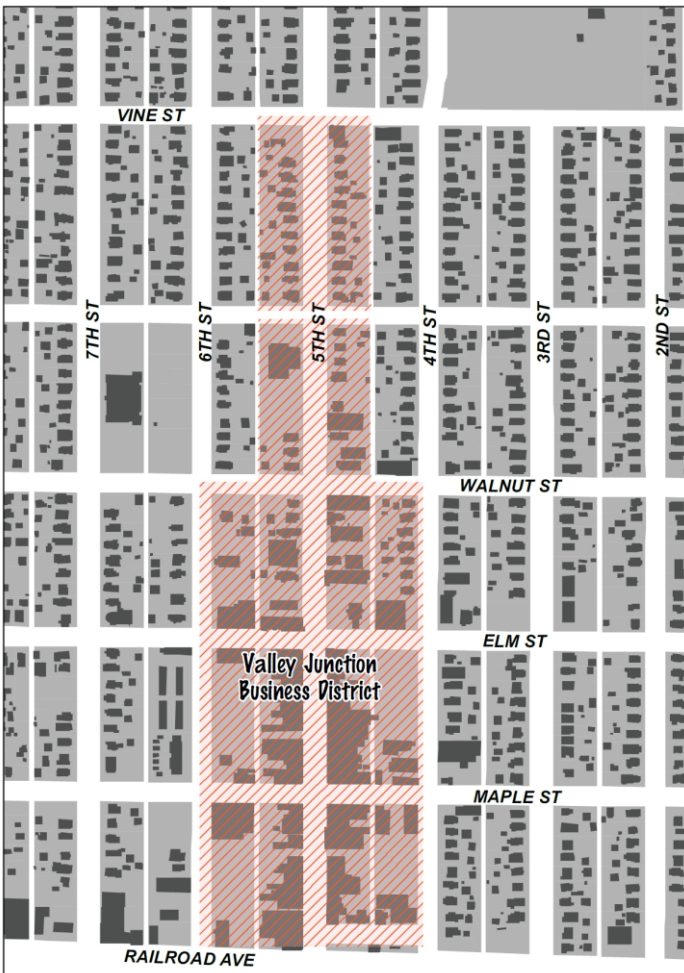




# VALLEY JUNCTION SIGN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Valley Junction is a unique place within both West Des Moines and within the greater Des Moines region. The eclectic mix of shops and restaurants, historic feel, and pedestrian character make the area a fun place to be. As with any commercial area, signs are necessary to help identify local businesses. The size, design and location of signs can have a significant impact on the overall identity and character of Valley Junction, and can be used to reinforce the area's special place within West Des Moines.

Based on community input received during the Historic West Des Moines Master Plan public engagement process, the following design guidelines will meet the needs of local businesses while encouraging iconic, innovative signs that honor the area's historic physical character. These guidelines are applicable to the Valley Junction business district, an area generally south of Vine Street and north of Railroad Avenue, between 4th and 6th Streets.



These guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to provide general aesthetic principles for sign design within Valley Junction. All signs must comply with the West Des Moines Sign Ordinance, including the City's sign review process, prior to installation.

## SIGN GUIDELINES

Signs are an important, but secondary, design element to the building they relate to. When designing signs within the Valley Junction business district, signs should enhance the qualities of both the architecture and the overall environment. Signs shall:

1. Meet all City codes. City staff shall administer these guidelines. Appeals to their decisions shall be addressed as outlined in the code.
2. Coordinate with building architecture and not hide architectural details like arches, glass transom panels, and decorative brickwork. This detailing enhances the unique character of Valley Junction, and reflects a quality of workmanship difficult to duplicate today. The building should frame the sign.
3. Not destroy the continuity of the building. Valley Junction is built as a walkable, human scale environment. It is not necessary to depend on overly large signs to attract customers.
4. Be coordinated with the sign placement of adjacent storefronts. Placing a sign higher or lower than adjacent signs may not increase readability, but instead create visual confusion.

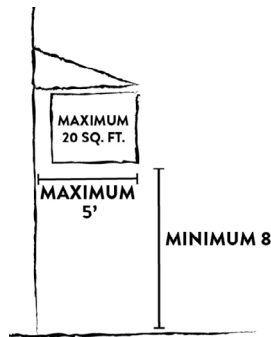
*These Sign Design Guidelines will apply to the Valley Junction Business District, shown here.*



## PROJECTING SIGNS

Due to the pedestrian focus of the area, low rate of speed of vehicular traffic, and overall character of Valley Junction projecting signs – often referred to as blade signs – are appropriate. These signs should identify the business, and do so in a fun, creative, and attractive way. Guidelines for the use of projecting / blade signs include:

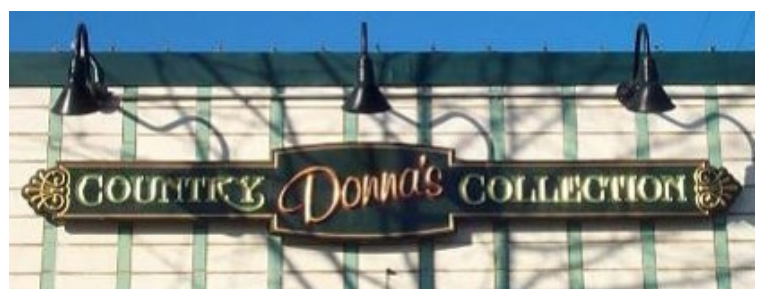
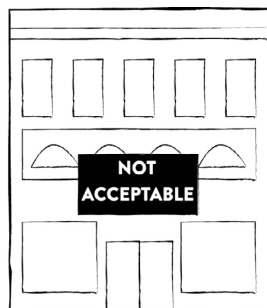
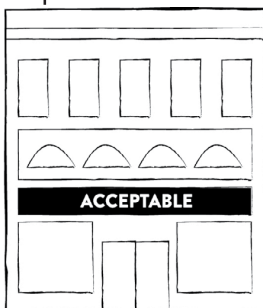
- One per façade visible to public, and generally located at first floor level. Corner projecting signs that are visible from two or more intersecting streets are allowed.
- Complex shapes relating to the business are encouraged rather than simple rectangles, circles or squares. Simple rectangular shaped signs are discouraged.
- A maximum of 20 square feet.
- May use external or halo illumination only – internally illuminated box signs are prohibited.
- A maximum 5' projection from wall, must not extend above parapet of single story or higher than top of second story windows.
- Minimum 8' above sidewalk.



## WALL SIGNS

Wall signs help to identify both a business's location and its entrance. Guidelines for the use of wall signs include:

- Wall signs should relate to architecture of the building in one or more categories: materials, shape and color.
- Signs with 3-dimensional appearance should have minimum  $\frac{3}{4}$ " relief.
- No box signs.
- Panel signs shall be contoured.
- Illumination is limited to external illumination or halo lighting and must shut the lighting off between 11 pm and 5 am, or one hour past the close of business, whichever is later.
- Neon/LED banding or accent lighting can be used as part of architectural enhancement.





## FREE-STANDING SIGNS

Some areas within the Valley Junction business district, particularly the 100 and 200 blocks of 5th Street, feature buildings located at the front property line, making it not practical to have a free-standing sign. In other areas of the business district free-standing signs may be appropriate provided they are in-scale and character with their surroundings.

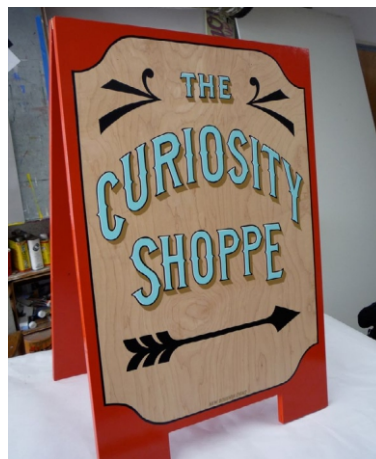
- Due to small lots, the minimum setback shall be 5' within the Valley Junction business district (this is reduced from 10' in other areas of West Des Moines).
- The maximum sign area shall be 20 square feet.
- Pole signs are prohibited. However, flag signs area allowed (see illustration) with maximum height of 7' and a maximum of 10 square feet of sign area.
- Non-rectangular signs are encouraged, but flat panel signs allowed without face dimension but background may not be internally illuminated (it may be externally illuminated).
- Box signs require a solid base and architectural enhancement.



## SANDWICH BOARD SIGNS

Due to the pedestrian character of the Valley Junction business district, small signs placed on the sidewalk in front of a business (commonly referred to as sandwich board signs as they sometimes are used to promote daily lunch specials) are appropriate. Sandwich board signs shall:

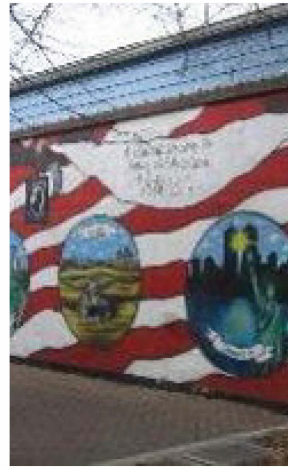
- Be maintained in upright position and only displayed during business hours.
- Be removed by business owner during snow and inclement weather.
- Only be in front of the associated establishment. Individual tenant off-premise directional signs are not permitted.
- Be freestanding – not anchored to sidewalk or poles.
- Have lettering professionally applied, chalkboard signs allowed but not white erasable boards.
- Not be illuminated.
- Maintain a five (5) foot minimum open walkway along the sidewalk.
- Be a maximum 2.5' wide and 3.5' high (9 sf).
- Be one per business.
- Be accompanied by provision of indemnification and insurance to the City since they are located on public property.



## MURALS

Murals are intended to serve an artistic and/or historic function rather than an advertising function and are not considered signs. Murals can celebrate the area's unique identity and culture while adding color and beauty to otherwise blank walls.

- Before installation, a sketch of all murals shall be reviewed by the Art Council. Their recommendation shall be forwarded to the City Council for approval of a Level 1 Minor Modification (see City sign regulations).
- Mural advertising is not allowed.



## AWNINGS, CANOPIES AND MARQUEES

Awnings and canopies provide another canvas on which to place signs. Depending on design and placement, their use can eliminate the need for wall or projecting signs. Guidelines for awnings and canopy signs include:

- Shall maintain a minimum 8' clearance above grade.
- Shall provide a hold harmless/indemnification agreement & proof of insurance to the City.
- Sign copy area on awning counts as wall signage.
- If the awning is backlit (entire awning glows), then entire awning square footage shall be counted as signage.
- Existing marque signs shall be allowed to remain provided they are appropriately maintained.
- However, new marque signs are prohibited.



## OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

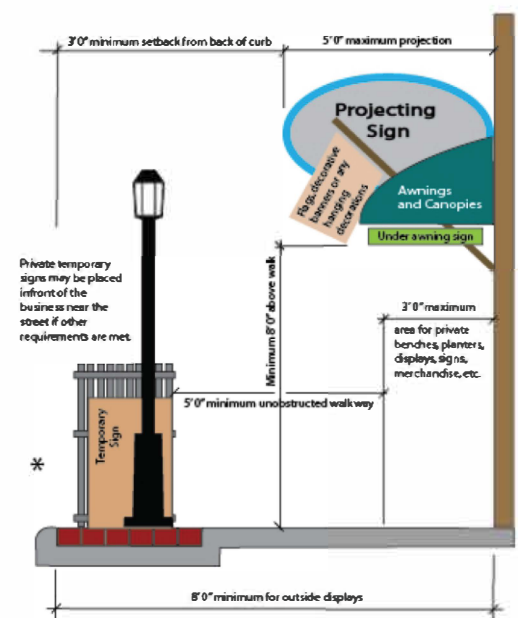
- Flags - Must be a minimum of 8' above sidewalk, maximum projection of 5'.
- Sidewalk Encroachment (Privately Owned Street Furniture) - includes benches, planters, tables, chairs, etc. Must be located adjacent to your building. Minimum of 5' unobstructed walkway must be maintained. Items must be taken in at night, or stacked neatly and secured. One-time fee and hold harmless is required, with annual proof of insurance.
- Merchandise - Nothing shall be used or set out on the sidewalk for such purposes which might endanger or injure anyone passing on the sidewalk. May use a maximum of 3' in width of the sidewalk next to and in front of building. Requires minimum of 5' unobstructed public sidewalk. Requires that sidewalk is 8' wide. Annual permit and fee with a hold harmless and proof of insurance is required.

For more information, contact:  
**Kevin Wilde, Sign and Zoning Administrator**  
 515.222.3630 or [kevin.wilde@wdm.iowa.gov](mailto:kevin.wilde@wdm.iowa.gov)

Sign permits can be found online at:

<http://www.wdm.iowa.gov/government/development-services/building-inspection/permit-applications/other>

USES WITHIN PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY IN VJHB DISTRICT



\* The placement of temporary signs must not obstruct the 2' vehicle overhang area