

## Chapter VIII: Guidelines for Signs

The Design Guidelines for Signs that follow should be used in conjunction with the City's sign regulations found in the Code of Ordinances Section 156.200. In cases where standards within the Code of Ordinances and these Guidelines are in conflict, the more restrictive shall apply. The design of all permanent commercial signs must be approved by the Board. In addition to the other provisions of Section 156.200, the official definitions of sign types and related material presented in the ordinance, as well as the methods of calculating sign measurements presented, shall apply.

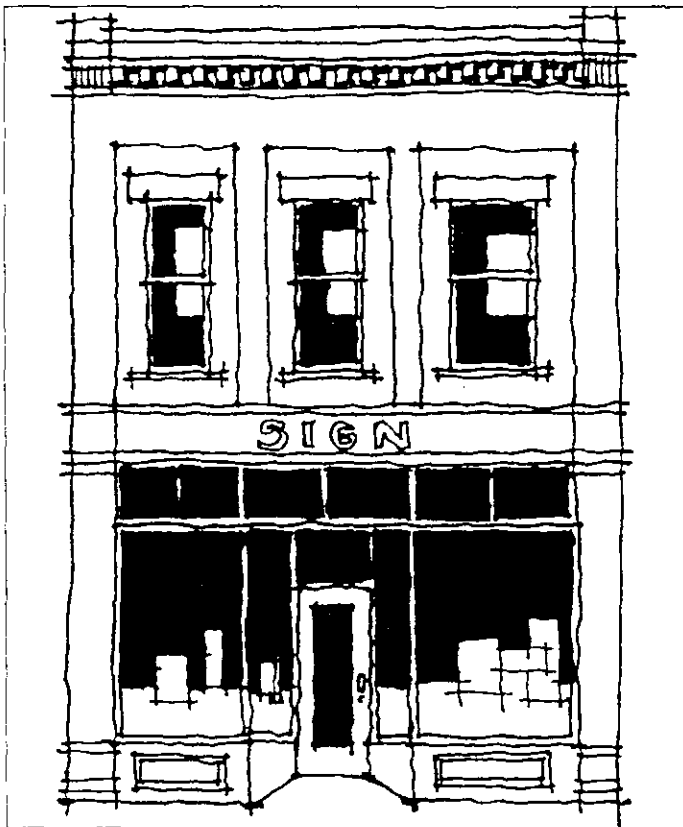
Historically, signs used on South Main Street were relatively simple. They varied in size and location quite broadly, but most were simple painted panels with simple type styles. The earliest signs had no lighting. In later years, an indirect light source was typical. These relationships should be continued. To do so, the Historic Landmarks Preservation and Architectural Review Board seeks to limit the size and number of signs such that no single sign dominates the setting, but rather the District reads as a distinct neighborhood.

## Sign Context

A sign typically serves two functions: first, to attract attention, second to convey information. If the building front is well designed, it 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 and of the District in mind.

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

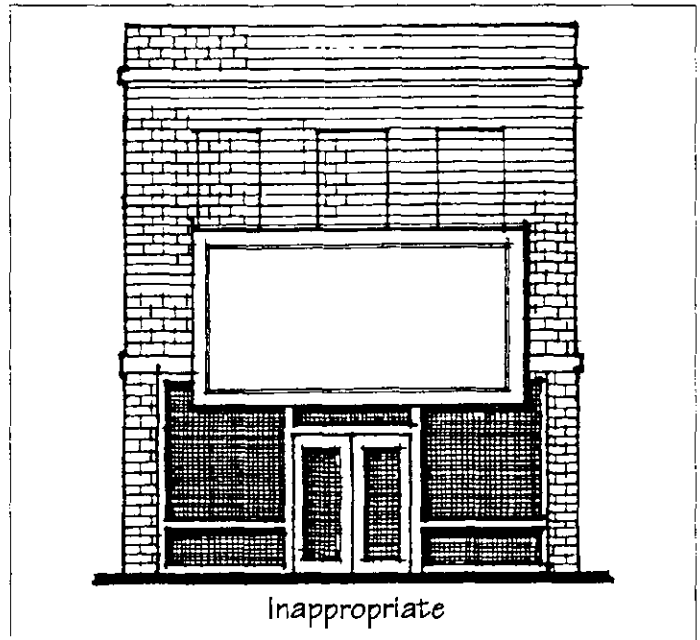
- a. Coordinate the overall facade composition, including ornamental details and signs.
- b. Signs also should be in proportion to the building, such that they do not dominate the appearance.
- c. Develop a master sign plan for the entire building front, which should be used to guide individual sign design decisions.



*The overall facade composition, including ornamental details and signs, should be coordinated. Signs also should be in proportion to the building, such that they do not dominate the appearance.*

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

- a. A sign shall appear to be in scale with the facade.
- b. Locate a sign on a building such that it will emphasize design elements of the facade itself. In no case should a sign obscure architectural details or features.
- c. Mount signs to fit within existing architectural features. Use signs to help reinforce the horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street.



*A sign should be subordinate to the overall building composition.*

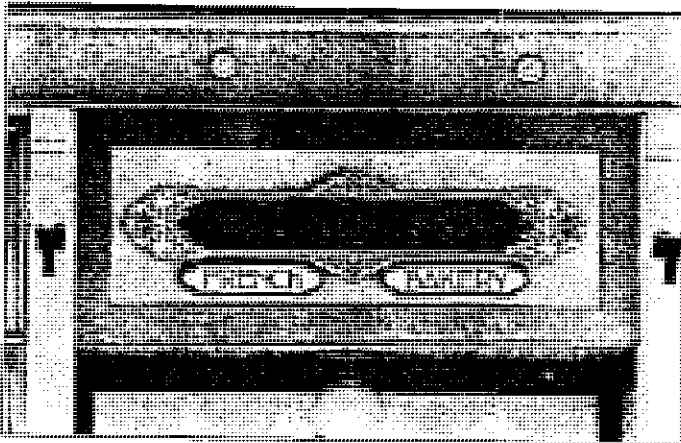
### 8.3 A sign shall be in character with the material, color and detail of the building.

- a. Simple letter styles and graphic designs are more appropriate on many of the restrained, vernacular structures found on South Main Street.

## Permitted Sign Types

### 8.4 Flush-mounted wall signs may be considered.

- a. A flush-mounted wall sign is one that is mounted flat to the wall; in most cases, a flush-mounted wall sign should be positioned just above the display window. It shall not be located above second floor windows.
- b. When feasible, place a wall sign such that it aligns with others in the block.
- c. When planning a wall sign, determine if decorative moldings exist that could define a "sign panel." If so, locate flush-mounted signs such that they fit within panels formed by moldings or transom panels on the facade. In no case should a sign obscure significant facade features.
- d. Only one flush-mounted sign shall be allowed for each distinct facade module.



*Appropriate: A flush-mounted wall sign is one that is mounted flat to the wall; in most cases, a flush-mounted wall sign should be positioned just above the display window.*

### 8.5 Projecting signs may be considered.

- a. A projecting sign should be located near the business entrance at eye level, just above the door or to the side of it.
- b. In general, only one projecting sign per building facade is allowed. However, where the Board determines that the result would be compatible with the District, one projecting sign shall be allowed for each distinct facade module of a building.
- c. Note that other approvals may be required to allow a sign to overhang the public right-of-way.



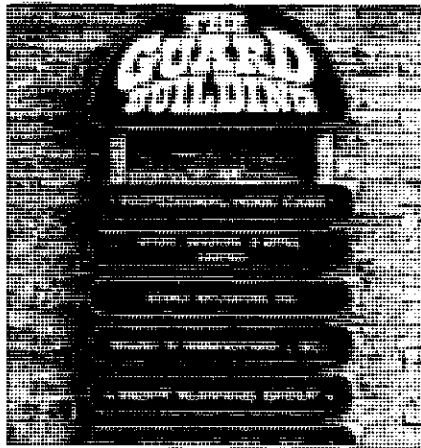
*Appropriate: A projecting sign should be located near the business entrance at eye level, just above the door or to the side of it.*

### 8.6 A window sign may be considered.

- a. A window sign may be painted on or hung just inside a window.

- 8.7 A directory sign may be considered.**
- a. Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs. Align several smaller signs, or group them into a single panel as a directory to make them easier to locate.
  - b. Use similar forms or backgrounds for the signs to tie them together visually and make them easier to read.
  - c. See Section 156.200 in the Code of Ordinances of the City of St. Charles for maximum sign area.

*Appropriate: Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs.*



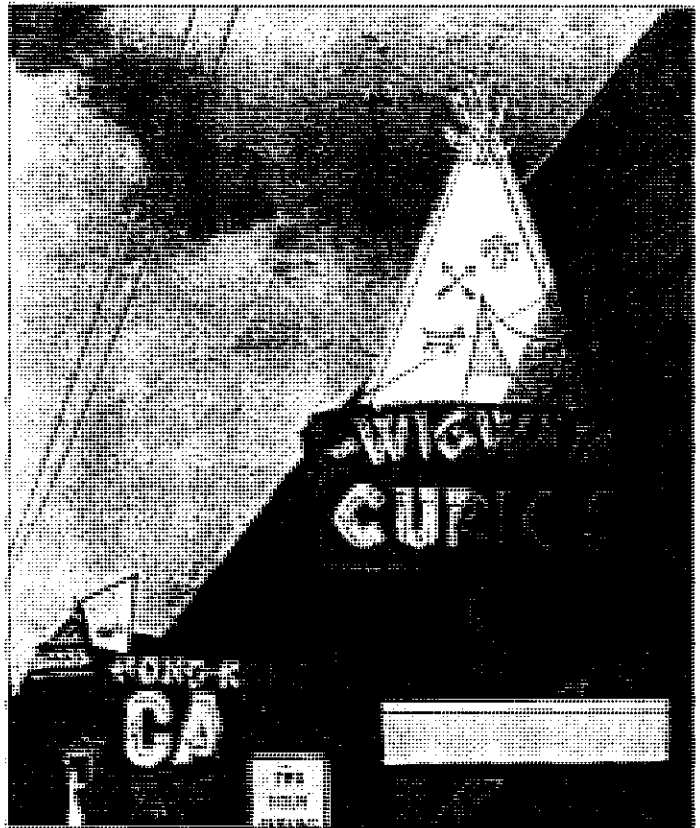
- 8.8 Free-standing or pole mounted signs may be considered.**
- a. A free-standing sign may be used in the front yard of a residence with a commercial use.
  - b. A free-standing sign may be used for businesses with entrances not facing Main Street.
  - c. See Section 156.200 in the Code of Ordinances of the City of St. Charles for maximum sign area.



*Appropriate: A free-standing sign may be used in the front yard of a residence with a commercial use.*

## Inappropriate Sign Types

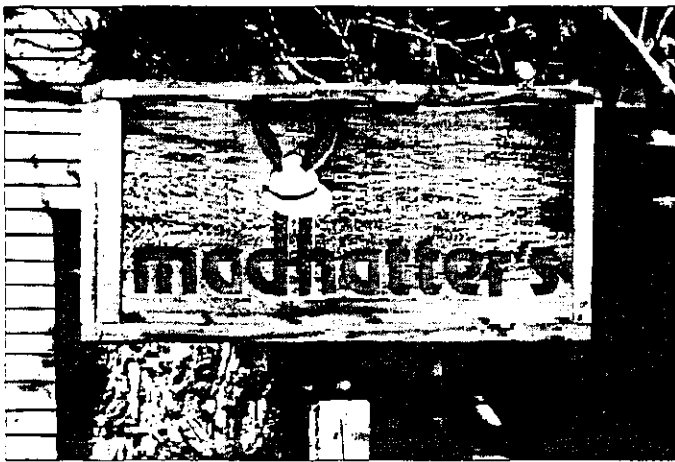
- 8.9 Signs that are out of character with those seen historically, and that would alter the historic character of the street, are inappropriate.**
- a. Animated signs are prohibited.
  - b. Sandwich (or menu) boards that stand on the sidewalk are prohibited.
  - c. Any sign that visually overpowers the building or obscures significant architectural features is inappropriate.
  - d. Neon signs shall not be allowed.
  - e. See Section 156.200 in the Code of Ordinances of the City of St. Charles for other prohibited signs.
- 8.10 An awning sign is not permitted in the District.**



*Inappropriate: Signs that are out of character with those seen historically, such as these, and that would alter the historic character of the street, are inappropriate. Neon signs shall not be allowed.*

## Sign Materials

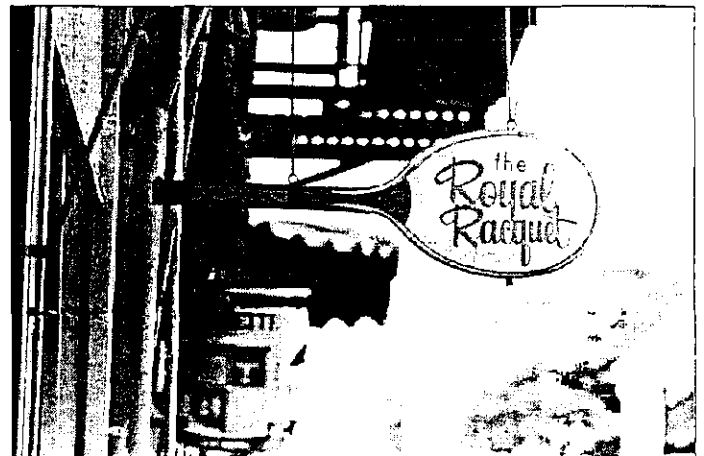
- 8.11 Sign materials shall be compatible with that of the building facade.**
- Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs. Their use is encouraged. Unfinished materials, including unpainted wood, are discouraged because they are out of character with the historic context.
  - Plastic is not permitted, except for flush, adhesive lettering.
  - Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read are inappropriate.



*Appropriate: Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs.*

## Sign Content

- 8.12 Symbol signs are encouraged.**
- Symbol signs add interest to the street, are quickly read, and are remembered better than written words.
- 8.13 Use colors for the sign that are compatible with those of the building front.**
- 8.14 Simple sign designs are preferred.**
- Typefaces that are in keeping with those seen in the area historically are encouraged. Avoid sign types that appear too contemporary.
  - Also limit the number of colors used on a sign. In general, no more than three colors should be used.
- 8.15 Select letter styles and sizes that will be compatible with the building front.**
- Letters should not exceed ten inches in height.
  - Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate typeface styles.



*Appropriate: Symbol signs add interest to the street, are quickly read, and are remembered better than written words.*

## Sign Lighting

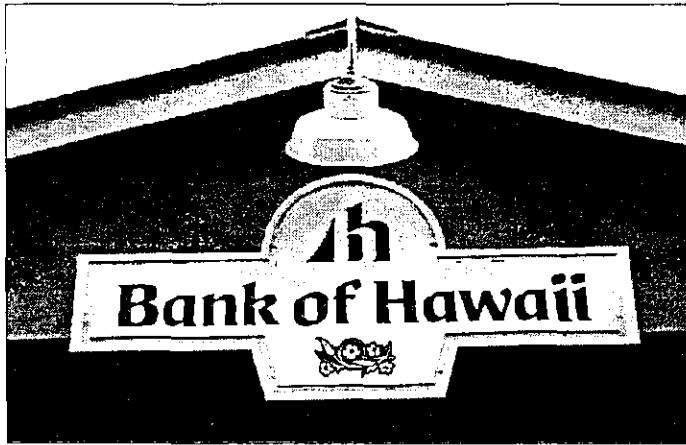
One should be able to perceive the historic character of individual buildings and of the District as a whole both during the day and at nighttime. In this regard, sign lighting should be compatible with the historic character of the street.

### 8.16 The light for a sign shall be an indirect source.

- a. Light shall be directed at the sign from an external, shielded lamp. Internal illumination of a sign is inappropriate.
- b. A warm light, similar to daylight, is appropriate.

### 8.17 Neon signs shall not be allowed.

- a. Evidence of the use of the neon from a more recent period does not provide a basis for its use.

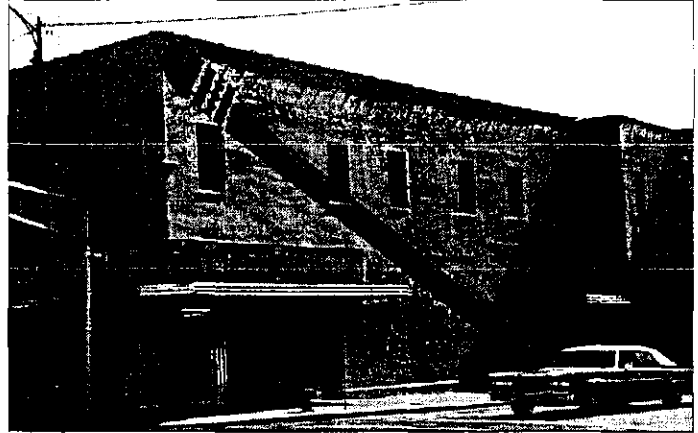


*Appropriate: Light shall be directed at the sign from an external, shielded lamp.*

## Wall Art and Graphics

### 8.18 Wall art will not be allowed in the District.

- a. Where historic wall art exists as a character-defining feature of the District, it may be preserved.



*Inappropriate: Wall art will not be allowed in the District.*