

## SIGNS

### Intent

Signs are an important streetscape design element that affect not only the visual character of the Historic District but also the vitality of its businesses. Signage provides business identification, and associates a building's exterior with its interior use. A quality sign program can help a business by making it distinctive.

Signs also serve as part of the traditional appearance of the community. While tastes and technology have evolved, signs have always been a visual element of the streetscape. Signs can augment or detract from the character of the Historic District. When sensitively designed, they accent buildings and add visual interest to the pedestrian realm.

Sign guidelines are intended to encourage appropriate graphic design that serves the needs of businesses while contributing to the quality of the historic commercial environment. Graphic design is encouraged that both enhances commerce and contributes to the historic commercial character of the downtown. Well-designed signs that complement each other and their buildings attract attention; poorly-designed signs compete with each other and cause visual confusion and clutter.

### A. General Guidance

1. Signage should reflect the pedestrian scale of the Historic District. Signs should be oriented to pedestrians in size and presentation, with simple and clear graphics.
2. Signage should be complementary to and integrated with the unique character of the specific building on which it is located; including scale, material, color, and detail. Lettering used during the period in which a building was constructed is recommended. Simple, modern lettering is also appropriate. The use of historically appropriate borders is encouraged. Signs that are out of character with those seen historically, or that would alter the historic character of the street or building, are inappropriate.
3. Creative, artistic and unique signage is encouraged. Sign designs incorporating icons, symbols and graphic logos or designs that represent a service or occupation that are the predominant features are preferable to large lettering or corporate logos.
4. Signs should provide an aesthetic and legible presentation of the sign message through careful consideration of color combination, illumination, sign placement, letter height, proportion and spacing, and by avoiding use of small and/or excessive lettering.
5. The building should be considered as part of the overall sign program. Signs should be subordinate to the overall building composition. When a sign is well-placed, it can complement a building's façade. Signs should be designed, scaled, and

positioned to work with the architecture and features of the building on which they are located.

6. Businesses located in multiple-tenant buildings who share an entry or whose frontage is on an alley or a secondary street are encouraged to use some form of cooperative signage in the form of a directory or a master sign plan. Several smaller signs may be aligned, or grouped into a single panel as a directory. If individual signage is preferred, the design may also be coordinated so that similar forms, fonts, or backgrounds are used, to tie the signs together visually and make them easier to read.

## B. Standards for all Sign Types

### 1. Materials

Sign materials should appear compatible with that of the building façade. Wood is the preferred sign material, however, metal and other durable materials that simulate painted wood may be acceptable. Except as awnings and public banners, vinyl, canvas, and similar non-rigid materials shall not be used for signs.

### 2. Sign Location

Signs shall not interrupt or overlap architectural features such as cornices, columns, and trim; and shall not extend beyond the edges of the wall on which they are mounted. New signs shall not be permitted above the sills of the windows of the second floor on two-story buildings. Signs on one-story buildings shall not project above the cornice line or eave.

Signs installed on buildings with mansard roofs shall not project above the highest peak of the roof, and shall be oriented perpendicular to the surrounding grade. Mansard roofs are defined as a roof having a slope in two planes on each side of the building, the lower plane being steeper, and the upper not easily seen from the ground.

**CONSISTENT**



Appropriate sign placement on building with mansard roof.

**INCONSISTENT**



Inappropriate sign placement.

## 3. Lighting

Lighting shall be subdued and from an external source. Back-lit and internally illuminated signs are prohibited except as noted. In general, bare bulbs visible from off-site locations are prohibited. The use of neon shall be consistent with the neon sign standards in this section.

### CONSISTENT



Appropriate external lighting is subdued and directed onto the sign.

### INCONSISTENT



Inappropriate external lighting creates glare.

## C. Sign Types

### 1. Wall signs

A wall sign is one that is painted, applied, or attached flush and parallel to the exterior façade of the building. Wall signs shall be located to fit within building features and shall be scaled to correspond to the scale of the building and its subordinate features.

### CONSISTENT



Appropriate sign placement complements building features.

### INCONSISTENT



Inappropriate sign placement obscures building features.

## 2. Projecting signs

Projecting signs are signs attached to a bracket on two or more edges, structurally affixed to the building wall.

- a. Projecting signs shall be perpendicular to the façade except that corner entry frontages may orient a projecting sign in the direction of the adjacent intersection at a 45 degree angle to the adjacent building streets.
- b. Brackets or other hardware used to retain a projecting sign shall be consistent with the building architecture. Where minimally visible, horizontal metal tubes may be used.
- c. Projecting signs shall correspond in size to the scale of the building or the feature on which the sign is located, consistent with the scale of historic signage on the same building or a similar building within the Historic District.
- d. Projecting signs may be internally illuminated with no more than one foreground and one background color, with an additional allowance for limited black elements when used for lettering and borders. Bright white shall not be allowed. Internally illuminated projecting signs are limited to 12 square feet sign in area.

### CONSISTENT



Appropriate internal illumination utilizes limited colors. Hardware is simple and appropriate.

### INCONSISTENT



Inappropriate internal illumination utilizes too many colors including bright white.

## 3. Awning/canopy signs

Awning signs are applied to the awning apron or awning return. Refer to awning standards for additional requirements related to awning structure. Canopy signs are applied to the vertical surface of the canopy structure.

# SIGN DESIGN STANDARDS

- a. Awning and canopy signs shall be limited to the name of the building or business and/or logo. Letter forms shall be a maximum of 8 inches in height and shall not be illuminated.
  - 1. A minimum one-inch border of awning surface shall be maintained on all sides of the sign area for awning signs.
  - 2. Letter forms may be allowed to extend beyond the borders of the canopy structure for canopy signs only.
- b. Letter and graphic forms shall be painted on or otherwise incorporated into the awning material on a vertical surface.
- c. Awning and canopy signs shall be limited to one color.
- d. Blade signs may be suspended from the awning or canopy structure subject to the requirements below.

## CONSISTENT



Appropriate awning signs with limited height of letter and graphic forms.

## INCONSISTENT



Inappropriate awning sign utilizes too many colors.

## CONSISTENT



Appropriate canopy sign with allowance for letter forms to extend beyond edges.

## INCONSISTENT



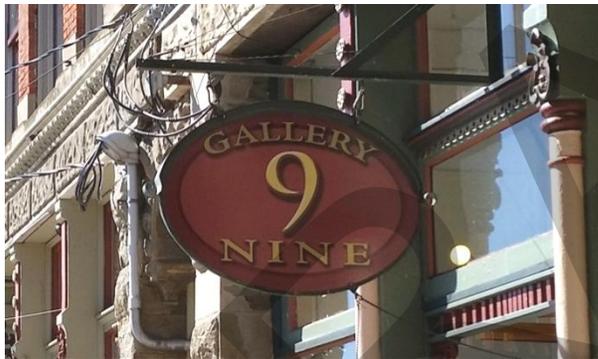
Inappropriate canopy sign is internally lit.

## 4. Blade signs

Blade signs are oriented perpendicular to the building façade and are suspended under a bracket or similar mounting device.

- a. Blade signs shall be suspended from a canopy, awning, or from above on a decorative metal bracket.
- b. Blade signs shall be limited to five square feet, with a maximum 18-inch vertical dimension and 48-inch horizontal dimension. Note: signs overhanging the public right of way must maintain a minimum eight-foot vertical clearance from the bottom of the sign to the surrounding grade.
- c. Brackets or other hardware used to retain a blade sign shall be consistent with the building architecture.
- d. Blade signs shall only be illuminated from an external light source.

### CONSISTENT



Appropriate blade sign is no larger than five square feet.

### INCONSISTENT



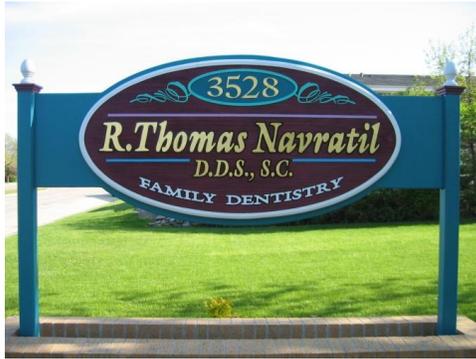
Inappropriate blade sign is internally lit.

## 5. Freestanding signs

Freestanding signs are signs that are supported by posts extending from the ground, not attached to a building.

- a. Freestanding signs shall be allowed only when the building is set back from the street including a front yard, and are used in place of a larger sign that would otherwise be placed in an inappropriate location.
- b. Freestanding signs shall be limited to six feet in height.
- c. Materials shall not include perforated pressure treated lumber.

## CONSISTENT



Appropriate freestanding sign is no taller than six feet in height.

## INCONSISTENT



Inappropriate freestanding sign is internally lit.

## 6. Historic non-advertisement signs

Historic or vintage signs may be hung as art without detracting from the allowable sign area for the building; provided that the historic sign does not advertise a product or service being sold or offered by the business, and that the sign is a minimum of 50 years old, or original to the building.

## 7. Neon signs

A brief, simple message should be used whenever possible. The fewer the words, the more effective the sign. A neon sign with a brief, succinct message is easier to read.

- a. Neon signage shall be limited to eight square feet of sign area and shall be limited to projecting signs only. Projecting sign standards shall apply.
- b. Neon signage shall include a combination of neon elements and non-illuminated letter forms or graphics. Neon elements shall be restricted to one color.
- c. The total sign area as well as the size of individual letters shall be as small as possible while still being clearly legible to pedestrians on either side of adjacent streets. Individual letters should be at least 3 inches high to be visible across an adjacent street.
- d. Neon signs shall be placed above the first story of a building, however shall not be installed above the sills of the windows of the second floor on two-story buildings. Signs on one-story buildings shall not project above the cornice line or eave. When placed on the same building, neon signs must maintain a minimum distance of ten linear feet between signs.
- e. The placement of transformers, backing plates or other mechanical devices accessory to the proposed neon sign shall be screened from public view.
- f. Alternatives to the above standards may be considered based on historical precedent for the type of business or specific building.

- g. Decorative Use Prohibited. The decorative use of neon as a means of accenting windows, doors, cornices or other architectural elements of a building is prohibited.
- h. Neon elements that appear to blink, flash, or move are prohibited.

## CONSISTENT



Appropriate neon sign incorporates non-neon elements.

## INCONSISTENT



Inappropriate neon sign utilizes only neon elements, with multiple colors.

## 8. A-frame signs *(placeholder)*

### D. Prescriptive Sign Program

Projecting signs, blade signs, and awning/canopy signs totaling no more than 12 square feet in area and which are consistent with the following standards are eligible for administrative approval by PDS staff. All other sign proposals must be reviewed by the Design Review Board.

1. **Materials:** Wood and metal only. The use of alternative, creative, or innovative materials must be approved by the Design Review Board.
2. **Colors:** Pallet limited to “encouraged” colors. For administrative approval, primary sign colors shall be chosen from the adopted color palette (included as an appendix). The number of colors used on a sign should be minimal to maximize their effect. Period colors included gray, dark brown, dark green, blue-gray, beige, brick red and terra cotta. Gold is an additional acceptable color for lettering. Black and bright hues shall not be the predominant colors of the sign. Bright white is not appropriate. Allowed colors shall be limited to two, with an additional allowance for black when used for lettering and borders.
3. **Fonts:** Fonts limited to "encouraged" list (included as an appendix). The use of alternative fonts must be approved by the Design Review Board. Lettering used during the period in which a building was built is preferred for its signage. Simple modern lettering is also appropriate. Appropriate lettering in black or gold may also be applied to glass. The use of historically appropriate borders is also encouraged. Allowed fonts used on one sign shall be limited to two.

## E. Prohibited Signs

1. Cabinet wall signs.
2. Marquee signs.
3. Signs of which any portion is located on or above eaves, a parapet, or a cornice, or are erected upon, against, or directly above a roof.
4. Signs with luminous plastic letters or reflective surfaces.
5. Electronic changing message signs.
6. Reader boards, except for gas stations.
7. Signs that display the symbol, slogan or trademark of national brands of soft drinks or other products that do not form the bulk of the business transacted on the premises.  
*(pending legal review)*

## INCONSISTENT



Cabinet sign



Sign with reflective surfaces



Reader board sign



Marquee sign



Sign mounted above roofline



Electronic changing message sign

DRAFT