



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY

SIGN ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM

PROGRAM GUIDELINES  
&  
DESIGN GUIDELINES



D O W N T O W N

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MAIN STREET PROGRAM

576 LIBERTY PARK  
LAPEER, MI 48446  
(810) 664-4553

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## **SIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

The City of Lapeer Downtown Development Authority has established the Sign Assistance Program to encourage high quality sign design in the downtown business district. The goal is to achieve quality sign design compatible with the facade improvements underway in the Downtown Development Authority district.

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

Subject to funding availability the Downtown Development Authority will provide 50% of the cost to design, construct, and install a sign up to a maximum of \$300.00. Funds are disbursed as a rebate upon sign installation.

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE:**

Owners and/or tenants of existing buildings within the Downtown Development Authority district (see attached map).

### **DESIGN GUIDELINES:**

Sign designs must conform to the City of Lapeer Zoning Ordinance, Section 7.17 - Signs, and the Downtown Development Authority Sign Design Guidelines.

### **PROCEDURES:**

1. Contact the City of Lapeer Downtown Development Authority at 664-4553 to schedule an appointment with the Executive Director to discuss your proposed sign plan and obtain a Sign Assistance Program application.
2. Submit the Sign Assistance Program application with the design material specifications and sign maker's cost estimate to the Downtown Development Authority office for review by the Design Committee. The Downtown Development Authority Design Committee will make a recommendation to the Downtown Development Authority Board prior to their meeting on the fourth Wednesday of each month. The Downtown Development Authority meetings are held in the Lapeer City Hall conference room at 7:30 A.M. The Design Committee meets as necessary.

3. Assuming funding availability and upon approval of the Downtown Development Authority Design Committee, the applicant will receive a Sign Assistance Program commitment letter from the Downtown Development Authority Executive Director.
4. The applicant must arrange for sign construction and installation in accordance with the approved sign design. Any changes in approved work must be authorized in advance by the Executive Director of the Downtown Development Authority. Significant modifications must be approved by the Design Committee.
5. Provide Downtown Development Authority with proof that the sign has been paid for (canceled checks and paid invoice).
6. Downtown Development Authority disburses funds directly to the applicant upon installation of the sign consistent with the approved plans.

**NOTE:** Downtown Development Authority approval of a sign grant does not constitute approval of the sign permit by the City of Lapeer. Conversely, approval of the sign permit by the City does not in any way guarantee receipt of sign assistance from the Downtown Development Authority. A sign permit must be obtained from the City of Lapeer Building Department located at 111 Howard Street, Lapeer, Michigan (810-245-9621.)

# LAPEER DDA DISTRICT SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES

**ALL SIGNS**, whether or not receiving funds through the Sign Assistance Program, shall be prepared by a sign professional. Hand-lettered or stenciled signs are prohibited, with the exception of signs advertising restaurant daily specials.

## **APPLIED SIGNS: FLAT, FIXED WALL SIGNS**

The location and size of signs on any building should relate to the architectural character of that particular structure. A sign should never be so large as to overpower a facade, nor obscure a building's architectural features.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Wall signs should be located above the entry to the store in order to relate to the pedestrian. The best areas for signs are those placed on the facade which contain continuous, flat surfaces which are void of windows, doors, or architectural details. When a building has a lentil strip or sign board as part of its facade, locate the sign directly on it.
2. When a facade contains more than one sign, they should compliment each other in shape, color, size, and lettering style.
3. The message on signs should be kept simple. Keep wording to a minimum so that it can easily and quickly be read.

## **HANGING SIGNS**

Small scale pedestrian oriented hanging signs are an effective method of advertising a business. Usually located near the entrance, these signs serve not only to inform the pedestrian of the name of the store and goods sold within, they also locate the entry and provide a rhythmic motion along the sidewalk. A particular type of hanging sign, called an icon sign, depicts a physical object, such as a shoe, and is an effective means of advertising with the minimum amount of lettering.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Hanging signs should be oriented toward the pedestrian and located so that they do not interfere with passage.
2. The size and placement of hanging signs should be compatible with the facade upon which they are attached.
3. If illuminated, the lighting of hanging signs should be compatible with the design of the sign.

4. Avoid exposed guide wires and cables where possible.
5. Current City ordinance prohibits signs projecting into the public right-of-way.

### **WINDOW AND DOOR SIGNS**

Window and door signs can be convenient ways of providing pedestrian-scaled signs downtown. Permanent window and door signs are usually painted on glass or constructed of applied vinyl letters. Gold-leaf or neon can also make attractive window and door signs.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Window and door signs should be applied so that they do not obscure visibility of the display windows or entrance.
2. Permanent window and door signs should not occupy more than 25% of the total glass area on which they are displayed. Such signs should compliment other signs on the facade.

### **SIGNS ON AWNINGS**

Signs on awnings can be a viable solution to providing identification for a business. Considering the cost as well as the life span of modern fabrics used for fabric awnings, these signs can provide effective and long lasting advertising. Signs attached or incorporated into more permanent types of awning materials can also be effective communicators.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Signs on awnings should be color coordinated with the sign or awning and the rest of the building's facade.
2. Signs on awnings should be located on the vertical portion of the awning for maximum visibility.

### **SIDEWALK SIGNS**

Portable Sidewalk Signs can be used to advertise sales, daily specials, other special events or promotions, or general advertisement. To maintain a cohesive aesthetic appearance in Downtown Lapeer, examples of suggested sidewalk sign designs are included at the back of this booklet. All sidewalk sign designs are subject to the approval of the DDA.

Sidewalk signs must be used with due consideration of pedestrian traffic and weather conditions, and therefore shall be professionally constructed in such a way as to avoid tipping or blowing over, to the greatest extent possible. All sidewalk signs must be removed from the sidewalk and placed indoors during non-business hours, in accordance with Article 7.17.J.2.1 of the City Zoning Ordinance. Please refer to the ordinance for a complete list of requirements.

## **COLOR, MATERIAL, AND LETTERING STYLES**

The color, material, and lettering style used in signs contributes to the overall character of the facades downtown. If well designed, the color, material and lettering styles of signs add interest and variety while, at the same time, clearly communicates to the pedestrians and customers.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Signs should use colors, materials, and lettering styles which relate to and compliment the buildings. In general, limit each sign to a maximum of three colors, two materials and one lettering style.
2. Where original sign colors, materials, lettering style, and placement can be documented, use the original as a guide in the design of new signs.
3. A wooden sign with raised letters, metal signs, painted signs, or neon or gold leafing are all appropriate in certain instances downtown.
4. New signs should have lettering as well as overall dimensions scaled to its location.
5. Nationally distributed heat-formed signs are usually inappropriate. If they are used, their color, lettering style, and lighting should compliment the building.
6. There are three types of lettering: decorative, sans serif and serif; each of which may be appropriate. As a general rule, lettering styles should relate to the architectural quality of the building as well as to the type of business being advertised.

## **ILLUMINATION OF SIGNS**

Illumination of signs is necessary for advertising at night. Properly done, illuminated signs can greatly enhance a business after dark and attract customers on late nights.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The light source for signs should be designed as part of the sign or hidden from view.
2. Lighting should have true color rendition.
3. Exposed lights which produce glare are not recommended.
4. Avoid exposed electrical fixtures and conduit or wire. If this is not possible, design as part of the sign or paint to match background.

## SIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM APPLICATION

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Building Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Building Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Building Owner's \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The following items must be provided:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) Cost estimate \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ b) Sign design/specifications
- \_\_\_\_\_ c) Photo of the building facade

The undersigned applicant affirms and understands that:

- A. The information submitted herein is true and accurate to the best of my (our) knowledge.
- B. I (we) have read and understand the Sign Assistance Program guidelines and agree to abide by these conditions.
- C. I (we) understand that receipt of a Sign Assistance Program commitment letter from the Downtown Development Authority does not constitute approval of a sign permit under the City of Lapeer zoning ordinance.
- D. I (we) agree that the proposed sign cannot be installed until the Downtown Development Authority reviews and acts upon this Sign Assistance Program application.

**SIGNATURES:**

\_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Submit the completed application to the Downtown Development Authority Office at 576 Liberty Park, Lapeer, Michigan 48446.

**SIGN CONTRACT**

**THIS AGREEMENT** is made and entered into on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ by and between the Downtown Development Authority of the City of Lapeer (the DDA) and \_\_\_\_\_.

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**RECITALS:**

- A. The DDA is authorized by the Downtown Development Authority Act to improve land and construct, reconstruct, rehabilitate, equip and improve any building within the downtown district for the use in whole or in part of any public or private person or corporation.
- B. The DDA has adopted a Development Plan authorizing the DDA to provide architectural assistance to building owners on a contractual basis.
- C. The DDA has adopted Program Guidelines for a Sign Assistance Program to encourage high quality sign design within the Authority District Boundaries for the DDA.
- D. \_\_\_\_\_ has submitted a Sign Assistance Program Application to the DDA which has been approved by the DDA.

**NOW, THEREFORE,** the parties hereby agree as follows:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ shall install a sign on its business property within the Downtown Development Authority boundaries in accordance with the sign design submitted to the DDA and approved by the DDA. The sign shall comply with all of the recommendations of the Sign Assistance Program Design Guidelines and the City of Lapeer, Zoning Ordinance Section 7.17J.
- 2. In consideration for the compliance with the Sign Assistance Program Design Guidelines, and upon installation of the sign to the satisfaction of the Executive Director of the DDA and submission of proof of payment for the sign, the DDA shall pay to \_\_\_\_\_ the sum of \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ shall not alter the sign or the sign design without advance written approval of the Executive Director of the Downtown Development Authority.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**CITY OF LAPEER  
SIDEWALK SIGN PERMIT**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Permit Fee: \$10 – paid \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Sign complies with the following requirements:

Yes    No

\_\_\_    \_\_\_    Overall size does not exceed 42” high x 24” wide

\_\_\_    \_\_\_    Sign has been constructed by a sign professional

\_\_\_    \_\_\_    Sign diagram attached

\_\_\_    \_\_\_    Does the sign contain space for changeable copy? (optional)

\_\_\_    \_\_\_    Have there been prior sign ordinance violations for this business or property address?

Sign prepared by (company name, address, contact information)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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- - - - For Office Use Only - - - -

Approved / Disapproved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
(circle one)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_