

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR  
SIGNAGE & AWNINGS  
IN THE OFFICE AND  
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS

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## GENERAL DESIGN STANDARDS & CONSIDERATIONS

**General Design Standards and Considerations for Signs and Awnings.**

In evaluating applications for Signs and Awnings, the Director of Community Development, Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be, shall consider and evaluate the appearance of a sign or awning in terms of the quality of its design, materials, and relationship to the surrounding business and office districts. A sign or awning should harmonize with and support a district's unique character and foster design quality that compliments the architectural and historic heritage of Lake Forest. Furthermore, a project must be consistent with all applicable ordinances and regulations of the City, including without limitation the Lake Forest Zoning Code, Building Codes, and General Regulation and Standards in Article III of the Signs Ordinance, absent a variance granted consistent with applicable Code requirements, and the following Standards and Design Guidelines.

- (A) **Style and Design.** Several common sign styles are appropriate to the Lake Forest's Office and Business Districts and include; Board Signs, Band Signs, Pin-Mounted Signs, Attached Letter Signs, Window Signs, Projecting Signs, and Awning Signs. Sign style and design should begin with an evaluation of the building to determine whether there is an adequate space on the building where a sign would look appropriate. Many commercial buildings are designed with a space for a sign; whether it is a horizontal lintel across the top of the storefront, or a wide mullion separating the storefront window and transom window above.

A building's proportions, as well as the street character and architectural character of neighboring buildings, are relevant to determining the appropriate size of a sign. Where no "sign space" exists on a building, a wall sign with a vertical format, or a projecting sign may be appropriate. All signs and parts thereof, including but not limited to framework, supports, background, anchors, and wiring system, shall be constructed and maintained in compliance with applicable building, electrical, and fire- prevention codes.

(B) **Size.**

- (1) In the Office and Business Districts, the maximum Aggregate Sign Area on the front façade shall not exceed five percent (5%) of the ground floor facade parallel or most nearly parallel to the public way or twenty-five (25) square feet, whichever is lesser.
- (2) Wall, Window or Projecting Signs on two facades of a corner building with frontage on two (2) public streets may be permitted provided that the additional sign shall be deducted from the maximum Aggregate Sign Area allowed for the front façade.
- (3) Awnings that contain signs shall have the Sign Area of the awning sign deducted from the maximum Aggregate Sign Area allowed for the front façade.

(C) **Placement.**

- (1) No sign shall extend above the fascia line or coping line of a one-story building, or above the bottom of the second-story windowsills of a multi-story building.
- (2) Signs should be located at or near the public entrance to a building or storefront and should not cover or obscure existing architectural features of a building.

- (3) On masonry buildings, signs should be anchored through mortar joints rather than directly into the masonry unit itself.

(D) Colors.

- (1) The maximum number of colors contained in any one sign shall be limited to two colors for all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs and symbols, plus one additional background color. Signs containing more than the maximum number of colors shall be subject to the approval of the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be.
- (2) The use of subdued, muted, earth tone or primary colors is encouraged.
- (3) A darker background with lighter lettering is encouraged as a traditional and aesthetically pleasing presentation.

(E) Materials.

- (1) Sign material should be high quality and is limited to painted wood, metal, stone, architectural glass and canvas unless specifically approved by the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission.
- (2) No particleboard or plastic shall be used. "Medium Density Overlay" plywood or marine plywood may be used, but it must be edge banded.
- (3) Solid wood is recommended over plywood since plywood tends to delaminate with age.
- (4) Wood signs may be constructed with attached raised lettering, painted or silk-screened lettering, or incised lettering through a process of sandblasting or routing the surface of the sign.
- (5) Metal signs and plaques should be constructed of brushed bronze, antique bronze, aluminum, stainless steel or painted cast iron.
- (6) Highly reflective metallic signs are not permitted.
- (7) Other materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis through review and approval by the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be.

(F) Lighting.

Lighting of signs shall comply with the regulations in Article III(D) of the Lake Forest Sign Ordinance. After installation, the City shall evaluate the intensity, direction, and shielding of lighting and, if necessary, require adjustments to comply with the regulations of the Sign ordinance. Signs within Market Square shall not be illuminated.

(G) Content.

- (1) The information contained on a Wall, Window, Projecting or Freestanding Sign shall be limited to the commonly used name of the business and a maximum of three (3) words describing products or services.
- (2) Awning signs shall be limited to only the commonly used name of the business.
- (3) No sign or awning shall include the telephone number, email or web address of a business.
- (4) A sign's primary content shall be text, identifying the name of the business. A sign may include non-text graphics or symbols, provided that the graphic or symbol is incidental and complimentary to the overall design of the sign. Some examples of acceptable graphics in the design of signs are shown below.
- (5) The use of trademarks or graphics that contain logos, images or symbols should be avoided. Any sign that includes a graphic, logo, image or symbol shall be subject to the approval of the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be, but in no case shall the graphic, logo, image or symbol occupy more than fifteen percent (15%) of the total area of the sign.

*Examples: Signs Containing Graphics or Symbols.*





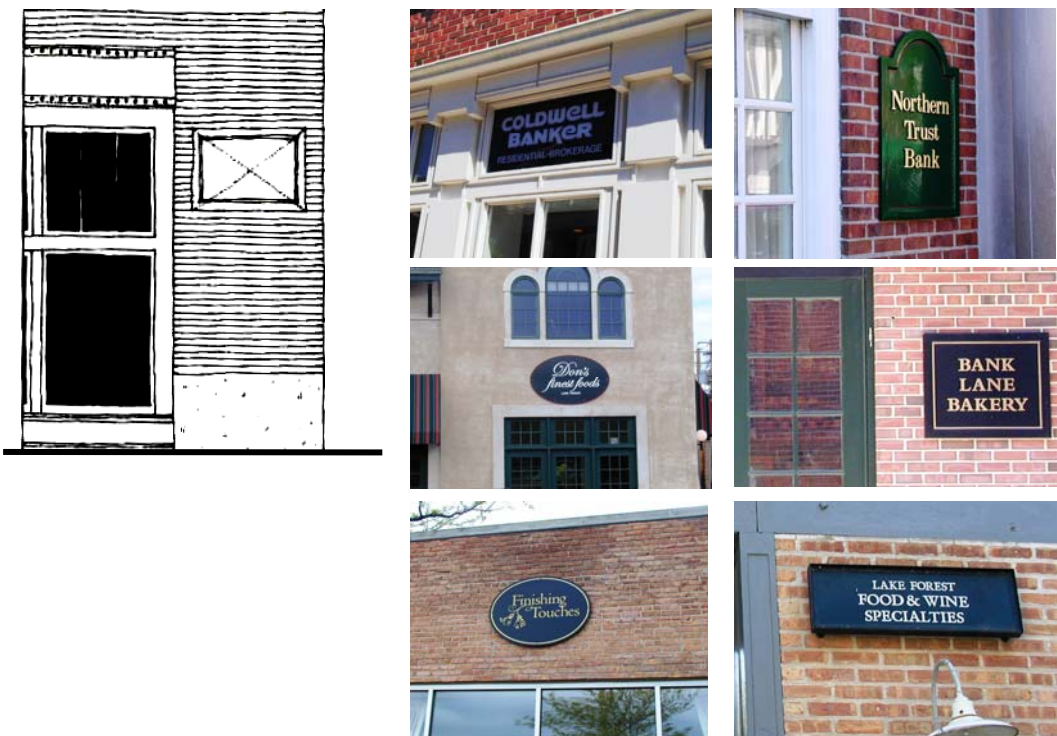
DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC SIGN AND AWNING TYPES

**Design Guidelines for Specific Sign and Awning Types.**

In addition to the General Design Standards for all signs and awnings in Part One, the following guidelines shall apply to specific sign and awning types. These guidelines and the standards in Part One are intended to encourage strong design and to provide direction on how to achieve that goal. These standards and guidelines are not intended to limit creativity or restrict imagination, innovations, or variety of sign styles, but rather seek to preserve and enhance the unique historic and architectural character of Lake Forest’s Office and Business Districts.

- (A) **Wall Signs.** A Wall Sign may be a Board Sign, Band Sign, Pin-Mounted Sign or Attached Letter Sign, securely affixed to a wall and not projecting beyond the Building Face fronting on a street, public way or parking lot. Wall Signs may not extend above the fascia line or coping line of a one-story building, or be located above the bottom of the second-story windowsills of a multi-story building.
  - (1) **Board Sign.** Board signs shall be constructed of a framed sign board with attached raised lettering, painted or silk-screened lettering, or incised lettering through a process of sandblasting or routing the surface of the signboard.
    - (a) **Size.** Generally, no single attached board sign should be larger than 8 square feet in Sign Area if the bottom of the sign is located 8’ or less above the ground, 10 square feet in Sign Area if higher then 8’ above the ground.
    - (b) **Placement.** Board Signs may be attached to any part of a building, but most commonly to a wall, and shall be located at the ground floor level only.
    - (c) **Lighting.** Board Signs may be front-lit if specifically approved by the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission.

*Examples: Board Signs*





- (2) **Band Signs.** A band sign consists of a band of lettering above the storefront opening or within the storefront transom space (if not occupied by glass). A band sign shall be constructed of a framed sign board with attached raised lettering, painted or silk-screened lettering, or incised lettering through a process of sandblasting or routing the surface of the sign board.
- (a) **Size.** The height of the Band Sign should be determined by the location of the sign. If the bottom of the sign is located 8 feet or less above the ground, then the height of lettering should not exceed 10 inches. If the bottom of the sign is located between 8 feet and 12 feet above the ground, then the height of lettering should not exceed 12 inches. If the bottom of the sign is located more than 12 feet above the ground, then the height of lettering should not exceed 14 inches.
  - (b) **Placement.** Band Signs should be installed above the top of first-level glazing and below the second floor windows, often on an exposed beam face or entablature when present.
  - (c) **Lighting.** Band Signs may be illuminated if specifically approved by the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be.

*Examples: Band Signs*



- (3) **Pin-Mounted and Attached Letter Signs.** Pin-Mounted and Attached Letter Signs consist of cast metal and flat-cut metal letters mounted, most commonly, above the storefront in the masonry sign band, within the transom space (when not occupied by glass), or on a wood mullion between the storefront window and transom. Less commonly, when adequate and appropriate wall space exists, Pin-Mounted Signs may be affixed to a blank portion of a masonry wall near the public entrance to a building.
- (a) **Size.** The height of the lettering for a Pin-Mounted or Attached Letter Sign should be determined by the location of the sign. If the bottom of the lettering is located 8 feet or less above the ground, then the height of lettering should not exceed 10 inches. If the bottom of the lettering is located between 8 feet and 12 feet above the ground, then the height of lettering should not exceed 12 inches. If the bottom of the

lettering is located more than 12 feet above the ground, then the height of lettering should not exceed 14 inches.

If placed on the wood mullion between the storefront window and transom window, the height of lettering should fit entirely within the height of the mullion. The length or the lettering should generally be contained within 75% of the length of the mullion.

- (b) Placement. A Pin-Mounted or Attached Letter Sign may be located in the sign band area, within a transom space when no transom window is present, or on a blank portion of a wall.
- (c) Lighting. Pin-Mounted and Attached Letter Signs may be illuminated if specifically approved by the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be.

*Examples: Pin Mounted and Attached Letter Signs.*



- (B) **Window Signs.** Window signs may be either paint or vinyl applied directly to the surface of the glass or any signage that is visible through a window or door on a permanent basis and is placed within 18 inches of the glass.
- (i) **Size and Placement.** The total height of any window sign should be limited to one-third the height of the glass in the sash, excluding muntins. The width of any window sign should be limited to 90 percent of the width of the glass in the sash installed.

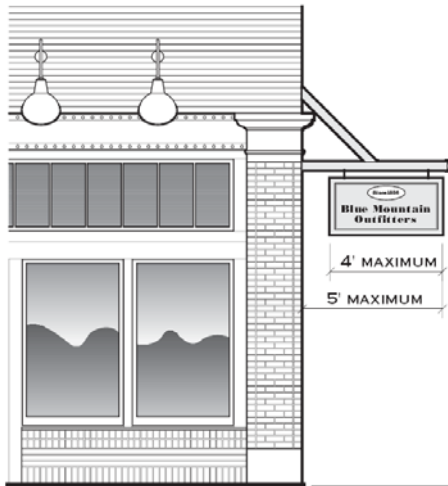
*Examples: Window Signs*



- (C) **Projecting Signs.** Projecting signs can be round, square or vertical and should either project outward from a building wall or hang from an architectural element. Signs hung from an element should usually be centered on that element. Brackets or other suspension devices should match the sign style. Brackets are not computed as part of the size of the sign.
- (1) **Size.** The total Sign Area of a projecting sign on a one-story building should generally be no more than four (4) square feet per sign face. The total Sign Area of a projecting sign on a building with a street front exceeding one (1) story should generally be no more than six (6) square feet per sign face. Larger projecting signs that serve the purpose of identifying the names of multiple tenants located inside a courtyard type building accessed from a common public lobby, or multiple storefronts that do not have frontage on a public street, but are accessed by a public way, may be considered and shall be subject to the review and approval of the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be.

- (2) Placement. Signs projecting from the wall may project a maximum of 5 feet. The top of the sign should be between 9 feet and 12 feet above the sidewalk. The lowest point of a projecting sign should not be less than seven feet six inches (7'-6"), above the sidewalk. A projecting sign should be located at or near the public entrance to the storefront or building.
- (3) Lighting. Projecting Signs may be illuminated if specifically approved by the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be.

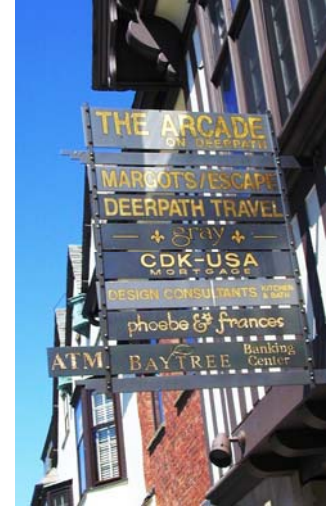
*Examples: Projecting Signs*



Multi-Tenant Sign



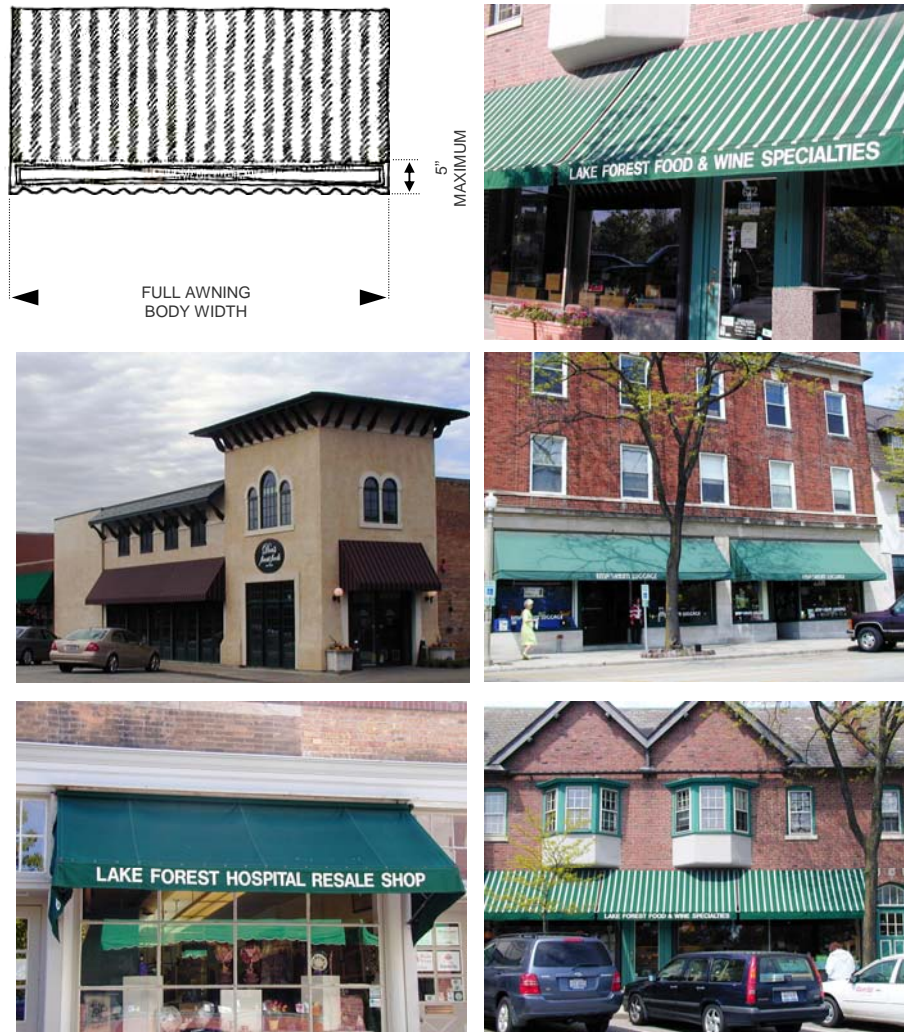
Multi-Tenant Sign



- (D) Awnings and Awning Signs. Awnings should be fabricated of canvas on metal frames. Awnings may be fixed or retractable. Fixed awnings should have concealed rigid metal frames. Awnings forms should conform to the general shape of the opening. Awnings may have open or closed end panels. Awning valances should be loose. Awning fabric may be solid or striped. Awning colors should be solid green or green and white stripes unless otherwise approved by the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be.
- (1) Size. The length of the awning should be restricted to the length of the storefront opening; awnings should not continue over masonry piers. The vertical and horizontal dimensions should be proportional to the overall projection of the awning. The preferred minimum awning projection is 36 inches.

- (2) Placement. Awnings shall be constructed and erected so that the lowest portion of the projecting frame shall not be less than 7'-6", and the lowest portion of the descending valance shall not be less than 6'-8", above the level of the sidewalk or public thoroughfare. On masonry buildings, awnings should be anchored through mortar joints rather than directly into the masonry unit itself.
- (3) Awning Sign. Awning signage shall be permitted for first floor businesses only and shall be limited to text. Lettering shall not exceed five (5) inches in height and shall be placed on the valance only. Awning signage shall be individual letters applied directly to the canvas covering.
- (4) Lighting. Awnings and Awning Signs may not be illuminated or backlit.

*Examples: Awnings*



(f) Freestanding Signs.

Freestanding Signs are independent of the building and are typically mounted on a post. In the Office and Central Business Districts, freestanding signs are only appropriate for buildings that are well setback from the street and have no other means of appropriate signage. Freestanding signs shall be reviewed and approved by the Building Review Board or Historic Preservation Commission, as the case may be, and may be finished on one or two sides and should be constructed of wood or metal.

*Examples: Freestanding Signs*

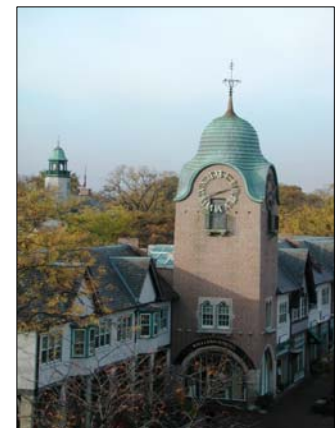
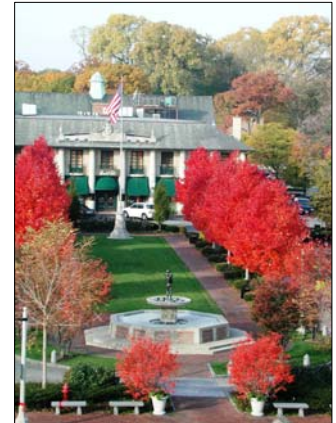


**Guidelines for Market Square Signs and Awnings.**

**Definition.** Market Square refers to those businesses located at the following address ranges: 672-680 N. Western Avenue; 720 N. Western Avenue; 247-271 Market Square (South Side); 248-284 Market Square (North Side); 686 N. Bank Lane.

**Historical Background.**

Historic Market Square, designed by architect Howard Van Doren Shaw and completed in 1916, is located at the heart of Lake Forest’s Central Business District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the first planned shopping center in the United States. Designed as an ensemble of buildings around three sides of a central green space, Shaw’s design for Market Square was deliberate in all aspects. This includes the placement of building signage, which was planned for and specifically identified on the architect’s drawings for the exterior of the storefronts. Based on these original plans, as well as historic photographic records, there are two distinct types of signage appropriate in Market Square; wall signs located in uniquely detailed sign boards



affixed above the storefront windows, or individual attached or painted lettering located on the wood mullion between the large storefront window and the upper transom windows. Three storefronts that were designed to deviate from this plan include 271 Market Square, the storefront situated at the base of the south tower which has arch shaped sign board above the arch shaped storefront window on the east elevation, 680 N. Western Avenue that was designed with signage in the upper portion of the two bay windows, and 625 Bank Lane, located at the west end of Market Square. Additionally, most storefronts had awnings with signage on the awning valance. Historically, awnings within Market Square were green and white striped.

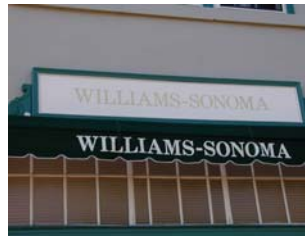
In order to support Market Square’s unique historic and architectural character and encourage new signage and awnings that compliment the original integrity of the design, new signs and awnings are encouraged to conform to the original historic sign plan for storefronts in Market Square. To achieve this goal, the following guidelines have been developed for signs and awnings within Market Square.

**Guidelines.** In addition to the Standards and Guidelines in Parts One & Two, the following guidelines have been developed for new and replacement signs in Market Square.

**Walls Signs.** Wall signs within Market Square consist of framed signboards, containing uniquely detailed scrollwork, affixed above the storefront window. Storefronts originally designed with wall signs should utilize this sign space as the primary means of signage. The wall sign may be used in combination with a window sign and an awning valance sign. Signs within Market Square shall not be illuminated.



**Attached Letters.** Storefronts that were designed without a wall sign should utilize individual attached letters or painted lettering located on the wood mullion between the storefront window and transom window as the primary means of signage. The attached letter sign may be used in combination with a window sign and awning valance sign.



**Special Signs.**

271 Market Square, arch-shape sign board. This sign is affixed above the arch top storefront window on the east elevation. The sign is painted black with gold attached lettering.



271 Market Square

625 Bank Lane

680 N. Western Avenue, bay window signage. This storefront is characterized with a pair of bay windows. Signage is located on the frieze board above the glass.



680 N. Western Avenue

680 N. Western Avenue

625 Bank Lane, located at the west end of Market Square, bronze plaques on the columns flanking the building entrance.

**Window Signs.**

Vinyl or painted window lettering, identifying the common name of the business only, may be applied to the bottom of the storefront window. Letter shall not exceed 6 inches in height.



A window sign stating the common name of the business and hours of operation may be placed on the storefront door. The maximum height of the letter shall not exceed 6 inches in height for the business name and 2 inches in height for lettering relating to store operation hours.







DEFINITIONS

## DEFINITIONS

**In General.** The words and phrases used in this Chapter shall be interpreted to have the meanings ascribed to them in this Section. To the extent that words or phrases used in this Chapter are not defined in this Section, but such words or phrases are defined in the Zoning Code (Chapter 46), such words or phrases shall be deemed to have the meanings set forth in the Zoning Code. Otherwise, words and phrases shall be interpreted in their commonly used sense as set forth in the Webster's Third International Dictionary (Ed.), unless the context reasonably requires another construction.

**Definitions.** The following words and phrases, when used in this Chapter, shall have the following meanings:

**AGGREGATE:** Square footage; the total or collective amount of square footage.

**AWNING:** A structure attached to a building, typically made of tubular frame and covered with canvas or similar soft material(s).

**BUILDING FACE OR FACADE:** The side of a building where the main entrance is located. The side of a building which is parallel or substantially parallel to the lot line of a street or traveled way accessible from a street.

**FREE-STANDING SIGN:** A sign having not more than two sides erected at grade level supported by one or more uprights, or other structural members, which are placed in or on an approved foundation and not attached to any building.

**INCIDENTAL SIGN:** A sign which is incidental to the primary use and is for public information and not for advertising purposes.

**INTERIOR SIGN:** Any sign that is located more than 18 inches behind the plane of a storefront window. This definition does not include products typically displayed in the window(s) of businesses.

**MULLION:** The vertical member that forms a division between units of a window or door, such as between a storefront window and transom window above.

**PERMANENT SIGN:** Any sign which is permanently affixed or installed and is intended for long-term use, generally being in place longer than six (6) months.

**PORTABLE SIGN:** Any sign not permanently attached to an approved foundation or a building.

**PROJECTING SIGN:** Any sign projecting from and attached perpendicular to a wall of a building or hung from an architectural element. A sign attached to the wall of a building or structure, with the exposed face(s) in a plane perpendicular to the building wall.

**PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY:** That land area over which the City has rights either through ownership or easement, to use for public street and utility purposes.

**SIGN:** Any visible identification, description, illustration, object, or device, illuminated or non-illuminated, which directs attention to a product, service, place, activity, person, institution, business or solicitation. This definition does not include products typically displayed in the window(s) of businesses.

SIGN AREA: Determined by the following:

- (a) The area shall be considered to include all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs and symbols together with the background, whether open or enclosed, on which they are displayed. It shall not include any supporting framework, decorative framing, or bracing that is incidental to the display itself.
- (b) For a sign applied/attached to a building, the area is considered to include all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs or symbols, together with any background of a different color than the natural or primary color of the building.
- (c) Where the sign consists of individual letters or symbols attached to or painted on a surface, building, awning, wall, or window, the area shall be considered to be that of the smallest rectangle or other geometric shape that encompasses all of the letters or symbols.
- (d) Only one side of a double-faced sign will be counted in computing the area of that sign.
- (e) The area of a flat, irregularly shaped sign shall be the smallest plane geometric figure that will wholly contain it.

TOTAL SURFACE AREA: The entire area within any continuous perimeter enclosing the extreme limits of lettering, representation, or other figures or messages, together with any material or color which is an integral part of the display or which is used to differentiate the sign from the background against which it is placed.

TRANSOM: A window above a door or other window.

WALL SIGN: A sign attached to the wall of a building or structure, with the exposed face of the sign in a plane parallel to the building wall.