

Chapter 8: Guidelines for Signs

The design guidelines that follow should be used in conjunction with the City's sign regulations found in the Code of Ordinances of the City of St. Charles, Chapter 157. In cases where standards within the Code of Ordinances and these guidelines are in conflict, the more restrictive should apply. The design of all permanent commercial signs should be approved by the HLPARB. In addition to the other provisions of Chapter 157, the official definitions of sign types and related material presented in the ordinance, as well as the methods of calculating sign measurements presented, should apply.

The Code of Ordinances defines a sign as: "Every device, letter, word, number, figure, mark, design, picture, trademark or reading matter, which is used or intended to be used to attract attention or convey information, and every announcement, declaration, demonstration, display, illustration, insignia, flag, banner, pennant, streamer or other device used to advertise or promote the interest of any person, business or commercial enterprise, when any of the above are placed so that they are clearly visible to the general public from an out-of-doors position."

Sign Context

A sign typically serves two functions: to attract attention, and 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, and use it to guide individual sign design decisions.



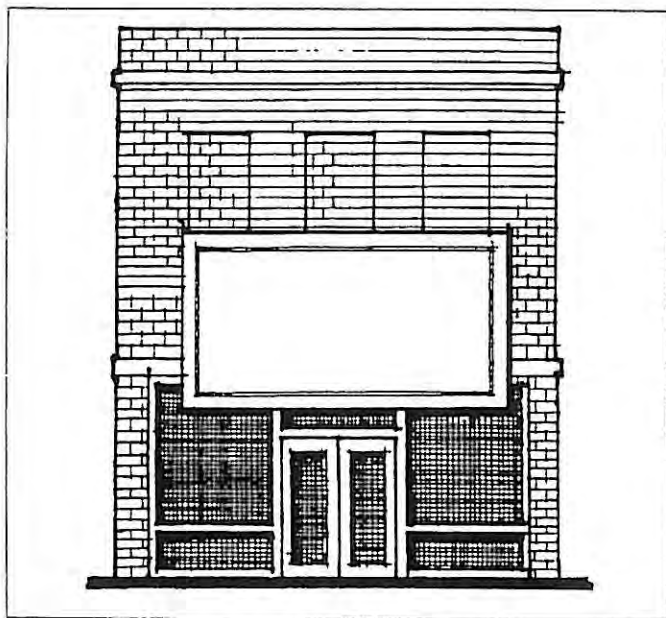
The overall facade composition, including ornamental details and signs, should be coordinated. Signs also should be in proportion to the building, such that they do not dominate the appearance.

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

- a. A sign should 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.

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

- a. Letter styles and graphic designs used historically are most appropriate.
- b. If letter styles are to be used that were not seen in the district historically, they should have serifs.



Inappropriate: A sign should be subordinate to the overall building composition.

Permitted Sign Types

8.4 Each building is permitted a maximum total area of signage (from all signs: wall, projecting and window) of one square foot per each lineal foot of frontage of the building.

- a. For buildings on street corners, the average frontages shall be computed to determine the signage allotment under this formula.
- b. One additional sign is permitted on the rear of each building with a maximum size of 50% of that allowed on the front.

8.5 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 on the building front should be positioned just above the display window. It should 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. In addition to other wall, projecting and window signage allowed, each occupant serving food and beverages is entitled to display one menu comprised of a maximum size of 400 square inches.



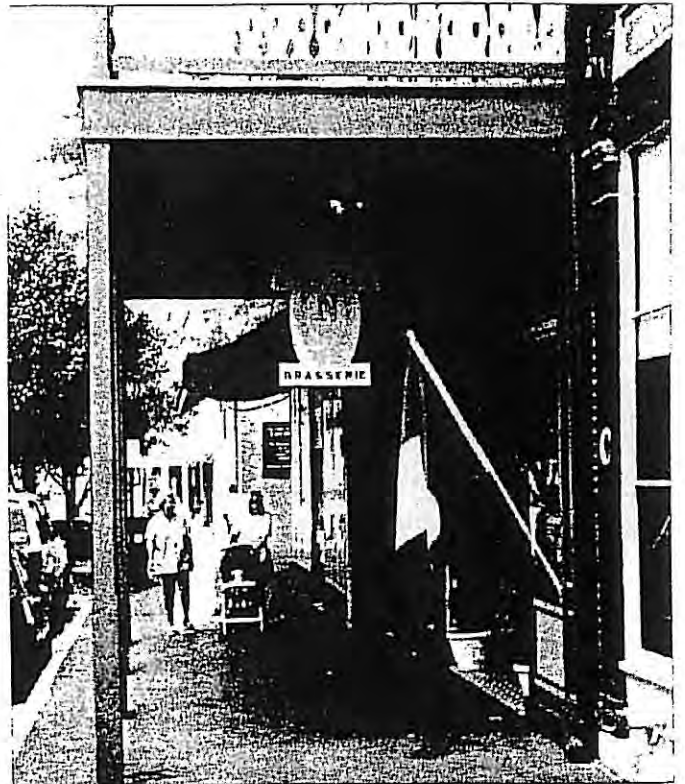
Appropriate: A flush-mounted wall sign is one that is mounted flat to the wall; in most cases, a flush-mounted wall sign should be positioned just above the display window.

8.6 Projecting signs may be considered.

- a. Each building within the district is allowed one projecting sign per tenant. Projecting signs must clear a sidewalk or walkway by at least eight feet.
- b. A projecting sign should be located near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side of it.
- c. Note that other approvals may be required to allow a sign to overhang the public right-of-way.

8.7 Free-standing or pole-mounted signs may be considered on properties that front on Second or Third Street.

- a. *See Section 157.008(B) in the Code of Ordinances of the City of St. Charles for maximum sign area.*



Each building within the district is allowed one projecting sign per tenant. Projecting signs must clear a sidewalk or walkway by at least eight feet.

- 8.8 A window sign may be considered.**
- a. Each occupant within the district is allowed permanent window signs with a maximum size equal to one-third of the size of the panes of glass for the space which the tenant occupies.
 - b. A window sign may be painted on or hung just inside a window.
 - c. A window sign includes any sign located on the glass or within three feet of the glass.
 - d. A window sign shall be included in the calculation of the total amount of building signage permitted.



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

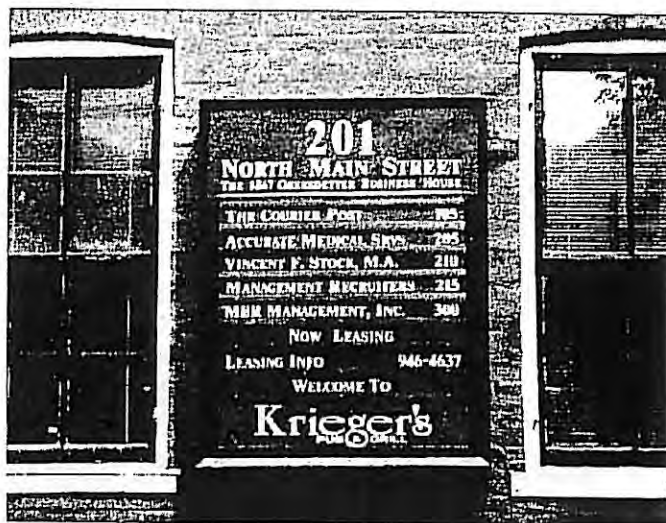


Appropriate: Awning and canopy signs may be considered.

- 8.9 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.
 - b. Use similar forms or backgrounds for the signs to tie them together visually and make them easier to read.
 - c. *See Section 157.008(B) in the Code of Ordinances of the City of St. Charles for maximum sign area.*

- 8.10 Awning and canopy signs may be considered.**
- a. The size of which shall be calculated by its actual area and shall be included in the calculation for total allowable building signage.

- 8.11 An A-frame or sandwich-board sign may be considered.**
- a. Each occupant is entitled to one A-frame or sandwich board sign with a maximum size of 30 inches wide and 48 inches in height, per side.



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

Inappropriate Sign Types

- 8.12 Signs that are out of character with those seen historically and that would alter the historic character of the street are inappropriate.
- Animated signs are prohibited.
 - Any sign that visually overpowers the building or obscures significant architectural features is inappropriate.
 - See Section 157.006.1 in the Code of Ordinances of the City of St. Charles for other prohibited signs.



Signs that are out of character with those seen historically and that would alter the historic character of the street are inappropriate.

Sign Materials

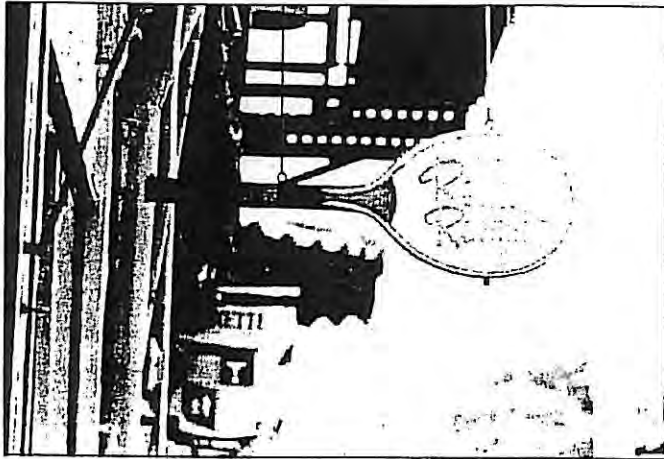
- 8.13 Sign materials should be compatible with that of the building facade.
- Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs. Their use is encouraged. Unfinished materials, including unpainted wood, are discouraged because they are out of character with the historic context.
 - Plastic is not permitted, except for flush, adhesive lettering.
 - Highly reflective materials are inappropriate.
- 8.14 Sign colors should be chosen from the approved Victorian paint color equivalency chart (guideline 7.11, on page 55).
- 8.15 Sign brackets and hardware should be compatible with the building and installed in a workman-like manner.



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Sign Content

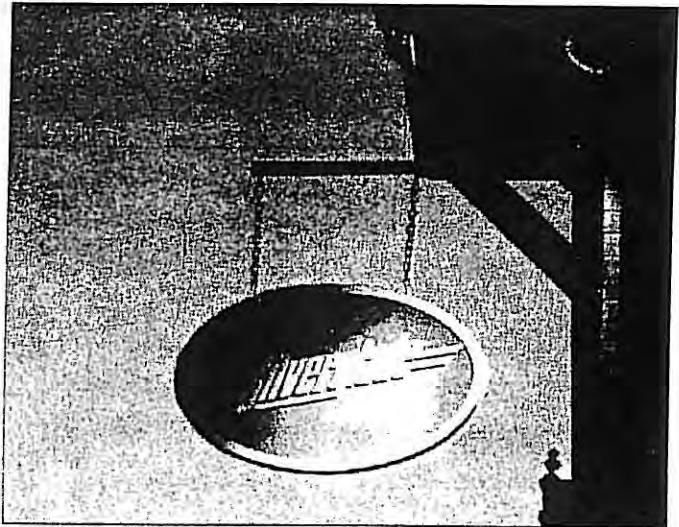
- 8.16 Symbol and shape signs are encouraged.**
- Symbol signs add interest to the street, are quickly read and are remembered better than written words.
- 8.17 Use colors for the sign that are compatible with those of the building front.**
- Also limit the number of colors used on a sign. In general, no more than three colors should be used.
- 8.18 Typefaces that are in keeping with those seen in the area historically are encouraged.**
- Generally, these are typefaces with serifs.
 - Avoid sign types that appear too contemporary.
- 8.19 Select letter styles and sizes that will be compatible with the building front.**
- Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate typeface styles.
 - Signs in the district should be oriented to pedestrians rather than automobiles. Sign lettering should be sized accordingly.



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

Sign Lighting

- 8.20 The light for a sign should be an indirect source.**
- Light should be directed at the sign from an external, shielded lamp.
 - A warm light, similar to daylight, is appropriate.
 - Light should not shine directly in the eyes of pedestrians.
- 8.21 Internal illumination of signs is inappropriate.**
- Neon lights in any form, including neon signs, are prohibited.



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