



# HERE'S YOUR SIGN

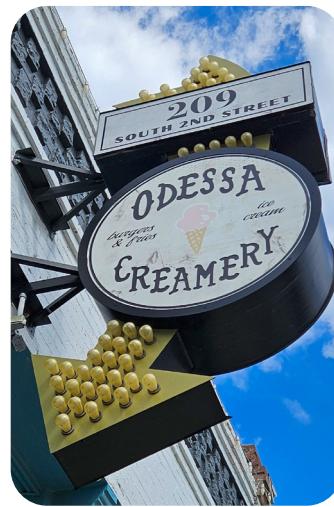
**Signs are a vital part of any Main Street.** They draw attention to your business and create an individual image. It's often forgotten that signs contribute to a commercial district's overall image as well. Signage for historic buildings should balance visibility and respect for architectural integrity and historical context. When Main Street presents a harmonious appearance, its signs must reinforce these images.

## Consider the following guidelines when designing your sign:

1. Stand back and question the purpose of your sign. Does it merely identify your business? Do you want to let the personality of your store or office shine through? Is it necessary to provide information about your products on the sign? What kind of customers are you trying to attract? Is the sign meant to be read by pedestrians, motorists, or both?
2. Think about the type of sign you want.
  - Word sign-This type of sign employs words to describe your business and its products.
  - Symbol Sign- Often, a recognizable symbol conveys the image of a business better than words.
  - Numbers sign-Some signs use numbers instead of symbols or words, the most common of these are street address signs that help customers locate your business.
3. Choose materials that complement the building's era and finishes. Each material type has unique qualities that can be exploited to create a sign suited to your needs. Signs can be made from a wide variety of materials like wood, metal, stone, neon, canvas, paint on glass, gold leaf, etched or stained glass.

or plastic. On Main Street, use of plastic is most suitable when used for individually formed letters, symbols, or numbers. Vacuum-formed plastic signs are never appropriate.

4. Look at photos that show how your building looked in the past to see how signs were displayed related to historic architectural details. Signs should be proportionate to the building.
5. Visualize how your sign will appear in relation to the entire facade. The sign should not dominate. Its shape and proportions should fit your building in the same way a window or door. Signage should not obscure or damage historic features. For example, a sign hung under the storefront cornice complements the building's architecture and therefore presents a strong image.



Pictured on this page top to bottom:

1. Smithville, 2. Odessa, 3. Lee's Summit



6. Decide on a suitable option to place your sign. Be sure to check local codes to see if there are any restrictions on signage material and placement. Options include:

- under the storefront cornice
- painted on glass
- on the side of the building
- projecting from the building
- on the awning valance or return
- on the canopy fascia

7. It is important to keep the message. Remember, your sign will be viewed as part of a very complex environment filled with written and visual messages.

8. Take a look at the colors of your building and the surrounding structures. Take hints from these when selecting colors and opt for a simple three colors scheme. Avoid bright, Day-Glo colors; they belong out on the highway!

9. Lighting is important. If you illuminate your sign at night, the light source should be as inconspicuous as possible. Try to avoid obtrusive or gaudy lighting techniques that merely divert attention from the sign. Consider incandescent, fluorescent, or halogen lights. Incandescent lighting is used primarily to "wash" the entire sign with a soft, yellowish light either from above or below. Fluorescent bulbs produce a white light. They are often concealed behind the face of the sign and shine through a translucent material. Fluorescent bulbs are most effective if only the sign's message is lit. Halogen lighting produces a white light. While the bulbs are very small and can be easily concealed, they are fairly expensive.

10. Express the personality of your establishment through the type of style. Explore other signs around town and think about what each style says about the business and product it advertises. Then, define the image you want your sign to project.



11. Quality of workmanship and construction is also a vital consideration. A simple, well-made sign speaks more highly of your establishment than an extravagant, but sloppy sign. Choose a sign-maker carefully, ask to see samples of previous work.



12. Consider the idea that your entire building conveys an image that acts as a sign. The appearance of your building may be more subtle than a sign, but it can often be more effective.

#### Bibliography:

Main Street Center, National "Signs" National Main Street Center, 1995. Service, National Park. "The Preservation of Historic Signs: Preservation Brief 25" National Park Service, October 1991. <https://www.nps.gov/>.

Pictured on this page top to bottom: 1. Belton, 2. Excelsior Springs, 3. Sedalia



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