

# Guidelines for Review of Signs in Historic Districts

## Objectives

These guidelines were developed to assist the property owners, tenants, sign industry professionals, other with the design and review of signage proposed to be installed within Rapid City's Historic Districts and Individually Listed properties. These guidelines and recommendations were created to ensure that signage enhances the form, scale, and visual character through consideration of such factors as size, position, projection, color, message, texture, materials, and illumination. The design guidelines have been created to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To ensure that all signs installed on historic property are compatible with the character of Rapid City's historic past.
- 2) To encourage signs which, by their appropriate design, are integrated with and harmonious to the building and sites which they occupy.
- 3) To preserve and improve the appearance of the City, and its historic neighborhoods, as a community in which to live, work, and visit.
- 4) To allow each individual business to clearly identify itself in a clear and distinctive manner.
- 5) To promote signs as pedestrian oriented, rather than automotive, which is generally consistent with historic character.
- 6) To ensure that the installation of a sign does not damage the historic fabric, nor detract from the historic character of a historic district.

## Guidelines

For signs proposed to be installed within a Historic District or an Individually Listed structure, the following guidelines shall apply:

- I. Properties with a historic district status of "Non-Contributing" that follow these guidelines may be approved administratively by the Community Development Director or their designee. Properties with a "Contributing" status, and Individually Listed Structures, will be reviewed by the Historic Sign Review Board, using these objectives.
  - a. **Objective I, Size: A sign should be designed to be in proportion and scale with the building.** A sign should be in scale with the façade of the building. A sign must meet the sizing requirements of the Section 17.50.080.
  - b. **Objective II, Position: Position a sign so that it does not obscure or conflict with architectural features of the building.** A wall sign should be placed so that it is framed by the architectural details of the building. A wall sign should be placed to reflect the fenestration pattern of the building. Placing or dimensioning a wall sign so that it spans the pilasters or detailing of a building should be avoided. Signs should be positioned where they will not damage or visually intrude upon architectural details.
    - i. **BRACKETS.** New signs should utilize existing mounting apparatus whenever possible. If new bolt holes or brackets are necessary for sign installation, care should be taken to ensure that installation does not damage the historic building materials in any way. Bolting through mortar

joints avoids damage to historic stone or brick. Where ever possible, avoid drilling new holes or creating new fixing positions on historic facades by using existing holes and fixing positions.

- c. Objective III, Projection: The projection of a wall sign should be minimized to the depth of the sign panel or letters.** A wall sign should be relatively flush with the building façade. A wall sign should be designed to sit within rather than forward of the fascia or other architectural details of the building.
  - d. Objective IV, Color: Sign colors should complement the colors of the building.** The number of colors used on a sign should be limited; in general, no more than three (3) colors should be used, although accent colors may also be appropriate. Color should be used to both accentuate the sign design and message, and also to integrate the sign or lettering with the building and its context. Fluorescent (day-glo) colors should be avoided. The main body of the sign should be more neutral and/or of historic era (not bright white).
  - e. Objective V, Legibility: Signs should express easy-to-read, simple messages.** The sign should identify the name of the business and not include extraneous information/advertising that creates visual clutter.
  - f. Objective VII, Materials: Sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic district.** Materials compatible with the district's period and style, used in contemporary designs can form effective new signs. Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs. Their use is encouraged. Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read may not be appropriate. The introduction of new plastic cabinet boxes is not appropriate.
  - g. Objective VIII, Illumination: Lighting should complement the character of the historic building or district.** Signage lighting may be externally illuminated, lit by one or more shielded, stationary bulbs projecting onto the sign. Use of internal illumination is strongly discouraged. Exceptions can be granted in cases where low wattage and the sign size, design, and color create an effective internal illumination that is acceptable in the historic district. Neon is generally appropriate for exterior signage where it fits in with the era of the building, generally 1920-present.
- II. For signs proposed in the environs of historic property:
- a.** Signs that do not meet the requirements of the sign code, contain electronic or LED message centers, or utilize fluorescent/day glow colors shall be reviewed by the Historic Sign Review Board.
  - b.** Any other sign in the environs of historic property shall not be reviewed by the Historic Sign Review Board, unless referred to the committee by staff.

Current Code

Q. *Historic sign requirements.*

1. *Purpose.* The purpose of this section is to create historic sign districts. The boundaries of the historic sign districts shall correspond to the same boundaries as any historic district or property listed and regulated by the National Register of Historic Places.

2. *Historic Sign Review Committee approval.* Approval for any sign located within a historic sign district shall be granted by the Historic Sign Review Committee. This Committee shall consist of 5 persons and include a member of the Historic Preservation Commission. The Historic Preservation Commission shall nominate 1 of their members to serve on the Historic Sign Review Committee as the standing member. The Historic Preservation Commission shall also nominate an alternate from their membership to serve in the absence of the standing member. The remaining 4 members shall be appointed by the Mayor and should include individuals with knowledge and experience in historic preservation, architecture, sign industry, and/or be a property owner or business owner within the historic district.

3. *Length of term.* Members shall be appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Common Council for terms of 3 years. The Committee shall elect a Chairperson from its membership to serve for a term of 1 year.

4. In considering sign permits within historic districts, the Historic Sign Review Committee shall consider the following criteria: size and position, projection, color, message, texture, materials, illumination and lettering style for the historic era for which the building or structure was constructed. In order to adequately review these factors, the applicant for a sign permit must, in addition to the requirements of § 17.50.080I., submit the following: a photograph of the property and structure, a photograph or scaled drawing of the property or structure with the proposed sign sketched on it, color chips or color samples of the same colors that are to be used for the sign, and a scaled drawing of the proposed sign depicting the sign fonts and other attributes as they will actually appear on the sign.

5. The Historic Sign Review Committee may adopt rules in accordance with this section. Meetings of the Committee shall be held at the call of the Chairperson and/or the Building Official. All meetings of the Committee shall be open to the public. The Committee shall keep minutes of its proceedings, showing the vote of each member upon each question; or if absent or failing to vote, indicating the fact, and shall keep records of its examinations and other official actions. A majority of the voting members of the Review Committee shall constitute a quorum.

6. If the Historic Sign Review Committee approved an application for a sign which meets the criteria established by this section, then a sign permit may be issued. In order to ensure compliance with the provisions of this section, the Committee may approve applications with stipulations that must be met before a sign permit may be issued by the city. If the Historic Sign Review Committee denies an application for a sign which does not meet the criteria established by this section, the applicant shall be notified in writing as to the reasons for denial. Decisions of the Historic Sign Review Committee may be appealed to the City Council.

**Historic Sign Review Application. Provide the following information for each proposed sign. Applicants are encouraged to refer to the guidelines when planning and designing new signage.**

**1. Address and Construction Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one: West Boulevard Historic District; Commercial Historic District; Individually Listed; Environs

Circle one: Contributing; Non-Contributing; Non-Listed

*Staff can assist you in providing this information.*

**2. Dimensions of Sign:** \_\_\_\_\_

- A scaled drawing or computer generated rendering of the proposed sign must be submitted. This graphic must identify the size, color/s, font/s, borders of the proposed sign

**3. Location of Sign:** \_\_\_\_\_

- A current photograph of the building where the sign is to be located must be submitted showing any existing signage.
- A scaled drawing/computer generated rendering of the proposed sign located on the building must be submitted.

**4. Sign Material:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Provide a written description of all proposed sign materials including lettering, backboard, etc.

**5. Sign Installation:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Describe how the sign will be installed; a licensed contractor must be identified prior to the sign being installed.

**6. Sign Illumination: Circle one: Yes; No**

If yes: describe how the sign will be lit, including a description of any existing or proposed light fixtures. \_\_\_\_\_