



Sign Design Guidelines





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1. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Bermuda Run recognizes that effective signage promotes economic development, complements the character of the Town, and minimizes distractions and obstruction of view that contribute to traffic hazards and public safety. The purpose of these guidelines is to supplement the sign regulations in the Town's Zoning Ordinance by providing additional recommended guidance to business owners and organizations regarding how to produce effective signage.



2. PURPOSE OF SIGNAGE

The main purpose of signage is communication. It is intended to convey information that passersby can make cognitive decisions based on the information provided. In general, signage can be classified into the following functions:

- Identification
- Information
- Advertisement
- Direction
- Safety and Regulatory

Identification Signs

Signs that primarily indicate business names, services offered, and/or address number.



Information Signs

Signs that give information about facilities, maps, directories, and instructions for use.



Direction Signs

Signs that lead passersby to services, facilities, functional spaces and key areas and may including wayfinding signs and directional arrows.



Advertisement Signs

Signs that promote a product, service or special sale or event for a business or organization.



Safety and Regulatory Signs

Signs that give warning or safety instructions, rules and regulations to ensure public safety and welfare.





3. CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SIGNAGE

As a matter of cost-benefit, signage should be effective to justify the expense that business owners or organizations incur to install it. To be effective, signage should meet the following criteria:

- Legible
- Informative
- Attractive

Legibility

Legibility is the most important factor in effective signage. Passersby need to be able to read the sign in order for it to convey the intended message. According the Sign Legibility rules of Thumb produced by the United States Sign Council (USSC), there are five actions that occur in how motorists react to signs in the roadside environment:

1. Message detection
2. Message processing
3. Intervals of eye and/or head movement alternating between the sign and the road environment
4. Active maneuvering of the vehicle in response to the sign
5. Message detection and processing is shortened as the speed on a roadway increases.

Viewer reaction time (VRT) is the time necessary for motorists to detect, read, and react to a message displayed on a sign. For most road environs in the Town of Bermuda Run (which are primarily 2-3 lane roads with a 45 mph or less speed limit), the VRT for message detection is 8 seconds for signs displaying six words of copy or 30 letters. Signs with more than 30 letters would create a greater VRT or reaction time. Sign brevity with less than 30 letters and six words is ideal for sign effectiveness within the Town. Using the USSC standard legibility index, the ideal letter height for most freestanding signs in Bermuda Run is between 8 inches and 13 inches

displaying no more six words or 30 letters.

In addition to letter height, the following characteristics that increase legibility:

- **Block text**

Script and italicized block text may convey a certain “upscale” message that a business or organization prefers, but block text is more legible. Italicized block text is also more difficult to read. Businesses and organizations need to determine if it is more important to evoke a feeling or effectively convey information when choosing a font for their sign.



- **Upper and lowercase letters**

Incorporating upper and lowercase letters rather than using all caps is also an effective way to increase sign legibility. According to the USSC, letter height of an all caps sign would need to be 15 percent taller in order to be as legible as a sign using upper and lowercase letters.



- **Dark background with lighter colored lettering**

The same principal applies to sign coloring. Darker backgrounds with lighter colored letters increase sign legibility to differing degrees depending on illumination and contrast.



- **Color simplicity**

The use of multiple colors also detracts from sign legibility. The use of no more than two colors in addition to the color of the background is most legible.



- **Negative space**

The importance of incorporating negative space into the sign design should not be underestimated. Signs in which the copy area (letters) fills the entire sign space are not as legible as signs that incorporate some negative space around the copy area. Ideally, signs should be designed in a manner that 40 percent of the sign is copy area and 60 percent is negative space.



- **Illumination**

The illumination of signage for nighttime recognition is important to many businesses and organizations. While internal illumination does increase legibility, the Town of Bermuda Run has determined that this particular aesthetic for freestanding signs was not desired for the overall character of the town, based on public input provided during the Comprehensive Plan process. The Town wanted to avoid the appearance of “glowing boxes” along the streets of the town. External illumination is permitted for freestanding signs. For external illumination to be most effective, the light source should project evenly onto the sign face and avoid producing glare that may hinder the vision of passersby. The regulations of the Zoning Ordinance do permit internally illuminated channel letters as wall signs. Internally illuminated channel letters are more legible than internally illuminated box signs.



Source: *Sign Legibility Rules of Thumb*, United States Sign Council

Information

Some businesses and organizations want to include as much information as possible on their primary identification sign. This can often be a mistake, as less is more in this situation. Especially taking into consideration the principals of legibility outlined above. At a minimum primary identification signs should include the name of the business. Additional acceptable information may include the general service or merchandise provided by the business and the address number. Any other information such as the phone number or hours of operation should be reserved for signs on the primary entrance to the building.



Aesthetics

Often the aesthetics of a sign can convey as much information as the actual information included on the sign. The following aesthetic characteristics improve the recognition of the sign and the business or organization with which it is associated.

- **Professional Construction and Permanent Appearance**

Signs that have professional construction and a permanent appearance evoke the feeling that the business or organization is professional and well-established. Do-it-yourself signage and flimsy, temporary construction evoke the opposite feeling and can be bad for business. Investment in a properly constructed sign can often pay for itself.



- **Compatible Materials**

Signs should also be constructed of materials that are compatible with the materials of building for the business is located and surrounding signs. This gives the appearance of careful planning and thoughtfulness with regard to the sign's surrounding environment and respect for the community. Residents of the area are more likely to patronize a business that they feel respects the community aesthetic and character.



- **Decorative Caps**

The sign regulations in the Town's Zoning Ordinance require a "decorative cap" for freestanding monument signs within the Town's jurisdiction. The Town of Bermuda Run has determined that this particular aesthetic for freestanding signs was desired for the overall character of the town, based on public input provided during the Comprehensive Plan process. The requirement is both for aesthetic and functional purposes as the cap serves to define the finite space of the sign and keep the passerby eye focused on the sign content. The aesthetic purpose is to improve the professional and permanent look of the sign and to provide a unifying element for signs within the Town. "Decorative caps" can be in the form of a monumental cap, finials on top of posts, corbelling of brick or similar treatment. The most aesthetically pleasing and eye-catching signs include a base, body, and cap.



- **Landscaping**

Attractive landscaping can draw the attention of pedestrians and drivers to the sign of a business or organization. The size of plants at maturity should be taken into consideration. Some plans can quickly grow large enough to obscure a monument, sign. Flanking a sign with larger, vertical plants will help to draw the attention of drivers. A tapered or curved bed of plants that leads the eye from a sign to its related building or entrance connects the two and directs people to the building. Planting groups flowering annuals provides bright color to draw attention to signage. In addition, changing the color and variety of annuals regularly is an inexpensive way to update the look of signage and create new interest for passers-by. It is also important to consider the maintenance cost of signage landscaping. Availability of irrigation should be taken into consideration. Drought tolerant plants should be chosen in areas that do not have irrigation readily available. Landscaping should also be supplemented with a three to four inch layer of mulch to reduce weeds and the costs of weed removal.

The sign regulations in the Town's Zoning Ordinance require landscaping around the base of freestanding monument signs within the Town's jurisdiction. This landscaping should be composed of a variety of annuals and perennials to provide year-round foliage. Landscaping should consist of low-growing and low maintenance varieties to maintain sign visibility and reduce maintenance costs.



Annual often refers to a plant grown outdoors in the spring and summer and surviving just for one growing season. Recommended annuals:

Plant	Season	Drought Resistant	Deer Resistant
Begonias	Spring/Summer	✓	✓
Coleus	Spring/Summer	✓	✓
Cosmos	Spring/Summer	✓	✓
Flowering Cabbage	Fall/Winter		
Forget-me-nots	Spring/Summer		
Geranium	Spring/Summer	✓	
Impatiens	Spring/Summer	✓	
Marigolds	Spring/Summer	✓	✓
Petunias	Spring/Summer	✓	✓
Pansies	Fall/Winter		
Snapdragons	Spring/Summer	✓	✓
Zinnias	Spring/Summer	✓	✓

A perennial is a plant that lives for more than two years. The term is often used to differentiate a plant from shorter-lived annuals and biennials. The term is also widely used to distinguish plants with little or no woody growth from trees and shrubs, which are also technically perennials. Recommended perennials:

Plant	Season of Bloom	Drought Resistant	Deer Resistant
Hibiscus	Spring/Summer		✓
Hostas (prefers shade)	Spring/Summer	✓	
Lantana	Spring/Summer		✓
Phlox	Spring/Summer	✓	
Sage	Spring/Summer		
Daylilies	Spring/Summer	✓	

Low-growing shrubs that can provide permanent landscaping around the sign base while supplemented with annuals and perennials include:

Plant	Drought Resistant	Deer Resistant
Boxwood (when properly trimmed)		✓
Creeping or Dwarf Gardenia		✓
Creeping Juniper		✓
Dwarf Azalea	✓	
Dwarf Euonymus		
Dwarf Holly	✓	✓
Dwarf Nandina		✓
Ligustrum (when properly trimmed)		

Source: NC State University Cooperative Extension



4. DESIGN ASSISTANCE

If a business or organization desires assistance in understanding the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance or the guidelines of this manual, they may contact the Town Hall at 336-998-0906 to be put in touch with the Town Planner. Free design assistance may be available.