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**Historic Zoning Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
April 23, 2019**

The Historic Zoning Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on April 23, 2019 at 5:30 pm in the Administrative Conference Room at the Municipal and Safety Building.

**Members Present:** Mr. Nathan Brand, Chairman  
Col. Paul Williamson, Vice-Chairman and Planning  
Commission Representative  
Mr. Wesley Forsythe  
Mr. Hal Hunter  
Ms. Valda Jones

**Members Absent:** Ms. Liz Biosca  
Mr. Tom Mozen

**Staff Present:** Matthew Manley, Senior Planner, City of Johnson City  
Nicole Lawrence, Recording Secretary, City of Johnson City

Chairman Brand called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

Approval of the Johnson City Historic Zoning Commission agenda was put forth with a motion from Commissioner Jones and a second from Commissioner Hunter. The agenda was then approved 5-0.

The minutes from the Historic Zoning Commission Meeting held on March 26, 2019 were approved with corrections with a motion from Commissioner Hunter and a second from Vice-Chairman Williamson. The minutes were approved 5-0.

## New Business

The first item on the agenda was discussion and approval of the proposed changes to the Downtown Design Guidelines (Sign Policy).

Please see the attached updated sign policy attached to these minutes. The changes are marked in RED.

Public Hearing was opened;  
Fred Jablonski – 240 E. main St. spoke in favor of the proposed changes.

Seeing no one else wished to speak, the public hearing was closed.

A motion to approve as presented and amended was put forth by Vice-Chairman Williamson with a second from Commissioner Jones.

Motion

VOTE: 5-0.

At this time Commissioner Hunter made a motion to defer the next two items on the agenda until the next meeting in May. Vice- Chairman Williamson made a second.

Motion to defer the last two items on the agenda under new business was approved.

VOTE: 5-0

## Additional Business

Staff approved CoA's were discussed by staff.

### Subcommittee reports:

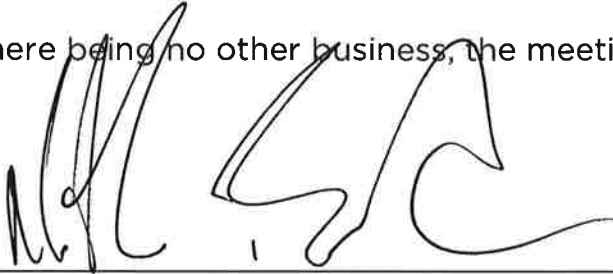
Gump Addition Selection Committee – Thomason & Associates met with interested parties regarding their progress on the Gump addition on April 22, 2019. This project is moving along smoothly.

Blight / Demolition by Neglect – The taskforce for this committee has been created with the exception of a member of the City Commission being appointed. The City Commission will meet again on May 2, 2019 and hopefully appointment a representative at that time.

Downtown Design Committee – This committee will next meet on April 25, 2019. Commissioner Forsythe will attend this meeting and report back on the progress being made.

CLG Training- Training will be held Friday April 26, 2019.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nathan Brand', written over a horizontal line.

Nathan Brand - Chairman

# { Signage/ Murals }

## A.

### Definitions:

- **Sign:** Any device, structure, placard, surface, or fabric using graphics, letters, symbols, pictures, or sculptured matter designed to convey information visually and exposed to public view from outside.
- **Mural:** Means a singular work of art painted or otherwise directly applied on a building, structure, fence, or other object within public view. The work does not contain text, graphics, or symbols which specifically advertise or promote a business, product, or service
- **Pedestrian Scale:** Refers to the use of human-proportioned architectural features and site design elements clearly oriented to pedestrian activity. Such elements are typically smaller in scale and more proportional to the human body, rather than monumental or large scale, and include surface texture and patterns, lighting, colors, materials, and architectural details.
- **Display:** Any merchandise or advertised service that is set in front of any first floor window and exposed to public view from outside for the purposes of conveying information visually without ~~the intention of~~ obscuring or reducing transparency of the storefront.

## B. General Purpose & Intent

According to the City of Johnson City Sign Ordinance (Article VII - Sign Regulations), new signs must conform with the Downtown Historic Design Guidelines. Conformance with the Design Guidelines is approved through the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA). CoA's are issued by the Historic Zoning Commission or in some cases, by the Staff (see more below). Additionally, a sign permit is needed in most cases (see Master Sign Plan matrix).

A sign typically serves two functions: first, to attract attention, and second to convey information, essentially identifying the business or services offered within. If it is designed well, the building front alone can serve the 'attention-getting' function, allowing the sign to focus on conveying information in a well-conceived manner. All new signs shall be developed within the overall context of the building and the district. Signs are most successful when they work with, not against, the architecture and are proportioned to fit the building and complement the district as a whole. Additionally, the following general principles shall apply to signage in the Downtown Historic District:

- Signs shall capitalize on the "special character" of the building (architectural features, style, scale, etc.) and the District as a whole (variety, massing, alignment of features, etc.).



Fig. 1 Appropriate Display



Fig. 2 Inappropriate Display

- A sign shall be coordinated within the overall façade composition. Locate a sign on a building so it emphasizes design elements of the façade and does not cover them. Use traditional placement; mount a sign to fit within existing architectural features. Use the shape of the sign to help reinforce the vertical and horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street or to help promote the product or service of the business.
- A sign shall be proportional to the building, so not to dominate the appearance. A sign shall be in scale with the façade and be to pedestrian scale. A sign shall be subordinate to the overall building composition.
- Signs that are historically important and retain or recreate integrity shall be maintained.
- It is not intended that these Design Guidelines be applied to **temporary** signage that is part a City Commission-approved Special Event.

**Policy 10A: Design a sign to be in balance with the overall character of the building and the surroundings.**

**A. MASTER SIGN PLAN** - A master sign plan is a cohesive plan which integrates all signage associated with a building within the context of the building, its features and its surroundings. A Master Sign Plan shall be developed for the entire building; to be used to guide individual sign design decisions and shall consist of a combination of Primary, Secondary, and Subordinate Signage. This is especially important for buildings with multiple businesses and/or multiple facades.

- A master sign plan should specify the location, number and size of all signs on the property
- A master sign plan should make all signs on the building cohesive, linking one to another, ultimately creating a central theme for the site.
- The materials, methods of illumination and graphic standards shall be defined.
- The majority of signs should be concentrated at the street level close to the entrance of the building.
- A sign shall be proportional to the building, so not to dominate the appearance.
- Signs will be considered Primary, Secondary or Subordinate signs.
- A maximum of three (3) signs (one (1) primary sign plus two (2) secondary signs), in addition to subordinate signage, may be used per primary building façade
- Upper floor occupants: may be recognized as part of a directory sign or within the signage allotted.
- Corner buildings or buildings with multiple facades shall be permitted one additional secondary sign. In cases where there are multiple entrances/storefronts, an applicant shall dedicate one side as "primary". A primary side is defined by a traditionally-used entrance and principal storefront.



Fig. 3 Master Sign Plan (appropriate)

# Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines Sign Matrix

	Sign Types	Approval Type
Primary Signs	Large Projecting Signs Wall Signage Monument Signs	CoA/Sign Permit CoA/Sign Permit CoA/Sign Permit
Secondary Signs	Window Signage Awning Signs Under-Awning Signs Small Projecting Signs Directory Signs Bicycle Rack Sign	CoA CoA/Sign Permit CoA/Sign Permit CoA/Sign Permit CoA/Sign Permit Public Works/Planning/ Building Permit
Subordinate Signs	Open Sign Hours of Operation Letters under 3" Sandwich Boards	None None None None





Fig. 4 Large Projecting Signs

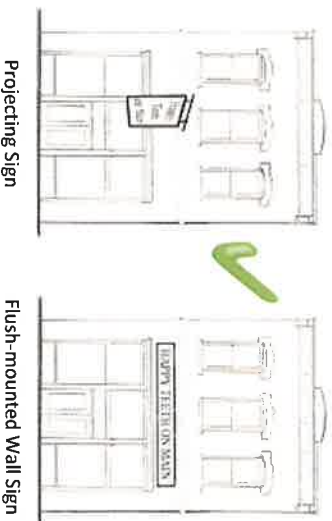


Fig. 5 Appropriate Primary Sign Locations

(1) **Primary Signs** shall be the largest, most prominent sign. They are placed in the sign band or upper façade or hung from the exterior façade (~~except in the case of a monument sign~~). Primary signs include wall signs, projecting signs, and monument signs. For the purposes of a Master Sign Plan, an awning sign is not considered a primary sign. Each Business shall be allotted 1 primary sign.

(a) **A Projecting Sign** is strongly encouraged in most circumstances as a primary sign.

(i) ~~A projecting sign is easier for a pedestrian to read than other sign types and is encouraged.~~

(ii) Projecting signs shall be carefully designed to reflect the character of the building and be compatible with other adjacent signage. They can have visually appealing elements such as shapes, painted or applied letters; two or three dimensional icons, etc.

(iii) Mounting hardware for any hanging sign should be an attractive and integral part of the sign design. It may be constructed of a variety of materials including wood, metal, or composites.

(iv) A projecting sign should be positioned where it will not damage or visually intrude upon architectural details.

(v) A projecting sign should be placed where it will not obscure a wall sign.

(vi) A large projecting sign shall be mounted higher, and centered on the façade or positioned at a corner (primary sign). Not to exceed 32 Sq Ft.

~~(vii) Within the allowable size, height, and dimensions, creative shapes that reflect the type or theme of the business being advertised are encouraged (e.g. ice cream shop may display a sign in the shape of an ice cream cone).~~

(viii) As part of a master sign plan, small projecting signs not exceeding 6 Sq Ft are considered secondary signs (see below).

(b) **A Flush-Mounted Wall Sign** shall be considered, depending on the building façade, as a primary sign.

(i) A wall sign may be permitted 1.5 square feet of signage per 1 linear foot of width of the building façade or storefront (example: 30 feet of wall width = 45 square feet of total wall signage. This will pertain to the total amount of wall signage for the first-floor façade, first-floor storefront, or the first-floor tenant space

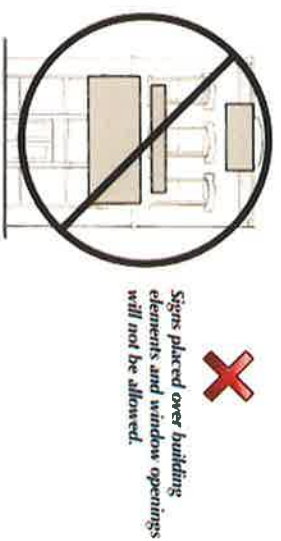


Fig. 6 Inappropriate Primary Sign Locations



Fig. 7 Monument Sign



Fig. 8 Window Signage

- (ii) **In certain cases**, the Historic Zoning Commission may determine **in specific cases or in general**, that the full size allowance **by the sign ordinance** is too large “in-scale-to pedestrians or the context of the building or surroundings” or obstructing significant architecture. The Commission **will suggest an appropriate size reserves the right to review the scale and context of proposed signage**.
  - (iii) When planning a wall sign, determine if decorative moldings exist that could define a “sign panel.” If so, locate a flush-mounted sign such that it fits within a panel formed by moldings or transom panels or **masonry**.
  - (iv) When mounted on a building with historic significance a sign shall not obscure significant façade features.
  - (v) Do not use wall signs that exceed the height of the building cornice.
  - (vi) Wall Signs shall be located to align with others on the block whenever feasible.
  - (vii) Signs on higher levels of the building should be considered only if it is the name of the building or where the premises may be limited in sign location at street level where otherwise, the sign would be obscured.
  - (viii) In certain cases, signs on commercial buildings along/fronting arterial streets may be placed higher on a façade when it is determined that the sign will not have a negative impact on the design, or design elements of the façade.
  - (c) Ground-mounted **Monument Signs** no more than 5 feet tall may be considered as primary signs. Such signs shall only be used when a site permits. Signs shall conform with basic standards for color, materials, lighting and typeface.
- (2) **Secondary Signs** (2) are generally smaller versions of the primary sign. They shall be window signage, under-awning signs, awning signs, directory signs, bike racks or small projecting signs. Each business shall be allotted two (2) secondary signs.
- (a) **Window Signage** may be considered as part of a master sign plan as a secondary sign.
    - (i) Window signage shall not significantly reduce storefront transparency or overpower the architecture of the building.
    - (ii) Window signage **may shall** be painted **on or be** an applied vinyl decal on a window.
    - (iii) Window signage shall cover no more than twenty (20) percent of the total window area.



(iv) *The total window area shall be calculated as the total window space of street-facing storefront windows. For corner buildings, the storefront of each side of the building shall be calculated separately.*

(v) *Signs that are visible through a window from the street must meet the requirements of a window sign unless they meet the definition of a "display".*



Fig. 9 Under-Awning Signs



Fig. 11 Awning Sign & Small Projecting Sign

(b) An **Awning Sign** or **Under-Awning Sign** may be considered as part of a master sign plan as secondary signs.

(i) An awning sign shall be located on the valance (vertical portion) of the awning which hangs below the main portion and not on the angled area.

(ii) Awning signs **may** occupy a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the valance (vertical surface) area on each face of an awning

(iii) An under-awning or under-canopy sign is appropriate in certain circumstances. Such signs shall be hung at a height of not less than 8' above the sidewalk so as not to obstruct pedestrians.

(iv) Under-awning signs shall be located near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side of it.

(c) **Small Projecting Signs** should be located near the business entrance, just above, or to the side of ~~it~~ the door. As part of a master sign plan, small projecting signs not exceeding 6 Sq Ft are considered secondary signs.

(d) A **Directory Sign** may be considered as part of a master sign plan as a secondary sign with individual businesses considered subordinate signs.

(i) Group small, individual signs on a single panel as a directory to make them easier to locate.

(e) A **Bicycle Rack Sign** may be approved as a secondary sign provided it meets the following requirements:

(i) The bicycle rack type, materials, and treatment meet the standards of the City's Public Works Department;

(ii) The placement location is approved by the City's Planning **Division & Zoning Department**;

(iii) The bicycle rack does not **obstruct encroach into** the four-foot unobstructed pedestrian way.



Fig. 10 Directory Sign



Fig. 12 Bike Rack Sign



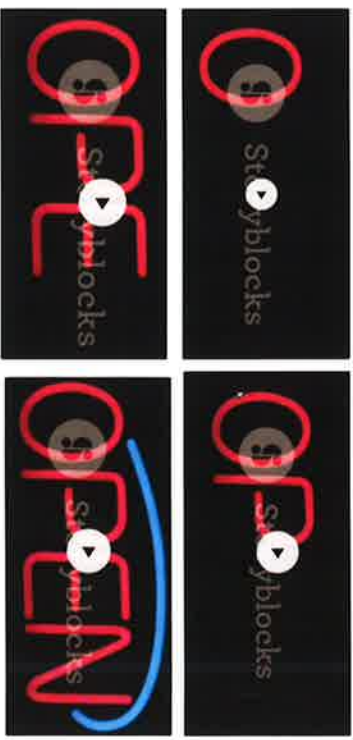
Fig. 13 Sandwich Board

(3) **Subordinate Signs** - generally provide additional information that is necessary for the operation of the business. "Open" signs and text regarding hours of operation, phone numbers and other similar text under 3" in height are considered subordinate signs.

- (a) Subordinate signs, other than Sandwich Boards, are limited to a combined 3 square feet.
- (b) Subordinate signs do not require a permit or a Certificate of Appropriateness
- (c) One **static** "Open" sign (no larger than 2 sq ft) shall be allowed per business
- (d) **Sandwich Board** signs are encouraged as a subordinate sign and shall not obstruct pedestrian traffic.
- (i) Sandwich Board signs on sidewalks in commercial areas are appropriate. Each business or premises shall be entitled one sandwich board sign for each street frontage granting access to the premises provided the following requirements are met:
  - (ii) The sign does not encroach into the four-foot unobstructed pedestrian way;
  - (iii) The sign material shall be wood and slate;
  - (iv) Sign lettering has a finished look;
  - (v) The maximum area of a sign is no more than six square feet per side of sign with the maximum height being 42 inches.



Figs. 14 & 15 Other Subordinate Signage



Figs. 16 Inappropriate Non-Static Open Sign



## Primary Colors

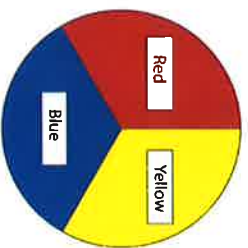


Fig. 17 Primary Colors as Accent Colors

B. **COLORS** - Use colors for the sign that are compatible with those of the building front.

- Limit the number of colors used on a sign – generally, no more than 3
- Signs should avoid the extensive use of primary colors or significant areas of white or cream, which would have the effect of visually detaching the sign from the building.
- Primary colors are appropriate as accent colors
- ~~Sign colors should be coordinated with overall building colors~~
- Color should be used both to accentuate the sign design and message, and also to integrate the sign or lettering with the building and its context.

C. **MATERIALS** – Sign materials shall be compatible with that of the building façade.

- The use of historic sign materials is required. Unfinished materials, are discouraged because they are out of character with the district.
  - Shall be considered “**Appropriate**”: finished, carved, painted or sandblasted wood; **high density urethane**, metal; stone; glass; gold leaf; brass and copper.
  - Shall be considered “**Inappropriate**”: plywood, plastic (includes acrylic sign faces) or unfinished wood; highly reflective materials that shall be difficult to read
- Painted signs on blank walls were common historically and may be considered. Depending on the scale and placement of the proposed painted sign, the HZC will determine if it will be classified as a Primary or Secondary Sign.
- Sign attachment parts should avoid damaging any architectural details or features of the building.

- Consider reusing the sign and fixing positions or cover previous fixing positions wherever possible.

- Wherever possible, avoid drilling new holes or creating new fixing positions on historic facades, by using existing holes and fixing positions.

- When creating new fixture areas on brick buildings, drill holes in the mortar rather than the brick.

D. **TYPEFACE** – A simple sign design is preferred

- Clear, coherent signage is encouraged in order to uphold the character of the district and improve pedestrian experience.



Fig. 19 Wood & Metal Sign with appropriate projecting sign hardware



Fig. 20 Typeface example



Fig. 18 Appropriate Painted Sign



Fig. 21 Typeface example

- b) Use letters and fonts that enhance rather than detract from the historic design of the building.
- c) Lettering and fonts should emphasize legibility
- d) Typefaces that are in keeping with those seen in the area traditionally are encouraged.
- e) Select letter styles and sizes that shall be compatible with the overall façade.



Fig. 22 Shielded, Externally-Illuminated Signage

- E. LIGHTING** – Lit signs shall use external illumination
- a) Lighting shall be a warm-white in color, similar to daylight, gas lanterns or incandescent bulbs.
  - b) **Lighting shall be rated between 2800K-3000K**
  - c) Externally illuminated signage shall be illuminated from the top of the sign using shielded and focused light fixtures.
  - d) Consider halo illumination as an alternative to other types of internally illuminated signs.
  - e) Reversed pan-channel letters with an internal light source reflecting off of the building may be used for “halo” illumination
  - f) The light source shall not be visible except for tubular style lighting
  - g) Unless historically documented, intermittent or flashing light sources **shall** be avoided
  - h) Neon and other tubular illumination may be considered.
  - i) Proposed lighting must receive an electrical permit from the City’s Building Department
  - j) See other standards for Lighting in Policy 12



Fig. 24 Reversed Pan-Channel Letters / Halo Illumination

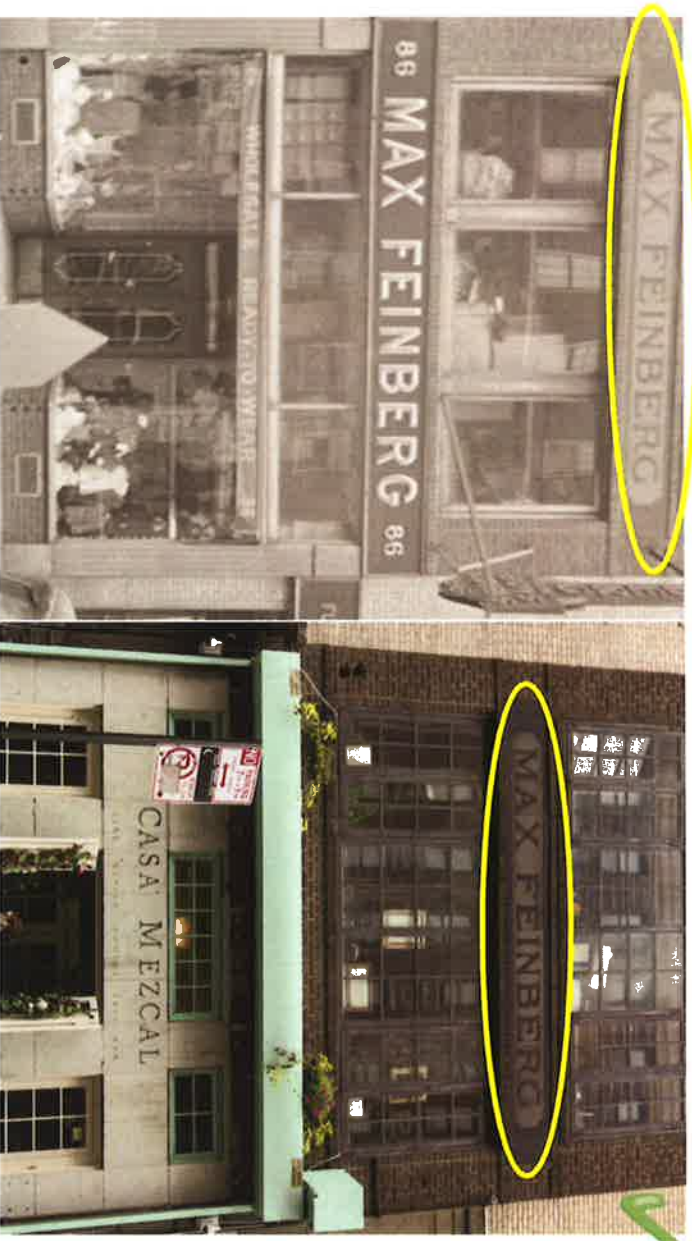


Fig. 23 Tubular Illumination



F. **PRESERVATION** - Signs that are historically important and retain or recreate integrity shall be maintained

- ~~a) Signs that are historically important and retain or recreate integrity shall be maintained.~~
- b) Preserve an historic painted sign or "ghost sign" where it exists when feasible.
- c) Ghost signs shall be allowed to fade.
- d) If an owner wants to restore the sign, the proposed method and level of restoration must be approved by the Commission.
- e) If a building owner wants to eliminate the ghost sign, approval must be given by the Historic Zoning Commission prior to removal.



Figs. 25 Sign Preservation Example



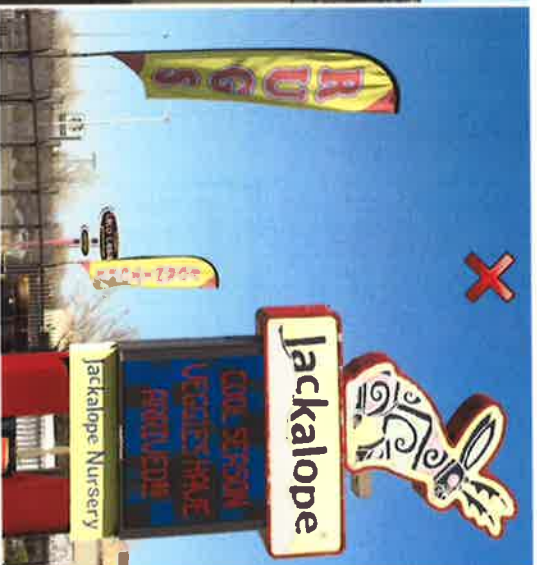
Fig. 26 Temporary Banner Example

G. **TEMPORARY SIGNS** - may be considered ~~for a maximum of 45 days~~

- a) **Temporary signs or banners may be utilized for a maximum of 45 days**
- b) Temporary signs or banners may be a maximum of 15 Sq Ft.
- c) Temporary signs are required to have a dark background and light lettering.
- d) Temporary signs require a Certificate of Appropriateness as well as a sign permit.

H. **PROHIBITED SIGNS**

- a) Internally-illuminated, cabinet signs are not permitted in the district.
- b) Free-standing signs, other than monument signs, which are supported upon the ground by poles, braces, fences or other supports and not attached to any building.
- c) Commercial Flags
- d) Feather banners
- e) Any sign not specifically included in these regulations



Figs. 27, 28, & 29 Examples of  
Prohibited Signs

**I. CoA Approval Process**

- a) *Sign Applications involving multiple sign types shall be considered Master Sign Plans.*
- b) *Master Sign Plans receive full Commission approval*
- c) *Once a Master Sign Plan is approved with a CoA, individual change-outs or revisions may be approved administratively though remain subject to sign permit application processes.*
- d) *Individual sign applications may be approved administratively with CoA issuance as long as they are consistent with an existing Master Sign Plan or the Historic District Guidelines.*