

# Chapter 8: Design Standards for Signage

This chapter presents design guidelines for the use of signage in the Historic Business District and other landmarked properties.

It is important to note that the total square footage for signage permitted by the Land Use and Development Code far exceeds the desirable maximum allowable signage within the Historic Business District and on local landmarks due to the disproportion in sign size to building facades. Signs should be in proportion to the building facade, display windows and sign panels incorporated in existing structures.

## Signage Context

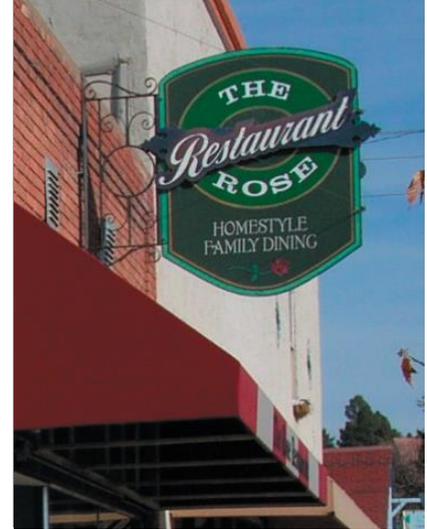
A sign typically serves two functions: first, to attract attention and second to convey information to identify the business or services offered within. If it is well designed, the building front alone can serve the attention-getting function, allowing the sign to be focused on conveying information in a well-conceived manner. All new signs should be developed with the overall context of the building.

### 8.1 Consider the building front as part of an overall sign program.

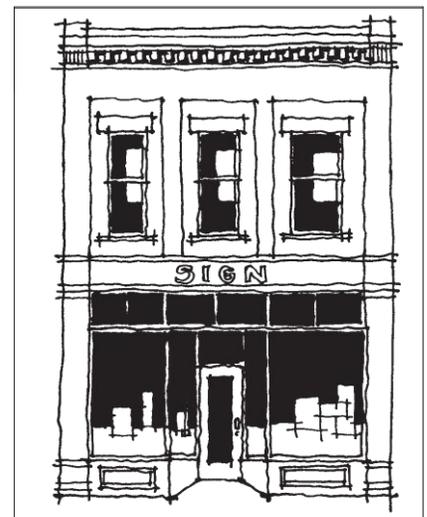
- Develop a master sign plan for the entire building to guide individual sign design decisions.
- Coordinate a sign within the overall facade composition.
- Use the shape of the sign to help reinforce the horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street.

### 8.2 A sign shall be subordinate to the overall building composition.

- Design signage to be proportional so that it does not dominate the building or the facade.
- Any sign that visually overpowers the building or obscures significant architectural features is inappropriate.



*A sign typically serves two functions: first, to attract attention, and second to convey information.  
(Pagosa Springs, CO)*



*The overall facade composition, including ornamental details and signs, should be coordinated.*

## Signage Categories and Types

Commercial signage generally falls into four categories as follows:

**Primary Sign.** A business should generally have only one primary sign, which is usually a flush mounted sign in the Historic Business District and is often a monument sign for other local landmarks.

**Secondary Signs.** Secondary signs are utilized in addition to the primary building sign. Typically, a secondary sign is an awning, hanging or window sign. The secondary sign is generally intended to capture the attention of the pedestrian walking on the sidewalk, while the primary sign's audience is specifically the viewer driving past in a vehicle.

**Portable Signs.** Portable signs are intended for the pedestrian walking on the sidewalk but do not impede pedestrian traffic. Portable signs include sandwich boards, signs mounted on easels or freestanding frames with sign inserts.

**Temporary Signs.** Temporary signs are used for a special purpose, such as limited-time offer or a sale and should be used only for short periods of time as specified in the Town of Pagosa Springs Land Use and Development Code.

Within the signage categories discussed above, a number of individual signage types are appropriate.



Examples of appropriate pole signs.  
(Pagosa Springs, CO)



Canopy signs are appropriate ways  
to identify businesses in the Historic  
Business District. (Pagosa Springs,  
CO)

### 8.3 Primary signs should be installed.

Flush mounted wall signs shall be no more than twenty-five (25) square feet in size.

Primary signs should be proportional in size to the building facade and located within the "sign band" if one is available.

### 8.4 Small hanging signs are encouraged.

A small hanging sign should be located near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side.

A hanging sign should be mounted perpendicular with the building facade.

A hanging sign should provide a minimum of eight and a half (8.5) feet clearance between the sidewalk surface and the bottom of the sign.

A hanging sign shall be no more than eight (8) square feet in size.

### 8.5 A projecting sign may be considered.

A larger projecting sign should be mounted higher and centered on the facade or positioned at the corner of a building. A projecting sign shall provide a minimum clearance of eight and a half (8.5) feet between the sidewalk surface and the bottom of the sign.

A projecting sign shall be no more than fifteen (15) square feet in size.

A projecting sign shall in no case project beyond 1/2 of the sidewalk width.

**8.6 Monument or pole signs may be appropriate outside of the Historic Business District on locally landmarked sites.**

Signs should not exceed twenty-five (25) square feet in size. Signs should be landscaped at the base and generally should include a subtle structure for hanging or support.

**8.7 Awning and canopy signs may be considered.**

In no case should an awning or canopy sign exceed the size of the awning or canopy surface to which it is applied. Consider mounting a sign centered on top of a building canopy where a flush-mounted sign would obscure architectural details

**8.8 A directory sign may be considered.**

Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs. Align several smaller signs or group signs into a single panel as a directory.

Use similar forms or backgrounds for the signs to tie them together visually and make them easier to read.

**8.9 Window and door signage may be considered for secondary signage.**

Hang permanent window signs just inside the window.

Paint temporary window signs on the glass.

Do not cover more than approximately 30% of the total storefront window area with window signage.

Tenant and address identification in the door window should cover less than 30% of the top half of the door window and should not exceed an area of three square feet.

**8.10 A portable sign may be considered for temporary signage.**

Portable signs include A-frame (sandwich boards), signs mounted on easels or free-standing frames with sign inserts. A portable sign should be limited to two square feet of surface per side and shall be removed daily, upon close of business. A portable sign should not interfere with pedestrian traffic.

## Signage Location and Size

The size and placement of a sign are critical in maintaining the visual order of the Historic Business District and local landmarks. Consistent placement of signs according to building type, size, location and even building materials create a visual pattern that the pedestrian can easily interpret and utilize to the mutual benefit of merchants, tourists and customers. Note that the following signage specifications are provided and are more restrictive than the aggregate signage limits outlined in the Town of Pagosa Springs Land Use and Development Code.

**8.11 A sign should not in any way obscure or compete with architectural details of a historic building facade.**

This is especially important for a building with historic significance

A sign should be designed to integrate with the architectural features of a building and not distract attention from the features



*This door signage is appropriate. (Pagosa Springs, CO)*



*The window signage shown above covers more than 30% of the total storefront window area and is inappropriate. (Pagosa Springs, CO)*

**8.12 The “sign band” is the most appropriate location for primary signage.**

Locate flush mounted wall signs in the “sign band” area above the transom or storefront windows and below any second floor windows

Respect the sign band borders. The sign should not overlap or crowd the top, bottom or ends of the band.

Mount a wall sign to align with others along the block, when feasible.

**8.13 Flush mounted wall signs shall maintain the overall proportions of the building facade.**

Ideally, a commercial building in the Historic Business District would include a sign band integrated into the architectural detailing of the front facade.

A wall mounted sign should be proportionate in size to the architectural elements on the building.

*The “sign band” is located above the transom or storefront window. (Georgetown, TX)*

## Signage Materials, Colors and Lighting

The materials, colors and lighting used for signage within the Historic Business District and on local landmarks play a major role in defining the scale and continuity of the street. Sign materials and colors should be chosen carefully to ensure commercial structures and spaces are easily identified while maintaining the traditional feeling of the area. Lighting should be subtle and serve only to help identify buildings or storefronts at night.

**8.14 Sign materials should be compatible with that of the building facade.**

Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs.

Their use is encouraged. Unfinished materials including unpainted wood are discouraged.

Plastic and vinyl are not permitted, except for flush mounted, adhesive lettering.

Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read are inappropriate.

Painted signs on blank walls were common historically and may be considered.

**8.15 Use colors for the sign that are compatible with those of the building front.**

Limit the number of colors used on a sign. In general, no more than three (3) colors should be used.

A summary of acceptable color considerations is reviewed in Appendix D.

**8.16 Lighting for a sign should be an indirect source.**

Light should be directed at the sign from an external, shielded lamp.

A warm light color, similar to daylight, is appropriate.

All lighting should be shielded and not shine directly in the eyes of pedestrians or vehicular traffic.

**8.17 Internally illuminated signs are prohibited.****Appropriate Content for Signage****8.18 Using a symbol for a sign is encouraged.**

A symbol sign adds interest to the street, can be read quickly and is remembered better than written words.

**8.19 Use simple typefaces on signage.**

Typefaces that are in keeping with those seen in the area traditionally are encouraged. Select letter styles and sizes that will be compatible with the building front.

Generally, these are typefaces with serifs.

Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate typeface styles.



*A symbol sign adds interest to the street, can be read quickly and is remembered better than written words. (Durango, CO)*

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