

APPENDIX B SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Purpose and Applicability

The purpose of the Sign Design Guidelines is to provide design criteria to be utilized in the design and construction of signage in the City of Kent. As such the goal is to encourage creative design while at the same time seeking to encourage compatibility with other signage and building facades.

These guidelines shall be utilized for signage in all areas of the City to the extent feasible. However, in areas where specific guidelines with regard to building and sign design may be applicable, as designated in Chapter 1121 of the Zoning Code, those specific guidelines may be mandatory and shall supersede the guidelines recommended in this Appendix.

Design Elements

These guidelines attempt to address design elements relative to signage in regard to general design compatibility, colors, materials, legibility and scale as well as lighting and illumination. While it may not be possible to address each and every design element with a given sign, the design of the sign should utilize the criteria set forth within these guidelines to the extent possible.

Sign Compatibility

- Creative Design: Signs should make a positive contribution to the general appearance of the street and commercial area in which they are to be located. The City encourages imaginative and innovative design of signage as long as it is compatible with its immediate surroundings and adjacent properties.
- Size and Scale: Within the parameters otherwise permitted in this Zoning Code, the scale of signage should be appropriate for the building on which it is located, as well as the surrounding site and properties adjacent to it.
- Integration: Signs should integrate well into the building that they are mounted to and should not obscure or cover significant architectural features. The sign should blend well with the design of the building, both in style, materials and color schemes. In buildings where there are multiple tenants, signs should complement and enhance other signage on the building.

- Impact: Signage should be designed and located in a manner so that they have little or no impact on adjacent residential neighborhoods. Such signs should generally be smaller scale and less intrusive with regard to lighting, color and design.
- Placement: Walls signs should be placed in a manner where they establish an integrated rhythm, form and scale with adjacent signage. This can be accomplished by maintaining compatible size and placement so that signs generally align vertically at similar heights on the façade.
- Pedestrian Scale: Signage should contain some pedestrian-oriented signage as part of the permitted signage at a facility. Such signage should be oriented so that it is easily seen and read by pedestrians standing adjacent to the business.
- Individual Letters: Lettering attached directly to a building may be used in place of an integrated sign structure as long as the lettering compliments the design and form of the building to which it is mounted and abutting buildings. Such lettering may be painted but painted lettering should not cover ornamental or architectural features, nor should it be applied directly to stone or brick surfaces.

Colors

- Selection: Color combinations should be selected and used in a manner that makes the sign attractive and blend well with its surroundings. The use of colors can be effective in catching the eye of the reader and communicating feelings and ideas. The use of too many colors can create confusion and detract from the message of the sign. Coloring should compliment the structures and the project as a whole.
- Contrast: Contrast in coloring is important in considering the legibility of signs. There should be substantial contrast between the lettering and the background to make the sign easier to read both in well-lit and poorly lit situations. Light letters on dark backgrounds or dark letters on light backgrounds are the most legible.
- Multiple Colors: Signs of multiple colors should be designed with consideration given to legibility and whether they detract from the visibility and identification of adjacent signage. Multi-coloring should be limited in scale and not overpower the sign on which it is placed or adjacent signage.

Materials

Types: The following materials are recommended for building mounted signs:

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.

Plastic: Plastic materials are only recommended when the use of such materials is colored or otherwise finished in a way where it compliments the architectural style of the building.

Neon: Neon tubing in the form of graphics or lettering may be used if it compliments the architectural nature and use of the building.

Cloth/Paper: The use of cloth or paper materials are generally not acceptable for exterior signage other than for awnings

There is no limitation on the types of materials used for ground mounted signs or pole mounted signs as long as the materials compliment the building and site on which the signage is located, as well as those on adjacent properties.

Compatibility: Sign materials should be compatible with the design of the building face on which they are located. Materials should not detract from the legibility of the sign. For example, glossy finishes may be difficult to read in high glare situations.

Sign Legibility

Effective signs should effectively communicate the message for which they are intended and as such, legibility of the content of a sign is of extreme importance.

Letter Sizing: Letter sizing should be determined by the nature of the sign and its intended audience. For example, pedestrian oriented signage, which is typically viewed at shorter distances, should have smaller lettering, generally ranging in size from 3" to 6". Signage which is to be viewed from the highway should be sized based on the distance from the highway and the legally traveled speed on the highway. Permit applicants should justify the size of their signage and its lettering based on the above.

The Architectural Review Board and/or the Community Development Department may request documentation from the sign permit applicant regarding the size of a sign and its lettering and may refuse to grant an approval for such signage where the sizing cannot be justified.

Messaging: The message being conveyed on a sign should be as brief and clearly stated as possible. Fewer words are generally more effective in communication and in legibility. Sign designers should consider the content carefully to determine what is minimally necessary to convey the advertising message.

Spacing: Letters and words should not be spaced too closely since the crowding of letters will make a sign more difficult to read. Conversely, letters should not be over-spaced to the point where the reader has to read each letter individually. Unless otherwise limited in Chapter 1165 of this zoning code, lettering should not occupy more than 75% of the sign panel area.

Symbols / Logos: Symbols and logos may be used on a sign to convey a message as long as the size and nature of the symbol / logo compliments the overall size and design of the sign.

Font Styles: It is generally recommended that the number of font styles be limited to the smallest number needed. Font styles that are difficult to read (including intricate type faces and/or cursive) are discouraged, especially on highway oriented signage.

Sign Illumination

Sign illumination should be carefully considered when planning any sign. The illumination method can compliment a sign's message or compromise its effectiveness. Improper illumination can also cause a hazard to public safety.

Necessity: The sign designer / user should consider the necessity of providing additional lighting to illuminate the sign. Signage on windows may benefit from internal building lighting and may not need additional lighting. Exterior signs may benefit from ambient street lighting as a source of illumination.

Energy Use: Sign lighting should use timing mechanisms wherever possible to reduce the consumption of power. If possible, sign lighting should be turned off when the business is closed or during early morning hours between 1:00 AM and 6:00 AM when vehicular and pedestrian traffic is limited.

Source:

Signs may be internally lit or directly lit by spotlights so long as such lighting does not shine brightly off-site on private or public property. Direct lighting will often highlight a sign in relation to the building architecture and compliment the architecture features. Such lighting should be the minimum necessary to adequately illuminate the sign. Direct light sources should be shielded to prevent glare, and if relevant, light pollution onto adjoining residential properties. The City may require a photometric lighting plan as part of a sign permit or Comprehensive Sign Plan application.

