

Signs

Both the residential and commercial areas of New Albany's historic districts include signs as part of the landscape. Signs help to identify businesses and historic and cultural attractions, convey important information on goods and services, and provide direction and orientation to the traveler. Left uncontrolled, however, signs can introduce visual clutter to the landscape, particularly in the primarily commercial Downtown Historic District.

In reviewing requests for a new sign, the New Albany Historic Preservation Commission evaluates the material, location, size, style, color, support structure, and height of the proposed sign. It also takes into account the visual and physical impacts on the building and the surrounding district. For these reasons, the Commission may not approve a sign that would be the maximum size allowable under the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Please be aware that the city's zoning ordinance also regulates signage, and when there are differences between these two, the stricter regulations will apply. Most signs will require a sign permit from the city, in addition to a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Preservation Commission, and those that overhang the public sidewalk will require approval from the Board of Public Works and Safety.

As you are designing your sign, keep the following principles in mind. New signs in New Albany's historic districts should:

✦ **Respect the historic, pedestrian-oriented context** – New signs should complement, rather

than compete with the character of a historic building and the surrounding district. Signage should be designed and scaled with pedestrians in mind, not drivers.

✦ **Encourage an interesting streetscape, free from visual clutter** – Be creative in designing new signs, and remember that a single, well-designed and well-positioned sign can do more to identify and benefit your business than multiple poorly-designed signs.

✦ **Utilize durable, quality materials and be installed in a way to minimize impacts on the building** – Consider the appearance of your sign over time, and use materials that have a proven track record of performance. Signs should be installed so they will cause little or no damage to the building, both now and when they are removed in the future.

Drawings of the proposed sign must accompany a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application. These drawings:

- a. Must have front elevation with sign drawn to scale and with dimensions, shown in proposed location. If the sign will be visible from another elevation (e.g. a projecting sign that will be seen from the side), a rendering showing that view must also be provided. If the sign will be illuminated, renderings showing the sign both lit and unlit should be provided.
- b. Color samples and material samples must also be submitted.

Sg1 Design storefront-level signs that are primarily oriented to pedestrians and are scaled accordingly.

Sg2 Signs should complement and fit in with the building façade in color, composition and materials.

Sg3 Signs should not cover significant architectural elements – including integral building or business names, or construction dates – or obscure the display area.

Sg4 Signs should be attached in a manner that does not damage the building materials. Any holes for mounting hardware should be drilled into the mortar of masonry buildings, rather than the masonry units themselves, and the number of anchor points should be minimized. Utilize existing mounting hardware if possible.

Sg5 A letter style should be chosen that is easy to read. Because the contrast between lettering and background greatly influences legibility, light colored letters on dark backgrounds are preferred. Lettering should occupy only about 60% of a signboard.

Sg6 Use appropriate materials for signage, including carved or painted wooden signs, signs applied to canvas awnings, smooth-surface metal signs, and lettering applied to glass using gold leaf, paint, etching, or vinyl.

Plastic is generally not acceptable as a sign material in the historic district. Printed vinyl materials, whether used as a banner or adhered to a backing board are also generally not acceptable as a permanent sign material in the historic district. If durable modern materials such as Urethane board or MDO board are utilized, they should be finished in a way that gives the appearance of traditional materials. Matte finishes are preferred to glossy.

Administrative sign approvals:

Signs that fit within the design guidelines can typically be approved at the staff level, without the need for applicants to wait for or attend a regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

A sign permit or other city approvals will still be required, for most sign types.

Sg7 Historically significant signs should be retained and repaired.

Sg8 Historic neon signs should be maintained and preserved. New neon or signs with a neon-like

appearance will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Sg9 Preserve and maintain historic painted “ghost signs,” as they enrich the character of the historic district. Avoid restoring these signs to like-new condition, where all evidence of their age would be lost, but instead choose treatments that maintain the character and patina of the sign while preserving it.

Sg10 A business should not have more than two signs – one primary and one secondary. Secondary signs should generally be no more than half of the primary signs' dimensions. Additional signage may be approved for corner buildings at the discretion of the HPC.

Sg11 In buildings that contain multiple businesses, signage should be unified. Consider designating a 'tenant area' for signs, where all tenants would be listed in a uniform format.



The design and placement of a sign can be more important than its size in attracting positive attention to a business.

Sg12 Recommended sign types include flush-mounted signs; painted wall signs; projecting or hanging signs; awning signs; and window, door or transom signs.

Sg13 Flush-mounted wall signs should be attached directly to the face of an exterior wall, parallel to the building and in a location that will not obstruct or impact significant architectural features.

Sg14 The length of a flush-mounted wall sign shall be no greater than 2/3 the width of the building storefront. The height of the sign should be no more than three feet or 50% of the sign width, whichever is less. Wider or longer signs shall be considered on a case-by-case basis, particularly when warranted by architectural features.

Sg15 The length of a painted wall sign shall be no greater than 1/3 the length of the wall on which it will be painted. The height of the sign should be no more than three feet or 50% of the sign width, whichever is less. New painted wall signs are not appropriate for previously-unpainted masonry surfaces.

Sg16 Projecting or hanging signs shall be of a scale appropriate to the building, but generally should not exceed twelve square feet in combined area (both sides). They should be mounted in a location and a manner that does not damage or obscure any architectural elements.

Sg17 Projecting signs shall:

- a. Not project (at a right angle) more than four (4) feet from the building.
- b. Not extend above the highest point of the roof line.
- c. Maintain a free clearance to grade of at least eight (8) feet, with ten (10) feet the preferred clearance.

Any sign that projects over the right-of-way requires approval from the Board of Public Works and Safety.

Sg18 An awning provides an excellent opportunity for graphics and signage, particularly on buildings lacking space designed specifically for that purpose. The lettering or graphics on an awning sign should be no more than 24" high and cover no more than 1/3 of the awning area. For additional guidelines regarding awnings and canopies, see section AC.

Sg19 Painted, vinyl or gold leaf window signs may be up to twenty-five percent of the window area. Interior signs installed within 12" of the storefront glass and intended to be seen from the exterior are considered window signs. Lighted signs hung behind the display windows are strongly discouraged.

Sg20 Painted, vinyl or gold leaf signs placed on door glazing may be up to fifty percent of the door glass area.

Sg21 Painted, vinyl or gold leaf transom signs may be up to twenty percent of the transom glass area.

Sg22 Free-standing ground signs, if approved by the commission, shall be of a scale appropriate to the building and its site. Sixteen square feet in combined area (both sides) is generally a good starting point for many buildings in the district.

Sg22 The use of a sandwich board or back-to-back sign is allowed in the historic district on a limited basis, but must not contribute to visual clutter of the streetscape nor impede the flow

of pedestrians using assistive devices, such as walkers or wheelchairs.

No more than one (1) sandwich board or back-to-back sign per business is allowed generally, although a corner business with entrances on both street frontages may be allowed one (1) additional sign of this type.

Sandwich boards or back-to-back boards may not exceed ten (10) square feet on either side, for a total of twenty (20) square feet for the whole sign. The sign may not exceed four (4) feet in height. Traditional materials such as wood or chalk board should be used, or if modern materials are used they should be finished in a way to give the appearance of traditional materials. The use of plastic for sandwich boards or back-to-back signs is not allowed.

Signs of this type must be removed from outside the location at the close of the business day.



This new sign was designed to evoke a historic neon sign that photos show was once located on this building.

Sg23 Temporary signage announcing special events may not exceed sixteen square feet. These signs shall be removed when the event is completed or after three months, whichever is less. Temporary signs shall not be illuminated. “Spinner,” triangular flag or pennant roping and other draped or tied banners are prohibited within historic districts, as are “feather” ground signs and human sign holders.

Sg24 Lighted signs shall use an indirect lighting method such as overhead or gooseneck lights. The appearance of the light fixture should be minimized if it is not a design element, and the light should be shielded to minimize glare. Internally lit signs are generally not appropriate for use in historic districts but will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Any internal lighting should be kept at minimal levels.

Changeable message LED readerboards or digital signs are not permitted in the historic district. Flashing, animated and blinking lights are not appropriate for use on signs in the historic district and should be avoided. No sign that revolves or is put into motion by the atmosphere shall be permitted.

Sg25 Murals will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Murals may not be painted directly on masonry walls that have not previously been painted. Murals could be painted on panels inserted into a frame that is attached in mortar joints.

The installation of a mural should complement and enhance the building and its surroundings. Before installing a new mural, the owner must ensure the wall underneath is properly repaired and in good condition. As appropriate, refer also to sections on Masonry or Siding and Trim.

Subjects related to local history or having some other local significance are encouraged. The location of the mural on the building should not cover or detract from significant or character-defining architectural features. Murals should not be located in an area which may cause undue distraction to drivers, and should be sited far enough away from other murals as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually and not cause visual clutter.

A mural painted in an outdoor location becomes public art. When planning a mural, consideration should be given to ownership of the mural (artist or building owner), location, and ongoing maintenance, as well as any other local regulations.

Sg27 A Certificate of Appropriateness is not required for the installation of National Register plaques or state or local historic markers. Plaques and markers are encouraged and should be installed in a manner that does not damage historic fabric or obscure architectural details.

For Further Information:

✦ Preservation Brief No. 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs (National Park Service)

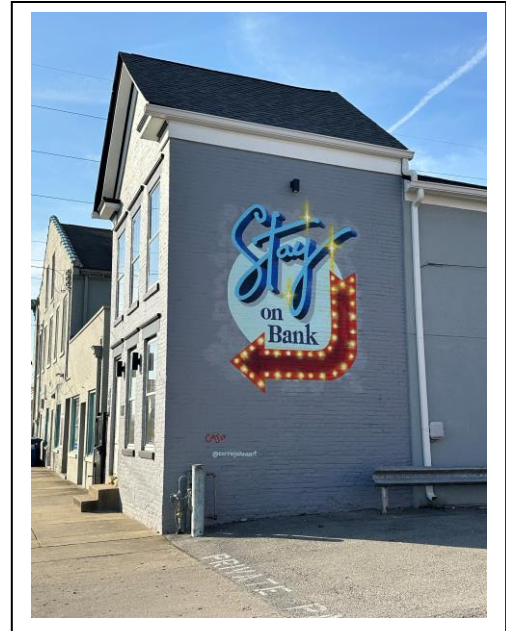
<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-25-signs.pdf>

✦ Preservation Brief No. 11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts (National Park Service)

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-11-storefronts.pdf>

✦ The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties:

<https://www.nps.gov/crps/tps/rehab-guidelines/rehabilitation-guidelines-1997.pdf>



Clockwise from top left: ghost sign (appropriately restored); painted wall sign; projecting sign; flush-mounted sign; unified tenant sign; window sign

