

# PLANNING COMMISSION

## HISTORIC DISTRICT SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES PLNHLC2011-00472 H-Historic Preservation Overlay District April 25, 2012



Planning and Zoning Division  
Department of Community and  
Economic Development

### **Applicant**

Mayor Ralph Becker

### **Staff**

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### **Zone**

H-Historic Preservation Overlay  
District

### **Council District**

N/A

### **Applicable Land Use Regulations**

- 21A.34.020
- 21A.6.050

### **Notification**

- Notice mailed on April 9, 2012
- Agenda posted on the Planning Division and Utah Public Meeting Notice websites April 9, 2012

### **Attachments**

- A. Proposed Guidelines

### ***Request***

A petition by Mayor Ralph Becker to create design guidelines for signs in all local historic districts and landmark sites within Salt Lake City.

### ***Recommendation***

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the petition to create design guidelines for signs, and forward a positive recommendation to the City Council pursuant to the analysis and findings in this staff report.

### **Potential Motions**

**Positive Recommendation:** Based on the findings and analysis in this staff report, I move that the Planning Commission forward the local historic district design guidelines for signs to the City Council with a positive recommendation.

**Negative Recommendation:** I move that the Planning Commission forward the local historic district design guidelines for signs to the City Council with a negative recommendation based on the following findings (Commissioner then states findings):

## ***Background***

On June 3, 2009, City staff under the direction of Mayor Ralph Becker initiated a petition to amend and enhance the existing historic district design guidelines. Initially the revisions were divided into commercial and residential, with signs included in the commercial section. As time went on, it became clear that signs were under represented in the commercial section, and a decision was made to remove them and create a standalone document.

The nonbinding guidelines provide guidance in determining the suitability and architectural compatibility of signs, while at the same time, allowing for reasonable changes to individual signs and sites that meet current needs. For property owners, architects, designers and contractors, they provide guidance in planning and designing future projects. For City staff and the Historic Landmark Commission, they provide an outline through which projects can be evaluated for compliance with Zoning Ordinance standards. Further, they provide the community as a whole with an idea of what to expect when signs are proposed in historic districts or on landmark sites.

The guidelines are not designed to be a regulatory document for the review of City historic district related applications. They are a nonbinding document designed to provide property owners, citizens, City staff and the Historic Landmark Commission with a guide toward making consistent and fair decisions.

On July 7, 2011, and again on September 15, 2011 staff presented drafts of the sign guidelines to the Historic Landmark Commission for review and comment. The Commission provided feedback, and the changes were incorporated into the document. On November 3, 2011 the Commission reviewed the guidelines again and forwarded a positive recommendation to the City Council.

Even though the guidelines are exclusively for use by the Historic Landmark Commission and by the Planning staff, in reviewing certificates of appropriateness and other historic petitions, State law, requires that the Planning Commission review all land use documents and forward a recommendation to the City Council. Staff is requesting that the Commission review the proposed Sign Guidelines and forward a positive recommendation to the City Council.

## ***Comments***

In addition to the required posting and mailing, this document has been reviewed in the following ways:

- Public Workshops. One public workshop to kick-off the project was held on June 3, 2009. The Planning Division also held a public open house on June 25, 2009 and again on September 12, 2011.
- City Advisory Boards. The project was presented to the Business Advisory Board twice as well as the Downtown Alliance.

To date public comment has been limited to general statements relating to the overall project (including commercial and residential guidelines). No specific sign guideline comments have been received.

## ***Analysis and Findings***

Section 21A.06.040.B7 states that the Historic Landmark Commission may “recommend design standards pertaining to the protection of H-historic overlay districts and landmark sites. On November 3, 2012 the Landmark Commission forwarded a positive recommendation to the City Council with the finding that this

document represents a compilation of best practices in historic preservation, mixed with the needs of the Salt Lake City Community.

## **Standards for General Amendments**

Section 21A.06.040.B7 states that the Historic Landmark Commission may “recommend design standards pertaining to the protection of H-historic overlay districts and landmark sites.” State law states that any land use regulation (or the amendment of a land use regulation) must first receive a recommendation from the Planning Commission and then be adopted by the City Council by ordinance. As a result, this petition was reviewed first by the Historic Landmark Commission, and is now under review by the Planning Commission.

The Ordinance does not however, include specific standards for consideration when creating these recommendations. Nonetheless, staff has reviewed the petition and made a finding that this document is consistent with the requirements of the City Master Plans as well as the Zoning Ordinance. The public was informed of the petition through open houses, presentations to advisory boards and work sessions in front of the Historic Landmark Commission.

## **Master Plan Compliance**

Historic preservation is an important component of Salt Lake City’s master plans. The Central Community Master Plan States:

“Historic buildings and sites offer styles of architecture that make these structures unique to the area. Historic development patterns make areas unique and provide a distinctive development character to the area... Regulation of historic-districts and landmark sites should provide a mechanism to preserve the unique characteristics of Central Community’s historic residential and commercial neighborhoods.”

Sign quality, location and design have a direct impact on how a historic building is perceived. It is not uncommon to see historically significant elements of a building obscured or overshadowed by a poorly designed or located sign. These sign guidelines are designed to ensure compatibility between buildings and the historic streetscape, which in turn preserves the historic characteristics of a neighborhood. They compliment the Zoning Ordinance by providing policy makers and staff with direction when reviewing signs in the H-Historic Preservation Overlay areas. In cases where there is a conflict between the Ordinance and the guidelines, the Ordinance will always take precedence.

## **Ordinance Compliance**

Historic preservation is detailed in Chapter 34 of the Zoning Ordinance, and signs are regulated in Chapter 46. The objective of the sign guidelines is to support the Historic Preservation aspects of these Zoning Ordinance chapters. Specifically by providing detail and direction as it relates to the creation and preservation of signs. For example, Section 21A.34.020.G.2 Standards for a Certificate of Appropriateness states:

“The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided”

The guidelines are nonbinding, they provide detail on what should be done to preserve and retain the historic character of a property by giving direction on coordination, positioning, projection, attachment, illumination

and materials. This level of detail is not possible or practical in the Ordinance. Nonetheless, it is invaluable to staff and the Historic Landmark Commission when reviewing certificate petitions, as it promotes consistency and clarity in decisions.

These guidelines apply specifically to signs in the H-Historic Preservation Overlay areas or on landmark sites. They are designed to provide direction to staff and the HLC when reviewing signs. Whenever there is a conflict between the regulations of the base zoning district and the H-Historic Preservation Overlay district guidelines, the regulations in the Overlay Zoning District take precedent.



**Attachment A**  
Proposed Historic District Sign Guidelines

# Design Guidelines for Signs in Historic Districts



*This streetscape of the 200 block of Main Street taken in 1912 shows a large variety of signs including sign panels over storefronts, projecting signs, awning signs, window signs and signs painted on the sides of buildings. (Photo courtesy of the Utah Historical Society).*

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## Introduction

These design guidelines apply to all existing and new exterior signs within the H-Historic Preservation Overlay District in Salt Lake City. The goal of the guidelines is to meet the needs of various interests in the community by providing guidance in determining the suitability and architectural compatibility of proposed signs, while at the same time, allowing for reasonable changes to individual signs and sites to meet current needs. For property owners, architects, designers and contractors, they provide guidance in planning and designing future projects. For City staff and the Historic Landmark Commission, they provide an outline through which projects can be evaluated for compliance with Zoning Ordinance standards. Further, they provide the community as a whole with an idea of what to expect when signs are proposed in historic districts or landmark sites.

The guidelines are not designed to be a technical manual for the rehabilitation of historic signs and the construction of new signs, nor are they intended to be a regulatory document for the review of City historic district related applications. Rather, they provide property owners, citizens, City staff and the Historic Landmark Commission with a guide toward making consistent and fair decisions.

Policy directives from various City Master Plans and the City Zoning Ordinance are fulfilled through this document. Guidelines are designed to clarify Master Plan policies and Zoning Ordinance regulations relating to exterior signs in local historic districts or on landmark sites. Included are policies, definitions, and guidelines for maintaining existing signs, as well as for new construction. Photographs of various types of signs are included in the document to familiarize property owners with typical styles and types of signs featured.



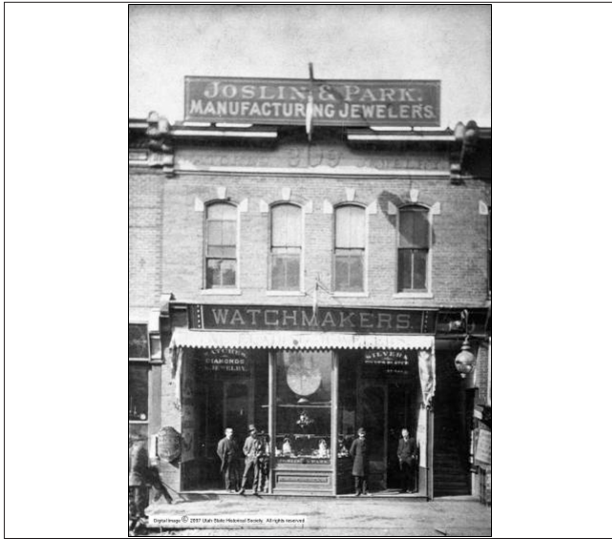
*ZCMI front facade.*



*When this building was renovated, the signs on the front facade were preserved.*

# Guidelines for Signs

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*This jewelry company at 170 S Main Street advertised through a large wall sign mounted at the roofline, a projecting sign, sign above the storefront and window signs. This photograph is from ca. 1880. (Photo courtesy of the Utah Historical Society).*

Certificate of Appropriateness applications are available on line at:

<http://www.slcgov.com/CED/planning/pages/applications.htm>



*Creativity in sign design can be fun and attractive.*

## Applicability

These design guidelines apply to the exterior signs within the H-Historic Preservation Overlay District in Salt Lake City (interior signs are not regulated through the historic overlay), including new signs and the rehabilitation of existing signs. The Historic Landmark Commission has the authority to further regulate signs to ensure that new and altered signs are appropriate for the historic setting. Chapter 46 of the Salt Lake City Zoning Ordinance governs signs in the City, including in historic overlay zones. Signs should be designed and installed in accordance with the City's Zoning Ordinance combined with the guidance provided in this document. Whenever there is a conflict between the regulations of the base zoning district and the H-Historic Preservation Overlay district standards, the regulations in the Overlay Zoning District take precedent.

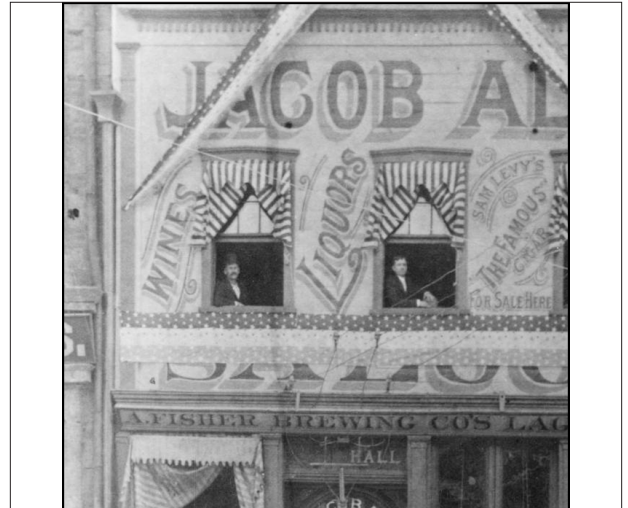
All signs in a historic preservation overlay must meet the provisions of the Salt Lake City Zoning Ordinance as well as receive a Certificate of Appropriateness. Certificate of Appropriateness review will determine whether a sign proposal meets the context of these guidelines and the H-Historic Preservation Overlay Zone requirements while a building permit review will determine whether the sign complies with the Zoning Ordinance and International Building Code. The guidelines establish a range of considerations to ensure compliance with the standards listed in Section 21A.34.020 of the Zoning Ordinance H-Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.



## Objectives

It is anticipated that these guidelines will help both private and public projects preserve and enhance the form, scale, and visual character that make Salt Lake City unique. These design guidelines have been created to achieve the following objectives:

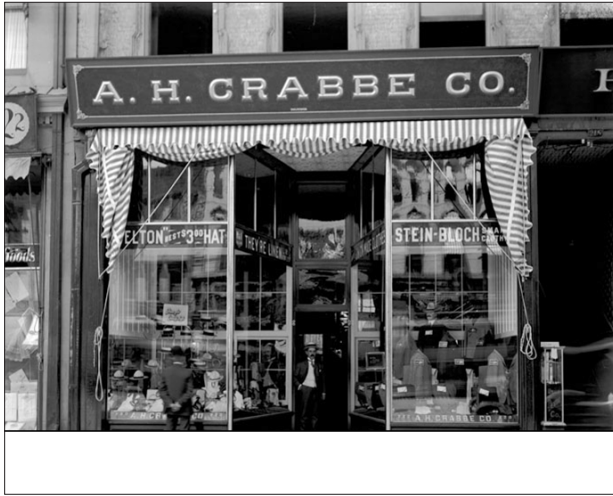
1. To ensure that all signs within the various local historic districts or on landmark sites are compatible with the special character of Salt Lake City's historic past.
2. To help convey the sense of excitement and vitality envisioned for the historic districts.
3. To encourage signs which, by their appropriate design, are integrated with and harmonious to the buildings and sites which they occupy.
4. To preserve and improve the appearance of the City as an historic community in which to live and work.
5. To allow each individual business to clearly identify itself and the goods and services which it offers in a clear and distinctive manner.
6. To promote signs as pedestrian oriented rather than automotive, which is consistent with the historic character.
7. To ensure that the installation of a sign does not damage the historic fabric, nor detract from the historic character of a historic district or landmark site.



*Nineteenth century buildings in downtown Salt Lake City were often covered with signs. The building at 109 S Main Street shown ca. 1876 has painted wall signs, a painted sign board over the storefront and signs on the display windows (Photo courtesy of the Utah Historical Society).*



*The E.P. Charlton Company installed a large wall sign over the storefront to advertise its business at 249 South Main Street in 1909. An upstairs tenant, Dr. West used signs on the awning valence and painted window signs. (photo courtesy of the Utah Historical Society)*



*The A.H. Crabbe Company at 220 S Main Street advertised its wares in 1905 through a wall sign above the storefront and signs painted on the display windows. (Photo courtesy of the Utah Historical Society).*



*The neon and illuminated marquee for the McKay Jewelry Company at 157 South Main Street dates from 1949 and contributes to the historic character of the building.*

## Salt Lake City Context

Commercial buildings traditionally have had a variety of sign designs and placement, allowing for wide flexibility of use in Salt Lake City’s commercial areas. During the 19th century, a great number of signs commonly dominated the landscape of commercial areas. Signs were displayed in every possible area and manner—in windows, over doors, painted on exterior walls, and hanging over or even across the street. One of the more common places to mount signs was on the lintel above the first story, and around 1900 it became popular to paint signs directly on the inside of display windows in gold leaf.

Following the invention of electricity, it became increasingly common to illuminate signs with light fixtures. This was typically accomplished by a simple fixture anchored above a sign and shining light directly on the advertisement. Light fixtures were commonly simple in design so that the primary focus of the viewer would be on the sign rather than the light fixture. Neon signs first became available in the United States in the 1920s and became very popular during the mid-20th century, particularly for restaurants and movie theaters.

Today, Salt Lake City has a number of Historic Districts on both the National and City Register, with additional districts on the National Register only. These districts, along with numerous buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places and those listed individually on the local Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources, are a major contributor to Salt Lake City’s attractive and inviting atmosphere.

## Appropriate and Inappropriate Types of Signs

The character of Salt Lake City’s historic districts and landmark sites necessitates the attention of the City to the form, quality and character of signs. Sign quality has a direct impact on how each individual district is perceived, whether sophisticated, exciting, intriguing, and unique, or over-presented, garish and potentially place-less. Each district has a specific individual architectural character which in turn requires careful design of signs to ensure compatibility with the building and the streetscape.

To ensure that signs enhance each district, it is important to note that there will be sign types which are less appropriate to a specific historic district, irrespective of whether they are allowed in the Zoning District. Sign types that are considered generally to be appropriate or inappropriate in the districts are listed here. They should be read in conjunction with the following design guidelines when considering options for new signs or additional signs.

## Generally Appropriate Types of Signs



*Historic Sign*



*Ghost Sign*



*Projecting Sign*



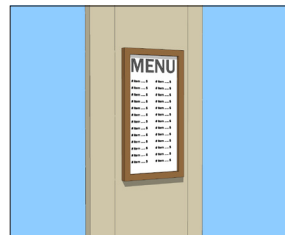
*Awning Sign*



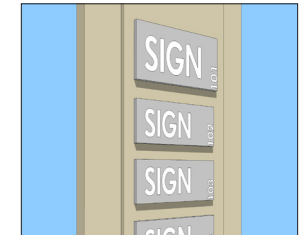
*Wall Sign*



*Window Sign*



*Menu Board*



*Directory or Tenant Sign*



*Wall Plaque*



*Monument Sign*

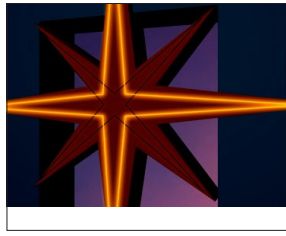


# Guidelines for Signs

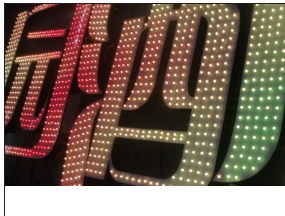
## Generally Inappropriate Types of Signs



*Pole Sign*



*Animated Sign*



*Flashing, Light Sign*



*Illuminated, Cabinet Sign*



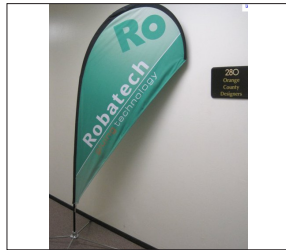
*Off-Premise Sign*



*Inflated Sign, Display*



*Image Projection Sign*



*Wind Sign*



*Video Sign*



*Temporary Sign*

## Compatibility

A sign typically serves two functions:

1. To attract attention
2. To convey information

If a sign is well designed, the architecture of a building can serve as the attention-getting feature, allowing the sign to be focused on conveying information in a well conceived manner. All new signs should be developed with the overall context of the building and of the historic district in mind.

## Architectural Context

Individual historic districts have historic characteristics that should be preserved, enhanced and incorporated into the design of new building projects. When designing a sign for a new or existing building, the context of the neighborhood, defined by natural forms and patterns, should be taken into account. Often features or details of the building will suggest a motif for new signs.

### Guideline 1

**A sign should preserve, complement or enhance the architectural composition and features of the building.**

- Covering or obscuring significant architectural details should be avoided.
- Damage to architectural detail when attaching the sign should be avoided.

## Guideline 2

**Consider the overall sign design as an integral part of the building façade.**

- The new sign should be coordinated with the overall façade composition, including ornamental details and other signs.
- Signs should be in proportion to the building, so they do not dominate the building appearance.

## Guideline 3

**A master sign plan should be developed for the entire property to guide individual sign design and location decisions.**

- This is especially important when a building includes multiple businesses.
- A master sign plan should specify the location, number and size of all signs on the property.
- The materials, methods of illumination and graphic standards should also be defined.
- A master sign plan should make all signs on the building cohesive, linking one to another, ultimately creating a central theme for the site.



*This sign on Main Street is proportional to the building and does not obscure ornamental details.*



*Ghost sign*

# Guidelines for Signs



*This sign is well proportioned with the facade.*

## Proportion, Scale and Dimensions

Historic preservation should not focus only on one building or site. When considering the preservation of a sign or the addition of a new sign, consideration should be given to its location and setting as it relates to the entire district. The elements that make a sign pleasing include orientation, pedestrian scale and unique architectural features which, when compounded create a unique historic fabric worthy of preservation. Sign lighting, placement, elevation and choice of materials, should be in harmony with the unique characteristics of the individual district.

### Guideline 4

**A sign should be designed to be in proportion and scale with the building.**

- A sign should be in scale with the façade of the building.
- Signs that would cover more than 20 percent of the façade should be avoided.

### Guideline 5

**A sign should be designed to be a part of the overall building composition.**

- A sign should be located on a building so it emphasizes the architectural elements of the façade.
- A sign should be mounted to fit within existing architectural features. The shape of the sign should be used to reinforce the relationship of moldings and transoms seen along the street.



*This drawing shows traditional locations for commercial signs.*



## Guideline 6

**Signs should have a human scale, and be pedestrian oriented.**

- Signs that are illegible when viewed from the sidewalk, or are located too high upon a building are not encouraged.
- A sign should be located on a building so that it draws an individual's attention toward the building or the use that it is intended to support.

## Positioning

One of the parameters that determines the effectiveness of a sign is its location on a building. Incorrect positioning can render a sign useless and obscure, overwhelm the building or harm the architectural features of the site. Most commercial buildings were designed with an obvious location for tenant signs. Effective signs do not obscure or compete with significant features of a historic building (Signs above a storefront could fit within the historic signboard, for example). Further, new signs should also respect neighboring buildings in a way that they do not shadow or overpower adjacent structures.



*Even though it is on a large building, the sign is designed to be viewed from the sidewalk.*



*Properly placed signs generally do not obscure architectural details.*

# Guidelines for Signs

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*Signs that cover significant architectural features are discouraged.*



*Signs at the pedestrian level are encouraged.*

## Guideline 7

**Position a sign so that it does not obscure or conflict with architectural features of the building.**

- A wall sign should be placed so that it is framed by the architectural details of the building.
- A wall sign should be placed to reflect the fenestration pattern of the building.
- Placing or dimensioning a wall sign so that it spans the pilasters or detailing of a building should be avoided.
- A projecting sign should be positioned where it will not damage or visually intrude upon architectural details.
- A projecting sign should be placed where it will not obscure a wall sign.

## Guideline 8

**Position a sign primarily to serve the pedestrian at the street level.**

- The majority of signs should be concentrated at the street level close to the entrance of the building.
- Signs at a higher level should be considered only where the premises may be limited in sign location at street level where otherwise, the sign would be obscured or if it is the name of the building.

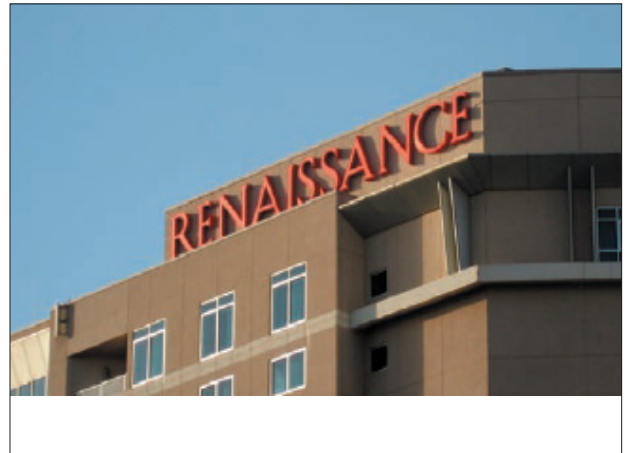
## Guideline 9

The use of signs placed on upper levels of a building should be limited since they will be visible over an extended distance and are not related to the street or entrance level of the premises.

- Generally, signs should be placed in an architecturally appropriate location no more than 20 feet above the sidewalk.
- Illumination of signs on upper levels should be limited to the brightness of lower level signs.
- In certain cases, signs on commercial buildings along arterial streets may be placed higher on a façade when it is determined that the sign will not have a negative impact on the design, or design elements of the façade.
- Signs which do not relate to the business within the building generally would not be considered appropriate, unless they relate to the historic use or owner of the building.

## Projection from the Building

Projecting signs are generally two sided signs, suspended from an iron bracket or building element, mounted perpendicular to the face of the building. Both lettered and symbolic projecting signs, have been used since the first settlers arrived, and are an important component to Salt Lake City's historic past. Projecting signs are sometimes paired with another at a 45-degree angle for increased visibility.



*This sign placed at the top of the building is not readily visible from the street or sidewalk.*



*A typical projecting sign*



*This projecting sign is paired with another for increased visibility*



*Wall signs should be relatively flush with the facade of the building.*

These design guidelines apply in addition to those in relevant preceding chapters, which may include Rehabilitation Guidelines, Guidelines for New Construction and General Design Guidelines.

## Guideline 10

**The projection of a wall sign should be minimized to the depth of the sign panel or letter.**

- A wall sign should be relatively flush with the building facade.
- A wall sign should be designed to sit within rather than forward of the fascia or other architectural details of the building.

## Guideline 11

**A projecting sign should be designed to equate with the sign projection seen traditionally.**

- Projecting a sign from the building wall should be attuned to the mass and scale of the building to which it is attached. A large projecting sign on a small building would compete with the architectural feel of the structure and therefore would not be encouraged.
- Projecting a sign that exceeds that of the immediate surrounding area is discouraged, but should be reviewed on a case by case basis.
- The sign bracket of a projecting sign should be designed as a decorative or complementary element of the sign.



## Sign Attachment Parts

When a new sign is proposed on a historic building, owners should first look for evidence of a previous sign installation. Evidence can be either physical or documentary. The existence of surviving hardware—rollers, arms, clamps and other fasteners or signs that hardware was once in place, such as bolt holes or recessed roller boxes (for awnings) are the most likely forms of physical evidence. Storefront remodeling projects often uncover concealed and disused sign hardware that can either be repaired or at least suggest what type of sign was formerly in place. Clamps, fasteners, and bolt holes in an exterior wall can reveal the position, type and dimensions of a missing sign installation.

### Guideline 12

**Sign attachment parts should be reused in their original location (holes in the façade or fixing positions) to protect the original building materials.**

- Sign attachment parts should avoid damaging any architectural details or features of the building.
- Consider reusing the sign and fixing positions or cover previous fixing positions wherever possible.
- Wherever possible, avoid drilling new holes or creating new fixing positions on historic facades, by using existing holes and fixing positions.
- When creating new fixture areas on brick buildings, drill holes in the mortar rather than the brick.

Historical documentation on a building or sign can be found at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) or in the Salt Lake City Planning Department.

[http://history.utah.gov/state\\_historic\\_preservation\\_office/index.html](http://history.utah.gov/state_historic_preservation_office/index.html)

<http://www.slcgov.com/CED/planning/>



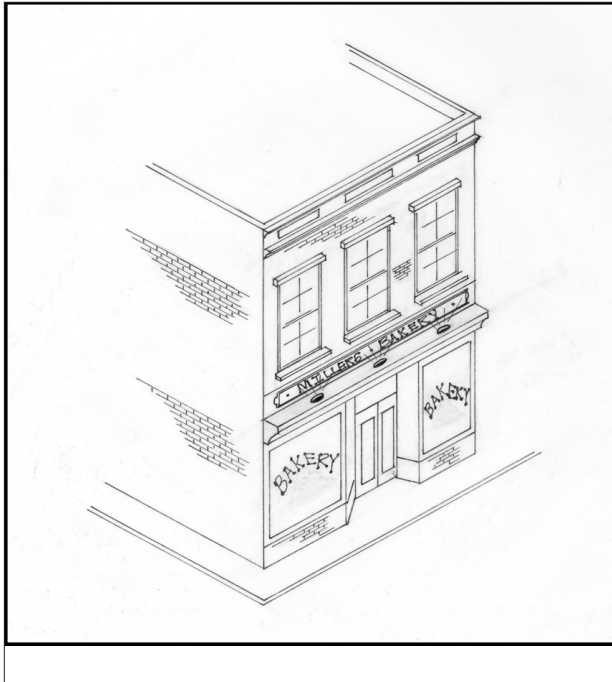
*This projecting sign reused the attachment hardware.*



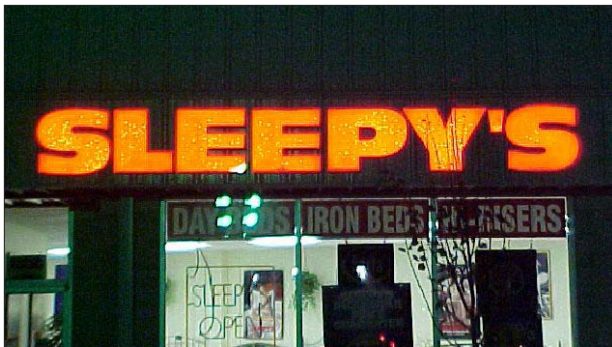
*Careless placement of a sign can have lasting effects on the building.*



# Guidelines for Signs



*Lighting for a sign should be indirect and as unobtrusive as possible. This example shows lights mounted above a storefront cornice.*



*The color intensity of this sign does not compliment the architecture of the building.*

## Illumination

Well designed sign illumination can add energy and visual excitement to the area, in keeping with a commercial or entertainment district, but it should not overwhelm. The best signs are those that are illuminated to fit with the design of the building. An indirectly lit sign, with light that also highlights building features may be appropriate.

### Guideline 13

**Illumination of a sign should be done with the objective of achieving a balance between the architecture, the historic district and the sign.**

- The color and the intensity of illumination are central to achieving a complementary balance of building and signs.
- Unless historically documented, intermittent or flashing light sources should be avoided.
- The sign illumination source should be shielded and directed only toward the sign to minimize glare.
- Light intensity should not overpower the building or street edge.
- Small and discreet modern light fittings may provide an unobtrusive alternative to traditionally styled lamp units.

## Guideline 14

**Wiring conduit for sign lighting should be carefully routed to avoid damage to architectural details and to be concealed from view as much as possible.**

- In some cases, copper sheathing should be used for wiring to minimize visibility.
- The wiring should be placed between the brick coursing and recesses to reduce the visibility.
- The power supply may be routed directly through a wall or window, hidden behind the sign.



*The lighting of this sign is shielded and directed toward the sign.*

## Guideline 15

**The illumination source for a sign should be compatible with both the sign and building.**

- Light can be directed at the sign from an external, shielded lamp.
- All sign lighting should be shielded and directed only toward the sign.
- Internal illumination of the lettering only is most appropriate if internal illumination is used.

## Guideline 16

**Consider halo illumination as an alternative to other types of internally illuminated signs.**

- Reversed pan-channel letters with an internal light source reflecting off of the building may be used for “halo” illumination.
- The light source should not be visible.



*Halo lighting*



*This neon sign is located on an arterial street, and is therefore larger than a sign along a smaller street.*



*This illuminated cabinet sign is discouraged.*

## Guideline 17

The selective use of neon may be considered.

Neon should be used in limited volume to ensure that it does not become visually obtrusive and dominate the street frontage.

- In certain cases neon may be more appropriate when framed and shielded.

## Guideline 18

The increased scale and vehicular orientation of a larger building along arterial streets may provide an appropriate setting for a greater level of illumination.

- Sign dimensions and proportions should relate to the façade and location of the building.

## Guideline 19

The use of internally illuminated sign faces should be limited to individual cut out letters.

The use of large panel internally illuminated signs is not recommended.

- The plastic or vinyl faces used for internally illuminated signs are discouraged in the historic district.
- Individual pan-channel letters with a plastic face or individual cutout letters and letters routed out of the face of an opaque cabinet sign may be used.
- The light source for internally illuminated signs should be white.

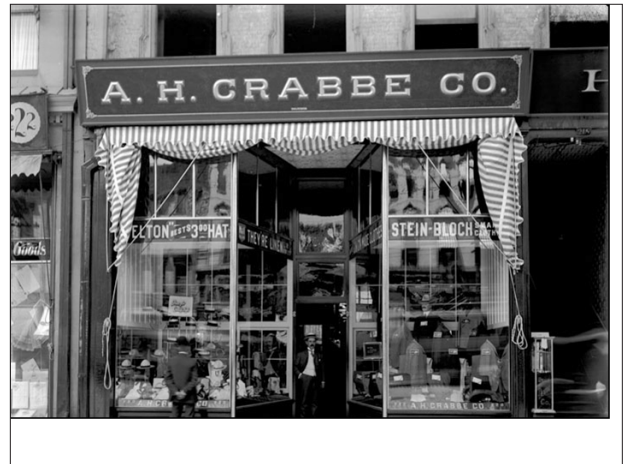
## Material

Historically, signs were either painted directly on the building façade or made of wood either attached directly to the building or suspended from wrought iron brackets. As technology advanced and building styles changed, a wider range of materials were used. These included bronze plates attached to buildings, cast iron, stainless steel, etched or painted glass, leaded glass, gold leaf, and tile. Each material was popular during particular time periods, and might not be appropriate at all building locations.

### Guideline 19

**Sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic building. Materials characteristic of the building's period and style, used in contemporary designs, can form effective new signs.**

- Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs. Their use is encouraged.
- Unfinished materials should be designed and used carefully.
- Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read may not be appropriate.
- The use of plastic on the exterior of a sign is usually not appropriate.



*Signs are made of wood or painted on the building.*



*The color and material of this sign were designed to match the window cladding.*



# Guidelines for Signs

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For more information, see Preservation Brief 25 from the National Park Service.

[Http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief25.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief25.htm)

## Color

The use of color is an important factor in effectively communicating a message. Colors have different meanings and work in various ways in contrast with each other and together. Contrast between the foreground and background is an important component in creating legibility. If colored text is used on a bright background the contrast will be weak. For optimal contrast results, white text against dark colored backgrounds works best. In sign design color can be a combining factor in harmonizing the sign with the environment. Color will distinguish signs from each other and can offer an indication of the message without having to be able to understand the language of the sign.

### Guideline 20

**Sign colors should complement the colors of the building.**

- The number of colors used on a sign should be limited. In general, no more than three (3) colors should be used, although accent colors may also be appropriate.
- Sign colors should be coordinated with overall building colors.
- Color should be used both to accentuate the sign design and message, and also to integrate the sign or lettering with the building and its context.



*The Color of this sign fits the color of the structure.*

## Guideline 21

**Strong primary colors should be used primarily as an accent.**

- Sign panels should avoid the extensive use of primary color or significant areas of white or cream, which would have the effect of visually detaching the sign from the building.
- Primary colors should be used sparingly.

## Form and Lettering

Signs should be viewed as part of an overall graphics system for the building. They do not have to do all the “work” by themselves. The most effective signs work with the building, not against it.

The Salt Lake City historic districts contain buildings constructed over a long period of time, by different owners for different purposes; the buildings reflect different architectural styles and personal tastes. These factors are what give the districts a diverse and distinct quality that is unique to Salt Lake City. Likewise, it is encouraged that designers and owners create signs that complement these different architectural styles and celebrate the diversity of the district.

## Guideline 22

**Letter styles and sizes should be selected that will be compatible with the building front.**

- Except on large buildings along arterial streets, sign lettering should be determined based on the legibility from the pedestrian way, and not the street.
- A sign letter of lesser height will be appropriate depending upon the scale of the street frontage.



*Primary colors are used only as lettering and trim on this sign. The background is white. This has the beneficial effect of visually detaching the building from the sign.*



*Letters are compatible with building front.*

# Guidelines for Signs

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*Signs that cover significant architectural details are discouraged.*

## Guideline 23

Letters that create signs that are out of character with the historic district or building, or that would alter the character of the historic district would be considered inappropriate.

- Use letters and fonts that enhance rather than detract from the historic design of the building.
- Lettering and fonts should emphasize legibility rather than any sort of stylistic agenda.

## Guideline 24

A corporate logo or color scheme incorporated into a building design may be recognized as a sign.

- This may take the form of canopies, roof material and, in some cases, building style or design.



*A well designed wall sign.*



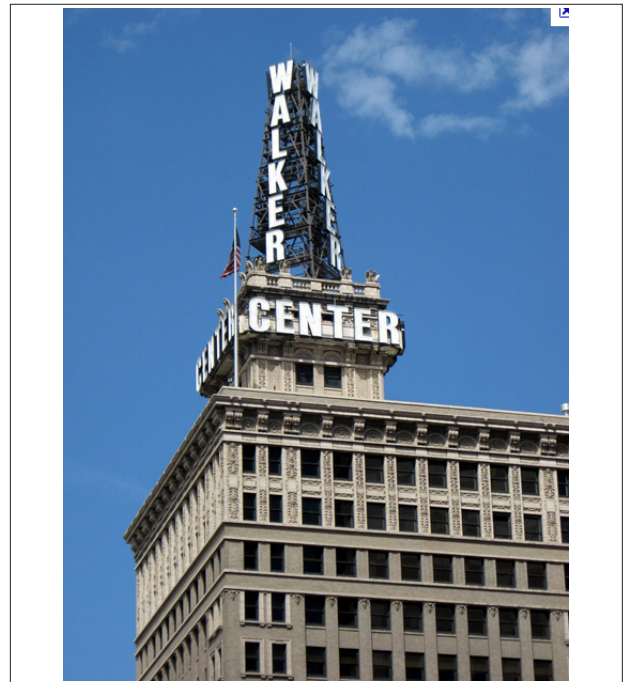
## Sign Types - Specific Design

Sign types vary widely and a range may be considered appropriate either individually or in combination. The important principle is that signs should not overwhelm the architecture of the building. The placement or location of a sign is perhaps the most critical factor in maintaining the order and integrity of the historic building. Consistent placement of signs according to building type, size, location and even building materials creates a visual pattern that the pedestrian or driver can easily interpret and utilize to the mutual benefit of merchants, tourists and customers.

## Historic Signs

Historic signs can contribute mightily to the architectural and historic character of Salt Lake City's buildings and districts. They can complement or even define an individual building. The impact may be at street level or higher, with roof mounted signs contributing to the city skyline.

Many signs are valued independently, apart from the buildings or sites to which they are attached. Nonetheless, the preservation of historic signs may present challenges of repair. Sign preservation may appear to conflict with general community goals such as encouraging artistic expression in new signs, and reconciling business requirements with preservation. Frequently, however, these goals may be complementary rather than conflicting. When issues arise, it is important to remember that the intrinsic merit of many signs, as well as their contribution to the overall character of a place, make the effort of preservation worthwhile. The guidelines below can help preserve both business and history.



*The Walker Bank roof sign was rehabilitated.*



*Even though the use has changed, This sign remains an important component of the building.*



## Guidelines for Signs

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*This mid-20th Century metal sign has been refurbished and reused for the new use in the building.*



*The First Security bank roof sign atop the building on 100 South Main Street is an icon of downtown even though the name of the bank has changed.*

The overall goal in the repair and rehabilitation of historic signs is to restore a sign that is largely intact or otherwise whole. Recognize, however, that the apparent age of historic signs is one of their major features, expressing the maturity of the building or district; do not “over restore” signs so that all evidence of their age is lost, even though the appearance and form may be recaptured. In particular, signs painted on building side walls gradually fade with age, conveying information about previous business and impressions of historic commerce.

### **Guideline 25**

**Historic signs, as a distinctive feature of Salt Lake City, should be retained and, where appropriate, restored.**

- Keeping a historic sign is encouraged, even if the business or product promoted is no longer on site. Retaining the sign can exploit the recognition value of the old name and play upon the public’s fondness for the old sign, especially when the sign is a community landmark.
- Signs should remain as they were originally designed.
- Historic signs which are faded with age and weathering contribute to the sense of age and time in the district.
- Additional signs that would detract from the appreciation of a historic sign may be inappropriate.

## Guideline 26

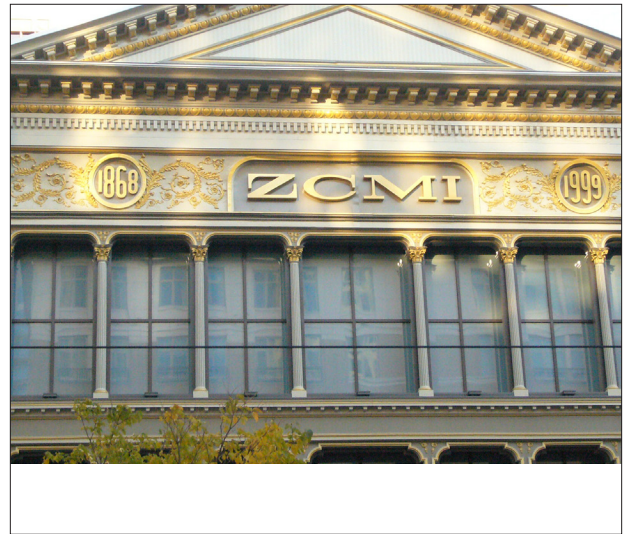
**Historic signs should be preserved, maintained, and repaired.**

- Historic signs add to the overall appearance and character of historic commercial buildings; treat them as significant features of the property.

## Guideline 27

**Historic painted wall signs and “ghost” signs should be retained where feasible.**

- Painted wall signs on a building façade should be left intact; avoid painting over or removing them.



*This historic sign was repaired and preserved as part of a larger development, even though ZCMI is no longer in business.*

## Awnings and Canopy Signs

A well designed and well placed awning can make a good impression, attract potential customers and unify a streetscape. By contrast, a confused, poorly designed or poorly placed sign or awning can overwhelm buildings, detract from the area, and potentially damage historic materials or finishes. Historically, awnings were attached to and placed near buildings. New awnings can use similar features to both enhance the character of the building and convey the necessary information to the public.

Awning Signs are typically located on the awning valance. In addition to identifying a business, awnings can provide sun damage protection for merchandise and reduce solar heat gain, and are a good option for businesses that are orientated to the south or west. In general, they help protect buildings and products from the weather – heat, rain, snow etc. Signs should not be the primary purpose of an awning; rather they should be subordinate to the primary reason for placement on a building.



*A well done awning sign.*

# Guidelines for Signs



*Signs should be pedestrian in scale.*



*The materials and shape of this awning are discouraged.*

## Guideline 28

**Signs on Awnings should be designed with the historic character of the building and district in mind. Awning signs should create visual interest, and promote commercial identity.**

- Signs should occupy a maximum of twenty percent (20%) of the valance (vertical surface) area on each face of an awning.
- Awnings and canopy signs should project no more than thirty-six inches (36") from the face of the building except when used as entrance canopies.
- The design should be compatible with the architecture of the building and should not obscure architectural details of the building. Further, awnings should serve as an accent to the building's design but should not be the dominant architectural feature.
- Awning styles at typical sign locations such as rounded balloon awnings or flat mounted wall awnings are discouraged.
- Awnings and canopy signs should be located in a traditional manner above doors, windows or walkways.
- Nylon, canvas or other similar materials are suitable. Material should be high quality, colorfast and sun fade resistant.
- Vinyl or plastic materials are not appropriate.



## Guideline 29

### **Illumination of awnings may be considered in certain situations.**

- Illuminated/back-lit translucent awnings or translucent letters on opaque backgrounds are discouraged.
- Canvas awnings illuminated with approved light sources that are down directed and shielded are encouraged.

### **Wall Signs**

Wall signs were one of the most common types of sign used historically in Salt Lake City. Wall signs, placed on the fascia or horizontal band between the storefront and the second floor, were among the most common. This area is often called the “signboard,” and as the word implies, provides a perfect place for a sign. Similar to fascia signs were signs between the levels of windows across the upper facade. Such signs were mounted on horizontal boards or painted on the building. Whether wall signs featured text or images, they sometimes became major features of the building. Signs in the form of plaques, shields, and ovals were used on many nineteenth-century buildings. Such signs had the advantage of being easily replaced as tenants came and went. They also easily incorporated images as well as lettering.

For more information, see Preservation Brief 44 from the National Park Service.

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief44.htm>



*Position a wall sign on the building in a manner that does not obscure architectural details.*



*Position a wall sign on the building in a manner that does not obscure architectural details.*



*This wall sign is flush with the wall, and compatible with the building.*

## Guideline 30

**Well designed flush-mounted wall signs are encouraged.**

- When feasible, place a wall sign such that it is compatible with others on the block.
- When planning a wall sign, determine if a horizontal sign board exists on the building. If so, locate flush-mounted signs such that they fit within panels formed by moldings or transom panels on the façade.
- Obscuring significant architectural façade features should be avoided.
- In general, wall signs should be oriented toward the pedestrian, and therefore, fixed on a lower section of the building.

## Projecting Signs

Projecting signs, both lettered and symbolic, were also common historically. Projecting signs are generally two sided signs, suspended from an iron bracket or building element, mounted perpendicular to the face of the building. Projecting signs are usually an appropriate type of sign for an historic structure because their installation is such that it requires minimum anchoring to the building and therefore does less damage.



*Projecting sign.*

## Guideline 31

**A projecting sign, which projects from the building front, is encouraged, particularly on a more pedestrian oriented corridor.**

- A projecting sign should be mounted perpendicular to the building façade and provide eight feet of clearance between the sidewalk and bottom of the sign.
- A projecting sign should be located near the business entrance.
- Exposed surfaces of projecting signs should be constructed of metal, high-density foam board, or solid wood.
- The sign materials should be compatible with the face of the building and should be colorfast and resistant to corrosion.



*Projecting signs should be located at a human scale and near the doorway.*

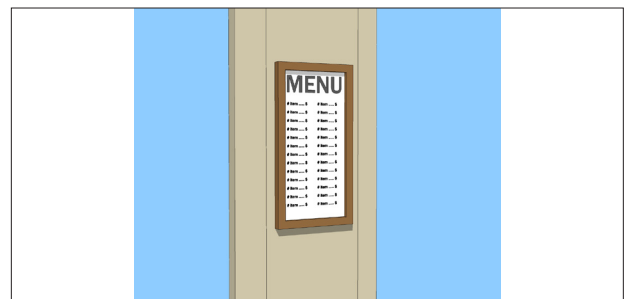
## Menu Boards

A menu board is a weather tight box with a glass or Plexiglas front that is used to display menus, sign bulletins, photographs etc. These signs are attached to an exterior building wall near the main entrance. A well designed menu board is an essential and appropriate use of sign area for a restaurant.

## Guideline 32

**In the case of a restaurant, a menu board is essential and will usually be considered appropriate.**

- The board should be positioned to avoid obscuring or damaging architectural detail.
- The board should be positioned near the main restaurant entrance.



*Menu Board*

# Guidelines for Signs



*Monument Sign*

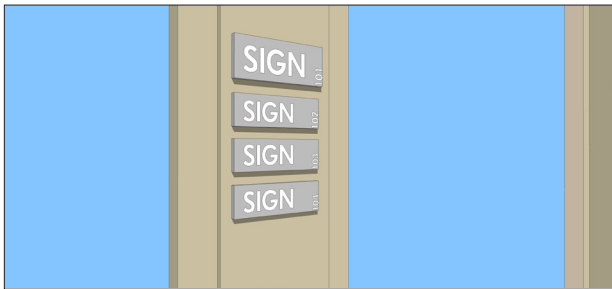
## Monument Sign

Monument Signs are not attached to the building. They can include information on one or two sides, spanning between two posts, or suspended from one post that is set in paving or landscape areas. The monument sign is usually located on the edge of the property near a pedestrian corridor or vehicle access point.

### Guideline 33

**Monument signs are a less obtrusive alternative to a pole sign and animated signs.**

- Signs must be compatible with the architecture of the building to which they are associated.
- Lighting of monument signs is permitted, provided that the lighting is shielded and directed only toward the sign.
- Internally illuminated monument signs should be avoided.



*Directory or Tenant Sign*

## Directory or Tenant Signs

Directory signs or tenant signs are attached to a building and are often used for professional offices. They include information about several businesses on a single larger sign, with an identifying building address and/or building name. Although they are usually located within the building, sometimes they are placed on the exterior.

## Guideline 34

**Use directory signs on multi-tenant sites to reduce the visual clutter of many signs.**

- Where several businesses share a building, signs should be coordinated. Align several smaller signs, or group them into a single panel to make them easier to locate.
- Similar forms or backgrounds should be used for the signs to tie them together visually, identify them as serving the same premises and make them easier to read.
- The individual nameplates on the sign should match each other in size, colors, letter size, case and styles.



*Directory Sign*

## Internally Illuminated Signs

Internally Illuminated signs are built with a sign face which is lit or outlined by a light source located within the sign. The face is generally made of colored plastic, vinyl or other transparent material. They generally are used as wall signs or as monument signs.



*Internally Illuminated Sign*





*Internally Illuminated Sign*

### Guideline 35

**Internally illuminated signs are generally not associated with Salt Lake City's historic districts. Nonetheless, in commercial areas, specifically within larger developments along arterial streets with many noncontributing structures, they may be appropriate.**

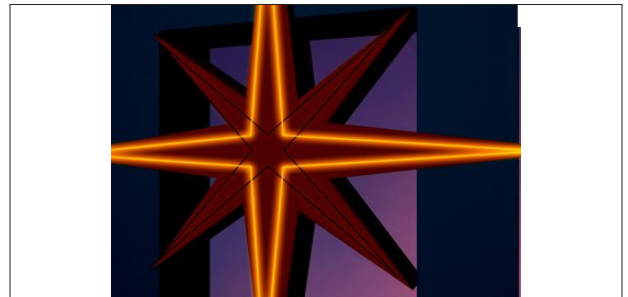
- Internally illuminated signs are not appropriate in neighborhood commercial areas in areas with many contributing commercial structures.
- If internal illumination is considered it should be limited to individual cut out letters with only the letter face illuminated.
- Letter height should be determined based on the size and design requirements in the Zoning Ordinance.

## Definitions

The following images and accompanying definitions are useful for understanding the design guidelines. Where similar definitions are found in the City Zoning Ordinance, similar language is used. The images contained in this section are solely for the purpose of illustration and may or may not be compliant with Salt Lake City regulations.

### Animated Sign

A sign, excluding an electronic changeable copy sign, which involves motion or rotation of any part by mechanical or artificial means or which displays flashing or intermittent lights.



*Animated Sign*

### Awning Sign

A sign that is painted on or otherwise made part of the awning material. Signage is limited to the vertical portions of the awning; the sides and the front valance. No signage shall protrude beyond the vertical face.



*Awning Sign*

### Billboard

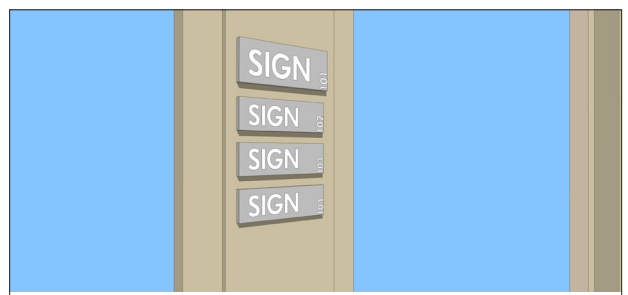
A form of an off premises sign. A freestanding ground sign located on industrial, commercial or residential property if the sign is designed or intended to direct attention to a business, product or service that is not sold, offered or existing on the property where the sign is located.



*Billboard*

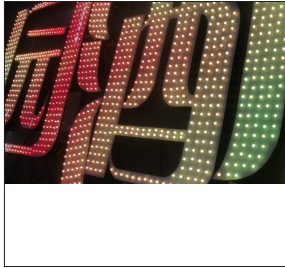
### Directory Sign

A sign on which the names and locations of occupants or the use of a building or property are identified, but which does not include any advertising message.



*Directory Sign*

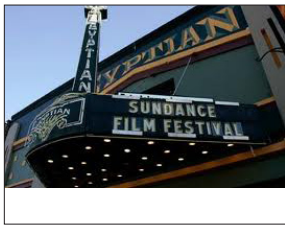
# Guidelines for Signs



Flashing Sign or Lights



Ghost Sign



Historic Replication Sign



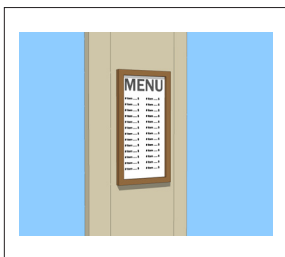
Historic Sign



Internally Illuminated Sign



Inflatable Sign or Display



Menu Board

## Flashing Sign or Lights

A sign that contains an intermittent or flashing light source that may also include the illusion of intermittent or flashing light by means of animation or externally mounted intermittent light sources.

## Ghost Sign

A sign painted on an exterior building wall, which has been weathered and faded to the extent that it has lost its original brightness of color and visibility.

## Historic Replication Sign

A sign, which is an exact replication, including materials and size, of a historic sign which once existed in the same location.

## Historic Sign

A sign that by its construction materials, age, prominent location, unique design, or craftsmanship, provides historic character, individuality, and a sense of place or orientation regarding clues to a building's history.

## Inflatable Sign or Display

Any inflatable object used for signs or promotional purposes.

## Internally Illuminated Sign

A sign which has characters, letters, figures, designs or outlines internally illuminated by electric lights, luminous tubes or other means as a part of the sign itself.

## Menu Board

Small scale sign boxes containing menus generally located near the primary entrance to a restaurant.

## Monument Sign

A sign that is supported by one (1) or more uprights or braces which are fastened to, or embedded in the ground or a foundation in the ground and not attached to any building or wall.



*Monument Sign*



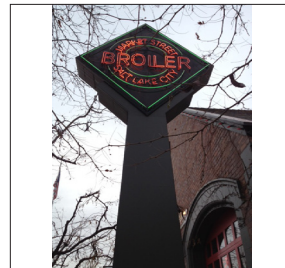
*Mural*

## Mural

A work of art, such as a painting applied directly to a wall, fence, pavement, or similar surface that is purely decorative in nature and content, and does not include advertising by picture or verbal message.

## Pole Sign

A freestanding sign other than a monument sign erected and maintained on a mast(s) or pole(s) and not attached to any building.



*Pole Sign*



*Projecting Sign*

## Projecting Sign

A sign attached to a building or other structure whose sign face is displayed perpendicular or at an angle to the building wall.

## Projection Sign

A sign which projects a visual image or message onto a surface.



*Projection Sign*



*Temporary Sign*

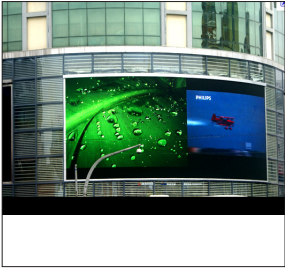
## Temporary Sign

Any exterior sign, banner, pennant, valance or advertising display constructed of paper, cloth, canvas, light fabric, cardboard, wallboard or other light materials, with or without light frames, intended to be displayed for a short period of time. Examples of temporary signs include: an A-frame sign; balloon; secured banner; unsecured banner; public event banner; garage/yard sale sign; political sign; real estate sign; special event sign.



# Guidelines for Signs

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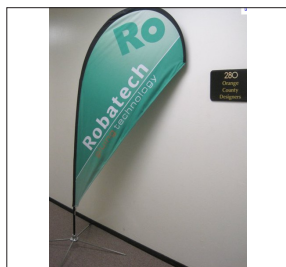
*Video Sign*



*Wall Sign*



*Plaque*



*Wind Sign*



*Window Sign*

## **Video Sign**

Animated visual messages that are projected on a screen.

## **Wall Sign**

A sign with messages or copy erected parallel to and attached to or painted on the outside wall of a building.

## **Plaque**

A small scale sign often embedded into the wall covering of a building that displays information pertaining to the building.

## **Wind Sign**

Any propeller, whirling, or similar device that is designed to flutter, rotate, or display other movement under the influence of the wind. This shall include "pennant flags", or banners.

## **Window Sign**

A sign inside of or attached to the interior of a transparent glazed surface (window or door) oriented to the outside of the building. A display window that does not include signs shall not be considered a sign.

