



# ADVERTISING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES IN THE BOLIVAR HISTORIC DISTRICTS

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**This booklet was prepared for the City of Bolivar  
and the City of Bolivar Historic Zoning  
Commission by the City of Bolivar Historic  
District Sign Committee.**

**Mrs. Joanne Johnson (Chairperson)**

**Mr. Willie R. Boyle (Member)**

**Ms. Judy Nuckolls, (Member)**

**Mr. Barrett Stevens (Councilman, Member)**

**Mrs. Cathy Mayfield (City Liaison/CLG Contact)**

**The Committee gratefully acknowledges and  
appreciates the use of, and information gleaned  
from the following:**

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Kevin Chastine**

**Lowell Massachusetts Sign Book**

**Historic Main Street Beaufort South Carolina**

**Historic Jonesborough Tennessee**

**National Trust for Historic Preservation**

**City of Bolivar Zoning Ordinance**

### **City of Bolivar Historic Zoning Commission**

**Mr Ken Kowen (Chairman)**

**Mrs. Monita Carlin (Member)**

**Mrs. Joanne Johnson (Member)**

**Mrs. Geneva Mckinnie (Member)**

**Mrs Kay Yarbrough (Member)**

### **City Of Bolivar**

**Mayor Charles L. Frost M.D.**

**Councilman Doug Baker**

**Councilman Milton Basden**

**Councilman Mike Brown**

**Councilman Willie McKinnie**

**Councilman Barrett Stevens**

**Councilman Mike Wellons**

**Councilman Jerry Wilhite**

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**Section 1**

**ADVERTISING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

These advertising standards and guidelines are intended to help the business community of Bolivar maintain and build the already viable harmony of commercial prosperity and historic preservation. The best guard against a lifeless streetscape then is a knowledge and appreciation of sign diversity and quality.

**Section 2**

**CORRELATION WITH BOLIVAR SIGN AND ZONING ORDINANCES**

These Standards and guidelines have been developed under the provisions of the **City of Bolivar Zoning Ordinance**. Applicable sections follow:

**a.**

**Chapter 2**

**Section 10-218 (Titled) Signs and Billboards**

**2. Historical and Cultural Districts**

No sign shall be erected or maintained at any location in a Historical or Cultural District until approval has been granted by the Bolivar Historic Zoning Commission. The Commission shall review each sign request on the sign’s relationship to the historical character of the immediate area zoned for historical cultural preservation.

**b. Chapter 7 DISTRICT REGULATIONS HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL DISTRICTS**

**(1.) Section 10-701 (Titled) General**

The Historical and Cultural District (HC) shall be overlaid on existing districts to designate areas, sites, and structures of sufficient historical and cultural significance to warrant public protection. It is the intent and purpose to encourage the preservation of structures, sites and areas that have historical and cultural significance. It is intended that the use of these structures shall be in character with their original design or of a nature which will not necessitate inappropriate changes in exterior appearance, create congestion or increase fire hazards.

**(2) Section 10-705 (Titled) Approval of Historic Zoning Commission**

After a structure or site or area has been designated as having historical and cultural significance as evidenced by re-zoning, all applications for building and/or occupancy permits for construction, alteration, repair, moving or demolition, or changes in use of building or land to be carried on within the Historic districts shall be referred by the Building Inspector to the Historic Zoning Commission who shall have broad powers to request detailed construction plans and related data pertinent to a thorough review of the proposal. The Historic Zoning Commission shall within thirty (30) days following the availability of sufficient data direct the granting of a building and/or occupancy permit with or without attached conditions or direct the refusal of the building and/or occupancy permit and the grounds of refusal stated in writing. Upon review of the application for the building and/or occupancy permit, the Historic Zoning Commission shall give prime consideration

to: (1) Historical and/or architectural value of the present structure; (2) the relationship of the exterior architectural features of such structure to the rest of the structure and the surrounding area; (3) the general compatibility of exterior Design, arrangement, texture and materials to be used; and (4) to any other factor, including aesthetic, which it deems to be pertinent.

### **Section 3**

#### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

##### **a. RESIDENTIAL**

In the Bills/McNeal Historic District, the North Main Historic District and other designated residential properties, the following sign locations will be acceptable:

1. Signs can be suspended between porch posts.
2. Signs can be mounted on or within the fascia board.
3. Signs can be freestanding in the front yard, no higher than eight feet (8') and shall not exceed a maximum area of eight square feet (8').
4. Projecting Signs from porch posts on residences shall be mounted no more than twelve feet (12'' from the ground.
5. Signs shall not obscure architectural details.

##### **b. BUSINESS**

In the Court Square Historic District and other designated Historic Business Properties the following sign locations will be acceptable:

1. Signs should not obscure architectural details or signage of adjacent buildings.

2. Space on the building façade specifically designed to contain signage shall be the most appropriate location for signs.

##### **c. LETTERING**

1. a. **Permanent** sign lettering for signs larger than one square foot should be compatible with the style and historic period of the related building.  
b. **Temporary** signs may use lettering consistent with the product, service or event advertised, even if inconsistent with the style and historic period of the building.
2. Historic spelling, lettering, and wording must be consistent with the documented authentic history of Bolivar. Numerous published examples of historic lettering styles are available from the Historic Zoning Commission at the Municipal Center. The Commission with regard to lettering styles will use these publications along with historic photographs taken in Bolivar as resource materials.

##### **d. COLORS**

1. Color selection is one of the most crucial aspects of successful sign design. A sign should complement rather than clash with its surroundings. Sign colors must be compatible with the building façade, adjacent signs, and the adjacent buildings.
2. Fluorescent and day-glow paints and colors **are Not Permitted** in the Historic Zone.

**e. LIGHTING**

1. In most locations in downtown Bolivar, signs are well lit by streetlights and individual sign illumination is unnecessary and shall not be approved.
2. External illumination may be approved when natural or street lighting doesn't provide sufficient light for reading a sign.
3. Internally illuminated signs shall not be permitted even for modern buildings unless the modern building and sign are isolated from view from neighboring buildings, which in their style and historic period predate the use of internally lit signs
4. The Historic Zoning Commission must carefully consider the effect of any sign's illumination on an adjacent or neighboring building prior to approval. Temporary trial lighting is strongly recommended as a part of obtaining approval of the Commission, which reserves the right to rescind any approval within sixty (60) days of installation, if in the judgment of a majority of the Commissioners, the lighting conditions were not accurately represented or demonstrated during the application process.

**f. QUALITY OF MATERIALS AND WORKMANSHIP**

Materials must be of sufficient quality and durability to give the sign a normal or longer than normal life span. All signs must be of professional quality. The Historic Zoning Commission reserves the right to rescind approval of any sign within 60 days of its installation, if

the judgment of the majority of its Commissioners, feel that the applicant has misled the Commission with regard to quality of workmanship at the time of application for approval. This is not intended to discourage individual artwork and careful craftsmanship on the part of people who do not necessarily make a living building signs.

**g. SIGN MATERIALS**

1. Appropriate materials are those which compliment the historical nature of the building. Signs can be made of wood, metal, stone, paint on glass, etched glass, stained glass, gold leaf, or synthetic materials may be used if they closely approximate the look of authentic natural materials.
2. Sign Brackets shall be constructed of painted wood or pre-painted metal. Guy-wires if needed shall be as inconspicuous as possible.
3. Materials must be of sufficient high quality and durability to sustain several years use.

**h. NUMBER OF SIGNS**

1. Each business shall be allowed two(2) signs per façade as long as one is a window sign or window lettering.
2. A building with more than one storefront shall have similar sign and mounting treatments so as to provide balance and unity to the building.

**Section 4**

**i. SIGN MAINTENANCE AND NON-CONFORMING SIGNS**

**SIGN SPECIFICS**

1. Non-conforming supports, brackets and unused signs must be completely removed before a new sign is installed. Any holes in the building must be appropriately patched or repaired.
2. Obsolete signs are prohibited and shall be removed within thirty (30) days of vacancy.
3. Signs should be properly maintained and not fall into disrepair. Rusting, paint peeling, and similar problems are evidence of poor maintenance.
4. Signs on awnings or canopies shall be removed when the tenant vacates the building.
5. Businesses with existing non-conforming signs are encouraged to develop new signage programs to bring their buildings in conformity with these guidelines.
6. The Historical Zoning Commission must approve any changes to existing sign, size, or materials etc.
7. Sidewalk benches or park benches with advertising on them are not allowed.
8. Temporary signage can be used for only 30 days from date of approval.

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a. AWNINGS & CANOPIES

1. Awning and Canopy signs are those which are painted or applied to awnings or canopies.
2. Awning and canopy signs shall be allowed on the canopy or valence.

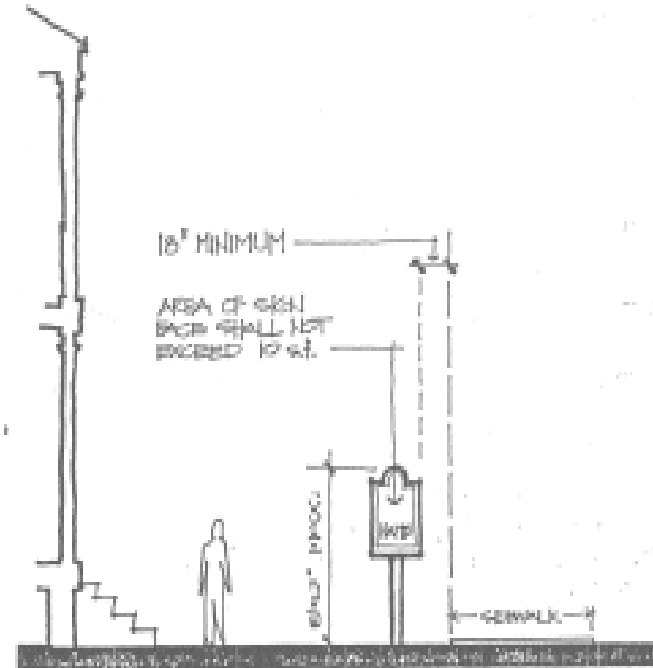
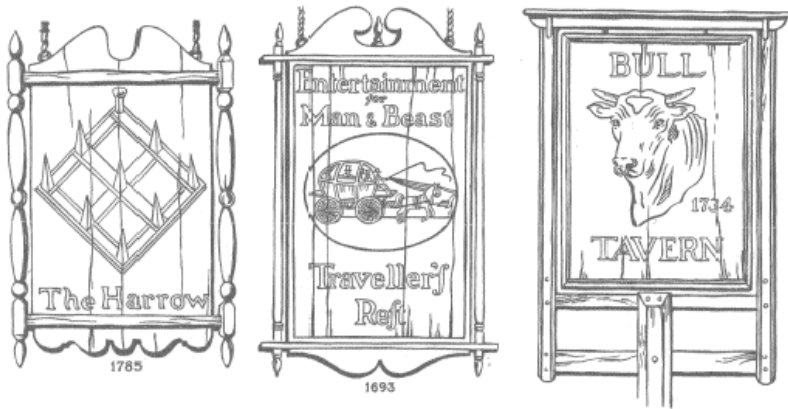




**b. FREE STANDING SIGNS**

- 1. Any sign that is attached to a completely self-supporting Structure (i.e. a pole) and not to any building.**
- 2. The edge of the sign shall be located no closer than eighteen inches (18") to a vertical plane at the sidewalk line.**
- 3. Size of Free Standing Signs:**

**In the commercial and residential historic zones, freestanding signs shall be no higher than eight feet (8') and Shall not exceed a maximum area of six square feet (6').**



c. NEON SIGNS

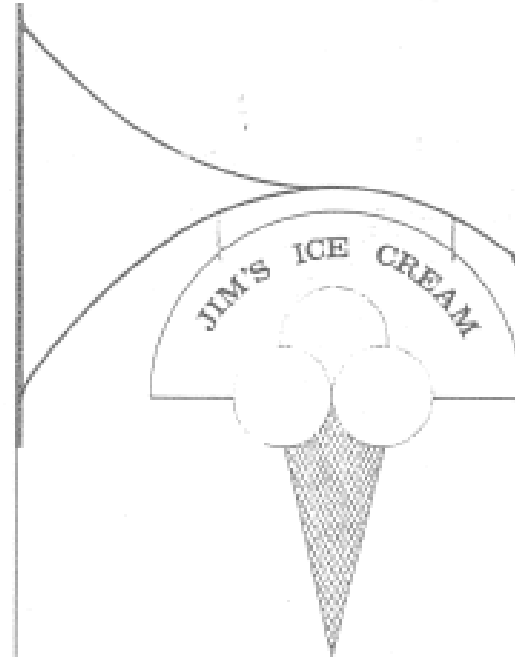
1. Neon Signs: Will be allowed and must meet criteria for size.
2. Neon Signs shall be located within eighteen inches (18") from the top or bottom frame of the display window.
3. Another acceptable location shall be where the center line of the sign is five feet, six inches (5' 6") above the sidewalk.
3. Size of Neon Signs:
  - a. Neon signs, in combination with any other window sign, shall not exceed twenty per cent (20%) of the area of the display window.
  - b. Temporary Neon Signs placed on display cases behind glass are acceptable as long as they are not affixed in any fashion to the glass. These signs will not require review, but the total ratio of all neon signs and window signs to glass shall not exceed twenty percent (20%).



An example of a well designed neon sign.

d. PROJECTING SIGNS

1. **Projecting Signs:** Any sign having two or more faces and/or that projects more than twelve inches (12") from the face of the building. This includes signs mounted on marquees, awnings, canopies, and banners.
2. **Projecting Signs** shall be located no closer than eighteen inches (18") to a vertical plane at the street curb line.
3. **Projecting signs** may not extend more than four feet (4') from the surface of the building.
4. **Projecting signs** shall maintain a minimum clearance of nine feet (9') from the pavement of the sidewalk to the lowest point on the bottom of the sign.
5. **For multi-story commercial buildings**, sign brackets shall be mounted no higher than the sill of the second floor window.
6. **For single story buildings**, signs shall be mounted so that the bottom of the sign is level with the top of the storefront opening.
7. **Size of Projecting Signs;** the maximum area of projecting signs shall not exceed eleven (11') square feet .



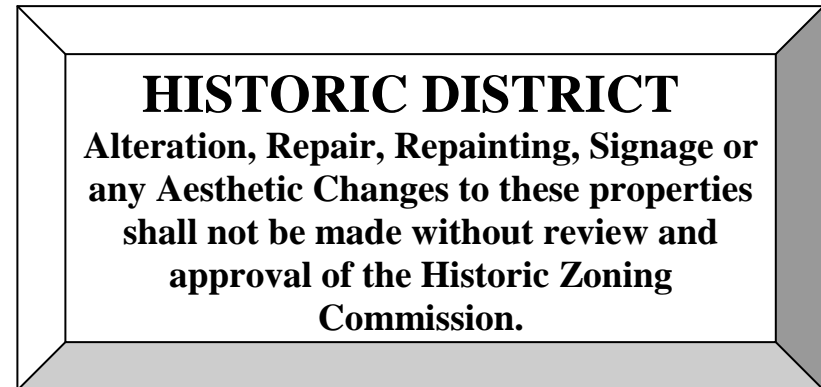
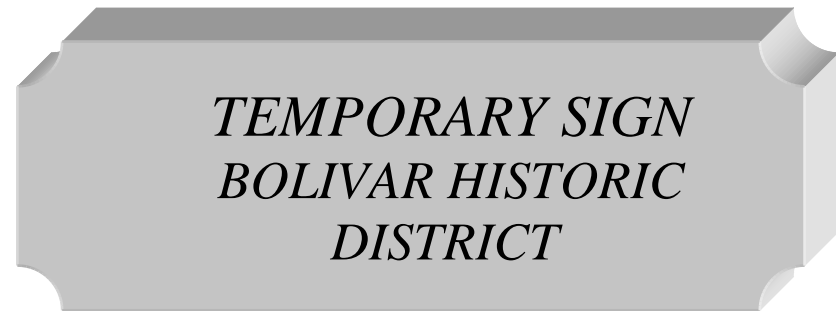
e. **SANDWICH BOARDS**

1. Any sign that is portable and stands on the ground.
2. Placement of sandwich boards shall not block pedestrian traffic or interfere with on street parking etc.
3. Size of Sandwich Boards:
  - a. Sandwich Boards shall not exceed three foot six inches (3' 6") in height and shall not exceed eight square feet (8') in area per side.



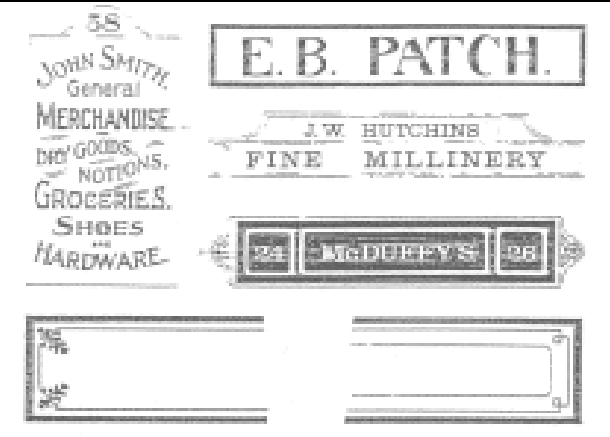
f. **TEMPORARY SIGNS**

1. **Temporary Signs:** Any sign purchased or leased from the Historic Zoning Commission to designate the opening of a new business, or any sign approved by the commission as a temporary sign.
2. This type of sign may be used for **no more than three (3) months** from the date of purchase, rental or approval, from the Historic Zoning Commission.
3. **No renewal** of the temporary new Business sign is permitted.
4. **Size of Temporary Signs:**
5. Temporary signs shall not exceed six (6) square feet.
6. Temporary signs can only be used for thirty (30) days from date of approval.



**g. WALL SIGNS**

1. **Wall Signs:** any sign affixed in such a way that its exposed face and sign area is parallel to the plane of the building to which it is attached.
2. A wall sign shall be confined to the flat unadorned surfaces of the façade.
3. Signs applied directly to building surface shall be acceptable.
4. Wall signs shall be placed where they best complement the building. (For example, on blank expanses of wall or building areas clearly designed as potential sign locations, covered transoms, wide vertical piers or broad plain fascias in the cornices). Such areas vary depending on the building's architectural style and/or date of construction.
5. Wall signs may not extend more than six inches (6") from the building surface.
6. **Size of Wall Signs:**
  - a. Area of wall signs per building shall not exceed 1-1/2 X the linear footage of the building.
  - b. Wall signs shall not exceed eighty square feet (80') in area.
  - c. Height of wall signs shall not exceed twenty-four inches (24").
7. Signs shall not cover transom windows.



**h. WINDOW SIGNS**

1. **Window Signs:** Signs painted on or attached to, or suspended directly behind any window or door that serves as an identification of a business.
2. **Window Signs** shall be located within eighteen inches (18”) from the top or bottom frame of the display window.
3. Another acceptable location shall be where the center-line of the sign is five feet, six inches (5’ 6”) above the sidewalk.
4. **Size of Window Signs:**
  - a. The ratio of sign to glass shall not exceed twenty per cent (20%) of the display window.

**Calculation Example**

*Window size = 5ft wide x 6ft tall = 30 sq. ft.*

*30sq. ft. x .20 = 6sq.ft total sign area*

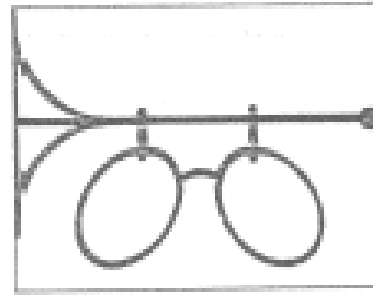
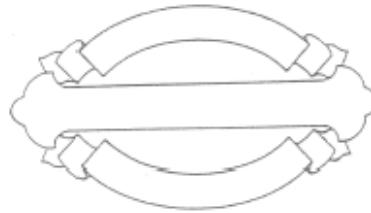
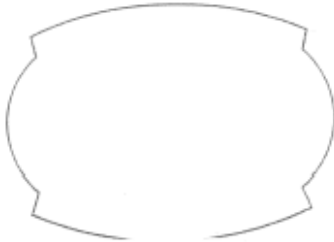
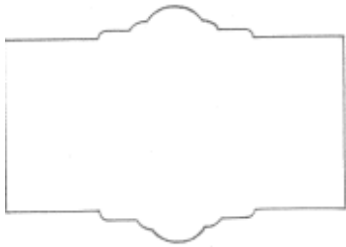
- b. **Temporary window signs** placed on display cases behind glass are acceptable as long as they are not affixed in any fashion to the glass. These signs are not required to be reviewed, but the total ratio of all window signs to glass shall not exceed twenty percent (20%) of the display window. (See above example)



## SAMPLE SIGNS

*The examples below are merely a sampling of appropriate signs, and are by no means the only types of signs allowed.*

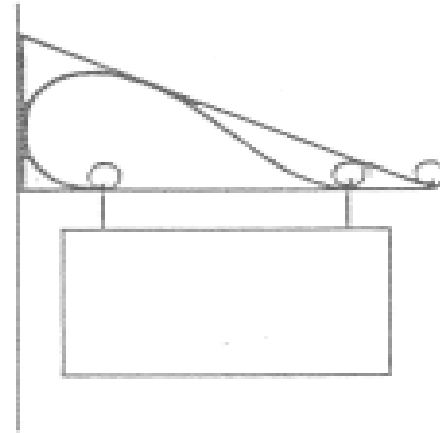
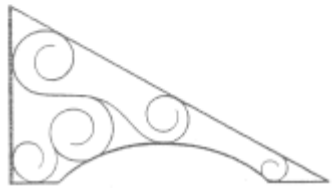
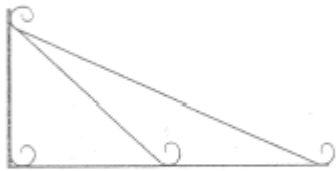
*The commission encourages unique and contemporary designs that would blend with, and enhance the architecture of our Historic Districts.*



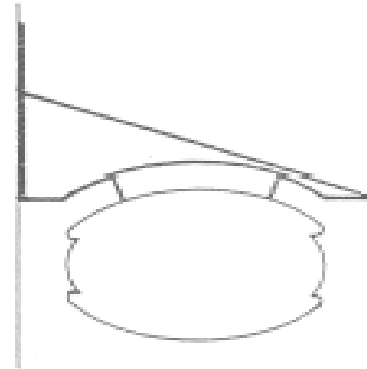


## SAMPLE BRACKETS

*The examples below are merely a sampling of appropriate signs, and are by no means the only types of brackets allowed. The commission encourages unique and contemporary designs that would blend with, and enhance the architecture of our Historic Districts.*



Bracket and rectangular sign



Bracket which closely follows sign's oval shape

**SAMPLE**

**Sign Proposal for a Sign in the Bolivar Historic District**

1. Property: Barrett & Stevens 117 S. Main Street
2. Location: Southernmost vertical pier in front of building. Sign shall be centered vertically based upon width of pier and horizontally based upon the distance between awning and sidewalk. Sign shall be affixed flat to the brick pier, and thickness shall not exceed 2 Inches (2”).
3. Type of Sign: Wall Sign.
4. Construction: Base of Sign shall be constructed of treated plywood, framed with treated molding. Letters will be painted on the base.
5. Colors: Background color will be Sherwin & Williams Forrest Green. Molding and trim color will be Sherwin & Williams Shadow Lawn. Lettering color will be gold leaf
6. Size of Sign: Twenty inches (20”) wide by thirty two (32”) tall, for a total of four and four tenths square feet 4.4’).
7. Style of lettering: Times New Roman Italic.



20” X 32” = 640 sq inches

640 divided by 144 = 4.4 sq ft.

## Section 5

### GLOSSARY

1. **WOOD**- Primary material for the original signs in Historic District can be utilized as sign boards, separate letters, either painted or covered with gold, silver, or metal leaf. Letters could be affixed to signboards or mounted directly on a building.
2. **PAINTED WALLS**- Repainted or re-enhanced wall signs are allowed. From the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, signs painted directly on buildings were a popular form of advertising. These signs were frequently found on sidewalls or upper stories of older buildings. Usually faded with age, they are known as phantom or ghost signs. Painted wall signs are important reminders of commercial history or community heritage. Whether repainted or allowed to fade, ghost signs should be left exposed for the enjoyment of future generations.
3. **MASONRY RELIEF**- Whether carved into stone or cast in molded brick or terra- cotta masonry relief signs are impressive and long lasting.
4. **ETCHED OR PAINTED WINDOWS**- Signs etched or painted directly onto glass storefront display windows and entrances are popular. Gold Leaf window signs are still popular today, as are signs in enamel or acrylic paints and those using thin plastic or vinyl letters affixed directly to the windows.
5. **DECALS**- Decals are affixed as borders framing storefront display windows. When too many are applied to one window they create a clutter-confusing appearance.
6. **AWNINGS AND BANNERS**- Awnings can be used as signs. The business's name and graphic image can be painted or silk screened on the material, or with individual canvas letters sewn onto the valance. Banners can be utilized to announce sales. This is a temporary use only.
7. **TRANSOMS**- Transom windows are often made with prismatic glass or frosted glass to allow light to filter into the building. Colored or stained glass letters spelling out the store's name or line of goods are incorporated into the design of these windows.
8. **ETCHED STRUCTURAL PIGMENTED GLASS**- A type of opaque glass with deep lustrous color created by the even distribution of pigments throughout its thickness. This glass is expensive today because it is imported from Europe.
9. **NEON**- Neon became popular in the 1920s. The hand crafted glass tubing is usually attached to a shaped, sheet metal structure projecting from a façade or it may be hung on a thin metal frame inside a store window.
10. **TILE AND TERRAZO**- Tiles are often used to form the business name or create decorative patterns on the bulkhead beneath storefront display windows and in the store entryway. Terrazzo was used as a paving material in deeply recessed storefront entrances.
11. **PORCELAIN ENAMEL**- These signs were made by applying liquid porcelain enamel to the face of sheet metal and baking it to create a durable finish. Enameled sheets can be used as sign panels, individual letters and three-dimensional symbols.
12. **SHEET METAL**- This can be used as a backing for porcelain enamel and neon signs; sheet metal can be molded into a variety of forms and used alone or in combination with other materials.
13. **SYMBOLS**- Signs used with symbols rather than words have been popular. Example: a mortar and pestle or eyeglasses are typical of trade symbols used as signs.
14. **PLASTIC**- Plastic is considered an unsuitable material for historic commercial areas because it often has been used inappropriately- particularly in the form of large individual letters and glaring white, internally illuminated boxes. Plastics may be approved for use on or adjacent to buildings consistent in style with a period during which plastics were used in advertising.

