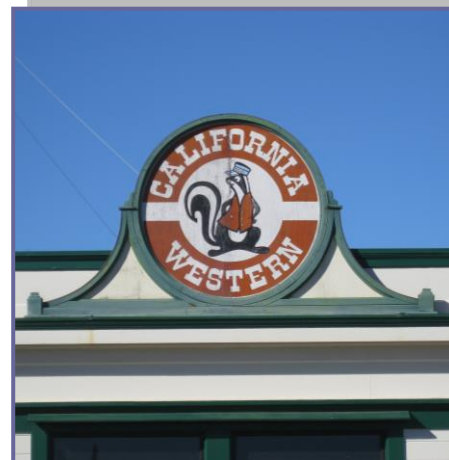


CHAPTER 4

SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES



SECTION 4.1

SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES FRAMEWORK

4.11 Introduction

Signs are one of the most noticeable visual elements along Fort Bragg's commercial streets and highway. Not only do signs communicate something about goods and services being offered at a particular establishment, they also communicate something about the quality of the businesses and the image of the community in general. Taken together with other visual elements in the City's environment, signs play a major role in how people perceive Fort Bragg's image. Well-designed signs that communicate their message clearly, without attempting to compete for attention will help create a more pleasing visual environment along Fort Bragg's streets.

4.12 Sign Design Guidelines Organization and Applicability

The guidelines in this Chapter apply to all new signs and the modification or reconstruction of existing signs throughout the City. The purpose of these sign design guidelines is four-fold:

- 1) Further implement the intent of the Development Code related to signs
- 2) Assist businesses and sign designers to better understand the City's expectations for well-designed, high quality signs
- 3) Assist those responsible for reviewing sign permit applications by having criteria upon which to judge appropriateness of sign design submittals
- 4) Improve the overall quality of signs throughout the City

To achieve these goals, the sign design guidelines are divided into the following sections:

Section 4.2: General Sign Design Guidelines

This section will describe basic sign design guidelines that are applicable to all signs, regardless of type.

Section 4.3: Design Guidelines for Specific Sign Types

This section describes design guidelines specific to sign types and identifies some of the development types in the community where the signs might most appropriate.

SECTION 4.2

GENERAL SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES

DESIGN PRINCIPLE: Signs will contribute to and enhance the character of Fort Bragg.

4.21 Introduction

This section provides basic design guidance for all signs, regardless of specific type or location within the community. The guidelines address issues related sign legibility, placement on the facade, color and materials, and effective illumination.

4.22 Overall Sign Guidelines

- A master sign program is required for each commercial and mixed-use development with more than four businesses.
- Signs that reflect the type of business through design, shape, or graphic form are encouraged.
- The method of sign attachment to the building should be integrated into the overall sign design.
- Signs should coordinate with the building design, materials, color, size, and placement.
- Sign variety is encouraged among different users.
- Signs should align with others on the same building facade.
- Hanging signs attached to buildings that project perpendicular to the building are encouraged in pedestrian areas.



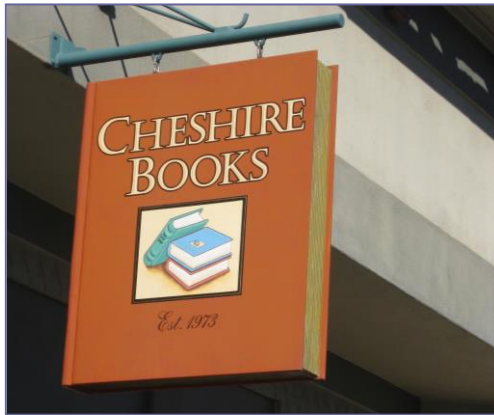
Commercial signage should be minimal yet effective



Use appropriate signage that complements the scale and architecture of the building

4.23 Sign Legibility

- **Use a brief message.** The fewer the words, the more effective the sign's message. A sign with a brief, succinct message is simpler and faster to read, looks cleaner, and is generally more attractive. Businesses with long names are encouraged to use a generic identification (e.g., "CLEANERS") rather than force too many words into the allowed sign area.
- **Ensure legibility.** An effective sign should do more than attract attention; it should communicate its message clearly. Usually, this is a question of the readability of words and phrases. The most significant influence on legibility is lettering style and spacing. The following guidelines should be used to help ensure that signs are easy to read.
- **Use easy to read lettering styles.** Avoid hard-to-read, intricate typefaces. Typefaces that are difficult to read reduce the sign's ability to communicate.



Use easy to read lettering styles



Avoid typefaces that are hard to read at a glance

- **Avoid spacing letters and words 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. Lettering should not occupy more than 75 percent of the sign face.
- **Limit the number of lettering styles 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 (generally up to 10 square feet) and three for larger signs.
- **Encourage unique signs, but avoid typefaces that are too faddish or bizarre.** These typefaces may look good today, but may soon go out of style. The image conveyed may quickly become that of a dated and unfashionable business.



Use significant contrast to increase legibility

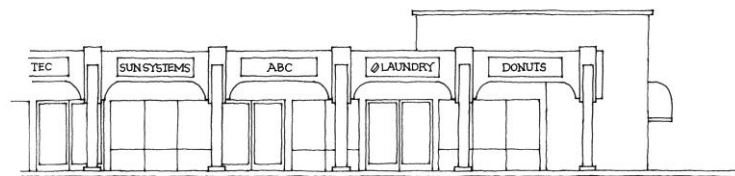
- **Use significant contrast.** If there is little contrast between the brightness or hue of the message of a sign and its background, it will be difficult to read. Generally, light colored letters and a darker, contrasting background presents the most visible and best-looking image.
- **Avoid signs with strange shapes.** Signs that are unnecessarily narrow or oddly shaped can restrict the legibility of the message. If an unusual shape is not symbolic in nature, it will probably be confusing.
- **Use symbols and logos.** Pictographic images will usually register more quickly in the viewer's mind than a written message. If the nature of the business suggests a particular symbol or logo to identify the business, this should be incorporated into the sign.



Pictographic images are encouraged

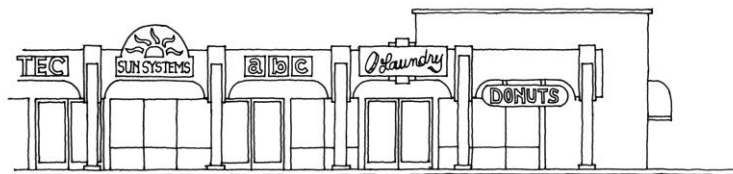
4.24 Sign Placement

- Signs should be designed to relate to the architectural features of the building on which they are located and create visual continuity with other storefronts on the same or adjacent buildings.
- Signs should be placed at or near the public entrance to a building or main parking area to indicate the most direct access to the business.
- Signs should be placed consistent with the proportions of the building's façade. For example, a particular sign may fit well on an upper, more basic wall, but would overpower and obstruct the finer detail of a lower storefront area. A sign appropriate near the building's entry may look tiny and out of place above the ground level.
- Signs should not be located so that they cover or interrupt the architectural details or ornamentation of a building's façade.
- Signs should not project above the edge of the rooflines and should not obstruct windows and/or doorways.
- The location and extent of signs and advertising should not obstruct scenic views.



APPROPRIATE

employ a consistent sign pattern

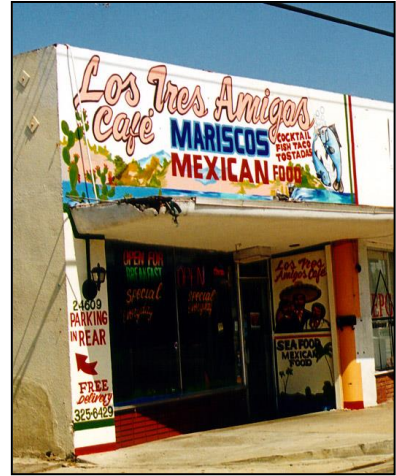


INAPPROPRIATE

inconsistent sign patterns create confusion

4.25 Sign Color

- Too many colors overwhelm the basic function of communication. The colors compete with the sign's content for the viewer's attention. Limited use of the accent colors can increase legibility, while large areas of competing colors tend to confuse and disturb. Colors should be limited to no more than three on a single sign.
- Contrast is an important influence on the legibility of signs. The most aesthetic and effective graphics are produced when light colored letters and images are placed on a dark contrasting colored background.
- Bright day-glo (fluorescent) colors should be avoided as they are distracting and do not blend well with other background colors.
- Sign colors should relate to and complement the materials or color scheme of the buildings, including accent and trim colors.



Too many colors can create a chaotic and confusing message

4.26 Sign Materials

- Sign materials should be selected with consideration for the architectural design of the building's façade. Sign materials should complement the materials on the façade and should contribute to the legibility of the sign.
- Sign materials should be very durable. Paper and cloth signs are not suitable for outside because they deteriorate quickly. When wood is used, it should be properly sealed to keep moisture from soaking into the wood and causing the sign's lettering to deteriorate.
- The following sign materials are encouraged for downtown Fort Bragg:
 - ❑ Wood (carved, sandblasted, etched, properly sealed and painted, or stained)
 - ❑ Metal (formed, etched, cast, engraved, and properly primed and painted or factory coated to protect against erosion)
 - ❑ Subtle custom neon tubing incorporated into sign or reminiscent of historic signs

4.27 Sign Illumination

- Lighting of all exterior signs should be directional down lighting to illuminate the sign without producing glare.
- If the sign can be illuminated by an indirect source of light, 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 sign cast light on the sign and generally a portion of the building as well. Indirect lighting emphasizes the continuity of the building's surface and signs become an integral part of the façade. Conversely, internally illuminated cabinet signs where only the sign face is illuminated tend to stand out and not appear integrated with the building's façade.



Internally illuminated signs are discouraged



Signs illuminated by a direct shielded light source are encouraged

- Whenever indirect lighting fixtures are used, care shall be taken to properly shield the light source.
- **Plastic, internally illuminated sign cabinets are discouraged.** If internally illuminated cabinet signs are used, their sign panels should be opaque so that when illuminated only the lettering, not the background, is illuminated. The background or field should have a nongloss, nonreflective finish.
- **Externally illuminated lettering is preferred.** Individually illuminated letters, either internally illuminated or back-lighted solid letters (reverse channel), are a preferred alternative to internally illuminated plastic-faced cabinet signs. Signs comprised of individual letters will be better integrated with the building because they use the building's façade as their background.
- The use of backlit, individually cut letter signs is strongly encouraged for all types of business and signs, including monument-type signs.



Backlit letter signs are encouraged



Good example of a backlit sign that is easy to read at night

- Blinking, rotating, flashing, changing, or reflecting lights are **highly prohibited, discouraged.**
- **Neon lighting is discouraged for the lettering of the sign except neon lettering that has a historic quality; innovative use of neon for images or logos may be appropriate at the discretion of the Community Development Director.**

- Electrical transformer boxes and raceways should be concealed from public view. If a raceway cannot be mounted internally behind the finished exterior wall, the exposed metal surfaces of the raceway should be finished to match the background wall, or integrated into the overall design of the sign.



- If raceways are necessary, they should be as thin and narrow as possible and should never extend in width or height beyond the area of the sign's lettering or graphics.
- All exposed conduit and junction boxes should be appropriately concealed from public view.
- Use of energy-efficient, high intensity discharge lamps is required.

SECTION 4.3

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC SIGN TYPES

4.31 Introduction

Each of the various sign types present particular issues that need to be considered. The guidelines in this section address issues of good design, placement, and compatibility for each of the following sign types:

- Wall Signs
- Projecting Signs
- Hanging Signs
- Awning Signs
- Window Signs
- Figurative Signs
- Freestanding Monument Signs
- Pole-Mounted Signs

4.32 Wall Signs

- A wall sign should be located where the architectural features or details of the building suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign. The best location for a wall sign is generally a band or blank area between the first and second floors of a building.

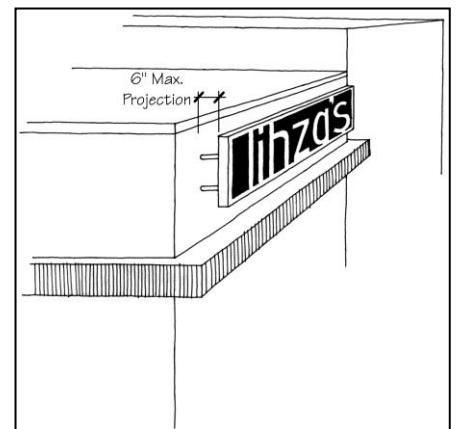


Appropriate wall signs

- Wall signs should not project from the surface upon which they are attached more than that required for construction purposes and in no case more than 6 inches.
- Wall signs and “ghost” signs painted directly on a structure may be appropriate in some cases. While generally not appropriate on historic structures (unless being renovated on an existing building), these types of signs often lend an air of age and authenticity.



Wall painted “ghost” sign



- Internally-illuminated cabinet-type signs are discouraged. Internally-illuminated, individually-cut channel letters are permissible.

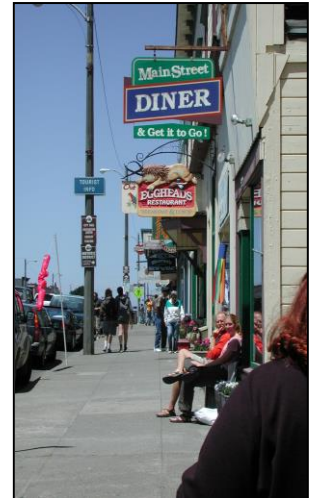


Inappropriate use of wall signs

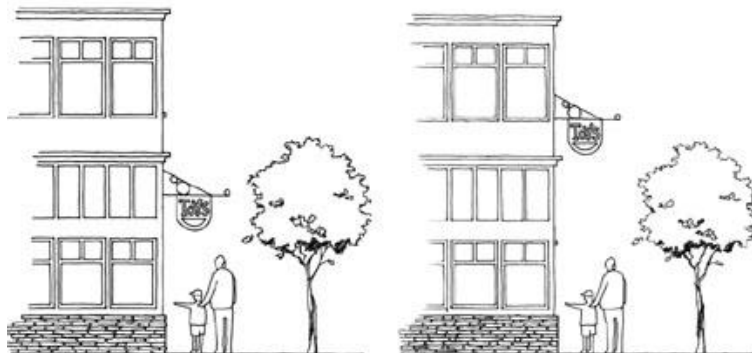
- New wall signs for individual businesses in a shopping center should be placed consistent with the location of signs for other businesses in the center. This will establish visual continuity among storefronts and create a unified appearance for the center.
- For new and remodeled shopping centers, a comprehensive sign program for all signs in the center should be developed.

4.33 Projecting Signs

- The use of small, pedestrian-oriented signs is strongly encouraged. Projecting signs are especially appropriate in downtown Fort Bragg and Neighborhood Commercial developments.
- Projecting signs should be used for ground floor uses only. On a multi-storied building, the sign should be suspended between the bottom of the second story windowsills and the top of the doors or windows of the first story. On a one-story building, the top of the sign should be in line with the lowest point of the roof.
- The scale of projecting signs should not detract from the architectural character of the building.
- Projecting signs should be hung at a 90-degree angle from the face of the building.



Projecting signs are common downtown



Projecting signs should be oriented to the pedestrian
APPROPRIATE

Avoid projecting signs not oriented to pedestrian
INAPPROPRIATE

- It is recommended that the distance between projecting signs be at least 25 feet.
- Sign supports and brackets should be compatible with the design and scale of the sign and the architectural design of the building. Decorative iron and wood brackets are encouraged.
- Internal illumination of projecting signs is strongly discouraged.



Discourage internally illuminated projecting signs

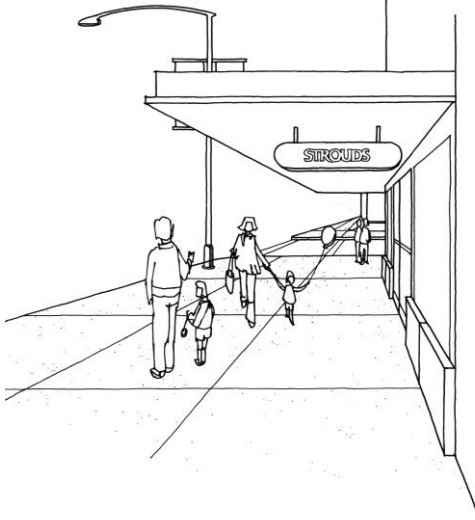


Appropriate projecting signs



4.34 Hanging Signs

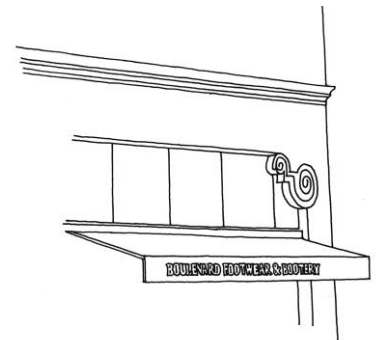
- Where overhangs or covered walkways exist, pedestrian-oriented hanging signs are encouraged. Signs should be hung over the pedestrian right-of-way consistent with the Development Code.
- Hanging signs should be simple in design and not used to compete with any existing signage at the site, such as wall signs.



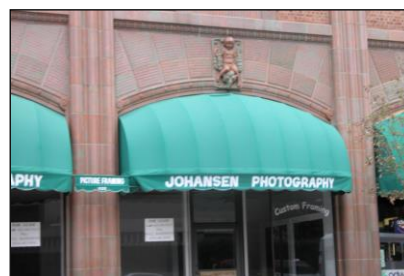
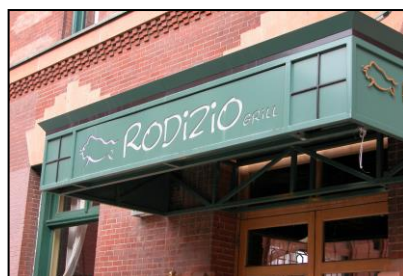
Appropriate hanging signs

4.35 Awning Signs

- Signs on awnings should generally be limited to ground floor and second floor uses only.
- The text of the sign should be located only on the valance portion of the awning. Letter color should be compatible with the awning and the building color scheme.
- The shape, design, and color of the awnings should be carefully designed to coordinate with, and not dominate, the architectural style of the building. Where multiple awnings are used on the building, the design and color of the sign awnings should be consistent with all other awnings.
- Backlit, internally illuminated awnings are strongly discouraged.
- Only permanent signs that are an integral part of the canopy or awning should be used. To avoid having to replace awnings or paint out previous tenant signs when a new tenant moves in, the use of replaceable valances should be considered.



Place lettering on valance only



Appropriate awnings

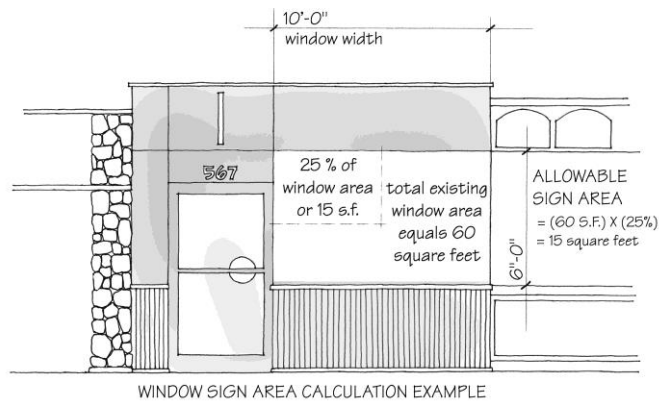
- Awning signs should be painted directly on the awning. The use of adhesive/press lettering is strongly discouraged.

4.36 Window Signs

- Window signs (permanent or temporary) should not cover more than 20-percent of the area of each window.
- Window signs should be primarily individual letters placed on the interior surface of the window and intended to be viewed from outside. White and gold-leaf paint are the recommended colors. Glass-mounted graphic logos may also be applied as long as they comply with the 20-percent area limitation.
- The text or sign copy of a window sign should be limited to the business name, and brief messages identifying the product or service (e.g. "maternity wear" or "attorney"), or pertinent information (e.g. "reservations required").



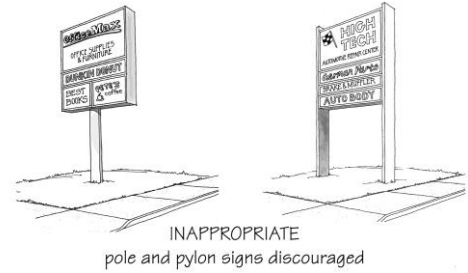
*Appropriate window signage in
Downtown Fort Bragg*



Appropriate window signs

4.37 Monument Signs

- Freestanding monument-type signs (on ground) are strongly encouraged over signs mounted on poles.
- Monument signs may be internally illuminated, however, the sign copy should be the only portion of the sign face that is illuminated. The sign background or field should be opaque with a nongloss, nonreflective finish. Signs with individual back-lit letters, or stenciled panels with three-dimensional push-through graphics are encouraged.
- The sign area and height of the sign should be in proportion to the site and surrounding buildings. Signs should not be overly large so as to be a dominant feature of the site.
- Monument signs should be placed perpendicular to the street.
- Monument signs should be placed so that sight lines at entry driveways and circulation aisles are not blocked.
- Monument signs should be designed to create visual interest and compliment their surroundings. Monument signs should incorporate architectural elements, details, and articulation as follows:
 - ❑ Provide architectural elements on the sides and top to frame the sign pane(s). Use columns, pilaster, cornices, and similar details to provide design interest.
 - ❑ Incorporate materials and colors into the sign support structures to match or be compatible with materials and colors of the development the sign serves so it does not appear out of scale with its adjacent building(s).
 - ❑ Monument signs shall incorporate landscaping at their base.
 - ❑ Landscaping around monument signs should be designed to ensure the long-term readability of the sign.
- For house conversions, bed and breakfast inns, and other small-scale commercial uses, simple, freestanding signs may be appropriate.



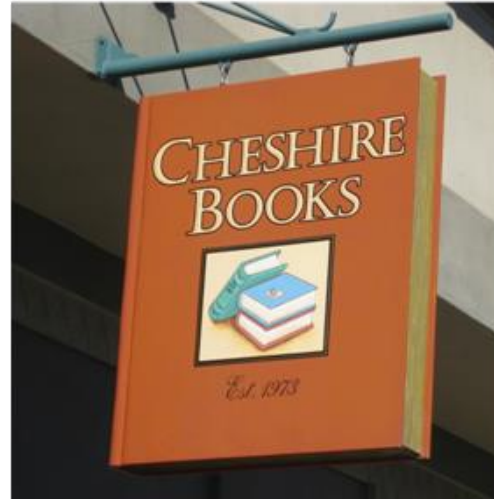
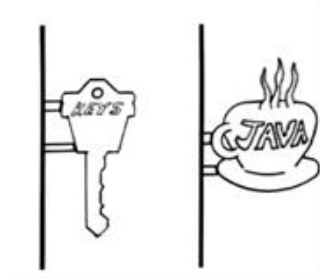
Place monument signs perpendicular to street



Simple freestanding signs are appropriate for some small-scale commercial uses

Figurative Signs

- Signs, which advertise the occupant business through the use of graphic or crafted symbols, such as shoes, keys, glasses, or books, are encouraged. Figurative signs may be incorporated into any of the allowable sign types identified above.



4.38 Pole Signs

- Pole-mounted signs are discouraged for parcels with less than 100 feet of street frontage as such signs would typically be out of scale with smaller parcels and would allow tall signs too close together, which would disrupt visibility.
- Pole signs supported by 2 poles or structures are encouraged over signs supported by single poles, which usually appear overly top heavy.
- Pole signs incorporate architectural elements into the sign portion of the sign as well as the supporting structure.
- Pole signs may be internally illuminated, however, the sign copy should be the only portion of the sign face that is illuminated.
- Pole signs should incorporate a landscaped area at the base of the sign equal to one to two times the size of the sign face.



Pole signs with two supports are preferred