

Sign Design Guidelines

Purpose and Intent

The following guidelines should be considered in the design of all signs within the City. These guidelines are intended to provide guidance in the way signs are designed, constructed, and placed in order to further implement the purposes of Division 5. (Sign Regulations) of the Zoning Ordinance.

These sign design guidelines are intended to promote the highest level of sign design quality and creativity, while in keeping with the overall character of the community of Agoura Hills. The guidelines will assist property owners and business owners in understanding city expectations and reduce time and cost for processing sign approvals.

General Sign Design

- Signs should be integrated with the design of the building. A well-designed building facade or storefront is created by the careful coordination of sign and architectural design, building materials and over-all color scheme.
- The scale of signs should be appropriate for the building on which they are placed and the area in which they are located. The size and shape of a sign should be proportionate with the scale and proportion of the structure.
- The layout and shape of the architectural features of the building should be considered when determining the size and location of a sign.
- New signs proposed for existing buildings shall provide a compatible appearance with the existing signage of other tenants. Signs should attempt to unify the business with its nearest neighboring tenants.
- With multiple signs on a single building, there should be a unifying element (such as size), even where no sign program exists. The design and alignment of signs on multiple use buildings should compliment each other such that a unified appearance is achieved.
- All signs shall complement their surroundings without competing with each other and shall convey their message clearly and legibly.
- New building construction and design shall anticipate signage and, where necessary, a sign program. New building design should provide logical sign areas, allowing flexibility for new users as the building is re-tenanted over time. Designs of building facades and wall exteriors which provide for convenient and attractive replacement of signs are encouraged.

Sign Colors

- Color is one of the most important aspects of visual communication -- it can be used to catch the eye or to communicate ideas or feelings. Colors should be selected to contribute to legibility and design integrity. Even the most carefully thought out sign may be unattractive and a poor communicator because of poor color selection. Too many colors used thoughtlessly can confuse and negate the message of a sign.
- Contrast is an important influence on the legibility of signs. A substantial contrast should be provided between the color and material of the background and the letters or symbols to make the sign easier to read in both day and night. Light letters on a dark background or dark letters on a light background are most legible.



- The colors and lettering styles should compliment the building façade and harmonize with neighboring businesses.
- A sign program with a multi-color sign palette utilizing a maximum of five (5) colors may be considered for shopping center with one (1) or more major tenants. It must be demonstrated that the multi-color sign program has been carefully planned to avoid glaring, haphazard color selection. The color combination must achieve a harmonious appearance. Unifying elements should be incorporated into the sign program design:
- For projects using a three to five color sign program, back-lighted reverse channel letters are encouraged for the inline tenant signs.
- When using three to five colors, it may be appropriate to use a single type of letter style (font). Letter height and size for inline stores should be consistent throughout the project. Architectural detail, i.e. tile accents, moldings, etc. should be considered around each signage area to provide an element of consistency.
- The shade of a color should be consistent within a project, i.e. the same shade of yellow, blue or red, etc.
- Use of bright ~~or fluorescent~~ colors is strongly discouraged and the use of fluorescent colors is prohibited.

Sign Materials

- The following sign materials are recommended:
 - High-density pre-formed foam – painted or otherwise finished to compliment the building architecture. New materials may be appropriate if properly designed in a manner consistent with these guidelines, and painted or otherwise finished to compliment the architecture.
 - Ceramic tile – painted or sandblasted.
 - Wood – carved or sandblasted.
 - Metal – formed, etched, cast or engraved.
 - Stone – natural stone indigenous to the area.
 - Stucco or stone monument signs with recessed or raised lettering.
- Sign materials should be compatible with the design of the face of the facade where they are placed. The selected materials should contribute to the legibility of the sign.
- Exterior materials, finishes, and colors should be the same or similar to those of the building or structures on site,
- Signs should be professionally designed and constructed using high-quality materials
- Internally lit plastic cabinet or can signs are ~~strongly discouraged~~[prohibited](#).
- Visible raceways and transformers for individual letters are prohibited unless the raceways are architecturally integrated (recessed) into the building wall. Sign installation details shall indicate the location of the transformer and other mechanical equipment.
- No exposed neon is allowed.
- The color of the trim caps shall match the color of the letter face, the cabinet return, or the building wall color.

Sign Copy and Lettering Style

- Signs composed of individual letters are encouraged. Back-lit (halo-lit, or reverse pan channel) letters are generally desirable for logos and wider individual letters.
- Modifications to logos and corporate identifiers may be required to fit attractively into the sign space provided.
- Separate logo/graphic elements consistent with the nature of the product to be advertised, are limited to twenty (20%) percent of the total sign area. The height of the logo/graphic element may differ from the height of the letters in the business name.

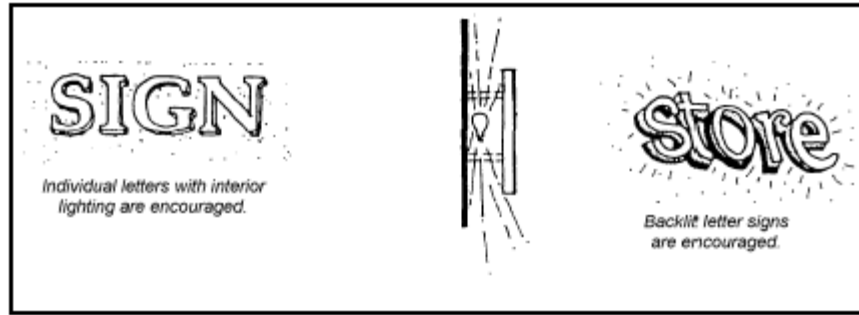
- Sign fonts shall be selected to provide both clarity and artistic integrity.
- Use a brief message. The fewer words utilized, the more effective the sign. A sign with a brief, succinct message is simpler and faster to read, looks cleaner and is more attractive.
- Carefully consider the proportion of letter area to overall sign background area. Large letters take up too much sign and they may be harder to read. Large letters are not necessarily more legible than smaller ones. A general rule is that letters should not appear to occupy more than 75% of the sign panel area.



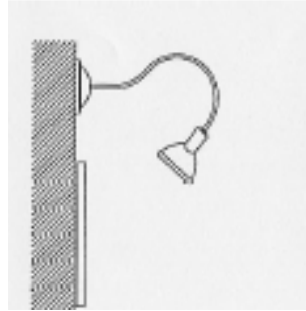
- A limited number of lettering styles should be employed in sign design to increase legibility. The number of different lettering types should not exceed two for small signs and three for larger signs.
- [Upper and lower case letters are easier to read and should be utilized when using long words.](#)
- Letters and words should not be spaced too close together. Crowding of letters, words or lines will make any sign more difficult to read. Conversely, over-spacing these elements causes the viewer to read each item individually, again obscuring the message.

Sign Illumination

- The illumination of a sign should be carefully considered. Like color, illumination can provide more effective visual communication, or can confuse the message. Imaginative and innovative lighting techniques for signs are encouraged.
- The lighting of signs should be considered as an element in a building's overall lighting design. Both internal and external lighting methods are allowed provided that they are not harsh or unnecessarily bright.
- Back-lit, halo-lit illumination, or reverse channel letters with halo illumination are highly encouraged for lighting purposes. Such signs convey a subtle and attractive appearance and are very legible under moderate ambient lighting conditions.

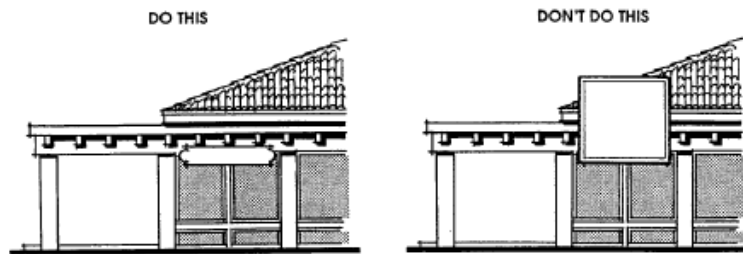


- Light sources for externally lighted signs shall be integrated into the architectural design of the building and/or project, or be concealed.
- Consider if the sign needs to be lighted at all. Lights in the window display may be sufficient to identify the business. Often, nearby street lights provide ample illumination of a sign after dark.
- Whenever external lighting fixtures are used (fluorescent or incandescent), care should be taken to properly shield the light source to prevent glare from spilling over into residential areas and any public right-of-way. Signs should be lighted only to the minimum level required for nighttime readability.
- Signs should not exceed (1) foot candle of projected brightness measured at the nearest property line.
- External lighting shall be completely shielded from view at the nearest property line and shall not project above the structure upon which the sign is placed (i.e. building or monument sign).
- Signs shall be shaded as necessary to avoid casting a bright light upon property located in any residential district or upon any public street or park.
- External lighting should be arranged so that the light source is screened from direct view by passersby, and so that the light is directed against the sign and does not shine into adjacent property or blind motorists and pedestrians.
- Signs that use blinking or flashing lights are not permitted.
- Exposed neon tubing used to illuminate and/or accent a building, and exterior neon window signs are prohibited.
- Projecting light fixtures used for externally illuminated signs should be simple and unobtrusive in appearance and aimed directly at the sign. They should not obscure the graphics of the sign.



Sign Placement

- Place wall signs to establish facade rhythm, scale and proportion where facade rhythm doesn't exist. On buildings that have a monolithic or plain facade, signs can establish or continue appropriate design rhythm, scale, and proportion.
- The architecture of the building often identifies specific locations for signs, and these locations should be used.
- The size of signs shall be in proportion to the size of their location.



- Place signs to indicate the location of access to a business - Signs should be placed at or near the entrance to a building or site to indicate the most direct access to the business. [For multi-tenant buildings, the sign should be centered over the store front.](#)

~~Place wall signs to establish facade rhythm, scale and proportion where such elements are weak. In many buildings that have a monolithic or plain facade, signs can establish or continue appropriate design rhythm, scale, and proportion.~~

- Signs should not be located above the fascia on a pitch roof building or on the top of a parapet when no pitch roof is provided.
- Repetitious signage information on the same building frontage shall be avoided, regardless of the sign area square footage allowed in the zoning code.

Sign Maintenance

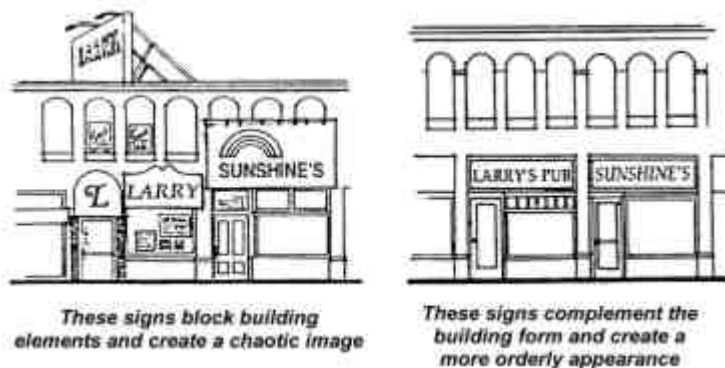
- All signs are to be maintained properly such that they are always in clean, working condition and the copy is not obscured or damaged. This includes components of the sign exposed to view as well as the illumination.
- Signage should be vandal proof and weather resistant.
- When replacing or modifying a channel letter sign, all unused holes in the building wall must be patched, painted and textured to completely match the surrounding building sign surface.
- Signs which are replaced on stucco exteriors can result in unattractive "patched" areas. This potential maintenance problem shall be addressed during the design phase of the project.

Specific Sign Types

Wall Signs

Wall signs are generally the most used type of business identification signing. Located on the face of buildings they are usually larger than other types of signage.

- The sign shall not be placed to obstruct any portion of a window, doorway, transom, or other architectural detail. Typically, wall-mounted signs should be centered on horizontal surfaces (e.g. over a storefront opening).



- The maximum area and height shall be as defined in 9655.8 - Sign Entitlement by Land Use. In no case shall the sign project above the edge of the roof of a structure.
- Internally illuminated reverse letter and backlit channel letter signs are strongly encouraged. Internally illuminated cabinet signs are not permitted.

- The sign shall not project from the surface upon which it is attached more than required for construction purposes and in no case more than twelve inches. Wall Signs are to be mounted flush and fixed securely to a building wall, projecting no more than 12 inches from the face of a building wall, and not extending sideways beyond the building face or above the highest line of the building to which it is attached.
- Wall signs shall be mounted in locations that respect the design integrity of a building, including the arrangement of bays and openings.
- Building wall and fascia signs should be compatible with the predominant visual elements of the building
- Where there is more than one (1) sign; all signs should be complementary to each other in the following ways:
 - Type of construction materials (cabinet, sign copy, supports, etc.)
 - Letter size and style of copy
 - Method used for supporting sign (wall or ground base)
 - Configuration of sign area
 - Shape to total sign and related components
- Internally illuminated cabinet signs are discouraged. Internally illuminated, reverse letter and backlit channel letter signs are encouraged.
- When wall signs are architecturally framed, the frame should create a clearly defined sign area, providing shadow relief and additional wall/surface articulation on the building façade.
- The maximum sign length should not exceed sixty-five (65%) percent of the storefront length, in order to provide clear definition between signs and to avoid a crowded appearance.

Monument signs (Identification, Directory or Address)

Monument signs are intended to provide street frontage project identification and the address for a freestanding building or shopping center or development complex. Monument signs are typically placed perpendicular to approaching vehicular traffic.

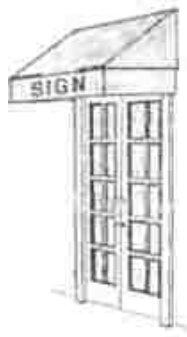


- The sign shall be located a minimum of five (5) feet from any public or private right-of-way and shall comply with city standards for vehicular sight distance at the driveway intersection with the frontage street.
- Monument signs should be sited in a manner that provides optimum visibility to the public.
- The sign shall be a maximum of forty-eight (48) square feet in area. Only one side of a double-faced (back to back) sign shall be included when calculating sign area. Sign area calculations shall not include architectural treatments or support structures.
- The maximum height of a monument sign shall be six (6) feet. Architectural treatments or support structures shall be included in the height measurement.
- The design of a monument sign shall be consistent with the overall scale of the building and shall be constructed with materials that complement the architectural theme and design used on the building(s). Each side, front, back and top of a monument sign shall include breaks. Design elements such as off-sets, curved forms, reveals, etc. are encouraged.
- The use of plastic material as a background is not permitted. The sign background material shall be opaque, which means that any interior light source shall not penetrate the material and illuminate the background but shall be limited to illuminating the sign letters.
- Landscaping shall be provided at the base of the supporting structure equal to twice the area of one face of the sign. The Director may reduce or waive this requirement if it is determined that the additional landscaping would not contribute significantly to the overall aesthetic character of the project.
- Monument signs should be constructed out of materials that compliment the building architecture and its use.
- Architectural lines which compliment that of the building shall be incorporated, especially with respect to the top of the sign.
- The design of the sign structure and the text should express high quality materials and construction.
- Monument signs should include a 2 ft. high (min) base. The base color(s) and material(s) should be compatible with the architectural theme of the building or building complex.
- The base should be complementary and proportional to the size of the sign.
- Free-standing sign bases shall be made of permanent, durable materials. Stonework similar to City street identification signs is strongly encouraged.

- A minimum of 10% of the sign area of freestanding signs for large multi-story buildings or center developments should be devoted to identification of the center or building by address or name.

Awning and Canopy Signs

Awnings and canopies can be incorporated into shopping centers to add color to the shopping environment and are often more visible from passing automobiles and by pedestrians from the opposite side of the street, especially in circumstances where street trees partially obstruct wall signs.

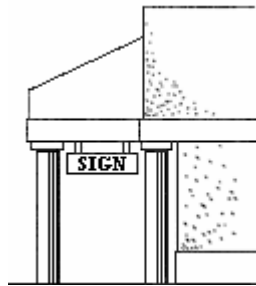


- Awning and canopy signs may be allowed only as an integral part of the awning or canopy to which they are attached or applied.
- Signs may be placed only on awnings that are located on first story building frontages, including those fronting a parking lot or pedestrian way.
- The sign area for awning and canopy signs shall be included within the basic sign entitlement.
- No structural element of an awning or canopy shall be located less than eight feet above finished grade.
- Sign text or logo areas should not occupy more than 30% of the awning panel.
- Awnings and canopies shall not be internally illuminated. Lighting directed downwards that does not illuminate the awning is allowed.
- Awnings should utilize a solid color and be made of woven fabric (and not vinyl).
- Metal canopies may be appropriate on some buildings if they are compatible in scale and overall design. Canopies should be simple in design and not obscure architectural features.
- Awning and canopy signs shall be regularly cleaned and kept free of dust and visible defects.

- Awnings and canopies must be permanently attached to buildings.
- The minimum height of awnings shall be 8 feet from the lowest point to the sidewalk.
- The color scheme for awning and canopy signs should be compatible and integral to the building architecture.

Under Canopy or Hanging Signs

Under canopy or hanging walkway signs may be used for pedestrian oriented business identification, in addition to the standard on building tenant signage.



- The sign shall be placed or hung only on a ground floor facade, near the main entrance of the business, except for businesses located above the ground level with direct exterior pedestrian access.
- The lowest point of an under canopy sign shall be at least eight feet above finished grade.
- Sign supports and brackets shall be compatible with the design and scale of the sign.
- Sign design, materials and color(s) should complement and enhance the building architecture and should be uniform throughout the shopping center.
- Hanging signs, excluding supporting rods, chains or similar hangers, shall fit within an imaginary rectangle with a maximum area of 4 square feet.
- Signs shall be oriented toward the pedestrian and impart a sense of creativity in its design.
- Internal illumination of under canopy or hanging signs is prohibited.

Projecting signs

Projecting signs are allowed only as pedestrian signage and ~~should~~shall be oriented to pedestrians passing on the sidewalk in front of the building. These signs feature simple information or can be uniquely designed with colors and icons to attract attention to the business.



- The sign area shall be included within the basic sign entitlement. Size uniformity should be maintained along street frontages to the greatest extent possible. The text, copy and logo should not exceed 75% of the sign background.
- The height shall not be less than eight feet above the ground level, unless the architectural features of the structure prohibit this height.
- Projecting signs shall be oriented to pedestrians passing on the sidewalk in front of the buildings rather than to automobiles or pedestrians on the far side of the street. This can be achieved by providing a minimum clearance of 12 inches between the building face and sign and maintaining a projection of 36 inches.
- Sign supports and brackets shall be compatible with the design and scale of the sign. Mounting hardware should be an attractive and integral part of the sign design.
- Projecting signs should be carefully designed to reflect the character of each building and business as well as fitting comfortably with other adjacent signage.
- Projecting signs ~~should~~ may not be mounted above the second floor window-sill in multi-storied buildings.
- Size uniformity should be maintained along street frontages to the greatest extent possible.
- Internal illumination of projecting signs is prohibited.

Temporary Signs

Temporary Signs can take the form of banners, window graphics, or as cards integrated with a window display. Temporary signs may contain written messages and should use a simple font that is easy to read.

- Temporary signs should be made of durable materials and shall not incorporate fluorescent or intensely bright colors.

- Temporary signs should be carefully designed and constructed, as they reflect on the quality of the business.
- Temporary signs should not interfere with pedestrian circulation.
- Illumination of temporary signs is prohibited.