

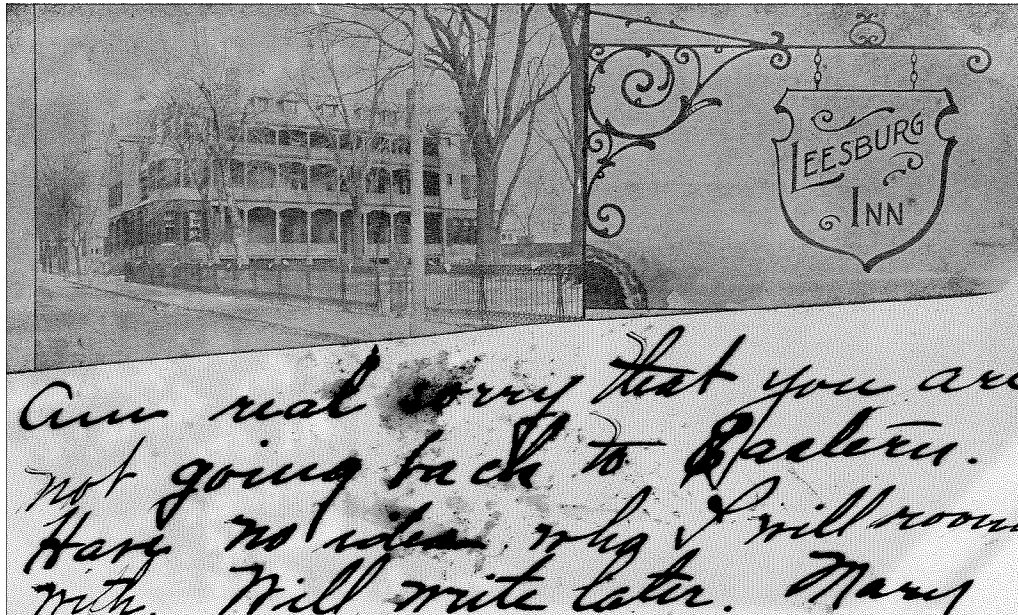
Town of Leesburg in Virginia

OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT SIGN GUIDELINES



Text approved by the Leesburg Board of Architectural Review
4 January 2006

(The illustrations are intended to be a guide only. In matters of conflict or debate the text overrides the material contained in the graphics or captions.)



Postcard depicting the Leesburg Inn, located across North King Street from the current Lightfoot Restaurant, 1906. The hotel was demolished in the mid-1900s.

*It is better to preserve than to restore
and better to restore than to reconstruct.*

—A.N. Didron, 1839



Revised and updated by Annie McDonald, Preservation Planner, 2006,
for the Leesburg Board of Architectural Review.
Produced by the Town of Leesburg.

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION 2

BASIC PRINCIPLES 2

NUMBER OF SIGNS PERMITTED 3

SIGN FORMS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT 3

Wall Signs 3

Projecting Signs 4

Window Signs 5

Ground-Mounted Signs 5

Freestanding Projecting Signs 6

CRITERIA FOR SIGN DESIGN 6

SOLUTIONS FOR MULTI-TENANT BUILDINGS 7

PRESERVING HISTORIC SIGNS 9

OBTAINING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS 9

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR BAR APPROVAL 10

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION 11

INDIVIDUAL SIGN FORMS FOR BUILDINGS WITH *ONE* OR *TWO* TENANTS 11

Wall Signs 11

Projecting Signs 11

DIRECTORY SIGN FORMS FOR MULTI-TENANT BUILDINGS (*MORE THAN TWO* TENANTS) . . 12

Wall Directory Signs 12

Projecting Directory Signs 12

CRITERIA FOR SIGN DESIGN 13

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL 13

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

Preserving the unique identity of Leesburg's Old and Historic District (OHD) relies as much on the district's streetscape elements as it does on maintaining the character of its historic buildings. Building owners and businesses can contribute to the preservation of this valuable identity through their signage choices. Appropriately designed and respectfully placed signage will effectively advance a business's presence and location in the OHD while contributing to the design of a visually attractive, integrated and pedestrian-oriented historic streetscape. All new applications for signs must conform to these guidelines.

Pursuant to the Town Code, **all** signs must receive appropriate permits prior to installation.

- Temporary signs are those displayed for sixty (60) days or less. Approvals for temporary signs are obtained through the Planning and Zoning Department.
- Portable board signs and flags are movable signs displayed on an ongoing basis. Approvals for moveable signs are obtained through the Economic Development Department. These signs are required to coordinate with any other signage, so it is prudent for an applicant to obtain approval for all other non-temporary signage prior to seeking approval for these types of signs.
- **Any** other sign (hereafter, sign) is considered an alteration to the property and is therefore subject to the rules of the Old and Historic District overlay district as reflected in these guidelines. Approvals are obtained through the Board of Architectural Review (BAR), as assisted by the Preservation Planner in the Planning and Zoning Department.

Building owners (or their designees) and their tenants are strongly encouraged to meet with the Preservation Planner to begin the approval process for:

- Creating any new sign
- Altering an existing sign
- Moving an existing sign to a new location
- Removing or altering an historic sign. Historic signs are those that are 50+ years old (see **Preserving Historic Signs**).

See **Obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness** and **Submission Requirements for BAR Approval** for more procedural details.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The following principles guide the approval of signs in the OHD:

- Signs are alterations that become part of the architectural design of a building.
- Signs must complement, not dominate, the building's façade in design, material and placement.
- Signs may not obscure architectural details and elements of the building, but should be visually linked to important building elements such as doorways and windows.
- Signs must be designed and placed to respect the pedestrian nature of the OHD.
- Signs must be designed and placed to respect the surrounding buildings and streetscape.
- Support structures and their signs must be proportional to each other and are reviewed concurrently.
- Signs must be placed in a location that relates to the business's primary entrance.
- Signs must be succinct in their presentation of information.
- The number of signs must be limited to be compatible with the architecture of the building and to discourage visual clutter.
- More than two (2) signs for a building or property must be part of a cohesive plan to maintain the integrity of the property and the streetscape.



Downtown Leesburg, circa 1900.



Downtown Leesburg, circa 1935.

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

- When reviewing sign applications, the BAR may take into consideration a building's unique architectural characteristics and how they may warrant an alternative placement other than required under these guidelines, so long as the sign otherwise meets requirements of the Leesburg Zoning Ordinance and the Town Code.

NUMBER OF SIGNS PERMITTED

Each business in the Old and Historic District is allotted a maximum of two (2) signs. The BAR has the authority to decrease or increase the number of signs permitted under the Zoning Ordinance based on its determination of what is appropriate for the architectural characteristics of a building and its setting. (Zoning Ordinance Section 15.11.1)

- Existing multi-tenant buildings—buildings with more than two (2) tenants—**may be limited** to a directory sign. However, an approved Comprehensive Sign Plan for the entire property or project may provide alternative additional signage opportunities (See **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings**).
- Proposed multi-tenant buildings or projects are **required** to complete a Comprehensive Sign Plan for the entire property or project (See **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings**).

SIGN FORMS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

Leesburg's downtown commercial district has historically featured a limited array of signs, including **wall signs**, **projecting signs**, and **window signs**. While other sign forms, such as those painted directly on the surface of a building, may be common in other historic districts throughout Virginia, they may not be appropriate based on the historic architectural record in Leesburg. The following details regarding the use of these sign forms is intended to assist a property owner or tenant in determining which type of sign is most appropriate for the building or property in question. Combining more than one sign type is something that may be determined by the BAR to be inappropriate due to the physical and architectural elements of the property; the BAR may determine that different sign forms may be appropriately combined, however, as part of a Comprehensive Sign Plan.

WALL SIGN: any flat sign attached directly to a wall. There are two types of wall signs permitted in the OHD:

- Individual Wall Signs contain identifying information for a single business.
- Wall Directory Signs contain identifying information for two or more businesses located in a single building. A wall directory sign is often required for organizing more than two signs on one elevation. Although a wall directory sign may be appropriate for organizing multiple signs on one elevation, the property owner may be required to complete a Comprehensive Sign Plan for the building or buildings containing multiple tenants (See **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings**).

CRITERIA FOR WALL SIGNS

Number

- Unless otherwise permitted by the BAR for reasons related to the building's architectural characteristics, a building is limited to one wall sign per primary business entrance.
- In rare instances, the BAR may determine that some buildings, due to their architectural characteristics and design, are able to accommodate more than one wall sign per business entrance.

Dimensions

- Individual wall signs may not exceed 6 square feet (example: 2' x 3', 1' x 6').
- Wall directory signs may not exceed 3' x 5".

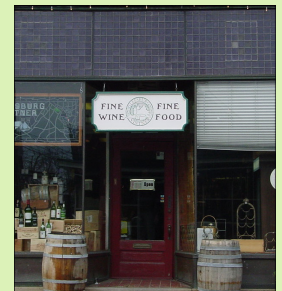


For greatest visibility, most wall signs are placed next to the main entrance of the business being advertised.



Wall signs need not be elaborate. In many cases, a simple brass plaque may be the most appropriate way to advertise a business, especially one that does not rely as heavily on tourist traffic as retail establishments.

Signs for businesses with recessed entries, such as the Leesburg Vintner, may be located in the space between the two projecting display windows.



A few commercial buildings in the Old and Historic District may accommodate wall signs above the main entrance and the display windows. In the case of the Bella Luna Ristorante, the fascia serves as a well-placed sign board, while the wall sign for Four Shabby Chicks takes advantage of an open space between the entry and the roof.

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

- The dimensions of the wall sign must be proportional to the building façade as well as the sign space.
- The BAR may determine that the architectural characteristics of the building necessitate a wall sign smaller than otherwise permitted.

Placement

- A wall sign must be located on the same façade as the main entrance to the business being advertised.
- Wall signs must be aligned with other elements of the building, including windows and doors, and may not be placed higher than the top of the door, excluding the trim. The BAR may determine that the architectural characteristics of the building warrant placement of a wall sign higher than the top of the door.
- Wall signs must be separated from adjacent architectural features, while maintaining proper proportions to the available and appropriate wall space.

PROJECTING SIGN: any sign mounted on the building by means of a bracket which holds the sign perpendicular to the face of the building. There are two types of projecting signs permitted in the OHD:

- *Individual Projecting Signs* contain identifying information for a single business.
- *Projecting Directory Signs* contain identifying information for two or more businesses located in a single building. A projecting directory sign is often required for organizing more than two signs on one elevation. Although a projecting directory sign may be appropriate for organizing multiple signs on one elevation, the property owner may be required to complete a Comprehensive Sign Plan for the building or buildings containing multiple tenants (See **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings**).

CRITERIA FOR PROJECTING SIGNS

Number

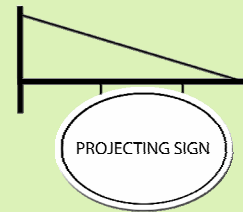
- Unless otherwise permitted by the BAR for reasons related to the building's architectural characteristics, a building is limited to one **bracket** per primary business entrance; although in some instances based on the architectural characteristics of the building, an alternative type of sign may be more appropriate.

Dimensions

- Individual projecting signs may not exceed 2' x 3'
- Projecting directory signs may not exceed 3' x 3'.
- The BAR may determine that the architectural characteristics of the building necessitate a projecting sign smaller than otherwise permitted.
- The bracket supporting the projecting sign must be proportional to the sign's width. The bracket may not extend beyond the projecting sign by more than a few inches. The BAR may permit brackets that are longer or shorter than typically allowed if the bracket is part of a well designed sign/bracket composition.
- The bracket may not extend more than 3' 6" from the surface of the building.
- The sign may not extend beyond the length of the bracket.

Placement

- The bracket supporting the sign must be located below the eaves of a one-story building or below the second-floor window sill level of a multi-story building. Pre-existing brackets located on a building above the second floor window sill may not be used unless the BAR finds the existing placement appropriate due to the architectural characteristics of the building.
- Projecting signs must be located on the same facade as the primary business entrance and in direct relation to that entrance.
- The brackets of all projecting signs on one building must be horizontally aligned to maintain balance and an organized appearance.
- Signs may not extend more than 3' 6" into the public right-of-way (Town Code Chapter 16).



The most common and typically most appropriate location for a projecting sign is right next to the main business entrance, with the bracket mounted below the window sill of the second story.



For businesses with porches that open onto the sidewalk, projecting signs may also be located below the porch roof as illustrated to the right. In many cases such as this, it is more appropriate to place the projecting sign in this location rather than to mount it to the front of the porch so that it hangs over the sidewalk.



For a building with two businesses that each has its own entry, a projecting sign may be placed at each door. The brackets for these signs must be horizontally aligned to maintain balance and an ordered appearance.



A single business that has two doors, such as Otter Creek pictured above, should use only one sign positioned in direct relation to the main entrance. The other door may include simple signage that directs patrons to the main entrance.

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

- The bottom of a projecting sign must be at least 7' 6" above the sidewalk (Town Code Chapter 16). The BAR may waive or adjust this clearance requirement if the sign does not project over the public right-of-way.

WINDOW SIGNS: any sign attached to or applied directly onto the surface of the window, or that is highly visible from the public right-of-way through the window. Window signs are generally painted, silk-screened, or in some other manner applied directly to the glass area of a storefront.

CRITERIA FOR WINDOW SIGNS

Number

- Generally, window signs are only appropriate for buildings that have minimal setback from the sidewalk.
- The BAR shall determine the appropriate number of window signs based on the number and location of windows and doors that relate to the business. The appropriate number of window signs shall also be determined based on the number and placement of other signs for the business and property.

Dimensions

- The size of the sign must be proportional to the size of the window and should not overwhelm the window display area.
- The sign should not obscure more than 20% of the glass on which it is applied. The sign area shall be calculated by measuring the perimeter of the appliqué containing all text and graphics.

Placement

- Window signs may be located in traditional storefront-type display windows or on a glass entry door.
- The center point of the sign should be approximately 5' 6" feet from above the sidewalk for greatest pedestrian visibility. However, depending on the design and size of the window sign, it may be more appropriately placed elsewhere on the window.
- Window signs must consist of flat letters and/or images that are not raised or three-dimensional.

GROUND-MOUNTED SIGNS: any sign that is supported by multiple structures or supports located in or upon the ground and independent of any support from any building. There are two types of ground-mounted signs permitted in the OHD:

- Individual Ground-Mounted Signs contain identifying information for a single business.
- Ground-Mounted Directory Signs contain identifying information for two or more businesses located on a single property. Although a ground-mounted directory sign may be appropriate for organizing many signs, the property owner may be required to complete a Comprehensive Sign Plan for the building or buildings containing multiple tenants (See **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings**).

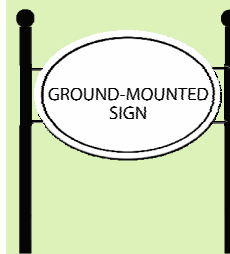
CRITERIA FOR GROUND-MOUNTED SIGNS

Number

- Because ground-mounted signs are designed more for vehicular than pedestrian traffic, they are best suited to large sites with wide corridors and are rarely appropriate in the OHD.
- The BAR may determine that some properties, due to the layout of building and the property on which it sits, are able to accommodate a single ground mounted sign.



Window signs may be placed on entry doors or commercial display windows. They must be of flat letters attached directly to the glass and may not cover more than 20% of the window. Business owners are, however, advised that the BAR counts proposed and existing window signs when determining the appropriate numbers of signs that a business may have.



Ground-mounted signs are typically only appropriate for buildings that sit back from the sidewalk or street with a front yard where the sign may be placed. To ensure the safety of pedestrians and drivers, these signs must not obscure sight lines from nearby driveways or side streets.



GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

Dimensions

- Individual ground-mounted signs may not exceed 2' x 3'.
- Ground-mounted directory signs may not exceed 3' x 5'.
- The height of the sign, combined with its support structure, may range from 3' to 6'. The BAR may determine that some properties, due to their physical and architectural characteristics, may be able to accommodate a ground-mounted sign that is greater than 6' in height.

Placement

- The sign must be placed on the property so that the sign and its support structure neither obscure architectural elements of the building nor obstruct sight lines for any nearby driveways or side streets.

FREESTANDING PROJECTING SIGNS: a special type of ground-mounted sign that makes use of one support arm with a bracket that supports a hanging sign. This type of sign is appropriate for historic dwellings that are now used as commercial space or offices, and is particularly appropriate for buildings with a front yard where the sign may be placed. Two types of freestanding projecting signs are permitted in the Old and Historic District:

- Individual Freestanding Projecting Signs contain identifying information for a single business.
- Freestanding Projecting Directory Signs contain identifying information for more than two businesses located on a single property. Although a freestanding projecting directory sign may be appropriate for organizing many signs, the property owner may be required to complete a Comprehensive Sign Plan for the building or buildings containing multiple tenants (See **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings**).

CRITERIA FOR FREESTANDING PROJECTING SIGNS

Number

- Because freestanding projecting signs are built more for vehicular traffic than pedestrians, they are suited to large sites with wide corridors and are rarely appropriate in the OHD.
- The BAR may determine that some properties, due to the size and shape of the area in front of the building and the architectural and physical details of the property, can accommodate more than one freestanding projecting sign.

Dimensions

- Individual freestanding projecting signs may not exceed 2' x 3'.
- Freestanding projecting directory signs may not exceed 3' x 5'.
- The height of the support structure may range from 3' to 6'.
- The BAR may determine that some properties, due to their physical and architectural characteristics, may be able to accommodate a support arm that is greater than six (6) feet in height.
- The support structure and arm must be proportional to the size of the sign.

Placement

- The sign must be placed on the property so that the sign and its support structure neither obscure architectural elements of the building nor obstruct sight lines for any nearby driveways or side streets.

CRITERIA FOR SIGN DESIGN

Shape

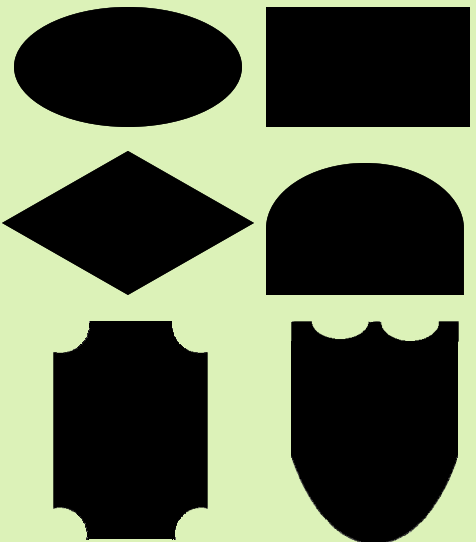
- Diversity in sign shape is encouraged throughout the OHD. A unique shape can be an effective strategy to enable a business to 'stand out' without employing colors and materials that may be inappropriate in an historic streetscape.
- Rectilinear and oval signs are appropriate and are common because they readily



Freestanding projecting signs are typically only appropriate for buildings that sit back from the sidewalk or street with a front yard where the sign may be placed. To ensure the safety of pedestrians and drivers, these signs must not obscure sight lines from nearby driveways or side streets.



Below are just a sampling of the many different shapes that may be used for signs in the Old and Historic District. In addition to these more basic sign shapes, the BAR also encourages the use of sign shapes that reflect the type of business being advertised, such as eyeglasses for an optician or a boot for a shoe repair company.



GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

conform to the area in which they are to be installed.

- Signs with unique shapes related to the nature of the business, such as eyeglasses for an optician or a boot for a shoe repair shop, may also be appropriate.

Text

- Signs may contain only the name, and, if desired by the business owner, a concise indication of the general nature of the business.
- Inclusion of a logo may be acceptable if it is determined that the text is not overcrowded and the sign otherwise meets the guidelines.
- E-mail addresses and telephone numbers are prohibited on signs in the OHD.

Material

- Traditional sign materials, such as painted wood and engraved or embossed metals, are encouraged in the OHD.
- Signs constructed of a durable composite wood material that, when painted, is indistinguishable from solid wood are also acceptable.
- The materials of which the sign is made should complement the design and materials of the building to which it relates.
- Support structures, if any, must be of durable traditional materials.

Color and Finish

- The sign color scheme includes the colors (including black and white) used for all elements of the sign or Comprehensive Sign Plan, including the text, background, logo, border and support structure, if any.
- Because signs are alterations to a building, their color schemes must respect the same guidelines as buildings. The color scheme must complement or relate to the overall color scheme of the storefront or building, including accent and trim colors. The color scheme may not detract from the architectural character of the storefront or building, nor from the surrounding buildings.
- The color scheme should be comprised of two or, at most, three colors (inclusive of background, text, and other elements); however, a particularly well-executed design may be determined to meet the guidelines though comprised of more than two or three colors.
- Reflective materials are generally discouraged. The BAR may deem appropriate a well-designed use of metallic (i.e., gold) leaf in a window sign or raised or engraved lettering on another type of sign.
- Text and graphics must be executed in a durable material that, in its finished form, resembles paint. Text and graphics may be executed in paint or, in some cases, flat or two-dimensional vinyl material that is commonly used by sign companies. The BAR may determine that vinyl letters, borders, and graphics are inappropriate in the case of large signs that exceed 24" x 36" in dimensions.

Illumination

- Internally illuminated or translucent signs such as box signs and neon signs are prohibited in the OHD unless a determination has been made by the BAR that such signs are historic in nature.
- Sign faces only may be externally illuminated by a properly shielded incandescent spotlight. That is, light must not spill over so as to impact pedestrians or vehicular traffic, or neighboring properties, and must otherwise meet all lighting requirements for the Town.
- The BAR shall review all details of the design of the spotlight and the intensity of the light used.

SOLUTIONS FOR MULTI-TENANT BUILDINGS

By definition, multi-tenant buildings are those structures that house three or more tenants or businesses, each of which may need signage to have a visible presence in the Old and Historic District. If each business installs separate signs without coordination, the result

Uniquely shaped signs, such as those shown below, may help convey the nature of a business and provide added visual interest to a sign.



The following signs illustrate how varied the design of a single sign shape may be. In these four cases, the oval sign is treated differently. While these signs may be similar in shape, they are very different in the way they are treated.



The words are incised and painted with a slightly metallic copper-colored paint, giving them a more distinguished look.



Shading and strong contrast to make the business name stand out.



A more modern design composition and non-traditional letter style set this sign apart from others nearby.



Simple and eye-catching, this sign takes advantage of a single bright color used sparingly with white text and black background.

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

could be a visually confusing and distracting mixture of incompatible signs that can negatively impact the valuable historic identity of the OHD.

Note: If a third tenant moves into a building that was previously NOT a multi-tenant building (thus creating a multi-tenant situation), then pre-existing signage that has been approved by the BAR may remain on the building. However, this creation of a multi-tenant situation will require the use of a directory sign to advertise the additional business, or a comprehensive sign plan must be presented and approved for the building. There are several ways in which property owners and businesses may be proactive and address the challenges present by multi-tenant buildings or projects.

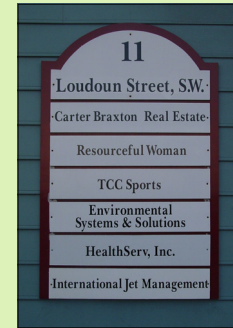
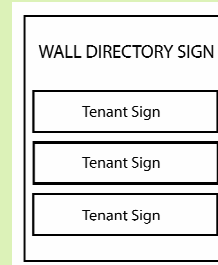
Comprehensive Sign Plan A Comprehensive Sign Plan is a coordinated plan that indicates the proposed signage details (including type, location, size, placement, design, materials, and color) for multi-tenant buildings and multi-building projects. It allows a group of tenants to have coordinated signage of one type, or even a combination of sign types if they are deemed appropriate by the BAR. The plan ensures that these signs are appropriately sized and aligned, and that they complement the building on which they are located as well as the surrounding properties.

- It is *highly recommended* that owners of **existing multi-tenant buildings** or **existing multi-building developments** seek approval for a Comprehensive Sign Plan prior to applying for individual signs for each business. Owners of existing multi-tenant buildings and existing multi-building developments may be required to use a directory sign to advertise the tenants on their property.
- A Comprehensive Sign Plan for **new multi-tenant buildings** or **new multi-building projects** is **required** in connection with the required BAR approval of the overall project.

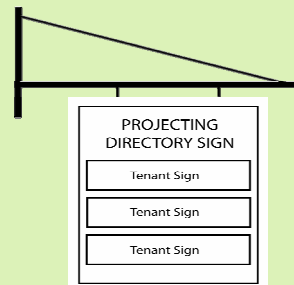
A Comprehensive Sign Plan can save property owners, business owners, and sign companies much time and effort. Once the Comprehensive Sign Plan is approved by the BAR, each individual sign may be administratively approved by staff in the Department of Planning and Zoning to ensure that it meets the requirements of the overall plan. The property or business owner would not need to apply for BAR approval of signage unless requesting a sign type, design, or location that is not part of the Comprehensive Sign Plan. Furthermore, a Comprehensive Sign Plan may remain in effect for many years. As new tenants obtain space in the building or group of buildings, administrative approval may be granted for their signage as long as it meets the requirements of the plan.

APPROPRIATE SIGN FORMS FOR MULTI-TENANT SITUATIONS

- **Wall Directory Sign** Because it must accommodate the names and locations of two or more businesses in a single building, a wall directory sign may be slightly larger than wall signs used to advertise individual tenants. Appropriately sized and placed, a wall directory sign can easily identify multiple businesses. These signs are often the most appropriate solution for advertising businesses in multi-tenant buildings. The wall directory sign must be located on the same façade as the entrance to the businesses being advertised. If there is more than one entrance to the building, then a directory sign may be placed at each entrance.
- **Projecting Directory Sign** Projecting directory signs may be slightly larger than their individual counterparts. Although they may be up to 3' x 3' area, they must still meet the minimum 7' 6" clearance required by Town Code if the sign projects over the public right-of-way. If the sign does not project into the right-of-way, the BAR may waive the clearance requirement. The size of a projecting directory sign, combined with the corresponding location requirements, may make it difficult to accommodate on multi-tenant buildings. The projecting directory sign must be located on the façade that faces the street and in relation to the entrance to the businesses being advertised. If there is more than one entrance to the building, then



Wall directory signs are often the most appropriate way of organizing many signs for businesses in a single building. The wall directory sign for the Joshua Chamberlain Building, depicted above, was approved by the BAR as part of a comprehensive sign plan. Now, each new tenant may obtain administrative approval of a single tenant sign that will be added to the wall directory sign.



Projecting directory signs are not common in Leesburg because of the location and clearance requirements for such signs. The sign illustrated above is located on North King Street and provides individual tenant signs for a number of businesses. If a tenant moves out of the building, only the individual tenant sign needs to be replaced.



GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

a projecting directory sign may be placed on each entrance that faces the street. If one of these entrances faces a parking lot or alley, then a wall directory sign must be used.

- **Freestanding Projecting Directory Sign** These signs contain the names of several businesses located in a single building and present a good solution for multi-tenant dwellings or other structures that sit back from the sidewalk with a deep front yard. Because the support structure for a freestanding projecting directory sign may not support more than two or three signs, this type of directory sign is not recommended for buildings with more than three tenants.
- **Ground-Mounted Directory Sign** These signs contain the names of several businesses located in a single building and present a good solution for multi-tenant dwellings or other structures that sit back from the sidewalk with a deep front yard. Ground-mounted directory signs are recommended for buildings with more than three tenants because they are supported at both ends by posts.

PRESERVING HISTORIC SIGNS

The following information about preserving historic signs is further detailed in Preservation Brief #25 available from the National Park Service and on the internet at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps. According to the NPS, historic signs should be retained and preserved when they are:

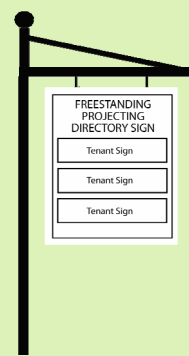
- Associated with historic figures, events, or places.
- Significant as evidence of the history of the project, business, or service advertised.
- Significant as reflecting the history of the building or the development of the historic district. A sign may be the only indicator of the building's historic use.
- Characteristic of a specific historic period, such as gold leaf on glass, neon, or stainless steel lettering.
- Integral to the building's design or physical fabric, as when a sign is part of a storefront made of Carrara glass or enamel panels, or when the name of the historic firm or the date are rendered in stone, metal, or tile. In such cases, removal can harm the integrity of a historic property's design, or cause significant damage to its materials.
- Outstanding examples of the signmaker's art, whether because of their excellent craftsmanship, use of materials, or design.
- Local landmarks, that is, signs recognized as popular focal points in a community.
- Elements important in defining the character of a district, such as marquees in a theater district.

OBTAINING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

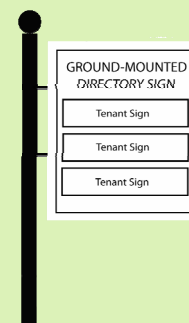
The property owner or tenant who wishes to install signage in the Old and Historic District must obtain the necessary permits prior to beginning work. The property owner or tenant(s) must obtain both the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) AND the Sign Permit before installing any signage. If more than one (1) sign is required, each sign shall require a separate Sign Permit, but only one (1) BAR application that requests approval of all signs. A Comprehensive Sign Plan may be required for large projects involving the installation of many signs on one property (see **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings**).

The BAR recommends following these steps to ensure compliance with the Old and Historic District Design Guidelines:

1. Contact the Department of Planning, Zoning & Development to discuss sign options. Town staff can recommend a few possibilities to best address your need for signage.
2. File an application for a COA.
3. File the required number of applications for a Sign Permit.



Freestanding projecting directory signs, like those depicted here, are a great way to organize signs for multiple tenants. These signs must be designed and installed so that they don't obstruct sight lines or obscure architectural details of the nearby buildings.



Because they are more solid and have greater chance of obstructing sight lines, Ground-mounted directory signs are rarely appropriate for the small lots in the Old and Historic District. Those that are approved are strategically designed to appropriately relate to their surroundings, such as these two signs on Loudoun Street.



There are few signs in Leesburg that qualify as historic (50+ years old). These signs are worthy of preservation because they document the town's historic commercial development. The signs depicted above date to the early twentieth century and are icons to many Leesburg residents.

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

4. Obtain approval for the COA from the Board of Architectural Review of the Preservation Planner. Once you obtain the COA, you may then receive the necessary sign permits.
5. Install all approved signage.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR BAR APPROVAL

Sign submissions must include the relevant Application and fee. Applicants are not required to obtain professional services in the design and execution of signage or for the submission of application materials. Nevertheless, all applications must be complete and include all information necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of the requested signs or Comprehensive Sign Plan. Unless otherwise indicated, the application must contain ten (10) copies (in color when appropriate) of the following information:

Scale drawing that includes the method of support, sign dimensions, and design. The sign design must show the text style and size, logo, ornamentation, and border.

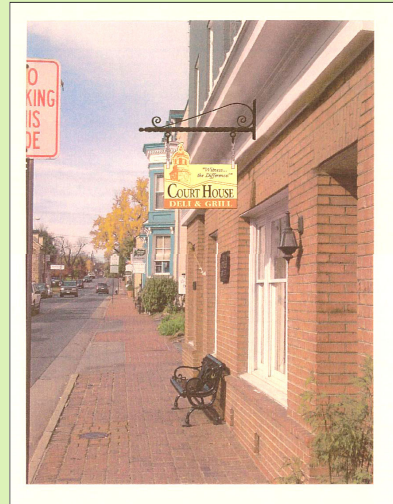
Scale drawing that demonstrates the method of mounting for all wall signs, projecting signs, ground-mounted signs, and freestanding projecting signs. For projecting signs this information should also include a scale drawing or photograph of the bracket. For freestanding projecting signs, this information should include a scale drawing of the bracket and yard arm (or other fixture). For ground-mounted signs, this information should include the type and size of the base on which the sign will be mounted.

Color rendering or chips to indicate the sign color scheme.

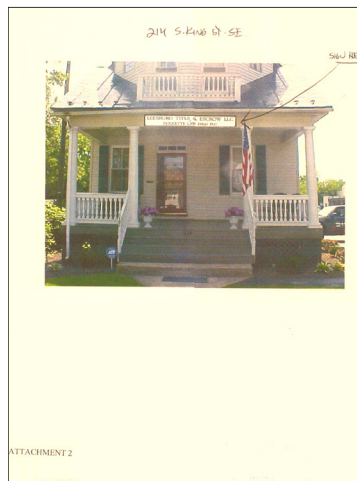
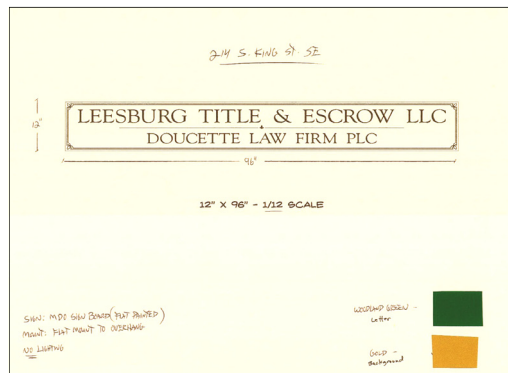
Material sample if the sign is composed of a material other than wood. Only one (1) copy of the material sample is required for the submission.

Site Plan that depicts the location of the sign on the property if it is a ground-mounted or freestanding projecting sign.

Illustration showing the method and details of illumination, if applicable.



Because the Courthouse Deli sign is uniquely shaped, the sign application materials for the Courthouse Deli included images of both sides of the projecting sign. For signs that are identical on both sides, only one side needs to be depicted. More complex sign shapes, such as the one depicted here, might require additional information. In addition, the application included a photographic representation of what the building would look like once the sign was installed.



When submitted for BAR approval, the wall sign for Leesburg Title and Escrow was depicted in attachments that included not only the sign's dimensions, but also "color chips" of the adhesive vinyl material typically used by sign companies. These chips enabled the BAR to see what the true colors of the sign would be. The image illustrating the sign's proposed location clearly indicates how the sign will appear on the building.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

The Board of Architectural Review (BAR) appreciates the importance of signage to downtown businesses and **sincerely** encourages sign diversity. BAR members are pleased to work with applicants, and they welcome businesses and property owners to apply for signs that are creatively designed yet compatible with the historic character of Leesburg. Indeed, it is these unique signs that most frequently earn awards for their distinction. As a time-saving benefit for those business owners desiring simple signs in straightforward situations, however, the BAR has delegated approval authority for certain sign forms and designs to the Town's Preservation Planner. Certain applications for signs in the Old and Historic District (OHD) may be administratively approved by the Preservation Planner if they meet the following criteria and guidelines for sign forms and sign design in the Old and Historic District. Sign design and placement issues can be quite complex. **If the Preservation Planner has any concerns about whether or not a proposed sign meets the following criteria for Administrative Approval for Signs in the Old and Historic District, then the application will not be approved administratively. In the event that the Preservation Planner does not administratively approve a request for signage, the application may be forwarded to the BAR for review at the applicant's request. This action should not be taken as an indication that a sign will not be approved by the BAR. Instead, it simply means that the application does not meet the criteria for Administrative Approval.**

INDIVIDUAL SIGN FORMS FOR BUILDINGS WITH ONE OR TWO TENANTS

THAT MAY BE APPROVED BY THE PRESERVATION PLANNER

To be approved administratively, an individual sign must comply with the criteria for the number, dimensions, and placement for each of the following sign forms.

WALL SIGNS

Number

- A building is limited to one wall sign per primary business entrance (not to exceed two wall signs per building).
- If a third tenant moves into a building that was previously NOT a multi-tenant building (thus creating a multi-tenant situation), see **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings** on page 7 or **Wall Directory Signs** and **Projecting Directory Signs** on page 12.

Dimensions

- Individual wall signs may not exceed 6 square feet (example: 2' x 3', 1' x 6').
- The dimensions of the wall sign must be proportional to the building façade as well as the sign space and adjacent architectural details.

Placement

- Signs must be aligned with other elements of the building, including windows and doors, and may not be placed higher than the top of the door, excluding the trim.
- All wall signs must be located on the same façade as the primary business entrance and in relation to that entrance.
- Wall signs must be separated from adjacent architectural features, while maintaining proper proportions to the available and appropriate wall space.

PROJECTING SIGNS

Number

- A building is limited to one **bracket** per primary business entrance (not to exceed two brackets per building).
- If two businesses use the same primary business entrance, then two signs may be hung from the same bracket.
- If a third tenant moves into a building that was previously NOT a multi-tenant building (thus creating a multi-tenant situation), see **Solutions for Multi-Tenant Buildings** on page 7 or **Wall Directory Signs** and **Projecting Directory Signs** on page 12.

Dimensions

- Individual projecting signs may not exceed 2' x 3'
- The bracket supporting the projecting sign must be proportional to the sign's width
- The bracket may not extend beyond the projecting sign by more than a few inches.
- The bracket may not extend more than 3' 6" from the surface of the building.
- The sign may not extend beyond the length of the bracket.

Placement

- The bracket supporting the sign must be located below the eaves of a one-story building or below the second-floor window sill level of a

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

multi-story building.

- Projecting signs must be located on the same facade as the primary business entrance and in direct relation to that entrance.
- The brackets of all projecting signs on one building must be horizontally aligned to maintain balance and an organized appearance.
- Signs may not extend more than 3' 6" into the public right-of-way (Town Code Chapter 16).
- The bottom of a projecting sign must be at least 7' 6" above the sidewalk (Town Code Chapter 16).
- Existing brackets that comply with these guidelines may be considered for use in new applications for business signage.

DIRECTORY SIGN FORMS FOR MULTI-TENANT BUILDINGS (MORE THAN TWO TENANTS)

THAT MAY BE APPROVED BY THE PRESERVATION PLANNER

To be approved administratively, a directory sign must comply with the criteria for the number, dimensions, and placement for each of the following sign forms.

WALL DIRECTORY SIGNS

Number

- A building is limited to one wall directory sign per primary business entrance (not to exceed three wall directory signs).
- If a third tenant moves into a building that was previously NOT a multi-tenant building (thus creating a multi-tenant situation), then pre-existing signage that has been approved by the BAR may remain on the building. However, this creation of a multi-tenant situation will require the use of a directory sign to advertise the additional business, or a comprehensive sign plan must be presented and approved for the building.

Dimensions

- Wall directory signs may not exceed 2' x 3'. Staff felt it appropriate to reduce the size of a wall directory sign that could be administratively reviewed.
- The dimensions of the wall directory sign must be proportional to the building façade as well as the sign space.

Placement

- Signs must be aligned with other elements of the building, including windows and doors, and may not be placed higher than the top of the door, excluding the trim.
- A wall directory sign can only be located on the same façade as a primary business entrance. If there is more than one business entrance to the building, then a directory sign may be placed at each entrance.
- Wall directory signs must be separated from adjacent architectural features, while maintaining proper proportions to the available and appropriate wall space.

PROJECTING DIRECTORY SIGNS

Number

- A building is limited to one **bracket** per primary business entrance per street elevation.
- If a third tenant moves into a building that was previously NOT a multi-tenant building (thus creating a multi-tenant situation), then pre-existing signage that has been approved by the BAR may remain on the building. However, this creation of a multi-tenant situation will require the use of a directory sign to advertise the additional business, or a comprehensive sign plan must be presented and approved for the building.

Dimensions

- Projecting directory signs may not exceed 3' x 3'.
- The bracket supporting the projecting sign must be proportional to the sign's width
- The bracket may not extend beyond the projecting sign by more than a few inches.
- The bracket may not extend more than 3' 6" from the surface of the building.
- The sign may not extend beyond the length of the bracket.

Placement

- The bracket supporting the sign must be located below the eaves of a one-story building or below the second-floor window sill level of a multi-story building.
- The projecting directory sign must be located on an elevation that faces a street and in relation to the entrance to the businesses being advertised. If there is more than one entrance to the building, then a projecting directory sign may be placed on each entrance that faces a street. If one of these entrances faces a parking lot or alley, then a wall directory sign must be used.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR SIGNS IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT

- Signs may not extend more than 3' 6" into the public right-of-way (Town Code Chapter 16).
- The bottom of a projecting sign must be at least 7' 6" above the sidewalk (Town Code Chapter 16).

CRITERIA FOR SIGN DESIGN

Shape

- Diversity in sign shape is encouraged throughout the Old and Historic District. This can be an effective strategy to enable a business to 'stand out' without resorting to colors and materials that may be inappropriate in an historic streetscape.
- In general, rectilinear and oval signs are appropriate and are common because they conform to the area in which they are to be installed.
- Signs with unique shapes related to the nature of the business, such as eyeglasses for an optician or a boot for a shoe repair shop, may also be appropriate.

Text

- Signs may contain only the name, and, if desired by the business owner, a concise indication of the general nature of the business.
- Inclusion of the street address and logo may be acceptable if it is determined that the text is not overcrowded and the sign otherwise meets the guidelines.
- E-mail addresses and telephone numbers are strictly prohibited on signs in the Old and Historic District.

Material

- Traditional sign materials are encouraged in the Old and Historic District, such as painted wood, and engraved or embossed metals such as brass or bronze.
- Signs constructed of a durable composite wood material that, when painted, is indistinguishable from solid wood are also acceptable.
- The sign's materials should complement the design and materials of the building to which it relates.
- Support structures, if any, should be of durable traditional materials as well.

Color and Finish

- Because signs are alterations to a building, their color schemes must respect the same guidelines as buildings. The color scheme must complement or relate to the overall color scheme of the storefront or building, including accent and trim colors. The color scheme may not detract from the architectural character of the storefront or building, nor from the surrounding buildings. For instance, signs in a predominantly residential district may be required to use more subdued colors than signs in a predominantly commercial area.
- The sign color scheme includes the colors (including black and white) used for all elements of the sign or Comprehensive Sign Plan, including the text, background, logo, border and support structure, if any.
- The color scheme should be comprised of two or, at most, three non-reflective colors (inclusive of black and white); however, a particularly well-executed design may be determined to meet the guidelines though comprised of more than two or three colors. The color scheme includes the colors used for the background, text, and other elements.
- Text and graphics must be executed in a durable material that, in its finished form, resembles paint. Text and graphics may be executed in paint or, in some cases, flat or two-dimensional vinyl material that is commonly used by sign companies. The BAR shall determine if vinyl letters, borders, and graphics are appropriate in the case of large signs that exceed 24" x 36" in dimensions.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL

The submission of applications for administrative approval must include the relevant Application and fee. Applicants are not required to obtain professional services in the design and execution of signage or for the submission of application materials. Nevertheless, all applications must be complete and include all information necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of the requested signs or Comprehensive Sign Plan. Unless otherwise indicated, the application must contain **two (2)** copies (in color when appropriate) of the following information:

Scale drawing that includes the method of support, sign dimensions, and design. The sign design must show the text style and size, logo, ornamentation, and border.

Scale drawing that demonstrates the location and method of mounting of all wall signs and projecting signs. For projecting signs this information should also include a scale drawing or photograph of the bracket.

Color rendering or chips to indicate the sign color scheme.

Material sample if the sign is composed of a material other than wood. Only one (1) copy of the material sample is required for the submission.

Illustration showing the method and details of illumination, if applicable.