

CHAPTER 8.0

Sign Guidelines

The following design guidelines should be considered prior to developing signs for any project. These design guidelines focus primarily on the Third Street area and are intended to complement other requirements for signs found in the San Juan Bautista Zoning Ordinance.

8.1 Design

1. The scale of signs should be appropriate for the building on which they are placed and proportionate to the area in which they are located.
2. Signs should be constructed to give an appearance of hand craftsmanship. Three-dimensional hand carved and hand painted signs are strongly encouraged. Preferred materials are wood or metal. High-density pre-formed foam or similar sturdy synthetic materials are appropriate if designed in a manner consistent with these guidelines and painted or otherwise finished to compliment the architecture. Plastic sign faces are strongly discouraged.
3. Signs should not obscure a building's architectural features. A well-designed building façade or storefront is created by the careful coordination of sign and architectural design and overall color scheme.
4. Pedestrian-oriented signs are strongly encouraged. Pedestrian-oriented signs are signs that are designed for and especially directed toward pedestrians so that they can easily and comfortably read the sign as they stand adjacent to the business.

8.2 Color

1. Color is one of the most important aspects of visual communication – it can be used to catch the eye or to communicate ideas or feelings. Colors should be selected to contribute to legibility and design integrity. Even the most carefully thought out sign may be unattractive and a poor communicator because of poor color selection. Too many colors, if thoughtlessly used, can confuse and negate the message of a sign.
2. Contrast is an important influence on the legibility of signs. A substantial contrast should be provided between the color and material of the background and the letters or symbols to make the sign easier to read in both day and night. Light letters on a dark background or dark letters on a light background are the most legible.
3. Colors or color combinations that interfere with legibility of the sign copy or that interfere with viewer identification of neighboring signs should be avoided.
4. Sign colors should complement the colors used on the buildings.

8.3 Sign Legibility

1. An effective sign does more than attract attention. It communicates a message. Usually, this is a question of the readability of words and phrases. The most significant influence on legibility is lettering. The following criteria should be considered in the design of signs.
2. The number of lettering styles should be limited in order to increase legibility. A general rule to follow is to limit the number of different letter types to no more than two for small signs and no more than three for larger signs. Intricate typefaces and symbols that are difficult to read reduce the sign's ability to communicate.
3. A brief message should be used. The fewer the words, the more effective the sign. A sign with a brief, succinct message is easier to read and looks more attractive. Evaluate each word. If the word does not contribute directly to the basic message of the sign, it detracts from it and probably should be deleted.
4. Letters and words should not be spaced too close together. Crowding of letters, words, or lines will make any sign difficult to read. Conversely, overspacing these elements causes the viewer to read each item individually, again obscuring the message. As a general rule, letters should not occupy more than 75% of the sign panel area.
5. Hard-to-read, intricate typefaces and symbols should be avoided. Typefaces and symbols that are difficult to read reduce the sign's legibility.
6. The use of appropriate symbols and logos in place of additional words is encouraged. Pictograph images will usually register more quickly in the viewer's mind than a written message.

8.4 Sign Size

1. The commercial and mixed-use areas of San Juan Bautista are envisioned to be areas of high pedestrian activity. Signs should be oriented to pedestrians and should be of a pedestrian scale.
2. A pedestrian-oriented sign is usually read from a distance of fifteen to twenty feet; a vehicle-oriented sign is viewed from a much greater distance. The closer a sign's viewing distance, the smaller the sign should be.

Pedestrian-Oriented Signs: Lettering Size

Minimum Character Size (inches)	Intended Reading Distance (feet)
1.0	10
1.5	20
2.0	30

2.5	40
3.0	50

8.5 Sign Type

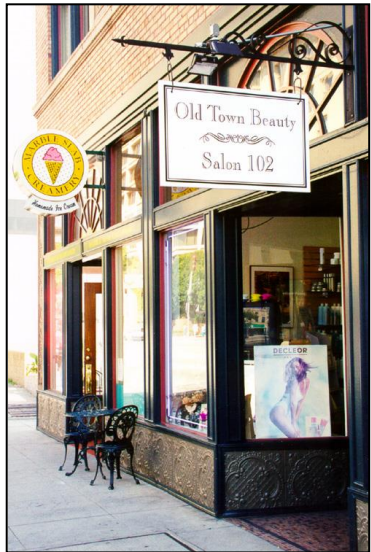
Preferred sign types for San Juan Bautista businesses include the following:

Projecting Signs

1. To create pedestrian-oriented environments, small projecting signs are most appropriate. Signs should relate the sidewalk instead of motorists. In these locations, signs should be placed close to the store entrance.
2. Projecting signs shall be placed only on ground floor facades except in instances where a second story houses offices or stores and access is provided via balconies or verandas.
3. The sign should be hung at a 90° angle from the face of the building. It should be pinned at least 6 inches away from the wall for best visibility.
4. Consistent with the zoning ordinance, at least a seven (7) foot pedestrian clearance shall be maintained from the sidewalk level.



Projecting signs help create pedestrian-oriented environments



5. Decorative iron brackets that support projecting signs are encouraged. Well-designed wood brackets may also be appropriate. The lines of the bracket should harmonize

with the shape of the sign. To avoid damaging stone and woodwork, brackets should be designed so that they can be bolted into masonry joints when possible.

Hanging Signs

1. Where overhangs or covered walkways exist, hanging signs are appropriate. Signs should be hung over the pedestrian right-of-way. Consistent with the zoning ordinance, a seven (7) foot clearance is required.
2. Hanging signs should be simple in design and not used to compete with existing signage at the site (i.e. wall signs, projecting signs).



Desirable pedestrian-scaled projecting signs

Simple hanging signs are encouraged

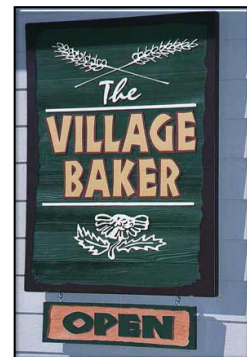
Wall Signs

1. Signs should be placed consistent with the proportions and scale of the elements within the structure's façade. A particular sign may fit well on a plain wall area, but might overpower the finer scale and proportion of a lower storefront. A sign which is appropriate near an entry may look tiny and out of place above the ground level.



2. A wall sign should be located where architectural features or

Wall signs should be consistent with building scale and proportions.



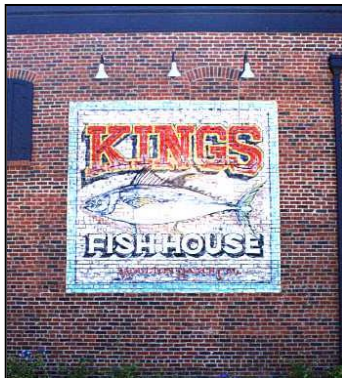
Wood carved signs are desirable.

details suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign. Wall signs should not project from the surface upon which they are attached more than required for construction purposes.

3. New signs should be placed consistent with sign locations on adjacent buildings. This can establish visual continuity among storefronts.
4. Wall signs should not project above the edge of the roof or outside the walls of a structure.
5. Signs should not be placed to obstruct any portion of a window, doorway, or other architectural feature.
6. Wall signs painted directly on a structure may be encouraged. “Ghost” signs, a variation of a wall sign, may be especially appropriate. While generally not appropriate for existing historic buildings, these signs may be fitting on new construction. These sign types often lend an air of “age” and authenticity.



Signs painted directly on buildings may be desirable



“Ghost” signs can create aged or authentic look on new buildings

Freestanding Signs

1. Freestanding signs supported permanently upon the ground by short poles or braces and not attached to any building are appropriate for converted residential structures or other businesses that are slightly set back from the sidewalk edge.



2. The maximum height of a freestanding sign should ideally be six to eight (6-8) feet to maintain a human scale.
3. Supporting hardware of wood or decorative iron/steel is encouraged.
4. Whenever possible, landscaping should be incorporated at the base of freestanding signs.
5. Freestanding signs may be indirectly illuminated if nearby lights do not provide adequate illumination. Lighting should be to the minimum level required for nighttime readability.

Freestanding signs may be appropriate for new development projects



Freestanding signs are desirable in front yard setbacks of businesses. Landscaping should be incorporated at the base.

Discouraged Signs

Signs that are generally discouraged in the Historic District, as well as elsewhere in the community include the following:

1. Pole signs
2. Internally illuminated signs
3. Neon signs



Internally illuminated are undesirable