

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD AND THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF PLANNING**

**NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING**

The D.C. Office of Planning and the Historic Preservation Review Board, pursuant to the authority set forth in section 10 of the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979, (D.C. Law 2-144; D.C. Official Code § 6-1109), Mayor's Order 79-50, dated March 21, 1979, section 6 of Mayor's Order 83-119, dated May 6, 1983, section III(B)(8) of Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1983, effective March 31, 1983, and section 402(b) of the Fiscal Year 2001 Budget Support Act of 2002, effective October 19, 2000 (D.C. Law 12-172; 47 DCR 6308), hereby gives notice of intent to adopt the following new Chapter 25 "Standards for Signs, Awnings, Canopies, and Marquees" to 10A DCMR, Historic Preservation, not less than thirty (30) days after publication of this notice in the *D.C. Register*. The purpose of the new chapter is to establish standards for the design and placement of signs, awnings, canopies, and marquees on historic properties. An earlier version of this proposed rulemaking was published in the *D.C. Register* on November 23, 2007 at 54 DCR 11257. This proposed rulemaking includes revisions that reorganize the chapter for clarity and consistency, distinguish design principles from design criteria, consolidate rules for institutional buildings, add new provisions related to video signage and illumination, clarify some terminology, and refine some requirements.

**Title 10A DCMR, Historic Preservation, is amended as follows:**

- A. A new Chapter 25, "Standards for Signs, Awnings, Canopies, and Marquees" is added to read as follows:**

**CHAPTER 25 STANDARDS FOR SIGNS, AWNINGS, CANOPIES, AND MARQUEES**

Secs.	
2500	General Provisions
2501	Permit Requirements
2502	Permit Application Procedures
2503	General Principles for Signage
2504	General Standards for Signage
2505	Appropriate Sign Types
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## **2500 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- 2500.1 This chapter addresses historic preservation requirements for signage and related building features, including awnings, canopies, and marquees, which typically serve as locations for signage.
- 2500.2 Signs, awnings, canopies, and marquees on historic property shall comply with the requirements of this chapter and the applicable provisions of the D.C. Building Code.
- 2500.3 Signage and related building features subject to review under the Shipstead-Luce Act or the Old Georgetown Act shall be submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for review before a permit is issued, and shall comply with applicable sections of the D.C. Building Code, including the specific limitations pertinent to those review areas.
- 2500.4 The Historic Preservation Review Board and Historic Preservation Office may also review signage and related building features subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission of Fine Arts.
- 2500.5 Signage and related building features in the Chinatown Overlay District are subject to review by the Chinatown Steering Committee pursuant to 10 DCMR, Chapter 24.
- 2500.6 Signage and related building features located in or projecting into public space are subject to review by the Public Space Committee of the District Department of Transportation pursuant to 24 DCMR, Chapters 1 and 2.
- 2500.7 As provided in 10A DCMR § 9900, terms specific to this chapter are defined in § 2599. Other terms used throughout Title 10A are defined in Chapter 99.

## **2501 PERMIT REQUIREMENTS**

- 2501.1 Notwithstanding the limitations and exemptions stated in the D.C. Building Code, a permit is required for the erection, painting, repainting, placement, replacement, hanging, rehanging, alteration, repair, or change of a sign larger than one (1) square foot in size on the exterior of a building on historic property or located within the first eighteen (18) inches inside a glazed opening of a building on historic property.
- 2501.2 Signs on historic property that are not subject to regulation under the D.C. Building Code or required to meet the permit requirements stated in the D.C. Building Code shall be issued permits based on their compliance with the requirements of this chapter.
- 2501.3 Notwithstanding the other requirements of this chapter, signs bearing non-commercial statements of fact, belief, or personal or political opinion that are posted on privately owned historic property shall be issued permits if the proposed method of installation would not destroy or irreparably damage the historic property and would not prevent the maintenance of the property in good repair as provided in § 10b of the Act. Such signs shall remain subject to the requirements and prohibitions applicable to dangerous and obstructive signs in 12A DCMR § 3107.13 and 3107.14. .

- 2501.4 A permit is required for the erection, placement, replacement, hanging, re-hanging, alteration, refacing, repair, or change of an awning, canopy, or marquee on historic property.
- 2501.5 A permit is required for a permanent sign on historic property relating to the sale, rental, lease, or management of the premises.
- 2501.6 A permit is not required for a temporary real estate sign on historic property six (6) square feet in area or less, or any sign on historic property that is one (1) square foot in area or less.
- 2501.7 A permit application for a sign, awning, canopy, or marquee on historic property shall comply with the application requirements of the D.C. Building Code and §§ 306 through 313 of this title, and shall include the following:
- (a) A completed D.C. Application for Construction Permit on Private Property and D.C. Application for Public Space (if applicable), signed by the applicant or building owner;
  - (b) Good quality photographs of the building or site, showing the entire façade and close-ups of the area where work is proposed, adequate to document the building or site's existing appearance;
  - (c) A scaled or dimensioned drawing of the proposed sign, awning, canopy, or marquee accurately indicating dimensions, materials, colors, graphics, copy, type of illumination, and method of attachment;
  - (d) Scaled or dimensioned plans, photo illustrations, or elevation drawings as necessary to show the proposed work as it would appear on the building or site;
  - (e) A section drawing, if the application is for an awning, canopy, or marquee; and
  - (f) If requested, a sample of the finish material(s).

## **2502 PERMIT APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

- 2502.1 An applicant shall submit permit application materials to the Permit Processing Division of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) for transmittal to the Mayor's Agent pursuant to the Act as further described in Chapter 3.
- 2502.2 Upon receipt of the permit application and the results of any required review by the Commission of Fine Arts, the HPO shall review the application under the authority delegated in § 321, and take action as appropriate.
- 2502.3 If the application does not meet the requirements of this chapter, and the HPO is not able to resolve the deficiencies directly with the applicant, the HPO shall prepare the case for review by the Board as provided in Chapter 3.

## **2503 GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR SIGNAGE**

- 2503.1 Signs are a prominent visual element of many historic properties, serving an important role in identifying or advertising businesses, institutions, building occupants, or other entities. The location and design of signage also influences the perception of historic buildings and districts. Well-designed and well-maintained signs add interest and variety to historic building facades and streetscapes and can enhance the image and attractiveness of a historic district. Oversized, poorly designed, or poorly maintained signs can result in visual clutter and detract from the overall appearance of historic property.
- 2503.2 Different historic buildings impose different constraints and may require varied signage solutions. Signage needs also vary by use. For instance, the requirements for a large department store, a small neighborhood retailer, a church, and a home occupation will differ, and signs for each should be tailored to the specific character of each building and entity.
- 2503.3 Different historic districts and neighborhoods have specific characteristics and qualities that may require varied signage solutions. For instance, Chinatown, Downtown, 18<sup>th</sup> Street in Adams Morgan, Georgetown, U Street, and many of the neighborhood commercial strips throughout the city have their own historical traditions and distinctive current characteristics that should be recognized and respected.
- 2503.4 Special considerations apply to residential and institutional signage. Signs are not typically a prominent visual element on historic residential buildings, and commercial signage is strictly limited by the D.C. Building Code within residential and special purpose zoning districts. Commercial signage is also unsuited to historic institutional buildings, which express their function primarily through architectural imagery and symbolism.
- 2503.5 Signs are an incidental element on buildings and in the landscape, and total signage on a property should maintain a deferential balance with historic architecture. Historic buildings were often designed to limit signage to specific areas defined by an architectural frame. Much less commonly, signage was designed as a prominent façade element on some mid-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings, but those signs typically relied on superb graphics and design flair to convey a stylish image.
- 2503.6 Vintage and historic signs contribute to the character and significance of historic buildings and districts. Many were integrally designed with historic facades. Historic signage that has survived for many decades is often the only visual reminder of long-forgotten businesses and modes of commercial advertising.
- 2503.7 Sign types developed for suburban highway-oriented environments are not compatible with urban historic districts. Billboards, rooftop signs, pole-mounted gas station signs, and other overscaled advertising designed to be viewed at high speed or from a great distance are generally not appropriate on historic properties or in historic streetscapes.

- 2503.8 The visual impact of strong color, intense lighting, supergraphics, and other branding elements can be crucial in judging whether signage is appropriate for historic property. Standardized corporate branding, typically developed without regard to local character and context, is often not appropriate for historic buildings and districts and may need to be substantially modified to be compatible with a specific building or district.
- 2503.9 Signs are an opportunity for stylistic imagination and graphic excellence. High artistic quality is strongly encouraged.

## **2504 GENERAL STANDARDS FOR SIGNAGE**

- 2504.1 Signage shall be appropriate to the building, site, or historic district it will affect. Signage shall relate to, take advantage of, and be compatible with the building's particular composition, scale, design features, and architectural character. It shall be designed with sensitivity to adjacent historic properties, the landscape of historic sites, and the streetscape of historic districts, especially when placed in public space.
- 2504.2 Signage shall be appropriate to the identified or advertised use. Its scale and design character shall be commensurate with the size and nature of the entity and its location.
- 2504.3 Signs on historic property shall be primarily oriented toward and promote the pedestrian environment.
- 2504.4 Redundant or repetitive signs which clutter, overwhelm, or visually detract from a building façade, storefront, or site are not permitted.
- 2504.5 Signs shall be lightweight in feeling and appearance. Signage or signage elements like raceways that are boxy, bulky, or out of scale with historic buildings and districts are not permitted.
- 2504.6 Signs that graphically or symbolically express a business or institution, or that express creativity, diversity, or individuality are encouraged.
- 2504.7 Branding, color branding, or overpowering visual effects that detract from or overwhelm the architecture or historic character of a building or district are not permitted.
- 2504.8 Signs should be well designed and fabricated of high quality materials. Professional design and fabrication are strongly encouraged.

## **2505 APPROPRIATE SIGN TYPES**

- 2505.1 Signage shall be of a type appropriate to the affected historic building, site, or district. The specific characteristics of the historic building, site, or district shall determine what sign types are appropriate in each instance.
- 2505.2 The following sign types, when properly designed and installed, may be appropriate for a historic property, depending on its design, setting, and characteristics:

- (a) Banner signs;
- (b) Blade signs;
- (c) Channel letter signs;
- (d) Halo lit signs;
- (e) Hanging signs;
- (f) Painted signs;
- (g) Panel signs;
- (h) Pin-mounted signs;
- (i) Plaques, markers, and medallions that are commemorative, interpretive, or informational in nature;
- (j) Projecting signs;
- (k) Raceway signs;
- (l) Reverse channel signs;
- (m) Routed signs;
- (n) Signs on the valance of an awning or canopy;
- (o) Three-dimensional signs; and
- (p) Window signs.

2505.3 The following sign types are typically not appropriate for historic buildings and districts:

- (a) Internally-illuminated, plastic-faced box or cabinet signs;
- (b) Electronic signs, flashing signs, and other signs with moving text or images;
- (c) Moving or rotating signs;
- (d) Pole-mounted signs more than ten (10) feet in height; and
- (e) Prohibited signs, as defined in § 2506.

## **2506 PROHIBITED SIGN TYPES**

2506.1 Billboards and special signs as defined in § 2599 are not permitted on historic property.

2506.2 Roof signs and revolving signs are not permitted on historic property, except for vintage, historic, or replica signs as provided in § 2513.

2506.3 Televisions and video monitors are not permitted as signage on historic property.

## **2507 DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROPRIATE SIGNS**

2507.1 In reviewing an application for signage, the HPO and Board shall evaluate the architecture and design of the building and site, and determine whether the proposed sign is compatible with respect to type, placement, size, material, copy, illumination, and installation. The HPO shall assist applicants in evaluating historic properties for appropriate signage.

2507.2 Sign placement shall be consistent with the following criteria and considerations:

- (a) A sign may be placed only on a portion of the building occupied by the person,

business, or entity to which it relates.

- (b) A sign band, fascia, or other storefront or building area designed to accommodate signage is the preferred location for sign placement.
- (c) In the absence of a sign band or fascia, a flat continuous wall surface, unbroken by decorative detailing and windows, is an appropriate location for signage.
- (d) A storefront or show window may be an appropriate location for a sign provided it does not visually overwhelm the storefront or obscure its transparency.
- (e) A sign shall not conceal or cover over a character-defining architectural feature, such as a window or door surround, cornice, pilaster, or other decorative or ornamental feature.
- (f) A sign shall not conceal or cover over a window or transom. A window sign within a transom or a channel letter sign on top of a show window may be appropriate provided it does not substantially cover the transom.
- (g) A sign shall not conceal or cover over a significant site or landscape feature. Sign placement shall avoid known or likely archaeological features.
- (h) A sign shall not project more than forty-two (42) inches beyond the building line or building restriction line. A projecting, hanging, blade, or banner sign shall maintain a minimum clearance of eight (8) feet above grade.

2507.3 Sign size shall be consistent with the following criteria and considerations:

- (a) A sign shall be sized appropriately for its location on a building or site. Signage in a historic district should be generally consistent with the prevailing size of comparable signage in the district.
- (b) The maximum size and area limitations established by the D.C. Building Code apply to signs on historic property. Further limitations on size and area may be necessary to achieve compatibility with a historic property or district.
- (c) The appropriate size of a sign on historic property shall be determined by and tailored to the specific characteristics of the building or site, the location of the sign on the building or site, and if applicable, the character of the surrounding historic district.
- (d) A sign installed on a sign band, fascia, or show window shall fit within the area specifically designed for its installation.
- (e) The aggregate area of all window signs within a storefront or show window shall not exceed twenty percent (20%) of the surface area of that element.

2507.4 Sign material shall be consistent with the following criteria and considerations:

- (a) Signage shall be constructed of durable, exterior-grade materials that will retain a high quality appearance.
- (b) Painted wood or metal, and other sign materials and finishes that are consistent in character with materials and finishes on the affected building, district, or site are encouraged.
- (c) Shiny plastic and other sign materials and finishes that are not found on or are out of character with the affected building, district, or site are prohibited unless unusual circumstances make them clearly acceptable at the specific building or location.

2507.5 Sign copy shall be consistent with the following criteria and considerations:

- (a) Sign copy shall not detract from the visual character of the historic building or district. Generally, copy should be kept simple and the number of words or symbols should be limited to keep the sign easily legible, graphically clear, and free of clutter.
- (b) Sign copy should be legible but not out of scale for the historic building or district. Lettering shall be no more than eighteen (18) inches in height unless a variation is dictated by the specific characteristics of the building and the placement of the sign.
- (c) A sign listing services, goods, websites, phone numbers, or other detailed information shall be no larger than three (3) square feet in size.
- (d) Signage using Chinese characters and design elements is encouraged in the Chinatown Overlay District.

2507.6 Sign illumination shall be consistent with the following criteria and considerations:

- (a) Sign illumination shall not detract from a historic building or district. At a minimum, illumination of a sign on historic property shall comply with the applicable provisions of the D.C. Building Code.
- (b) Low-level illumination for signage is encouraged as a general principle. Intense or overpowering illumination can render an otherwise compatible sign inappropriate for historic property.
- (c) Sign illumination shall be appropriate for the location, setting and character of the specific building and site. Certain types of facilities, such as theaters and public buildings, may warrant greater levels of illumination.
- (d) The large internally illuminated surface areas of box signs are generally not appropriate for signs on historic property. Internally illuminated channel letter signs are more appropriate and are encouraged as an alternative.



- (e) Signs with a diffused source of illumination, such as halo-lit channel letter signs, are encouraged.
- (f) Any exterior source of illumination shall direct the light onto the sign, and shall be appropriately shielded to prevent light and glare from shining in the eyes of pedestrians.
- (g) Spot lights, hanging lamps, and decorative fixtures may be acceptable methods of external illumination, if the light source is appropriately shielded and of low intensity.
- (h) Sodium vapor, mercury vapor, or other metal halide light sources are generally too bright for illuminating signs on historic property and are not permitted.
- (i) Neon signs may be permitted if appropriate for the building or district. The use of neon or continuous light-emitting diode (LED) strips as decorative trim or as a building outlining element is not permitted except in the Chinatown area of the Downtown Historic District.
- (j) Sign illumination shall be by steady light only. Pulsing, blinking, or flashing lights are not permitted.

2507.7 Sign installation shall be consistent with the following criteria and considerations:

- (a) Signage shall be installed in a manner that minimizes permanent damage to a building. On masonry buildings, signage shall be attached through mortar joints, rather than through masonry units, whenever possible.
- (b) Signage shall be installed in a neat and workmanlike manner.
- (c) Electrical conduit, transformers, and other electrical equipment for lighting of exterior signs shall be concealed. Raceways shall be as compact as practicable and painted or finished to blend with the wall color behind.
- (d) Ground-mounted signs shall be installed to avoid damage to known or likely archaeological features.

## **2508 SIGNS FOR HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

2508.1 Signs are not typically a prominent visual element on historic residential buildings. In order to preserve the character and setting of historic residential buildings, signage on these buildings and in historic residential areas shall not be visually intrusive, overwhelming, or incompatible with the significant historic characteristics of the particular building, site, and context.

2508.2 Commercial advertising on historic property in residential and special purpose zoning districts shall comply at a minimum with the pertinent limitations in the D.C. Building

Code. The Board may impose further limitations in size or other characteristics if necessary to achieve compatibility with a historic landmark or district.

- 2508.3 Signage for a historic apartment building or an apartment building in a portion of a historic district zoned for residential use shall be limited to the name and address of the building.
- 2508.4 The preferred location for apartment building signage is at the building entrance, either on a canopy, marquee, or adjacent flat wall surface. A small ground-mounted building identification sign may be permitted for a historic apartment building, an apartment building within a historic district, or historic property within a special purpose zoning district.
- 2508.5 A permanent sign on historic property relating to the sale, rental, lease, or management of the premises is limited to two (2) square feet in size.
- 2508.6 Illuminated signage is discouraged in portions of a historic district zoned for residential use. Illumination may be permitted if it is determined acceptable for the specific building and setting. Any permitted illumination shall consist of soft, steady white light only.

## **2509 SIGNS FOR HISTORIC INSTITUTIONAL PROPERTIES**

- 2509.1 Historic civic, institutional, religious, and educational properties generally have a very different character from historic commercial properties. Government offices, courts, churches, synagogues, schools, colleges, libraries, and other institutional or quasi-institutional structures like banks and corporate offices were typically designed to express their function primarily through the imagery and symbolism of their architecture. Signage on a historic institutional property shall be consistent with and respectful of the image and architecture of the property.
- 2509.2 The preferred solution for signage on historic institutional properties is to retain any existing historic signs or to add signage of the same or a similar type if needed.
- 2509.3 The preferred design for bulletin sign boards for historic institutional properties is the traditional style consisting of permanent identification and non-illuminated or front-lit changeable letters set behind glass against a solid background.
- 2509.4 Ground-mounted identification and bulletin signs may also be permitted for historic institutional properties.
- 2509.5 Signs for historic institutional properties shall be subject to the following provisions:
  - (a) Traditional institutional building signage shall be placed at an architecturally appropriate location like a frieze or wall surface next to or above an entrance. The determination of an appropriate location is dependent on the architecture of the specific historic building.

- (b) Ground-mounted institutional signs shall be located where they do not obscure public views of the building, its entrance, or other significant architectural or site features. Ground-mounted signs shall not be raised on masonry piers.
- (c) Institutional signage shall be sized appropriately to its location on the historic building or site. A bulletin sign should not exceed twenty (20) square feet in area, calculated to include any architectural supports such as piers, bases, and frames.
- (d) Institutional signs shall be constructed of materials appropriate for the building, site, or district. Signs of metal, wood, stone and other materials compatible with the building or district are encouraged. Signs of synthetic materials, such as shiny plastic, that are not compatible with the building or district are not permitted.
- (e) Institutional signs shall be illuminated in a manner consistent with and appropriate for their setting. Internally illuminated signs are prohibited unless unusual circumstances make them clearly compatible with the specific building or location.

2509.6 Signs on historic institutional properties that are within or adjacent to historic districts shall be designed in a manner that minimizes the impact of institutional signage, such as the level of illumination, on adjacent historic properties.

2509.7 Signs for properties within a historic complex or campus should be coordinated to convey that the properties are or were historically related. Owners of these campuses and complexes are encouraged to develop a master plan for signage, pursuant to § 2511.

## **2510 SIGNS FOR NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS AND SITES**

2510.1 Signage on non-contributing buildings and sites can materially affect the streetscape of historic districts. These signs should be appropriate for the building or site where they are located and shall not detract from the character of historic districts, landmarks, or sites.

2510.2 Signage on a non-contributing building shall be generally consistent with the character of the historic district, landmark, or site.

2510.3 New pole-mounted signs on gas stations or other facilities are not permitted to exceed ten (10) feet in height. Removal of existing pole-mounted signs and replacement with ground-mounted signs or other appropriate signage is encouraged.

## **2511 MASTER PLANS FOR SIGNAGE**

2511.1 The development of a coordinated master plan for signs is encouraged where a building, complex, or institution houses multiple tenants or activities requiring several signs, or where signs will be installed on multiple properties that were historically or architecturally related.

- 2511.2 A master plan for signage shall be submitted to the Board for review according to the provisions for concept design review outlined in Chapter 3.
- 2511.3 If the Board approves a sign master sign to be in effect for a specific period, the HPO shall adhere to the provisions of the plan in delegated approvals for the duration of the plan.

## **2512 TEMPORARY SIGNS**

- 2512.1 Temporary signage serves a legitimate practical purpose and has little or no lasting impact on the character of historic property. HPO shall apply the criteria in this section when reviewing temporary signs under the authority delegated in § 320 of this title.
- 2512.2 HPO shall routinely approve temporary signage to be installed for less than ninety (90) days or that is less than twenty (20) square feet in size, provided it is installed in a manner that does not cause permanent damage to historic property.
- 2512.3 HPO shall review a temporary sign to be installed for more than ninety (90) days or that is more than twenty (20) square feet in size according to the standards and criteria for permanent signs. HPO may grant greater flexibility in terms of size, placement, type, shape, material, and copy, provided that the sign is installed in a manner that does not cause permanent damage to historic property.
- 2512.4 A temporary sign may be denied if it is plainly and unnecessarily incompatible with the architecture and characteristics of the building, site, or district, or if its installation is likely to cause permanent damage to historic property.
- 2512.5 The permit application for a temporary sign shall indicate the period of time during which the sign is to be displayed. The permit for a temporary sign is not valid beyond its stated duration.

## **2513 VINTAGE AND HISTORIC SIGNS**

- 2513.1 Vintage and historic signs express distinctive characteristics or aesthetics of an earlier period and provide character to historic property. The Board and HPO shall evaluate vintage and historic signage for its significance and for preservation when it may be affected by proposed construction work.
- 2513.2 A vintage sign should be considered for preservation or reuse where feasible.
- 2513.3 A historic sign that is integral to the design of historic property, such as a sign that is carved or etched into masonry or included as part of the design of a parapet or cornice, shall be retained.
- 2513.4 A historic sign that is not integral to the design of historic property, such as the ghost of a painted sign, shall be retained where feasible.

2513.5 Replication or installation of a close copy of a documented historic sign is considered an appropriate preservation treatment unless it clearly conflicts with the D.C. Building Code or the Board's design standards. Documentation of the historical appropriateness of a proposed sign may consist of early photographs, original drawings, or similar sources.

#### **2514 AWNINGS: GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

2514.1 Awnings provide weather protection and may also identify or decorate buildings. Awnings shade windows and storefronts and can shelter pedestrians, but as a secondary function, they also provide an area for identifying the name or trade of an occupant.

2514.2 Awnings and their associated signage can significantly affect the appearance and architectural character of a historic building or district. Improper awning installation can also cause permanent damage to the materials and ornamentation of historic facades.

2514.3 Awnings are not signs and should not be used as substitutes for effective signage or solely as branding elements.

2514.4 The appropriateness of a specific awning depends in part upon the historic district, building type, or business type involved. Awning design should reflect the specific character of the affected landmark, building or district.

2514.5 Historically, the retractable shed awning was the type used almost exclusively on Washington buildings. Barrel-vaulted awnings were less commonly used for arched openings, and more intricate and fancier quarter-round awnings were infrequently used.

2514.6 Replication of a documented historic awning or pattern of awnings is considered an appropriate preservation treatment unless it clearly conflicts with the D.C. Building Code or the Board's design standards. Documentation of the historical appropriateness of a proposed awning or awnings may consist of early photographs, original drawings, or similar sources.

#### **2515 AWNINGS: SPECIFIC CRITERIA**

2515.1 Awning design, placement, and type shall respect, take advantage of, and be compatible with the particular composition, design features, and architectural style of the historic property where it is installed.

2515.2 An awning shall be compatible in shape, size, scale, material, illumination, and method of installation with the character of the historic property to which it is attached.

2515.3 Any signage characteristics of an awning shall be compatible with the character of the affected historic property and district.

2515.4 Awning location and configuration shall be consistent with the following criteria:

- (a) An awning shall be placed only on a portion of the building occupied by the person, business, or entity to which it relates.
- (b) An awning shall relate to a single architectural feature, whether a storefront, window opening, or door opening. An awning shall not be designed as a continuous element that spans multiple storefronts, window openings, or door openings.
- (c) An awning shall relate to and fit within the masonry opening or frame of the storefront, window, or door where it is located.
- (d) An awning shall not cover or obscure or cover over an ornamental or character-defining feature of a historic property.
- (e) Excessive use of awnings is inappropriate and can make commercial advertising detract from a historic property. Repetitive awnings used as signage or branding on upper floor windows are not appropriate.

2515.5 Awning type and shape shall be consistent with the following criteria:

- (a) A shed-style awning is generally the most appropriate form for a flat-topped opening. A barrel-vaulted awning is usually appropriate only for an arched opening. A quarter-round awning is typically appropriate only for an architecturally elaborate façade or storefront.
- (b) An awning shall not have a compound shape, such as a shed awning with a barrel-vaulted midsection.
- (c) An awning should not be bulky or boxy in appearance. An open-sided configuration is encouraged in order to make the awning appear lightweight and to increase visibility of the window.
- (d) Operable and retractable awnings are preferred because this reinforces their accessory nature and allows greater visibility of the building when they are raised.
- (e) An awning should be consistent with the prevailing proportions of other awnings in the streetscape. Its angle of slope should be moderate, and neither so steep that the top of the awning looks like a billboard, nor so shallow that the awning looks like a shelf or marquee.
- (f) The underside of an awning shall not be enclosed or boxed in with fabric or other material, unless justified by the specific circumstances of the building or awning installation.

2515.6 Awning dimensions shall be consistent with the following criteria:

- (a) An awning shall be appropriate in size and scale for the historic building to which it is attached.

- (b) An awning shall be sized to fit the opening where it is installed.
- (c) The projection of an awning shall be appropriate for the building to which it is attached. No awning shall project more than sixty (60) inches beyond the building line or building restriction line.
- (d) An awning shall maintain a minimum clearance of eight (8) feet above the ground.

2515.7 Awning materials shall be consistent with the following criteria:

- (a) An awning shall be covered only with canvas, woven acrylic or similar fabric materials. Metal and shiny or glossy materials like vinyl and plastic are not permitted.
- (b) A single solid color material is preferred for awnings. Striped or patterned awnings are discouraged and are not permitted if they would visually detract from the character of the historic building or district.

2515.8 Awning signage characteristics shall be consistent with the following criteria:

- (a) The valance of an awning is an appropriate location for signage. Signage shall generally be limited to lettering no taller than twelve (12) inches.
- (b) A discreet logo may be allowed on the slope of an awning if also permitted by the building code official.
- (c) An awning shall not be used as an oversized sign. An awning or pattern of awnings shall not be used to create supergraphics or branding that is overpowering or detracts from the historic character of the building or district.

2515.9 Awning illumination shall be consistent with the following criteria:

- (a) An awning shall not be lighted except as part of general storefront illumination. Translucent backlit awnings and under-mounted lighting of an awning are not permitted.
- (b) A sign on the valance of an awning shall not be illuminated.
- (c) Unobtrusive storefront lighting fixtures may be attached to the underside of an awning.

2515.10 Awning installation shall be consistent with the following criteria:

- (a) An awning shall be attached to a building in a manner that causes the minimum permanent damage. Typically, an awning should be attached to a window frame or storefront surround.

- (b) Attachment of awning frames through masonry is prohibited except in unusual circumstances where it is unavoidable due to specific characteristics of the building.

## **2516 CANOPIES: GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- 2516.1 Canopies historically provided shelter and weather protection for the entrance to a building. Canopies also shaded show windows and sidewalks in a manner no longer permitted by construction codes.
- 2516.2 A canopy is appropriate where weather protection is a primary consideration. A canopy should not be used primarily as an enlarged sign background or to extend commercial signage across a sidewalk.
- 2516.3 A canopy at the entrance to a large historic apartment or hotel building can enhance the sense of arrival and welcome created by the architectural treatment of the building entrance. A canopy in a historic commercial streetscape can detract from its character by obstructing views of building facades and adding excess clutter and signage.
- 2516.4 The appropriateness of a specific canopy depends in part upon the specific characteristics of the historic district, building type, or business type involved.

## **2517 CANOPIES: SPECIFIC CRITERIA**

- 2517.1 Canopy design, placement, and type shall respect, take advantage of, and be compatible with the particular composition, design features, and architectural style of the historic property where it is installed.
- 2517.2 A canopy shall be compatible in shape, size, scale, material, illumination, and method of installation with the character of the historic property to which it is attached.
- 2517.3 A canopy shall be consistent with the following criteria:
  - (a) An entrance, storefront, or sidewalk café may be an appropriate location for a canopy.
  - (b) A canopy shall relate to and fit within the masonry opening or frame of a door or storefront. A barrel-vaulted canopy is only appropriate for an arched opening.
  - (c) A canopy shall not conceal or cover over a door surround or other significant architectural feature of a building.
  - (d) A shed style canopy should have open sides to increase visibility of the building or its entrance.
  - (e) The projection of a canopy shall be proportional to the building and appropriate to the streetscape where it is located.



- (f) A canopy shall maintain a minimum clearance of eight (8) feet above grade.
- (g) A canopy shall be finished with canvas, woven acrylic or a similar fabric material. Vinyl, plastic, and other shiny or glossy finish materials are not permitted.
- (h) Translucent backlit canopies are not permitted. Under-mounted downlighting may be permitted on opaque canopies.
- (i) A canopy shall be attached to a building in a manner that does not cause permanent damage. Typically, a canopy should be attached to a door frame or storefront fascia. Attachment of canopy framing through masonry is prohibited unless justified by the specific characteristics of the building.

2517.4 Signage on a canopy shall be consistent with the following criteria and considerations:

- (a) An entrance canopy is an appropriate location for building or occupant identification and the property's address.
- (b) Commercial signage is not permitted on the side of a canopy facing the direction of pedestrian travel along a sidewalk.
- (c) Signage on a canopy shall not be illuminated.

2517.5 Entrance canopies that extend to the public sidewalk or curb are generally not appropriate unless associated with a large-scale commercial establishment, hotel or apartment building. Entrance canopies in other circumstances may be allowed if justified as appropriate given the specific characteristics of the building.

2517.6 Replication of an original or historic canopy is considered an appropriate preservation treatment. Documentation of the historical appropriateness of a proposed canopy may consist of early photographs, original drawings, or similar sources.

## **2518 MARQUEES: GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

2518.1 Marquees are permanent architectural elements traditionally associated with and only appropriate only for larger buildings of a public or semi-public nature, such as apartment houses, hotels, department stores, theaters, and office buildings. Marquees provide shelter, weather protection, and architectural embellishment, and can also include identifying signage at the building entrance.

2518.2 Unlike an awning or canopy, a marquee is a more permanent architectural element applied to a building. Adding a marquee to a historic building is usually not appropriate if one never existed, but a marquee is often appropriate for large-scale new construction in a historic district. A marquee may be appropriate for a larger building but is generally not appropriate for a smaller building or single-family house.

## **2519 MARQUEES: SPECIFIC CRITERIA**

- 2519.1 A marquee shall be compatible with the character of the historic property or district where it is installed. A marquee attached to a historic building shall respect, take advantage of, and be compatible with the building's particular composition, design features, and architectural style.
- 2519.2 A marquee shall be compatible in size, scale, shape, type, material, and illumination with the character of the historic property to which it is attached.
- 2519.3 A marquee shall be placed at a height appropriate to its function as shelter. Typically, the suitable location for a marquee is directly above entrance doors and below the level of transoms. A marquee shall not be placed high above a building entrance to create a grandiose effect.
- 2519.4 A marquee is an appropriate location to identify a building, occupant, or address. Signage on a marquee shall be consistent with the following criteria:
- (a) Signage on a marquee shall be commensurate with the nature of the establishment it identifies.
  - (b) Signage for an apartment building or public institution should be restrained and usually not illuminated.
  - (c) Signage for a commercial building or theater may be more prominent and brightly illuminated.
- 2519.5 A marquee shall not conceal or cover over important decorative elements of a door surround or other significant character-defining features of a historic building.
- 2519.6 A marquee shall be attached in a manner that limits permanent alteration to the affected building as much as possible. A marquee shall be designed to fit around, rather than penetrate, decorative door surrounds or other character-defining elements.
- 2519.7 A marquee that is original, architecturally distinctive, or historically significant shall be retained.
- 2519.8 Replication of a missing original or historic marquee is encouraged. Documentation of a historic marquee may consist of early photographs, original drawings, or similar sources.
- 2519.9 A marquee shall be professionally designed and fabricated of durable, high quality materials.

## **2599 DEFINITIONS**

- 2599.1 As used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings ascribed below:

**Advertisement:** The use of any image, text, logo, symbol, color, or other form of public

announcement to encourage a commercial transaction or to market a business, entity, or commodity.

**Awning:** An architectural projection that provides weather protection, identity or decoration and is wholly supported by the building to which it is attached. An awning is comprised of a lightweight, rigid skeleton structure over which a covering is attached.

**Banner:** A hanging sign, typically of fabric, which may be hung perpendicular or parallel to the face of a building.

**Billboard:** A permanent signboard or structure on which lettering or images can be attached or posted, as further defined in the D.C. Building Code.

**Blade sign:** A vertically-oriented, double-faced projecting sign that hangs perpendicular to the façade of a building, allowing copy on both sign faces.

**Box sign:** A plastic- or acrylic-faced sign mounted on a box or cabinet that houses a source of internal illumination; also called a “cabinet sign.”

**Branding:** The use of signs, logos, symbols, figures, shapes, colors, or other elements individually or collectively, to market a business or identify it as part of a larger corporate entity.

**Bulletin sign:** A free-standing or wall-mounted sign box, usually constructed of metal with a hinged glass face, housing a letterboard for changeable copy.

**Cabinet sign:** A plastic- or acrylic-faced metal sign mounted on a box or cabinet housing a source of internal illumination; also called a “box sign.”

**Canopy:** An architectural projection that provides weather protection, identity or decoration and is supported by the building to which it is attached and at the outer end by at least one stanchion. A canopy is comprised of a rigid structure over which a covering is attached.

**Channel letter sign:** A sign consisting of individually formed letters, which may include illumination within each letter or many be mounted on a continuous raceway.

**Color branding:** The use of a color or colors associated with a business or entity as a means to convey its identity.

**Copy:** The use, amount, and size of lettering, numbers, or imagery on a sign.

**Fascia:** A plain, flat horizontal band, typically part of a storefront cornice, intended for sign placement; also called a “frieze” or “sign band.”

**Flag sign:** A fabric panel with signage displayed or configured as a flag.

**Frieze:** The portion of the façade that is typically just above or at the top of a storefront which provides an area for signage; also called a “fascia” or “sign band.”

**Ground-mounted sign:** A free-standing sign that is located within the public space, yard, or landscape of a property; also called a “monument sign.”

**Halo lit sign:** A sign of an opaque material illuminated from behind to form a “halo” of light around the silhouetted letters or symbols.

**Hanging sign:** A double-faced sign that projects perpendicular from the face of a building, allowing copy on both sign faces, and which typically hangs from an overhead bracket.

**Historic sign:** A sign that is original to a building, historically significant, or at least fifty (50) years old and which has features, qualities, or associations that may warrant preservation.

**Marquee:** A permanent roofed structure attached to and supported by the building to which it is attached and that projects into the public right-of-way.

**Monument sign:** A free-standing, ground-mounted sign.

**Moving sign:** A sign that displays three-dimensional, moving, rotating, flashing, animated, or changing images or text, and is propelled by wind, solar or electric power.

**Painted sign:** A sign painted directly onto the face or other element of a building.

**Panel sign:** A one-sided sign mounted on a flat wall surface.

**Pin-mounted sign:** A sign composed of individual letters or other components attached to a panel or building by pins or screws.

**Pole-mounted sign:** A free-standing sign mounted on a single tall pole or pylon, typically located within the site or landscape of a property, and frequently used to advertise auto-related businesses.

**Projecting sign:** A double-faced sign that projects perpendicular from the face of a building, allowing copy on both sign faces.

**Raceway sign:** A sign consisting of individual channel letters mounted on a horizontal or vertical structural raceway element that houses electrical conduit for illumination.

**Real estate sign:** A sign announcing the sale, rent, or lease of land or premises.

**Reverse channel sign:** A sign where individual letters or images are cut in to an opaque panel allowing the letters or images to be illuminated when back lit.

**Roof sign:** A sign that is mounted on the roof of a building, as defined further in the D.C. Building Code.

**Routed sign:** A sign, typically of wood, into which letters or images are carved or routed.

**Sign or Signage:** A physical medium or display, including its structure and component parts,

used to advertise, identify a person, object, or entity, or to provide information, consisting of words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, numbers, illumination, or projected images.

**Sign band:** A plain, flat horizontal band at the top of a storefront intended for sign placement; also called a “fascia” or “frieze.”

**Special sign:** A sign that is erected, hung, placed, posted, painted, displayed or maintained on an outside, exterior wall or surface of a building pursuant to a Special Sign permit issued pursuant to the D.C. Building Code, and as further defined in the D.C. Building Code.

**Symbol:** A recognizable image, icon, logo or other graphic representation for a business, service, institution or other object or entity.

**Temporary sign:** A sign erected for a limited and defined period of time.

**Three-dimensional sign:** A sign, symbol, icon, object, or logo that is sculptural or three-dimensional in form.

**Vintage sign:** A sign less than fifty (50) years old which may have distinctive characteristics or aesthetic qualities that lend character to a building or district.

**Window sign:** A sign that is hung, etched, painted, or mounted inside a glass storefront, door, window, or transom.

**B. Section 9901 of Chapter 99 is amended by adding the following two new definitions:**

**Building code or D.C. Building Code:** Title 12A of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, also known as the Building Code Supplement.

**Building code official or building official:** The person authorized and directed to enforce the provisions of the building code and the construction code.

**Construction code or D.C. Construction Codes:** Titles 12 and 13 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations.

All persons wishing to comment on the subject matter of this proposed rulemaking should file comments in writing not later than thirty (30) days after the date of publication of this notice in the *D.C. Register*. Comments may be sent to Tersh Boasberg, Chairman, HPRB, c/o Steve Callcott, 2001 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Washington, D.C. 20009, or to [steve.callcott@dc.gov](mailto:steve.callcott@dc.gov). Copies of these proposed rules may be obtained at the same address and on the Office of Planning website at [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov).