

MEDIAN SIGNS

An acknowledgement sign is an integral part of the median sponsorship programs. There are two primary objectives concerning signs. One objective is to recognize and credit sponsors for their contribution to city beautification without the sign becoming an advertising vehicle. The second objective is to develop a sign program that is attractive, consistent throughout the city, and does not detract from the landscaping.

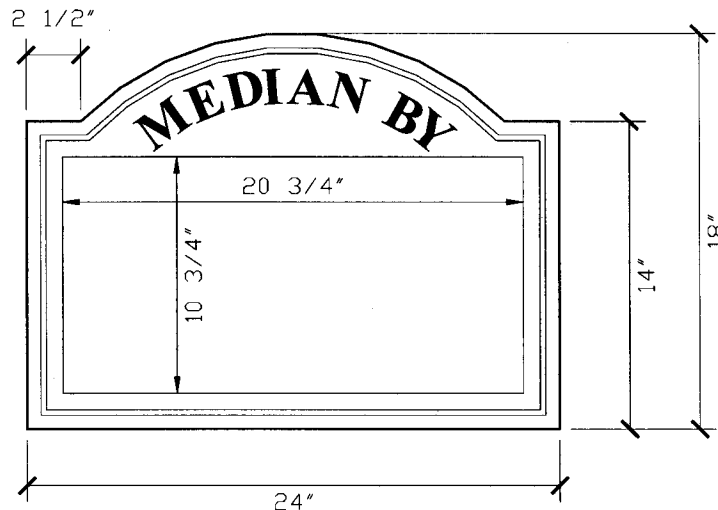
Over the years, signs of all sorts have appeared in these medians. The variability in color and content has detracted from the programs intended to enhance Gainesville's medians. The sign guidelines have been developed to dictate certain specifications that will insure safety, promote good design, and eliminate "mini-billboards."

Sign Specifications

The major considerations for the sign program are size, shape, color, and material. While these are all aesthetic issues, the size and height of the sign also has the potential for creating safety issues. FDOT has specific guidelines in place for sponsorship signing in a median. These guidelines have been developed to ensure clear views of traffic, signs and signals. Incorporating FDOT guidelines would facilitate consistency in signage throughout the city.

Size - The basic guideline is a maximum panel size of 24 inches wide by 18 inches high. This is the size of the signs currently in place throughout the city. It is recommended that the bottom of the sign be 12 inches above the ground, which is lower than many signs currently in place.

Shape - The shape of the signs currently being used, as shown in the drawing below, should continue to be the standard for all median signs until such a time as an alternative is adopted.



Color - FDOT standards call for sponsorship signs to be brown with white lettering. Unless an exception can be negotiated for Gainesville, all median sponsorships on state owned roads would display brown and white signs. For the objective of city-wide consistency, brown and white is an acceptable solution. Brown and white may not be an original combination but it is a “natural” color that works with planting material and displays high contrast for legibility. Previous median programs called for green and beige or white signs and still exist in some locations. Signs in this color combination may remain in place until wear dictates their replacement. However, multi-colored signs should be replaced immediately.

Sign Content

Another objective is to acknowledge the sponsor without allowing advertising that may detract from the landscape. This objective involves issues of color, text, and graphics. A consistent two-color scheme would keep the sign subtle as desired. Text should be limited to the name of the sponsor. Phone numbers and slogans, for example, are not appropriate. Graphics (logos) will not be permitted.

Materials

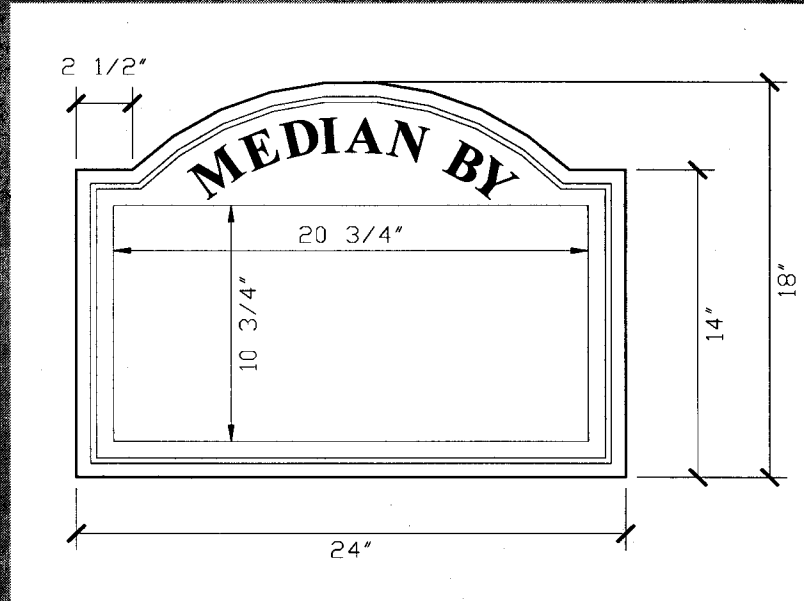
Sign Foam - Materials used for signage in the median programs have evolved over time. High-density urethane sign foam (HDU) was favored for a while, with many such signs still in use. Sign foam is usually sand blasted to give a deep reveal and then painted. The foam is resistant to UV, weather, and insects, but is fragile to impact and must be backed with a more structural material. HDU is a relatively high cost alternative.

Wood - Marine quality plywood (MDO) is the material of choice currently. It is sealed and painted, and then vinyl letters or graphics are applied. This is an inexpensive alternative that lasts approximately 3 to 5 years before showing wear. A number of these signs are starting to show their age. Festival Signs currently manufactures most of the signs for the Adopt-A-Median program.

Recycled Plastic - There are recycled plastic materials that have a lot of promise. High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) can be recycled from #2 plastics (milk jugs). A number of companies are producing a laminate product that has one core color sandwiched between two outer layers of another color. The outer layer is then routed to reveal the second color within. The material is durable and slick. The slickness prohibits painting the panel, but it also results in the material staying clean and resisting mold and graffiti. All of the exterior blue signs on the UF campus are a solid HDPE product in which vinyl letters are applied. The earlier versions of recycled HDPE had some trouble with fading from UV exposure. The products today incorporate much improved UV stabilizers. Even the 4” x 4” posts that the signs are mounted on could easily be recycled plastic lumber. The durability of these signs may allow for the development of permanent median sponsorship signs that have removable panels. As sponsors change, only the panel would need to be replaced. The City of Gainesville should strive to always be in the forefront of any sustainable design efforts.

SIGN GUIDELINES

Panel size - 24" W x 18" H, bottom of sign 12" off ground.
See graphic for dimensions and shape.



Sign Post - 4 x 4 breakaway post.

Color - Posts - Dark brown
Panel - Dark brown background, white letters (FDOT).

Material - Posts - Solid recycled High Density Polyethylene (HDPE). Panel - Recycled HDPE laminate, routed to reveal second color.

Quantity - A maximum of two signs per sponsor (one for each direction of traffic) are to be installed regardless of the number of median islands.

Content - Top line following radius - "Median By"
Body of Sign - Name of Business or Sponsor Name
No graphics, phone numbers, or slogans permitted.

Existing - Existing signs of green and beige are permitted to remain until wear dictates replacement.

Existing signs not in compliance with the above guidelines (with the exception of the green and beige exemption) are to be replaced by signs that meet the stated sign guidelines.



Figure 35
Example of Sandblasted Sign Foam

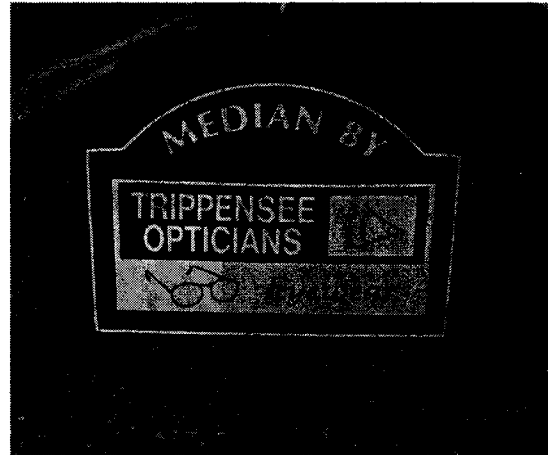


Figure 36
Typical Wooden (MDO) Signs with incorrect logos



Figure 37
Examples of Routed HDPE Laminate signs at the Gainesville Technology Enterprise Center on Hawthorne Road

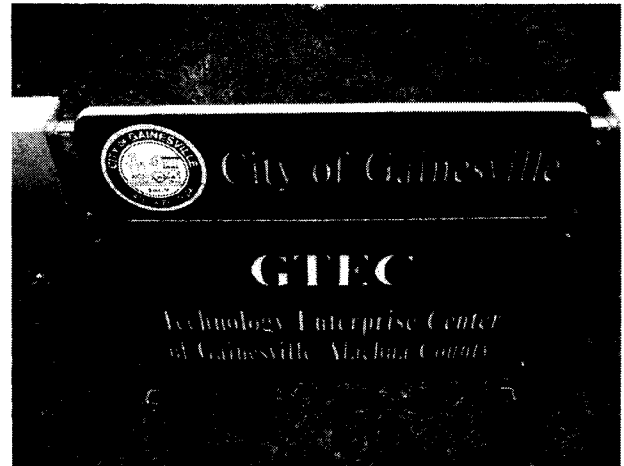


Figure 38
Examples of Routed HDPE Laminate signs at the Gainesville Technology Enterprise Center on Hawthorne Road

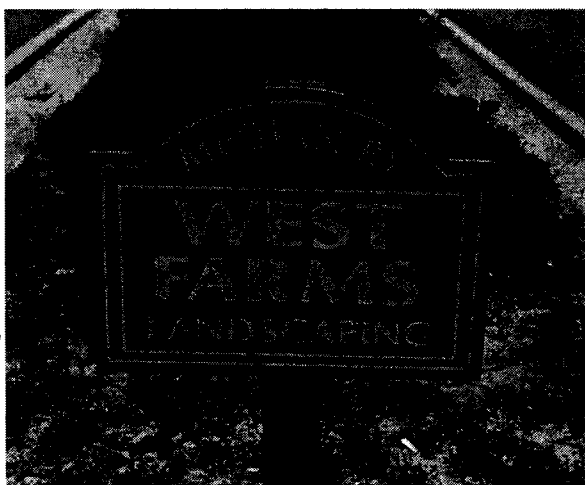


Figure 39
Example of a sign in compliance with all guidelines.

Figures 40 - 44 show examples of signs that are not in compliance.



Figure 40
Inappropriate aluminum signs on NE 8th Ave

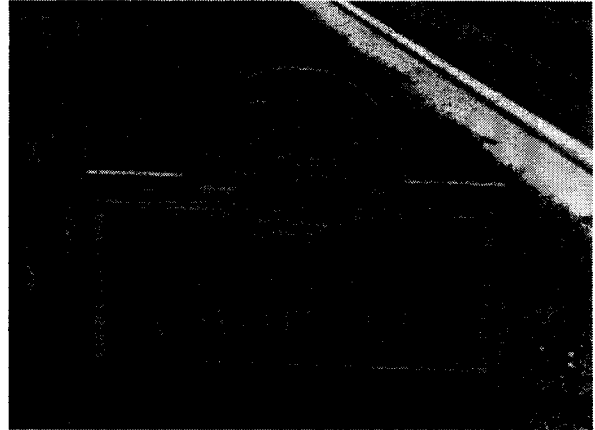


Figure 41
Incorrect color scheme and graphic



Figure 42
Incorrect color scheme and logo



Figure 43
Incorrect color scheme, logo, and content

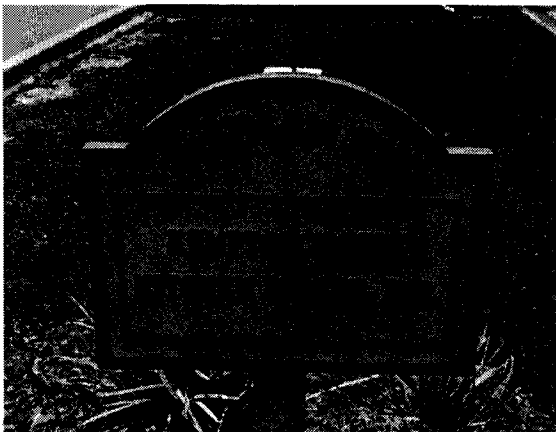


Figure 44
Incorrect color scheme

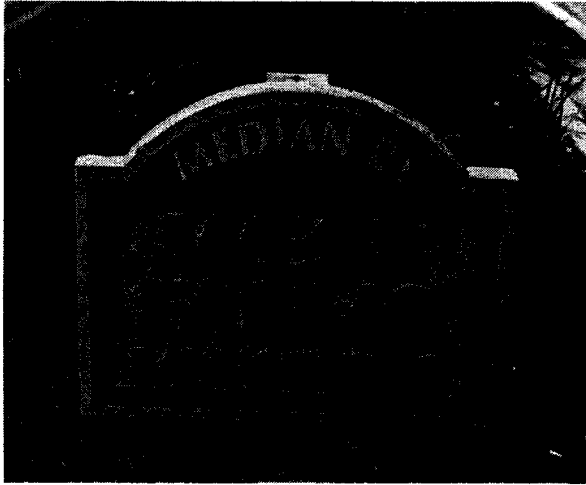


Figure 45
Incorrect color scheme
(Previously approved green and beige)

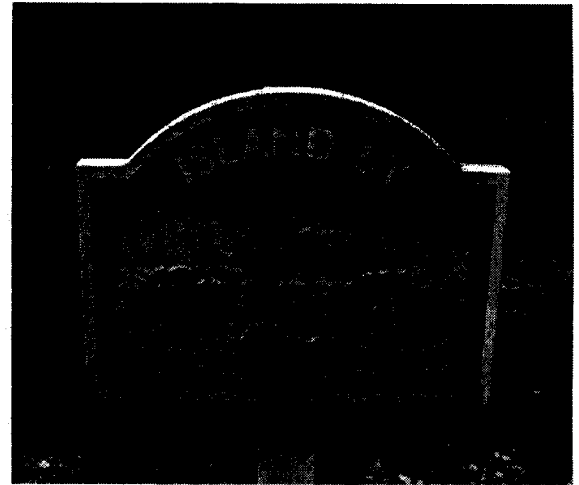


Figure 46
Incorrect color scheme
(Previously approved)

Figures 45 and 46 show examples of the previously approved green and beige or white color scheme that will be “grandfathered in” under these guidelines.

THE NEXT STEPS

The implementation of these guidelines is the next step. Discussions are needed to decide the best way to coordinate the efforts of all the entities involved. This would include designers, planners, and public works departments associated with the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, and the Florida Department of Transportation.

To take this project to the next level of detail, it is recommended that a series of maps be developed. Color-coded maps showing roadway ownership, median classifications, gateway districts, etc. may be helpful from a planning standpoint. Resource allocation for enhancement funding or maintenance may be easier to plan.

A master plan should be prepared that would identify corridors or sections of corridors by highlighting potential themes, tree types, or any unique characteristic that could be developed as a focus for that corridor. The objective is to create a tool that could coordinate the various efforts that currently are undertaken independently. The results of a coordinated design concept in terms of driving median enhancement, roadside tree planting, and commercial buffer designs along the corridors have the potential to create some special corridors within our city.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES UTILIZED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

1. Florida Highway Landscape Guide, FDOT, 1995.
2. Road Design Standards, FDOT, 2002.
3. Gateway Corridor Design Workshop for The City of Gainesville, FL, Buford Davis and Associates, 1998.
4. Gainesville Land Development Code, June 2003.
5. Alachua County Land Development Code, June 2003.
6. Alachua County Roadway Design Manual, Public Works, 2003 draft.
7. Gainesville Regional Utilities Vegetation Management, GRU, undated.
8. *Waterwise Florida Landscapes*, Florida's Water Management Districts, 2001.
9. Agreement of Construction and Maintenance on the Department of Transportation Right of Way (agreement with West Farms), FDOT, 1998.
10. Agreement to Sponsor Median, West Farms, 2001.
11. Gainesville Landscape Island Sponsor Program, Dept. of Recreation and Parks, undated.
12. Current Adopt-A-Median Program - Nick West interview, June, 2003.
13. County Public Works – Heather Martin (County Horticulturist) interview, June, 2003.
14. Gainesville Parks Department, Maintenance – Pat Byrne interview, May, 2003.
15. Gainesville Public Works – Ron Barlow phone interview, May, 2003.
16. Florida Department of Transportation – Dick Bush phone interview, June, 2003.