

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE May 24, 2005

TO District of Columbia Zoning Commission

THROUGH *JLS for*
Ellen McCarthy, Director OP

FROM Travis Parker, AICP

SUBJECT Supplemental Report - **2C-04-27**
Text Amendment – H Street, NE Neighborhood
Commercial Overlay District
REVIVAL The H Street NE Strategic Development Plan

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At its meeting of April 7, 2005, the Zoning Commission conducted a public hearing on the proposed text and map amendment changes to the zoning regulations for the H Street Commercial Overlay District. The Zoning Commission has requested further information from the Office of Planning in the following areas:

- Provide language to avoid review conflict between BZA and HPRB
- Address the ANC recommendations
- Provide guidance on the feasibility of sign guidelines in the overlay
- Address concerns about limitations on commercial development in the Housing Area
- Provide the market study that influenced the H Street Strategic Development Plan
- Show visual representation of the Children's Museum in reference to the corridor

This supplemental report contains responses to these requests and further recommendations for the Overlay District text.

BZA and HPRB Review

Section 1325 1(1) of the proposed language requires that the State Historic Preservation Officer shall review and report on special exceptions in the Overlay District if a historic landmark is involved in the application. The Zoning Commission has requested that this language be clarified to avoid future conflict between the Historic Preservation Review Board and the Board of Zoning Appeals.

~~Zoning Commission~~
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 04-27
EXHIBIT NO. 29

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 04-27
EXHIBIT NO. 29A

The proposed language was not intended to create conflict between the BZA and HPRB, but to recognize the separate authority of the two bodies. Both bodies have separate review processes and separate authority over projects involving historic districts or historic landmarks. OP believes that these processes should remain independent, but that each should have more information about decisions made by the other. To this end OP recommends the following language change to §1325.1(1)

“The architectural design of the project will enhance the urban design features of the immediate vicinity in which it is located; and, if a historic district or historic landmark is involved, the Office of Planning report to the Board will include review by the State Historic Preservation Officer and a status of the project’s review by the Historic Preservation Review Board;”

ANC Recommendations

OP was asked to respond to the concerns raised by the two local ANCs in response to the plan. OP noted six specific concerns that were identified by ANC 6A and largely seconded by ANC 6C. These concerns are listed and addressed below

1 Remove the special exception for expansion of gasoline stations existing prior to the date of the section and make all gas stations prohibited including expansion of grandfathered uses

Based on testimony of the owner of the BP site at the public hearing, OP understands that the gas station on the corner of 3rd and H Streets will not be returned to use. Based on this representation, the existing language will have no potential use and OP has no objection to the proposed language being amended as suggested.

2. Place automobile accessory sales on the list of special exception or prohibited uses

OP believes that this amendment is unnecessary. The existing auto parts store is grandfathered and therefore may continue, even under different ownership or name, until the use is changed or discontinued for more than three years. If the use is discontinued for more than three years on the current lot, the use would not be allowed to return on this lot nor would it be allowed on any other lot in the overlay. §1302.1 requires buildings in the overlay to provide designated uses on the ground floor and automobile accessory sales is not a designated use in §1302.2 or any of the new language for the overlay. Automobile accessory sales on the ground floor of any building would not meet the standards of the overlay for any new development, therefore any further prohibitions would be superfluous. No change is recommended.

3 Fast food establishments should be required to meet the standards of §733 and/or §734

The new zoning overlay text does not relieve the requirements of §§733 and 734. Any fast food establishment in the C-2-A district would still be required to meet the standards of these sections. The intent of §1320.4 and other parts of the new overlay were to apply the standards of these sections to the other zones in the overlay. The individual requirements of §§733-4 are covered

either in the new language or in Chapter 13

- Sections 733.2-733.4 and 734.2-734.4 are directly transferred to §1320.4
- Sections 733.5 and 734.5 are covered by §1303.1
- Sections 733.7 and 734.6 are addressed through the standards of §1325.1
- Sections 733.8, 733.9, 734.7 & 734.8 are addressed in §1324.

In short, the standards of sections 733 and 734 already been adopted in one form or another in the new overlay requirements and further reference to these sections would be redundant

4 Add an affordable housing component to the plan.

The Zoning Commission, at its meeting of May 9, 2005, began reviewing OP's requirements for inclusionary zoning. OP continues to recommend that affordable housing requirements be implemented on this broader scale and believes that the enforcement and implementation of a broader approach is more practicable than including an affordable housing component in individual corridor overlays at this time.

5 Parking should be limited to the rear half of lots

This request was intended to ensure that parking not be located in front of uses on H Street and instead be placed behind buildings on the corridor. This goal is shared by OP and the addition of language in the overlay text is not necessary. Currently §2116.5 of the regulations states "Required parking spaces shall not be located in the area between a building line and lot line abutting a street." OP feels that this language, in conjunction with the design requirements of §1324, are sufficient to meet the community's goals of preventing parking between the street and the front of businesses on the corridor.

6 Signage on the corridor should be subject to Historic Preservation review for conformance with design guidelines

The Historic Preservation Review Board does not have authority to review signage on buildings not landmarked or located within an existing historic district. The potential for sign regulations outside of HPRB review is discussed in the next section.

Sign Guidelines

The Commission requested that OP consider including sign guidelines in the overlay or special exception criteria. OP continues to have concern about having sign regulations both in Chapter 11 which is administered by the Zoning Administrator, and in Chapter 12 Building Code which is not administered by the Zoning Administrator.

OP met with Historic Preservation staff and examined city documents relating to sign guidelines. HP staff has stated that while they do provide guidelines, there are no hard and fast rules and each project is examined individually. Attachment A contains HP side guidelines. In addition to HP documents, the city has produced a guide to storefront design titled "Thrive." This document

provides citywide guidance on complete storefront design including signage and is included in this report as Attachment B.

Both of these documents provide excellent advice and guidance on creating friendly, attractive, and effective signage for storefronts that work with the surrounding area. However, neither document is designed to create regulations on the size, appearance, or effect of signs.

OP has reviewed these documents with H Street as context. The H Street overlay is intended to permit flexibility of design as such. OP continues to discourage the inclusion of sign regulations in the overlay. However, at the Commission's request, OP proposes general sign placement regulations for the matter-of-right uses and more detailed guidance for the BZA review.

1324.14 The following sign guidelines shall apply in the HS Overlay

- a) **Projection Signs shall have a minimum clearance of eight-feet (8') above a sidewalk and fourteen feet (14') above a driveway, shall project no more than three feet –six inches (3'-6") from the face of the building, and shall be a minimum of one foot (1') behind the curbline or extension of curbline.**
- b) **Façade Panel Signs shall not be placed so they interrupt windows or doors and shall project no more than twelve inches (12") from the face of the building.**
- c) **Roof Signs shall not be erected above the height limit established by the zone district.**

The proposed language in §1325.1(5) provides that the BZA may impose requirements pertaining to signs as it deems necessary to protect neighboring properties and to achieve the purposes of the Overlay District. This language grants the BZA the latitude to protect the neighborhood from the negative effects of signage. For additional guidance, OP recommends the following be added to §1325.1:

- §1325.1 (6) The size, type, scale and location of signs will be compatible with the surrounding corridor and consistent with the H Street design guidelines. Signage is encouraged on upper facades, awnings, and transom windows. Signage should be of durable materials and sensitive design. Signage that is located above the rooftop or that affects more than 20% of display windows is discouraged. Backlit box signs and neon product advertisements are discouraged. Signs should not be overly obtrusive or block visibility into a store.**

Non-Residential FAR in the Housing Sub-Area

There were multiple comments at the public hearing regarding the limitation of non-residential FAR in the Housing Sub-Area to 0.5 or 1.0 with preservation of an existing building. OP continues to believe that the base limitation of 0.5 for new construction is vital to the goals of the Plan. Both the community and OP have consistently supported the idea of a retail core in the

center of the corridor The addition to and encouragement of commercial uses in the Retail Sub-Area is meant to form a critical mass of retail that will help to revitalize the entire corridor The addition of residential uses to the designated uses in the housing sub-area make the sub-area the only location on the corridor where completely residential buildings can be built as a matter of right and further the communities goals for increased residential density at this end of the corridor between the regional employment and retail to the west and the neighborhood retail and services to the east

Moreover, the overlay is purposely designed to be flexible The special exception provisions can be used to relieve the strict non-residential FAR limitations of the housing sub-area where projects are furthering the goals of the overlay district. Since all projects over 6,000 square feet are required to receive special exception approval to meet the goals of the district, any project of this size will already be going to the Board of Zoning Appeals for review and will not have any additional time or monetary burdens in seeking additional non-residential FAR. For these reasons OP does not recommend a change in the base non-residential FAR of 0.5.

However, OP does realize that the 400 block of H Street contains many existing structures that represent the type of architecture the community would like to save and that many of these buildings contain commercial uses in excess of 1.0 FAR. To address this issue and to provide these building owners with the flexibility to work within the existing structures and save the existing buildings, OP recommends that the bonus for preserving an existing façade in §1321.3 be increased from 0.5 to 1.0 This would raise the maximum non-residential FAR for these buildings to 1.5

Market Study

The Commission requested that a copy of the market study used for the development of the H Street Strategic Development Plan be submitted into the record Attachment C contains the requested study The study is also available to the public at: http://www.planning.dc.gov/planning/frames.asp?doc=/planning/LIB/planning/project/NE_Corridor/pdf/SDP_H_Street_Detailed_Market_An.pdf

Children's Museum Massing

At the public hearing on April 7, 2005, OP showed a fly-by of the H Street corridor to demonstrate proposed densities in relation to existing development. The Commission requested that additional views be shown of the approved Children's Museum Buildings. Attachment D contains two views of the massing of the approved Children's Museum site PUD from H Street.

Conclusion

Based on discussion at the April 7, 2005 public hearing and the analysis above, OP recommends the following changes to the H Street Commercial Overlay District text amendment:

- §1321.3 New construction that preserves an existing façade constructed before 1958 is permitted to use an additional 1.0 FAR for up to a maximum non-residential FAR of 1.5 for office uses or neighborhood serving retail uses as permitted in §§701.1, 701.4.

§1325.1(1) The architectural design of the project will enhance the urban design features of the immediate vicinity in which it is located, and, if a historic district or historic landmark is involved, ***the Office of Planning report to the Board will include review by the State Historic Preservation Officer and a status of the project's review by the Historic Preservation Review Board;***

§1325.1(5) The Board may impose requirements pertaining to design, appearance, signs, ~~size-~~***massing***, landscaping, and other such requirements, as it deems necessary to protect neighboring property and to achieve the purposes of the H Street Overlay District

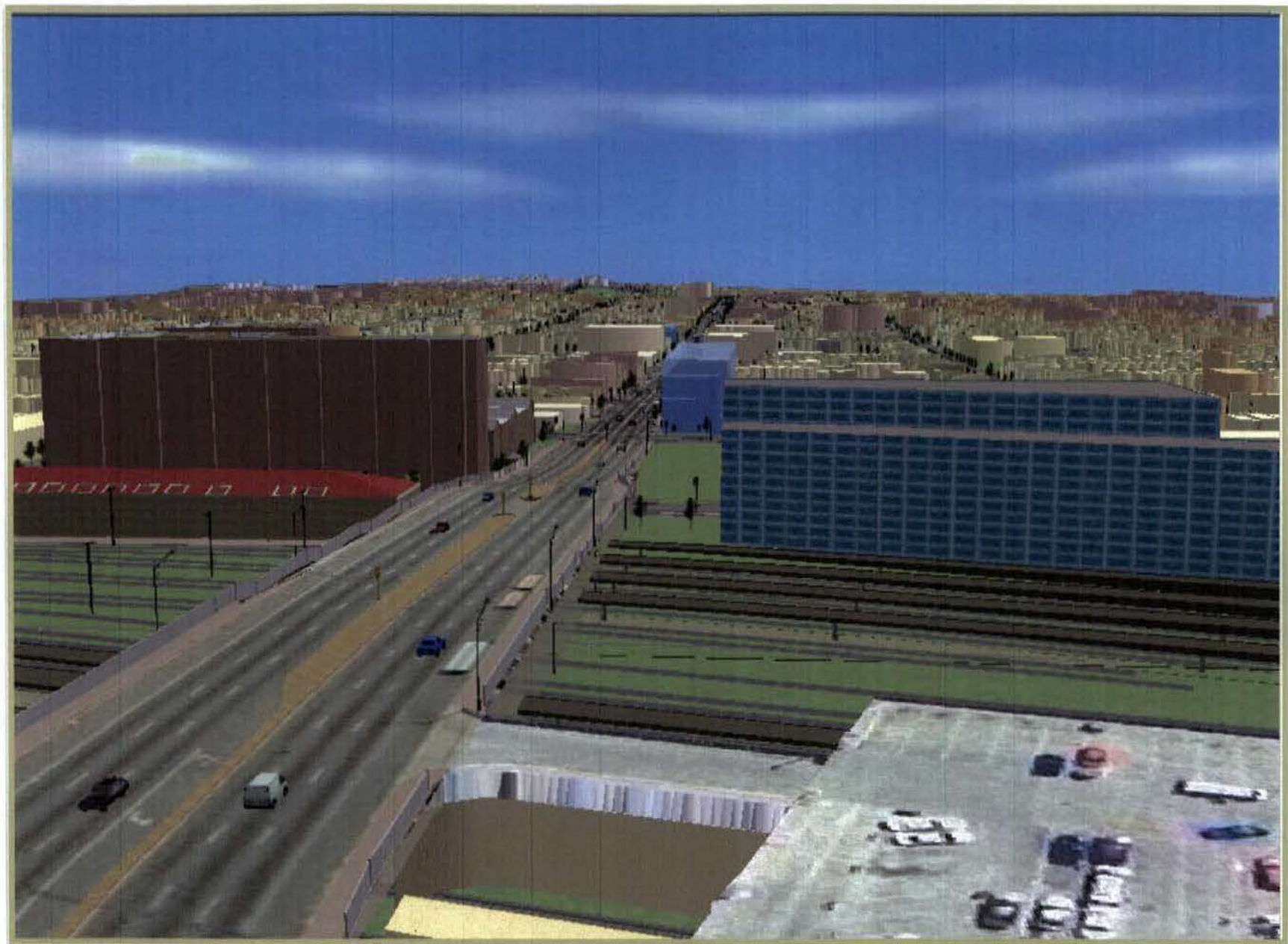
To maintain the goals of the community and based on the analysis above, no further changes are recommended to the previously advertised text

Attachments:

1. ERA Market Study
2. Children's Museum Views

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**District of Columbia
Historic Preservation Guidelines**

**SIGNS ON HISTORIC
COMMERICAL
BUILDINGS**



Historic Preservation Division
614 H Street, NW, Room 305
Washington, DC 20001

District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines

Introduction to the Historic Preservation Guidelines

Roofs on Historic Buildings

Windows and Doors for Historic Buildings

Walls and Foundations of Historic Buildings

Additions to Historic Buildings

New Construction in Historic Districts

Porches and Steps on Historic Buildings

Landscaping, Landscape Features and Secondary
Buildings in Historic Districts

Commercial Storefronts and Outdoor Seating Areas

Signs on Historic Commercial Buildings

Accommodating Persons with Disabilities
in Historic Buildings

Energy Conservation for Historic Buildings

The Historic Preservation Guidelines were written to provide guidance on appropriate changes to historic buildings as well as their maintenance and preservation. Following the advice contained in these publications will help facilitate the historic preservation review process. For copies of the Historic Preservation Guidelines and information on the review process, please contact the Historic Preservation Division, 614 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 727-7360.

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Introduction

The economic health of a neighborhood commercial area depends to a great extent on the quality of its businesses, promotional activities and marketing. Significantly contributing to the economic vitality of a commercial district is its appearance. A well maintained business area, with well designed buildings, streets and sidewalks, is inviting to customers and clients. On the other hand, a poorly maintained area with badly designed buildings and public spaces is uninviting, causing customers and clients to go elsewhere.

Business signs play an important role in the appearance of neighborhood commercial areas. Well designed and maintained signs suggest that the business people care about quality, customers and clients. Poorly designed or maintained business signs demonstrate the opposite.

Business signs have three major purposes: 1) to identify the location of a business particularly to first-time customers and clients; 2) to convey a message about the quality of goods and services available; and 3) to provide information about the ranges of goods and services offered. Good business signs will accomplish all three clearly and concisely. In addition, a good business sign will reinforce the image of the business, as will the design of the storefront, by complementing the character and features of the entire facade.

Design of Signs

Prior to the widespread use of the automobile, business signs were designed to attract the attention of pedestrians and streetcar riders. This resulted in two different types of signs. Some were designed to attract the attention of pedestrians. They were located on storefronts, hung inside windows or projected over the sidewalk on awnings, canopies or signboards. The other type of historic business sign was typically large in scale and attached to the upper facade of buildings or to exposed side walls. These were used to attract the attention of streetcar riders. Since streetcars moved slowly and the riders did not have to pay attention to traffic, many businesses covered their entire building facade with signs.



Historically business signs covered commercial buildings and presented a cluttered appearance.

After World War II, the location, size and other design attributes of business signs reflected the increased use of automobiles. Pedestrian signs, while still used, became less important. The cluttered appearance of facades intended to be read by the slowly moving streetcar rider was reduced to one or two large scale signs intended to be read by the faster moving motorist who also had to pay attention to traffic.



After World War II, commercial buildings typically contained fewer but larger signs designed to attract the attention of motorists.

Today, with the increased popularity of historic neighborhood commercial areas, emphasis is placed on business signs designed to attract the attention of pedestrians. In addition, the increased popularity of historic commercial districts has reinforced the desirability of business signs that are compatible with storefronts and present an uncluttered appearance.



Today, pedestrian oriented signs that present an uncluttered appearance are popular and effective in historic commercial areas.

The quality and design of a business sign is influenced by its location, materials, size, scale, color, lighting and typeface. If more than one sign is used for a particular business, their design attributes should be compatible. Similarly, if the business occupies one of a series of storefronts in the same building or row of similar buildings, all of the signs should be compatible with one another.



Business signs in a single commercial block or similar storefronts should be compatible.

Location of Signs

There are a number of appropriate locations for business signs on storefronts. They may be attached to the signboard area or upper facade of one story commercial buildings. They also may be located on storefront awnings and canopies, windows, transom windows or project above entries.

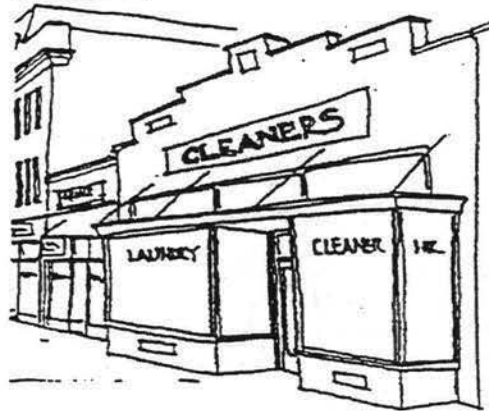
Signs on Signboards and Upper Facades

Business signs are often mounted on a storefront signboard area on the upper facade of a one story commercial building. The sign may be painted on the signboard or wall, or be made of wood, metal or other material and be attached to the signboard or upper facade.



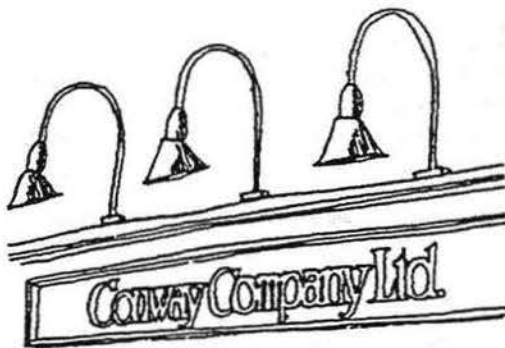
Signs may be located on the signboard area of a storefront.

Signs should typically cover no more than 65% of the signboard or upper facade. Lettering, graphics or logos used for the sign should be a minimum of 8" and a maximum of 18" high. If raised, free-standing letters are used, they should project no more than 12" from the face of the signboard or upper facade.



Signs may be located on the upper facades of one story commercial buildings.

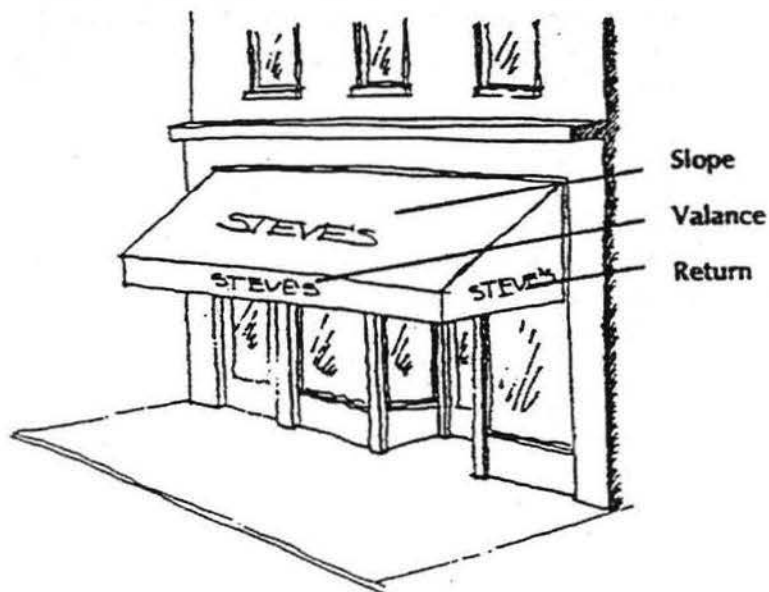
Signs should typically be centered in the signboard or upper facade. If the entry to the ground floor business is not located in the center of the storefront, the sign should be centered above the entry. If illuminated, top-mounted external incandescent or fluorescent lighting should be used. The light source should be shielded so that pedestrians and motorists are not subject to glare. If individual free-standing letters are used, they may be back-lighted. Internally illuminated, vacuum-formed signs are usually inappropriate for historic commercial buildings.



Signs on signboards and upper facades may be externally illuminated or back-lighted.

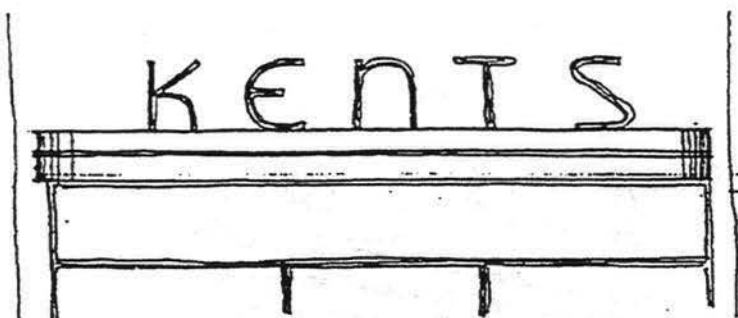
Signs on Awnings and Canopies

Signs are often appropriately located on storefront awnings or canopies. Awning signs may be silkscreened onto the awning fabric, made of fabric and sewn into the awning, or be made of a translucent material sewn into the fabric awning. Signs on awnings may be appropriately located on the slope of the awning, or on its return or valance. To be legible, the lettering should be in a color contrasting to the color of the awning or may be outlined in a contrasting color.



Signs on awnings may be located on the slope, return or valance.

Business signs located on canopies may be mounted above, applied to, or cut into the fascia. If a top mounted sign is used, the height of the lettering should be in proportion with the height of the fascia. Signs on canopies are typically not illuminated, except for signs cut into the fascia. In this case, they are usually back-lighted using fluorescent light. By code, signs on awnings and canopies must consist of individual, free-standing letters without background and may not exceed 12" in height.



Signs on canopies may be mounted above, applied to, or cut into the fascia.

Signs on Display Windows

Signs announcing the name of a business, products and services provided, special sales and other information are often hung inside display windows. Sometimes they are designed as part of the window display itself. Signs hung inside display windows that are made of solid or opaque materials should be hung so that views into the store are not obstructed. The material used should be compatible with the materials of the storefront and the image that the business wishes to project. Typically, the total square footage of signs hung inside display windows should not be more than 15% of the total display window glass area. Signs hung inside display windows that are made of transparent or translucent material should be limited to no more than 20% of the glass area of the window.



Signs hung inside display windows should not obstruct views into the ground floor.

Signs may also be appropriately applied to the inside of display windows. Traditionally, some businesses such as drug stores and jewelers applied sign bands at the top or bottom of display windows to advertise products and visually reduce the size of the window without blocking it down. Business name signs and promotional signs are often applied to display windows just below or just above eye level.

Gold leaf and paint are appropriate materials for permanent signs applied to the inside of display windows. Paper, cardstock, vinyl lettering and other materials are not appropriate for permanent signs, but may be appropriate for temporary promotional signs applied to display windows. Signs applied to display windows should not cover more than 10% of the total glass area of the window.

Signs on Transom Windows

Business name signs and street addresses are often applied to transom windows. In some cases they may be made of gold leaf or painted onto clear transom glass. In other cases, they may be made of colored or stained glass incorporated into the design of the transom. Signs applied to transom windows should occupy no more than 15% of the glass.

Projecting Signs

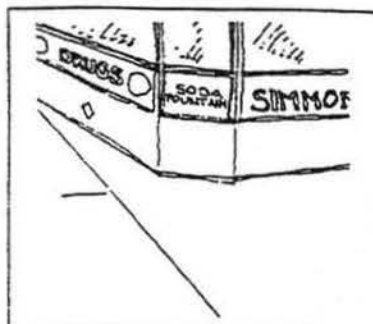
Small projecting signs are effective means of communicating to pedestrians. Typically located above the storefront entry, a projecting sign is limited by code to one line of free-standing lettering not to exceed 12" in height.

Projecting signs should be made of wood or metal. Other materials such as vacuum-formed signs, are inappropriate for historic commercial buildings. Illumination of projecting signs, if used, should be by external incandescent or fluorescent light, shielded to protect pedestrians from glare. Internal illumination is inappropriate for projecting signs on historic commercial buildings.

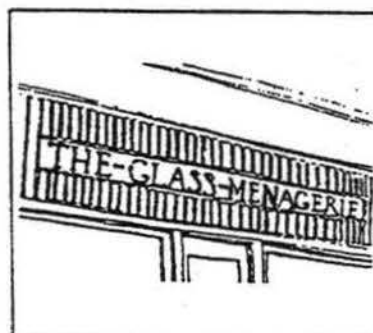
Projecting signs must be securely attached to the storefront or upper facade of a one story commercial building. They should have a minimum clearance of 8' above the sidewalk, and should project no more than 3'-6" from the face of the storefront. Projecting signs should also be a minimum of 1' behind the plane of the curb.

Sign Materials

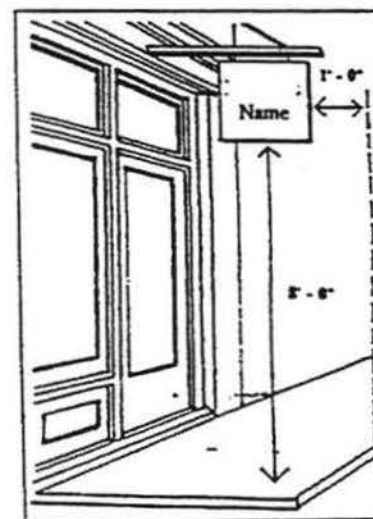
Signs may be made of a wide variety of materials including wood, metal, paint, gold leaf and certain types of plastic. Conversely, vinyl, paper, cardboard and other materials that do not



Sign bands were traditionally used by drug and jewelry stores.



Stained or colored glass signs are sometimes used in transom windows.



Projecting signs are an effective means of communicating to pedestrians.

project a quality image are almost never appropriate for business signs. A sign material should be selected based on the image the sign is intended to project, its compatibility with the materials of the storefront or facade, and its durability and cost.

Sign Size and Scale

The size and scale for a business sign is governed by its location, materials and message. For example, signs located on a storefront cornice should cover between 40% and 65% of the signboard to be in scale with the cornice. It should be constructed of materials that are visually, physically and chemically compatible with the signboard's materials. Since the sign will typically be located 10' to 14' above the sidewalk and read at an oblique angle by pedestrians, the message should be kept simple.



Signs should be in scale with the area of the storefront on which they are located.

Color

A sign's color greatly influences its legibility and image. Typically the legibility will be enhanced if the color of a sign contrasts with its background. For example, a sign with a darker background and lighter colored letters will have a strong visual appearance. Alternatively, outlining a sign's letters, graphics or logo in a dark color will help it stand out from the background.

A sign's colors should complement the colors used on the storefront and building facade. Using non-complementary colors, or ones that are too bright or garish, will detract from the appearance of the sign, the character of the building and storefront, as well as detract from the image the business wishes to project.

Typefaces for Signs

A good sign communicates its message quickly and easily. The clearer the typeface, the more understandable the sign. Lettering that is overly ornate or hard to read should be avoided. In addition, the typeface used for a sign helps to project an image of the business. For example, serif typefaces have a traditional appearance while sans serif and script typefaces give a more contemporary look to a sign. The use of all capital letters, all lower case letters, or a mixture of both, will also affect the image of a sign and business. For example, using all capital letters has a somewhat formal appearance, while all lower case letters presents a more contemporary image.

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Serif, sans serif or scrip typefaces are all appropriate for signs so long as they can be read easily.

Signs Checklist

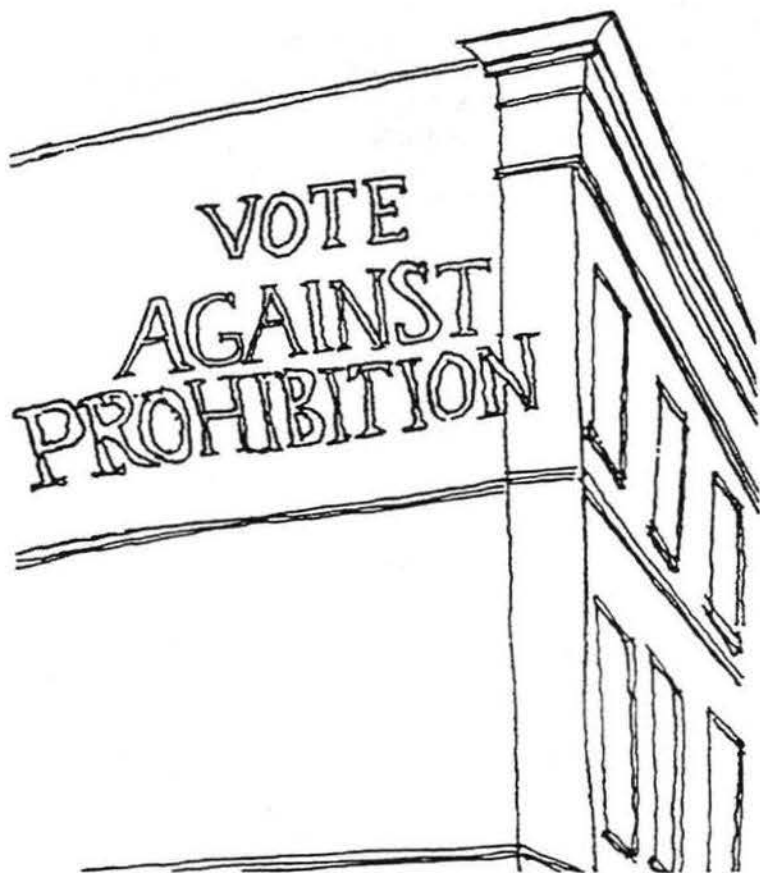
Location	Appropriate Materials	Illumination	Comments
Signboard	- Wood letters (carved or raised letters)	- External	- Great flexibility of typeface logos, graphics.
	- Metal letters	- Back-lighted or external	- Easy to maintain.
	- Paint	- External	- Inexpensive, but must be maintained.
Upper Facade	- Painted	- External	- Consider a border to set-off sign from background.
	- Metal letters	- Back-lighted or external	- On masonry walls, attach letters through mortar joints, not the masonry units.
Awning	- Silkscreen	- None	- Limited to a single line of individual letters. Canvas, not vinyl, should be used for the awning material.
	- Fabric	- None	
	- Translucent plastic	- None	
Canopy	- Metal	- None	- Limited to a single line of individual letters, 12" high.
	- Cut into fascia	- Internal	
Display Windows (hung inside)	- Painted	- External	- Consider a border to set-off sign from background.
	- Metal letters	- Back-lighted or external	- On masonry walls, attach letters through mortar joints, not the masonry units.
	- Neon	- Neon	- Prohibited in some historic districts.
Display Windows (attached)	- Gold leaf	- None	- Low maintenance.
	- Paint	- None	- May crack or fade in direct sunlight.
Transom	- Paint, gold leaf or clear glass	- External	- May fail if the transom is boxed, particularly if the sign is exposed to direct sunlight.
	- Colored or stained glass	- External	- Use zinc comes.
Projecting	- Wood (carved)	- External	- Flexibility in typeface.
	- Paint	- External	- Inexpensive, but must be maintained.

Historic and Ghost Signs

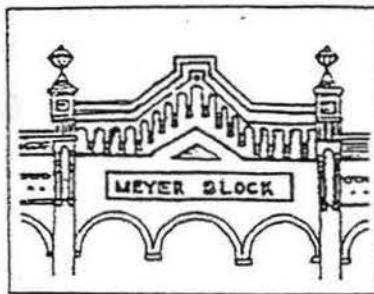
Sometimes historic and ghost signs are found on historic commercial buildings. (1) While they often no longer communicate the name of the business, nor the types of products and services currently found within the building, they are a visual part of the building's history. Business and property owners should consider retaining historic and ghost signs.

Some historic signs are carved or cast into the facade or storefront. For example, many historic commercial buildings have the name of the builder, developer or former business on the facade. Many also have carved date stones. These and other types of historic signs should be retained and, if necessary, repaired or replaced.

Due to their design, materials or message, some historic signs have obtained significance in their own right and should be retained as reminders of the building's history. Other historic signs, for example marquees, are part of the facade of a building, and should be retained. Similarly, painted ghost signs are often a significant part of a building's history and should be retained.



Historic and ghost signs are sometimes a significant part of a building's history and should be retained.



Historic commercial buildings often have the name of the builder in their cornice.

1). A historic sign is an old sign that contributes to a building's history and appearance. A ghost sign does the same but is usually faded and difficult to read.

Maintaining and Repairing Existing Business Signs

A well-maintained sign is very important to the image of a business. It suggests that quality goods and services will be found within. On the other hand, a poorly maintained sign suggests that less than quality goods and services are offered by the business.

Business signs for historic commercial buildings may be appropriately made of a wide range of materials, including wood, metal, canvas, paint, gold leaf, stained glass and colored glass. Each material has its own maintenance and repair issues.

Wood

Wood signs are subject to rot due to water penetration or the wood may crack. In addition, the anchoring systems used to attach wood signs to a building may deteriorate. Minor rot or cracking of wood signs may be repaired with wood putty and an appropriate wood sealant so that moisture cannot penetrate the surface. Larger areas of rot may be repaired by cutting away the affected area and scabbing in a new piece of wood. (2) Exposed end grains of wood signs should be sealed with a wood cap or molding to protect against water penetration. If the anchoring system is deteriorated, the existing anchors should be removed and new ones installed.

Canvas

Canvas signs and awnings are subject to tearing and fading. Their anchors may become loose or corrode. If a tear is minor, the canvas can often be stitched together or repaired with fabric cement. If the tear is extensive or the canvas is faded, it should be replaced. If the anchors are loose or corroded, they should be replaced. If the awning frame itself is loose, it should be reanchored.

Paint

Painted signs are subject to fading, cracking and flaking. When this occurs, the old loose paint should be removed, the surface properly prepared and the sign repainted. However, ghost signs should usually not be repainted.

2). Scabbing refers to patching a section of deteriorated wood with a new piece.

Gold Leaf

Gold leaf signs are subject to flaking and cracking. When this occurs, the glass surface should be carefully cleaned and the sign repainted or regilded.

Stained and Colored Glass

Signs made of stained and colored glass may have broken or missing pieces, or the comes that hold the glass in place may be bowed or not securely holding the glass in place. If the glass is broken or missing, it should be replaced with new glass that matches the original. If the comes are slightly bowed they may be stabilized with metal rods attached to the interior side of the sign. If the bowing is pronounced or the glass is loose, new zinc comes should be used to replace the existing.

Metal

Porcelain enamel steel and other painted metals used for signs are subject to chipping, denting and corrosion. Minor chipping and corrosion can be repaired by sanding, priming and repainting the affected areas. Minor denting can often be hammered flat. Extensive chipping, denting or corrosion will usually require that the sign be replaced.

Cast aluminum, stainless steel, brass and bronze are also used for signs. Typically, they are low maintenance, requiring only regular cleaning. Brass signs may also require occasional polishing with an appropriate polishing agent.



Bronze and brass signs sometimes note the historic significance of a building.

Replacing Existing Signs and Adding New Signs

If an existing sign must be replaced due to extensive deterioration, the business owner should first consider replacing the sign in-kind, that is using the same materials, design and other characteristics of the existing sign. If replacing an existing sign in-kind proves not to be technically or economically feasible, or a new sign is to be installed, the business owner should select a sign material based on the image of the business that he or she wishes to project as well as its compatibility with the existing materials and character of the storefront and building facade. The advantages and disadvantages of various sign materials, listed below, should also be considered.

Material	Advantages	Disadvantages
Wood		
MDO Plywood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inexpensive.- Ideal for exterior signs.- Smooth, grainless surface.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Delaminates if edges are not sealed.- Somewhat difficult to cut.
Exterior Grade Plywood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inexpensive.- Easy to cut.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Delaminates in humid climates or if edges are not sealed.- Weathers quickly.- Shows grain.
Redwood and Cedar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ideal for carved and sandblasted signs.- Provides texture.- Durable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- May split when carved.- Expensive.
White and Sugar Pine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ideal for carved and sandblasted signs.- Available with smooth or grained finish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bleeds from high sap content.- Splits and warps easily.

Metal

Sheet Metal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lightweight. - Inexpensive. - Low maintenance. - Very large sizes available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tendency to buckle if not properly braced. - Lacks quality if not properly finished.
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Aluminum Sheets and Aluminum Bonded Panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lightweight. - Resistant to buckling. - Can be back-lighted. - Ideal for cutout letters, graphics and logos. - Suitable for contemporary image. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expensive. - Limited color range.
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Stainless Steel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality appearance. - Easily cut. - Lightweight. - Low maintenance. - Very durable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expensive. - Requires special handling and installation.
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Cast Metal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be flush or raised mounted. - Spray painted or anodized in a variety of colors and finishes. - Very durable. - Low maintenance. - Quality appearance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expensive. - Requires special handling and installation.
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Glass

Stained and Colored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides color while allowing light to pass through. - Quality appearance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expensive. - Experienced artisans may be hard to find.
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Etched	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality appearance. - Design flexibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expensive. - Experienced artisans may be hard to find.
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Gold Leaf

Gold Leaf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High quality appearance. - Extremely reflective. - Low maintenance. - Variety of textures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expensive. - Experienced artisans may be hard to find.
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Material	Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Fabric</i>		
Nylon and Canvas Duck	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wide range of colors and patterns. - Inexpensive. - Lettering, graphics and logos may be painted, silkscreened or sewn-on. - Available in matte and glossy finishes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High maintenance. - Requires replacement every 5 to 7 years. - Color will fade when exposed to direct sunlight.
<i>Paint</i>		
Exterior Grade Bulletin and Lettering Enamel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideal for signboards and windows. - Flexibility of design. - Shading, shadows and outline may be used. - Inexpensive. - Finishes well. - Wide choice of color. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatively high maintenance. - Color may fade in direct sunlight. - Surface must be properly prepared for good adhesion.
Smalts (Ground glass or sand powder additives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low maintenance. - Provides depth and sparkle. - Inexpensive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited availability. - Experienced artisans may be hard to find.

Code Requirements for Signs

The District of Columbia's zoning and building codes control the number, size, location, materials and other aspects of signs. Some of the regulations apply to all areas of the city, others are specific to a particular business area. Business owners are responsible for complying with city codes regulating signs. In historic commercial areas abutting federal lands and Georgetown, the design of signs is also reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts as well as the Historic Preservation Division. Businesses affected by both should be familiar with the Commission's as well as the Preservation Division's requirements.

The *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines* were developed under a grant from the Historic Preservation Division, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Government of the District of Columbia. They were funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. The United States Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, or handicap. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility in this program, or if you desire further information please write to: Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, National Capital Region, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1100 Ohio Drive, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20242, (202) 619-7020. AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER M/F/H.