

3.2.11. Signage

Signage: Marking our Place in Time

The function of signage intends to change as building tenants change. As a result, signs communicate not only a district’s historic character, but how the present-day community has agreed to manage the appearance of historic districts. Signage is a tool that can be used to create a cohesive look and feel within historic districts, connecting low-priority buildings to the surrounding historic fabric. As a result, new signage on low-priority buildings is regulated to a higher degree than most other building elements.

Refer to the City’s Signage Ordinance- Chapter 29- for maximum size area, placement and types of signs allowed by zoning district.

Maintenance

- (a) Preserve and maintain all elements of a historic sign unless deteriorated beyond repair (SOI Standards 2, 5, 6).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Recommended	Recommended	Recommended

- (b) Maintain and repair historic signs according to accepted preservation techniques (*Appendix G*); preventing rust on attachments is especially important to prevent expansion and damage to the surrounding wall materials (SOI Standards 5, 6, 7).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Recommended	Recommended	Recommended

- (c) Where possible, patch the smallest feasible portion of a deteriorated sign, matching the historic material, dimensions, profile, and configuration (SOI Standard 6).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Recommended	Recommended	Recommended

Alterations

- (d) Design new signs—including the configuration, shape, and profile—to reflect the historic character of the building, looking at other examples of the same style and era in the Fredericksburg Historic District or from historic catalogs (SOI Standard 9).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Required	Required	Required

- (e) Appropriate materials for new signs include wood, metal, and fiber-cement; vinyl and plastics are not appropriate (SOI Standard 9).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Required	Required	Recommended

- (f) Allow the lettering and graphics depicted on new signs to represent the present day to avoid creating a false sense of history (SOI Standards 3, 9).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Recommended	Recommended	Recommended

- (g) Position new signs so that they do not obscure historic character-defining features (SOI Standard 9).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Required	Required	Recommended

- (h) Attempt to position new signs so that they highlight and enhance the building’s significant character-defining features (SOI Standards 3, 9).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Recommended	Recommended	Recommended

- (i) Attach new signs in a manner that does not damage the original exterior wall material; for masonry walls, all attachments should anchor into the mortar rather than the masonry unit; use galvanized stainless-steel anchors to avoid rust (SOI Standard 10).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Required	Required	Recommended

Restoration

- (j) If the extant signage is non-historic, consider researching the historic signage and, if documented, replicate and restore the historic storefront (SOI Standard 3).

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Recommended	Recommended	Recommended

Figure 3-40. Example of a preserved historic sign at 307 E Main Street.
Photo source: Historic Preservation Officer



Figure 3-41. Examples of pedestrian-oriented signage under canopy.



National Trust for Historic Preservation Guidance for Decisions about Signs
The recommendations below may be helpful when designing a sign:

- 1) Determine the purpose of the sign.**
 - To identify the store?
 - To project the store's individuality or uniqueness?
 - To provide product information?
- 2) Determine the type of sign desired.**
 - Awning - A sign that is painted, printed, or attached flat to the surface of an awning or canopy.
 - Flags - A rectangular piece of fabric attached on one side to a supporting rod or pole; it can be either a free-standing pole, or mounted on a building façade.
 - Marquee - A permanent roof-like structure supported by and extended from the façade of a building.
 - Monument - A sign affixed to the ground, usually for auto-oriented businesses.
 - Product Display - A sample of products that can be purchased at that particular store, usually lively and changing.
 - Projecting - A sign that is attached to and projected from a building wall.
 - Short Free-Standing - A sign, resting on the ground, supported by poles or braces, not attached to any building.
 - Wall - A sign that is parallel to the wall of a building.
 - Window - A sign installed on a window, to be viewed from the outside.
- 3) Determine the materials to be used.**
 - See the standards and guidelines above (*Section 3.2.10*).
- 4) Determine what kind of signs were used on the building in the past.**
 - Refer to the "Historical Research Resources" in *Appendix H*.
- 5) Determine the dimensions of the sign.**
 - See the maximum dimensions in the standards and guidelines above.
- 6) Determine the placement of the sign.**
 - It should be visible without disrupting character-defining features.
- 7) Determine the message the sign is to convey.**
 - Keep the message direct and simple, not cluttered.
- 8) Determine the color scheme for the sign.**
 - Refer to the period-appropriate color palettes in *Appendix G*.
- 9) Determine the type of lighting to be used.**
 - If illuminating the sign at night, use a light source that is as inconspicuous as possible; keep it subtle.
- 10) Determine what is to be expressed in this sign and how to do so.**
 - This can be done by choosing a lettering style that best represents the character of the store. There are three main types of lettering:
 - Serif Face - historically appropriate, ranging from simple to elaborate
 - Sans Serif - more contemporary with clean, bold lines
 - Script - more decorative; historically often painted on glass
- 11) Determine a craftsman to create and design the sign.**
 - Remember that quality of craftsmanship and construction is vital in having a sign that lasts.