

Downtown Skowhegan Sign Design Guidelines

Signs play a critical role in the economic vitality and appearance of downtown Skowhegan. When properly designed and mounted, they can direct motorists and pedestrians to their proper destination and inform them of the goods and services provided within. Signs can have a significant effect on the visual quality of downtown in the way they relate to historic structures and delight the eye. Because signs provide initial information and impressions about Skowhegan's downtown commercial operations, they are very important design factors to consider. Design guidelines provide recommendations for signs that will compliment and enhance the historic character of downtown Skowhegan, while providing necessary information.

1. Sign Design

All buildings in downtown Skowhegan should be identified by attractive, legible signs that reflect the function and needs of the store or office. Each sign should be de-

signed to complement the façade of the individual building.

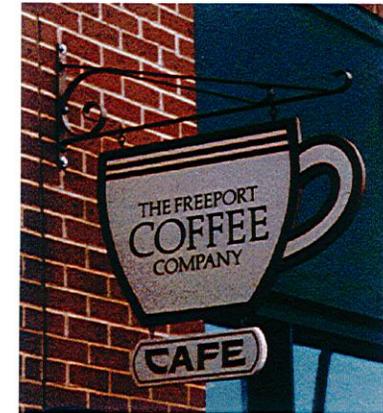
1a. Designers: Signs should be designed by professionals with experience in commercial signage.

1b. Compatibility: Signs should complement the building and its surroundings in terms of color, lighting, forms, and materials.



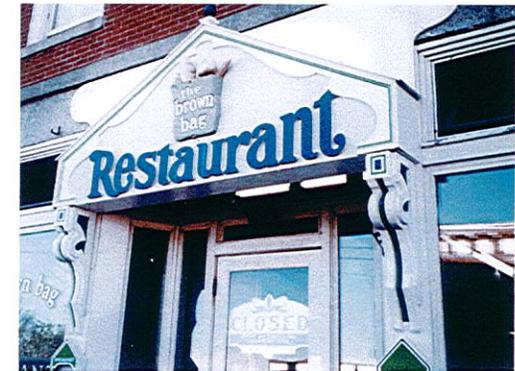
This sign complements the color and style of the building without overpowering it.

1c. Shapes: Signs should generally be simple geometric shapes that complement the architectural detailing of the building façade. The use of shapes that graphically reflect the specific commercial use of the property – e.g., a clock for a watchmaker's shop – are encouraged to create a visually appealing and effective form of advertising.



An effective projecting sign that conveys its message with words and simple shape.

1d. Design: The sign should relate to the architectural features on or near the property.



A simple sign that reflects the stores' function and adds visual delight to the streetscape.

1e. Size: Permanent signs should occupy no more than 10% of the total façade of the building.



These business signs are well proportioned to the building's front facade.

1f. Colors: Signs should be limited to two or three colors that compliment those found on the building.

1g. Materials: Signs should be constructed of permanent, durable materials that complement those used on the architecture. The use of materials with matte finishes or carved wood is encouraged. The use of acrylic plastics and similar high gloss materials should be avoided.

1h. Lettering Size: The size of the lettering for identification signs should consider the distance from which they are being read and the type of audience (pedestrian or motorist) that they are aimed at. For most applications, the minimum letter size should be four inches in height.



The use of raised gilded letters complements a classic building and produces a highly legible sign.

1i. Trim: Flat signs should have a trimmed edge or frame that matches the details of the building in order to improve the finished appearance of the sign.



The decorative trim and hardware on this sign give it an attractive, finished appearance. Attention to the smallest details has produced an exemplary sign.

2. Sign Content

Signs should be simple and direct in message, content, and form in order to minimize visual clutter in the downtown area.

2a. Information: Signs should contain only the information that is essential to identify the establishment within the building, with a minimum of advertising. Repetitious signage, both on the building façade and the internal windows of the store, should be avoided.

Repetitious signage, both on the building façade and the internal windows of the store, should be avoided, regardless of the total sign area.



This highly legible façade mounted sign contains seven 'bits' of information.

2b. Content: The maximum content for any sign should be either 30 letters or 7 bits of information. A bit is one syllable or symbol.

2c. Advertising: The use of 'sponsor signs', either on or near the sign, to promote products, goods or services other than the primary tenant is discouraged. If a sponsor sign is used, it should only be 10% of the total sign surface.



This sign contains too much information that clutters the sign and confuses the passing motorist.

2d. Readerboards: Readerboards – places for changeable messages on signs – are highly discouraged.

3. Façade Mounted Signs

Signs should be designed as an extension of the building. Downtown buildings – with little or no setbacks – can have signs mounted flush with the façade or projecting out from the building. Façade mounted signs, which are primarily for motorists and people on the opposite side of the street, should

be relatively large. Projecting signs, on the other hand, are primarily for the pedestrian, and should be easily readable a few stores away.

3a. Location: Both projecting and façade-mounted signs should be incorporated into the façade of the building and should not obscure architectural details. Signage should be mounted on vertical surfaces without projecting above the fascia trim.



This projecting sign is designed to attract the window shopper. The fine ironwork adds visual interest to the sign and the storefront.

Signs projecting over the sidewalk should be mounted so their lowest component is at least seven feet above the sidewalk to prevent interference with pedestrian traffic.

3b. Hardware: Façade mounted signs should be installed with concealed hardware. Projecting signs should be mounted with decorative ironwork, treated to prevent rust and corrosion.

3c. Multi-Tenant Signage , A building identification sign should be located at the main entrance to facilitate wayfinding in multi-tenant buildings.



This multi-tenant sign is designed as an integral part of the architecture and site.

3d. Temporary Signage:

Temporary signage, including banners, window signs, and flags, should be mounted in a manner that does not obscure the detailing of the building. They should be removed as soon as the advertised event or sale has passed.

4. Externally-Lit Signs

Signs should be designed to be visible after dark to encourage nighttime commercial activity in downtown Skowhegan. Externally illuminated signs are preferred over internally illuminated signs.

4a. Light Levels: The illumination level on the vertical surface of the sign should be bright enough to provide a noticeable contrast with the surrounding building or landscape without undue glare.

4b. Lighting: Lighting fixtures illuminating signs should be carefully located, aimed, and shielded so that light is directed only onto the sign façade. Lighting fixtures should not be aimed toward adjacent streets, roads, sidewalks, or abutting properties. Light fixtures should complement the form, style, and

color of the sign and the building façade. Floodlights are strongly discouraged.

4c. Light Sources: The light source should be designed for the specific installation to effectively illuminate the sign without distracting motorists or pedestrians. Top mounted lighting fixtures, which direct light downward and hide the light source, can be an effective, attractive, and integral part of the façade.



The positioning of these light fixtures reduces glare while highlighting the commercial sign.

5. Internally-Lit Signs

Where internally illuminated signs are used, they should not create glare or unduly illuminate the surrounding area.

5a. Light Sources: Internally-lit signs should not constitute light fixtures in their own right.

5b. Appearance: Where internally-lit signs are used, light lettering and symbols on dark backgrounds are strongly encouraged over dark lettering and symbols on light backgrounds. The graphic elements of the sign (letters and symbols) should not constitute more than 40% of the sign area.



This sign is not preferred, due to the excessive light it give off at night.

5c. Design: Individual letters and symbols are preferred over whole panels that are internally lit.

6. Awnings & Canopies

Where they are used, awnings can complement the building through design, materials, and appearance. They should enhance the appearance and function of the building without becoming a dominant advertising feature.



An awning used to emphasize the entrance of the building and provide some measure of shelter.

6a. Location: Because fixed or retractable awnings are part of the architecture of a building, they should be located directly over windows or doors where they can protect the customer from the elements. Locations that disregard

the features of the building are strongly discouraged.



An awning used as an advertising feature and sign, which would be inappropriate on most downtown buildings.

6b. Materials: Awnings should not be made of reflective materials, such as metal or plastic. Their color should compliment those found on the façade.

6c. Lighting: Backlit awnings are strongly discouraged.

6d. Advertising: Graphics included on the awning should be considered part of the total signage area. Signage on awnings should no repeat the information included in the building's sign.