ⁴	Choose one of the following descriptions of the sign:	Maximum permitted area of sign, Include any applicable height, setback or other bonuses	# of Tenants Associated with the Sign (note for freestanding signs, # of tenants impacts maximum permitted area of sign face)	Proposed area of sign in SF (include length x width)	Maximum permitted height (ft) if applicable	For freestanding signs - proposed height of sign in ft. For wall and freestanding signs, proposed height of sign above the wall, eave or roof line.	Required Setbacks e.g.: Set back from lot lines Required distance from other signs (e.g. projecting) Required setbacks due to digital display	Proposed Setbacks	Proposed Illumination Exterior or Interior? What type of fixtures is proposed?	Proposed Digital Display Yes or No? If yes, include SF of digital sign	Dimensional Relief Requested, if any, from the Planning Board for this type of sign including area, setback, height or number permitted
Match sign number in table to references on photo simulations and plans	Awning (A) Building Directory(BD) Canopy (C) e.g. gas station Freestanding Monument (FM) Freestanding Pole (FP) Marquee (M) Projecting (P) Roof (R) Wall (WA) Window (WI) permanent & temporary		Existing to Remain Existing to be Removed Change to Existing Proposed (New)										
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													

³ See Article VI of the Zoning Ordinance for sign type definitions.

⁴ Identification should match submitted photo simulations and site plans.

18. Non-accessory Signs.

Describe location, number and area of non-accessory signs on site (billboards) – wall, freestanding or roof.

19. Instructional Signs.

Describe location, number and area of instructional signs.

20. Window Signs. Demonstrate compliance with the following requirement for window signs:

The maximum permitted area of temporary and permanent window signs, combined, per floor and per primary and secondary building lengths shall not exceed 50% per story and per building length. This provision shall not be construed to limit window sign area to 50% of each individual window pane.

21. Site Information Relevant to Signs.

List the site’s available frontage (s) – (One site may have more than one frontage if abutting two or more streets (e.g. corner lot).

22. Building Dimensions Relevant to Signs

(Copy and use additional sheets as necessary):

List all individual establishments on site and provide the required dimensional information. For sign permitting for tenants in future phases of development, indicate as: Retail A, Restaurant B, etc..

List all current and proposed establishments individually	List primary building unit length (s) per establishment. For multi-story buildings, provide area in SF for proposed use	List secondary building unit length (s) per establishment. For multi-story buildings, provide SF for proposed use)	Height of building (in ft)	Setback from nearest street from which sign (s) are visible

24. SPECIAL PERMIT FINDINGS OF FACT RELATED TO SPECIAL PERMIT APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR ACCESSORY SIGNS (per Article IV Section 6(J)(2))

- 1) Describe how all other permanent and temporary accessory and non-accessory signage on site are in compliance with zoning requirements including provisions that govern the removal of abandoned signs:

- 2) Describe how the proposed sign/s do/es, in addition to other signs on site, do/es not create unnecessary visual clutter or constitute signage overload for the lot or surrounding neighborhood and street:

- 3) Describe how the proposed sign/s do/es not substantially block visibility of signs on abutting lots:

- 4) Describe how the proposed sign/s do/es not substantially block solar access of abutting residential dwelling windows:

- 5) Describe how the proposed illumination is appropriate to the site and is appropriately located with respect to the surrounding neighborhood:

- 6) Describe whether any proposed digital display is appropriate with respect to the proposed sign scale and location:

- 7) Explain how the proposed sign/s do/es not derogate from the purposes and intent of Section 6 , specifically, and the Zoning Ordinance, generally.

25. SPECIAL PERMIT APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR COMPREHENSIVE SIGN PLAN APPROVAL (per Article IV Section 6(J)(8))

- 1) Explain whether number, size, height, illumination, and proposed digital display are appropriate to the site and surrounding neighborhood:

- 2) Explain whether proposed instructional signs are well-placed and suitable in number and size:

- 3) Describe the adequacy, arrangement, location and appearance of all proposed permanent signs:

- 4) Describe the protection of adjacent or neighboring lots against glare and unsightliness:

- 5) Describe the relationship between signs and proposed landscaping on site:

- 6) Explain whether requested relief for one or more proposed signs with respect to number, dimensional requirements, or digital display is necessary because of site specific conditions and allows for more creative, well-placed signage that directs vehicles and pedestrians safely to the site and throughout site:

WHEREFORE, the applicant(s) requests that this Board grant the special permit (s) as requested above.

By: _____
(Signature of Applicant or Applicant's Agent)
If more than one applicant, all applicants must fill out information.

By: _____
(Signature of Property Owner or Owner's Agent)
If more than one property owner, all owners must fill out information.

(Name of Applicant)

(Name of Property Owner)

(Address)

(Address)

(Contact Phone Number)

(Contact Phone Number)

(Email)

(Email)

(Date)

(Date)

**CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH
WORCESTER REVISED ORDINANCES GOVERNING REVENUE COLLECTION**

***Note: This form must be completed and signed by both the applicant(s) and owner(s) of the property certifying payment of all local taxes, fees, assessments, betterments, or any other municipal charges of any kind. Failure to include a fully completed certification form with the application shall result in the application being deemed incomplete and ineligible for further processing by the Zoning Board of Appeals.**

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40, Section 57 and the City of Worcester General Revised Ordinance, Chapter 11, Section 26-28, the undersigned applicant and all parties having an ownership interest therein, hereby certify, under the pains and penalties of perjury, that the applicant(s) and owner(s) have complied with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Worcester regarding payment of all local taxes, fees, assessments, betterments or any other municipal charges of any kind.

(Give first and last names in full. In case of a corporation give names of President, Treasurer and Manager; and in case of firms, give names of individual members.)

(1) If a Proprietorship or Single Owner of residential property:

Name of Owner _____

Business Address _____

Home Address _____

Business Phone _____ Home Phone _____

Signature of owner (certifying payment of all municipal charges):

_____ Date: _____

(2) If a Partnership or Multiple Owners of residential property:

Full names and address of all partners

Printed Names

Addresses

Business Address _____

Business Phone _____

Signature of all owners of property (certifying payment of all municipal charges -attach multiple pages if necessary)

_____ Date: _____
_____ Date: _____
_____ Date: _____
_____ Date: _____

(3) If a Corporation:

Full Legal Name _____

State of Incorporation _____

Principal Places of Business _____

Place of Business in Massachusetts _____

Printed Names of Officers of Corporation:	Title
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Owners of Corporation:		
Printed Names	Address	% of stock
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Signature of all owners of property (certifying payment of all municipal charges -attach multiple pages if necessary)

_____	Date: _____

(4) If a Trust:

Name of Trust _____

Business Address _____

Printed Names of Trustees:	Address
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Printed Names of Beneficiaries:	Address
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Signature of trustees of property (certifying payment of all municipal charges -attach multiple pages if necessary)

_____	Date: _____

(5) Signature of Applicant (if different from owner, certifying payment of all municipal charges):

Printed Name of Applicant: _____

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

The City of Worcester, by this document, does not provide legal advice. Questions about Variances and Special Permits should be directed to your legal counsel.

If your variance and special permit petition is approved, obtain a certified copy of the approved decision from the city clerk's office and record the decision at the registry of deeds.

Special Permit Decisions: Final decisions are typically signed at the next scheduled Board Meeting and filed the following day with the City Clerk. Typically, if there is no appeal of the decision after twenty days (20) has elapsed from the date the decision was filed with the City Clerk's office, the applicant may obtain a properly certified copy of the approved decision from the City Clerk (Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40A, Section 11).

City Clerk, City Hall
455 Main Street -Second Floor, Room 206
508-799-1121
Monday 8:45am - 5:00pm
Tuesday - Friday 8:45am - 4:15pm
www.worcesterma.gov

Recording Special Permit (s): Upon obtaining a properly certified copy of the approved decision, the applicant must bring the same copy to the Worcester District Registry of Deeds and have the decision recorded (Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40A, Section 11).

Worcester District Registry of Deeds
City Square - 90 Front Street, Level 2 - 508-798-7717
Recording Hours: Monday – Friday 9 am to 4 pm
Closed on State or Federal Holidays
www.worcesterdeeds.com

Lapse of Special Permit(s): Per the City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance, Article II, § 9 (D)(5): If the activity authorized by a special permit granted by the ZBA or SPGA is not initiated within one (1) year of the date of grant of such special permit except in the case of phased construction as approved by the ZBA or SPGA and/or if the activity is not completed within two (2) years, then the special permit shall lapse unless the Director of Code Enforcement makes a determination that failure to complete was for good cause. Otherwise, after a lapse, the special permit may be re-established only after notice and a new hearing pursuant to this Ordinance (Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40A, Section 11).

Your decision must be recorded prior to use of approved special permit

For more information about the rules and regulations of City of Worcester Boards and Commissions:

1. The City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance and City of Worcester Zoning Map are available online at www.worcesterma.gov. Choose the "Quick Find" option. Then click on "Ordinances and Regulations" and select the appropriate file.
2. Copies of the City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance or Board Rules and Regulations can also be purchased at the City Clerk's office, 2nd floor of City Hall.
3. For more information about M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Zoning: <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/index.htm>