



OAKHURST MARKETING



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- [Routed & Sandblasted Signs](#)
- [Electric Signs](#)
- [Site Signs & Banners](#)
- [Interior Signs & Displays](#)

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- [Marketing Services](#)

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Sign Restrictions



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Before selecting the most appropriate type of sign, the business person must consider the regulative and financial restrictions which may limit his or her options.

Sign Codes

In some cases, municipalities have sign codes which severely restrict certain types of signs. Free-standing signs may be restricted in downtown area, or roof signs may be allowed only in certain zones or on certain types of businesses.

Local sign companies are usually familiar with the legal restrictions on signs, and a copy of the sign ordinance may be obtained from the local planning or building department.

Site

Another factor to be considered before selecting the type of sign used is the business' site or location. For instance, motels or gasoline service stations which rely on drawing motorists from a nearby freeway find it almost essential to use a fairly tall free-standing sign. Because a free-standing sign can be high enough to be visible above the surrounding landscape, and because it can be large enough to be read from a passing motor vehicle, it is effective in reaching mobile consumers who are unfamiliar with the area.

Sometimes a business, particularly a small business, may find itself in a location which has distinct disadvantages. It may be on a less-frequented street where the number of passing motorists and pedestrians is relatively small. In that case, a free-standing or roof sign can act as a location correctional device, enabling customers to locate the store easily. Or it can even give it a multi-street frontage, drawing passersby from several streets.

Not all sites, of course, present disadvantages. Some sites are highly advantageous: the business may be located on a heavily traveled street with a good consumer profile, or it may be at the intersection of two major thoroughfares. A business with a carefully designed commercial communications system will make full use of these advantages.



A business located on a corner should use a sign (or combination of signs) that can

be seen from both streets. Similarly, if a business is located on a street that is heavily traveled, perhaps with a great deal of stop-and-go traffic during rush hours, this might be an ideal location for a readerboard. Research studies in perceptual psychology have shown that the eye is drawn to anything new in the environment or landscape. A readerboard, with its copy changed often, can be highly effective on such a street. Not only will the advertising be often seen, reinforcing the message, but a favorable impression of the business can be created, because commuters often appreciate environmental stimuli which relieve the boredom of daily travel past the same locations.

Type of Business

In choosing a type of sign, the business person should also consider his type of business. A wall sign is often appropriate for a retail outlet that wants to create a tasteful, subdued atmosphere. An electronic message center would not, in most cases, be appropriate for a restaurant that wants to portray an expensive and elegant image to attract an exclusive clientele.

The Needs of Viewers

Not only should the type of sign be appropriate to the image of the business, it should also meet the needs of viewers. For instance if a business is a tourist-related, such as a motel or some restaurants, it will need a sign that can be read quickly and easily. Often, it will need a sign which can guide people to the business itself. A free-standing or roof sign is usually best for these sorts of situations.

A Shared Environment

By their very nature, signs do not exist in isolation; they are part of a shared visual environment. When considering the type of sign to be used, the surrounding area must also be considered. The most important criterion is that a sign be readable. If one type of sign will be visually blocked by other signs or by other features of the landscape (buildings, trees, etc.), then another type of sign should be considered.

Highway engineers have discovered that along certain stretches of the road, not only does the driver receive a great deal of information, he may also be required to make quite a few decisions (Miller, David B. "Traffic Engineering Principles Applied to On-Premise Signage." Jack E. Leisch and Assoc., Transportation Engineering, Evanston, Illinois, 1977.) In situations where this occurs, traffic engineers try to avoid excess information. Similarly, if a sign can be placed so that it is not competing with other information (traffic directions or other on-premise signs), its effectiveness should be increased.

Of course, a business person erecting an on-premise sign does not always have an opportunity to choose where he will locate his sign. But in some cases, careful consideration of the surrounding environment will show, for instance, that a free-standing sign -- because it can be some distance from a busy intersection -- is preferable to other types of signs.

Frequently, traffic engineers use design models or sketches to plan the placement of signs along a highway. Sketches of the area, including the proposed signs, can be done from the different perspectives that approaching drivers would view the sign. One would then have a good idea of the sign's visibility and would be able to make any necessary changes or modifications before the sign is built.

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