



The following policies have been developed by the Planning and Development Department (P&D) to assist both applicants and staff by identifying specific criteria that is used to evaluate signs that require design review approval. These policies should be used when completing and reviewing the required design review checklist that should be submitted with the sign permit application.

The following list recognizes under what circumstances a sign is subject to design review and what guidelines are applicable:

- The proposed sign is located on a site that is subject to site plan design review guidelines. (All guidelines apply);
- The proposed sign is for an existing site that is NOT subject to site plan design review guidelines, however an increase in height and/or sign area is requested. (Only guidelines 6.1.1, 6.1.3 and 6.1.4 are applicable, EXCEPT, if the site is subject to a site plan with design review, then ALL guidelines apply);
- The proposed sign is requesting one of the following bonuses permitted under sign design review:
  - ◆ Signs erected above the roofline;
  - ◆ Elimination of the separation from building standard;
  - ◆ Signs on attached building walls within the building setback.(ALL guidelines apply)

The guidelines that pertain to signs are either presumptions or considerations. Section 507 of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance defines these as follows;

**Presumptions (P):**

Most of the guidelines are Presumptions (P). A guideline that is a presumption normally will contain the word “should.” A plan submitted for design review is incomplete if it does not demonstrate that the presumptive elements have been in some way incorporated or overcome.

**Overcoming a presumption:**

A presumption that may be unsuitable for a given project may be waived if an applicant can demonstrate to P&D that there is a good reason why the presumption is inappropriate. P&D may approve an alternative that achieves the intent of the presumption.

**Appropriate reasons for overcoming a presumption include:**

- (1) Demonstrating that in this instance the underlying design principles will not be furthered by the application of the presumption;
- (2) Showing that another design principle is enhanced by not applying the presumption;
- (3) Explaining the unique site factors that make the presumption unworkable.

Increases in cost of development generally will not be an acceptable reason to waive a

guideline or determine a guideline is inappropriate.

### **Considerations (C):**

Design guidelines listed in the adopted Design Review Guidelines as Considerations (C) are issues and concepts that an applicant should consider in preparing a plan. Their omission is not grounds for rejecting a plan, but their inclusion or recognition is encouraged and may assist in overcoming certain presumptions and in gaining acceptance for a plan.

The following contains the design review guidelines (bolded) that pertain to signage, followed by bullet items that identify specific areas that need to be addressed. The guidelines can be found in Section 507 Tab A of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance.

## **6. Project Signage**

### **6.1 Character**

#### **6.1.1 Signs should be designed to be consistent with architectural treatment and overall character of the site.(P)**

**Rationale: Signs help reinforce the image created by architecture of the development.**

- ♦ A solid base using similar building materials should be used on signs eight feet or less in height.
- ♦ Pole covers can be used on signs greater than eight feet in height. Arches, columns and other features should be assimilated into the pole cover to achieve architectural compatibility.
- ♦ Particular attention should be paid to the sign cabinet to insure the cabinet does not appear massive or out of scale with the base. The cabinet should work together with the rest of the architectural embellishments, so that the structure appears as a unified structure. Routing letters, using individual letters, using reveals and borders to provide relief to the structure can achieve this.

#### **6.1.2 Signs should conform to the character of the context area, as it is more specifically defined in any adopted plan for the area. (C)**

**Rationale: Signs are one of the most effective means of creating a unique image for an area within a community.**

- ♦ Specific, Redevelopment and Neighborhood Plans as adopted by City Council shall be adhered to when sign standards have been defined.
- ♦ Consideration should be given to the height and area of signage in the surrounding context area. (Context area includes all adjacent parcels as well as property within approximately 300 feet of subject site.)

#### **6.1.3 Signs should use materials or textures that are complimentary to those used in the building or project being signed. (P)**

**Rationale: Signs which incorporate the materials used on site are better integrated into a development.**

- ◆ Like or similar building materials and textures should be used on sign bases and pole covers.
- ◆ Sign cabinets should be textured using the same or complimentary textures.
- ◆ Structural additions that are used to integrate signs onto peaked roofs or attached building walls must use similar or complimentary materials to ensure that the addition appears as an integral part of the building and not an afterthought slapped on the building.

**6.1.4 Signs should use colors which match or complement the colors used on the building or on the project being signed. (P)**

**Rationale: Sign colors can enhance and carry out the character of a development. Signs are one of the most effective means of creating a unique image for an area within a community.**

- ◆ Colors that match or complement colors or elements of the building should be incorporated into the sign base, architectural trim and/or cabinet.
- ◆ The use of a consistent letter style and color should be considered when designing tenant directory panels. The colors should be harmonious with the colors of the project.

**6.2. Location**

**6.2.1 Sign locations should be integrated within the design of the site and the adjacent streetscape. (P)**

**Rationale: Signs should be located to provide their functional purpose of communication, and not dominate the building, the site design, or the adjacent streetscape.**

- ◆ Building setbacks should be considered in addition to landscape and retention areas when determining sign placement. The sign structure should not visually compete with the building structure(s).
- ◆ Generally, the higher the sign is, the greater the setback should be. Sight angles should be considered to ensure that placement of the structure will perform the intended function and readability of the sign.

**6.2.2 Signs should be placed so they are not obscured by landscaping when it has reached full maturity. (P)**

**Rationale: Although landscaping may not initially appear to obscure a sign, it may significantly reduce or eliminate the sign's effectiveness unless taken into account in the planning process.**

- ◆ Landscaping should be used to enhance the placement of signage. Site inspections will be conducted to determine that trees will not be destroyed due to sign placement. In the event that a tree is in the way of the most appropriate place to put

a sign, the tree should be relocated in the same general vicinity. If a tree needs to be relocated there should be additional shrubs and ground cover provided to compensate for the trees removal/relocation.

- ◆ Low growing shrubs and/or living ground cover should be added around a monument base.

### **6.2.3 Consideration should be given to the location and design of signs on adjacent parcels. (C)**

**Rationale: The location and design of signage on adjacent parcels can create a possible conflict and reduce the readability of project signage.**

- ◆ Ordinance requires a minimum of one hundred-(100) foot spacing between ground signs. The height, location and design of existing ground signs should be considered so that sight angles will not be reduced due to existing sign structures.
- ◆ Ground signs should not compete with one another for visibility.

## **6.3. Function**

### **6.3.1 Sign placement and materials for multiple tenant occupancies should be delineated in a uniform and consistent manner. (P)**

**Rationale: Sign content is more comprehensible when it is displayed in a consistent manner and signage causes less visual clutter when it is executed uniformly.**

- ◆ Sign bands should be created on centers so that wall signs are not placed haphazardly on building walls. This does not mean that the bands have to be at the same height, however, the same amount of area should be provided in offset bands.
- ◆ As a general rule, wall signs should be no closer to the roofline than a minimum of one-half (1/2) the vertical dimension of the sign. Signs twenty-five (25) feet or higher SHALL be no closer to the roofline than a minimum of one-half (1/2) the vertical dimension of the sign.
- ◆ Tenant directories should provide a proportionate amount of area for each tenant listed. This is not to say that major tenants can't have a larger panel than minor tenants. When multiple directories exist or are proposed the panel sizes should be consistent among each ground sign.

### **6.3.2 Traffic directional should be placed to promote safe and efficient traffic flow. (P)**

**Rationale: Poor placement of signs can confuse motorist and pedestrians and cause potential safety hazards.**

- ◆ Directional signs should be placed at the entrance/exit of the driveway to which directions are being provided. Interior directionals may be necessary due to site size, however, consideration of traffic safety should be reviewed to determine placement.

**6.3.3 Signs should be oriented to promote readability and serve their intended function. (P)**

**Rationale: Poor orientation reduces the effectiveness of a sign.**

- ◆ Sight angles should be considered in sign placement. The main purpose of the sign ordinance is to promote a good visual environment and provide adequate identification, communication and advertising for land uses. In many cases, wall signs are more functional and readable than a ground sign.