



# City of Saratoga Springs

## Signage

### Historic District Design Guidelines

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Signs are a vital part of the downtown, commercial district. Signs identify the location of a business, promote the merchandise or available services within, and attract customers. Successful signage within the historic district must achieve these objectives and be sensitive to the historic character of neighboring buildings and positively contribute to the district. There are several types of permitted signage: awning signs, free-standing/monument signs, sandwich boards, wall signs and window graphics.

Signs are reviewed for appropriateness in the district including compatible materials, placement and design, and potential negative impact on significant building elements.

#### GENERAL DESIGN

- Signs should be clear and simple so readers can immediately absorb essential information.
- Signs should identify business names and should not advertise specific product names.
- Signage should be subordinate to the building. Sign shape and proportion should be appropriate to the building and its architectural elements.
- Signs should help define or enhance architectural elements; they should not cover, obscure, or alter architectural features of the building.
- The use of natural materials is encouraged. Materials should be durable and vandal-resistant.
- Sign design and location should be evaluated to ensure its architecturally appropriate.

#### SIGN TEXT & COLOR

- Signage design should be creative; consider using images and graphics to promote business and the merchandise or service provided.
- Sign messages should be short (e.g. 4-8 words) with simple typography to enhance legibility and visibility. Avoid lettering that is overly ornate or difficult to read.
- Minimized wording and use traditional symbols to achieve a clear message.
- Sign colors should be simple (e.g. a range of 3 colors) and historically appropriate or compatible with the building color scheme and neighboring buildings. Too many colors may obscure the message and make it difficult to read.
- Sign colors should complement and relate to building colors for a coherent appearance.
- Sign legibility is enhanced by contrast between lettering and background, and the amount of open space surrounding the text.

#### SIGN PLACEMENT & MOUNTING

- Signs should be located within appropriate architectural elements of the building. This may restrict the number of signs to fewer than the maximum number of signs permitted in the ordinance.
- The location of a sign usually determines its proportion and direction. For example, signs on the transom or wall should be horizontal; signs on the column or other vertical elements should be vertical.
- Signs are to be fastened so as not to permanently damage historic façades.
- Anchoring devices should be kept to a minimum. If mounted to masonry, sign anchors are to be attached to mortar joints so as not to damage underlying brick or stone.
- Sign support structures and their color should be subordinate to the sign message.
- All scars, anchor-holes, ghosts from previous sign installations should be repaired or removed.

#### SIGN LIGHTING

- Light sources should be inconspicuous to avoid distracting attention from the sign.
- Signs may have external illumination (e.g. gooseneck fixtures), internal illumination (lighted box signs w/ dark background), or have opaque, "halo-lit" letters.

- Choose lighting carefully as different bulb types provide different colors of light and can change the appearance of a sign.

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## ZONING REQUIREMENTS

### AWNING SIGNS

- An awning sign is permitted for each window and door of a façade within a commercial, institutional or industrial district. Signage may only be placed on one face of the awning; typically, the front.
- There is no restriction on letter/logo size or height but the total sign may not exceed 25% of the awning face or 100 square feet, whichever is less.
- Awnings may not extend more than 7 feet from the façade or be lower than 7 feet from the ground.

### WALL SIGNS

- One wall sign is permitted per building street frontage, including alleys, and may identify multiple establishments (e.g. sign directories).
- Wall signs may not extend above the first floor of the building.
- Wall signs may not extend beyond the end or above the top of the wall to which it is attached, or more than 6" from the building face.
- Wall signs are permitted up to 2 square feet in size for each linear foot of building frontage attributed to the establishment, or 15% of total building façade area, or 100 square feet, whichever is less.
- A building with multiple storefront tenants may have a sign for each tenant.



### WINDOW GRAPHICS

- Signs/posters on window interiors are not regulated as long as they do not exceed 30% of the window surface or 100 square feet, whichever is less
- Interior window graphics that exceed 30% of the window area or 100 square feet, and any exterior window graphics are considered wall signs and must meet wall sign requirements.

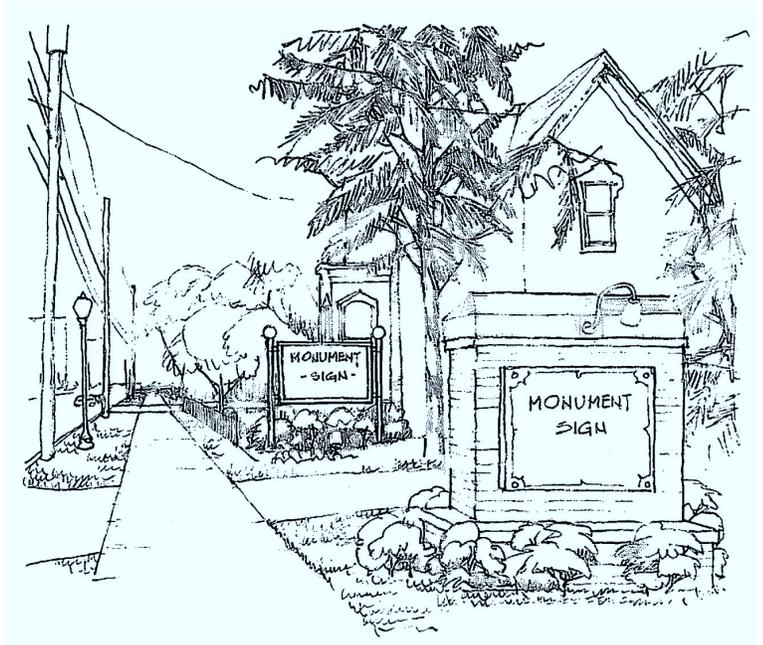
### SANDWICH BOARDS

- Sandwich Boards are only permitted on Broadway from Van Dam Street to the Avenue of the Pines and with approval of the Commissioner of Public Works.

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## FREESTANDING/MONUMENT SIGNS

- One freestanding/monument sign is permitted on a parcel in a commercial, institutional or industrial district, and may identify more than one on-premise establishment.
- Sign height and size should promote a pedestrian scale and emphasis. Freestanding signs height is encouraged to be 8' in height or lower.
- One freestanding/monument sign is permitted on any parcel in a residential district for any lawfully established non-residential use of that property. The maximum sign may not exceed 4 square feet and may not be backlit.
- A freestanding/monument sign shall not be located within 50 feet of another freestanding sign.
- A freestanding/monument sign may not extend into the public right-of-way or extend beyond property lines.



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## NOT PERMITTED:

- Unshielded light fixtures or mirrors.
- Flashing, intermittent, rotating, or moving lights.
- Moving, fluttering, or revolving devices used for advertising or attracting attention.

## ALSO NOT PERMITTED WITHIN HISTORIC DISTRICT:

- Exposed neon tube.
- Sign lettering or logos exceeding 18 inches in height.
- Internally-illuminated, translucent "channel" letters.

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## PERMITS

Signs, with the exception of allowed window graphics and sandwich boards, require approval by the Design Review Commission and a sign permit from the Building Department.

For additional information on signage requirements see the City's Zoning Ordinance at:  
[www.saratoga-springs.org](http://www.saratoga-springs.org)

City of Saratoga Springs  
Design Review Commission  
Office of Planning & Economic Development  
474 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866  
(518) 587-3550 / [www.saratoga-springs.org](http://www.saratoga-springs.org)

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