



TOWN OF DENTON SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Central Commercial (CC) Zoning District



Downtown Denton, 1930's

Guidelines

General Guidelines for All Signs in the CC District

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Applicability

The standards in this guideline apply to all properties within the Central Commercial zoning district as indicated on the map Page 11.

- All proposed signs shall conform to the Sign Ordinance #594.
- Establish a permit system to allow a variety of signs in the Central Commercial zoning district and a limited variety of signs in other zones subject to the standards of Ordinance #594 and permit procedures.
- Prohibit all signs not permitted by the Sign Ordinance #594.
- Provide for enforcement of the provisions of Ordinance #594.
- Require all signs to comply with the provisions of the sign regulations.
- Signs may not be changed without the approval of the Planning and Codes department.
- Non-conforming signs will exist within the Town after the implementation of the sign ordinance and guidelines. The intent of the Town is to improve the business experience for everyone. Therefore, voluntary compliance is highly encouraged for all businesses with non-conforming existing signage.

Purpose

The intent of this guideline is to accomplish the following:

- Establish reasonable and improved standards for business identification.
- Assist property owners and business owners in understanding the Town expectations.
- Reduce the time for processing sign approvals.
- Encourage creative and innovative approaches to signage within the established framework.
- Promote economic vitality in the Town.
- Enhance overall property values and the visual environment in the Town by discouraging signs which contribute to visual clutter of the streetscape.
- Ensure that commercial signs are designed for the purpose of identifying a business in an attractive and functional manner, rather than serve primarily as general advertising for business.
- Ensure signs on the façade of buildings reinforce existing character and are integrated into the architectural scheme of the building.
- Ensure signs are appropriately sized and for the type of activity associated with the business or property.



- Promote a quality visual environment by allowing signs that are compatible with their surroundings and which effectively communicate their message.

Permitted Signs

The following signs are permitted in the CC District

- Wall Signs
- Awning & Canopy Signs
- Projecting Signs
- Hanging Signs
- Window Signs
- Low Profile & Monument Signs
- Tenant Directory Signs
- A-Frame Signs
- Permanent Banner Signs
- Temporary Signs
- Multiple Signs

Sign Overview

- All signs shall be architecturally integrated with their surroundings in terms of size, shape color, texture, and overall lighting so that the sign is complementary to the overall design of the buildings.
- Signs shall reflect the character of the building and its use.
- Signs shall respect the immediate context of the building's location and the overall character of the area.
- Signs shall enhance the primary design elements or unique architectural features of buildings.
- Signs shall be designed with the purpose of promoting retail and street activity while enhancing the pedestrian experience.
- The size of a sign and its letters shall be located in a logical 'signable area' which relates to the pattern of the façade. (Signable area is an imaginary square or rectangle around the graphics and logo.)
- The number of signs per building façade shall be limited to the fewest necessary to clearly identify businesses located within.
- Signs are not permitted to cover or obscure architectural features of the buildings.
- Historic and Architectural Review Commission approval is needed for signs located in the Historic District.

- Consider the layout and shape of the architectural features of the building when determining the size and location of signs.
- Design elements such as window patterns, vertical and horizontal rectangles, arches, squares, etc. will determine the sign shape that will best suit the building.
- All signs are to be maintained properly such that they are always in clean, in good working condition, and not obscured, damaged or worn.
- Signs that encroach or project over the public-right-of-way shall be subject to the approval of the sign permit.
- New signs proposed for existing buildings shall provide a compatible appearance with the existing signage of other tenants. Signs shall be compatible with its nearest neighboring tenants.

Sign Programs

- Sign programs establish a distinctive and cohesive image for a building ("Branding") and are encouraged for multiple tenant buildings.
- Sign programs serve to create a coordinated theme of uniform design elements such as color, lettering style and placement.
- In the event that the sign requirements in the sign ordinance and guidelines conflict with an approved sign program, additional approval requirements may be necessary.

Permitted Sign Area

The table below applies to the following types of signs: wall, awning & canopy, window, plaque, tenant directory, permanent banner and temporary signs. Permitted sign area for all other signage is addressed individually in the specific guideline section throughout the remainder of this document.

(The allowable square footage of a sign area in the CC zoning district shall be computed based upon the amount of frontage indicated in the following table.)

Central Commercial District		
Sign Type	Type of Property Use	Max. Sign Area in Square Feet
Unlit Real Estate	Any Permitted	10
Freestanding With Front Yards	Improved lots	10 per Lot (2) Per Corner Lot
Indirectly Lit Flat Sign	Any Permitted	Lesser of 1 sq. ft. per linear ft. of building front or 40 sq. ft.
Projecting	Any Permitted	10 for single tenant / 12 for multi-tenant
Exterior Directory	Any Permitted	2 Each Tenant Business or 10 Total
Directional	Any Permitted	4
Banners and Pennants	Advertise Sale, Special Events	24 for Banners and 32 for Pennants
A Frames and Pedestals	Any Permitted	6 (3 ft. max. height)

Placement

- The architecture of the building best determines specific locations for signs, and these locations shall be used.



- The size of the signs shall be in proportion to the size of the location.
- Repetitious signage information on the same building frontage shall be avoided, regardless of the number of signs and the sign area square frontage allowed by the ordinance.
- To minimize irreversible damage to masonry, all mounting and supports are to be inserted into the mortar joints and not in the masonry. This allows for easy removal and repair of holes.
- Where possible, signs that are replaced shall re-use the existing locations. At times, replaced signs may leave an unattractive appearance and enhancing the location may be addressed during the approval process.

Multi-Story Buildings

- Ground floor tenants shall place signs at the storefront level.
- Window signs and permanent banner signs are permitted on the upper portions of the façade.
- Signs on the upper façade of multi-storied buildings may be permitted for ground floor tenants.
- Upper story tenant signs shall be window signs. The limitations are addressed under *Window Signs* on page 7.
- Window signs for upper story tenants are permitted if the tenant has an entrance at the sidewalk and a directory sign is located properly at the ground floor.

Design & Materials

- Exterior materials, finishes, and colors shall be the same or similar to those of the building or structures on site.
- Signs shall be professionally constructed using high quality materials.
- Excessively bright colors or over-scaled letters shall not be used as a means to attract attention.

- The colors and lettering styles shall compliment the building façade and harmonize with neighboring businesses.
- Exposed neon tubing may be used for historic signs only, in conjunction with other types of materials to artistically emphasize the business name and/or logo.



- The design and alignment of signs on multiple use buildings shall compliment each other such that a unified appearance is achieved.

Sign Message

- Primary signs contain only the name of the business and/or its logo. Secondary text identifies products and shall be located in a secondary location.



- Signage that contains advertising is not permitted. However, signs may include information describing the products sold or services provided.
- Sign message must be designed to fit properly in the sign location.
- Modifications to logos and corporate identifiers are required to fit attractively in the space provided.
- Sign fonts shall be selected to provide both clarity and artistic integrity.

Sign Lighting

- Where permitted, arrange external spot or flood lighting such that the light source is directed away from the passerby. The light source shall be directed against the sign such that it does not shine into an adjacent property or cause glare for motorists and pedestrians.



- Back-lit, halo-lit illumination, or reverse channel letters with halo illumination are highly encouraged for lighting purposes. Such signs convey a subtle and attractive appearance and are very legible under moderate ambient lighting conditions.
- Signs that use blinking or flashing lights are not permitted except where the sign is a historic replica.
- Visible raceways and transformers for individual letters are prohibited. Sign installation details shall indicate the location of the transformer and other mechanical equipment.
- Electrical wiring and transformers, or any other energized installations creating a dangerous condition are prohibited.

- Projecting light fixtures used for externally illuminated signs shall be simple and unobtrusive in appearance. Light fixtures shall not obscure or conceal the graphics of the sign.



- Where signs face near-by residential areas, within 150-feet, a low level of brightness shall be maintained or turned off between the hours of 10 PM and 6 AM.

Wall Signs are to be mounted flush and fixed securely to a building wall, projecting no more than 9-inches from the face of a building wall, and not extending sideways beyond the building face or above the highest line of the building to which it is attached.

- Wall signs shall be located on the upper portion of the storefront, within or just above the enframed storefront. The length of the sign shall not exceed the width of the enframed storefront.
- Wall signs shall be placed within a clear signable area, the area relating to the pattern of the façade. Signable area is defined as an architecturally continuous wall surface uninterrupted by doors, windows, and architectural details. The sign area can be visualized as an imaginary square or rectangle around the graphics and logo.
- Wall signs shall be mounted in locations that respect the design of the building, including the arrangement of bays and openings.



- Wall signs shall not obscure windows, grille work, piers, pilasters, and ornamental features. Typically, wall signs shall be centered on horizontal surfaces, for example over a storefront opening.
- Wall signs shall be designed to be compatible with the storefront in scale, proportion and color.
- Signs shall be designed to create a clearly defined edge, provide shadow relief, and a substantial appearance. This effect is generally difficult to achieve by painting the sign directly to the building. For this reason, painted signs are discouraged.

Awning & Canopy Signs are signs that are printed on, painted on or attached to an awning or canopy above a business door or window. They generally serve to bring color to the shopping environment and are oriented toward pedestrians from the opposite side of the street.

- Sign lettering and/or logo shall comprise no more than allowed for the measurement of the sign area. Letters and graphics shall be a single line of lettering not exceeding 6-inches in height.
- Awnings and canopies must be permanently attached to the buildings.
- The minimum height of awnings and canopies shall be 8-feet from the lowest point to the sidewalk.

- Awnings and canopies shall be mounted on the horizontal framing element separating the storefront window from the transom (the cross piece member separating a doorway from a window).
- Awnings shall be designed to project over individual windows and door openings and not project as a single continuous feature extending over masonry piers or arches.
- Awnings shall be mounted on the wood or metal framing within a door or window opening, not on the wall surrounding the opening.



- Internally, back-lit graphics, or any illumination is prohibited.
- Graphics may be painted on or affixed flat to the surface of the awning or canopy and indicate only the name and/or address of the business or use of the property.

Projecting Signs are affixed to the face of a building or structure and project in a perpendicular manner more than 12-inches from the wall surface. The projection shall be no closer than 2-feet from the curb line, of that portion of the building or structure to which it is mounted. Projecting signs are strongly encouraged and shall be carefully designed to reflect the character of each building and business, as well as, fitting comfortably with other adjacent signage.

- Projecting signs are encouraged to be mounted between the bottom sill of the second floor window in multiple storied buildings or at the lowest point of a one story building. The vertical clearance to of the sign from the sidewalk is 8-feet and 13-feet vertical clearance from a driving surface where the sign is mounted above an alley or driveway.
- Flat projecting signs shall not exceed 10-square feet per face.



- Liability insurance coverage that names the Town as the insured party is required for signs above a public way.



- Multiple occupancy buildings are permitted to have one projecting sign for each retail storefront, not to exceed 10-square feet per face or one projecting sign listing multiple tenants not exceeding 12-square feet.
- Projecting signs shall be oriented to pedestrians passing on the sidewalk in front of the buildings rather than to automobiles or pedestrians on the far side of the street. This can be achieved by providing a minimum clearance of 12-inches between the building face and sign and maintaining a projection of 36-inches, but no closer than 2-feet from the curb line.

- Projecting signs shall fit within an imaginary rectangle with a maximum area of 10-square feet.
- Mounting hardware shall be attractive and an integral part of the sign design. Simple round pipe brackets with plugged ends or added decorative elements are generally inappropriate for signs. Metal brackets of a more decorative and complex shape are encouraged where appropriate to add to the character of the building.



Marquee Signs

- Marquee signs are projecting signs attached to or supported by a permanent canopy.



Hanging Signs are similar to projecting signs except that they are suspended below a marquee or under a canopy. Hanging signs are generally smaller than projecting because of the lower mounting height.

- Hanging signs shall be used only at ground floor locations except for upper floor businesses with separate entry porches and balconies.
- Hanging signs shall be treated similar to projecting signs.
- Hanging signs, excluding supporting rods, chains or similar hangers, shall fit within an imaginary rectangle with a maximum area permitted under *Combination Signs*.
- Signs shall be oriented toward the pedestrian and impart a sense of creativity in their design.

Freestanding Signs are signs that are printed on, painted on or attached to an independent support on the yard of a property.

- Freestanding signs are permitted on improved lots with front yards and may be indirectly lit. Sidewalks are not considered to be front yards.
- Two freestanding signs are permitted on corner lots.
- The required setbacks are 10-feet from the property line.

Window Signs are signs that are painted, posted, displayed, or etched on an interior translucent or transparent surface, including windows or doors. This type of signage generally contains only text but in some circumstances can express a special business personality through graphic logos or images combined with color.

- Window signs shall not obscure or conceal more than 50% of the total storefront glass area and are required to be reduced when used in combination with other types of signage.
- All signage may include the branding logo for Town in addition to the store sign.
- Window signs shall be created from high quality materials.
- Storefront window signage shall be reduced in area to reflect the area used for projecting signs. For example, if a storefront window is allowed 100-square feet and a projecting sign is 15-square feet, then the storefront window sign is reduced to 85-square feet allowable area (100 sq. ft. – 15 sq. ft.). The total storefront window signage cannot exceed 50% of 85-square feet.



- Window signs shall be applied directly to the interior face of the glazing area or hung inside the window, concealing amounting hardware and fasteners.
- Well-designed window graphics shall be used in the assembly of the sign to attract attention but still allow pedestrians to view store interiors.

Multiple Signs are signs of multiple types displayed in one building, business, or tenancy.

- A storefront is permitted to have one projecting sign and one permanent window sign.
- A storefront is permitted to have one projecting sign and a temporary window sign.
- A storefront is permitted to have a temporary window sign in combination with a flat, projecting, awning, or canopy sign.

Tenant Directory Signs are used to identify multi-tenant buildings and businesses that do not have direct frontage on a public street. Tenant signs shall be constructed and oriented to the pedestrian.

- Tenant directory signs shall be mounted flat against a wall.
- Each business or tenant is allowed one sign panel 2-square feet in area. The total area for all tenants in a directory sign is limited to 10-square feet.
- Directory signs shall not contain advertising.
- Tenant directory signs shall be constructed out of materials that compliment both the building structure and use.



A-Frame Signs are signs designed to stand on their own either on public or private property. Such signs are portable and are usually placed along public sidewalks to attract pedestrians into shopping areas.

- Only one A-frame sign is permitted per building unless there are multiple tenants or businesses in one building.
- The minimum separation between A-frame signs along a walkway is 20-feet.
- A-frame signs dimensions shall be 24-inches in width and 36-inches in height. The width of the A-frame sign may be larger provided a 42-inch clearance is maintained along the walking surface and the sign area is 6-square feet or less.
- A-frame signs shall not cause a visual obstruction at traffic intersections.
- A-frame signs located within a public right-of-way and against a building are permitted provided an encroachment permit has been approved by the Town.
- A-frame signs shall be removed after normal business hours.

Banner, Pennant, and Special Events Signs often help to add interest and color to blank facades buildings. They are to be vertically oriented, and compatible with the overall character and color of the building.

- Special events signs may be displayed for 4-weeks before an event and shall be removed 3-days after the event and located on the site of the event.
- Carnivals, fairs, festivals and similar events may display special events signs off-site provided permission is received from the property owner where the event sign is displayed. A limit of 4-signs may be displayed in one location. Special event sign area is limited to 32-square feet, may be posted 4-weeks before the event, and shall be removed 5-days after the event.
- Grand openings and re-openings of businesses are permitted to display banners, pennants, and flags on the site of the business 2-weeks before the event provided they are removed 3-days after the event.
- Business grand openings and re-openings may display 2-off premise banners, flags, and pennants provided permission is obtained from the property owner where the event sign is installed.
- Posting of merchants' prices is prohibited.



- Banners are permitted to advertise sales provided there are no more than two banners at any one time.
- Banner sizes are limited to 24-square feet and may be displayed for 2-weeks at a time and no more than 6-times in a year.
- Banner signs shall be mounted perpendicular to the face of the façade at both the top and bottom.
- Free standing banners are not permitted.
- Banner and pennant signs shall not reduce the clearance of a walkway beyond 42-inches and installed where the sign shall not be an obstruction to pedestrian or vehicular traffic.



Temporary Signs can take the form of banners, window graphics, or cards integrated with the window display. Temporary signs may contain written messages and shall use simple font that is easy to read.

- Temporary sales signs are allowed without a permit provided the signs do not exceed the allowable sign area permitted for a building.
- Temporary signs that exceed the allowable sign area of a building are permitted by approval of the Town provided the sign is removed 15-days after the event.

- Temporary signs may be displayed in storefront glass area.
- Temporary signs shall not reduce the visibility of storefront glass or glass door area more than 50%.
- Temporary signs shall be removed within 90-days.

Map of Central Business Commercial Zoning District

