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SIGNAGE

DESIGN GUIDELINES





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A. INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

The City of Arcadia's General Plan and Development Code promotes high quality design in buildings, landscape, signage, public realm, and open space areas. These documents also identify community design principles applicable to the City's ongoing redevelopment, including "Creating Identifiable Places," "Improving the Public Realm," and "Improving the Private Realm." The General Plan stresses the importance of quality in design and the impact that it has on enhancing the visual image of Arcadia and establishing places that people enjoy. The design guidelines contained within this document have been written to reinforce these goals and objectives and provide general guidelines for signage.

Signage plays an important role in the success of any business by providing ease of location information and identification by prospective customers. When signs are properly integrated into a building design, they can provide a personal quality that contributes to the ambiance of a project or streetscape, especially more unique, individualized signs that convey a business activity or service provided. Alternatively, signs can also intrude upon surrounding environment when they are applied as an afterthought within a project.

The intent of the guidelines in this Section is as follows:

- Provide each sign user an opportunity for adequate identification while guarding against the excessive and confusing proliferation of signs by appropriately regulating the time, place, and manner under which signs may be displayed.
- Preserve and enhance the community's appearance by regulating the type, size, location, quality, design, character, scale, color, illumination, and maintenance of signs.
- Encourage well-designed signs that attract and invite rather than demand the public's attention.
- Encourage the design of signs that complement the structures and uses to which they relate and that are harmonious with their surroundings.
- Ensure freedom of expression for sign uses, including noncommercial speech, by maintaining a content-neutral approach to sign regulation.
- Enhance the safety of motorists and pedestrians by minimizing the distraction of intrusive signs, as well as to protect the life, health, property, and general welfare of City residents and visitors.
- Provide a review process for signs to ensure compliance with the requirements of this Section.

The following design guidelines are intended to balance the legitimate needs for business identification with the need to prevent visual clutter that detracts from a project and the community's overall character.

2. How These Design Guidelines are Applied

These Design Guidelines will be utilized during the City's development review process to encourage the highest level of design quality while at the same time providing the flexibility necessary to encourage creativity on the part of an applicant in response to existing site conditions. Designers and developers are urged to become familiar with these guidelines and to apply them throughout the design process to assure that the design, review, and permitting processes are as efficient as possible. No claim can be made that these guidelines encompass every possible technique for achieving a high level of design quality. It is important to note that the guidelines are a minimum starting point for quality signage and the designer is encouraged to use their creativity and experience to improve upon the means for realizing this highest level of quality design. The guidelines do not seek to impose an overriding style, a limited color palette, or an artificial design theme, but rather seek to promote the positive design characteristics currently found throughout the City.

3. How to Use These Design Guidelines

Property owners, developers, architects, designers, and contractors proposing a new development or redevelopment within Arcadia should first review the appropriate Development Code sections governing their property. If the project involves additional construction beyond signage, the applicant should also refer to the Design Guidelines document applicable to their property's land use – whether Single-Family Residential, Multifamily Residential, Commercial/Mixed Use, or Industrial.

The goal of this document is to provide clear and useful recommendations for the design, construction, review, and approval of signs within Arcadia. The guidelines are intended as a reference point for a common understanding of the minimum qualitative design expectations. The guidelines are offered as one way of achieving attractive and functional projects that compare favorably with established community standards. All development shall comply with the spirit and intent of the design guidelines presented.

The design guidelines may be interpreted with some flexibility in the application to specific projects, as not all design criteria may be appropriate for each project. In some circumstances, one guideline may be relaxed in order to accomplish another, more important, guideline. The overall objective is to ensure that the intent and spirit of the design guidelines are followed and to attain the best possible design within reason.



The Arcadia General Plan provides guidance on the design of signs:

“Commercial signs have a significant influence on the overall aesthetic impact of a given street. If signs have enough uniformity and are well-proportioned and appropriate to their context, they can collectively function much the same way as public art in providing a sense of place and unique identity. If, on the other hand, signs are ill proportioned, cheap looking, and an odd mix of styles (monument versus pylon versus wall signs), they create visual “noise” and clutter that make it difficult to see the positive qualities of the street and to locate businesses.”

4. Applicability to Other City Documents

In addition to these guidelines, applicants should also refer to the Development Code for signage standards and additional design criteria related to signs. For specific definitions of each of the sign types included below, applicants should refer to the Development Code. While the Design Guidelines contained herein are not intended to supersede the requirements of the Development Code, applicants should not assume that a project will be approved by merely adhering to the City’s minimum zoning standards and development regulations. Rather, these Design Guidelines provide additional guidance to aide applicants in the design of signs for all projects in order to ensure the high quality desired by the City and the community.



B. DESIGN GUIDELINES

SIGNAGE



Design Guideline Objectives define Arcadia's priorities and standards for future development. Many of them have been derived from land use policies established in the General Plan. Development should be designed to adhere to the following objectives and the supporting guidelines provided.

Objective 1: Guide the design and development of signs that are attractive and well-coordinated with the building and surrounding context.

1. General Sign Guidelines

- a. Signs should be integrated into the building design, complementary of the building architecture, and compatible with the building colors and materials and other signage on the building.
- b. Signs should be in scale with, and in proportion to, the primary building façade so that the signs do not dominate the appearance.
- c. The method of attaching the sign to the building should be integrated into the overall sign design.
- d. Signs should not cover up important architectural features.
- e. Signage should consist of the store name. Tag lines, bylines, merchandise or service descriptions are discouraged.
- f. Flush-mounted signs should be positioned within architectural features, such as the window panel above the storefront or flanking the doorways.
- g. Buildings with historical significance should use signs, lettering, and other accent features that are typical of the era of construction.
- h. Signs should not cause unnecessary distractions to motorists or differ aesthetically from the surrounding architecture.
- i. Space for signage should be designed into building elevations that are adjacent to public streets.
- j. Symbols and logos should be used in place of words to aide in ease of business identification, where feasible.
- k. Signs that advertise an occupant's business through the use of graphic or crafted symbols, such as shoes, keys, glasses, or books are strongly encouraged. These types of figurative signs may be incorporated into any of the allowable sign types.
- l. The number of lettering styles on a sign should not exceed more than two styles for small signs and three styles for larger signs.
- m. Sign lettering and wording should be appropriately spaced, not crowded together or overly spaced, to aid in ease of legibility.



Example of metal used for business signage



Appropriately spaced sign lettering



Example of contemporary sign incorporating wood and metal



Example of a sign advertising an occupant's business



Wood lettered sign with gooseneck downlights



Freestanding pylon sign with complementary colors and lettering

- n. Typefaces should be clearly legible.
- o. The total number of colors used in any one sign should be minimized to no more than two to three.
- p. The following materials are encouraged:
 - Wood (carved, sandblasted, etched and properly sealed, primed and painted, or stained);
 - Metal (formed, etched, cast, engraved and properly primed and painted or factory coated to protect against corrosion); or
 - Custom neon tubing in the form of graphics or lettering may be incorporated into sign design.
- q. The following materials are discouraged: foam, fiberglass, and reflective materials that may be difficult to read.
- r. The use of indirect lighting sources like spotlights or gooseneck downlights are encouraged as indirect lighting emphasizes the continuity of the building's surface.
- s. Reverse channel letters with halo lighting is preferred over internally illuminated, front lit channel letter signs.

2. Freestanding Signs (Monument and Pylon)

- a. Freestanding signs that are well articulated, well-proportioned, and accented with landscaping are encouraged at project entries.
- b. Freestanding signs should incorporate complementary colors, materials, and lettering fonts consistent with the building materials.
- c. Freestanding signs should be placed perpendicular to the street.
- d. Freestanding signs should be placed in a manner to maintain adequate vehicular sight distances at entry driveways.
- e. Materials used for sign bases should match an architectural element of the building.
- f. All sides of freestanding signs should be finished. Use of a decorative trim at the top is encouraged.

- g. Freestanding signs should be in proportion to the relevant development and the context of the surrounding neighborhood in height, depth, and length.
- h. Monument signs with dimension lettering should ensure that lettering depth is in proportion to the size of the sign.

3. Blade Signs

- a. The bottom of a projecting or blade/bracket sign should maintain adequate pedestrian clearance from the sidewalk level to allow for unobstructed and unimpeded flow of pedestrian foot traffic.
- b. Signs should not be mounted or project above the eave line or parapet.
- c. Decorative iron and wood brackets that support projecting signs are strongly encouraged.
- d. The lines of any proposed brackets should harmonize with the overall shape of a sign and should be able to adequately hold up the projecting sign.
- e. To avoid damaging building brick or stonework, brackets should be designed so they can be bolted into masonry joints, where feasible.
- f. Blade signs with dimensional lettering and/or logos should ensure that lettering depth is in proportion to the size of the sign.



Blade/bracket signs provide clear direction for pedestrians and enhance streetscape continuity.



Example of an engraved wood sign with iron brackets

4. Wall Signs

- a. The following types of wall signs are strongly recommended:
 - Dimensional letter forms with seamless edge treatments;
 - Reverse channel lettering with halo lighting;
 - Cut or fabricated steel, painted or unfinished;
 - Polished metal;
 - Etched metal or glass, sandblasted glass;
 - Metal, hardwoods, glass;
 - Halo or exposed channel neon;
 - Silhouette illumination;
 - Externally illuminated signs using a separate light source like spotlight or gooseneck downlight; or
 - Dimensional geometric shapes and three-dimensional forms.



Dimensional lettering made of brass with seamless edge treatments



Signage limited to business name while also incorporating playful symbols



Negative space around sign provides balance on building facade



Awnings with removable flaps should be considered

- b. Signs proposed to be located on buildings that have existing signage should be designed (size, location, colors, lighting, and materials) to be consistent with the existing signs.
- c. The text of permanent storefront signage should be limited to the name of the business, address, and/or generic type of goods or services offered.
- d. All signs should fit comfortably into their storefront architecture leaving sufficient margins and negative space on all sides. Thickness, height, and colors of sign lettering and graphics should be visually balanced and in proportion to other signs on the building.
- e. Panel signs should be constructed of a durable material such as metal or wood.
- f. Raceways should be avoided where possible and, if exposed, should be painted to match the color of the building.
- g. When replacing flat panel signs, new signs should utilize dimensional lettering. If utilizing light, the background should remain solid opaque while the letters and logos may transmit light.

5. Awning/Canopy Signs

- a. Signs should be appropriately sized and scaled with the building façade on which they appear.
- b. Lettering, logos, symbols, and graphics should be compatible with the chosen awning/canopy and that of the overall building color palette.
- c. When installed, applicants should consider installing awnings or canopies with removable valance flaps and end panels in order to accommodate future changes in business signage.
- d. Letters and logos should be silkscreen printed or sewn on the vertical surface. Painting of awnings or canopies is strongly discouraged.
- e. The shape, design, and color of fabric awnings and canopies should be carefully coordinated with, and should not dominate, the architectural style of the building on which they appear.
- f. Where other fabric awnings or canopies are used on a building, the design and color(s) should be coordinated together.

6. Window Signs

- Window signs should be limited to individual letters placed on the interior surface of the window and designed to be viewed from outside of the business.
- Window sign text should be limited to the business name and may include a brief message(s) identifying the type of products or services provided.
- Window signs should be grouped to minimize the blocking of views into the business.



Group together window signage to minimize obstruction of views

7. Marquee Signs

- Marquee signs may include the venue name as well as changeable copy related to current and future attractions.
- Venue name should be designed with bright colors and may be painted, rendered in neon tube, or constructed of individually-shaped letters that are either internally-lit or lit from concealed external sources.
- Use of more than one material for a sign or structure is strongly recommended.
- Changeable copy should use movable simple black lettering against a white background.
- If changeable copy is provided, the venue or name should not occupy more than a third of the total marquee sign area.
- If no changeable copy is provided, the venue name should be limited to 75 percent of the sign area.



Example of marquee sign featuring black lettering with white background

8. Mural Signs

- Mural signs should be sited in a highly visible location, and sized appropriately for their location.
- Paint for mural signs should be vivid, and of high quality.
- Creative designs and fonts are encouraged.



Mural sign appropriately sized and sited

9. SIGN TYPE EXAMPLES



Monument sign



Freestanding sign



Blade sign



Wall sign



Awning sign



Marquee Sign



Window Sign



Mural Signs