


# City of Angels Design Guidelines For Signs



Adopted by the Historical Commercial District Sign Ad-Hoc Committee on May 8, 2008  
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## Introduction

This document presents the design guidelines for the treatment of signs associated with commercial uses. The design guidelines are organized into relevant design topics, and within these are individual polices and design guidelines upon which the City of Angels (COA)/Angels Camp will base its decisions for all Commercial areas. Specific guidelines for the Historical Combining District will be denoted with an (*HCD*) designation.

A little history....traditionally, a variety of signs were seen in Angels Camp. Five different types occurred:

- Small, freestanding signs mounted on a pole or post, located near the sidewalk because the primary structure or business was set back from the street (e.g., and area with residential character); printed on both sides.
- Medium sized, square or rectangular shaped signs that projected from the building above the awnings or canopies; painted on both sides.
- Small signs hung below canopies.
- Medium to large sized, horizontally oriented rectangular signs attached flat against the building, above and/or below canopies; printed on one side only.
- Window signs, painted on glass; used at street level and on upper floors.

## DESIGN TOPICS

1. Sign Context
2. Appropriate Signs
3. Materials
4. Sign Content
5. Sign Lighting

Signs that were mounted on the exterior advertised the primary business of a building. Typically, this use occupied a street level space and sometimes upper floors as well.

In addition, signs were mounted to fit within architectural features. In many cases, they were mounted flush above the storefront, just above the moldings. Others were located between columns or centered in "sign boards" on a building face. This method also enabled one to perceive the design character of the individual structures, and is the preferred alternative for most structures in Angels Camp.

## Sign Context

A sign typically serves two functions: first, to attract attention, and second to convey information, essentially identifying the business or services offered within. If it is well designed, the building front alone can serve the attention getting function, allowing the sign to be focused on conveying information in a well conceived manner.

### A. Consider the building front as part of an overall sign program.

1. Integrate a sign within the structure's design into a unified architectural statement.
2. Develop a master sign plan for the entire building. This is especially important for buildings that house multiple businesses. The master sign plan can then guide individual sign design decisions.
3. See most current revision of Chapter 15.12, SIGNS AND BILLBOARDS and Section 17.45.120 Signs, of Chapter 17.45 HISTORICAL COMBINING DISTRICT (HCD) of COA Municipal Code.

### B. Design a sign to be subordinate to the overall building composition.

1. A sign should be consistent with the proportions and scale of the elements within the structure's facade.
2. Locate a sign on a building such that it will emphasize design elements of the facade itself.
3. Study the facade of the structure to determine if there are any architectural features or details that suggest a location, size or shape for the sign. These could be bands or frames of brickwork, cornice lines, indentations or projections in the face material. (HCD)
4. Look at the facade of the structure in relation to where adjacent businesses have placed their signs. There may be an established pattern of sign locations. (HCD)

### C. Do not locate signs so that they cover architectural features that may be important to the structure's overall design.

1. This is especially important for a building with historic significance. (HCD)
2. Design a sign to integrate with the architectural features of the building on which it is to be installed and not distract attention from them. (HCD)



*Coordinate the overall facade composition, including ornamental details and signs.*

## Appropriate Signs

### A. A flush mounted wall sign may be considered.

1. In some cases, Historical Commercial buildings in Angels Camp have a "sign band." This is the ideal location for a primary building sign. The sign band is typically located above the transom and below the second floor windows (HCD)
2. When using the sign band location, fit the panel within the band borders.

### B. An awning sign may be considered.

1. An awning sign may be woven, sewn or painted onto the vertical valance of an awning.
2. Wording or graphics that are simple and concise are preferred. The text copy should be limited to the name of the business only. Letter color should be limited to one and should be compatible with the color scheme of the awning and building.
3. Internal illumination of an awning sign is not recommended.
4. When initially installed, awnings should be provided with removable valances and end panels to accommodate future changes in sign copy. Painting cloth awnings in order to change sign copy is strongly discouraged, as this will decrease the fire resistant/retardant properties of the treated canvas.

## Appropriate Signs - con't.

### C. A window sign may be considered.

1. It may be painted on the glass or hung just inside a window.
2. When using a window sign, consider the size and in relation to the overall window size and viewing area from the outside in.
3. The text of a window sign should be limited to the business name and a brief message identifying the type of product or service available

### D. A projecting sign may be considered.

1. A projecting sign is attached to a building face and is mounted perpendicular to the facade. They must not constitute a hazard to pedestrians or vehicular traffic.
2. Locate a projecting sign near the business entrance at eye level, just above the door or to the side of it. A projecting sign may also be located on the underside of a canopy.
3. The lowest point of a projecting sign must not extend lower than eight feet (8'-0") above the surface below it.

### E. A building directory sign may be considered.

1. Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs. Align several smaller signs, or group them into a single panel as a directory.
2. Use similar forms or backgrounds for the signs to tie them together visually and make them easier to read.
3. A building directory sign is usually considered a wall sign.

### F. A freestanding, ground mounted sign may be considered.

1. A freestanding sign may also be used in areas where the primary use is set back from the street edge.
2. A monument sign, where the sign itself is low to the ground with a large base or foundation, is generally not appropriate in the *HCD*.
3. A pole mounted sign, where a small sign panel is suspended from a arm that is attached to the pole, is preferred where a free standing sign is needed for a commercial building that is set back from the street.

### G. Signs that are out of character with those seen historically and would alter the historic character of the street and not recommended for the *HCD*.

1. Animated signs are inappropriate.
2. Any sign that visually overpowers the building or obscures significant architectural features is inappropriate.

## Materials

### A. Sign materials should be compatible with the design theme and use of materials on the building where the sign is to be placed.

1. Painted wood and metal are preferred materials for signs. Generally, signs in the *HCD* should be constructed of natural materials, or materials that imitate or appear like natural materials to reflect the character of the environment. Natural materials include redwood, cedar, oak, or other kinds of wood that resist the elements well.
2. Plastic is inappropriate. (*HCD*)
3. Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read are inappropriate.
4. Exterior neon or LED signs are not allowed in the *HCD*.
5. Signs should be constructed of weather resistant materials.

### B. Banners

1. See most current revision of Chapter 15.12, SIGNS AND BILLBOARDS; Sections 15.12.20 "Temporary Sign" and 15.12.210 "Temporary Signs"
2. Banners that obscure major portions of the building's facade is not considered appropriate in the *HCD*.

## Sign Content

### A. Consider using a symbol for a sign.

1. A symbol sign adds interest to the street, can be read quickly and is remembered better than written words.
2. Over detailing a symbol or icon is not recommended and not easily read or understood.

## Sign Content - con't

### **B. Sign colors should complement the colors used on the structures and the project as a whole.**

1. Color is one of the most important aspects of visual communication. It can be used to catch the eye or communicate ideas or feelings. Too many colors used simultaneously can confuse and negate the message of a sign. The number of colors should be limited to two or three on any one sign. Small accents of several colors can make a sign unique and attractive, but the competition of large areas of many different colors decreases readability.
2. Overpowering colors should be restrained for use as accent colors.
3. Contrast is an important influence on the legibility of signs. Light letters on a dark background or dark letters on a light background are most legible.
4. Sign colors should compliment the colors used on the structures and project as a whole.
5. See Historic Color palate recommendations at COA Community Development Department. (*HCD*)

### **C. A simple sign is preferred.**

1. Typefaces that are in keeping with those seen in the area traditionally are preferred. (*HCD*) Select letter styles and sizes that will be compatible with the building front (and side if a corner location.)
2. Generally, these are typefaces with serifs making them easier to read.
3. Avoid hard to read or overly intricate typeface styles.
4. Avoid spacing letters and words too close together. Crowding of letters, words or lines will make any sign more difficult to read. As a general rule, letters (sign copy) should not occupy more than 75 percent of sign panel area.

## Sign Lighting

### **A. Indirect lighting for a sign is permitted.**

1. Direct light at the sign from an external, shielded lamp is preferred in the *HCD*.
2. Internal illumination can be considered, but its use in the *HCD* is inappropriate.

3. A warm light, similar to daylight, is preferred.
4. Light that shines directly in the eyes of pedestrians or traffic is not recommended.
5. If the sign can be illuminated by an indirect source of light, the sign will be more compatible and integrated with the building's architecture. Light fixtures supported in front of the structure cast light on the sign and generally a portion of the face of the structure as well. Indirect lighting emphasizes the continuity of the structure's surface and signs become an integral part of the facade.
6. Whenever indirect lighting fixtures are used (fluorescent or incandescent), the light source shall be shaded, shielded, subdued, or directed so that the intensity of the light does not impact surrounding properties. Signs should be lighted only to the minimum level required for nighttime readability.

Please direct any questions regarding commercial signage guidelines to the COA Community Development Department at (209) 736-1346. All commercial signs require the business owner to complete a Sign Permit Application form which is available at the Community Development Department.