

Town of Blackstone Historic Business District Sign Guidelines

These sign guidelines apply to all signs constructed after **September 28, 2016**.

Placement:

1. Place signs so that they do not obstruct architectural elements and details that define the design of the building. Respect signs of adjacent businesses.
2. Flat wall signs for commercial buildings can be located above the storefront, within the frieze of the cornice, on covered transoms, or on the pier that frames display windows on generally flat, unadorned surfaces of the façade or in areas clearly suitable as sign locations.
3. For residential type buildings used for commercial purposes, a flat sign attached to the wall at the first floor between porch columns is appropriate.
4. Projecting signs for commercial buildings should be at least 10 feet above the sidewalk, and project no more than 3 feet from the surface of the building. They should not be placed above the cornice line of the first-floor level unless they have a clearance of less than ten feet.
5. For residential type buildings used for commercial purposes, small projecting signs attached to the wall at the first floor or porch column are appropriate and should not be located higher than the top of the porch.
6. Freestanding signs, in general, are not an appropriate sign type in a traditional downtown except for use in the front yard of a residence that has been converted to commercial or office use. In this case, freestanding signs should be no higher than 15 feet.
7. Window signs should be approximately 5.5 feet above the sidewalk at the center point for good pedestrian visibility.
8. Window signs are also appropriate on the glazing of doors and on upper floor windows for separate building tenants.
9. Awning and canopy signs should be placed on the valance area only. The minimum space between the edge of the letter and the top and bottom of the valance should be 1.5 inches.
10. Sandwich board signage should be movable signage. Placement of signs should not impede pedestrians on the sidewalk. Only one sign is allowed per business. This sign must be located immediately in front of the lot upon which the building for the business is located. Colors shall compliment and blend with the district. Signs must be removed at the end of the business day.

Quantity of Permanent Signs:

1. The number of signs used should be limited to encourage compatibility with the building and discourage visual clutter in the HBD.
2. In commercial areas, signs should be limited to two total signs and each a different type. A building should have only one wall sign per street frontage. Smaller directory signs may be used near the entryway or inside a common lobby area.
3. If customer access is provided at the rear of the building, property owners should consider reserving some of the building mounted sign allocation for identification of the business at that entry.

Size:

1. All the signs on a commercial building should not exceed 50 square feet.
2. Flat wall signs should not exceed 18 inches in height and should not extend more than 6 inches from the surface of the building.
3. Projecting signs should be a maximum of 9 square feet per face.
4. Average height of letters and symbols should be no more than 12 inches on wall signs, 9 inches on awning and canopy signs, and 6 inches on window signs.
5. Window signs should obscure no more than 40 percent of the window glass.
6. Sandwich board signage should not exceed 48 inches in height and 30 inches in width.

Execution:

Sign professionals who are skilled at lettering and surface preparation should execute and install signs approved by the review board and issued a certificate of appropriateness for the permit.

Design:

It is important that signs be readable while conveying an image appropriate for the business or the building in a historic setting. Often sign painters or graphic designers can assist with the sign design.

Shape:

Shape of signs for commercial buildings should conform to the area where the sign is to be located unless a sign is to take on the shape of the product or service provided, such as a shoe store. Such shapes should not obscure architectural elements of the building.

Materials:

Use traditional sign materials, such as wood, glass, gold leaf, raised individual metal or painted wood letters, and painted letters on wood, metal, or glass. Avoid the use of foam molded letters. Some plastic individual letters may be appropriate if they have a non-glossy finish and do not appear as having a shiny plastic appearance. Wall signs should not be painted directly on the surface of masonry walls if the wall has not been previously painted. Window signs should be painted or have decal flat letters and should not be three-dimensional.

Color:

Use colors that complement the materials and color scheme of the building, including accent and trim colors. Three colors are recommended, although more colors can be appropriate in exceptional and tastefully executed designs.

Illumination:

Generally, signs should be indirectly lit with a shielded incandescent light source. Internally lit plastic molded signs are not appropriate for the historical business district.

Buildings with Multiple Tenants:

A master sign plan should be submitted for the building. Upper-floor tenants should be represented at each primary entrance by a flat, wall-mounted directory sign.

Other Signs:

Banners are temporary as indicated by the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Wall murals should not be discouraged, but should be carefully reviewed for compatibility with the district character.