

# Guidelines for Review of Signs in Historic Areas

## Objectives

These guidelines were developed to assist the private and public sector with the design and review of signage proposed to be installed within Rapid City's Historic Districts. These guidelines were created to encourage signage enhances the form, scale, and visual character through consideration of such factors as size, position, projection, color, message, texture, materials, illumination, and lettering style. 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 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 recreate.
- 4) To allow each individual business to clearly identify itself, and the goods and services which it offers, 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 the Historic Environs

- I. For signs proposed to be installed on structures located within the environs of historic property:
  - a. If the proposed sign meets all requirements of the sign code and does not contain an electronic or LED message center or fluorescent/day glow colors or entail a sign painted directly onto a building the sign does not require review by the Historic Sign Review Committee.
  - b. Any other sign shall be reviewed by the Historic Sign Review Committee.

## Guidelines for Historic Property

- II. For signs proposed to be installed in the historic district, or on a historic property, the following Guidelines shall apply. 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. **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 Sign Code.

- b. 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. Use a sign band where one is available. A wall sign should be placed to reflect the arrangement of windows and doors on the elevation of the building. Placing or dimensioning a wall sign so that it spans the pilasters or detailing of a building should be avoided. A projecting sign should be positioned where it will not damage or visually intrude upon architectural details.
- c. 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. 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. Neon “day-glo” colors may not be used in the historic district.
- e. Message:** Sign copy should be simple and legible. Messaging should generally be limited to convey information such as the business name, logo, and business type. Signs should be designed to avoid visual clutter.
- f. Materials:** Sign Materials should be compatible with those of the historic building. Materials compatible with the Historic District’s period and style, used in contemporary designs can form effective new signs.
- i. Wood: Wood signs are appropriate in historic areas and their use is encouraged.
  - ii. Metal: Aluminum and other metals are generally appropriate. Consider stencil cut or stem-mounted from the sign board or anchors set into mortar joints on the wall.
  - iii. Awning: Valance signs on an approved canopy, or awning are generally appropriate in the historic district.
  - iv. Neon or Neon-Appearing: Gas filled neon tube signs are generally appropriate on buildings constructed after 1920. This does not apply to non-primary signs such as “Open” signs.
  - v. Plastic Cabinet Boxes: These signs are not appropriate on historic property and will not be approved administratively.
  - vi. Other: Modern materials such as toolable sign foam, applied pre-fab and primed printable dimensional lettering, painted MDO plywood, painted plastic letters, or fiberglass reinforced plastic are generally appropriate.

- vii. Signs painted directly onto the building façade: This is not recommended due to the likelihood of deterioration to historic masonry or other cladding. Painted signs on facades of buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places shall not be approved administratively.
- viii. Electronic Message Center: These signs are not allowed on Historic Property or within the environs of historic property and may not be approved administratively.
- ix. Brackets/Hardware: 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.
- x. Pole Signs: Where pole signs are allowed in the sign code, consider a design which includes a pole cover that is compatible with the architectural character of the structure and the surrounding commercial area.

**g. Illumination:**

- i. **Front Lit or Direct External Lighting**: Lighting with scoop, arm, or “crook neck” commercial signs lit traditionally mounted above the sign board from the wall are recommended and their use is encouraged. Modern halogen pin spots mounted below on wall, frame, or metal arms, or canopies may also be used when compatible with the proposed signage and architecture of the building.
- ii. **Full Internal Illumination**. Fully internally illuminated signs such as back lit plastic, vinyl, cabinet, box, dimensional lettering, and awning signs are not allowed in the historic district. These signs will not be eligible for administrative approval.
- iii. **Partial Internal Illumination**. Signs that integrate very minimal internal illumination where light spill is minimal may be appropriate in the historic district. For example back lit silhouetted letters or logo may convey a sophisticated appearance at night.
- iv. **Other lighting**. Bright flashing, strobing, or quickly changing colored lights are not allowed.

- h. Lettering**: Letter styles and sizes should be compatible with the building’s architecture. Use letters and fonts that enhance rather than detract from the historic elements of the building. Lettering and fonts should emphasize legibility over a stylistic agenda.

**As a supplement to the Sign Permit 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. \_\_\_\_\_