

SIGNAGE FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES



Historic properties have special signage needs, so the City's zoning regulations and historic design guidelines are a little different for them than for modern properties. The following applies to all properties that are located within the City's Historic Overlay District.

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Application process

The application process is the same as for other types of signage (see the City's Sign Permit Application), with one additional step of requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed sign.

The City's historic preservation specialist may review this Certificate of Appropriateness request in all cases except for:

- A request to keep using a nonconforming sign that otherwise the Zoning Ordinance would require to be removed; and
- A request to use exposed neon lighting as part of a sign or a sign face.

The Board of Historic Review would decide whether those two types of requests should be approved after holding a public hearing on the question.

Allowed Sign Types

Freestanding Signs

Center pole- style sign

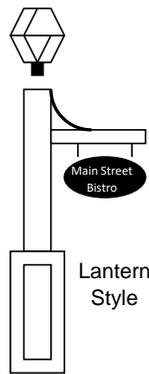
consisting of a decorative pole supporting a small decorative sign.

The overall height of the sign must not exceed 8 feet, and the sign must be a maximum of 10 square feet.



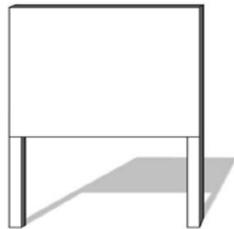
Lantern-style sign consisting of a decorative pole or vertical support with a decorative sign hanging from a horizontal arm.

The vertical support arm must not exceed 10 feet in height, the horizontal arm must not be at a level greater than 8 feet in height, and the sign must not exceed 10 square feet.



Small post and panel sign that is wood or painted metal.

The sign must be 20 square feet or less. The posts must be of the same material as the sign. The open area between the bottom of the sign and the ground should be no more than 30 inches.



Freestanding monument sign



Signs on Structures

(Note: These should be avoided if the structure was originally designed as a residence.)

Wall sign



Projecting sign

These are often a great choice for buildings Downtown because they can be easily seen by pedestrians and slow-moving vehicles.



Window sign



Awning sign



Design considerations

The design of signs is a special consideration for signage on historic properties. New signs should be designed to complement the historic character of the district. Here are some guidelines about that:

- **The number of new signs should be kept to a minimum.**
- **New signs should not be the primary focus of a building and should not overpower historic designs and elements.**
- **New signs should not conceal original architectural details or decorative designs.** Original transom glass should not be covered or obscured with a solid sign panel, although transom areas that are not reopened to expose original glass or to install new glass may be a suitable location for a sign. Temporary signs, such as banners, that conceal architectural details may be used for a limited period of time as stated in the Zoning Ordinance.
- **Signs should be placed at traditional sign locations.** Wall signs should not exceed the height of the building cornice or the roof parapet. Wall signs may be painted on the face of the building, provided this area has previously been painted. Wall signs may be applied directly to the face of the building and should be placed at traditional locations such as above transoms, on cornice fascia boards, or below cornices. Reverse-channel letters creating a backlit effect may also be considered. Sign brackets for projecting signs should be located no higher than second floor window sills. Awning valances are appropriate locations for signs.
- **New signs should be selected that are legible, clear, and pedestrian-oriented.** Symbols and logos provide for ready identification of a business and are encouraged.
- **Traditional sign materials should be used for new signs.** The use of painted or finished wood for signs was the most common type of sign at the turn of the century. These types of wood signs continue to be popular, as are sandblasted wood signs. Therefore, the use of finished wood, along with metal or brass letters, carved wood, gold leaf, glass, or composite materials resembling traditional materials for signs is appropriate. Sign brackets should be of wood, or pre-painted or finished metal. Materials such as plywood, plastic substrates, and unfinished wood should not be used for signs in the historic districts.

Within the Downtown Historic Overlay District, the Board of Historic Review may allow exposed neon lighting as part of a sign or a sign face if it determines that the use is in keeping with the historic context of the property in question.

- **New signs should be in keeping with size of other signs in the area.** Letters should not exceed 18 inches in height. No more than 60% of a sign's total area should be occupied by lettering. Historic markers and professional name plates that do not exceed two square feet are exempted from review and do not require a sign permit.
- **The color of signs should not be restricted in most cases; however, sign colors should complement overall building colors and no more than two or three colors should be used per sign.**
- **Lighting for signs should be concealed.** Light fixtures for signs should not be readily visible from the street or sidewalk; spot and floodlights are not recommended. Internally lit signs may be considered if constructed of aluminum or similar material with the text and/or graphics routed and backed with translucent material.
- **Signs should be mounted to minimize damage to historic materials.** Mounting bolts on masonry building should be applied within mortar joints rather than the face of the masonry.

Size, Height, and Location

These are the same as for signs on non-historic properties, and are based on whether the property's underlying zoning district is business or residential and the classification of the adjacent road (see the City's Sign Permit Application for more information).