

CHARLOTTESVILLE

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CONTROL DISTRICTS

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Approved by City Council, September 17, 2012



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V

SIGNS, AWNINGS, VENDING & CAFES

A. SIGNS

Signs are a vital part of commercial areas. A balance should be struck between the need to call attention to individual businesses and the need for a positive image of the entire district. The character of signs shall be harmonious to the character of the structure on which they are placed. Consider the relationship of surrounding buildings, compatible colors, appropriate materials, the style and size of the lettering and graphics, and the type of lighting. Signs can complement or detract from the character of a building depending on their design, placement, number, and condition. Historically significant signs on buildings should be retained if possible, even if the business is no longer in existence. See the Zoning Ordinance for specific sign regulations in each historic district. The following are recommended guidelines.



This sign painted on a masonry wall is typical of many historic signs on a warehouse building.

Types of Signs and Typical Locations



projecting sign



window signs



flat wall sign



pier-mounted signs



awning signs



hanging sign

free-standing sign

Placement

1. Place signs so that they do not obstruct architectural elements and details that define the design of the building. Respect the signs of adjacent businesses.
2. *Projecting signs* for commercial buildings are limited to one per storefront. They should be no lower than 8 feet from the sidewalk, and no more than 3 feet from the surface of the building. They should not be placed above the second story sill line. For residential buildings, small projecting signs attached to the wall at the first floor or porch column are appropriate.
3. *Window signs* should be approximately 5.5 feet above the sidewalk at the center point for good pedestrian visibility. Optional locations could include 18 inches from the top or bottom of the display window glass. Window signs are also appropriate on the glazing of doors.
4. *Flat wall signs* for commercial buildings can be located above the storefront, within the frieze of the cornice, on covered transoms, or on the pier that frames the display windows or generally on flat, unadorned surfaces of the façade or in areas clearly designed as sign locations. Flat wall signs for residential buildings can be appropriate if attached to the wall at the first floor or between porch columns.
5. *Awning and canopy signs* should be placed on the valance area only. The minimum spacing between the edge of the letter and the top and bottom of the valance should be 1.5 inches.
6. *Freestanding signs*, in general, are not an appropriate sign type in commercial areas of Downtown and the West Main Street corridor except for use in the front yard of a residence that has been converted to commercial or office use on a site where the building is set back deeply on the lot. In this case, freestanding signs should be no higher than 12 feet.

Number of permanent signs

1. The number of signs used should be limited to encourage compatibility with the building and discourage visual clutter.
2. In commercial areas, signs should be limited to two total, which can be different types.
3. A building should have only one wall sign per street frontage.
4. In addition to the existing permitted signs, each business in a building with rear entrances may have one small flat mounted sign not to exceed 6 square feet.



Flat, wall-mounted directory signs identify the multiple businesses within a building in a coordinated design.



Window signs should be concise and not obscure the storefront.



Projecting signs help direct pedestrians towards a business.



Freestanding signs are acceptable in historic districts where residences have been converted to professional use and can be adapted for use by more than one tenant.

A. SIGNS

Size

1. All the signs on a commercial building should not exceed 50 square feet.
2. Average height of letters and symbols should be no more than 12 inches on wall signs, 9 inches on awning and canopy signs, and 6 inches on window signs.
3. Projecting signs should be a maximum of 10 square feet per face.
4. Window signs should obscure no more than 20 percent of the window glass.
5. Flat wall signs should not exceed 18 inches in height and should not extend more than 6 inches from the surface of the building.

Design

1. Signs should be designed and executed by sign professionals who are skilled at lettering and surface preparation.

Shape

1. Shape of signs for commercial buildings should conform to the area where the sign is to be located.
2. Likewise, a sign can take on the shape of the product of service provided, such as a shoe for a shoe store.

Materials

1. Use traditional sign materials, such as wood, glass, gold leaf, raised metal or painted wood letters, and painted wood letters on wood, metal, or glass.
2. Newer products, such as painted MDO may also be used.
3. Do not use shiny plastic products.
4. Window signs should be painted or have decal flat letters and should not be three-dimensional.

Color

1. Use colors that complement the materials and color of the building, including accent and trim colors.
2. A maximum of three colors are recommended, although more colors can be appropriate.

Illumination

1. Generally, signs should be indirectly lit with a shielded incandescent light source.
2. Internally lit translucent signs are not permitted.

Buildings with Multiple Tenants

1. A comprehensive sign plan should be submitted for multi-tenant buildings.

2. Upper-floor tenants should be represented at each primary entrance by a flat, wall-mounted directory sign.

Other Signs

1. Banners should be temporary and wall murals should be carefully reviewed for compatibility with district character.
2. Halo-lit signs with opaque letters may be appropriate.

Neon Signs

1. Neon signs are often associated with early- to mid- twentieth century commercial design and are currently prohibited within the historic districts unless mounted inside windows.

Sign Maintenance

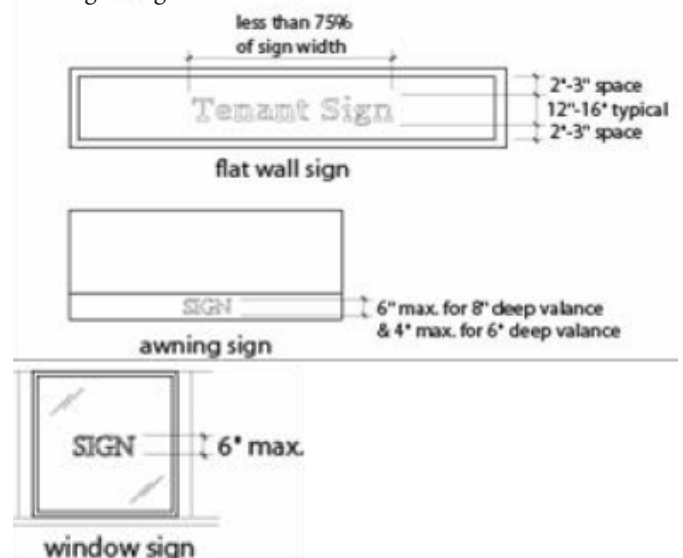
1. Signs that are not properly maintained should be removed.
2. Signs of a business no longer occupying a building or storefront should be removed unless it is historically significant.

PRESERVATION BRIEFS

#25: The Preservation of Historic Signs

Publications are available at
www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm

Lettering on signs



B. TEMPORARY SIGNS

1. Sandwich board-type signs should be:
 - a. a maximum of four feet high.
 - b. a maximum of ten square feet.
 - c. constructed of metal or painted wood.
2. Wood signs should be constructed of medium density overlay (MDO) board or a similar quality material and not grained plywood.
3. All edges should be covered with molding or otherwise finished.
4. Sandwich board-type signs should have a maximum of four colors that relate to the colors of the associated building.
5. Letters should be scaled to the size of the sign.
6. No national advertising trademarks or logos should be a part of the sign other than that of the business.



This sandwich board directs customers to parking while highlighting two businesses that are located in the rear of the building.



Temporary signs provide the opportunity to give more information about a business's products.



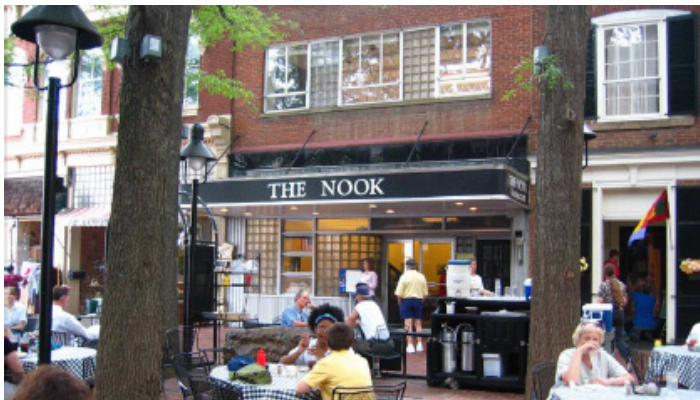
The simple design of this sandwich board uses bright colors and bold lettering to attract attention to this business.

C. AWNINGS, MARQUEES & CANOPIES

Awnings can contribute to the overall image of the Downtown, The Corner, and West Main Street by providing visual continuity for an entire block, helping to highlight specific buildings, and covering any unattractively remodeled transom areas above storefronts. They also protect pedestrians from the weather, shield window displays from sunlight, and conserve energy. Marquees are usually associated with theaters and contain areas for changing information. Canopies are more permanent structures.



These metal fixed canopies blend in well with this contemporary storefront design.



The Nook's canopy design integrates well with the period storefront.

Types

1. *Fixed, sloped fabric awnings* are the traditional awning type and are appropriate for most historic buildings, both residential and commercial.
2. *Boxed or curved fabric awnings*; a more current design treatment, may be used on a non-historic or new commercial building.
3. *Marquees and canopies fabricated from rigid materials* are appropriate on some commercial buildings, however, they must fit the storefront design and not obscure important elements such as transoms or decorative glass.
4. *Historic marquees and canopies* should be retained and maintained on historic building facades.
5. *Backlit awnings or canopies* used as illuminated signs are inappropriate.

Placement

1. Place awnings carefully within the storefront, porch, door, or window openings so they do not obscure elements of damage materials.
2. Choose designs that do not interfere with existing signs or distinctive architectural features of the building, or with street trees or other elements along the street.
3. Choose an awning shape that fits the opening in which it is installed.
4. Make sure the bottom of the awning valance is at least 8 feet high, or consistent with the current building code.

Color and Materials

1. Coordinate colors with the overall building color scheme. Solid colors, wide stripes, and narrow stripes may be appropriate, but not overly bright or complex pattern.
2. Aluminum, vinyl plastic, or overly ornate fabric awnings are generally inappropriate for any buildings within the historic districts.
3. Contemporary marquees or canopies may be constructed of combinations of metal, wood, and glass; some types of plastic may be appropriate.



Coordinated awning types and color help unify the redesigned multiple storefronts of this long brick building.



A modern awning with no fabric on the sides can be an alternative to more traditional designs.



Traditional fabric awnings help screen the sun and provide color for these West Main Street businesses.

D. VENDING STRUCTURES

A vending structure is defined as any stand, rack, cart, prop, table, frame, pedestal or container used for display of goods and services. These standards shall apply to all vendors whether regular mall vendors, Christmas Market vendors, or City Market vendors when permitted on the Mall. See Section 28-119 of the City Code.

1. Design

- a. Preference for mobility of the structure will be given.
- b. All vending stands should have a tailored black (preferred), dark green, purple, navy, charcoal gray, or maroon cloth skirt that is long enough to touch the ground and hide the structure of the table and ancillary equipment for all four sides of the table.
- c. All skirts must be properly maintained and kept clean and in good repair.
- d. All tables must be at least 30 inches high and comply with applicable ADA standards.
- e. Only items for sale should be visible.
- f. Trailer hitches must be removed from carts.

2. Materials

- a. Vending cart materials other than black or silvertone metal require BAR approval.
- b. All wood must be finished or painted.

3. Color

- a. Colors on vending structures should be in keeping with the character of the surrounding area.
- b. No primary or bright colors shall be allowed.
- c. Dark colors or silver are preferable.

4. Size

- a. All vending structures shall be within a space limited to either 5 feet by 10 ½ feet, or 10 ½ feet in length and width, and 6 feet in height.

5. Signs

- a. No signs should be located on or within any vendor structure, except a price sign, and a sign or logo identifying the name of the vendor or the product, which signs shall lay flat on the table.
- b. The vendor's license and peddler's license shall be displayed on the structure.
- c. No sign shall be greater than 2 square feet in area.

6. Umbrellas

- a. Only single pole umbrellas can be used to cover vending structures and should not obscure surrounding businesses.
- b. No permanent canopies or tents are allowed.
- c. Umbrellas should be of only one dark or neutral color that is compatible with the vending structure.
- d. The size of the umbrella should be in scale with the vending structure and fit within the space limits as stated in #4. Umbrella clearance shall be minimum 7 feet.
- e. No text is permitted on a vending structure umbrella.

7. Racks and bookcases

- a. Only one vending rack shall be allowed per vendor.
- b. The rack shall be no longer than four feet not more than six feet high.
- c. No rack shall be allowed unless it is associated with a stand with table(s).
- d. All racks must be within the space allotted for a vendor stand.
- e. Racks shall be black or silvertone.
- f. A bookcase located adjacent to a storefront shall be maximum four feet high, constructed of metal.

8. Merchandise

- a. All merchandise must be located on a vending table or on a rack.
- b. No merchandise shall be placed on the ground nor shall it be visible on the ground under the table.

9. Stands and Chairs

- a. Each vendor must furnish his/her own stands and chairs.
- b. Chairs must be located within the square footage allowed for the vendor area.



This vending stand's skirt and umbrella comply with the standards.

All elements, including chains, bollards, tables, chairs, planters, and trash containers, should be the same color, materials, and design character. Black, being the dominant color of mall elements, or silvertone metal are preferred. The use of treated lumber or unfinished wood anywhere on the mall is not allowed.

1. Fences, Chains, and Bollards

- a. Should be wrought iron or black painted metal.
- b. Should be kept well-maintained.
- c. Chain-links shall be two inches in length or larger.
- d. Bollards shall be at least 3 inches in diameter.

2. Tables and Chairs

- a. Should be wrought iron, black painted or silvertone metal. Other materials or colors require BAR approval.
- b. Cloth tablecloths and removable seat cushions are permitted. Materials other than cloth, and color are subject to BAR approval.

3. Planters

- a. Should be compatible in terms of design, scale, and color with other elements of the café. The planter material shall be terra cotta or concrete. Other materials require BAR approval.

4. Umbrellas

- a. If used, may contain a maximum of one dark or neutral solid color that is compatible with the furniture.
- b. The size of the umbrella should be in scale with the table. Oversize umbrellas may be permitted, but all parts must be contained within the café space.
- c. No text is permitted on an outdoor café umbrella.

5. Trash Containers

- a. Black metal is preferred.
- b. Should be located within the café enclosure.



Dark painted metal is preferred for outdoor cafe furniture.



Silver tone metal furniture is an alternative to dark colors.



Planter boxes soften the simple design and subdued color of this fence.

V

SIGNS, AWNINGS, VENDING & CAFES

F. TENTS FOR TEMPORARY EVENTS (UP TO 5 DAYS)

1. Tents should preferably be located in a rear or side yard.
2. Tents should not permanently alter significant landscaping or site features.
3. Tents should be a solid color, without any text or logos.
4. Tents are not appropriate on the Downtown mall portion of East and West Main Streets, except at Central Place, on the side streets leading to the mall, and on the upper floors or roofs of buildings.



A clear tent may be appropriately used to provide shelter for a temporary event.

G. TENTS (INCLUDING TENT CANOPIES) FOR THE WINTER CAFE SEASON OR YEAR-ROUND USE

(AMENDED OCTOBER 21, 2013)

1. Tents are generally not appropriate in historic districts that are primarily residential (North Downtown, Wertland Street, Ridge Street, Oakhurst-Gildersleeve, Rugby Road-Venable, most of Martha Jefferson).
2. Tents may be appropriate in the Downtown, the Corner, and the West Main Street ADC districts, and in the mixed use/commercial areas of Martha Jefferson Conservation District, except tents are not appropriate on the Downtown mall portion of East and West Main Streets, including Central Place, and on the side streets leading to the mall.
3. Traditional solutions such as patio umbrellas and tree shade are encouraged.
4. Tents are not appropriate on the upper floors or roof of buildings.
5. Tents are not appropriate in front of a contributing building.
6. Tents may be appropriate in front of a non-contributing building, depending on the tent materials, and the impact of its footprint and massing on the streetscape and building.
7. Tents may be appropriate on the rear or side of a building.
8. Tents should not permanently alter significant landscaping or site features.
9. Tents should be a solid color, without any text or logos.



A tent that is appropriate for temporary use may not be appropriate for longer term use.



Low shen subtle colors and intentional design complement the building.

AVAILABLE GUIDELINES SECTIONS

These entrance corridor design guidelines have been divided into the following sections so that you need only read those pertinent to your project.

- I. Introduction
- II. Site Design & Elements
- III. New Construction & Additions
- IV. Rehabilitation
- V. Signs, Awnings, Vending & Cafes
- VI. Public Improvements
- VII. Demolition & Moving

Guideline sections are available from the Charlottesville Department of Neighborhood Services. Online they may be accessed through <http://www.charlottesville.org> at the Board of Architectural Review home page.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was developed for the City of Charlottesville Board of Architectural Review by Frazier Associates of Staunton, Virginia.

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