

Appendix C

Sign Design Guidelines

Because signage is intended to be visible and attract attention, it has significant visual impact on the area in which it is placed, particularly in a community that is attempting to maintain certain aesthetic qualities. Signage, as part of the overall character of an area, can produce a lasting impression on visitors and local residents.

Sign Types and Placement

The type of sign should depend upon the surroundings and the attention one desires to attract. An abundance of signs of many different sizes, shapes, and heights in close proximity can be visually chaotic and ineffective as signs compete for the attention of the viewer. Signs made of similar materials, same lighting, and styles of support can provide a unifying element to a commercial district and enhance the area for business (Figure 3).

Ground signs are perhaps best used in situations where there is a large setback from the street, where the attention of fast moving vehicles is being sought, or where there are several uses in one building.

Wall signs, or other signs attached directly on a building, are best used in pedestrian or village scale commercial areas. Figure 4 illustrates appropriate locations on a building for various types of signs. Projecting signs are best used for street-level and second floor business identification where the attention of slow moving vehicles or pedestrians is desired and where little or no front yard is available for a ground or free-standing sign (Figure 4, No. 8). Signs identifying a second floor business should be placed directly beside a related window (No.9) and should not be higher than the height of the window opening. First floor projecting signs should not project more than three feet and second floor projecting signs should not project more than two feet beyond the façade of the building.

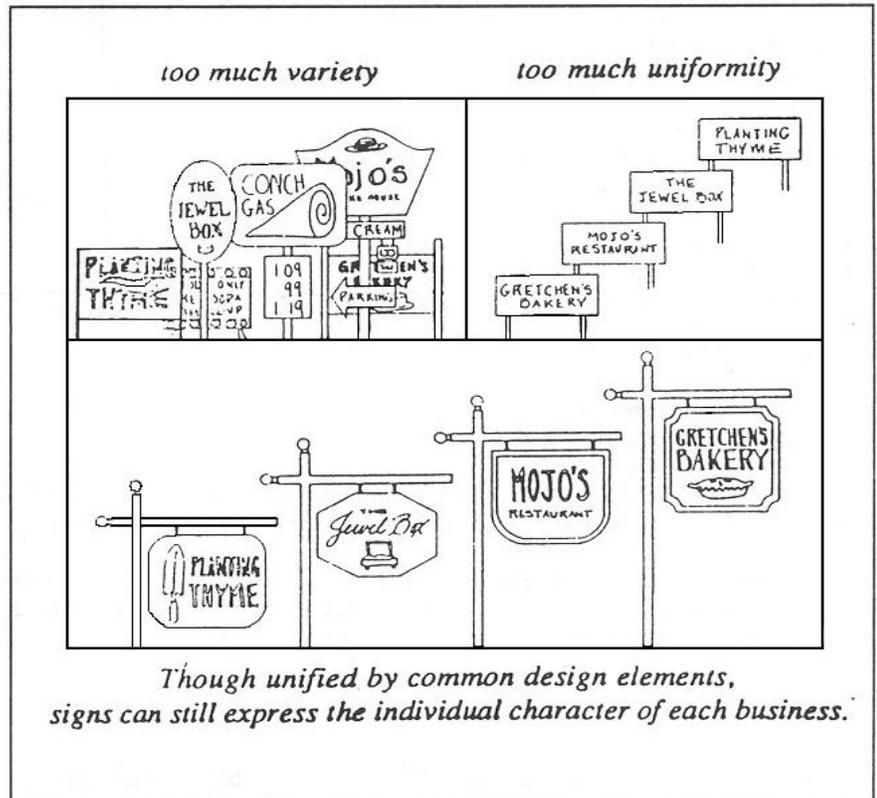


Figure 3. Variety vs. Uniformity

Windows provide an excellent area for signs that will not interfere with the architectural details or overall appearance of the building. Such signs should simply state the name and function of the business. Covering the window with long lists of products, prices, and other information can create a cluttered and unattractive appearance.

Freestanding signs are perhaps best used in areas of slow moving vehicles or pedestrian activity. Freestanding signs work well in intimate settings, such as courtyards.

If two businesses share a common storefront (Figure 4 No. 1), both should use the same basic sign format. Signs relating to street level establishments should be placed within an information band (No. 3) immediately above the storefront or should be applied directly to the display window (No. 2). The information band should not be longer than the overall length of the storefront. If it cannot be confined to the width of an existing band defined by the building, its height should not exceed two feet, six inches.

Second floor businesses should be identified by a street level directory or sign that is placed directly beside (No. 4), immediately above (No. 5), or directly on a related window (No. 6). A sign placed beside the window should be no higher than the height of the window opening. A sign placed immediately above a window should be no longer than the overall width of the window.

Third floor businesses should be identified either by a street level directory or sign that is applied directly to a related window (No. 7). No signs should be placed on the façade of the building above the second floor.

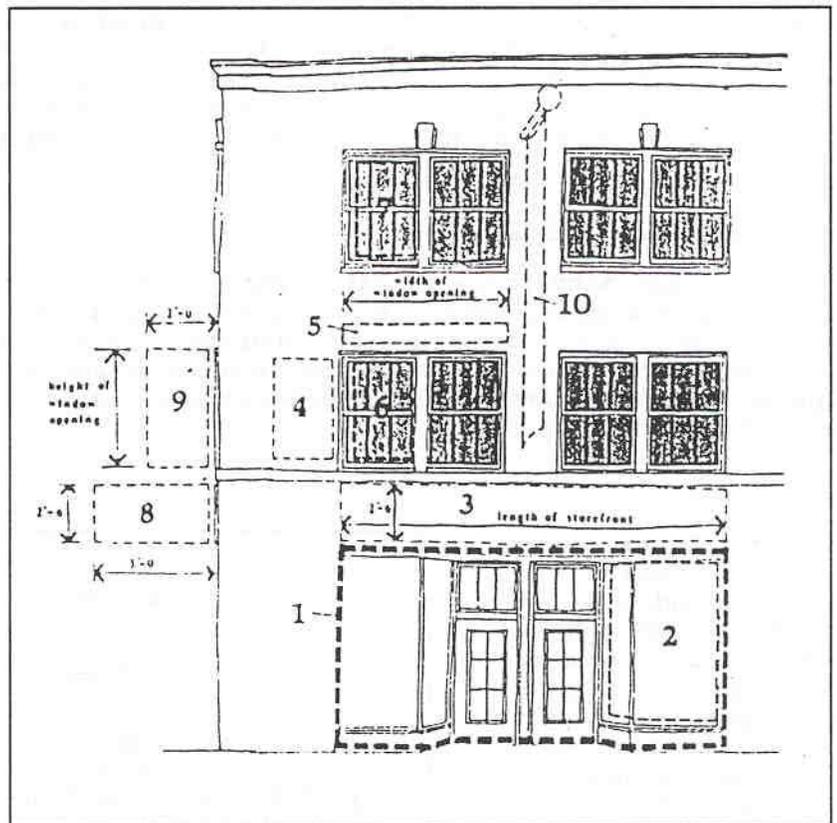


Figure 4. Sign types and placement

Sign Size

The size of words and the overall sign should be kept in scale with the viewer's expected location and speed. The sign should also be in scale with the building it is associated with. Larger, auto-oriented signs may be more appropriate along high-speed roads but are not generally consistent with the scale and pedestrian-orientation of village areas.

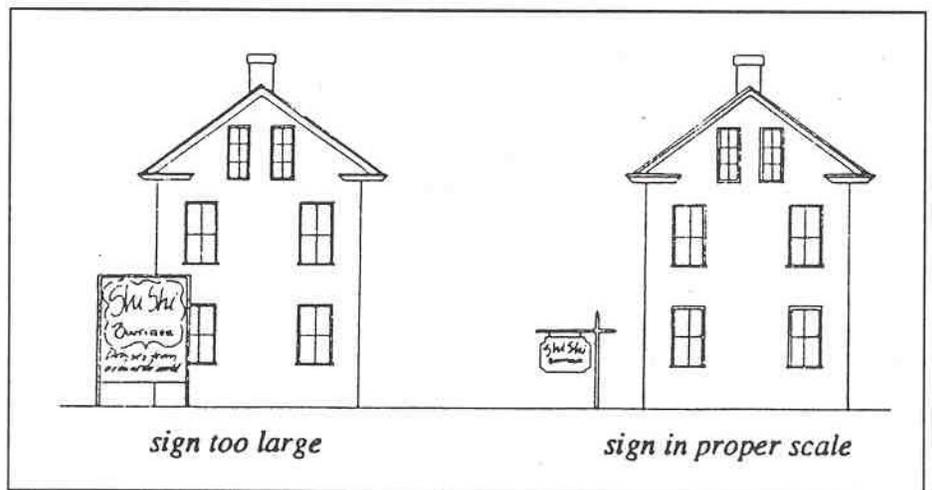


Figure 5. Size and scale

The size of the sign should depend upon its expected location on the façade of the building so it does not conceal significant architectural details (Figure 5).



Picture 1: Existing sign out of scale with building.



Picture 2: Sign alterations with improved scale

An example of a sign that is not consistent with its building or location is shown in Picture 1. This sign is too large. Notice that the speed of traffic in this area is regulated by a signal and is relatively slow moving. Also, the size of the sign in relation to pedestrians on the sidewalk is out of scale. This sign dominates the area in which it is located and negatively effects surrounding businesses.

It is not hard to visualize that recognition of the business would not be lost with a lowering and reduction of the existing large sign since additional small signs exist and the architecture and color of the building itself serves as a symbol that is readily identifiable to the general public (Picture 2).

All figures from the Village Planning Handbook, Bucks County Planning Commission, 1989.

Most text taken from the Waterbury Zoning Regulations, Waterbury, VT, 1994.

An example of a sign that is consistent with its location is this Central National Bank sign (Picture 3). The size, content, and materials of the sign are aesthetically pleasing and proper for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.



Picture 3: Desired sign size, materials, and colors.

Sign Content

The message on the sign should be easy to read, direct, and simple. Too much information on one or a group of signs may be difficult for a viewer to absorb (Figure 6). A sign using bold, easily recognized symbols and clear, crisp lettering will effectively identify a business or activity, enhance the area in which it is located, and complement the general appearance of the road. Pictures, symbols, and logos can add individuality and character to signs and make them easier to read.

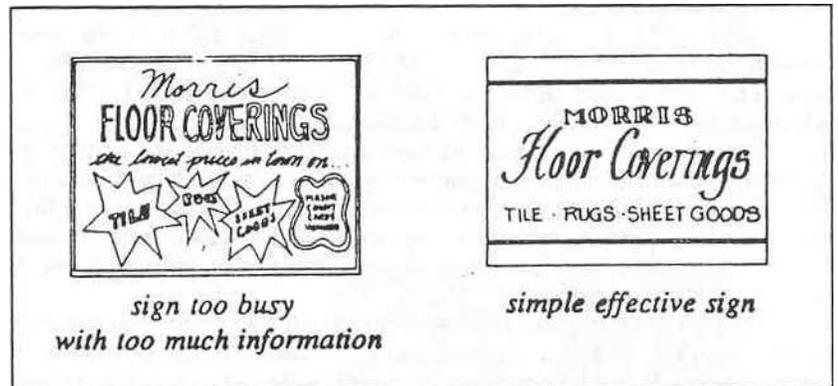


Figure 6. Cluttered vs. clear information

Sign Materials

Materials should be selected which are compatible with the architecture of the building and the character of the area. For signs in historic areas and commercial areas, consideration should be given to how its materials fit into the surrounding streetscape. Signs of wood, either painted or carved, with external lighting, are usually perceived to be aesthetically pleasing and are usually appropriate in any location in a village or rural location. While a variety of supports can be used, wood or wrought iron is recommended. Internally-lit plastic signs are generally not consistent in most areas and are usually perceived to be the least aesthetically pleasing.

Sign Colors

Most signs need no more than three colors: one for background, a contrasting color for lettering, and a third for emphasis (such as borders, motifs, or shading). For an illustration incorporated into a sign, complementary colors should be used (Figure 7).

All figures from the Village Planning Handbook, Bucks County Planning Commission, 1989.

Most text taken from the Waterbury Zoning Regulations, Waterbury, VT, 1994.

Colors used for a sign should complement the general tone of the structure it serves. When more than one sign is used, the colors of the signs should be coordinated to present a unified image.

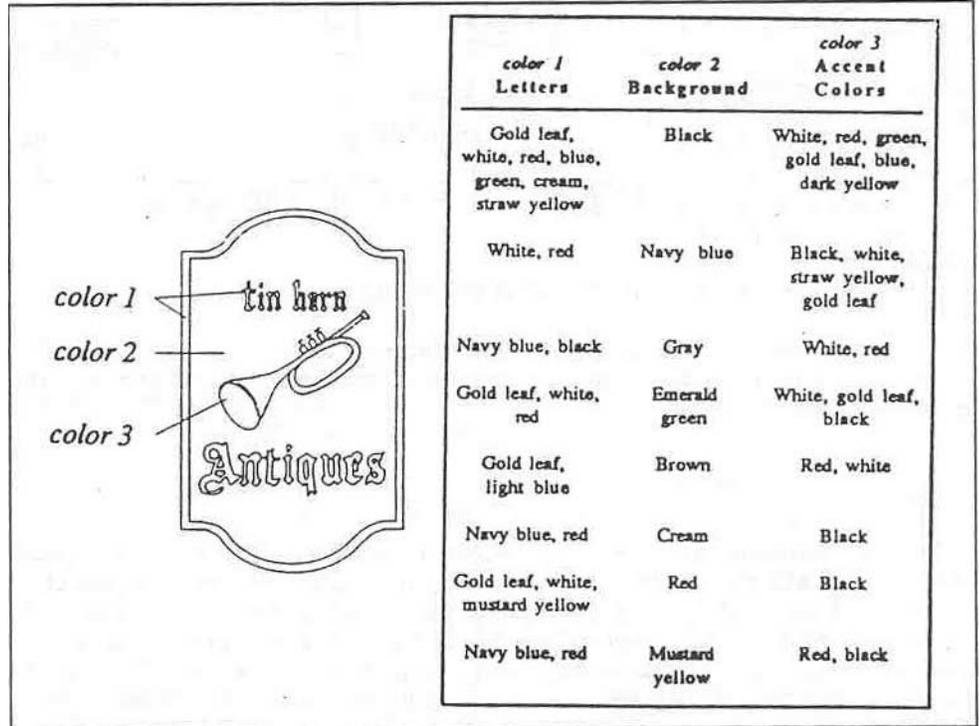


Figure 7. Colors