

Downtown Fremont, Inc.
Design Review Committee
Sign Guidelines

Introduction

These sign guidelines are intended to offer guidance to Certificate of Appropriateness applicants regarding what the Design Review Committee will be looking for when determining approval of applications. They reflect the views of the committee members as to what is acceptable within the Downtown Historical District and what should be avoided.

The purpose of this committee is to get the Downtown Historical District into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets-such as historic buildings and traditional downtown layout. An inviting atmosphere created through window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, streetlights, and landscaping conveys a visual message about what Downtown Fremont, Inc. is and what it has to offer. These guidelines help the Design Review Committee of Downtown Fremont, Inc. achieve this goal.

The following guidelines, along with the City of Fremont Sign Ordinance should be referred to when applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Questions regarding a sign or issue that is not contained in the guidelines should be directed to Kristie Bilger, Executive Director of Downtown Fremont, Inc.

General Guidelines

- Sign and storefront colors should be coordinated.
- Generally, colors used in the Historical District should be designated as Historical or Restoration Colors by paint manufacturers.
- Letters on any type of sign that are overly ornate or difficult to read should be avoided.
- Type should be limited and matched to the image of both the business and the district.
- Signs should only promote business at that location.

Façade Signs

- Signs should be mounted flush to building facades and fit within the transom or cornice area.
- Should be visually contained within the building framework of columns and other architectural trim.
- Signs should fit within certain building proportions per zoning requirements.
- Seven words are the number that could still be easily understood by passers-by.
- Generally, letters should be less than 15" tall, filling no more than 60% of the sign surface.

Window/Door Signs

- May be painted on the glass, vinyl letters or in the form of interior-hung panels
- Should not fill up more than 20% of the window area
- Minimum lettering styles, clear graphics, and minimal wording is recommended

Projecting Signs

- Limit to 10-15 sq.ft..
- Shall be a minimum of ten (10) feet above the grade
- Brackets should be sturdy, uncluttered, and reflect the style of the building.

Pole Signs

- Signs that are supported by one or more poles and otherwise separated from the ground by air should be avoided.

Canopy and Awning Signs

- Lettering applied along a valence should be no more than 12" tall.
- Graphics and text should be contained on the "main sheet".
- The awning should fit within the storefront opening.
- Simple, traditional shapes, colors and materials are recommended.

Animated & Flashing Signs

- Signs that are moved by mechanical or natural means, such as wind, should be avoided.
- Time and Temperature signs and other types of flashing signs should be avoided.
- Electronic Marquees will be considered a flashing sign and therefore should be avoided.

Temporary Signs

- Temporary Signs are not permitted on the city right-of-way.
- Sandwich Board Signs, Free Standing Signs, and "A" Frame Signs will be permitted on the business owner's property provided the sign compliments the historic integrity of the district and conforms to the following criteria:
 - o Sign shall not exceed four feet in any one of its dimensions
 - o "Sunflower", Mobile Signs (wheeled or non-wheeled), and rented changeable letter signs, illuminated or non-illuminated, are prohibited. No sign shall be provided with electric, flash, be animated, rotate, or have the appearance of movement.
- Banners, flags, and pennants shall be permitted when promoting a special sale or announcing special events of a civic or philanthropic nature. These signs may be placed not more than thirty (30) days before the initial date of the sale or event and shall be removed not more than five (5) days after such special sale or event. Any person, business, or organization erecting a temporary sign for this purpose shall notify the Executive Director in writing so that the thirty (30) day period can be established.
- Temporary signs, erected or displayed that do not meet the above criteria shall be removed immediately after the delivery of written notice to that effect by the Executive Director to the owner or occupant of the premises on which the signs are located.

Lighting Issues

- Unobtrusive lighting should be used to call attention to merchandise, signs, and architectural details.
- For exterior sign illumination, shaded gooseneck lamps and raised letters backed with neon are recommended.
- Signs lit by a projecting box situated just below the sign panel, shielded from the eye by the woodwork is acceptable.
- Carefully shielded lighting that is subtle and attractive is recommended.
- Signage using bare bulbs, backlit Plexiglas sign boxes, internally illuminated plastic awnings, neon, and floods should be avoided.

Summary

Significant changes can be accomplished through creative and sensitively designed signs. Placement, proportion, colors, material, and style should all reflect the building and business image, regardless of the type of sign used. Collectively, signs define the image of an entire district. Dramatic improvements into the visual appearance of Downtown will draw more customers and enhance the sense of community.

A collection of photographs of acceptable signs is available for review. The showcased signs follow these guidelines and provide good examples of quality signs that could be used to enhance both the business and the Downtown.

Appeals Process.

1. Any person affected by any notice and order issued in connection with an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness may request and shall be granted a hearing of the matter before City Council. Such person shall file in the office of the Zoning Inspector a written request for such hearing and shall set forth the name, address and phone number of the appellant and a brief statement of the grounds for such hearing and appeal from any notice or order of the Design Review Committee.

2. Requests shall be filed within ten calendar days after the notice and order is served. Upon receipt of such request, the Council Chair shall set a time and place for such hearing before Council and shall give the appellant written notice thereof at least 15 days prior to said hearing date. The hearing shall be held within 45 days after a request has been filed.
3. At any hearing of City Council, the appellant shall be given an opportunity to be heard and to show cause why such notice and order should be modified or dismissed. The failure of the appellant or designated representative to appear and present the appellant's position at such hearing shall be grounds for dismissal of such request.
4. Upon hearing, Council may affirm, amend, modify or withdraw any notice and order of the Design Review Committee. Council can only turn the decision by super majority vote. The appellant and the Design Review Committee shall be notified in writing of such findings.
5. The proceedings at any hearing, including the findings and decision of Council and reason therefore, shall be summarized in writing and entered as a matter of public record in the Office of the Zoning Inspector. Such record shall also include a copy of every notice and order issued in connection with the matter. A person aggrieved by the decision of Council may seek relief therefrom in any court of competent jurisdiction as provided by the laws of the state.

Ordinance number 2000-3158 should be reviewed in order to determine when a Certificate of Appropriateness is required and the rules that govern it. A violation of this ordinance is an offense punishable by a fine of not more than two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) or by imprisonment for not more than thirty (30) days or both. Each subsequent day that the condition is not remedied constitutes a separate offense.

Effective Date: 6/17/02
Revised Dates: 2/6/04
1/31/06
6/5/12
5/29/14