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OUTDOOR ADVERTISING SIGNS IN THE TOWNSCAPE:
A VISUAL RESOURCE?

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This study is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Diploma in Landscape Architecture, Lincoln College, University of Canterbury.

September 1984
"Advertisement is a valuable tool of design which has not yet been exploited to the full and it should not be lightly discarded as merely a commercial 'gimmick'".

Connor, P. (1976)
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Study Goal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Methodology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Definitions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 History of Advertising</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 The Role of Advertising</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The Need for Controls</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 The Design Approaches</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Forms of Outdoor Advertising</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 THE VISUAL QUALITY IMPACT</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Concept of Visual Quality Assessment</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Application of Visual Quality Assessment</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 CURRENT CONTROLS IN CHRISTCHURCH</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Outdoor Advertising Sign Control</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Objectives</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Regulations</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Discussion</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 INTEGRATING OUTDOOR ADVERTISING SIGNS TO THE TOWNSCAPE</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Outdoor Advertising Signs as a Design Potential</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 The Attitude of Planners Towards Outdoor Advertising Sign Control</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 Regulations</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3 Implementation</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Conclusion</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 1  
Design Guidelines  
68

APPENDIX 2  
Legibility of Vehicle-Oriented Signs  
71

APPENDIX 3  
Colour and Conspicuity  
74

APPENDIX 4  
Colour for Better Legibility  
75

APPENDIX 5  
Checklist for Selecting or Modifying Alphabets for Signing  
76

REFERENCES  
77

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  
79
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Confusion worse confounded</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2      | An example of Design Approach I  
A sign reflecting the character and uniqueness of the visual environment | 2.6     | 8    |
| 3      | An example of Design Approach 2  
A sign dominating the character of the visual environment | 2.6     | 9    |
<p>| 4      | Free-standing signs | 2.7     | 11   |
| 5      | A sign attached to a building | 2.7     | 11   |
| 6      | Advertising painted on a bus | 2.7     | 12   |
| 7      | Advertising painted on a train coach | 2.7     | 12   |
| 8      | Visual Quality Assessment of signs on the landscape | 3.2     | 15   |
| 9      | The question of the appropriateness of a design strategy to its setting must be answered | 3.2     | 16   |
| 10     | Signs dominating over the architectural style of the building | 3.2     | 17   |
| 11     | Integrative Approach: A sign relating by its shape/form to the space it occupies | 3.2     | 19   |
| 12     | Dominant Feature Approach: A sign not relating by its shape/form to the space it occupies | 3.2     | 19   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sign lettering that is legible and of appropriate style to its setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hereford Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>High Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tuam Street/Manchester Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Victoria Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Poplar Street/High Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Victoria Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Cashel Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Tuam Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Gloucester Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Papanui Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Riccarton Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Blenheim Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mona Vale Avenue/Riccarton Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>List of signs reviewed and their visual quality impact on the landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Location map of signs reviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>The forecourt of a petrol filling station cluttered with outdoor advertising media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Banners as a form of inexpensive but dynamic outdoor advertising display add colour and movement in the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>Graphics programme, White Plains Mall, White Plains, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36,37</td>
<td>Promotional signing for an urban development area, River Oaks, Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-41</td>
<td>Vibrantly designed sculptural signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Monumental numeral marking, 9 West 27th Street, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Problems relating to integrating outdoor advertising signs to the townscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Schematic sign design showing scale and general description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Outdoor advertising sign integrated as an element of street furniture in our urban spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Essential information often makes little impact when it is displayed in a clutter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>A family of sign design which demonstrates attention-seeking devices yet maintaining overall co-ordination and in-scale to the pedestrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Motorist legibility analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>An example of the size of sign needed in relation to speed reaction time/distance travelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>The percentage of area a coloured sign has to exceed a white sign to be equally conspicuous is shown here</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM

Advertising is recognised to be an essential service in today's world. Amongst other things, it serves to keep consumers informed of services and goods available and locations where they may be bought.

However, outdoor advertising signs can be visually unappealing and as such denigrated by members of the public. Yet while advertising of any kind is justifiably condemned in a wilderness landscape - a 'natural' landscape where it is incongruous - that is not to say that it must be outlawed everywhere.

In the shopping centre, entertainment area, commercial area, advertising can be justified - it is appropriate there and is all part of the feeling of "place". The problem remains, however, of integrating advertising signs to the townscape.

1.2 STUDY GOAL

The goal of this study is to investigate the proposition that outdoor advertising can be a positive feature in the townscape.

To attain this goal, five objectives are identified. The first is to review the literature on outdoor advertising. This serves to provide an overall context for the present study. The second objective is to develop and apply a technique in visual quality assessment. The third objective is to review regulations used to control outdoor advertising. The purpose of this is to evaluate the success or otherwise
of these controls in integrating outdoor advertising in the townscape. The fourth objective is to consider outdoor advertising signs as a design potential in the townscape and the methods by which outdoor advertising can be better integrated into the townscape.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The literature on outdoor advertising is reviewed. Two local authority regions in Christchurch, Christchurch City and Riccarton, are chosen as case studies. Laurie's 1975 (cited in Zube et al., 1975) technique of visual quality assessment is adapted for outdoor advertising and applied to signs that occur in this study region. The respective district schemes are reviewed for the controls used for outdoor advertising.

The elements that make up outdoor advertising signs is reviewed and how these elements can contribute towards creating effective and visually attractive signs.

The current problems related to outdoor advertising signs are looked at and recommendations are made to improve the process of integrating outdoor advertising signs to the townscape.
LI TER A T U RE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a context for the present study. Outdoor advertising is defined and its history is briefly reviewed. The different views of the role of advertising are considered. The design approaches and the needs for control are analysed. Different forms of classifying outdoor advertising are considered and for the purpose of this study, one form is adopted in order to analyse current controls.

2.2 DEFINITIONS

The Collins English Dictionary (1979) defines advertising as "the action or practice of drawing public attention to goods, services, events, etc."

For the purposes of this study, the definition of advertising signs adopted by the Christchurch District Council is used. In the City Plan, sign is defined as:

"Sign includes every advertisement or advertising device of whatever nature whether painted, written, printed, carved, inscribed, endorsed or projected onto, or fixed to or upon any building, wall, pole, structure or erection of any kind whatsoever, or onto any rock, stone or tree or other object, if such advertisement or advertising device is visible from any road or public place".

Christchurch City Bylaw No. 106 (1980) - Control of Advertising Signs.

Under the planning scheme by-law, Riccarton Borough Council and Christchurch City Council definitions of sign are very similar.
2.3 HISTORY OF ADVERTISING

Bolen (1981) provides the following about early advertising. The earliest documented advertising dates back to Babylonian times (2200-538 BC). During these times, symbols were quite important as customers could not read. The dairy would be represented by a picture of a goat, whereas a sign depicting a mule driving a millstone stood for a baker. Skilled trades used signs showing the tools of their work, for example, a carpenter was represented by a saw and chisel.

These early signs were for the most part made of stone or terra cotta (Sampson, 1930, quoted in Sandage and Fryburger, 1963). The principal function of these early signs was to identify a merchant's place of business (Sandage and Fryburger, 1963). A valuable by-product of a sign is that of providing a landmark for the citizens of a town as house numbers were unknown then (ibid).

The invention of the printing press provided the technology to mass produce printed material. The first printed English advertisement was a handbill or 'poster' announcement written by William Caxton in 1477 (Sandage and Fryburger, 1963). The art of outdoor advertising was then transformed from individually handcrafted pieces of folk art to mass production. With the Industrial Revolution, markets were developed and broadened with outdoor advertising serving as a medium to transmit information on individual products and retail outlets.

In conclusion, while outdoor advertising has a long history, it was technological and economic developments of the last 200 years which resulted in the vastly expanded role of advertising.
2.4 THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING

This section examines both the role and necessity of outdoor advertising. Quite clearly the role of outdoor advertising is to communicate information ranging from the location of goods and services, specific products and non-commercial information, e.g. directional signs. Attention-gathering devices through the use of words, pictures, colour, size, movement, position, timing and so on, aim at passing a message to the consumer.

The necessity of outdoor advertising specifically, and advertising generally, is, however, a controversial issue. Bolen (1981) summarises the controversy. On the one hand it is argued that advertising costs money and hence increases the prices of goods and that it artificially stimulates consumers' desires to maintain the capitalistic system. To these accusations can be added, in the case for outdoor advertising, the commercialisation of the visual environment. On the other hand, it is argued that advertising provides the information necessary for the market to work efficiently, and that costs are reduced as the market size for products is increased and economies of scale achieved. Moreover, the role of advertising in stimulating consumer demand in order that full employment is maintained is also noted. From the pro-advertising viewpoint, outdoor advertising specifically is seen to enhance the visual townscape.

Advertising in the form of outdoor media has grown in importance as the mobility of the population has grown. Consumer exposure to outdoor advertising has grown as a result of the growth of our suburbs, the decentralisation of our retail structure and our shorter work week.

In contemporary New Zealand townscape, outdoor advertising is a reality and has a role in communication.
2.5 THE NEED FOR CONTROLS

This section examines the need for controls in outdoor advertising. The visual environment can be described as having two values; i) amenity - the aesthetic stimulus; ii) information - the knowledge acquiring process including perception, intuition and reasoning. The visual environment is a common property resource, no one is excluded from using it. For instance, to erect an advertising sign, rights are required to the property upon which the sign is erected, that is all. No right to the use of the visual amenity is necessary. Yet the value of the visual amenity can be debased by such a sign. Thus, outdoor advertising can be described as a private use (by advertisers) of a "common property" visual landscape. This problem of "common property" has been generally reviewed by Hardin (1968). The notion is that in a situation with open access to a resource and where users adversely interact, the result may be an undesirable social outcome. In outdoor advertising the undesirable outcome is that the amenity value of a scene can be degraded. It can also be so heavily congested with signs that the information of the signs themselves is not conveyed.

Figure 1:

"Nothing wrong at all, thank you, officer - its just that I'm a terribly slow reader".
For this reason, there is a need for regulation of outdoor advertising. While regulations to prevent sign congestion are relatively easy, it is not so easy to regulate the balance between the amenity value of a landscape and the demand for information via advertising signs. This is because society's preference between the two functions of the visual environment is difficult to measure.

2.6 THE DESIGN APPROACHES

This section considers the responses to the visual landscape, advertisers can take in advertising sign design. Advertising can be used in two ways. The first is to do with the primary role of the sign, it must convey the information that is to be advertised. The second aspect of advertising is the design of an aesthetically appropriate sign to its setting.

Depending on the value the advertiser places on the visual environment, i.e. amenity or information, advertisers can respond to advertising and its need in two ways. The advertiser may be most interested in the information conveyed from the sign and not its aesthetic attributes or, the aesthetic appropriateness of the sign to the setting is of primary concern to the advertiser.

There are then two responses to advertising design depending on the value placed on the visual environment and therefore two design approaches.
DESIGN APPROACH I

The sign is designed to reflect the character and uniqueness of the visual environment (refer to Figure 2). This is a sympathetic response to the environment and the sign design is appropriate in its function and sensitively integrated into its surroundings.

Figure 2: An example of Design Approach I. A sign reflecting the character and uniqueness of the visual environment.
DESIGN APPROACH 2

The communicative function of the sign is of primary importance and the aesthetics function is secondary. This approach usually results in signs which strongly contrast with the environment. Sign systems of this kind do a good job of communicating information, but they are seldom carefully integrated with colours and materials of the environment. These signs dominate the character of the visual environment and contribute towards a strong, visual feature (refer to Figure 3).

Figure 3: An example of Design Approach 2. A sign dominating the character of the visual environment.
The appropriate approach depends very much on the visual character of the environment. The term 'appropriate approach' is moreover subjective and designers may differ in what they consider appropriate for a particular environment depending on how sensitive and responsive they are to the environment. For some industrial projects, urban renewal scheme, modern architecture, making a dominant feature of the sign can add colour and vibrancy to the otherwise bland scene. For areas of strong architectural and historical implications, e.g. the Christchurch Square, the Arts Centre, a sympathetic approach to the landscape may be preferable. In such areas, the character and uniqueness of the visual environment is very important and signs should be designed in sympathy to the existing visual character and not detract from the scene.

2.7 FORMS OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

Outdoor advertising takes many forms which can be categorised according to:

A. The physical form the advertising sign takes.

B. The type of information the advertising sign conveys.
A. The physical form the advertising sign takes

i) Free-standing signs which have an independent means of support and are not attached to any building as illustrated in Figure 4 (Christchurch City Council Planning Booklet No. 15, p. 12).

![Figure 4: Free-Standing Signs](image1)

ii) Signs attached to buildings: signs under/above a verandah, fascia signs, sky signs, vertical/horizontal signs, painted signs on building walls. An example of a sign attached to a building is illustrated in Fig.5.

![Figure 5: A sign attached to a building.](image2)
iii) Miscellaneous: trailed banners, sky writing, balloons, flags, banners, litter bins, bus shelters, painted buses. Two examples are illustrated in Figures 6 and 7.

Figure 6: Advertising painted on a bus.

Figure 7: Advertising painted on a train coach.
B. The type of information the advertising sign conveys

i) Sign displayed is not in connection with the building or use in the premise, e.g. hoarding*.

ii) Sign displayed is in connection with the building or use in the premise, e.g. name sign, business sign.

For the convenience of evaluating the planning regulations, the category of advertising signs according to its physical form: (Ai) free-standing signs and (Aii) signs attached to buildings, is used. Signs are regulated through this category under the Christchurch City Council, but the Riccarton Borough Council Planning Scheme does not make such a differentiation between signs.

*Definition of hoardings:
"Hoardng" includes any structure, wall, building or erection, part or all of which is let or used for the display of any advertisement or advertising device for goods or services or purposes elsewhere than on the premises on which the hoarding is displayed.

Christchurch City Bylaw No. 106 (1980), Control of Advertising Signs.
3 THE VISUAL QUALITY IMPACT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, outdoor advertising signs in a case study area are analysed in terms of their visual qualities. The case study area comprises two local authority regions in Christchurch: Christchurch City and Riccarton. The areas were chosen for their proximity and two local authority regions were chosen in order to compare and contrast the different situations.

The concept used in analysing the outdoor advertising is first explained, the results from the case study presented and conclusions drawn.

3.2 CONCEPT OF VISUAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT

For outdoor advertising signs to make a positive quality impact on the townscape, it must meet two requirements. Firstly, the appropriate design strategy (refer to Section 2.6) must be adopted. This will depend on the existing character of the visual environment. Secondly, the sign design must be appropriate within the design strategy taken.

A sign design can be assessed on a range of visual quality, from being totally appropriate to being not appropriate to the setting. Where it lies along the scale is only relative and depends upon a number of elements that contribute towards its visual quality. An observer can analyse why (s)he finds a particular sign appropriate or not appropriate, by breaking the sign down to these elements and analysing the sign design on its appropriateness to the setting.
This also allows discussion between people of different points of view as to the points of their difference. Such an analysis is a valuable process in considering the merits of a particular outdoor advertising sign and as a result, in evaluating outdoor advertising controls. The visual quality assessment technique described by Laurie (1975) (quoted in Zube et al., 1975) is adapted in this study to outdoor advertising. The approach used is represented in Figure 8. Figure 9 shows the alternatives in design strategy to take, given a setting.

VISUAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF SIGNS ON THE LANDSCAPE IS Based on the Characteristics and Components of the Landscape:
* spatial interest and continuity
* architecture
* vegetation
* roofline.

Based on the Inherent Qualities of Characteristics and Components of the Advertising Signs:
* size/scale
* shape/form
* colour
* lettering
* texture/pattern.

Figure 8
SIGN
in the Landscape

Depending on the existing character of the visual environment.

INTEGRATIVE DESIGN APPROACH

The sign reflects the character and uniqueness of the visual environment.

FEATURE DESIGN APPROACH

The sign dominates the character of the visual environment.

---

Figure 9: The question of the appropriateness of a design strategy to its setting must be answered.

The visual quality impact a sign makes on the landscape is contributed by the visual characteristics of the sign itself assessed against the landscape. The impact exists as a visual relationship of the sign against the setting. The following elements of the landscape are regarded as important contributors towards this relationship.

SPATIAL INTEREST AND CONTINUITY - Landscape is seen as a sequence of spaces. Its character has much to do with the impression made by the entire scene. Coherence is sought and a visual interruption is a natural eye-catcher whether beautiful or ugly. Outdoor advertising signs can be seen as a visual interruption forming a positive or negative spatial interest towards the continuity of the scene.
"A landscape may appear to have beauty if a single object is beautiful in itself but is in an uninteresting setting. The eye is stimulated by the quality of contrast between the object and its setting, as well as by the intrinsic quality of the object itself".

Zube, E.H. et al. (1975).

ARCHITECTURE - Since advertising signs other than free-standing signs are attached to a building of some sort, the relationship of the sign as a whole and its inherent qualities of characteristics and components (size/scale, shape/form, colour, lettering, texture/pattern), to the building is important. Walls define spaces and form the vertical background upon which signs are seen. The two design approaches will require different treatment where architecture is concerned. An Integrative Design Approach requires sensitivity to the architecture and architectural integrity maintained. However, in the Feature Design Approach maintaining existing architectural integrity may not be important. Signs as a dominant feature may take priority over existing architecture, as illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Sign dominating over the architectural style of the building.
VEGETATION - Plants can have a significant impact on the visual display of a sign. Plant characteristics, e.g. form, texture and colour are interesting visual features. However, in many highly urban areas, plants do not exist at all to assess signs against.

ROOFLINE - The roofline is an integral feature on the vertical axis contributing towards the continuity of the scene, e.g. roofline of a row of shops. Signs above the parapet or eave line of a building may break the roofline and destroy the architectural integrity of the upper levels of the building. Maintaining the architectural integrity of a building(s) through the roofline may be of low priority if the approach of signs being the dominant feature in the landscape is to take place.

The following features are based on the inherent qualities of characteristics and components of advertising signs. These features contribute towards the aesthetic value of the individual sign itself and the visual impact it makes on the landscape.

SIZE/SCALE - In the urban area, signs are designed for two main users, the pedestrian and the motorist. Signs designed for the motorist need necessarily be larger to remain legible (see Appendix 2). Under the two design approaches, size/scale factor can be used to create conspicuousness of the sign. The larger the sign, the more attention it attains. This criteria may be used in the favour of signs being the dominant feature. However, the relationship between the size/scale of the sign, the area space and man is crucial towards man's perception of comfort in the space.

SHAPE/FORM - For the Integrative Design Approach, signs should relate by their shape/form to the spaces they occupy e.g. slender box signs will fit better in corridor-like spaces (refer to Figure 11).
For the Feature Design Approach, signs command the scene and are therefore less restricted by the shapes of the spaces they occupy. In some cases, a sign shape in

Figure 11: Integrative Design Approach.
A sign relating by its shape/form to the space it occupies.

Figure 12: Feature Design Approach.
A sign not relating by its shape/form to the space it occupies.
contrary to the shape of the space and positioned in the right location may form an interesting contrast (refer to Figure 12).

COLOUR - Colour as a design element is essential in making the sign system appropriate to its environment. In the Integrative Design Approach, sign colours should relate to colours and materials of the building or space where the sign will be installed. In the Feature Design Approach, sign colours may contrast with the overall colour of the building or space. The use of colours for their own sake is emphasised in the second approach. The use of various colours on different sized signs can create various degrees of conspicuousness (see Appendix 3). Colours can also affect the legibility of words on a sign depending on the colour combinations used (see Appendix 4).

LETTERING - Signs must be clear and legible in order to communicate information. The visual quality of the lettering is affected by the colour, letter size, letter style, number of words, letter arrangement. These should be selected in view of the distance from which the signs are read, the reaction time of the viewer response from a moving vehicle, and its aesthetic contribution towards the sign.

There are many letter styles to choose from, and a simple letter style may be preferable to a more decorative letter style in some cases so that the letter style will not detract from the architecture of the site. Appropriate lettering as a design element will help integrate signs to the setting, as illustrated in Figure 13 (see Appendix 5: checklist for selecting or modifying alphabets for signing).
Figure 13: Sign lettering that is legible and of appropriate style to its setting.

TEXTURE/PATTERN - Texture/pattern of signs is related to the materials used. The range of materials used, the methods of manufacture and processing have increased widely with the progress in technology. However, outdoor advertising signs are limited in the choice of materials used, as they must be resilient to weather conditions.

In the Integrative Design Approach, the chosen material for signs should harmonise with local building material. Selection is therefore often limited to the use of natural materials. The chosen sign material integrated with existing walls of buildings are immediately absorbed into the fabric of the area.

In the Feature Design Approach, the materials used on the existing site need not limit the choice of material used for the sign. The wide range of materials that can be used in this design strategy, especially plastic, offer a limitless selection of shapes and forms that signs can take.
3.3 APPLICATION OF VISUAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE

This section examines the visual quality impact of outdoor advertising signs on Christchurch townscape.

The visual qualities assessment is made according to Figure 8. The outdoor advertising signs chosen for assessment were taken from areas under the Riccarton and Christchurch City Planning Scheme. The use of the word 'townscape' in this study is restricted to areas of busy vehicle or pedestrian traffic i.e. areas designated commercial, cultural, or industrial zone in the related planning maps.

In this study, I am concerned with signs that 'communicate and gain attention' from the public. Small signs that do not 'command the visual environment', e.g. business and private identification signs, are therefore not assessed. Visual quality assessment is conducted on both free-standing signs and signs attached to buildings.

The visual quality of outdoor advertising signs in the townscape is assessed firstly on the basis of the appropriateness of the design approach taken. The signs are then assessed on the basis of their appropriateness within the design strategy taken. The visual quality assessment is made from the street level during the daytime.
THE SETTING - The visual character of the streetscape draws from the fine architectural details of the facade.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH - The appropriate design approach for such a setting is the Integrative Design Approach. The sign should reflect the character and uniqueness of the total environment.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT - The lettering style of the sign is too 'heavy' for the elegant details of the facade. The materials used, colour, shape/form do not integrate the sign to the existing environment but instead creates a dominant feature of the sign. The position and vertical alignment of the sign Q.B.E. has detracted from the architectural integrity of the facade.

The existing design approach is inappropriate to the setting. The sign has been made a dominant feature and has detracted from the setting. A positive visual contribution would have been made if the sign reflected the character and uniqueness of the total environment.
Figure 15: High Street under Christchurch City Planning Scheme.

THE SETTING - The visual character of the streetscape draws from the facade of the buildings. The repetition of windows, the continuity of the parapet, the colour and texture of materials used and the architectural details reflect the character and uniqueness of the visual environment.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

Any sign mounted against such a setting should take the Integrative Design Approach and not detract from the setting.
THE SIGNS: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

Signs 1 and 2 are of contrasting colours, made of plastic material and are mounted at right angles to the facade. Their position and angle at which they are attached to the building breaks the continuity of the facade.

The fascia signs work with the continuity of the verandah and have not detracted from the architectural detail of the building. Aesthetically, the fascia signs are not of high value.

The design of Signs 1 and 2 are not made in response to the architectural style and are highly inappropriate to the situation. The signs have created a negative visual impact on the facade. The fascia signs are well integrated to the facade by their size and location.
THE SETTING - This busy intersection of streets draws its character from the design of buildings built in the early 1900s. Architectural detail is lacking and the building presents a visually bland facade.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

A sign design made the dominant feature in the streetscape is appropriate and could add interest to this otherwise bland space.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

The sign design is integrated with the whole building. The sign design is effective and simple, relying only on two colours. Colours have been used for the sake of itself and allow the sign to stand out.

The sign design is appropriate and has added colour and excitement to the space and architectural facade that is otherwise visually bland. The sign has created an attractive feature out of what would otherwise be an uninspiring frontage.
Figure 17: Victoria Street under Christchurch City Planning Scheme.

THE SETTING - A commercial street that draws its visual character from a variety of uninspiring building styles.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

A sign design made the dominant feature on the streetscape is appropriate, and could add interest to this otherwise bland space.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

Advertising is conveyed through the building style and the literal information. The sign design is well planned and integrated to the building as a scheme. The sign design is simple and bold, and stands out in the space. Colours used are bold and bright, lettering is simple, contributing towards the vibrancy of the sign design.

The sign design is appropriate and has formed a visually attractive landmark on the street. The sign has added colour, interest, vibrancy to an otherwise blank space. It has contributed positively to the visual environment.
THE SETTING - This space is visually bland and often unnoticed. It is on a side-street and bordered by the uninspiring side walls of buildings.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

There is no strong, unique character existing in this setting. An appropriate sign design using the Feature Design Approach could add interest to this space.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

The sign design is simple and the appropriate use of colour, size/scale, lettering has resulted in an eye-catching sign design. The texture of the brick is seen through the paintwork integrating the sign to the rest of the wall surface. The use of the green colour has been repeated on the windows to give continuity to the space.

Appropriate and effective sign design has added visual interest to this uninteresting alley. The sign design has contributed positively to the visual environment.
Figure 19: Victoria Street under Christchurch City Planning Scheme.

THE SETTING - A commercial street that draws its visual character from a variety of uninspiring building styles.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

A sign design made the dominant feature in the streetscape is appropriate and could add interest to the space.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

The letter style used is simple, bold and appropriate to the architectural details of the building. The sign design has paid attention to the alignment of the second storey of the building. This horizontal alignment and the use of the same colour tone as the building relates the sign to the continuity of the space. The sign is made a dominant feature by the use of size, yet it relates well to the rest of the space by the use of colour, horizontal alignment and simple style. The use of plants of varying colours in flowers and foliage have not contributed towards the visual display of the sign. Instead, they cause a visual detraction to the sign. The sign has added visual interest to an otherwise blank wall. The sign design is appropriate and has produced a positive visual impact to the environment.
Figure 20: Cashel Street under Christchurch City Planning Scheme.

THE SETTING - A busy, commercial section of the town, drawing its character from a variety of architectural styles around it. This space is dominated by the monotony of a flat, horizontal plane used for a car park and the bleak, concrete wall of the building.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

A dominating sign design is appropriate and could add interest to this otherwise bland space.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

The sign is designed primarily to convey information. This it does very effectively. However, very little thought has been given towards the aesthetics of the sign. It is a very simple, uncluttered design and its dominance is derived mainly through its size and position.

The Feature Design Approach taken is appropriate, however, the sign has contributed little towards the aesthetics of the space.
THE SETTING - This space has no strong intrinsic character. The parking space is bordered by bleak side walls of buildings and the horizon is broken up by an irregular roofline.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

Given this bland setting, signs dominating the visual character of the environment is the appropriate design approach.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

This space is dominated by not one, but several signs of various sizes and colours. They are all arranged at varying heights. The 'Casio' sign is simple and eye-catching by the use of bold lettering and colours. It is appropriately designed for motorist attention and to the setting. The 'Turners' sign is cluttered with information and the use of colours is poor. The sign is inappropriately designed for motorist attention or to the setting. The car parking signs consist of free-standing signs and signs painted on building walls. These signs are designed for the sole purpose of conveying information. They contribute nothing towards the aesthetics of the visual environment.

The signs are visually conflicting, badly balanced in design and have resulted in an undesirable, confused streetscene. The combination of signs have contributed negatively to the visual environment.
Figure 22: Gloucester Street under Christchurch City Planning Scheme.

THE SETTING - This is a busy, commercial street and buildings of various styles and height dominate the scene. The street does not reflect any dominant characteristic or uniqueness. There is no visual linkage in the scene.
THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

Since there is no strong visual characteristic in the scene, a dominant sign design is appropriate and can add interest to the scene.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

The 'C.T. Computing' sign is cluttered and inappropriately designed for legibility to the motorist.

The variety of colours contrasting with one another on the sign and against the building, the different letter styles, have all contributed little towards the aesthetics of the sign itself.

The 'Wave House' sign is simple and bold. It has been designed to convey information and this it does boldly and directly; however, aesthetically, it is lacking.

The Feature Design Approach used by the two signs is appropriate. However, the signs have contributed little towards the aesthetics of the visual environment. In fact, the signs being of equal size, contrasting colours, inappropriately located on the building, slightly disaligned, have all led to the visual disharmony of the environment.
THE SETTING - The visual character of the streetscape draws from uninspiring rows of shops on opposite sides of the road.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

The appropriate design approach for such a setting is the Feature Design Approach. A dominant sign, appropriately designed, could add interest to an otherwise bland scene.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

The sun-shade is a refreshing media to use for the advertising sign. The lettering is bold and simple. The colours used on the sign, i.e. red, white and blue, are repeated with the rest of the shop frontage, relating the sign to the shop. Colour and movement have been introduced through the use of effective sign design.

The sign design is appropriate and has added a touch of drama and identity to the scene. The sign has contributed positively towards the visual environment.
THE SETTING - A busy street approaching the commercial region of Riccarton. The character of the setting draws from the various signs of active trading taking place.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

Given this commercial setting with no dominant visual character, a Feature Design Approach could add interest to the scene.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

The architecture and sign on the building are integrated as an advertising unit. The style of advertising is simple, direct and eye-catching. The free-standing sign has not contributed aesthetically to the overall advertising scheme. It is unnecessary, contributing no additional information to what is already integrated with the building and has only resulted in a clutter of signs.

The sign design of the building has made a strong identity to the trade and the space, and is appropriate in this commercial setting. The sign has reinforced the visual identity of the area, an area of "buying and selling".
THE SETTING - A busy road dominated by large industrial buildings. The setting lacks aesthetic value.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

Given such a bleak setting, a sign design made a dominant feature could add interest to the visual environment.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

The sign works on the principle of contrast to the visual environment. The contrast is obtained through the use of the bright colours and the vertical alignment of the sign. If the sign had conformed to the horizontal alignment of the building structure, it would only have reinforced the monotony of the blank horizontal style. Visual interest has been introduced through the use of colours, location, simple letter style and vertical alignment of the sign.

The sign design is appropriate and has added visual interest to the sign. The vertical alignment of the sign is appropriate; however, the visual quality impact of the sign on the environment would be improved if the sign is located on ground level, thus preventing it from looking like a chimney.
Figure 26: Mona Vale Avenue/Riccarton Road under Riccarton Borough Council Planning Scheme.

THE SETTING - A 'remnant' piece of land running alongside a railway line and visible from the busy Riccarton road. This space draws its character from the row of trees and the busy street.

THE APPROPRIATE DESIGN APPROACH

Given the setting, a Feature Design Approach is appropriate.

THE SIGN: VISUAL QUALITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

Both signs are well designed and well maintained. The lettering styles are simple, colours used are appropriate and the overall effect is good. The signs are designed without clutter and appropriate to catching the motorist's attention. The use of plants have helped in framing the signs, softening the harsh outlines and integrating the signs to the space.

The visual impact the signs make on the environment is positive. The signs are appropriately designed and have added interest to a space which would otherwise be overlooked.
3.4 CONCLUSION

As a technique, the visual quality assessment check-list has proved useful for assessing outdoor advertising signs. It is useful in that factors of outdoor advertising signs that contribute towards the visual impact can be identified and assessed individually. Differences in opinion regarding the merits of a sign can be explained with the aid of the checklist. The checklist can be used by Local Bodies for the assessment of outdoor advertising signs or the checklist can be adjusted and used in the assessment of other visual features, e.g. sculpture, building/architecture in the landscape.

One of the problems related to this piece of research is the selection of signs to be analysed. The basis of selection was being conspicuous and reaching out for attention. This may have resulted towards a bias of Feature Design Approach.

From Section 3.3 it can be seen that outdoor advertising have contributed towards a range of visual quality impact in Christchurch townscape. They range from examples contributing very positively to the townscape, to signs of inappropriate design approach. From the examples reviewed, Figures 14 and 15 demonstrate inappropriate design approach. The signs have detracted from the character and uniqueness of the visual environment. Figure 20 demonstrates the appropriate design approach has been taken, but the sign has contributed little towards the aesthetics of the environment. When many signs are placed in a common area, e.g. the side wall of a building, the sign design may be appropriate; however, the physical arrangement of the signs may result in a negative visual impact on the townscape as demonstrated in Figures 21 and 22.

Signs in Figures 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25 and 26 are appropriate and have contributed positively to the visual environment. The positive visual contribution of the signs examined give the townscape are colour, interest and vibrancy to what would otherwise be bland spaces.
The use of plants in the examples examined have not always contributed positively to the visual display of signs. Plants with a colourful display of flower or foliage, as demonstrated in Figure 19, are unsuitable as they detract from the colours of the sign. Dark green foliage with no colourful flowers or foliage are most suitable when used with colourful sign displays as demonstrated in Figure 26. The plant size and form must also be carefully considered to be of a significant scale to the sign.

The Feature Design Approach is the most common approach used by advertisers in Christchurch. Appropriately used, it can contribute towards a 'good' sign display. However, this approach may not always be the best strategy to adopt as demonstrated by Figures 14 and 15. The popularity of the approach may be explained by advertisers preferring this approach as it achieves their advertising objectives by gathering most attention to their signs. This may, however, be achieved to the detriment of the townscape for which planning regulations are set up with the intention of preventing this from happening.

Planning regulations are considered in the following section.
4 CURRENT CONTROLS IN CHRISTCHURCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I analysed the visual quality impact of outdoor advertising signs on the townscape. In this section, I shall review the planning schemes relevant to the areas under study and see how effective these regulations are as a tool in integrating outdoor advertising signs to the townscape.

To examine the control effectiveness, I shall look at the objectives set out under each district scheme, examine the controls set up to meet these objectives and how well these controls achieve their purpose.

4.2 OUTDOOR ADVERTISING SIGN CONTROLS

The Town and Country Planning Act 1977 provides for "the preservation or conservation of buildings, objects and areas of architectural, historic, scientific or other interest or of visual appeal" as a matter to be dealt with in District Schemes. Planning regulations for outdoor advertising are provided for under the section "Amenity" in the Planning Scheme and also included in this section are planning controls for buildings of historic and architectural interest, tree protection and landscaping.

Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1977, amenities are defined as,

"those qualities and conditions in an area which contribute to the pleasantness, harmony, and coherence of the environment and to its better enjoyment for any permitted use".

The definition is nebulous and as such, the local authorities' approach towards this problem is varied.
4.2.1 Objectives

Riccarton Borough Council - No overall objective is stated in the Riccarton Borough Council Planning Scheme; however, a general statement on the necessity for control of outdoor advertising is stated as,

"Outdoor advertising industry .... must be accepted as an established fact in modern commercial enterprise. In the interest of amenity and safety it is necessary as with all other uses, that there should be some form of control, but at the same time, the industry is entitled to know what it may do as of right".

(Riccarton Borough Council Planning Scheme, p.77)

This portrays a negative attitude towards outdoor advertising. It is seen as an inevitable activity generated in modern commercial enterprise that has to be controlled in the interest of safety and "amenity".

Christchurch City Council - The general planning objective for amenity in the Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme is,

"To promote a standard of amenity and public health which will improve the "garden city" image and further establish the reputation of the city as a good place to live".

(Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme, p.5)

There is no definition as to what is a good place to live, neither is it disclosed what sector is making the analysis and on what basis.

Signs are recognised to be an important feature of the townscape but its visual appearance can have a marked effect on amenities. The planning objective for advertising is:

"To ensure a high standard of design for advertising signs in order to protect public amenity and safety".

(Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme, p.42)

"The main objective is to ensure that signs are not displayed in a manner that would be detrimental to
the visual amenities of an area or would create a traffic hazard".

(Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme, p.44)

The meaning of "high standard of design" and "visual amenity of an area" is not disclosed.

4.2.2 Regulations

To achieve the objectives, the various planning schemes have set up regulations for outdoor advertising signs as follows.

Riccarton Borough Council - The regulations for outdoor advertising in the Riccarton Borough Council Planning Scheme operate through two zones: residential zone; commercial and industrial zone. In this study I am concerned only with the busy townscape, i.e. the commercial and industrial zone.

Under the commercial and industrial zone, the controls are:

a) No sign shall be erected or displayed in any commercial or industrial zone so as to be obtrusively visible from a residential zone.

b) No red or green illuminated sign which may cause confusion with traffic signals.

c) A restriction in the display area of the sign.

Amenity control has been stated as one of the objectives. On close examination of the regulations, amenity control operates only through 1) the restriction in the display area of the sign, and 2) the protection of residential zone against visual obtrusion by signs. I feel that these regulations are inadequate towards satisfying the objective of amenity control. If the term 'amenity' involves aesthetics and preserving the positive visual characteristics of the place, the regulations are inadequate.

The special protection for residential areas against obtrusive signs can be interpreted as, from the living
quarters, signs are undesirable and not an integral element in the visual landscape. 'Obtrusively visible' is a vague term. Since visual quality is a subjective term, a measure of visual obtrusion is not possible.

The system of computing the aggregate area of sign permitted relative to the building area is doubtful as an amenity control. Does human perception operate such that one square foot in excess of the permissible area renders a sign too big in proportion to a building, and therefore "ugly" and not in the interest of amenity? The controls prevent the adverse proliferation of outdoor advertising. However, the finer points of aesthetic controls are inadequate.

Christchurch City Council - The Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme sets out a series of standards that provide a framework for ensuring that building and land uses establish in such a way as to be compatible and complementary to each other. This is achieved by the operation of two techniques: zoning; and performance elements and standards.

"Performance element can be used to introduce flexibility through discretion and dispensation procedures. Provided the performance element is met, the method of meeting is of little consequence".

(Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme, p.12)

In examining outdoor advertising signs in the townscape, we are concerned with the cultural, commercial and industrial zones under the Christchurch City District Scheme.

Permitted signs in cultural zones and their performance elements and standards

a) Design and appearance
"Signs shall be limited to those displayed in connection with any permitted building or use in the zone. Any sign visible from a residential zone, recreational zone, or from a road shall not exceed 1.1 m² in area".

(Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme, p.138)
Cultural I zone incorporates the Arts Centre Sign. Much flexibility has been introduced under the regulations for outdoor advertising signs.

"..... to retain and enrich the cultural, historic and architectural character of the old University site", has been recognised under the zone statement. Signs permitted on display are restricted to only those relevant to the site and building. A limit on the display area of signs is made at 1.1 m². A size limit may be beneficial towards the character of the area as it is at present already a built-up area and large signs will only add to visual clutter. However, the limit of a 1.1 m² on display area seems too specific. Are signs 1.05 m² in the area "good" and signs 1.15 m² or over, "bad"?

Permitted signs in commercial and industrial zones and their performance elements and standards

a) Amenities of residential neighbours

"No sign shall detrimentally affect the amenities of any land or property, tend to depreciate the value of nearby property, or be obtrusively visible from a residential zone".

(Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme, p.38)

The term "visually obtrusive" is subject to interpretation and a means by which it may be measured is not provided.

b) Traffic safety and traffic control

"No sign shall detrimentally affect traffic safety or traffic control by obstructing drivers' vision, or causing confusion or distraction for drivers, or creating a situation hazardous to the safe movement of traffic".

(Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme, p.138)
c) Content of sign
"Information displayed on signs is restricted to that pertaining to the site or building, except as otherwise provided".

This regulation restrains the exploitation of the landscape as a medium for displaying commercial information. It allows for only the advertising of goods and services available on site.

d) Design and appearance
Special amenity provision is made for Cathedral Square, Victoria Square, New Regent Street, pedestrian malls and the Commercial 3 zone. Except for these special areas, signs attached to or on any building or its walls or a verandah, are permitted provided that no part of the sign protrudes above the line of the eaves or parapet of the building.

This control preserves the integrity of the architectural design. However, it does not to any large extent integrate signs as an architectural element to the building. This is because the control only makes provision for the eaves and parapet line of the building.

Free-standing signs are limited in display area and height. The relevance of a strict cut-off point in sign size as a means of achieving amenity objectives is doubtful. Moreover, the method by which the specific limit is made is not revealed. Whether there is some broad relationship between sign size and visual disamenity is doubtful. The use of a sign which exceeds this limitation of regulation may be far more pleasing, may even enhance the visual aspect of the site even if of a larger surface area.

In assessing Christchurch City Council regulations against their objectives, the control of the aesthetic element of signs is inadequate. Other than controlling signs from being "obtrusively visible" and "detrimentally effecting
the amenities of any land or property", there is little or no control over the aesthetics of signs.

Limits are made on factors which are technically measurable, e.g. display area. These limits can be seen as being restrictive to the initiative of the advertiser or designer. While such limits no doubt have a role to play towards the control of outdoor advertising, they do not guarantee exclusion of "bad" signs.

The Christchurch City Council Scheme is set up on the policy of performance index and performance element. However, for regulatory purposes, some regulations are made based on measurable quantities. This is restrictive and results in a system of practice based on conservative, conventional regulations.

4.2.3 Discussion

The planning schemes examined demonstrate that advertising in the street is subjected to a complex of framework of regulations aimed at controlling a proliferation of posters and signs in the interests of 'amenity' and 'public safety'. From the study in Section 3.3, we conclude that signs in the Christchurch landscape contribute towards a range of visual quality impact as shown in Figure 27. The signs range from those which contribute very positively to the visual environment to signs that are inappropriate to the setting. Yet all these signs which are reviewed and distributed around Christchurch as shown in Figure 28 comply within the regulations set up by the relevant planning schemes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure no.</th>
<th>Sign location</th>
<th>Regulated by</th>
<th>Visual quality impact of the sign/s on the landscape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hereford Street</td>
<td>CCC*</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tuam Street/Manchester Street</td>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Victoria Street</td>
<td>CCC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Poplar Street/High Street</td>
<td>CCC</td>
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<td>CCC</td>
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<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Monva Vale Avenue/Riccarton Road</td>
<td>RBC</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* CCC - Christchurch City Council

* RBC - Riccarton Borough Council

Figure 27: List of signs reviewed and their visual quality impact on the landscape.
Figure 28: Location map of signs reviewed.

*Sign regulated by Christchurch City Council
•Sign regulated by Riccarton Borough Council
The term 'amenity' is a nebulous term which essentially defies a definitive interpretation. Objectives and regulations set up for 'amenity' control are vague. The difficulty of regulations for outdoor advertising signs no doubt lies in the control of the 'amenity' of the environment. The existing controls in the two planning schemes examined exist as a basic code. This code spells out definite criteria of measurement for technical factors, e.g. limits on display area and height restrictions. Whether such measurements relate to visual and 'amenity' control is questionable.

Applications for signs to be put up have to be reviewed by the planning authority. The planners may prohibit a sign which in their opinion is contrary to the amenity of the region or may endanger traffic safety. The result may be that advertisers will produce displays which fall within the terms of deemed consent rather than produce a scheme which would be of a better quality but would require time and expense to obtain express consent. The initiative of advertisers may be stultified and what can be a potential design element in the townscape ends up in a conformity of design displayed in a horizontal and vertical alignment.

The best example of a visually unattractive form of outdoor advertising yet conforming within regulations is used in petrol filling stations and car sales yards. An example is shown in Figure 29. Various forms of attention-gathering devices are used, flags, banners, 'mobile' signs. These result in a cluttered appearance, environmentally and commercially unsound although within the deemed consent provisions of the regulations.
The Christchurch City Council Planning Scheme introduces some flexibility into the regulations through the performance index, and performance standard criteria. However, for administrative purposes, the resultant regulations are no different to the regulations set by the other planning schemes. The principle of the approach is good but the problem lies in the administering of the regulations. I feel that planners tend towards a conservative and conventional approach, treating advertisements other than those complying by the regulations laid out with utmost care.

The basic code of technical criteria signs must satisfy, operate according to the use of the area, e.g. commercial, industrial or residential area. The regulations, however, make no response to the appropriate design approach to be taken according to the visual character of the existing environment.

Section 3.3 demonstrates that the Feature Design Approach is a very common approach in Christchurch. Such a design approach can be used to the benefit of the advertiser to gain public attention to the sign. Used appropriately, it
can add interest and vibrancy to the townscape as is demonstrated in Figures 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25 and 26. However, such a dominant approach may prove detrimental to some of Christchurch's old but architecturally interesting buildings. Figures 14 and 15 demonstrate the negative impact caused on the visual environment when an inappropriate design approach is taken. The signs have complied within the basic code of technical criteria, regulations have been laid out according to the use of the area. However, the regulations have not responded to the appropriate design approach to be taken according to the visual character of the existing environment.

Areas of high visual amenity are given special protection by the classification of Special Amenity Areas. All other signs are regulated by the same basic code if they exist within a certain use area. This system of regulation occurs regardless of the visual character of the existing environment. If settings are unique and outside a large area which can be easily zoned 'Special Amenity Areas' (which includes Cathedral Square, Victoria Square, New Regent Street, pedestrian malls), regulations must respond to such circumstances. Such an approach is necessary to a larger degree under the Christchurch City Scheme rather than the Riccarton Borough Scheme. This is because streets in the Riccarton area are more recent and of lesser visual character than the older streets under the Christchurch Scheme.

Outdoor advertising signs are a potentially positive visual feature of today's world. What the regulations have done is to take away the worst state of outdoor advertising proliferation, but what it hasn't done is to control the finer points of the aesthetics of each sign. We can conclude that the controls for the aesthetic attributes of signs can be improved and signs can be better integrated as a design in our townscape.

The following section looks at integrating signs as a design element in the townscape.
5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at outdoor advertising as a design element in the townscape. The problems and methods related to integrating outdoor advertising signs to the townscape are reviewed.

5.2 OUTDOOR ADVERTISING SIGNS AS A DESIGN POTENTIAL

From Section 3.3 we can see that outdoor advertising signs have contributed interest, excitement, vibrancy to many of our urban spaces. Outdoor advertising signs are often accused of being

"the major cause of visual confusion and ugliness in our towns and cities today".

(Design Council 1976)

This statement appears too strong according to most of the examples assessed on the Christchurch townscape. However, we can say that outdoor advertising in Christchurch is generally conventional and conservative. Advertising is generally restricted by regulations to horizontal and vertical plaques, painted walls and the few bold attempts of incorporating advertising with the whole building style, e.g. Figures 16 and 17.

Outdoor advertising signs are a visual resource in our townscape.

"Tasteful advertising on well-designed, well-cared for and well-placed structures of various types can add colour, light, interest and gaiety to what otherwise might be a rather drab and sterile scene".

(Purdie, N.; Hockley, D., 1976)
With the technology advancement of today, a wide range of materials ranging from the natural to the synthetic are available for outdoor advertising signs. Signs need no longer be confined to horizontal and vertical plaques on shop fronts, as a variety of adventurous approaches are made possible. Some examples of effective outdoor advertising signs are illustrated in Figures 30 to 42 (Figures 31 to 42 are taken from Pollis, J.; Hammer, D., 1979).

Figure 30: Banners as a form of inexpensive but dynamic outdoor advertising display add colour and movement in the environment. Chancery Arcade, Christchurch.
Figures 31-35

Graphics programme,
White Plains Mall,
White Plains, New York.

Fig. 31

Fig. 32

Fig. 33

Fig. 34

Fig. 35
Figures 36-37:
Promotional signing for an urban development area, River Oaks, Illinois.
Figures 38-41:
Sculptural signs.
The opportunity and potential of outdoor advertising signs as a design element contributing positively towards the environment has not been fully utilised in Christchurch. We can identify the problems of the present situation resulting from various levels by using Figure 43.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 43:** Problems relating to integrating outdoor advertising signs to the townscape.
5.2.1 The Attitude of Planners Towards Outdoor Advertising Sign Control

The attitude and underlying philosophy of planners towards outdoor advertising signs can be regarded as negative. They regard outdoor advertising signs as an inevitable consequence of the consumer world, and controls are required to protect public safety and 'amenity'. Planners' attitude towards outdoor advertising signs should change if its design potential is to be realised. The regulations as they stand give the local planning authority a free rein to interpret 'amenity' according to the characteristics of a particular locality, and the possibilities of the advertisement medium for adapting to the particular needs of an area are virtually boundless. From the landscape architecture point of view, we are interested in creating the townscape such that it

"Works as a total living space with the positive interaction and dynamic interplay between the physical environment and the people who use it".

(Connor, P., 1976)

Is this not what 'amenity' really means?

5.2.2 Regulations

There are many problems related to sign regulations. However, the existing regulations whereby signs have to comply within the basic code set up for a number of technical factors is inadequate. The aesthetic factor of signs in relation to the space it occupies is inadequately dealt with. Furthermore, the same basic code governs signs within an area of specific use, e.g. Commercial, Industrial or Cultural regardless of the character of the setting. In Section 3.4, we conclude that Feature Design Approach is the common design approach adopted by advertisers in Christchurch. Since it is to the advertiser's interest to gather as much attention as possible to the sign, this approach will be
adopted wherever possible. This may, however, be to the detriment of the townscape. Regulations must respond to the character of the setting and accommodate for the appropriate design approach on each site. Certain areas e.g. Cathedral Square, Victoria Square, New Regent Street, new pedestrian malls are regarded areas of high visual amenity. These Special Amenity Areas are regulated by an even more restrictive basic code. I consider that these areas considered under Special Amenity Areas should be treated differently.

The Cathedral Square with its buildings and spaces of great intrinsic quality should be treated with due restraint. However, in the shopping areas, e.g. the new pedestrian malls, a more adventurous approach can be considered. In these areas now closed to vehicular traffic, the streetscape which was before overlooked in the hustle and bustle of traffic is now open to pedestrian scrutiny. These older shopping streets now reveal uninspiring frontages and public safety considerations are not as restrictive without through vehicular traffic. Contrast rather than due restraint may be desired in such shopping areas. The irregularities of well designed advertisements of various scale, materials, colour and lighting on shop facades, integration of signs with other street furniture can enhance rather than detract from such environment. It is in these kinds of situations, buying and selling, which outdoor advertising is strongly associated with. Outdoor advertising finds its rightful place in such environment and the planning authority should not inhibit the development of a vibrant, stimulating shopping environment under their misguided efforts to implement an orderliness through standardised signs. An adventurous yet sympathetic approach to advertisements in such areas could show tremendous dividends for the environment, trader and shopper alike.
5.2.3 Implementation

Planning and implementation for aesthetics is by no means an easy job. There are no hard and fast rules regarding what makes a good design. A good sign design for a certain setting may not necessarily be good for another setting, so what we are looking for is not a good but an appropriate sign (refer to Appendix I for Design Guidelines). A yardstick of measurements as shown in existing regulations is not going to ensure aesthetically appropriate signs but rather signs which conform to a standard orderliness. Such regulations tend to support the status quo producing visual monotony through adherence to minimum standards set by the regulations and as a result, discouraging innovation and creativity. This is probably the reason for the Christchurch situation.

One of the major problems related to implementing appropriate signs is that applications for consent and the installation of advertisements with consent are piecemeal and intermittent. Comprehensive treatment especially for new developments and controls are therefore difficult.

Section 36(6) (e) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1977 specifically authorises local authorities to provide for landscaping under the district scheme. Planners impose conditions in all new developments requiring outline landscaping plans. Vegetation is seen as an integral element in the visual landscape and considered in the comprehensive scheme. Section 36(6) (d) provides for

"The design and appearance of buildings and signs and the provision, design and appearance of verandahs".

However, the treatment of outdoor advertising displays and its location is not regarded within the comprehensive scheme. Just as building plans, landscape plans are submitted
before permits are given for development to commence, so should plans of sign design and location, its visual impact on the environment be considered from the start. The system of signs should be treated as part of the total environmental design problem. The role of outdoor advertising material in the visual environment is as important as tree planting or ornamental paving. Signs should be considered in the comprehensive scheme as an integral unit of the development and planned accordingly and not as an afterthought to fill a gap on site.

Advertising displays should be "treated as part of the landscape proposal as a whole and not as an added afterthought". (Purday, N.; Hockley, D., 1976)

Before permits are consented on signs, the sign should be reviewed on the basis of the design quality and the visual quality impact the sign makes on the environment. This would best be done on a sketch plan stage. Schematic drawings as shown in Figure 44 are important aids at this design level. Acting like enlarged thumbnail sketches, they help establish preliminary design of signs, its location and the visual quality impact on the environment. Review of a design of a design at this stage is preferable to reviewing it at an advanced stage because less cost and time have been incurred and there is more scope to influence sign development at the start of the process.

Figure 44: Schematic sign design showing scale and general description.
The review of outdoor advertising sign design and its visual quality impact on the landscape should be carried out by people or a committee with expertise in various matters of aesthetic concern. Regulations may exist as a basic framework but instead of letting this minimum standard become the norm, flexibility is introduced into the scheme. Consent should be made not only on the basis of complying to measurements set by planners but on the basis of the visual impact on the environment. According to such a scheme, signs may exceed the limitations set by the regulations, e.g. by being of a larger surface area but may be granted consent because it is assessed to contribute positively to the visual environment. Within such a scheme, we are also able to respond to the character of each setting considered so essential in evaluating the merits of the relevant sign.

The Christchurch City Council introduces flexibility into the scheme through the performance standard, performance index criteria. The principle applied is good. However, the failure lies in the administering of the aesthetic objectives. Planners are not trained in aesthetics and are therefore not the suitable personnel to assess signs on the basis of the visual quality impact on the landscape. Assessment by planners is therefore made strictly on the basis of compliance to the basic technical factors set up, and proves to be highly inadequate as an aesthetic control.

The legislation of good aesthetics is almost impossible.

"No matter how creative regulations are, they cannot cover every possible matter that has a bearing upon aesthetic quality and they are dependent upon equally creative and competent execution. Moreover, good design depends not only on the skill of designers themselves, but also on the active participation of the entire community, a community which demands a high standard of aesthetic quality for its environment and
which will view critically the design standards of the professionals. It is within this sphere that education has a major role to play".

(Lochhead, 1978)

Education of the public plays an important role in aesthetic control. The sort of education programme a council may undertake is demonstrated by the Akaroa County Council Scheme. It provides an educational programme demonstrating the Council's aesthetic objectives. An "environmental exhibition" displayed in the town's information centre provides an aesthetic analysis and photographs illustrating the existing character of the town. The Akaroa Civic Trust plays an active role under the scheme. Consisting of professionals, trained in the aesthetics, it offers advice on colour schemes, landscaping, design, preservation, signs, or any other matter leading to the improvement of the environment.

The larger councils can draw personnel with expertise in aesthetic matter, e.g. landscape architects to act on an advisory service, and produce, design briefs towards improving the visual quality of the environment through signs.

"Whether or not a council lacks members with expertise, it should enlist the aid of interested volunteer groups such as Civic Trusts, the Historic Places Trust, and environmental groups, as these groups will usually include among their members people with expertise in various matters of aesthetic concern as well as people committed to the improvement of the aesthetic quality of the environment".

(Lochhead, 1978)

There is also scope for the advisory committee to work in conjunction with advertising agencies with the object of enhancing the environment in defined areas by promoting advertising displays in conjunction with other street furniture and landscaping elements, e.g. well designed advertising struct-
ures with combined seating, litter bins, or lighting columns, etc. Such opportunities of integration can contribute towards an integrated scene and lead to the visual success* of our urban spaces (refer to Figure 45).

*The criteria for visual success are first, that this space be imageable, i.e. well structured and vivid in form, endowed with a pervading sense of place. Second, it must be conceived as a sequential experience, rhythmically organised, with contrast and variety, yet with strong continuity. Third, it must be meaningful; highly expressive of the nature, function, and value of the place and the uses that occupy it". (Lynch, K., 1966).

Figure 45: Outdoor advertising sign integrated as an element of street furniture in our urban spaces.
Although such a scheme only acts on an advisory basis and compliance to the guidelines is not mandatory, it creates an awareness in the public towards the character of the area and actively promotes pride and responsibility towards the environment. The advertiser must also be led to think an aesthetically good sign is good business. A clutter of aggressive signs need not attract more customers. Some shoppers find the clutter offensive and are turned off by them. Worst of all, clutter can lead to visual confusion, as is shown in Figure 46. Unless the public is fully involved in the pursuit of an aesthetically pleasing environment, even the most imaginative regulations are not likely to guarantee success due to the difficulty of legislating aesthetic control.

Figure 46: Essential information often makes little impact when it is displayed in a clutter.
5.3 CONCLUSION

After reviewing the situation in Christchurch under the Christchurch City Plan and the Riccarton Borough Council Plan, I can say that the existing regulations have prevented the proliferation of outdoor advertising signs. Signs existing under both schemes are, however, conventional in appearance with many inappropriately designed signs in relation to their setting. The regulations have, therefore, not controlled the finer points of aesthetics in the signs and there is room for improvement in this regard. Outdoor advertising signs with the vast design potential of offering vibrancy, colour, interest to urban space is also not fully utilised under the present regulations.

Many problems have been recognised as associated with the control of outdoor advertising signs. These problems relate to the attitude of planners towards outdoor advertising signs, the controls themselves and the implementation of controls. A summary of the existing problems and possible solutions can be listed as follows:

* Planners are negative in their attitude towards outdoor advertising signs. Outdoor advertising signs are considered an inevitable consequence of commercialism and regulations are needed for amenity and safety controls.

* Outdoor advertising signs are treated piecemeal and intermittently under the present regulations. Such a treatment gives rise to problems of control and implementation. To overcome these problems, outdoor advertising signs must be considered an integral part of the visual environment and must be considered from the start of a development.

* Regulations according to the technical criteria the signs must meet are inadequate for aesthetic control.

* Regulations must take into consideration the aesthetic appropriateness of a sign to the setting. Regulations must respond to the character of the setting.
Planners are not trained in aesthetics and are therefore not the suitable personnel to make aesthetic judgements of signs. Personnel trained in the aesthetics, e.g. landscape architects, are appropriately skilled to assess the visual quality of a sign and the visual quality impact it makes on the landscape.

Education plays a large role in aesthetic control. Awareness of the public and the public responsibility undertaken towards the environment can promote better results than regulations can because of the difficulty of legislating good aesthetics.
APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Commercial advertising can enhance or be a blight on an environment. The following are very general guidelines to make signs effective as message bearers, and also as design elements that enhance the setting. The author does not advocate rules for design of signs as this would mean little and may prove limiting towards the potential of a lively and original design work. It must be recognised that each problem and the opportunities connected with it are peculiar to each job.

"I believe all design solutions stem from the problem to be solved. Preconceived, narrow viewpoints hinder these solutions".

Lubalin, H., 1957.
Cited in Follis, J. and Hammer, D., 1979

- Well designed signs appropriately located can enhance the visual environment by, e.g., creating pleasant spaces, screening sites awaiting redevelopment or wasteland.

- All structures related to outdoor advertising signs should be well constructed of the right materials and vandal-proof as far as possible.

- A well designed sign to remain aesthetically pleasing for a long period of time must be well maintained. Maintenance can be reduced by using durable, low maintenance materials and techniques, although initially these are more expensive.

- Signs should not constitute a hazard to pedestrian or vehicle traffic. In view of traffic safety, red and green should not be used especially if viewed from the road and clashing with traffic signals.
- If plants are used to enhance sign display, the choice of plants should be restricted to plants without colourful fruits, foliage or flowers that are likely to detract from the colours of the sign.

- If closely associated signs are required, a family of sign design need not be monotonous.

Figure 47: A family of sign design which demonstrates attention-seeking devices, yet maintaining overall co-ordination and in-scale to the pedestrian.
LEGIBILITY OF VEHICLE-ORIENTED SIGNS

The legibility of signs viewed from a moving vehicle is determined by the following items listed in order of priorities:

1. Driving speed and the number of traffic lanes, both of which influence reaction time.
2. The distance from which signs should be recognizable.
3. Type of environment (commercial, industrial, residential, or agricultural).
4. Setback distance, within cone of vision and outside cone of vision.
5. Graphic design considerations, such as selected typeface; letterspacing; number of words, names, or syllables on a sign; colour; number of items of information (there should be six or fewer); area of total signface; lighting and sources of illuminations; and other auxiliary and basic design elements.

The most important considerations in designing vehicle-oriented signs are:

1. The distance from which a sign should be read when the vehicle is parked.
2. Reaction time when the car is moving - the time it takes a driver to see a display, read its message, and respond to that message by preparing a turn.

Field tests have shown that the reaction time which allows a driver to see a sign, read it, and respond is related to the number of lanes as follows:

- 2-lane road: 8 seconds
- 4-lane road: 10 seconds
- 6-lane road: 11 seconds
- Freeway: 12 seconds.
The faster a car is moving, the farther it travels while the driver is reacting to a message and, therefore, the larger that message must be (Figure 47). It is fairly well established that for every 50 feet (15 metres) of distance separating a viewer from an object, 1 inch (2.5 millimetres) of letter height is required. To be absolutely sure that the sign can be read, 1 inch Helvetica capital letters is recommended for every 30 feet (9 metres) of distance.

Since there is a limit to what a person may see and remember as he is driving, the number of items of information being communicated to him as he moves down the street becomes vitally important. An item of information is defined as being a symbol, word, syllable, or discontinuous shape. As a maximum, six items of information are more than adequate to help a driver find what he is seeking. Moreover, six items of information seem to be the maximum a driver can usefully and safely absorb from any one street sign. Ten items of information can be communicated from a property to an adjacent right-of-way by various signs. Figure 48 gives the size of sign needed in relation to speed reaction time/distance travelled so that the sign will be large enough to permit all six items of information to be put into one ground sign.
MOTORIST LEGIBILITY ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of lanes</th>
<th>Speed (mph)</th>
<th>Reaction time (seconds)</th>
<th>Distance travelled during reaction (feet)</th>
<th>Letter height (inches)</th>
<th>Total area of sign (square feet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>176</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>352</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Freeway</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 48: 15' LATERAL DISTANCE

Figure 49: An example of the size of sign needed in relation to speed reaction time/distance travelled.
APPENDIX 3

(Follis, J.1 Hammer, D., 1979).

COLOUR AND CONSPICUITY

Various experiments and tests have been conducted to determine the amount by which signs of various colours would have to be larger or smaller than white signs to be equally conspicuous. Generally, the results in terms of the percentage of area a coloured sign had to exceed a white sign are shown in Figure 50.

To be conspicuous under open conditions at 250 yards (220 metres), signs of different colours have to be of different sizes to be equally conspicuous. To be equally conspicuous in shaded areas, the coloured sign areas have to be doubled.

![Figure 50: The percentage of area a coloured sign has to exceed a white sign to be equally conspicuous is shown here.](image-url)
APPENDIX 4

(Favre, J.P., November, A. (no date).

COLOUR FOR BETTER LEGIBILITY

Colours are a way to improve legibility of words, trademarks, logos, for instance. The following table of Karl Borggrafe informs on the legibility of coloured letters on coloured backgrounds. This ranking list was compiled based on reading tests with letters 1.5 cm high on cards 10 x 25 cm in size. A tachistoscope was used to measure the exact time of reading. 1.31 means that the card concerned was read practically completely within the first exposure unit, as only a fraction of a further exposure unit (0.31) sufficed for all letters on the card to be registered.

<table>
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<th>First colour: letters</th>
<th>Second colour: background</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Daylight</th>
<th>Artificial light</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>green on white</td>
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<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red on white</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.36</td>
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</tr>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>blue on yellow</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>1.41</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5

(Follis, J., Hammer, D., 1979).

CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING OR MODIFYING ALPHABETS FOR SIGNING

The following questions should be kept in mind:

1. Does the alphabet have the appropriate character for the project?
2. Which weight (regular, light, medium bold) should be used?
3. Will the alphabet be highly legible when viewed at the distance required? When illuminated at night?
4. If three-dimensional letters are planned for, will it be easily read when viewed from an angle?
5. Is the alphabet suitable for all the fabrication techniques planned. For example, a Roman styled alphabet with sharp serifs cannot be deeply sand-blasted into granite without losing much of its elegance, but it can be hand-carved into metal or slate.
6. Will fabrication of the alphabet be practical, considering the sizes required and the materials to be used? Script letters may have excessively thin strokes for cut out wood or even metal when fabricated in small size. However, script letters can be silk-screened or sand-blasted in small sizes on various materials.
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Publications used in preparation but not specifically referred to in the text:


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