

CHAPTER 11

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS



Introduction

This chapter presents design guidelines for the treatment of signs associated with commercial uses. The design guidelines are organized into relevant design topics, and within these are the individual policies and design guidelines upon which the Town will base its decisions.

Traditionally, a variety of signs were seen in Truckee. Five different types occurred:

- Small, freestanding signs mounted on a pole or post; located near the sidewalk because the primary structure or business was set back from the street (e.g., an area with residential character); printed on both sides
- Medium-sized, square or rectangularly-shaped signs that projected from the building above the awnings or canopies; printed on both sides
- Small signs hung below canopies
- Medium- to large-sized, horizontally-oriented rectangular signs attached flat against the building, above and/or below canopies; printed on one side only
- Window signs, painted on glass; used at the street level and on upper floors

Topics Discussed in this Chapter:

1. Sign Context
2. Appropriate Signs
3. Materials
4. Sign Content
5. Sign Lighting

Signs that were mounted on the exterior advertised the primary business of a building. Typically, this use occupied a street level space and sometimes upper floors as well.

In addition, signs were mounted to fit within architectural features. In many cases, they were mounted flush above the storefront, just above moldings. Others were located between columns or centered in “sign boards” on a building face. This method also enabled one to perceive the design character of individual structures, and is the preferred alternative for most structures in Truckee.

References:

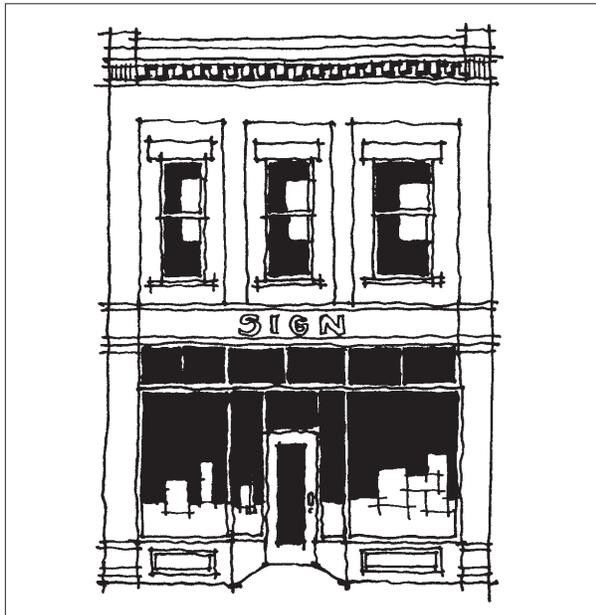
☞ Also consult Chapters 18.54 and 18.56 of the Truckee Municipal Code.

1. Sign Context

A sign typically serves two functions: first, to attract attention, and second to convey information, essentially identifying the business or services offered within. If it is well designed, the building front alone can serve the attention-getting function, allowing the sign to be focused on conveying information in a well-conceived manner.

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

- 1) Integrate a sign within the structure's design into a unified architectural statement.
- 2) Develop a master sign plan for the entire building. This is especially important for buildings that house multiple businesses. The master sign plan can then guide individual sign design decisions.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.040 which provides more information about filing a Comprehensive Sign Program.



Coordinate the overall facade composition, including ornamental details and signs.

B. Design a sign to be subordinate to the overall building composition.

- 1) A sign should be consistent with the proportions and scale of the elements within the structure's facade.
- 2) Locate a sign on a building such that it will emphasize design elements of the facade itself.
- 3) Study the facade of the structure to determine if there are any architectural features or details that suggest a location, size or shape for the sign. These could be bands or frames of brickwork, cornice lines, indentations or projections in the face material.
- 4) Look at the facade of the structure in relation to where adjacent businesses have placed their signs. There may be an established pattern of sign locations.
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(E) for more guidance regarding sign placement.

C. Do not locate signs so that they cover architectural features that may be important to the structure's overall design.

- 1) This is especially important for a building with historic significance.
- 2) Design a sign to integrate with the architectural features of the building on which it is to be installed and not distract attention from them.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(E) for more guidance regarding sign placement.

2. Appropriate Signs

A. A flush-mounted wall sign may be considered.

- 1) In many cases, Vernacular Commercial buildings common in Truckee have a “sign band.” This is the ideal location for a primary building sign. The sign band is typically located above the transom and below the second-floor windows.
- 2) When using the sign band location, fit the panel within the band borders.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.070(K) for more general standards.

B. An awning sign may be considered.

- 1) An awning sign may be woven, sewn or painted onto the vertical valence of an awning.
- 2) Wording or graphics that are simple and concise are preferred.
- 3) Internal illumination of an awning sign is not recommended.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.070(A) for more general standards.
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(F)(1) for more guidance regarding awning signs.

C. A window sign may be considered.

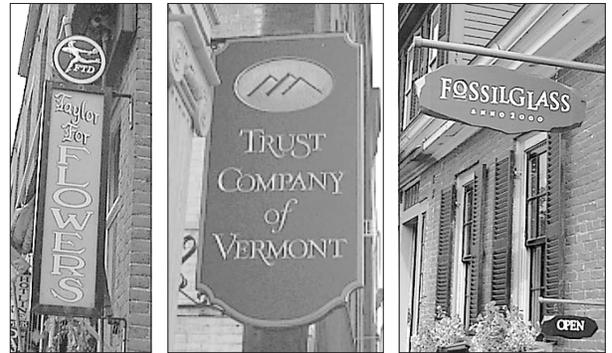
- 1) It may be painted on the glass or hung just inside a window.
- 2) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.070(L) for more general standards.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(F)(2) for more guidance regarding window signs.

D. A projecting sign may be considered.

- 1) A projecting sign is attached to a building face and is mounted perpendicular to the facade.
- 2) Locate a projecting sign near the business entrance at eye level, just above the door or to the side of it. A project sign may also be located on the underside of a canopy.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.070(F) for more general standards.



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



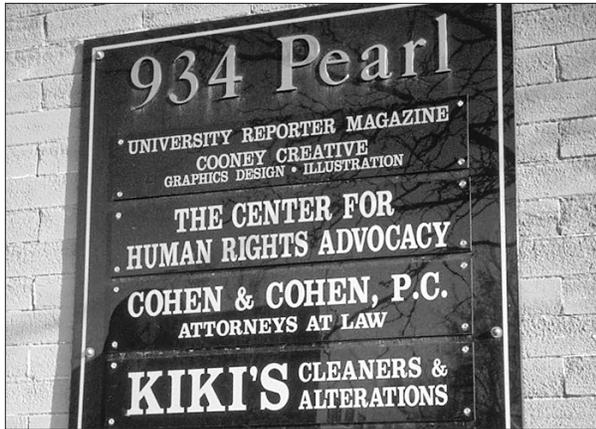
A projecting sign may be considered.

References:

- ☞ See also 18.54.080 to determine the maximum number, sign area, sign height and location requirements for appropriate signs in Truckee. Note that this information is organized by zoning district.

E. A building directory sign may be considered.

- 1) Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs. Align several smaller signs, or group them into a single panel as a directory.
- 2) Use similar forms or backgrounds for the signs to tie them together visually and make them easier to read.
- 3) A building directory sign is considered a wall sign; see also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.070(K) for more general standards.



Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs.



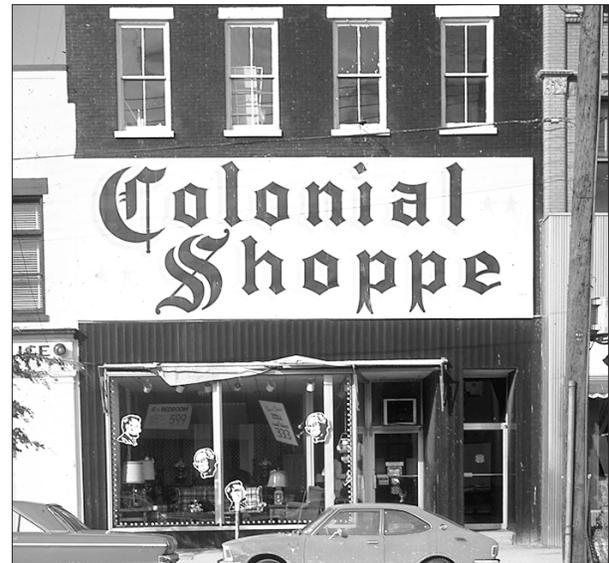
A pole-mounted sign is preferred for smaller buildings, such as those historic residences converted to commercial uses.

F. A freestanding, ground-mounted sign may be considered.

- 1) A freestanding sign may also be used in areas where the primary use is set back from the street edge.
- 2) A monument sign, where the sign itself is low to the ground with a large base or foundation, is generally not appropriate.
- 3) A pole-mounted sign, where a small sign panel is suspended from an arm that is attached to the pole, is preferred where a freestanding sign is needed for a commercial building that is set back from the street.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.070(K) for more general standards.
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(F)(3) for more guidance regarding ground-mounted signs.

G. Signs that are out of character with those seen historically and that would alter the historic character of the street are not recommended.

- 1) Animated signs are inappropriate.
- 2) Any sign that visually overpowers the building or obscures significant architectural features is inappropriate.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.050 for more information regarding prohibited signs.



Any sign that visually overpowers the building or obscures significant architectural features is inappropriate.

References:

- ☞ See also 18.54.080 to determine the maximum number, sign area, sign height and location requirements for appropriate signs in Truckee. Note that this information is organized by zoning district.

3. Materials

A. Sign materials should be compatible with the design theme and use of materials on the building where the sign is to be placed.

- 1) Painted wood and metal are preferred materials for signs.
- 2) Plastic is inappropriate.
- 3) Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read are inappropriate.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(B) for more guidance regarding sign materials.



Painted wood and metal are preferred materials for signs.

4. Sign Content

A. Consider using a symbol for a sign.

- 1) A symbol sign adds interest to the street, can be read quickly and is remembered better than written words.
- 2) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(C) for more guidance regarding the use of symbol signs.

B. Sign colors should complement the colors used on the structures and the project as a whole.

- 1) Overpowering colors should be restrained for use as accent colors.
- 2) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(A) for more guidance regarding sign colors.

C. A simple sign design is preferred.

- 1) Typefaces that are in keeping with those seen in the area traditionally are preferred. Select letter styles and sizes that will be compatible with the building front.
- 2) Generally, these are typefaces with serifs.
- 3) Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate typeface styles.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(C) for more guidance regarding sign design.

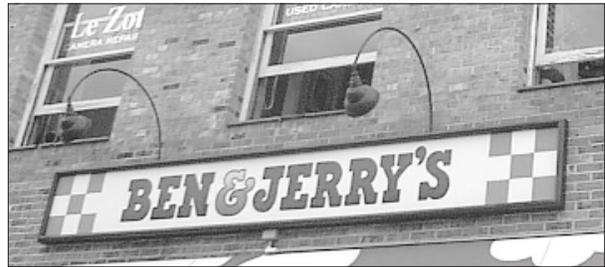


Symbol signs add interest to the street, are quickly read and are remembered better than written words.

5. Sign Lighting

A Indirect lighting for a sign is permitted.

- 1) Direct light at the sign from an external, shielded lamp is preferred.
- 2) While internal illumination is discouraged elsewhere in Truckee, in the Downtown its use is inappropriate.
- 3) A warm light, similar to daylight, is preferred.
- 4) Light that shines directly in the eyes of pedestrians is not recommended.
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.54.060(C) for more guidance regarding the illumination of signs.
- 6) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.56.030(D) for more guidance regarding the illumination of signs.



Lighting that is directed at a sign from an external, shielded lamp, is preferred.