

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Signs

Sign Characteristics

The location, number, size, height, shape, and color of signs can either enhance or detract from the visual appearance of a community or roadway. Can you picture a place in your community where there are lots of signs everywhere—big imposing signs on tall poles, on billboards, and sometimes even stacked on top of each other? This type of haphazard placement of signs causes visual clutter, a form of visual pollution, because it detracts from the visual appeal and character of our community.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Unlimited size and number of signs has the potential to create visual clutter and loss of regional character.
- Too many signs competing for attention are ineffective advertising for businesses, too.
- Large signs along roadways are an intrusion into the scenic qualities of the natural landscape.
- The presence of large signs, used by franchises nationwide, contribute to a sense of sameness about the community, sometimes referred to as “Anywhere, USA.”



COMMON APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

Tall signs, too many signs, and signs with very large square footage are commonly erected. Business owners seek the most impact in order to be seen from a passing vehicle. Signs are designed to be as different as possible from those on adjacent properties, so that they don't blend in. This **visual clutter** detracts from the scenic qualities of the community and the natural landscape.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

(May be accomplished through state or local education programs or regulations enacted by local units of government.)

- Limit the number, size and height of signs, and prohibit billboards when possible.
- Encourage little or no illumination of signs.
- Use sign materials that reflect regional landscape, community character, and architectural styles (see sign on p. 20).
- Encourage franchise establishments to use their logo rather than a large sign, to alert passers-by to their location. For example, McDonald's has used a pair of trademark golden "arches," instead of a large sign stating "McDonalds."
- Recognize and reward businesses, perhaps through a tax incentive or public certificate/awards program, for constructing an attractive sign that is less visually intrusive on the landscape.



Using a single sign like this at highway exits can eliminate the need for many billboard signs.

