

GETTING STARTED

Assess your current signs and lighting

Take a day and night photo of the building/storefront façade and compare the two. Do both successfully communicate the building and business identity you want to portray to your customers?

Have you minimized signage/product clutter to deliver a clear message about your brand and business?

Have you successfully achieved the three types of lighting: 1) architectural/building lighting, 2) display lighting and 3) signage lighting?

Find a new perspective

Take a pedestrian viewpoint photo from the sidewalk and across the street. How well does the signage and identity relate to each vantage?

Take photos of other storefronts and businesses you like (including your competitors!) and compare with your own. Where is there room for improvement?

Double-check the code and your lease

Every city has building and development codes to protect the health and safety of its citizens. Installation and modifications to signs and lighting often require building, structural, sign, and/or electrical permits. Call your main street, city permitting, planning or economic development staff to determine the type of work that can be completed without a permit, what is allowed under the city's code, and what it will take for your sign or lighting contractor to obtain a permit.

Also don't forget that many leases require building owner approval of signs and lighting changes!

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AUGUST 2012

Trade secrets of distinctive signs and lighting

PRESENTED BY:

City of Gresham
City of Hillsboro
City of Lake Oswego
Hillsboro Downtown Association
Main Street Oregon City
Metro



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HIGHLIGHTS

SIGNS

A well-designed sign is one of the most important elements of a storefront. As publicly displayed information, it reflects the personality of a business. While locating and advertising a business, signs also add visual interest to the streetscape experience and contribute to the character of the neighborhood. Clear, well-designed signs best market a business through quick impact. In the context of a streetscape, a well-planned storefront is a sign in itself and can effectively communicate business character. The following are general guidelines to designing and placing signs for your business.

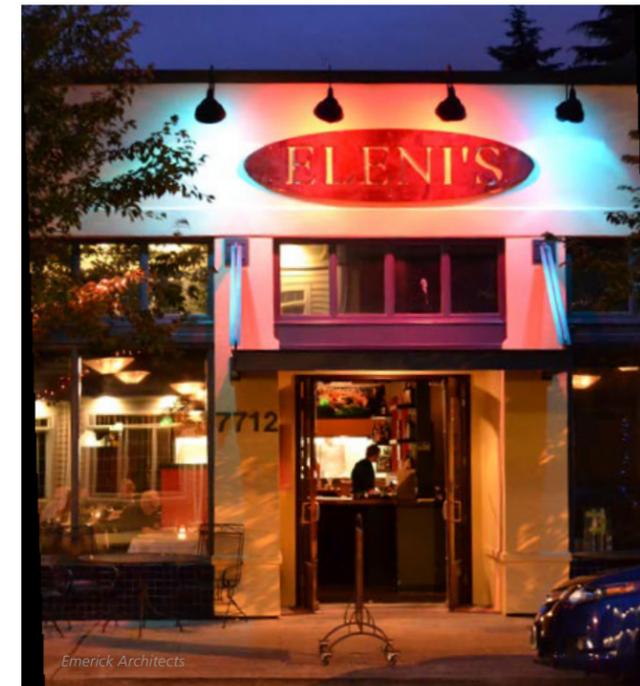
NOTE: Exterior signs are regulated by the City's building and development code; consult the permit or planning department to determine the allowed types, size, and locations for signs.

SIGN GUIDELINES

1. The scale of a sign should consider the design of the storefront, building and neighboring buildings.
 2. Graphics and lettering should be well-designed and legible.
 3. Place signs in clear, architecturally defined areas on windows, awnings, or suitable wall spaces such as the sign band.
 4. Blade signs or projecting signs perpendicular to the sidewalk are very effective when scaled for pedestrian use.
 5. Iconic, graphic, or three-dimensional signs are great variations when scale is appropriate.
 6. Remove old and non-functional signs and brackets.
 7. Use durable material types such as painted MDO plywood, metal, or molded letters.
 8. Wall signs should be painted on surfaces other than the natural building material. Paint signs on a durable sign material that mounts directly to the wall.
 9. Restore historic signs if they are adaptable to the business image.
 10. Iconic neon signs are acceptable and encouraged when they bolster the neighborhood's identity.
 11. Use opaque letters or letter cut outs that are illuminated from behind to create elegant halo signage. (These are different from internally illuminated plastic letters, which are not acceptable in historic districts).
 12. Painted window signs provide an additional level of information about the business, such as store hours or types of services.
 13. Window signs should not be excessive as to obscure transparency into the store.
 14. Sign lighting should be focused and cropped to avoid glare and light pollution to meet "dark sky" goals for sustainability.
 15. Temporary signs and cloth signs are to be short-term and event-specific so as not to convey an image of deterioration or a poorly maintained business.
 16. Consider astronomical clock timers combined with photo cell sensors for seasonally sensitive on/off switching that is consistent and energy efficient.
 17. Avoid high-intensity sign lights or excessive external illumination of signs.
 18. Avoid obscuring or removing building elements such as windows, cornices or decorative details to accommodate signs.
 19. Avoid internally-illuminated or backlit plastic sign boxes.
- [Sign and Lighting Guidelines are excerpted from the Portland Main Street Design Handbook, produced by Emerick Architects for the City of Portland and Portland Development Commission]



Images by FrontdoorBack



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A seventh generation Oregonian whose family came over the Oregon Trail, Brian earned his architectural degree from the University of Oregon. In 1999, he co-founded Emerick Architects P.C. with his wife, Melody Emerick. Their firm has forged a reputation for timeless architecture created from regional materials and the heritage of the Pacific Northwest. Brian is currently vice-chair of Portland's Historic District Landmarks Commission and also serves as the Main Street Architect for the Portland Development Commission in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

LIGHTING

Lighting illuminates businesses, creates an evening ambiance, and discourages crime. It creates a feeling of security for the passerby and is an important factor in a commercial setting. Sign lights, display window lights, architectural lighting, and general area lighting are encouraged to advertise the business, highlight building features, and illuminate dark corners of the property or street. In some cases, where general street lighting is sufficient, a storefront may require minimal illumination. Resist over-lighting a storefront. Display lighting and one other source is often plenty.

LIGHTING GUIDELINES

1. General exterior illumination is typically provided by street lighting. Where this lighting is minimal, provide a focused and even level of illumination.
2. Indirect lighting is encouraged.
3. General interior lighting of display areas helps prevent break-ins by allowing both police and passerby to see the activity inside a store.
4. The scale and style of light fixtures should be consistent with the storefront. Fixtures should enhance a building's architectural details.
5. Lighting should attract attention to signs, displays, store information, or building details, but not to itself.
6. Seasonal lighting can bring a festive spirit of the district, but it should be appropriate to the current season.
7. Avoid flashing, pulsating, dynamic, or moving lights.
8. Avoid lights that glare onto the street, public way, or adjacent properties; these are a nuisance and ruin the evening atmosphere. Supplemental security lighting such as floodlights should be hidden or shielded.