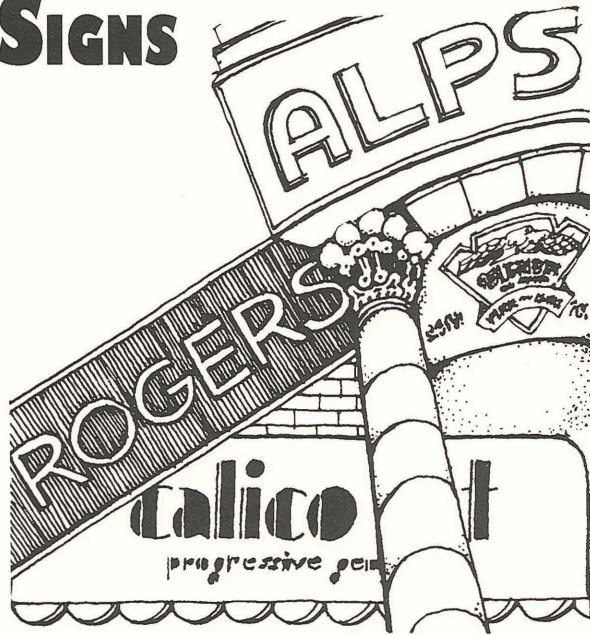


# SIGNS



Signs are a vital part of any Main Street. With a sign, you call attention to your business and create an individual image. But it's often forgotten that signs contribute to a commercial district's overall image as well. Merchants try to out-shout one another with large, flashy signs.

If Main Street is to present a harmonious appearance, its signs must serve both of 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?

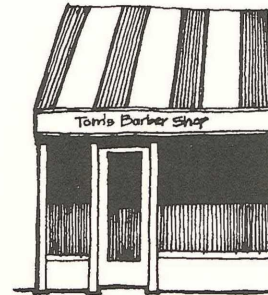
## 2. Think about the type of sign you want.

- *Word sign*—This type of sign employs words to describe your business and its products.

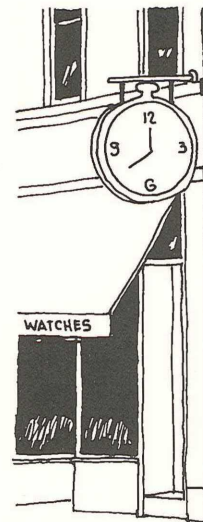


- *Numbers sign*—Some signs use numbers instead of symbols or words; the most common of these are street address signs that help customers locate your business.

Perhaps you'll want to combine words, symbols, and numbers in the same sign.



- *Symbol sign*—Often, a recognizable symbol conveys the image of a business better than words.



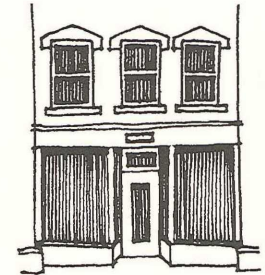
## 3. Consider the possibilities of using different materials. Each has unique qualities that can be exploited to create a sign suited to your needs.

Signs can be made from wood, metal, stone, neon, canvas, paint on glass, gold leaf, and etched or stained glass, to name a few. Signs can also be made of plastic. The most suitable use of this material for Main Street is to create signs made of individually formed letters, symbols, or numbers. Vacuum-formed plastic signs are almost never appropriate.

## 4. You may want to look at photos that show how your building looked in the past to see how signs were related to historic architectural details.

## 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 fits.

For example, a sign hung under the storefront cornice complements the building's architecture and therefore presents a strong image.



## 6. Decide where you want to put your sign. There are several suitable options:

- 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

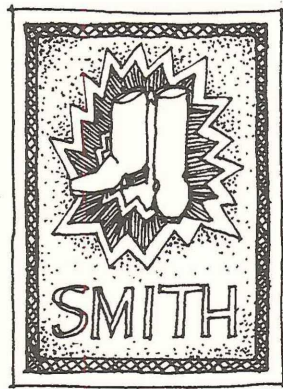
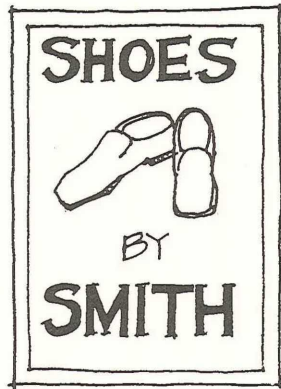
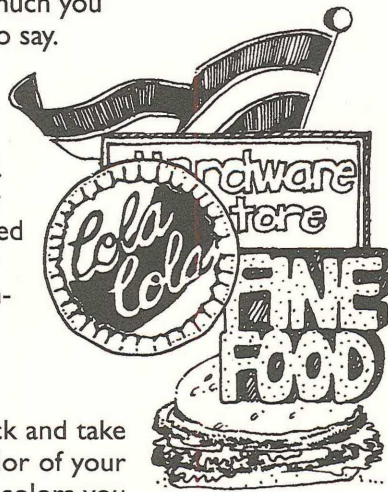
Some types of signs are *not* appropriate, such as signs made of vacuum-formed plastic or oversized signs placed on top of the building or applied over the upper facade.

7. Decide how much you want your sign to say.

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

8. Now step back and take a look at the color of your building and the colors you see on the surrounding structures. Take hints from these when selecting colors for your sign.

You will usually get the best results if you opt for a simple color scheme—a range of three colors. Avoid garish, Day-Glo colors; they belong out on the highway!



9. As with colors, 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 distract attention from the sign.

Signs can be illuminated with 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, not its background, is lit. Halogen lighting produces a white light. While the bulbs are very small and thus can be easily concealed, they are fairly expensive.

10. Express the personality of your establishment through the type style you select. To learn about various styles, look at other signs around town. Think about what each style says about the business and product it advertises. Then, define the image you want your sign to project.

There are three basic styles of type—serif, sans serif, and script—with numerous variations of each.

**ABCD a b c d**  
**ABCDabcd**  
**ABCDabc**

**Serif**

This is a historically appropriate style, with many variations, from plain to fancy.

**Sans Serif**

This is a more contemporary letter style, with cleaner, bolder lines.

**ABCDEF**  
**ABCDabc**  
**ABCDabcd**

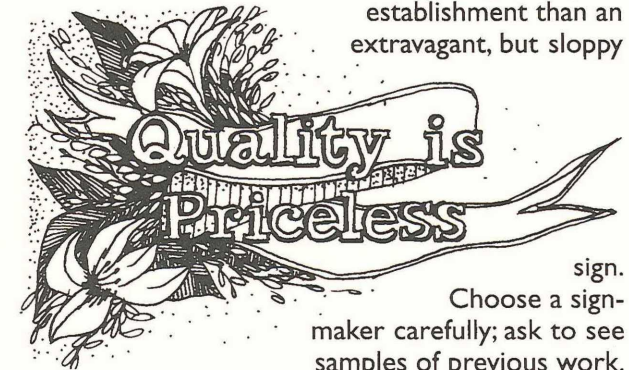


**Script**

A more personal and decorative style, script is often used for signs painted or gold-leafed on glass. (Both upper- and lower-case letters should be used in script-style signs.)

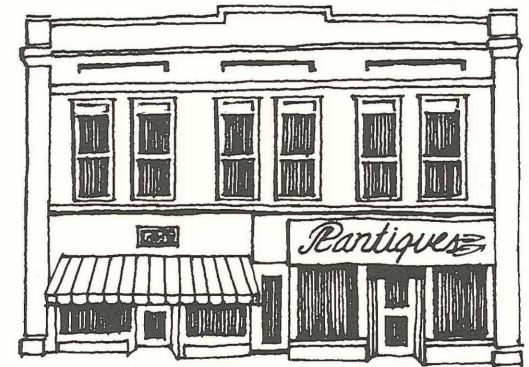
Ask local sign makers to show you a selection of type styles and consult with your local and state Main Street offices.

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. Signs provided by national distributors are not appropriate. They don’t reflect the individuality of your business and usually appear as add-ons to your storefront advertising. The signs you display should advertise your *personal* business message.



Your best advertising

13. Now consider this idea. Your entire building conveys an image that acts as a sign. Your building’s appearance is more subtle than a word, symbol, or number sign, but it can be more effective.