



# Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR ON-PREMISES SIGNS AND AWNINGS



These guidelines apply to new and existing signs and awnings on designated landmarks and in local historic districts. Please review them carefully before applying for permits and proceeding with a project. Contact historic preservation staff with questions at 311 or (612) 673-3000.

Adopted June 6, 2023

## Historic signs

- ✓ Revealing, maintaining, and restoring historic signs is encouraged and shall not be counted in number or area of signs allowed by these design guidelines, but may count toward Zoning Code-permitted signage. (1.1)

## Location

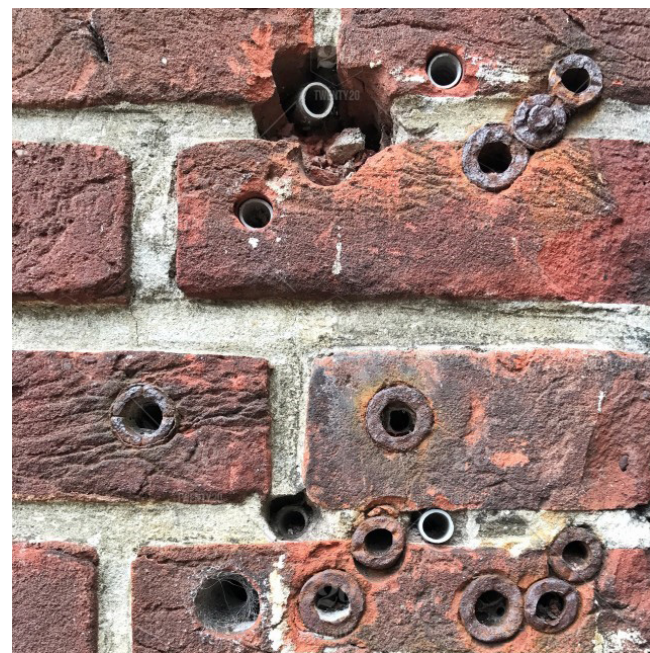
- ✓ Wherever possible, signs should be placed in traditional sign locations including the storefront sign band area. (1.2)
- ✗ Signs should not obscure or damage character-defining features including windows, doors, pilasters, columns and historic signs. (1.3)

## Illumination

- ✓ Signs may be illuminated externally, internally, or by neon, provided they are not backlit. (1.4)
- ✓ LED may be considered a compatible substitute for neon when the banding's dimensions, color, and intensity resemble neon or other noble gases used in lighting. (1.5)
- ✓ Acrylic faces on individual channel letters are acceptable. (1.6)
- ✓ Not more than one brick should be damaged by the installation of wiring, which should only pierce historic masonry when the wiring is too wide to pass through mortar joints in the wall. (1.7)
- ✓ Electrical conduit and any lighting fixture should be attached to the sign and mortar joints. (1.8)
- ✗ Banners and awning signs shall never be illuminated. (1.9)
- ✗ Plastic face covers are not allowed except on channel letter faces. (1.10)

## Installation

- ✓ Sign installation should have a minimal impact on the building and, to the extent practical, should allow the building to be returned to its original condition if the sign is removed. (1.11)
- ✓ Signs and lighting fixtures shall only be attached to the building through the mortar joints on masonry buildings. (1.12)
- ✓ Awnings should be attached to window or door frames. (1.13)
- ✗ Awnings, signs, electrical conduits, and lighting fixtures should not be directly attached to masonry. (1.14)



Masonry will be damaged when signs are not attached through the mortar joints.

### Wall Signs

- \* **Location.** Wall signs should not conceal character-defining features or obstruct openings. (2.1)
- \* **Size.** Wall signs should not extend outward from the building more than eight (8) inches. (2.2)
- \* **Materials.** Wall signs may be constructed of wood, metal, painted fiberglass, painted plastic, or materials compatible with the existing building. (2.3)
- \* **Installation.** Wall signs should not be painted directly on the surface of the building, except as part of the maintenance or restoration of an existing historic sign, or in instances where the masonry is already painted. (2.4)

### Projecting Signs

- \* **Location.** Projecting signs should be located near a building entrance. Projecting signs should not conceal character-defining features or obstruct openings and should not be suspended from the soffit. (3.1)
- \* **Size.** The thickness of a projecting sign should not exceed eight (8) inches. (3.2)
- \* **Materials.** Projecting signs may be constructed of wood, medium density overlay/signboard, metal, painted fiberglass, painted plastic, or materials compatible with the existing building. (3.3)

### Freestanding Signs

- \* **Location.** Freestanding signs should not obscure the character-defining features of adjacent buildings. (4.1)
- \* **Materials.** Freestanding signs should be constructed of materials similar to those found on the existing building or compatible with the existing building. Acceptable materials include brick, stone, stucco, metal or wood. (4.2)

### Window Signs

- \* A window sign may not include a backlit sign, flashing sign, or any other sign type not allowed. The number, size and location of window signs are not regulated by the HPC. (5.1)

### Canopy Signs

- \* **Location.** Signs may be mounted to the fascia of canopies, provided the letters do not extend above or below the fascia. Canopy signs are permitted atop existing canopies, where they traditionally appeared. (6.1)
- \* **Design of canopy signs.** Canopy signs shall consist of individual characters mounted to the front of a boxed raceway and shall not exceed eight (8) inches in thickness total (sign and raceway). The raceway shall be painted to match the color of the canopy or building wall behind it. Characters shall be mounted flush with the top and front face of the canopy or no more than four (4) inches from the front face of the canopy. (6.2)
- \* **Illumination.** Illuminated signs, either external or internal, are permitted atop canopies or attached to their fascia. All electrical components shall be housed within the raceway. Halo-lit letters are permitted. (6.3)



*Freestanding signs should be constructed of materials similar to those found on the existing building or compatible with the existing building, like the brick and dark colored aluminum found in this sign and its historic building.*



*Signs may be mounted to the fascia of canopies, provided the letters do not extend above or below the fascia.*

### Awning Signs

- \* **Location.** Awnings should fit within the window or door opening. (7.1)
- \* **Number of awnings.** The number of awnings may not exceed the number of window or door openings. (7.2)
- \* **Number of awning signs.** Awning signs are limited to ground floor awnings. Where there are multiple awning signs on a building, all signs should be located in the same or similar position on the awnings. (7.3)
- \* **Materials.** Awnings should be constructed of coated or uncoated cloth fabric. Awnings clad in other materials require HPC review unless they are a restoration or a simple, historically compatible design, as demonstrated by the applicant through the submission of historical photos. (7.4)
- \* **Installation.** Awning hardware should be attached to the window or door frame and should never damage historic masonry. Awnings should not be attached to or cover any part of the building wall. (7.5)
- \* **Illumination.** Awnings and awning signs shall not be illuminated. (7.6)
- \* **Awning shape.** Awnings should project downward and outward from the openings in straight lines unless they are reflecting the curved shape of the opening. The projection of an awning shall be less than its height. An awning drop or skirt shall not exceed twelve (12) inches. (7.7)



*Awnings should be constructed of coated or uncoated cloth fabric. Other materials may require HPC review and approval prior to installation.*

### Dynamic Signs

- \* Dynamic signs and dynamic changeable copy signs are not permitted. (8.1)
- \* Historic dynamic signs may be repaired or replaced in-kind. (8.2)

### Murals

- \* **Location.** Murals may not be installed on a primary (streetside) elevation. (9.1)
- \* **Installation.** Murals may not be painted on unpainted historic masonry. Murals can be installed on a compatible screen material that does not damage historic masonry. (9.2)

### On-Premises Incidental Notification Signs

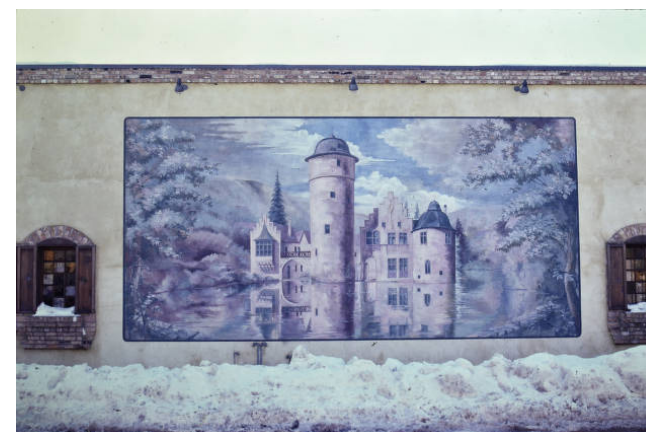
- \* On-premises incidental notification signs are permitted, but must not damage historic masonry. (10.1)
- \* The total signage on a zoning lot shall not exceed two (2) square feet in area, and such signs shall not be placed or maintained in the public right-of-way and shall not be illuminated. (10.2)

### Temporary Signs

- \* The number, size and location of temporary signs are not regulated by the HPC. (11.1)



*Historic dynamic signs may be repaired or replaced in-kind.*



*Murals may only be painted on existing painted historic masonry.*





Sixth Street signage near Hennepin Avenue in 1967 (left) and 2021 (right), courtesy of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED).

### Application Process

Heritage preservation staff and the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) will evaluate sign or awning proposals for consistency with the design guidelines. Staff are available to review the plans with applicants at all stages of a project at 311, or (612) 673-3000.

Once plans are complete, an application for a Certificate of No Change or Certificate of Appropriateness must be submitted. Applicants should allow sufficient time for staff review and assistance.

- \* A **Certificate of No Change** (administrative review) may be issued by staff for sign and awning proposals that conform to the design guidelines, unless the applicant can demonstrate a historical precedent through the use of historical photos. A Certificate of No Change may be approved within 10 business days once the application is complete.
- \* A **Certificate of Appropriateness** (public hearing review) is required for sign or awning proposals that do not conform to the design guidelines, unless the proposed sign was previously approved by the HPC and is substantially similar in terms of the attributes that do not strictly conform to these guidelines. Approval generally takes 6-8 weeks and requires review by the HPC at its bi-monthly public hearing.

After receiving the signed copy of the approved Certificate of No Change or Certificate of Appropriateness final actions, the applicant must have their licensed sign contractor submit one approved copy of all sign plans with a sign permit application to receive a permit, if required.

### Zoning Code Consistency

All signs and awnings also must comply with the requirements of Chapter 560 of the City's Zoning Code as well as other applicable regulations. If a provision of these design guidelines conflicts with a provision of the zoning code or with any other regulation, the more restrictive provision will apply.

For example, the zoning code sign regulations for many residential uses are more restrictive than the HPC design guidelines. In such a case, the zoning regulations will govern. Therefore, property owners and their sign contractors should carefully review the zoning code sign regulations before proceeding with a project or applying for a sign or awning permit to determine if the plans are consistent with the applicable zoning regulations.

### Nonconforming Signs

Legal signs and awnings that are nonconforming as to these design guidelines may be altered administratively through a Certificate of No Change, provided the signs and awnings:

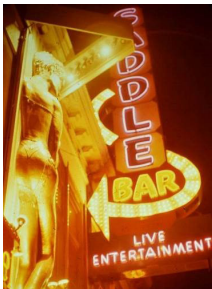
1. Are not enlarged, relocated, refaced, intensified, illuminated, etc. in a manner that increases their nonconformity to standards articulated in these design guidelines; and
2. Have not been discontinued for a continuous period of more than one (1) year, even if the sign frames haven't been taken down.

# SIGN DEFINITIONS, A TO Z

SIGN DEFINITIONS

### Animated Sign

**Animated sign.** A sign with a progression of frames which give the illusion of motion, moving objects, moving patterns or bands of lights and shapes; or that gives the visual impression of movement.



### Balloon Sign

**Balloon sign.** A sign consisting of a bag or similar device made of lightweight material supported by helium, hot, or pressurized air, which is greater than eighteen (18) inches in diameter.



### Awning

**Awning.** A roof-like cover, often constructed of fabric, plastic, vinyl, metal or glass, designed and intended for protection from the elements or as a decorative embellishment, and which projects from a wall of a structure.



### Banner

**Banner.** A piece of fabric or similar lightweight material generally with no enclosing framework, which is designed either for decoration or to provide signage, and which may be mounted to a pole or building at one (1) or more edges.



### Awning Sign

**Awning sign.** A sign printed on or in some fashion attached directly to an awning.



### Building Sign

**Building sign.** A sign attached to a building, including but not limited to an awning, canopy, or marquee, wall, projecting or window sign.



### Back-to-Back Sign

**Back-to-back sign.** A sign structure with two (2) sign faces oriented in opposite directions and spread not more than two (2) feet apart.



### Canopy

**Canopy.** A structure, often constructed of fabric, plastic, vinyl, metal or glass, with supports attached to the ground, or attached solely to the building, sheltering an area or forming a sheltered walk to the entrance of a building. While the Zoning Code defines canopies as being attached to the ground, these guidelines do not.



**Canopy Sign**

**Canopy sign.** A sign printed on or in some fashion attached directly to a canopy.



**Flag Sign**

**Flag sign.** A sign consisting of fabric or similar lightweight material attached at one end of the material, usually to a staff or pole, so as to allow movement of the material by atmospheric changes and which contains distinctive colors, patterns, symbols, emblems, insignia, or other symbolic devices.



**Changeable Copy Sign, Dynamic**

**Changeable copy sign, dynamic.** A sign or portion thereof with letters or numbers only that can be electronically changed or rearranged without altering the face or the surface of the sign.



**Flashing Off-Premises Sign**

**Flashing off-premises sign.** A sign which exhibits changing light or color effect by any means, so as to provide intermittent illumination or the illusion of intermittent flashing light by any means. Also, any mode of lighting which resembles zooming, twinkling or sparkling.



**Changeable Copy Sign, Manual**

**Changeable copy sign, manual.** A sign or portion thereof with letters or numbers only that can be manually changed or rearranged without altering the face or the surface of the sign.



**Freestanding Sign**

**Freestanding sign.** A sign which has supporting framework that is placed on, or anchored in, the ground and which is independent of any building or other structure.



**Dynamic Sign**

**Dynamic sign.** A sign, or any element of a sign, which provides the ability to change text or images, or exhibits changing effects in order to provide intermittent illumination or the illusion of such illumination, or any series of imagery or display which may appear to move or change, including changes produced by any electronic method. A dynamic sign is not a changeable copy sign, dynamic.



**Identification Sign**

**Identification sign.** A sign containing principally the name of the individual or establishment occupying the premises, and which also may include the street address, telephone number or other information identifying the use.



### Illuminated Sign

**Illuminated sign.** A sign lighted by or exposed to artificial lighting either on or in the sign or directed toward the sign.



### Marquee

**Marquee.** A permanent, roof-like structure projecting over an entryway, parallel to the ground, generally designed and constructed to provide protection from the elements.



### Illuminated Sign: Backlit

**Illuminated sign: backlit.** A light source contained within the sign element or sign cabinet that illuminates by shining through a translucent surface or sign face, except where only the letters, numbers or logos of the sign copy are illuminated.



### Marquee Sign

**Marquee sign.** A building sign painted on or attached to a marquee.



### Illuminated Sign: External

**Illuminated sign: external.** A light source outside the sign element or sign cabinet that illuminates by directing light onto the sign surface, such as by floodlight or spotlight.



### Monument Sign

**Monument sign.** A freestanding sign with its sign face mounted on the ground, on a solid base at least as wide as the sign, or on one (1) or more poles or beams with not more than one (1) foot of open area between the sign face and the ground or base.



### Illuminated Sign: Internal

**Illuminated sign types: internal.** A light source contained within the sign cabinet that illuminates by directing light onto the sign surface, or that illuminates only the letters, numbers or logos of the sign copy, and which is not backlit.



### Mural

**Mural.** A hand-painted, hand-tiled, or digitally printed work of visual art that is either affixed to or painted directly on the exterior wall of a structure with the permission of the property owner. A mural does not include displays with electrical or mechanical components or a changing image art display.



### Off-Premises Advertising Sign or Billboard

**Off-premises advertising sign or billboard.** A sign which directs attention to a business, establishment, product, service, interest, activity or entertainment not exclusively related to the premises where such sign is located.



### Portable Sign

**Portable sign.** A sign which is designed or intended to be moveable, including by trailer or on its own wheels, even though the wheels of such sign may be removed.



### On-Premises Sign

**On-premises sign.** A sign which directs attention to or promotes a business, establishment or activity conducted, or a product, service, interest or entertainment sold or offered, on the premises where such sign is located.



### Projecting Sign

**Projecting sign.** A sign which projects from a wall of a building in such manner that the sign face is perpendicular to the wall, or a sign which is suspended from a soffit or other permanent roof overhang.



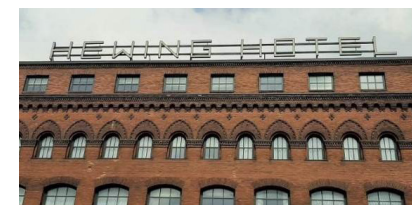
### Painted Wall Sign

**Painted wall sign.** A wall sign that is hand-painted directly on the exterior wall of a structure.



### Roof Sign

**Roof sign.** A sign which is mounted on the roof of a building or which projects above the top of the wall of a building with a gambrel, gable or hip roof.



### Pole Sign

**Pole sign.** A freestanding sign which has its supportive structure anchored in the ground or on a solid base not at least as wide as the sign, or which has a sign face elevated above the ground or base by one (1) or more poles or beams and with an open area between the sign face and the ground or base of more than one (1) foot.



### Service Area Canopy Sign

**Service area canopy sign.** A sign which is part of, or attached to, a service area canopy.





Sign

**Sign.** A structure, fixture, placard, announcement, declaration, image, device, demonstration, logo or insignia used for direction, information, identification, attraction, or to advertise or promote any business, product, activity, service, interest or entertainment.



Stringer Sign

**Stringer sign.** A sign that is made of commercial or decorative pennants, flags or streamers which are attached to a string, rope or cable.



Sign Face

**Sign face.** The surface of the sign upon, against or through which the message or the sign is exhibited.



Temporary Sign

**Temporary sign.** A banner, pennant, poster or advertising display constructed of paper, cloth, canvas, plastic sheet, cardboard, wallboard, plywood or other like materials that is intended to be, or is determined by the zoning administrator to be, displayed for a limited period of time.



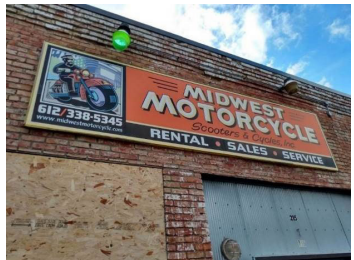
Sign Structure

**Sign structure.** A structure including the supports, uprights, bracing and framework which supports or is capable of supporting a sign.



Wall Sign

**Wall sign.** A sign attached parallel to, or painted on, a wall, which is supported by such wall, and which displays only one (1) sign surface, or a sign attached parallel to, or within forty-five (45) degrees of parallel, or painted on, the surface of the lower slope of a mansard roof.



Snipe Sign

**Snipe sign.** A sign of any material, including but not limited to paper, cardboard, wood or metal, attached to any object and having no application to the premises where located.



Window Sign

**Window sign.** A sign that is placed inside a window or upon the surface of a window and is visible or is intended to be viewed from the exterior of the window.

