

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE RESOLUTION NO. 96-02

Design Guidelines for Illuminated Signs

The General Plan states, "Monterey's image is that of a small-scale residential community beside the bay, framed by a forested hill backdrop and drawing its charm from a rich historical background, certain commercial enterprises and natural scenic beauty." To assure preservation of this image, it is the desire of the Architectural Review Committee to maintain the City's existing uniform lighting as it is viewed from a distant vista or Scenic Highway entry. All new lights, including lights for signs and lights in commercial districts, should not stand out in relationship to surrounding lights when viewed from distance. New lights should be architecturally compatible with the project that they are proposed for and they should not create glare or light overspill that impacts viewers off-site.

1. Sign light should be minimal and consistent with Monterey's image and scenic beauty. To achieve this goal, the Architectural Review Committee will use the following guidelines to evaluate the design and placement of illuminated signs. The intent is to promote high quality attractive signs that are appropriate to their site and neighborhood without stifling creative and innovative design.
2. Sign lighting should be compatible with the predominant method of sign lighting that is used in the surrounding commercial area. In most of Monterey's commercial areas, indirect illumination of signs is the predominant method of lighting and new signs should be indirectly illuminated.
3. Sign lighting should be concentrated and focused on the sign area and not diffused over the building or property. Glare and undesirable illumination on adjacent properties or streets can be avoided with the proper selection of light fixtures and shields.
4. All illuminated signs should be designed to provide a high quality appearance in both natural light during the day and in artificial light at night.
5. Over-illumination of signs should be avoided. Over-illumination creates visual hot spots that increase ambient light, detract from the appearance of the street, and may reduce the effectiveness of neighboring signs. Inconsistent and uneven lighting across the face of the sign should also be avoided since this detracts from the sign's appearance and reduces legibility.
6. Internally illuminated signs are discouraged by the Architectural Review Committee except as set forth below in guidelines 7, 8, 9, and 10. These signs often consist of large rectangular metal sign cabinets with large surface areas of illumination that produce glare and excessive light. In many cases, the cabinet shape is poorly integrated with the design of the building or business that it identifies and it can, if improperly designed, significantly detract from the appearance of the property. Consequently, all proposed new and replacement internally illuminated signs will require approval by the Architectural Review Committee. Internally illuminated signs will not be eligible for administrative review or approval.
7. Internally illuminated signs are signs in which illumination is provided by an artificial source of light which is contained within the sign itself and the light is transmitted through the sign panel, letters, or logo.
8. New internally illuminated signs can be consider in the north Fremont Street, Del Monte Center, East Del Monte Avenue, and Fisherman's Wharf I/Marina areas. In these four (4) areas, internally illuminated signs are compatible with the predominant lighting characteristics in the area. North Fremont Street and East Del Monte Avenue are characterized by a wide street, a high speed of traffic, a landscaped median island, and a predominance of existing internally illuminated signs. Del Monte Avenue displays a large number of internally illuminated signs and has established a comprehensive sign and building design policy that requires all signs to be integrated into the building architectures. The Fisherman's Wharf area displays a variety of sign lighting designs that are oriented to the interior of the Wharf and not visible outside the Wharf area. This variety of pedestrian oriented signs and sign lighting contributes to the unique character of the Wharf.

9. In all other commercial areas, internally illuminated signs will be considered for approval by the Architectural Review Committee only when it is determined that the internally illuminated sign is: 1) integrated into the architectural design of the building; 2) high quality in design, materials, fabrication and finishes; 3) designed to minimize over illumination; and, 4) designed to be compatible with other signs in the area. The sign applicant is responsible for demonstrating that these design standards are met.
10. Internally illuminated signs shall be designed to minimize the amount of light that is transmitted through the sign panel. Signs with large surface areas of exposed internal illumination raise the ambient light level in the area of the sign without significantly improving sign legibility or effectiveness. Consequently, the display of white light should be limited to the sign copy. If lighting the sign copy only is not an option, the display of internal illumination through the background can be controlled by limiting its size to a small percentage of the sign area, changing the shape of the sign to reduce the lighted surface area, using a dark color, using an opaque screen, or a combination of these features.
11. Existing internally illuminated signs and all sign lighting that does not currently comply with these standards will be required to be upgraded to comply as a condition of approval for a new or remodeled sign. Any sign changes - for example, a change in name or log - are a remodel and they will be evaluated for compliance with these guidelines.
12. Bare bulb light fixtures such as flood and spotlights should not be used for sign lighting. This type of light fixture has a low quality appearance, creates glare and hot spots, and the bulb cannot be adequately screened.
13. Moving, flashing, rotating, or twinkling lights are prohibited and shall not be used as signage. Exposed neon or accent lights are discouraged and should not be used as signage.
14. All electrical wiring required for the lighting should be hidden or located in as unobtrusive a location as possible. Any visible conduit or wires should be painted out to blend with the background.
15. Light manufacturer's brochures or catalogues showing fixture types, illumination level, materials, and finish shall be submitted to the Planning Division prior to consideration of the sign permit.
16. Signs and sign lighting shall be maintained in good repair and working condition as long as they are up. Damaged signs and inoperative lights shall be repaired or replaced to match exactly the sign and/or equipment that has been approved if they are to remain on the property.

Chairperson

Vice Chairperson

Date

Original signed by Chair and Vice Chair November 24, 1996