

## 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

- I. For signs proposed to be installed within a Historic District, or on an Individually Listed structure, the following guidelines shall apply. Properties with a historic district status of "Non-Contributing" that follow these guidelines may be approved administratively by the Planning Director or their designee. Properties with a "Contributing" status will be reviewed by the Historic Sign Review Board.
  - 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 interior window signage only, or where it fits in with the era of the building, generally 1920-1960.

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.

**Preservation of existing historic signs: Need an inventory (permitting the maintenance and preservation of non-conforming signs)**

- i. Neon signs
- ii. Ghost signs
- iii. Midcentury façade signs?
- iv. Creamery
- v. Motor Service
- vi. Garage

Signs which meet all of the recommended criteria may be reviewed and approved administratively by City Staff.

Completed application with scaled drawings and where it's going. Sign superimposed on the location of where it is going.

At minimum, a drawing showing where the shape of the sign is going.

Definitions:

Moldings

Transoms

Historic Property types

Pilasters

**SIGN TYPES**

<http://www.signartusa.com/sign-terminology.html>

**Back Lit Sign**

A sign which has an internally-illuminated background, such as a cabinet sign.

**Cabinet Sign**

A fabricated sign box, which contains a light source and a plastic or aluminum face with letters or graphics. A cabinet sign may mount to a wall or may be part of a monument or pylon sign.

**Channel Letter**

A fabricated three dimensional aluminium letter which may include a light source and a plastic face. Channel letters typically mount to a wall.

**Digitally Printed Vinyl or Face**

A computer graphic can be printed directly onto vinyl or other substrate. The printed graphic usually consists of multiple colors or gradients, like a photograph.

### **Electronic Message Center**

An LED illuminated sign, in varying sizes. EMCs can either be monochromatic or full color. Sign graphics usually change or scroll and can be controlled remotely from a host computer.

### **Exposed Neon**

Neon tubing which is exposed to the elements or which can be seen through clear acrylic faces. Used mainly for novelty or special effect.

### **Externally Illuminated**

Describes a sign which is illuminated from external flood-lamps on the wall. Usually a non-internally lit sign.

### **Flat Cut Out (FCO)**

Flat pieces of sign substrate (aluminum, acrylic or PVC) which are cut into letters or shapes and attached to a wall or backer. These letters or logos are non-illuminated.

### **Flush Mount**

Sign mounting technique where the sign is attached directly against the wall with no space between wall and sign.

### **Halo-Lit Letter**

A reverse channel letter (mounted 1 ½ inches away from the wall), with an aluminum face and returns and a translucent backer, which when lit produces a halo of light around the letter onto the wall. (Discussion - solid letter light comes out behind it)

### **Internally Illuminated**

Any sign or letter which is lit from the inside.

### **Push Through – definition**

Historic reference for internally illuminated

In Rapid City, Masonic temple glass panels with a place for oil to be lit in front. Early 1900's late 1800's.

1970's – reason historic sign board came to be. Plastic cabinets and large projection signs were being placed all over downtown and it looked very cluttered. Goal of historic sign board was to help reduce the visual clutter and bring it back to a more historic appearance.

Cabinet vs. raceway letters

Treatment of the edges; shape of the sign.

Internally illuminated "cabinet sign" in a pedestrian scale (less than 8 square feet) seems ok. Color is important. A white background reads like a business card. A color that matches to the building

**Comment [HS1]:** Are these considered internally illuminated?