

## Chapter G-34

### SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES

#### Topics:

- G-34.200 Purpose.
- G-34.210 Design Compatibility.
- G-34.220 Color.
- G-34.230 Materials.
- G-34.240 Sign Legibility.
- G-34.250 Sign Illumination.

#### G-34.200 Purpose.

The following guidelines should be considered in the design of all signs within the city. These guidelines are intended to complement other requirements in the previous sections of this chapter.

#### G-34.210 Design Compatibility.

- A. **Creative design encouraged.** Signs should make a positive contribution to the general appearance of the street and commercial area in which they are located. A well-designed sign can be a major asset to a building. The city encourages imaginative and innovative sign design. The Creative Sign application procedure is specifically designed for artistic and unusual signs that might not fit the standard sign regulations and categories.
- B. **Proportionate size and scale.** 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 of the structure.
- C. **Integrate signs with the building.** Signs should not obscure architectural features. Their design 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 and over-all color scheme. Signs in multiple tenant buildings should be designed to complement or enhance the other signs in the building.

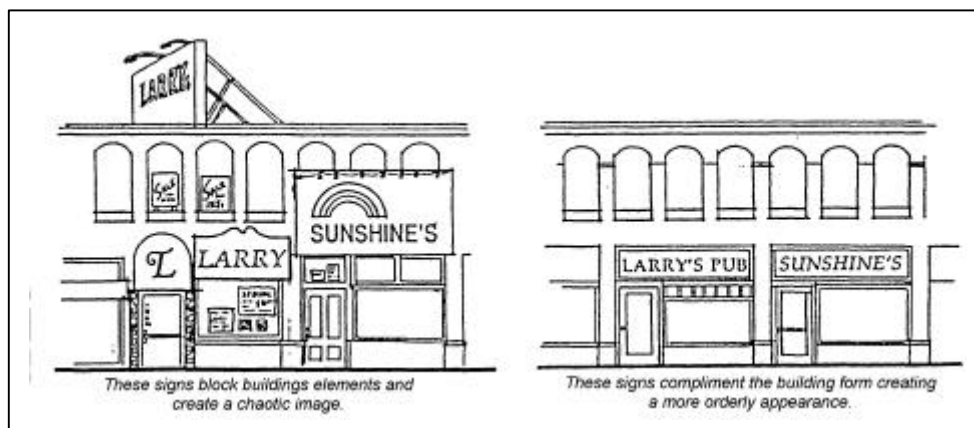
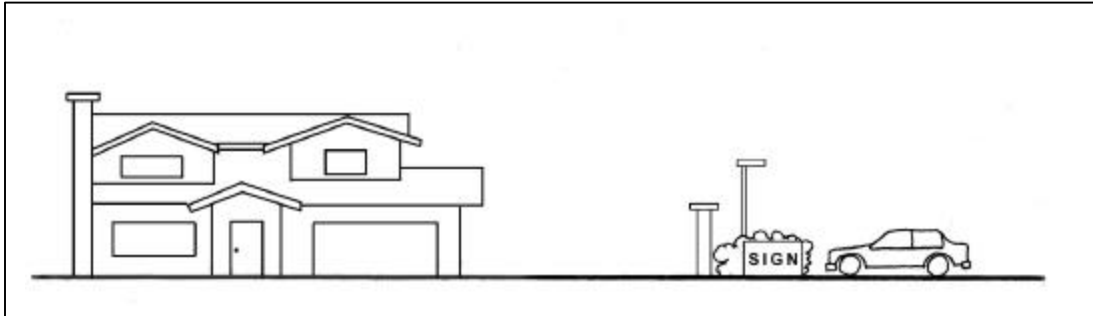


Figure SD-1  
DESIGN COMPATIBILITY

- D. Reduce sign impact.** Because residential and commercial uses generally exist in close proximity, signs should be designed and located so that they have little or no impact on adjacent residential neighborhoods.



**Figure SD-2**  
**REDUCE SIGN IMPACT**

- E. Sign placement.** Place wall signs to establish facade rhythm, scale and proportion where facade rhythm does not otherwise exist. On buildings that have a monolithic or plain facade, signs can establish or continue appropriate design rhythm, scale, and proportion.



- F. Pedestrian-oriented signs are encouraged.** It is desirable and encouraged to include a pedestrian-oriented sign as one of the permitted signs for a business. Pedestrian-oriented signs are signs that are designed for and directed toward pedestrians so that they can easily and comfortably read the sign as they stand adjacent to the business.

- G. Use individual letters.** As an alternative to an attached sign, lettering may be painted directly on the building facade. However, signs should not be painted directly over ornamental and architectural features or over brick and stone surfaces of buildings.



**Figure SD-4**  
**PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED SIGN**

### G-34.220 Color.

- A. **Select colors carefully.** 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.
- B. **Use contrasting colors.** 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.



**Figure SD-5**  
**CONTRASTING LETTERS AND BACKGROUND**

- C. **Avoid using too many colors.** Colors or color combinations that interfere with legibility of the sign copy or that interfere with viewer identification of other signs should be avoided. Small accents of several colors may make a sign unique and attractive, but the competition of large areas of many different colors often decreases readability.
- D. **Use complementary colors.** Sign colors should complement the colors used on the structures and the project as a whole.

### G-34.230 Materials.

- A. **Sign materials.** The following sign materials are recommended:
  1. Wood (carved, sandblasted, etched, and properly sealed, primed and painted, or stained).
  2. Metal (formed, etched, cast, engraved, and properly primed and painted or factory-coated to protect against corrosion).
  3. High density pre-formed foam or similar material. New materials may be very appropriate if properly designed in a manner consistent with these guidelines, and painted or otherwise finished to compliment the architecture.
  4. Custom neon tubing, in the form of graphics or lettering, may be incorporated into several allowed sign types.
- B. **Compatibility of materials.** 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. For example, glossy finishes are often difficult to read because of glare and reflections.
- C. **Appropriate materials.** Paper and cloth signs are not suitable for exterior use (except on awnings) because they deteriorate quickly. Paper and cloth signs are appropriate for interior

temporary use only. The use of interior signs on paper or cloth should be the result of careful thinking about readability and the image of the business.

### G-34.240 Sign Legibility.

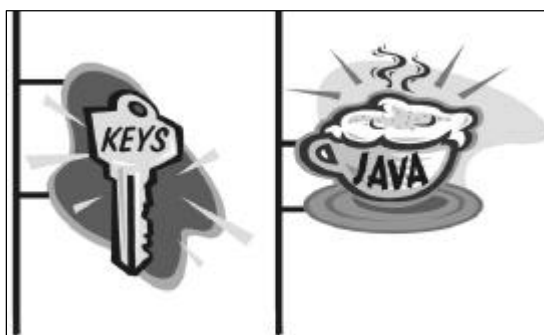
An effective sign should do more than attract attention, it should communicate a message. Usually, this is a question of the readability of words and phrases. The most significant influence on legibility is lettering.

- A. **Pedestrian-oriented signs.** Make signs smaller if they are oriented to pedestrians. The pedestrian-oriented sign is usually read from a distance of fifteen to twenty feet; the vehicle-oriented sign is viewed from a much greater distance. The closer a sign's viewing distance, the smaller that sign need be. See the following table.

**LETTERING SIZE FOR  
PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED SIGNS**

| Minimum Character Size (inches) | Intended Reading Distance (feet) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3.5                             | 60                               |
| 4.0                             | 70                               |
| 4.5                             | 80                               |
| 5.0                             | 90                               |
| 5.5 to 6.0                      | 100                              |

- B. **Use a brief message.** A brief message should be used whenever possible. The fewer the words, the more effective the sign. A sign with a brief, succinct message is easier to read and looks more attractive. Evaluate each word. If the word does not contribute directly to the basic message of the sign, it detracts from it and probably should be deleted.
- C. **Space letters and words carefully.** Letters and words should not be spaced too closely. 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. As a general rule, letters should not occupy more than 75 percent of sign panel area.
- D. **Use symbols and logos.** Symbols and logos can be used in place of words wherever appropriate. Pictographic images will usually register more quickly in the viewer's mind than a written message.

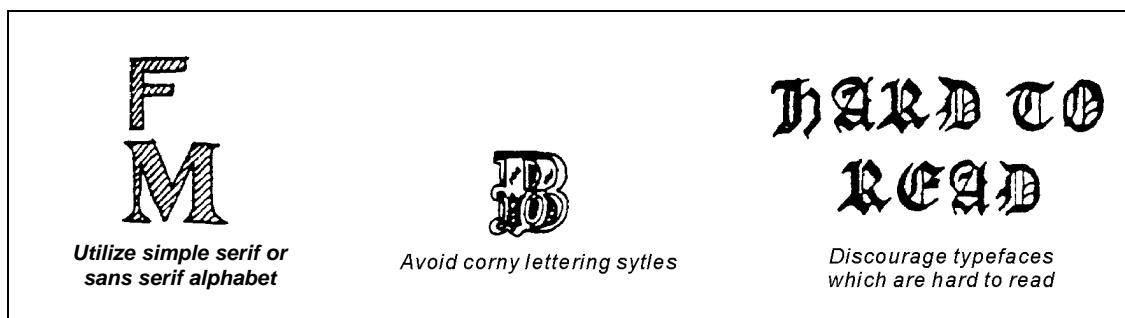


**Figure SD-6  
USE OF SYMBOLS/LOGOS**



**Figure SD-7  
LETTER SPACING**

- E. Limit the number of letter styles.** The number of lettering styles should be limited in order to increase legibility. A general rule to follow is to limit the number of different letter types to no more than two for small signs and three for larger signs. Intricate typefaces and symbols that are difficult to read reduce the sign's ability to communicate.

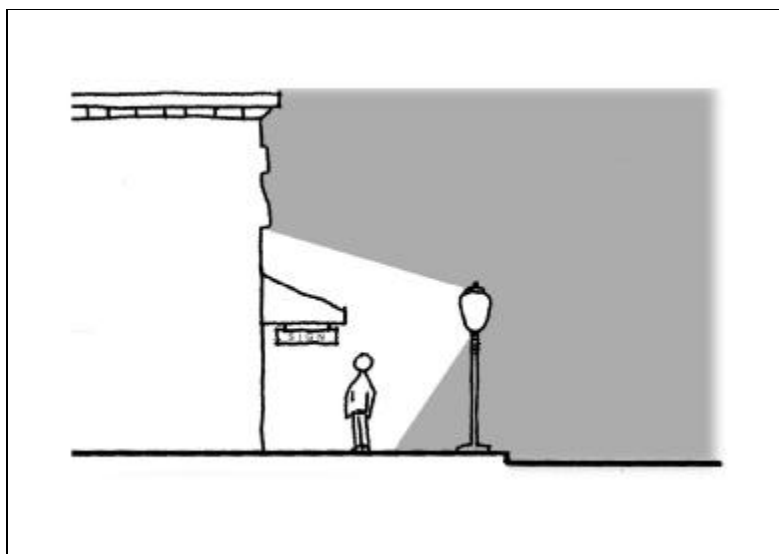


**Figure SD-8**  
**LIMIT LETTERING STYLES**

### G-34.250 Sign Illumination.

The possible 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.

- A. Use illumination only if necessary.** Consider if the sign needs to be lighted at all. Lights in the window display may be sufficient to identify the business. This is particularly true if good window graphics are used. Often, nearby street lights provide ample illumination of a sign after dark.

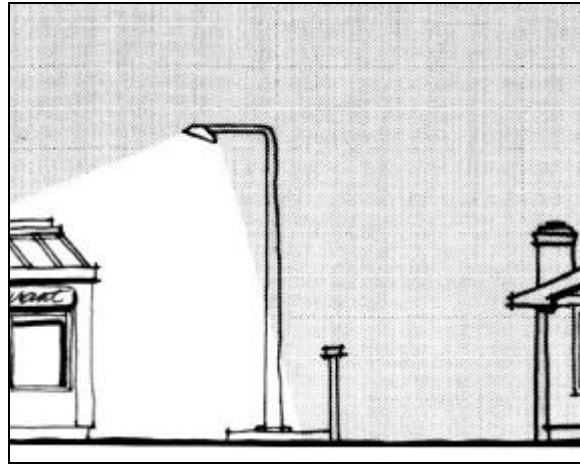


**Figure SD-9**  
**USE OF EXISTING ILLUMINATION**

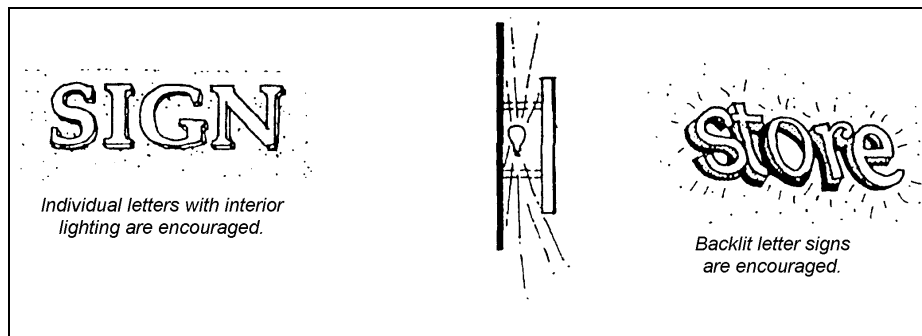
- B. Use a direct light source.** If the sign can be illuminated by a direct source of light (e.g., spotlight), this is usually the best arrangement because the sign will appear to be better

integrated with the building's architecture. Light fixtures supported in front of the structure cast light on the sign and generally a portion of the face of the structure as well. Direct lighting emphasizes the continuity of the structure's surface, and signs become an integral part of the facade. Direct lighting is also appropriate because it produces a more intimate ambiance on the street. The lighting of signs should be considered as an element in a building's overall lighting design.

- C. Shield the light source.** Whenever direct 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.
- D. Back-lighted signs.** Back-lighted, solid letters are encouraged. Signs consisting of opaque individually cut letters mounted directly on a structure (push-through letters) can often use a distinctive element of the structure's facade as a backdrop, thereby providing a better integration of the sign with the structure.



**Figure SD-10**  
**SHIELDED LIGHT SOURCE**



**Figure SD-11**  
**BACK-LIGHTED SIGNS**