



CITY OF GARDNER SIGNAGE and FACADE DESIGN GUIDELINES



Submitted to:
The City of Gardner

Submitted by:
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1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Introduction

Once dubbed internationally as “the chair city of the world,” Gardner has a proud history of furniture manufacturing that remains expressed through its historic mill buildings and downtown infrastructure and architecture. Presently the City is looking to develop a revitalization strategy to beautify and reactivate its foundation of quality urban fabric. The City’s Sign & Facade Improvement program is an integral part of this effort, providing financial incentives in the following manner, as per the City’s website (<http://www.gardner-ma.gov/signgrants.html>):

“Sign projects are awarded a zero (0) percent interest, deferred payment loan. The loan is forgiven after five (5) years provided title to the property remains unchanged and the owner observes all terms of the loan agreement. Loans cannot exceed \$2,500. Facade projects are eligible for a matching loan. The program finances eighty percent (80%) of approved project costs in the form of a five (5) year deferred payment loan (DPL) at zero percent interest. The loan is forgiven after five (5) years provided title to the property remains unchanged and the owner observes all terms of the loan agreement. If title to the property changes, or if the terms of the loan agreement are violated, the loan becomes immediately due. The maximum amount of assistance provided per project is \$15,000.”

Additionally, Gardner Square Two, Inc., a voluntary, non-profit organization committed to returning its downtown to “an economically vital business, cultural and residential district,” is an active proponent of revitalization and a community-focused vehicle for promoting such initiatives. With several mechanisms in place, Gardner seeks to take the next step forward in re-establishing their downtown as a vibrant center. To fortify their efforts, guidelines for sign & façade enhancements are needed.

The City is committed to retaining a vibrant and walkable city center. As such, its image is of central concern to the community. By providing an improved visual quality for the entire area, the business community will also benefit from the simple fact that patrons prefer pleasant, coherent environments as places to shop, visit, and do business. In turn, this activity would encourage further reinvestment.

These design guidelines are aimed at providing the City of Gardner with a resource in advancing towards effective implementation of their sign and façade improvement program, although they may also be used for other purposes. They have been compiled from similar experiences in small city centers that exhibit a strong historic character and local identity throughout the region. Intended as an advisory document, the City and the Planning Board may use this to inform property owners and tenants of preferred approaches to design.

While these guidelines could be applied in many locations, they are specifically intended for an area identified in Appendix 1, which is also the focus of the West Gardner Historic District.

These guidelines have been prepared and assembled by The Cecil Group, Inc., and funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Purpose and Goals

These design guidelines are intended to provide for a coherent and attractive business and civic environment within the historic core of the community. They are intended to apply to those portions of buildings that can be seen from public vantage points, and apply to the interior of buildings only to the degree that this influences the appearance from the streets or sidewalks in Gardner.

General goals for the application of these design guidelines include:

1. Restore and protect the historic character - The city center retains buildings that have historic merit. These buildings are important as representatives of the architecture of past eras and of the historic culture of the city. These guidelines seek to preserve characteristics that are genuine and which remain, and to restore historic characteristics once associated with existing buildings where they can be reasonably and practically restored.
2. Enhance the city center as a commercial area- The city center contains numerous service and retail businesses. As such, the guidelines promote a consistently high quality that will be attractive to visitors and patrons of the area.
3. Reinforce the city center as a civic place - The city center serves its citizens as a symbolic and functional downtown, and contains public uses in addition to the businesses and residences. As such, the city center should have an attractive appearance that displays the unique qualities of its past and present.

Design guidelines have been organized into two main sections:

- Facade Guidelines - These concern the elements of a building and its site that might be affected by a proposed project such as storefronts, lighting, roofs, materials, signage and the like.
- Signage Guidelines – These are specific guidelines that apply to the design of signs.

The information within each specific set of guidelines is further organized as follows:

- Goals - These are overall principles and intentions that should be followed.
- Guidelines - These are specific guiding principles for new designs or renovations.

Design Review Committee

Every new construction, renovation and modernization project involving changes to a building's façade, storefront or signage within the focus area identified in Appendix 1 to which these guidelines apply should be subject to design review and approval by a Design Review Committee appointed by the appropriate City authorities. The Design Review Committee may include members of the Office of Community Development and Planning, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Steering Committee, and other public or private organizations directly involved in the implementation of the Sign and Façade Improvement Program. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the proposed design and materials conform to these guidelines as well as to any other applicable regulations. The design review process should be independent and supplementary to the Building Inspector review established as part of Zoning and Building approval requirements.

3. SIGNAGE GUIDELINES

Signage Goals

The primary function of a sign is to identify a property or business and direct customers clearly and easily to the desired location. Additionally, signage can unify the street-front or building facade by creating an organized pattern of information. Signage can be used to activate a building's facade by introducing color, texture and sophistication.

All signs should serve as an integral part of the immediate surroundings. In general, well-designed signs increase the visual quality and character of the business being served as well as the City of Gardner. Because they are viewed publicly, signs can either add or detract from the community image.

Signs not only enhance the architecture, but also support the intended function of the business being advertised. Sign type, style, materials and color should be compatible with the building and the site. Sign content should generally be limited to the individual establishment name or place name, however it may also consist of logo or icon. Secondary signs may include some description of services or products sold.

Signs come in basically three types: wall signs (including window signs and awnings), projecting signs, and freestanding signs.

Currently, the City's Zoning Ordinance states that "no portion of a wall sign or individual letter sign shall project more than one foot from the face of the wall or above the wall of any building". Consequently, projecting signs require a variance. However, design guidelines for projecting signs are herein included to anticipate circumstances such as the granting of a variance.



The projecting sign in the foreground represents an appropriate example of this sign type, while the large, internally lit defunct sign in the background is not in compliance with these guidelines.

General Sign Guidelines

1. Signs displaying product names and logos should be directly associated with the principal business on premise.
2. Signs should be compatible with the building, neighboring buildings, and the character of the City of Gardner as a whole.
3. Signs should present a clear message and be compatible in terms of type, size, color, and material with the building they serve.
4. Building signs and graphics should be clear and well designed. The style and placement should complement the architectural character of the building.
5. A series of individual letters placed on a building in such a way that, when seen from the distance, they form the name of a business or a brand name should be consider to be one sign, and as such, be subject to all the applicable guidelines and limitations.
6. In a multiple storefront building, the signage should be of a size, location, material and color that relates harmoniously between bays.
7. Signage that covers or obscures significant architectural details of the building should be avoided.
8. All sign dimensions and clearances must comply with the requirements of the Gardner Zoning Ordinance. (Note: under current zoning, projecting signs would require a variance.)



The multiple storefront wall signs shown here are consistent with each other and the overall architecture of the building.

Type and Location of Signs

Wall Signs

1. Storefront design may provide a signage band element, or a space clearly defined by architectural elements, trim or moldings, where signs may be placed above the storefront windows.
2. Signage band elements should extend along the entire length of the storefront, and the type and location of signs within the band element must be consistent.
3. All wall signs in a multi-tenant building should be coordinated and display a consistent attitude toward design.
4. Window signs, such as information signage (hours of operation, sales info, etc.) should be high quality vinyl die cut letters or painted directly on to the glass.

Projecting Signs

1. Projecting signs should convey information in a unique and artistic way, utilizing images that convey the goods or services provided at the premises.
2. Projecting signs should hang below the sill height of the second floor or the roof cornice, whichever is lower.
3. Projecting signs should only advertise the business located on the premise.

Freestanding Signs

1. Freestanding signs in general should be compatible in design and materials with the design of the building they advertise.
2. The use of wood, metal, and stone piers for ground signs is encouraged.
3. Exposed structural supports for freestanding signs are discouraged.
4. Attractive landscaping around the base of a sign is recommended to enhance the sign and the image of the business.
5. Single pole signs should be avoided.



Unique sign conveying image and personality of establishment.



Quality materials are used for this freestanding sign.



Sign Materials

Guidelines for Sign Materials

1. Durable, high quality materials should be employed, compatible with the design and materials of the building.
2. Signs utilizing light-colored letters against a dark background and signs on awnings advertising the name of the business or organization are encouraged.
3. Plastic materials may be employed if used in combination with higher quality materials, or as part of individual internally lit letters or symbols.
4. Signs on awning are encouraged where appropriate (i.e., in areas of wide sidewalks).



Signage exemplifying local character is highly preferable to corporate branding.



Attractive metal sign with indirect lighting.



High quality carved wood projecting sign.

Sign Illumination

Guidelines for Sign Illumination

1. Directly illuminated signage should be from a series of gooseneck or similar extended arm fixtures, which direct light to the façade and are compatible with the design of the building.
2. Internally lit signs may be allowed if they are attached to the building façade and comply with all the other applicable guidelines.
3. Exterior lighting of freestanding signs with ground or sign-mounted fixtures is encouraged.
4. Signs that cast glare onto residential areas or public roads are not allowed.
5. Internally lit signs with white-color background are strongly discouraged.



Gooseneck lighting (indirect).

4. APPENDICES

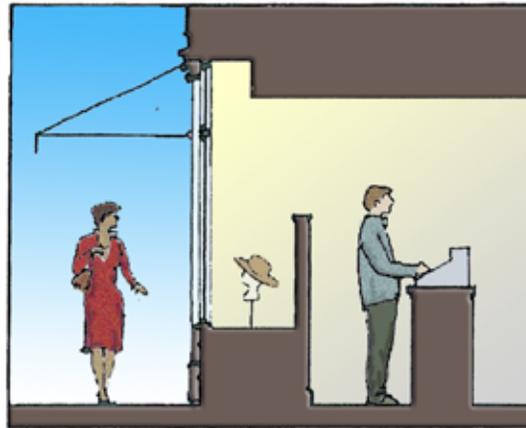
Appendix 2: Anatomy of a Building Facade



KEY

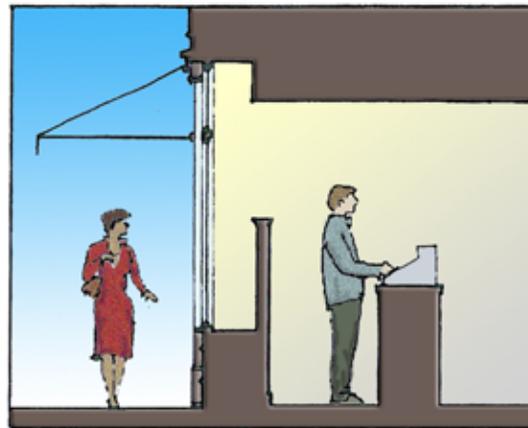
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Cornice | 8. Column or Pier Capital |
| 2. Keystone | 9. Transom |
| 3. Lintel | 10. Column or Pier |
| 4. Sill | 11. Storefront Display Window |
| 5. Horizontal Course | 12. Sill Course |
| 6. Exterior Light Fixture | 13. Base Panel |
| 7. Frieze or Horizontal Signage band | 14. Column or Pier Base |
| | 15. Awning |

Appendix 3: Storefront Design



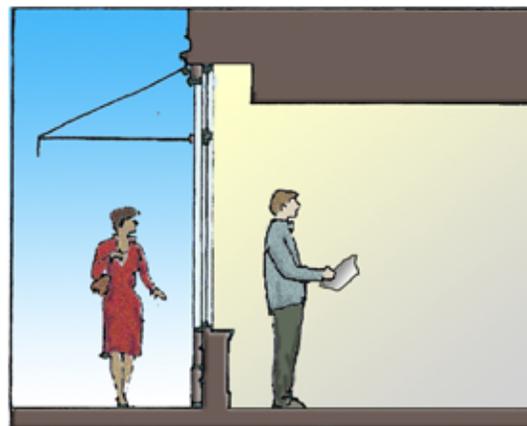
Full Display

- Best for retail product display
- Utilizes the maximum benefit of the storefront window
- Generates a high level of pedestrian interest



Signboard Display

- Used for retail and non-retail display
- Information display can be simple and direct or more detailed
- Generates a fair level of pedestrian interest



Activity Display

- Good option for restaurants and non-retail uses
- Window treatment can provide levels of privacy necessary for service businesses

Appendix 4: Glossary of Terms

Glossary of Terms

There are many traditional terms that are used to describe portions of buildings and storefronts. Because some of these terms are used in the guidelines, this glossary has been prepared.

Ashlar - Stone cut and laid in a rectangular shape and pattern.

Awning - An element projecting from and supported by the exterior wall of the building, constructed of fabric on a supporting framework, for the purpose of providing shelter or shading windows.

Balustrades - Railing of vertical and horizontal elements. Railing can be part of a stair or platform, or a decorative motif at the roof edge.

Canopy - A permanent roof-like shelter extending from and supported by the exterior wall of the building, constructed of some durable material such as metal or glass.

Canopy Sign - A sign painted on, printed on or attached flat against a canopy or marquee.

Clerestory Windows - Windows located well above street level that allow light to enter near the ceiling of the interior.

Composition - An arrangement of the parts of a building so as to form a unified, harmonious whole.

Cornice - An element at the top edge of a wall where it meets the roof, which usually is profiled to overhang the wall.

Dormer - A roof-covered projection from a sloped roof.

Facade - Any side of a building which faces a street or open space.

Fascia - A facing board used as trim, this term is also sometimes used to refer to the signboard.

Fenestration - The door and window openings in a building facade.

Gable - The vertical surface that connects two or more sloped roofs.

Landscaped Area - The part or parts of a lot developed and permanently maintained in grass and other plant materials, in which the space is open to the sky and is free of all vehicular traffic, parking, loading and outdoor storage.

Lintel - A spanning element above a window, typically seen in masonry construction.

Mansard - A roof with steeply sloping sides, rising to a relatively flat roof at the top.

Marquee - Similar to a canopy, but also serves as a location for signage.

Massing - The overall form of a building.

Pedestrian-oriented - Describes an attitude or accommodation in which the pedestrian is the primary consideration.

Pilaster - A decorative column or pier that is inset into the face of a wall.

Signboard - An area of the storefront above the glazing that was often ornamented and became the traditional location for signage. The term “fascia” is sometimes used for the same element.

Setback - The minimum horizontal distance between the street or way line and the line of the building.

Soffit - The horizontal underside of any architectural element; usually used in reference to the bottom surface of a roof overhang or the edge of a ceiling. A soffit is often used to conceal structural elements, mechanical equipment, or to transition between different ceiling heights.

Symmetrical - Having a regular or balanced arrangement of elements on opposite sides of a center or axis.

Transom - The glazed or solid panel immediately above a door.

Yard, Front - A yard extending across the full width of the lot and lying between the front line of the lot and the nearest line of the principal building or structure.

Vehicle-oriented - Describes an attitude or accommodation in which the vehicle is the primary consideration.

