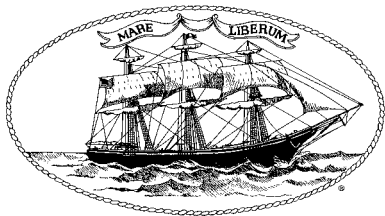


# City of New London Office of Development & Planning

## Sign Design Guidelines



The City of New London Office of Development and Planning working with a committee of residents and merchants appointed by the Planning and Zoning Commission spent a year developing design guidelines and regulations regarding signs. Exhaustive research, photographs, field trips, review of existing city regulations and those of other communities gave the committee a wide-ranging view of signage control and management. The goal of the committee was to develop simplified regulations with the aim to reduce visual pollution. In conjunction with developing new regulations the Committee agreed to develop “user-friendly” guidelines to aid the business community and citizenry.

### PURPOSE

A well-designed sign creates an image and personality for the business. The best signs are simple signs that are easy to read and offer quick identification. Design elements, such as a logo or a symbol, can be used to communicate the types of services or goods provided by the business. Providing an address enables the public to quickly identify the location. A sign with too much information confuses the reader. Also some information, such as hours of operation and telephone numbers may change over time.

### SIGN DESIGN ISSUES

Each commercial and residential area in New London consists of a unique assemblage of buildings with unique needs and purposes. Signs are most effective when the overall design of the building, property and other nearby signs are considered together. Well-designed signs combined with pleasant building facades, clean sidewalks and good lighting attract people to businesses.



**UNIFIED SIGNS:** The appearance of a group of stores is enhanced by coordinated design treatment of their signs. In a unified program all signs are compatible in shape, lettering, materials and placement on the building creating a harmonious and consistent appearance. Consequently, applications for unified signage programs can be handled more efficiently by City staff. There are bonus provisions for property owners installing unified sign programs.



### DESIGN ELEMENTS

Size, lettering, shape and symbols are important elements of a sign. The unique combination of these elements is what creates your sign.

**SIZE:** “The bigger, the better” does not necessarily work in sign design. The size of the sign should compliment the building and the location.

**LETTERING:** Legibility is essential. Type should be clear, well spaced and properly sized. Wording should be kept to a minimum. Select a type style that reflects the business or defines an image. Upper and lower case is

most distinctive. Generally, it is usually best not to mix typefaces.

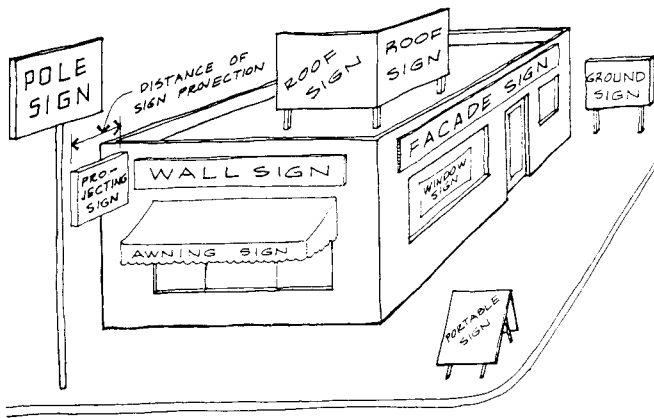
**SHAPE:** Select simple shapes. Circles, rectangles and ovals are most effective. These are shapes seen every day in different contexts and do not detract from the message.

**SYMBOLS:** Symbols, logos and pictographic images register quickly in a viewer's mind. If a particular image represents the business, it should be an integral part of the sign.



### SIGN TYPES

There are a variety of sign types. When choosing a sign type, you should determine what type of sign fits best with the building, the streetscape and the neighborhood. Also check the zoning regulations to determine what sign types are allowed at your location.

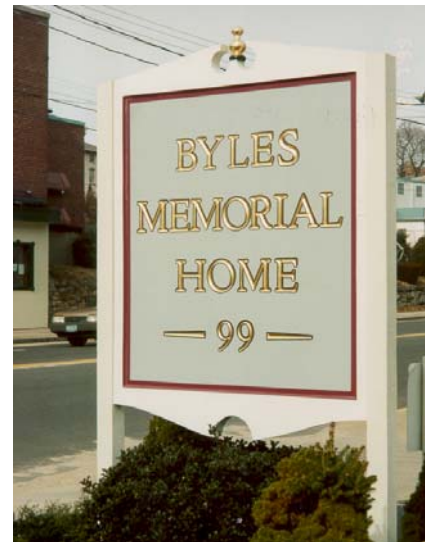


SIGN TYPES

**AWNINGS:** Awnings are simple, highly effective means to improve a retail façade while advertising your business. Not only do awnings create an enticing environment, they also muffle traffic noise, provide shelter from sun, snow, or rain.



**FREE STANDING SIGNS:** A sign supported by one or more columns, poles, or braces placed in or upon the ground. The sign is not attached to any part of a building or structure other than its own supports.



**PORTABLE SIGNS:** Portable signs are limited to one per building. A portable sign is restricted to use during the business operating hours and should not obstruct the flow of pedestrian traffic.

**PROJECTING (HANGING) SIGN:** A sign that projects at a 90 degree angle from the building wall and is double faced.



**ROOF SIGNS:** Roof signs are allowed only by special permit from the Planning & Zoning Commission. Businesses choosing a roof sign will not be permitted a wall sign. It must be demonstrated that a roof sign will be more effective than a wall sign by building design.

**SIDE ELEVATIONS:** Wall signs located along sidewalls in alleys, parking lots and above adjacent shorter buildings often are highly visible from the street. These walls have a strong visual impact on the image of the street or sidewalk and can be a valuable asset to the business.



**WALL SIGNS (FAÇADE):** Wall signs are attached to the façade of the building lying flat against the wall.

**WINDOW SIGNS:** A window sign should contribute to the over-all attractiveness and theme of the business. Select appropriate type style, size, and color. Do not overwhelm the product.



## LIGHTING

Lighting is an important element to ensure your sign is legible at night. On a dark street, a lit sign will immediately attract attention. Where there is an abundance of light, ambient light from store windows or street lights may be adequate to light your sign. You may also decide not to light your sign at night or after business hours to save on

energy costs. There are several common lighting approaches for signs.

**INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED:** Lighting shines through plastic or other translucent covering. The lettering should be a lighter color against a dark background, making the lettering easier to read.

**DIRECT EXTERNAL LIGHTING:** Flood lights or spotlights illuminate sign and/or building façade. Lights for signs **MUST** be positioned to focus on the sign, so that no light glares or shines into the eyes of motorists or pedestrians.



**INTEGRAL LIGHTING:** Bulbs or neon tubing spell out the sign message. Moving, Flashing, Animated signs are prohibited except for time and temperature signs.

## TEMPORARY SIGNS

Temporary signs are disposable signs displayed for a limited time. Examples of temporary signs include: sales promotions, political campaign signs, cultural events and religious or other public events. Temporary signs should not obscure permanent signs and can be displayed inside store windows, on exterior or interior bulletin boards, kiosks, building walls, and as banners.



## **MAINTENANCE**

Consider maintenance as part of the design process. Choose materials that will require the least maintenance. Poorly maintained signs communicate the image of a poorly run business and can have a negative affect om neighboring business as well.

## **PERMITS**

The type, size, location and dimensions of all signs in New London are governed by the New London Zoning Regulations. The requirements differ based on where in the City the sign is to be located. **Before designing any sign, please contact the Office of Development and Planning, 111 Union Street. (860)447-5203.** Office of Development & Planning staff are available to assist you with your sign questions.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Signage Commission acknowledges a number of valuable documents used in the preparation of this Handbook, including:

### **Sign Possibilities Book**

Bank Street, New London, CT

### **Signs in The Central Commercial District**

Norwich, CT

### **Sign Guidelines**

Chapel Hill, NC

### **Design Review Guide: Signs**

Burlington VT Planning & Zoning

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Mr. Harold Arkava, Mr. Peter Bachner; Mr. Armand Beaudette; Mr. Les Bliven; Mr. Douglas Braun; Ms. Sandra Chalk, Mr. Robert Fromer, Mr. John Hunziker, Mr. Peter Gillespie, City Planner; Ms. Jennifer Murray, Assistant Planner and Ms. Susan Brant, Zoning Enforcement Officer

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **1. Review the Sign Regulations**

The sign regulations provide a basic vocabulary that will help you understand the requirements.



### **2. Identify your Zoning District**

The sign regulations establish rules for placement and sizes of all sign types in all districts. Consult with City Staff.



### **3. Develop a Good Sign Design**

Design a sign that fits the site. Keep it clear and simple. Choose the materials carefully. Select the appropriate lighting. Work with your neighbors.



### **4. Apply for a Sign Permit (Zoning)**

After developing a sign design consult with city staff to apply for a sign permit and determine appropriate fees.



### **5. Obtain a Building Permit**

Bring a copy of your sign permit to the building department.



### **6. Erect your New Sign**

Protect your investment by proper installation. Follow proper safety regulations.



### **7. Maintain your Sign**

Check your sign periodically for appearance and safety. Proper maintenance will preserve your sign and the image of your business.