

## 4.4 Signage

**Objective:** Exterior signs should be located within the first floor (not on upper floors) of the building with concern for the appropriateness of location, size, color, and lighting.

Signs are an integral part of the commercial character of the Silver Spring Business District. However, lack of control can lead to visual chaos. The base of the building is the most visible part of the building for both pedestrians and motorists. To be effective, signs should call attention to the business and create an identity while still contributing to the overall image of the street. Signs add variety and liveliness to both building facades and streetscapes. Rules for special exceptions for signs located above the first floor might be created if there is a clear improvement of the aesthetic character and quality of the facade as a result of the sign.

### 4.4.1 Sign Message

- Business signs should only include the formal name of the business, the nature of the business, and the address. There should be no advertising of brand names. Avoid an accumulation of outdated service club affiliations, credit card decals, and other sign clutter. Building signs (as opposed to business signs) should include the name of the building and the street address of the property. Professional office buildings may list the occupants of the building.

### 4.3.2 Location and Size

- Appropriate locations for signs include: (1) on the spandrel panel of the building immediately above the storefront, (2) within the transom of doors or windows, (3) on the glass of doors or windows, (4) on wall areas adjacent to doors, (5) on the valance / skirt of awnings or the edge of canopies, or (6) on projecting signs hung within the base area of the building. (See illustration)
- *Spandrel panel signs* should be contained within a structural bay of the building in terms of width, generally not exceeding 20 feet. The height of the lettering for the sign should be no more than 75% of the height of the spandrel.
- *Transom panel signs* should not completely obscure the clear glass on the transom of the door or display windows. If the transom is divided into sectioned panels, the sign location should respect and therefore not cross or otherwise obscure those divisions. Signs in the transom should not exceed 65% of the width of the panel or 75% of the height. The height of letters should also not exceed 18 inches.
- *Display window signs* applied directly to the glass should consist only of lettering and / or a logo without an opaque background. On the display window, signs should not cover more than 20% of the total area of glass. Window signs should not obscure the display area. The color of the letters should be contrasting with the display in the background. Light colored or gold-leaf letters with dark borders are generally most effective.
- *Banners and projecting signs* can be appropriate if they are executed tastefully.

Projecting signs should be small (no more than 12 square feet on one side) and mounted onto the structural piers of the building. They should be externally lit with lighting that is shielded to prevent glare from shining in the eyes of people on the street. No internally lit, flashing, or moving signs should be used. No sign can project past the curblineline of the street. All projecting signs should maintain a minimum height of nine feet to the bottom of the sign.

- o *Awning and canopy signs* can also serve as signs with contrasting letters painted or sewn onto the valance or skirt of the awning or painted onto the edge of the canopy. Usually six to eight inch letters are sufficient. Lettering should not be used on any other

portion of the awning. Lettering should also not be used that exceeds the height of the canopy edge.

- o *Ground signs* can be used at the entry point or gateways to parking lots to provide direction and signage for nearby businesses. Signs mounted on single poles are generally discouraged. Ground signs should appear monumental and their design should be carefully coordinated throughout the District. They should be supported by a substantial structure that utilizes materials such as stone or brick. This type of sign should not be used within any vision triangle at street intersections. Ground signs may be designed to include seating areas or planting areas.



**Sign Locations**

- Some exceptions for the inclusion of artfully created neon signs or images should be included, especially for businesses that have significant hours of operation during nighttime hours. Such signs should use narrow neon tubes and letters should be no larger than the letters allowed in the above descriptions.

#### **4.4.3 Style and Size of Letters**

- There are thousands of letter styles available. A letter style should be chosen that is easy to read and that represents the image of the business it is presenting. The maximum height of the letters should not exceed 75% of the height of the background on which they appear.

#### **4.4.4 Color**

- It is recommended that colors are compatible with the color(s) of the building facade and the nature of the business. No more than three colors should be used, plus white, black or a metallic accent. Fewer than three colors is acceptable and often preferred. Fluorescent colors should not be used.

#### **4.4.5 Illumination**

- No sign should be illuminated by intermittent, rotating, or flashing lights. Signs can be externally illuminated provided that any external light utilizes a hood to avoid any direct view of the light source by pedestrians or passing motorists. Internally illuminated signs are discouraged.



*Hanging sign appropriate to size, style and scale of building*



*Example of signage combined with use of an awning*



*Example of a ground sign signifying an entry*



*Freestanding ground sign for informational purposes*



*Example of a basic ground sign using brick and other natural materials*