



5

Signage and Wayfinding

5. SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Signage is an important element that will contribute to the character of Tysons. The two predominant signage types that will most contribute to place making in Tysons are on-site signage (signs used to identify a place of business or a residential building); and wayfinding elements which are placed in the public realm and provide directional assistance or location information to pedestrians and motorists.

The quantity and quality of all signage should be considered in a comprehensive manner within a development but should also be complementary between neighborhoods and in most cases, the subdistrict, district, or Tysons as a whole.

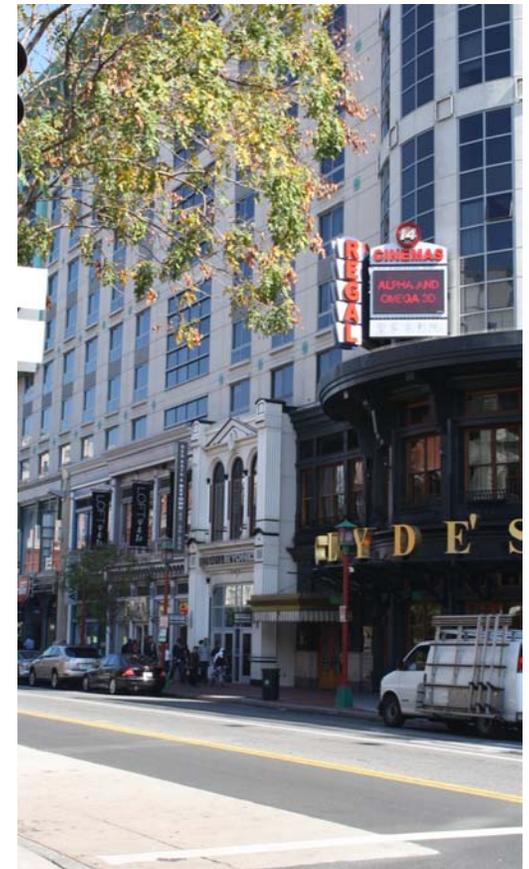
Article 12 of the Zoning Ordinance provides guidance regarding the permitted types, size and location of signs. All signs require permits which are reviewed and approved by the Zoning Inspection Branch of the Department of Planning and Zoning. Depending on the size and illumination of the sign, building and/or electrical permits may also be required. When Article 12 was developed, it did not envision the signage needs of a high-density urban environment such as Tysons. To address these needs, it is expected that innovative signage design will emerge in Tysons as the urban form is built. It is recommended that a Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) be submitted for all redevelopment applications. It is further recognized that the signage requested pursuant to such CSPs may deviate significantly from that permitted under Article 12.

All signage should be well-organized, neat, well-maintained, concise and legible. Signage should fit with the architectural style of the building, using complementary materials and colors, and ideally be incorporated into the architectural elements of the structure.

Design Suggestions:

- ◆ Use permanent, weather proof, well-designed signs.
- ◆ Limit the number of signs to convey a clear message and avoid visual clutter.
- ◆ Clearly state the business name or other information displayed on the sign.
- ◆ Scale typeface, characters and graphics of storefront signage to pedestrians and/or motorists, as applicable.
- ◆ The scale and materials used for signs should be appropriate to the neighborhood. For instance, monolithic digital or other illuminated signs may be considered on a case by case basis in areas close to the metro and adjacent to high concentrations of arts and entertainment uses. Similarly, small-scale blade signs or awning signage would be more appropriate for a mixed-use residential neighborhood.
- ◆ Signage must not present a visual obstruction to sight distances at intersections and vehicular entrances.
- ◆ See Chapter 7 for suggestions regarding signage in interim conditions.





Above Left: (top left) Retail signage - small scale, (top right) Retail signage, large scale, (bottom left) Directional signage for parking, (bottom right) Retail signage on an awning.

Above Right: (top left) Large scale, building mounted retail signage, (bottom left) Innovative lettering and signage for a cultural attraction, (right) Many sign types in a retail area.

5.1 Signage and Wayfinding Elements

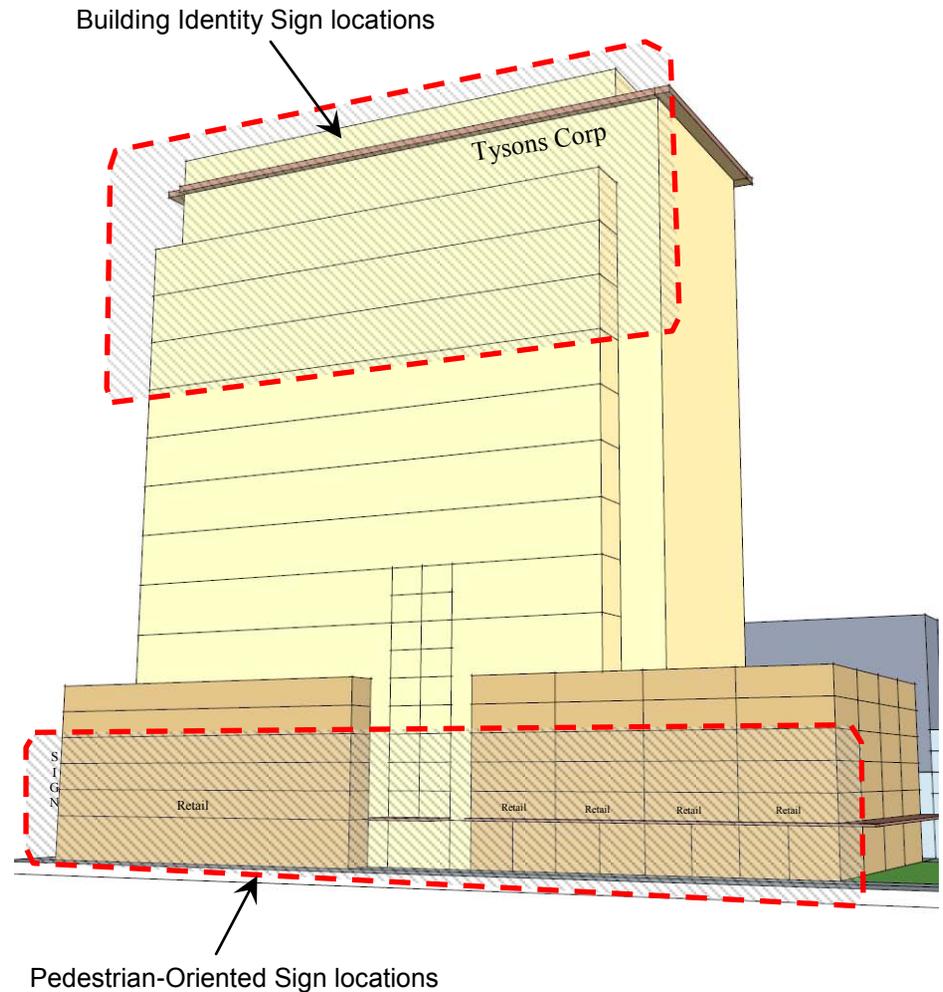
Building Identity Signs

Building identity signs are generally auto-oriented and intended to be seen from a distance. As such, they are usually located in the top half of the building, closer to the roofline, and are the largest signs in an urban area. Signs should be sized for legibility, but also appropriate to the scale of larger urban buildings. They are intended to identify the name of a building or the name of a major tenant within the building. Building identity signs can also contribute to the identity of the skyline by providing visual interest when they are well-integrated into the building architecture.

Pedestrian-oriented Signs

Pedestrian-oriented signs include blade signs, awning signage, and sign bands which are generally located within the first two or three stories of a building. These signs are typically for retail, services or other businesses which are accessible to the public from street level. They are not intended to identify individual office tenants. Window signage may also be considered for businesses with storefronts.

Additional signage may be considered on parking garages and other non-habitable portions of a building if it is well-integrated into the building architecture and does not create visual clutter.



Design Suggestions:

- ◆ Building identity signs recognize a corporate identity, a major tenant, or the name of the building. Signs can be comprised of text or logos.
- ◆ Building identity signs should be sized proportionally to the height of the building and the size of the building façade. In general, building identity signs should not be taller than one story in height, although some variation for stand-alone logos may be considered.
- ◆ Building identity signs should be located in the top half of a building, close to the roofline, and should be limited to one per major building façade. Additional building identity signs may be considered near the building base when the size is more appropriate to the pedestrian scale and does not produce visual clutter.
- ◆ Building identity signs should be integrated into the building architecture, taking into consideration the pattern of fenestration and building materials.
- ◆ Consider building identity signs that are projected and only visible at night.
- ◆ For extremely tall buildings, signage may not be readily visible unique building architecture should be considered as a branding technique in lieu of large signage.



Opposite: General placement of sign types in urban development

Top: Capital One Headquarters, Image: www.dcmud.blogspot.com

Bottom: Continental Headquarters, Image: Wikipedia

5.3 Pedestrian-Oriented Signs

Design Suggestions:

Sign Bands

- ◆ A majority of pedestrian-oriented signs will be building-mounted signs for ground floor retail, services, and other commercial uses which face the street.
- ◆ Generally, building-mounted signs should be located within a “sign band” located above the storefront and below the façade above, to provide some continuity in placement (A).
- ◆ When several businesses are located in one building, individual signs should share some similar design characteristics, including scale, alignment, and placement to avoid visual clutter. Variation reflective of the nature of the individual businesses may be considered.
- ◆ In general, sign bands should be around 3 feet tall. Signage for individual businesses should be limited to the width of the associated storefront on the building façade.
- ◆ Awning, or canopy signage, in lieu of building-mounted signage may be considered (B).

Pedestrian Blade Signs

- ◆ Pedestrian blade signs projecting from buildings should be mounted a minimum of 8 feet above the sidewalk. Signs should project no more than 4 feet from the building façade (C).
- ◆ Pedestrian blade signs should be limited to one per business.

Vertical Building Signs

- ◆ Vertical building signs can be flush with, or project from, a building façade, and should be mounted above the first floor. Generally, signs should project no more than 3 feet from the building façade (D).
- ◆ Vertical building signs should be limited to one per business.

Monument Signs

- ◆ Monument signs, which are low and ground-mounted, are discouraged in an urban environment. If monument signs are proposed, they should not be located in the streetscape, but they may be located in the building zone or within plazas or open spaces which form entry features to the building.
- ◆ Monument signs may be integrated into seat walls or planter walls (E).

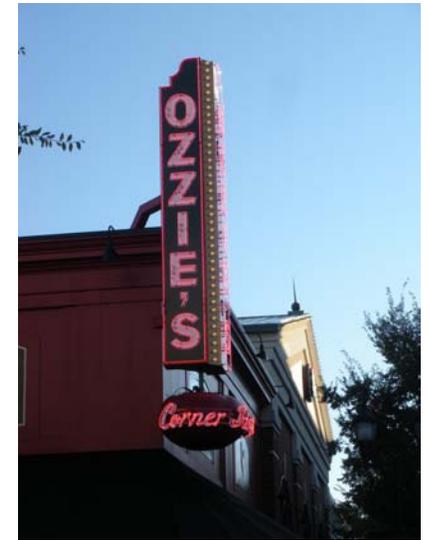




A



C



D



B



E

5.3 Pedestrian-Oriented Signs

Design Suggestions (cont.):

Storefront (Window) Signs

- ◆ Permanent or temporary window signs may be considered for a portion of the glazed area of the storefront. Signage should not unreasonably obstruct views from the street into storefront spaces (F).

Building-mounted Cabinet Signs and Display Windows

- ◆ Building-mounted cabinet signs and display windows may be considered in areas where functional storefronts are not possible or where blank walls exist.
- ◆ Building-mounted cabinet signs should not advertise specific products, but may display seasonal decorations, event information, and general branding.
- ◆ Stand-alone cabinet signs are strongly discouraged within the streetscape as they can disrupt pedestrian movement.
- ◆ In general, building-mounted cabinet signs and display windows should be sized proportionally to the scale of the storefront, and should be located within the first floor of a building (G).

Other Signs

- ◆ Provide clear, unobstructed address signs for public safety purposes.



F



G

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Opposite Top: Window sign and display window, Cole Haan, Chevy Chase, MD

Opposite Bottom: Bergdorf Goodman display window, Image: Rudy Pospisil, www.anothernormal.com

5.4 Wayfinding Elements

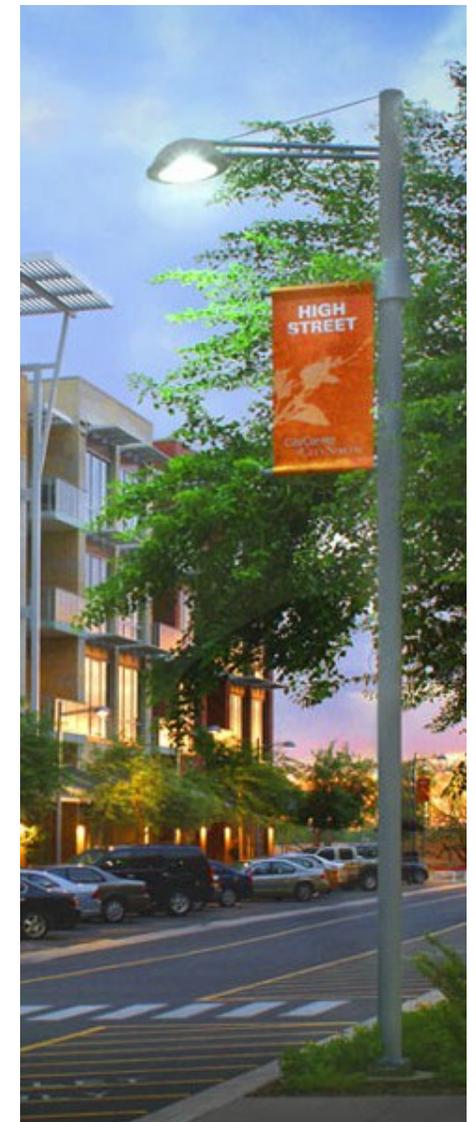
As the character of districts and subdistricts emerges, and as parks, museums, entertainment and dining areas are developed, wayfinding signage will help pedestrians and motorists navigate throughout Tysons.

Wayfinding elements are most effective when used on a sub-district and district level and indicate routes and events throughout Tysons. A Tysons-wide strategy for wayfinding should be considered, and could act as a branding tool. It is expected that stakeholder groups, such as the Tysons Partnership, will undertake and implement these wayfinding strategies as a collective vision that will complement and connect all of the redevelopment projects in Tysons.



Design Suggestions:

- ◆ Signs should include appropriately scaled elements that assist both motorists and pedestrians.
- ◆ Wayfinding signage should clearly convey information for both motorists and pedestrians without unnecessary clutter or detail.
- ◆ All signage structural components should complement the color and finish of streetscape furnishings in Section 3.4.
- ◆ Careful consideration should be paid to the placement of wayfinding signs in high-volume pedestrian areas. Signs should not obstruct pedestrian traffic in any way. Wayfinding signs should not be placed in the sidewalk zone.
- ◆ Streetlight-mounted banners that advertise public events, seasonal attractions or other attractions are encouraged.
- ◆ Conflicts with pedestrian flow should be minimized by consolidating different signs on one structure.
- ◆ Wayfinding programs should coordinate with online and interactive websites to provide up-to-date information on travel, events and other relevant information.
- ◆ Create wayfinding systems that can be utilized by a wide variety of users, including the visually and hearing impaired, and that comply with accessibility requirements.



Opposite Left: Sign with historic area information. Washington DC

Opposite Right: Retail signage—Bethesda, MD

Above Left: (Left) Portland wayfinding signage (Right) Vancouver wayfinding signage

Above Right: (Left) Wayfinding signage National Harbor—Maryland (Right) Banner arm signage on street light