



OTTUMWA

CITY OF BRIDGES...RIVER OF OPPORTUNITY

DOWNTOWN DESIGN
STANDARDS

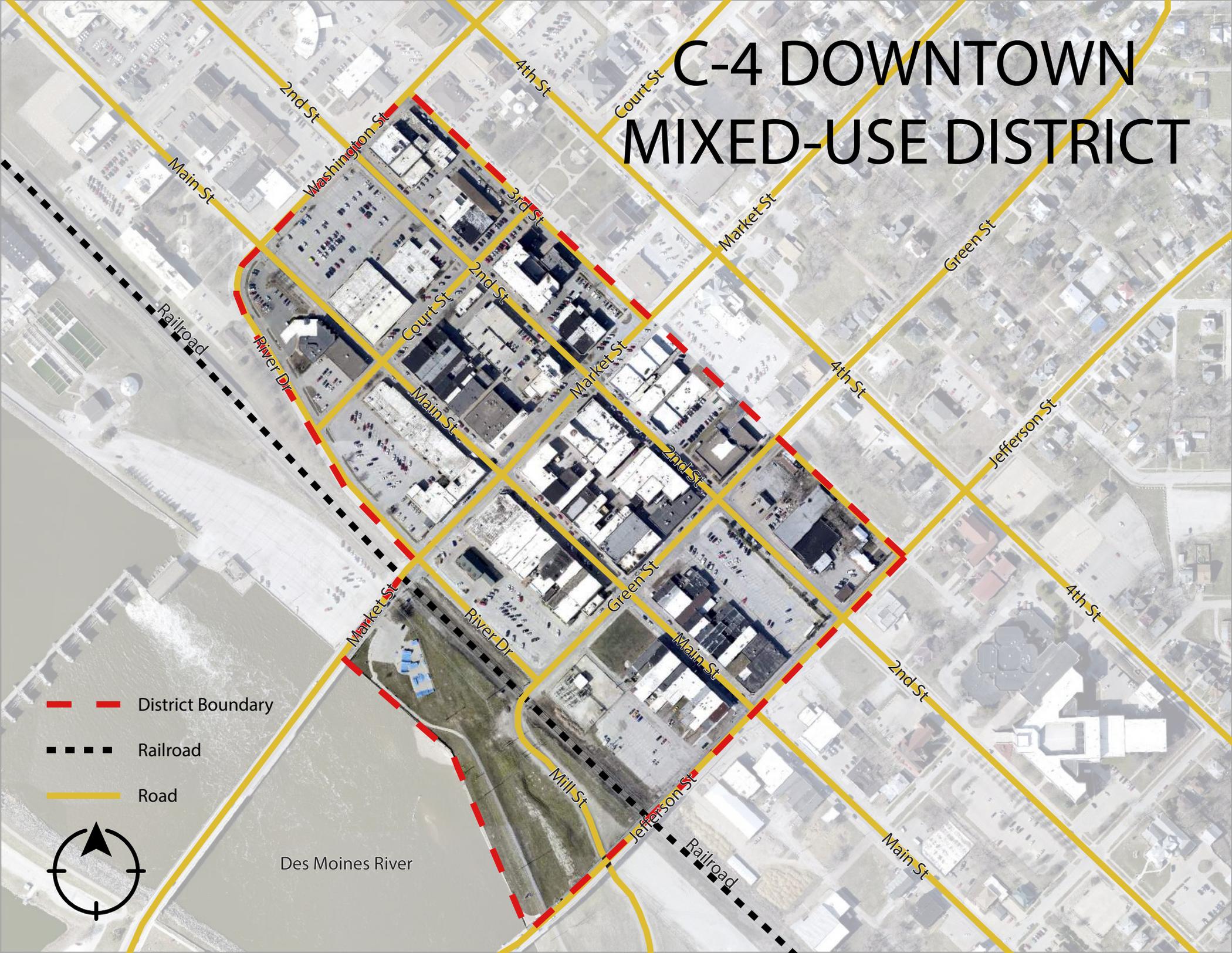
DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS

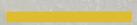
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C-4 DOWNTOWN MIXED-USE DISTRICT



-  District Boundary
-  Railroad
-  Road



Des Moines River

I. Intent

This document describes a user-friendly process for businesses and building owners to design building facades and install well-designed signs in appropriate placements that will enhance downtown Ottumwa.

If a proposed facade design or sign slightly differs from these design standards it does not necessarily mean the facade and/or sign cannot be allowed. If such a proposed facade and/or sign does not fall within these standards, the Zoning Administrator or designee will review and determine the appropriateness and potential effects that a facade or sign may have within the broader context of downtown Ottumwa. Any administrative decision can be appealed to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for consideration.

Well-designed facades and signs can:

- + Enhance the appearance of a business property
- + Serve as business identification
- + Help maintain a quality community appearance

II. Overarching Limitations

The building exterior that faces the street is considered the facade.

The following facades are limited to no more than 25% of the total building facade, unless approved by a Conditional Use Permit:

- + Metal
- + Porcelain or baked enamel metal panels

The following signs are prohibited, unless approved by a Conditional Use Permit:

- + A sign or portion of a sign that rotates
- + A roof sign
- + A box sign
- + A sign which flashes or blinks at intervals
- + A sign with deep channel letters

Signs should not:

- + Dominate facades
- + Be haphazardly positioned
- + Overlap or obscure other signs
- + Create distraction or confusion for motorists
- + Obstruct the footpath
- + Cause non-repairable damage to buildings when installed or removed

DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS

III. Architectural Requirements

A. Site

1. Maintain existing setbacks.
2. Place parking areas so as not to be the focal point of the building.

B. Building size and proportions

1. Building height should be comparable to adjacent structures.
2. Establish a storefront cornice comparable to adjacent structures.
3. Define a distinct cornice (top of building) by using a minimum of one of the following elements:
 - i. A horizontal projection or series of projections from the plane of the wall surface.
 - ii. A contrasting, but complementing, change in color.
 - iii. A complementing change in pattern or texture from the wall surface.
4. The size and proportion of window and door openings of a building should be similar to those on surrounding exemplary facades. The same applies to the ratio of window area to solid wall for the facade as a whole.

C. Mechanical and electrical items

1. Locate all mechanical and electrical items, such as conduit, piping, vents, and ductwork, out of view as much as possible.
2. Any items that require exposure should be painted to match existing materials, or screened with an enclosure that is architecturally integrated with the building.



DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS

III. Architectural Requirements (Continued)

A. Materials and construction

1. Materials used for building facades should be consistent with the adjacent context and enhance overall character of the area.
2. Materials allowed for unlimited usage on facades:
 - i. Brick
 - ii. Stone
 - iii. Terra cotta
3. Materials allowed for limited usage on facades that should be carefully considered:
 - i. Wood
 - ii. Stucco/Plaster/EIFS
 - iii. Concrete block/glazed block/ceramic tile
 - iv. Concrete and precast concrete
 - v. Metal
 - vi. Structural steel
 - vii. Glazing and glass block
 - viii. Porcelain or baked enamel metal panels
4. Materials prohibited for any use where they may be visible to the public on building facades:
 - i. Aluminum, or vinyl siding and preformed panels
 - ii. Asphalt or wood shingles or siding



DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS

IV. Awnings

A. General

1. Awnings should complement and enhance architectural details, rather than detract attention away from the primary building elements.
2. Awnings must be permanently fixed to buildings.
3. Awnings shall be mounted to wood or metal framing, or be mounted to mortar joints--not the wall of the building.
4. Awnings shall be maintained so as to preserve the original appearance as much as possible.

B. Design

1. Awnings shall be constructed of canvas, vinyl, or similar material.
2. Awnings should be designed to project over individual windows and openings, and not as a single, continuous accessory that covers architectural features.
3. Awnings should have a size, shape, and location that is complementary to the individual building, as well as adjacent buildings.
4. Awnings with a solid color are preferred. Striped or patterned awnings may be appropriate if the awning complements, and does not detract from, architectural features.
5. Awnings with bright or highly contrasting colors may be visually detrimental to the building and district, and are therefore highly discouraged.
6. Awning lettering and/or logo should not comprise more than 30% of the total exterior surface of an awning.



V. Position and Location of Signage

A. Position signs so they will not obscure existing architectural details.

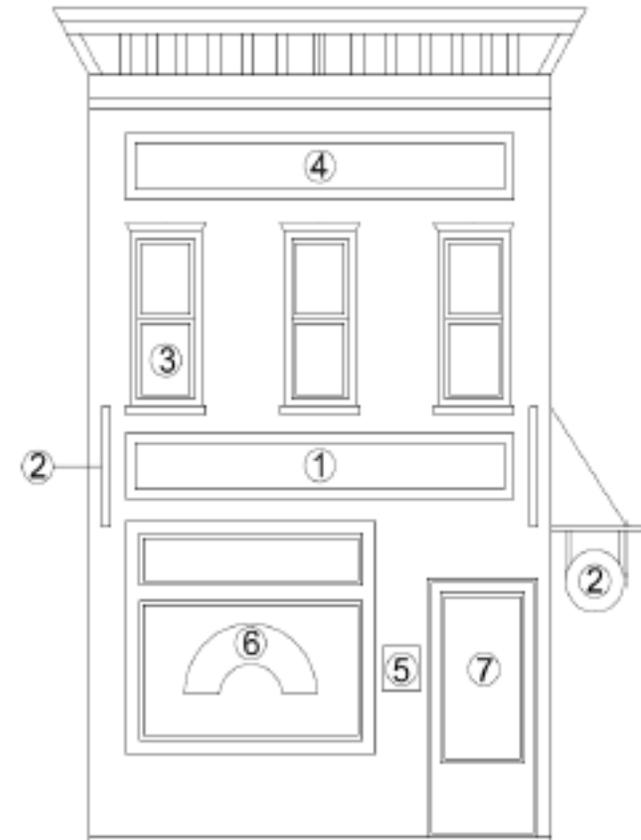
1. If decorative bands, brickwork, or panels are indented in the face material, place the sign to fit within them.
2. If a building name or date is raised on the facade and is historically valuable, it should be retained and should not be blocked or damaged by new signage.

B. Align signs approximately with others on the block when feasible.

1. Follow the order of sign alignment if other signage on the block have aligned with each other.
2. If aligning signs is not possible, look for other features to determine sign placement. Each store sign may relate directly to the store entrance in a similar fashion, or all signs may be placed in windows.

C. Locations for signs

1. All signs should be limited to below the second floor window level unless historic evidence shows signage in a different area for that particular structure.
2. Signs on a building or facade:
 - i. If parallel, maximum thickness of three inches.
 - ii. If perpendicular, maximum width of four feet, and maximum thickness of three inches.
 - iii. Eight foot minimum clearance above sidewalk or street.
3. Signs on windows should be individual letters with a contrasting outline, and should cover no more than 30% of glass surface.
4. Street numbers, individually applied or painted, should be placed above primary entry.



1. Signboard
2. Projecting/Blade Sign
3. Upper level window sign applied to glass (with historic evidence and CUP approval)
4. Frieze Sign (with historic evidence and CUP approval)
5. Plaque
6. Storefront window sign applied to glass
7. Door sign applied to glass

DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS

VI. Lighting, Color, and Font

A. General illumination standards

1. Illumination should not interfere or distract from the message being conveyed by the sign.
2. Flashing, blinking, revolving, or rotating lights are prohibited.
3. Illuminated signs should be well-integrated into the building facade and neighborhood character.

B. Indirect illumination or no illumination is recommended for signage.

1. Light fixtures mounted on the front of the building that shine on the sign are called indirect sources. These light a portion of the face of the building, and emphasize the continuity of the building surface.
2. Indirect lighting fixtures should be shielded to prevent glare on the street and sidewalk. Gooseneck lamps are a good example of shielded, indirect lighting.
3. Unobtrusive fittings and cabling are required.

C. Fonts and colors

1. Signs should contain clear and legible lettering that contrasts with the sign background.
2. Lettering style should be compatible with the building.
3. Corporate colors may need to be adapted to suit the district.



VII. Signage Material & Masonry Application

A. Signage material

1. Signs should be constructed of traditional materials, such as wood or flat finish metal.
2. Signs can be constructed of imitation materials that have the same visual characteristics of traditional materials when painted, such as urethane millwork (Fypon) or resin.

B. Painted masonry

1. New painted signage is prohibited on bare masonry.
2. Appropriate historic murals/artwork or existing signage on bare masonry can be repainted using the same colors, design, and proportions, as approved by the Zoning Administrator.

C. Anchoring

1. All signs and hanging brackets must be anchored in a way that when removed, historic materials will not be harmed; ie. anchoring in mortar joints, creating holes small enough to patch, etc.



DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS

VIII. Sign Types

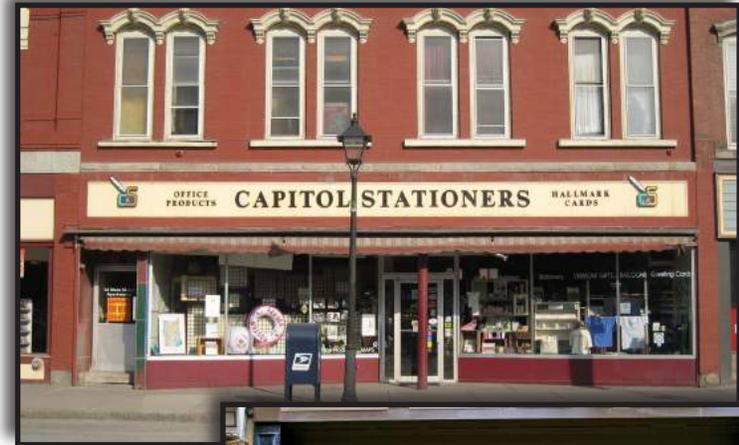
A. General standards

1. Design

- i. Simple typefaces and fonts provide legibility and style.
- ii. Sign colors, materials, and lighting should be restrained and harmonious with the buildings architecture.
- iii. Signs should be compatible with adjacent signs and should not compete for attention (using elements such as excessively bright colors or disproportionately sized letters).
- iv. Channel letters may be flush-mounted to the building.
- v. A single trademark logo or symbol compliant with the applicable design guidelines may be allowed with the business name.

2. Size

- i. Overall height of storefront letters/sign should generally not exceed 18” in height when utilizing all capital letters.
- ii. Wall sign square footage is encouraged to remain within 5% of the tenant space square footage to allow flexibility for other business identification, such as awnings and blade signs.
- iii. The total signage per building shall not exceed 150 square feet, unless approved by a Conditional Use Permit issued by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.



VIII. Sign Types (Continued)

A. General standards (continued)

3. Architectural aspects

- i. Signs should never cover architectural details, but should be integrated with architectural facade elements.
- ii. Business identification should be integrated into the building's architecture. Building design elements, such as window patterns and arches, may help determine the sign shape that best suits the building.

B. Wall signs

1. Applied flat signs

- i. Should be applied to, and fit, within the sign board area of a facade (usually a flat area located above a storefront and below second story windows).

2. Applied letters & logos

- i. Can be applied directly to the sign board area of a facade (usually a flat area located above a storefront and below second story windows)
- ii. Can be applied to other areas of the building if historic evidence indicates previous signage in the proposed area (photos, ghost marks, etc.), and are in general conformance with the adopted sign standards.



VIII. Sign Types (Continued)

B. Wall signs (continued)

3. Pin-mounted wall signs
 - i. Pin-mounted letterforms should be unobtrusive, and should not project more than 12” from the storefront.
 - ii. Backgrounds should be no more than 4” or less than the depth of the pin-mounted letters.
 - iii. Pin-mounted letterforms should contrast with the material color on which they are mounted.

C. Projecting/blade signs

1. Design
 - i. Blade signs should be oriented toward pedestrians passing on the sidewalk of the building.
 - ii. Mounting hardware for blade signs should be attractive and an integral part of the sign design.
 - iii. Blade signs should not cover architectural details, and should be well-integrated with architectural facade elements.
 - iv. Blade signs should have two consistently finished sides.
 - v. Blade signs should be consistent with downtown wall sign design guidelines.
2. Placement and Size
 - i. Two-sided blade signs shall be permitted to be mounted perpendicular to the storefront.
 - ii. No sign shall extend above the parapet wall of the storefront building.
 - iii. There shall be provided 7-foot 6-inches clearance between the baseline of any sign and the sidewalk.



VIII. Sign Types (Continued)

D. Window applications & displays

1. Window graphics should use high quality, durable materials. If painted, should be silk screened or hand painted on inside of the glass window surface or door to prevent weathering.
2. Should cover no more than 75% of glass surface (includes logos and text).
3. Should be centered vertically and horizontally on exposed glass surface.
4. Window graphics should reinforce the identification of the store, and not compete with wall signs or distract from the business.
5. Illuminated window signs are discouraged.
6. Window graphics and displays should be tasteful, minimal, create an open and inviting appearance, and express the nature of the business without obscuring visibility.

E. Ground signs

1. A ground sign may be appropriate when all of the following conditions are met:
 - i. Other alternative types of signs do not provide adequate identification.
 - ii. Scale and location of ground sign complements the building in adjacent properties.
 - iii. Integration into site landscaping so as not to create a site or visual obstruction.
2. Ground signs must provide 48 inches of unobstructed horizontal clearance between the sign and building.



VIII. Sign Types (Continued)

F. Other signs

1. Marquee Signs
 - i. Marquee signs are permitted so as to be in general conformance with the adopted sign regulations.
2. Plaques
 - i. Plaques should be of case or engraved brass, bronze, urethane millwork (fypon), resin, wood, or stone.
3. Flags & banners
 - i. Flags and banners may not obstruct pedestrian visibility or movement.
4. Murals/artwork
 - i. Murals and artwork are allowed with approval of a Conditional Use Permit issued by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.
5. Printed menus
 - i. Printed menus shall be neatly mounted in a wood or metal frame, and covered by glass.
6. Detached Signs
 - i. Existing detached signs as of the date of the adoption of these standards may be replaced with approval of a Conditional Use Permit issued by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

