

Commercial Development: Signage Standards

The Green Valley Institute exists to help the communities and citizens of The Last Green Valley, also known as the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor, sustain their environment and quality of life while growing their economics.

We are a non-regulatory organization dedicated to:

- Improving the knowledge base from which land use and natural resource decisions are made,
- Building local capacity to protect and manage natural resources as our region grows.

The GVI was created through a formal partnership of the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor and the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Massachusetts' Cooperative Extension System and other partners.



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Regulations and design standards for commercial development can enhance town character, create a sense of place and encourage economic development. This fact sheet is the fourth in a series on this topic. Other fact sheets in the series are an overview of commercial development, and individual fact sheets with suggested regulation standards site planning, architecture, lighting and landscaping. **Signage** is an integral part of the overall commercial development plan. Clear standards ensure that signage is attractive and serves the needs of the business while complementing the site and architecture.

Objectives for Commercial Signage

Signage should be an integral part of the overall proposed development plan and complement the architecture. Signage should provide basic, clear information about the business with attractive, highly legible signage.



The signage plan should demonstrate forethought in the design, size, placement and graphic format of each sign to ensure compatibility with overall site design.

Signage plan should propose the minimum level of signage required for identification and wayfinding to lessen visual clutter.

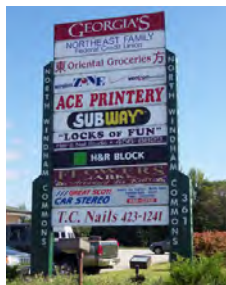
General Signage Design Standards

Develop an integrated signage plan for all signs proposed for the development or business. Within the plan, base the design and location of each sign for the intended viewer.

Coordinate the sign design with the building and its surroundings through the use of similar detailing, form, color, lighting and material.

Locate free standing signs to maintain a motorists' line of sight and the pedestrians path.

Use the appropriate letter size to be easily read by the intended viewer. Identification signs should contain one



line of large letters or symbols for ease of viewing, small letters are unreadable from a moving vehicle and may require motorists to slow down to read them which could potentially be a safety hazard

This multi-tenant sign was not designed for the intended viewer making it ineffective and creating visual clutter.

Design directional signs, such as those indicating the entry, exit or wayfinding within a site to complement the overall site design, use the minimum size to provide direction, and place in an appropriate location.

Include graphic building elements that visually enlarge the appearance of a sign as part of the overall signage for dimensional calculations.



These buildings have graphic elements that visually enlarge the appearance of the signage to the point of being billboards. Regulations in many communities would consider the graphic area adjacent to the text when calculating the dimension of the sign.

Content Standards

Correlate the content to the viewer. The amount of information contained in a sign is dependent upon the distance and travelling speed of the intended viewer:

Passing motorists can only discern 30 letters or 7 bits of information. A bit is either a symbol or the syllable of a word. Identifier signs meant to be read by a motorist should contain one line of text in a large font.

Pedestrians have the opportunity to read more information, signs at eye level can contain phone numbers, hours of operations, menus and other information about the business.



The Hoot sign, with only 2 bits of information in large letters, works well for passing motorists, Olde Towne's hanging sign was designed for pedestrian viewing.

Focus the signage content on the occupants, sponsor logos or slogans should be limited to 25% of the total face of the sign.

Prohibit, or limit, the use of electronic signs with movable images and letters as they distract from other signs and add to visual clutter.

Free Standing Sign Standards

Locate signs to increase visibility for intended viewer. Generally, two sided signs perpendicular to the roadway with a center at 5' above the road provides the most visibility on a two-lane road. Additional height may be needed for four-lane roads.

Design the supporting structure to complement the site and building.



Facade Mounted Sign Standards



Design facade mounted signs as an integral element of the architecture in shape and materials that complement the architectural features on the building.

Locate facade mounted signs to enhance the architectural details on the

building and to aid in wayfinding

Mount with concealed hardware of stainless steel or galvanized metal to prevent rust and corrosion that could stain or discolor the building.

Multi-Tenant Signage Standards

Coordinate all signs of multi-tenant development for a harmonious signage plan that is attractive and effective.

Design each sign within in the context of the principle building in color, materials, detailing, and style to present a unified appearance for the development.

Establish a signage hierarchy to help with wayfinding and to eliminate visual clutter. Sign hierarchy includes a development identification sign, directional signs listing tenants, and individual tenant signs at the entrance to their business; each is described below.



Multi-Tenant Development Identification Signs



Locate one identifying sign in a highly visible location near the primary driveway entrance to convey an overall identity for the property and emphasize the name of the place (i.e. East Brook Mall).

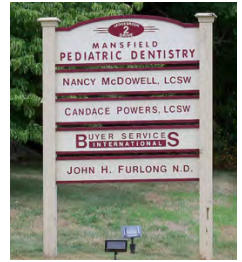
List the name of major individual tenants, if necessary, on the identification sign in a clear hierarchy in the display of information by using significantly smaller lettering in a coordinated graphic and color palette.

Incorporate the street address into the sign to facilitate wayfinding and 911 emergency response.

Tenant-listing Directional Signs

Locate tenant-listing directional signs to aid visitor wayfinding.

Coordinate the design with the development identification sign, limit the color and graphic palette to minimize the confusion and visual clutter of the sign. In general, multi-tenant signs, should have no more than 3 colors including the structure and background.



Individual Tenant Signs

Follow the standards for free-standing, facade mounted or pendant signs and sign content.

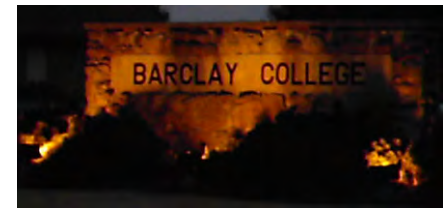
Incorporate the color and design of the overall development with the individual tenant's logo or color scheme.

Signage Lighting Standards

Design the lighting as an integral part of the sign design.

Illuminate the vertical surface of externally-lit signs with sufficient light to provide a noticeable contrast with the surrounding building or landscape without causing undue glare or reflection.

Locate the light fixtures of externally-lit signs to direct only onto the face of the sign and avoid light spillage beyond the sign.



These signs are well lit and enhance the signs for night time viewing and avoid light spillage onto abutting properties. .

Conceal all light sources with appropriate canopy, screen ground-mounted fixtures or partially bury to minimize the view of the light source.

Select light fixtures to complement the color and design of the sign and the architecture and for ease of maintenance.



Limit the use of internally-lit signs to light lettering and/or symbols of no more than 40% of the sign surface, set against a dark background, to minimize the amount of light emanating from the sign.

Additional Information:

Green Valley Institute: www.GreenValleyInstitute.org

United States Sign Council: www.ussc.org

Scarborough, ME commercial guidelines: www.scarborough.me.us/planning/pb/spguidelines.pdf



A publication of the Green Valley Institute. Please contact us at 860-774-9600 to schedule a workshop on this topic.