



# Downtown Lansing Sign Design Guidelines



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# GUIDELINES

## **Applicability**

The standards and guidelines set forth in this manual apply to businesses within the Principal Shopping District A area that are receiving a financial incentive through the Downtown Lansing Inc. Sign Grant Program.

- All signs shall be reviewed by the Design Committee (DC) for compliance with the guidelines contained herein.
- Signs that are funded in whole or in part by the Sign Grant Program may not be fabricated, installed or changed until the DC has approved the design and a sign permit (if applicable) has been issued.
- The intent of the Sign Grant Program is to provide a financial incentive to encourage businesses to design and install high-quality, creative and interesting signs in the Principal Shopping District A area. Thus, voluntary compliance with these guidelines for those businesses not utilizing the Sign Grant Program is highly encouraged.
- The DC, at its sole discretion, shall have the authority to deny or approve any application.

## **Purpose**

The intent of the sign design guidelines is to:

- Promote reasonable and improved standards for business and building identification.
- Encourage creative and innovative approaches to signage within an established framework.
- Promote economic vitality in the downtown.
- Raise overall property values and the ambiance of downtown Lansing by discouraging visual clutter.
- Create commercial signs designed with the purpose of identifying a business in an attractive and functional manner, rather than to serve primarily as general advertising for business.
- Ensure signs on the façade of buildings enhance the existing character and are complimentary to the architectural scheme of the building.

- Encourage the highest quality visual environment through compatibility with surroundings and effective communication of the sign's message.

**Eligible Signs**

Wall Signs

1. Each ground floor business establishment shall be permitted to have 1 wall sign on each wall.
2. The allowable wall sign area shall be determined by the amount of building wall frontage that the establishment occupies, in accordance with the following table:

**BUILDING FRONTAGE**

**MAXIMUM WALL SIGN AREA**

UP TO 39 LINEAL FEET OF BUILDING FRONTAGE	5% OF BUILDING FACADE AREA TO MAXIMUM SIZE 50 SQ. FT.
40 FEET TO 99 FEET OF LINEAL BUILDING FRONTAGE	15% OF BUILDING FACADE AREA TO MAXIMUM SIZE 150 SQ. FT.
100 FEET AND UP OF LINEAL BUILDING FRONTAGE	15% OF BUILDING FACADE AREA TO MAXIMUM SIZE 200 SQ. FT.
H & I ZONED BUILDINGS OF OVER 200 LINEAL FEET OF BUILDING FRONTAGE	15% OF BUILDING FACADE AREA TO MAXIMUM SIZE 300 SQ. FT.
BUILDING FACADE AREA CALCULATED BY 15 FEET (HEIGHT) X BUILDING WIDTH.	

3. Where a business establishment occupies no part of the building frontage, one 8 square foot wall sign shall be permitted. Such business establishments may have one wall sign or one projecting sign as regulated in this ordinance, but not both.
4. Wall signs shall be placed at a maximum height of 15 feet, measured from the top of the sign to the ground or sidewalk, except that buildings with more than 4 stories may place building identification signs on the building parapet. Buildings on corner lots may place one building identification sign on the parapet of each wall that abuts a public street. The allowable size for building identification signs shall be computed using the standard wall sign table. Such signs shall not be deducted from the total amount of wall signage permitted for the building or the business establishments therein.
5. No wall sign shall obstruct any door, window, fire escape or ventilation system and shall not be erected to extend above the top of a wall or beyond the ends of the wall to which they are attached, except as otherwise permitted by this ordinance.
6. No wall sign shall project more than 24 inches beyond the wall of the building to which it is attached.

7. Restaurants in the Principal Shopping District A area are permitted to have one, six (6) square foot menu sign, mounted flat against the wall of the building. Such signs shall not be deducted from the amount of wall signage that is permitted for the business establishment.

#### Projecting Signs

1. One projecting sign per business establishment is permitted, unless otherwise is prohibited by this ordinance.
2. Projecting signs must be perpendicular to the building and may have a maximum area of 16 square feet and a maximum projection of 4 feet, 6 inches.
3. Where a projecting sign is located on a corner building and is used in lieu of one permitted wall sign, the area of the projecting sign may exceed 16 square feet and shall be deducted from the total allowable wall sign area for the building establishment. Such sign must be visible from at least 2 directions.
4. Projecting signs shall have a minimum vertical clearance of 8 feet from the bottom edge of the sign to the ground or sidewalk, or 15 feet if overhanging an alley.

#### Awning Signs

1. Awning signs shall be regulated as wall signs.
2. The square footage of the sign shall be determined by striking straight lines around the extremities of the text or message to form a square or rectangle. The total area of the awning shall not be used in computing the size of the sign.

#### Window Signs

Window signs are signs that are painted, posted, displayed, or etched on an interior translucent or transparent surface, including windows and doors.

1. Window signs shall not exceed 20% of the window area from which the sign can be seen from the exterior of the building.
2. Window signs should be created from high-quality materials such as paint or gold-leaf. Appropriate techniques for window signs include sandblasting or etched glass.
3. All mounting hardware and equipment should be concealed from the exterior view of the building.
4. Well-designed window graphics shall be used in the construction of the sign to attract attention but still allow pedestrians to view store interiors.

### Prohibited Signs

Permanent billboards

Roof signs

Inflatable signs

Pennants, streamers & spinners

Free standing signs

Sandwich boards

Temporary signs

### Basic Sign Design Guidelines

- All signs should be integrated with their surroundings in respect to size, shape, color texture, and lighting so they are complementary with the overall design of the building.
- Sign design should reflect the character of the building and its' use(s).
- Signs should account for and respect the buildings location, context and character within the downtown.
- Signs should enhance the primary design elements or unique architectural features of the buildings.
- Signs should be designed with the purpose of promoting retail and street activity while enhancing the pedestrian experience.
- The size of signs and its letters should be sensitive to the design of the building.
- The layout and shape of the architectural features of the building should be considered when determining the size and location of the sign.
- The design elements of the building such as window patterns (vertical and horizontal rectangles, arches, squares, etc.) should guide the process of determining the shape of the sign.
- All signs within the downtown shall be maintained properly so they are always in clean, working condition and not obscured or damaged.
- New signs for existing buildings shall provide a compatible appearance with the existing signage of other tenants.
- Signs should attempt to unify the businesses of adjacent neighbors or the nearest neighboring tenants.

### Placement

- For new buildings, the architecture of the building often identifies specific locations for sign placement and these locations shall be used.

- If the architecture of an existing building infers a specific location for sign placement, the location shall be used.
- The size of signs shall be in proportion to the size of the location.
- Signage producing repetition of information on the same building shall be avoided, regardless of square footage allowed under the Sign Code.
- All mounting and supports should be inserted into mortar joints and not into the brick face of a masonry facade. This technique minimizes irreversible damage and allows for easy removal.
- Signs to be replaced on the exterior of stucco exteriors can leave unattractive “patched” areas. These potential maintenance problems shall be addressed in the approval process by the DC.

### **Design & Materials**

- The colors and lettering styles should compliment the building façade and create a harmonious relationship with neighboring businesses.
- Excessively bright colors or over-scaled letters shall not be used as a means to attract attention.
- Exposed neon tubing may be used in conjunction with other types of materials to artistically emphasize the business name and/or logo to accentuate the historical context of the business and its’ chronological relationship to the use of neon.
- The design and alignment of multiple use buildings should compliment each other so that a unified appearance is achieved.

### **Sign Message**

- Primary sign text shall contain the name of the business and/or its logo. Secondary text may identify goods or services, including information describing the products sold or services provided.
- Sign messages must be designed to fit properly into the sign itself.
- Sign fonts shall be selected to provide both clarity and artistic integrity.

### **Sign Lighting**

- Light sources must be directed on the sign such that it does not shine into adjacent property or result in glare for motorists or pedestrians.

- Signs using blinking, flashing, rotating, or revolving lights are not permitted.
- Projecting light fixtures used for externally illuminated signs should be simple and unobtrusive in appearance. The lighting should not obscure the graphics of the sign.
- In an effort to promote continuity, colored lighting should be avoided.
- Signs should not obscure windows, grille work, piers, pilasters and other ornamental features. Typically, wall signs should be centered on horizontal surfaces (i.e., over a storefront opening).
- Wall signs shall be designed to be compatible with the storefront in scale, proportions, and color.
- Signs should be designed to create a clearly defined edge and to provide shadow relief.

### **Awning Signs**

- Sign lettering and/or logo shall compromise no more than 30% of the total exterior surface of an awning.
- The minimum height of an awning shall be 8 feet from the lowest point to the sidewalk.
- Awnings with back-lit graphics or other kinds of interior illumination are not permitted.
- Plastic bubble awnings are not permitted.
- Poles between awnings and the ground for supporting awnings are not permitted.
- Awnings with a solid color are generally preferred. However, striped awnings may be appropriate for some buildings. Striped awnings with highly contrasting, bright colors may be visually inappropriate.

### **Projecting Signs**

- Projecting signs should not be mounted above the second floor sill in multi-storied buildings.
- The design should consider visually interesting elements such as square or rectangle shapes with painted or applied letters, 2 or 3 dimensional symbols or icons, irregular outlines, and/or internal cut-outs.



- Projecting signs shall be oriented to pedestrians passing on the sidewalk in front of the building(s) rather than to automobiles or pedestrians on the opposite side of the street.
- Mounting hardware should be an attractive and integral part of the sign design. Simple round pipe brackets with plugged ends or added decorative end elements are generally appropriate for signs. However, metal brackets of a more decorative and complex shape are encouraged where appropriate to add to the character of the building.

### **Monument/Ground Signs**

- Monument/ground signs should be constructed of materials that compliment the building structure and its use.
- Architectural lines that compliment the building shall be incorporated into the sign, especially with the respect to the top of the sign.
- The design of the sign structure and the text should express high quality construction.
- Monument/ground signs should consist of lettering that is consistent with the image of the business and the surrounding architectural style.
- Letter heights should not exceed 12 inches.
- Monument/ground signs should be illuminated either by external fixtures designed to complement the appearance of the sign.
- Internal illumination may be permitted and shall be designed such that only text and logos are illuminated. Opaque backgrounds are required and shall be of non-reflective materials.
- Sign text should be limited to the building or project name, logos and address.