



Poultney Downtown Revitalization Committee, Inc.

**Downtown Poultney
Voluntary Business Sign
Design Guidelines**

AND

**Town of Poultney
Sign Regulations**



Downtown Poultney

Voluntary Business Sign Design Guidelines

May 1, 2008

Introduction

The Poultney Downtown Revitalization Committee, Inc. (PDRC) has developed these business sign design guidelines for the use of property owners and businesses in the Poultney Downtown area. The guidelines are intended to be voluntary and have the objective of integrating well-designed signs with the design and landscape of streets within the downtown area. This will improve the appearance of the area which will make our downtown more attractive and interesting to visitors and customers. Over time, the intention is to make Poultney a true destination, thereby helping to increase sales for town businesses.

We Encourage Professional Design & Creativity

We strongly suggest the use of professional sign designers and makers. They are trained and experienced in the art of creating signs that are innovative and which will communicate an effective image of your business. In general, do it your self signs made by amateurs look just that: amateurish.

To encourage the use of professional sign makers, PDRC will provide businesses financial support equal to 20 to 25% of the cost of a professionally designed sign up to a maximum of \$500.

Sign Size & Proportion

A sign should be proportional in size to the area where the sign is located. Sign size cannot exceed the limits established by the town of Poultney. Signs cannot exceed 35 square feet in area. A double sided sign cannot exceed 17.5 square feet on each side. Other restrictions are detailed in the Ordinance, which is attached and made part of these guidelines. As a general rule the length of a wall-mounted sign should not exceed 70% of the frontage of the building.

Careful consideration should be given to the proportion of lettered and graphic area to the overall size of the sign background. If the letters and graphics take up too much of the sign space, they become harder to read from a distance. As a general rule keep them to no more than 70% of the sign area.

Signs Should Complement Building Architecture & Surroundings

Signs should be designed with regard for and to integrate with the architectural style and historical significance of the building and adjacent buildings. That's not to say that a very contemporary looking sign (that may be appropriate for the business) can't be used with a classic architectural style. PDRC is simply recommending that signs enhance the primary design elements or unique architectural features of the building. Also, signs should not obscure distinct architectural features of the building.

Multiple Business Signs on Same Building

If there is more than one business in the same building, there should be an effort to have similar size, colors, fonts, letter heights and so forth in each sign. At a minimum the signs should complement each other and not clash.

Free Standing Signs

Free standing signs are attached to a structure separate from a building. They may be mounted on two poles or hang from a single pole. As noted in the ordinance this type of sign must be located at least three feet from the sidewalk and cannot be located on the village right of way.

Suggestions on Sign Shapes

As a general rule, rectangles and squares are most effective for signs which are going to be mounted flush on a building's façade. Circles and ovals should be avoided, as well as odd shapes like trapezoids. However, if the sign is to project from the building and be mounted at right angles or from a sign pole, oval or circles are equally effective. Signs with shapes reflecting a logo or distinct nature of the business can also be effective when mounted from a pole.

General Design Principles for Signs

While we encourage creativity and innovation in approaches to signage, there are proven principles of well designed signs which will successfully communicate the message of a business in a clear fashion. Some principles of sign design are:

1. Use Color Contrast

The color of the letters should contrast with the color of the empty space or background in a sign. A substantial contrast should be provided between the color of the background and the letters and graphic symbols to make the sign easier to read in both day and night. Use light letters on dark backgrounds or dark letters on light backgrounds to make the sign most legible.

In general, limit the number of colors in a sign to two with three colors the maximum. This increases the sign clarity. Colors should be compatible with the colors of the building façade.

2. Font Size, Style and Number Affect Legibility

The height of the letters determines how far away the letters can be read. Downtown Poultney has many trees and will continue to add more in the future as our landscape program is implemented. This favors signs that are designed to be read primarily by pedestrians walking on the side walks. Letter heights for pedestrian oriented signs should be at least 3.5 inches in height. If the business intends that the signs should be read by passing motorists the letter height should be increased to at least 4.5 inches.

The font or typeface style greatly impacts readability. If your business does not already have an identity program, specifying the use of certain fonts, then select fonts which provide clarity and artistic integrity. Avoid trendy fonts, as they may soon be out of date. Also, limit the number of fonts in the sign to two for small signs and to three for

large signs. Too many fonts negatively impact readability and also cheapen the look of the sign, as well as the business.

Recommended Fonts:

Garamond Bold (or variation)
Helvetica
Bank Gothic (or variation)
Baskerville Old Face
Century Gothic
Copperplate Gothic (or variation)
Futura, Frutiger or Myriad
Gill Sans
Times or Times New Roman
Bodoni

Fonts to be Avoided

Comic Sans
Verdana (*designed for on-screen viewing*)
Arial (*a poor imitation of Helvetica*)
Any script font (*especially small sizes*)

3. Keep the Sign Message Simple

The fewer the words in a sign, the more effective and easier to read the sign will be. Signs with succinct messages are cleaner and more attractive because they are less cluttered. In general, signs should only contain the business name, logo if there is one or an appropriate graphic element indicating the nature of the business. Do not list products, services brand names, etc.

4. Sign Materials

Do not use cloth, paper or vinyl banner signs. They cheapen the image of your business and they do not last long.

High quality signs can be made of:

- Wood carved, painted, sandblasted, etched and properly sealed
- Aluminum properly primed and painted or with high quality vinyl films
- PVC painted or with high quality vinyl films
- Aluminum with PVC solid or corrugated core with high quality vinyl films

Hand carved and treated wood produces very elegant and long lasting signs. However they are generally the most expensive signs. PVC or aluminum signs are much less expensive.

5. Things to Avoid

- Fluorescent or garish colors that do not fit Poultney's historic appeal
- Signs that appear above the eaves of a single story building
- Back-lighted or illuminated signs

Illustrations of Signs Good & Bad



Examples of well-designed signs that fit within their environment.



Examples of poorly-designed signs or signs that clash with their environment.

Town of Poultney Zoning Regulations

ARTICLE X. SIGNS

Section 1001: Purpose

The purpose of this section is to promote and protect the public health, safety, and welfare by regulating existing and proposed signs in the Town and Village of Poultney. It is further intended hereby to control and reduce the proliferation of signs in order to protect the economic and scenic value of the municipality and in order to prevent hazards to uses of the roads in the municipality.

Section 1002: Regulations

Signs are permitted only in accordance with the following:

- A. Signs must be well-constructed and maintained in good repair and stable condition;
- B. Up to two (2) signs may be displayed on the premises. However, any such sign may designate more than one business or activity on the premises;
- C. Signs may contain up to thirty-five (35) square feet of area on one side; when more than one side of a sign is used, the area of all sides shall be included in the total allowable area.
- D. On premises used primarily as a residence there may be one (1) sign which may contain up to six (6) square feet per side.
- E. One "Real Estate for Sale" sign is permitted for each twelve hundred (1) feet of frontage, or part thereof, on a public road provided that such signs do not exceed an area of six (6) square feet each. Both sides of such signs may be used and may list the name of an agent.

Section 1003: Restrictions

- A. No sign shall be permitted which appears to direct the movement of traffic or which interferes with, imitates, or resembles any official traffic, directional, or route sign, signal, or device;
- B. No signs shall be permitted which prevents a clear and unobstructed view of official signs and approaching or merging traffic;
- C. No lighting of signs shall be permitted unless such lighting is so effectively shielded as to prevent beams or rays of light from being directed at any portion of the main traveled way of a public road unless such lighting is of such low intensity or brilliance as to cause no hazard;

- D. No sign or display shall contain any moving parts, nor contain, include, or be flashing, moving, or intermittent light;
- E. No sign shall be erected, attached, or maintained upon trees, or drawn or painted on rocks or other natural features, or upon utility poles;
- F. No sign shall be permitted closer to sidewalk than three (3) feet from any vertical line from the edge of the sidewalk, except when such sign is attached to the face of the building at least eight (8) feet above walking level and protruding no more than six (6) inches from the face of the building. If perpendicular, then no more than three (3) feet from the face of the building;
- G. No sign shall be allowed which is not on the premises of the activity served by the sign;
- H. No advertising material may be attached or placed upon any property, including but not limited to cars, fences, walls, and buildings, by anyone other than the owner or tenant of such property or his authorized agent;
- I. No free-standing sign may be more than twenty (24) feet high at the top of the sign;
- J. No sign which is attached to a building may extend above the eaves of that part and side of the building to which the sign is attached;
- K. No sign may be erected within the town highway right-of-way (such as between the sidewalk and the street in the Village) unless approval or permission is granted by the Town Road Commissioner.

Section 1004: Exemptions

The following signs are exempt from the provisions of this Article.

- A. Signs erected, maintained, or administered by the municipality or the State of Vermont under Title 10, Chapter 21, whether maintained at private or public expense.
- B. Small signs, without advertising, displayed for the direction, instruction, or convenience of the public, including signs which identify rest rooms, freight entrances, posted areas of the like, with an area not exceeding two (2) square feet, provided such signs are on the premises of the activity served by the sign.

Section 1005: Nonconforming Sign

Signs which are not in conformance with the provisions of this Article on the date of adoption of these Regulations may be continued or replaced but may not be expanded or enlarged.