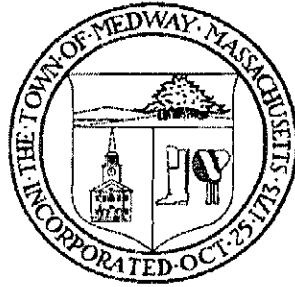


Sign Design Guidelines



TOWN OF MEDWAY DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES





Design Review Guidelines Town of Medway

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Design Review Guidelines

Town of Medway, Massachusetts

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PART III – SIGN GUIDELINES

A. PURPOSE

1. To provide guidance to businesses and sign makers to design signage that is attractive and functional. To help businesses and others identify themselves in a manner that promotes a positive image for the establishment and, if applicable, for the shopping center or commercial area in which a business is located.
2. To promote well-designed signs which successfully communicate their messages in a clear fashion.
3. To encourage creative and innovative approaches to signage which comply with the spirit and intent of the sign bylaw.
4. To enhance overall property values and the community's visual environment by encouraging signs that contribute to improving the overall visual image of the community through appropriate size, quantity, clarity and innovative designs, and discouraging visual clutter.
5. To ensure that commercial signs are designed for the purpose of identifying a business in an attractive and functional manner, rather than to serve primarily as product advertising.

B. GENERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Signs should make a positive contribution to the general appearance of the street and/or the commercial area in which they are located. Well-designed signs can be a major asset to the business, the building, the neighborhood or development.
2. Professionally designed signs convey the business name most effectively.
3. Where a business has more than one sign, all signs should be designed to be compatible with each other in terms of materials, color, lettering style and logo usage. Multiple signs for a single enterprise are more effective visually when they are coordinated.

C. RELATIONSHIP TO NEIGHBORHOOD

1. Sign design should take into consideration adjacent storefronts and flanking buildings, particularly if those structures are similar in style, are of comparable height, and of compatible type and scale.
2. Where business uses are interspersed with residential uses, signs should be designed and located with sensitivity to the residential areas. Illumination should be designed to minimize impact on adjacent residences.

D. RELATIONSHIP TO BUILDING ARCHITECTURE

1. Signs should be designed with regard for, and to integrate with, the architectural style, historical significance, and/or inherent character of the building. Signs should fit on a building as if they were one of its architectural elements. Signs should enhance the primary design elements or unique architectural features of the building. Particularly with older buildings, extreme care should be taken not to obscure, damage or otherwise interfere with design details and architectural features that contribute to the building's character.
2. A sign should be designed with regard for the specific location where it will be placed on the building or site.

E. SIGN LOCATION AND PLACEMENT

1. For wall signs, the architectural design of the building suggests the appropriate placement location. Signs should be positioned to respect and complement the design of a building, including the arrangement of bays and openings.
2. Wall mounted signs on fascias above storefront windows should be sized to fit within existing friezes, lintels, spandrels, and other such features and not extend above, below or beyond them. Typically, a wall sign should be centered horizontally on the vertical surface to which it is affixed.

3. In positioning a free-standing sign, consideration should be given to lot characteristics, roadway curves, and building location on the lot.

F. SIZE AND PROPORTION

1. A sign should be proportional in size to the area where the sign is to be located.

2. Carefully consider the proportion of the lettered and graphic area to the overall size of the sign background. When letters and graphics take up too much of a sign, they actually become harder to read. Large letters are not necessarily more legible than smaller ones. A general rule is that the text and graphic elements should not appear to occupy more than 2/3 of the sign panel area.

3. Although the sign bylaw prescribes the maximum sign size, as a general guideline, the length of a wall-mounted sign should not exceed 70% of the frontage of the establishment.

4. The size of the sign should take into account the vantage point of the viewer. Signs directed at pedestrians are very different from signs directed at motorists in heavily traveled roadways.

G. Message and Content

1. Use a brief message. Keep it simple. The fewer the words, the more effective the sign. A sign with a succinct message is easier to read, looks cleaner and is more attractive because it is less cluttered and looks more professional. For instance, a business's primary sign should contain only the name of the business and its logo or a distinctive graphic element.

2. Avoid hard-to-read, overly intricate typefaces. Such typefaces reduce a sign's ability to communicate effectively. Fonts should be selected to provide clarity and artistic integrity.

3. Avoid trendy typefaces. The image conveyed may quickly become that of a dated and unfashionable business.

4. The following information should **not** be included on a business' primary sign:

- a) telephone numbers,
- b) business hours,
- c) sale information,
- d) listing of goods and services,
- e) brand names carried, nor
- f) "credit cards accepted" type statements.

H. Color

1. Colors should be selected that enhance sign legibility for both day and nighttime viewing. Contrast can be used effectively to increase clarity.

2. Building colors should be considered when selecting sign colors. Sign colors and finishes should be compatible with the color of the building or development.

I. Materials

1. Signs should be constructed using high-quality, durable, and low maintenance materials. If wood is used, it should be properly sealed to keep moisture from soaking into the wood and causing the sign's lettering to deteriorate.

2. Sign materials should be compatible with the design of the building and façade on which they are placed. Consider the architectural design of the building and select complementary sign materials.

3. Select materials to contribute to sign legibility. For example, glossy finishes on signs are often difficult to read because of glare and reflections.

J. Multi-Tenant Buildings

1. Multi-tenant developments, which have gone through site plan review, will already have prepared a master sign plan for the development. At a minimum, signs should comply with such master sign plan.

2. Signs in a multi-tenant building or development should share a generally common design in terms of type of sign, materials, size, shape, illumination, placement, alignment, and method of attachment, particularly for ground floor tenants. A stronger

visual impression is made with simple, coordinated signs than with a jumbled array of various sign sizes, types and locations. Maintaining some continuity will reinforce the building facade's composition while retaining each business's individual identity.

3. New signs proposed for existing buildings should provide a compatible appearance with the existing signage of other tenants. Signs should be designed to unify the business with neighboring tenants.

4. Employ a consistent placement for signs. The placement of signs can establish a rhythm, scale and proportion for a building, especially where such elements are weak or absent in terms of the building's architecture. In a building with a plain facade and limited architectural features, a consistent sign pattern can establish an attractive design element.

K. Lighting

Internal Illumination

1. Window Awning Signs – If an awning sign is internally illuminated, only the sign letters, logo and ornamentation should be translucent. The background material should be opaque.

2. When signs other than channel letters are internally lit, only the sign copy (*words/logo*) should be illuminated. The sign background or field should be opaque and of a non-reflective material.

3. The preferred forms of internally lit signs are those using:

- a) push-through graphics and text;
- b) standard channel letters, also called back-lit or halo-lit;
- c) reverse channel letters with a halo effect.

4. Raceways, conduits and other electrical components should be concealed from public view.

External Illumination

1. External lighting fixtures that project light on a sign from above or below are strongly encouraged. Light fixtures supported on the front of the building cast light on the sign and a portion of the facade immediately around the sign. The visual impact of this should be considered in lighting selection.

2. Light fixtures should be simple and unobtrusive in appearance and size.

3. Light fixtures should be positioned so as to not obscure the sign's message and graphics.

4. Light sources should be shielded and such that the light source is directed away from passersby. Light sources should be directed against the sign such that it does not shine onto adjacent property or cause glare for motorists and pedestrians. Bare light bulbs should not be exposed.

L. Window Signs

1. Window signs are directed primarily at pedestrians and are meant to be read close range at pedestrian eye level. From this vantage, pedestrians are able to notice a higher degree of detail and smaller scale signs are more appropriate.

2. Window signs should be created from high-quality materials such as neon, gold-leaf and computer cut adhesive vinyl. Appropriate techniques for window signs also include sand-blasting or etching.

3. Hand-painted and paper window signs are discouraged.

4. Window signs should be applied directly to the interior face of the glazed area of the window or hung inside the window.

M. Free-Standing Signs

1. Single pole (*lollipop*) signs are highly discouraged. Monument or structured signs are preferred.

2. Free-standing signs should be architecturally designed and incorporate design details, materials and colors of the associated buildings.
3. Free-standing signs should be placed perpendicular to approaching vehicular traffic. Alternately, two sign faces at 90° to each other and 45° to the road might be considered.
4. A free-standing sign should be placed within a substantial planted landscaped area or raised planter which is of a shape, size and design to provide a compatible setting and ground definition to the sign.
5. Sign text should be limited to the business or development name, logo and possibly the address in the case of doctors, lawyers, accountants, and other professional establishments.

N. Awning Signs

1. Opaque fabric is preferred. Lettering/logo details may be painted or screen-printed or cut in.
2. Lettering and/or graphic elements should comprise no more than 30% of the total exterior surface of an awning or canopy.
3. Cross reference to item K1.1 in Internal Illumination.

O. Projecting Signs

1. Mounting hardware should be an attractive and integral part of the sign design.
2. The design of a projecting sign may incorporate visually interesting elements such as painted or applied letters, two or three dimensional symbols or icons and internal cut-outs. Where appropriate, projecting signs may employ unusual shapes to reflect the business product/service.

P. Things to AVOID/DISCOURAGE in Designing Signs

1. Signs that are overly cluttered with too much information on them to be attractive or comprehended from a moving vehicle. *VISUAL OVERLOAD* defeats the purpose!

2. Excessive quantity of signs for any one business which compete for attention, contribute to visual blight, overwhelm the customer, and diminish the communication value of any one sign.
3. Signs whose material, color, and detailing share not visual similarity or complimentary to the building.
4. Signs positioned on a part of the façade that is not a suitable location for that particular sign. For example, a 4' x 4' square sign placed on a building's sign panel that measures 3' x 15'.
5. Signs with shapes that are positioned on the building in a way that is out of scale with the façade.
6. Signs with strange shapes (*unless directly related to the business logo or a building's architectural feature.*) Signs that are unnecessarily narrow or oddly shaped can restrict the legibility of the message. If an unusual shape is not symbolic, it is probably confusing.
7. Fluorescent /day-glow colors.
8. The use of too many different colors and fonts on a sign. Colors, fonts or combinations thereof that interfere with legibility should be avoided. Too many colors overwhelm and negate the basic function of the sign, which is to communicate.
9. The use of internally illuminated box/cabinet type signs, particularly those with translucent backlit panels. Also the use of rectangular or square box/cabinet type signs without any sort of distinctive or artistic curvilinear form.
10. Amateur or poorly-crafted hand-painted signs.
11. The use of pole type free-standing signs (*lollipop signs*). Monument signs are much preferred.
12. The use of neon tubing to outline the perimeter of storefront windows.

The reuse of an existing sign from one building to a new location. Remember that just because a sign may have been well integrated with the building façade at its previous location, it may not necessarily fit as well at the new location.

Wall signs that appear above the eaves of a single story building.

Installing a new sign before all remnants of abandoned signs and structures are removed, except for signs of documented historic interest.