



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: July 19, 2014
TO: Johnny Darosa, Darosa and Associates
FROM: Mark Luellen, Planning Department
RE: PPA Case No. 2014.0775U
740 Washington Street

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CA 94103-2479

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Please find the attached Preliminary Project Assessment (PPA) for the address listed above. You may contact the staff contact, Kanishka Burns at (415) 575-9112 or kanishka.burns@sfgov.org with any questions you may have, or to schedule a follow-up meeting.



Mark Luellen, Senior Planner



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Preliminary Project Assessment

Date: July 19, 2014
Case No.: **2014.0775U**
Project Address: 740 – 742 Washington Street
Block/Lot: 0194/009
Zoning: CVR (Chinatown – Visitor Retail) District
Washington Broadway Special Use District
50-N Height and Bulk District
Area Plan: Chinatown
Project Sponsor: Johnny Darosa, Darosa and Associates
650-692-4072
Staff Contact: Kanishka Burns – (415) 575-9112
kanishka.burns@sfgov.org

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DISCLAIMERS:

Please be advised that this determination does not constitute an application for development with the Planning Department. It also does not represent a complete review of the proposed project, a project approval of any kind, or in any way supersede any required Planning Department approvals listed below. The Planning Department may provide additional comments regarding the proposed project once the required applications listed below are submitted. While some approvals are granted by the Planning Department, some are at the discretion of other bodies, such as the Planning Commission or Historic Preservation Commission. Additionally, it is likely that the project will require approvals from other City agencies such as the Department of Building Inspection, Department of Public Works, Department of Public Health, and others. The information included herein is based on plans and information provided for this assessment and the Planning Code, General Plan, Planning Department policies, and local/state/federal regulations as of the date of this document, all of which are subject to change.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The proposal is to convert the existing 10,229 square foot, three-story over basement mixed use building into 26 rooms of group housing with a restaurant use at the ground floor and basement levels. The property is a known historic resource within the National Register Historic Chinatown District. The group housing rooms would include private restrooms but no cooking facilities. Common spaces for residents would be located at the basement level and a roof deck is proposed. Alterations to the façade are proposed. No building expansion is proposed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the environmental review process must be completed before any project approval may be granted. This review may be done in conjunction with the required approvals listed below. In order to begin formal environmental review, please submit an Environmental Evaluation Application (EEA) for the full scope of the project. Environmental Evaluation Applications are available in the Planning Department lobby at 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400,

at the Planning Information Center at 1660 Mission Street, and online at www.sfplanning.org under the “Publications” tab. See “Environmental Applications” on page 2 of the current Fee Schedule for calculation of environmental application fees.¹

Based on the preliminary review of the proposed project, the project may qualify for a categorical exemption from environmental review under CEQA. However, a formal determination would be made upon submittal of an EEA. In order for Environmental Planning staff to evaluate whether the project is indeed eligible for a categorical exemption, please provide the following information with your EEA.

- 1) *Allowable Occupancy*: Detailed information should be provided that identifies the maximum total occupancy of the existing building allowed by the San Francisco Building Code - Use and Occupancy Classifications for the existing uses and the total occupancy that would be permitted for the proposed uses. Please provide a list of the existing occupancy classifications for the existing uses and the corresponding occupant to floor area ratio for each use.
- 2) *Complete Project Description Narrative and Plans*: The project description narrative and plans provided with the EEA should provide details on all proposed changes to the project site, including any alterations to the existing building and any potential excavation or soil-disturbing activities. Details on the existing and former uses within the various floors and areas of the building should also be provided.
- 3) *Geotechnical Study*: A geotechnical study for the proposed project is required and would inform the preliminary archeological review that would be completed as part of the environmental review process.
- 4) *Historical Resources*: The existing circa 1907 building on the project site has been identified as a contributory building in the National Register-listed Chinatown Historic District and is therefore listed on the California Register, making the building a historic resource for CEQA purposes. The proposed project alterations to the building would need to be reviewed by the Department’s Preservation Planning staff to evaluate whether the proposed project alterations would be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. To assist in analysis of the proposed project, the Department requires that the preparation of a Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE), focused on evaluating impacts on the identified historic resource, be prepared by a qualified professional who meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards in Historic Architecture or Architectural History. The Planning Department will provide the project sponsor with a list of three consultants from the Historic Resource Consultant Pool, which shall be known as the potential consultant list. Once the EEA is submitted, please contact Tina Tam, Senior Preservation Planner, via email (tina.tam@sfgov.org) for the list of three consultants. Upon selection of the historic resource consultant, the scope of the Historic Resource Evaluation shall be prepared in consultation with Department Preservation staff.

If it is determined that the project would have potential significant adverse impacts on the environment, the project would not be eligible for a categorical exemption. Rather, an Initial Study would need to be

¹ San Francisco Planning Department. *Schedule for Application Fees*. Available online at: <http://www.sf-planning.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=513>

completed. If the Department finds that the project would have significant impacts that can be reduced to a less-than-significant level by mitigation measures agreed to by the project sponsor, then the Planning Department would issue a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). If the Initial Study process indicates that the project would result in a significant impact that cannot be mitigated to below a significant level, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be required to be prepared by an environmental consultant from the Planning Department's environmental consultant pool. The Planning Department would provide more detail to the project sponsor regarding the MND or EIR process should this level of environmental review be required.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT APPROVALS:

The project requires the following Planning Department approvals. These approvals may be reviewed in conjunction with the required environmental review, but may not be granted until after the required environmental review is completed.

1. **Conditional Use Authorization.** The project as proposed requires conditional use authorization for the following items:
 - a. **Non-Residential Use Size (811.20/890.130).** Non-residential uses sizes up to 2,500 square feet are principally permitted in the Chinatown Visitor Business District. The proposed commercial use size is unclear and will require Conditional Use authorization if it exceeds 2,500 square foot unless a Restaurant use is proposed. A Restaurant use up to 5,000 square feet is principally permitted, however establishing a Restaurant requires Conditional Use authorization.
 - b. **Restaurant Use (811.44/790.91).** Establishing a Restaurant use as defined by Planning Code Section 790.91, requires Conditional Use authorization from the Planning Commission. A Limited Restaurant as defined by Planning Code Section 790.90 is principally permitted.
2. **Variance.** The project as proposed may require the granting of variances for the following Code Sections:
 - a. **Street Frontages (Section 145.1).**
 - i. Active Uses – §145.1(c)(3). With the exception of space allowed for building egress and access to mechanical systems, space for "Active uses", as defined in Section 145.1(b)(2) shall be provided within the first 25 feet of building depth on the ground floor and 15 feet on the floors above. Residential uses are considered active uses on the ground floor only if more than 50 percent of the linear residential street frontage at the ground level features walk up dwelling units which provide direct, individual pedestrian access to a public sidewalk and are consistent with the Ground Floor Residential Design Guidelines. As proposed, the residential entry with stairs and corridor leading to storage do not meet the active use requirements of the Planning Code. The ground floor lobby space to provide greater active use at the residential lobby area.
 - ii. Ground Floor 145.1(c)(6). A minimum of 60 percent transparency is required along the projects street frontage on Washington Street. The existing building façade and the proposed redesign do not appear to meet this requirement. Any alterations to the existing building façade should increase transparency. Please revise the ground floor design to increase transparency, or seek and justify a Variance from the Planning Code.

3. A **Building Permit Application** is required for the change of uses from the previous uses of Restaurant, Massage Establishment and Office to Limited Restaurant or Restaurant and Group Housing as well as for all construction work.

Conditional Use and Variance applications are available in the Planning Department lobby at 1650 Mission Street Suite 400, at the Planning Information Center at 1660 Mission Street, and online at www.sfplanning.org. Building Permit applications are available at the Department of Building Inspections at 1660 Mission Street.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTIFICATIONS AND PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Project sponsors are encouraged to conduct public outreach with the surrounding community and neighborhood groups early in the development process. Additionally, many approvals require a public hearing with an associated neighborhood notification. Differing levels of neighborhood notification are mandatory for some or all of the reviews and approvals listed above.

PRELIMINARY PROJECT COMMENTS:

The following comments address specific Planning Code and other general issues that may significantly impact the proposed project.

1. **Bird Safety.** All glazing shall not exceed 24 square feet or be bird safe glazing pursuant to Planning Code Section 139.
2. **Bicycle Parking.** Pursuant to Planning Code Section 155.2, a group housing project would require 7 Class 1 bicycle parking spaces and two Class 2 bicycle parking spaces. The ground floor proposed restaurant space requires one Class 1 bicycle parking space if it exceeds 7,500 square feet of occupied floor area and one Class 2 bicycle parking spaces for every 750 square feet of occupied floor area. The use size of the proposed Restaurant is not provided so a calculation of all required bicycle parking spaces can be provided at this time. Please see Zoning Administrator Bulletin No. 9 for additional information on providing required bicycle parking spaces.
3. **Restaurant use.** As previously discussed, a Restaurant use as defined by Planning Code Section 790.90 requires Conditional Use authorization. A Formula Retail use as defined in Planning Code Section 803.6 is not permitted in the Chinatown Visitor Retail Zoning District. The principally permitted hours of operation for any commercial use are 6AM to 11PM. Hours of operation from 11PM to 2AM require Conditional Use authorization.

PRELIMINARY GENERAL PLAN / POLICY COMMENTS:

1. **Chinatown Area Plan.** The project is within the boundaries of the Chinatown Area Plan and is consistent with the policies therein. The project seeks to increase housing supply which is consistent with the Plan's objectives of increasing the supply of housing where possible while also maintaining the distinctive urban character and heritage of Chinatown.
2. **Group Housing Communal Space.** The Planning Department appreciates innovative means of providing affordable housing. However, the common understanding of group housing is a facility that provides communal or shared programmatic functions. Spatially, these are expected to be significant and evident at each level of the building, as well as central to the daily function

of the residents. The project provides common program/space at the basement level only and falls below the expectations for group housing. Please provide significant program area dedicated to common space at each level.

PRELIMINARY PRESERVATION COMMENTS:

1. **Storefront:** The storefront configuration should align with the recommendations set forth in the attached Department's Storefront Guidelines (Draft) by implementing the traditional storefront configurations generally found on historic buildings (transom, glazing, bulkhead, recessed entry, framed doors, etc.). In addition, the new storefront and upper façade should create a single architectural image by aligning architectural framework within the design and using similar cladding materials. Furthermore, the residential entry should be a prominent and separate feature highlighted on the ground floor level.
2. **Materials:** Please call out all materials, texture, and color of finishes including window and storefront system finishes proposed on the plans. The proposed storefront should draw from the material and texture typical of the China Town district. Any proposed metal material on the storefront should have a dark painted finish.
3. **Awning:** The proposed waterfall awnings are not a permitted type of awnings on storefronts. The attached Awning Guidelines call for awnings to be of the sloped variety and the underside of the awning to remain open. Retractable and operable awnings are encouraged.
4. **Signs:** Please call out the materials and type of signs proposed (if any) on the new storefront. Please refer to the attached Department's Signs Guidelines for recommendations.
5. **Roof Deck:** Any railing enclosing proposed in association with the proposed roof deck should be setback a minimum of 5-feet from the face of the building along the primary elevation and be of transparent glass material, open or cable rail to minimize its view from the public right-of-way.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN COMMENTS:

The following comments address preliminary design issues that may significantly impact the proposed project:

1. **Street Frontage.** Historic Preservation evaluation will guide much of the specific storefront design, but the Planning Department recommends that the storefront create a more direct engagement with the street. Nearby examples demonstrate some acceptable approaches to emulate. The storefront should be more open, transparent and inviting to both commercial use and residential entrance. The canopies should relate to the entrance and could be expressed with more character. The single vestibule entrance might be enlarged or separated into two, one exclusively serving the residential and one serving the commercial use. Consider higher, wider storefront system

FIRST	LAST	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP	TELEPHONE	EMAIL	NEIGHBORHOOD OF INTEREST
Anni	Chung	President & CEO	Self-Help for the Elderly	407 Sansome Street	San Francisco	CA	94111	415-677-7663	annic@selfhelpelderly.org	Chinatown, Inner Richmond, Inner Sunset, Outer Richmond, Outer Sunset
David	Chiu	Supervisor, District 3	Board of Supervisors	1 Dr. Carlton B Goodlett Place, Room #244	San Francisco	CA	94102-4689	415-554-7450	David.Chiu@sfgov.org; judson.true@sfgov.org; Catherine.Rauschuber@sfgov.org; Amy.Chan@sfgov.org	Chinatown, Financial District, Nob Hill, North Beach, Russian Hill
Howard Ian	Wong Lewis		0 Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries 0 HERE Local 2	126 Varennes 209 Golden Gate Avenue	San Francisco San Francisco	CA CA	94133 94102		0 WongAIA@aol.com 0	Chinatown, North Beach 0 Chinatown, Downtown/Civic Center, Marina, Mission, Nob Hill, North Beach, Pacific Heights, Presidio, South of Market
Nancy	Shanahan	Chair, Planning and Zoning Committee	Telegraph Hill Dwellers - Planning & Zoning Committee	224 Filbert Street	San Francisco	CA	94133	415-986-7070	nshan@mindspring.com	Chinatown, Financial District, North Beach, Russian Hill
Norman	Fong	Executive Director	Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC)	1525 Grant Avenue	San Francisco	CA	94133	415-984-1462	nfong@chinatowncdc.org; info@chinatowncdc.org; wkwan@chinatowncdc.org	Chinatown, North Beach
Rita	Mah	Executive Director	Chinese Newcomers Service Center	777 Stockton Street #104	San Francisco	CA	94108	415-421-2111	ritagmah@chinesenewcomers.org	Chinatown
Stephanie	Greenburg	President	0 Chinese Chamber of Commerce SoTel Neighbors	730 Sacramento Street 455 Vallejo Street, #112	San Francisco San Francisco	CA CA	94108 94133	415-982-3000 415-794-7596	stephgreenburg@sotelneighbors.org	0 Chinatown Chinatown, Financial District, North Beach, Russian Hill



SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT

Design Standards for **Storefronts**

for Article 11 Conservation Districts

HISTORIC PRESERVATION DESIGN STANDARDS

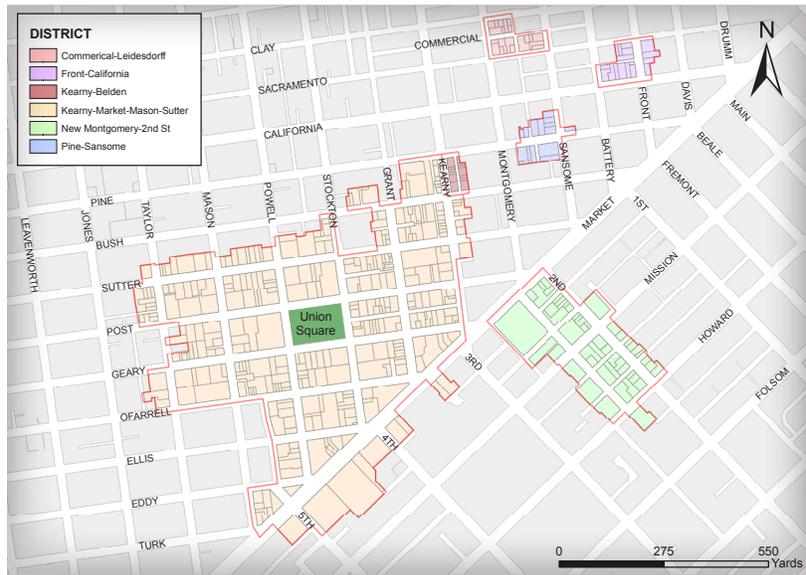
SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT | DRAFT NOVEMBER 2012





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INTRODUCTION

The **San Francisco Conservation Districts** make up some of the most important commercial centers for visitors and residents in San Francisco. The vitality of the Districts' streetscapes are dependent on the existence and the success of storefront businesses. In response to changing marketing and advertising strategies designed to draw customers in, storefronts are the most commonly altered architectural feature in commercial buildings. The purpose of these standards is to protect and enhance the character of the Districts by encouraging storefront designs that allow tenants to successfully convey their image and products, compliment the public realm, and respect the architectural features of the district. While Article 11 of the Planning Code provides basic design requirements, all ground level alterations proposed for buildings that have been identified as significant or contributory (Categories I - IV), or buildings located within any Article 11 Conservation District are subject to additional review pursuant to Section 1111.6 of the Planning Code. The following standards are meant to supplement relevant sections of Article 11 in order to provide additional guidance for tenants, property owners, and the general public for the rehabilitation of existing or the installation of new storefronts within the Conservation Districts. These standards may be used as a guide for other similar Conservation Districts where no specific information is given within Sections 6 and 7 of the applicable Conservation District Appendices.

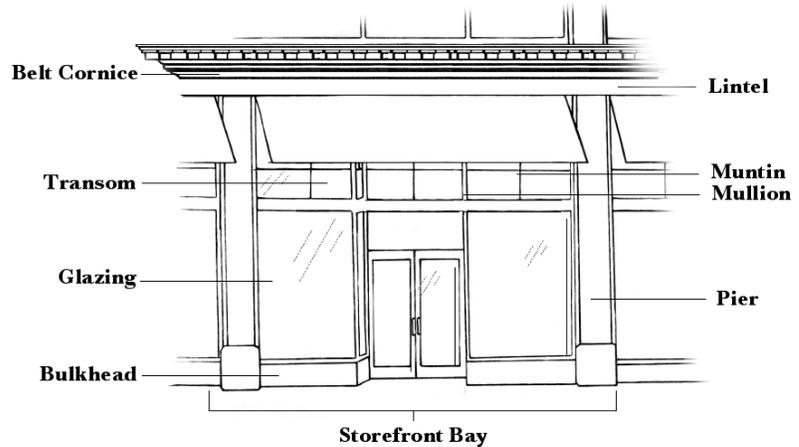
The information within this document is divided into topics based on each storefront component. Each component is outlined to address materials, design, finishes, proportion and location. All subsections are meant to provide clear and understandable instructions based on the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and to meet the purposes of Article 11. There are also images to serve as examples and to better express the intent of the standards.

The Planning Department acknowledges that national retailers prefer uniform branding programs for all outlets. The unique character of the Conservation Districts may require further refinement of storefront components, materials, merchandising displays, etc., to be found in conformance with these standards.

Conformance with these standards authorizes the Planning Department to administratively approve ground floor permit applications when confined to the area within the piers and lintels of the opening as stated in Article 11 of the Planning Code. Please note that these Conservation District Standards will be used by the Planning Department to evaluate all permit applications and while only those proposals that meet the standards will be approved, the Department will review all proposals on a case-by-case basis. All storefront design related to a Major Alteration, as defined by Section 1111.1, may be subject to review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission.

STOREFRONT COMPONENTS

Existing historic storefronts in the Conservation Districts date from the late 19th to early 20th century. There are a number of elements that make up the architectural features of a historic storefront. The repetition of these features creates a visual unity on the street that should be preserved. Collectively, they establish a sense of place, provide a “human scale” and add rich detail to the public realm.



ANATOMY OF A FACADE

Typical Features Include:

Belt Cornice: A projecting, horizontal molding, similar to a cornice, separating parts of a façade, especially used to delineate the first and second floors.

Bulkhead: The low paneled base of a storefront bay that supports the glazing and elevates merchandise for pedestrian viewing.

Façade Materials: Original exterior cladding, typically brick, wood or stone provide a sense of permanence, scale and texture and often convey the work of skilled craftsmen.

Glazing: The large panes of clear glass within the storefront bay where goods and services are displayed and supported by the bulkhead and framed by the piers.

Lintel: The horizontal structural element that spans above the storefront bays to support the weight of the upper façade.

Mullion: The vertical element that separates window units or storefront glazing; typically not a structural support for the building.

Muntin: The small molding or bar that separates the individual panes of a multi-paned window, such as in a transom.

Pier: The vertical structural or decorative elements, also known as a column, which supports and/or frames the glazing.

Storefront Bay: Defined by the height of the lintel and separated by piers, a storefront bay is composed of bulkhead, glazing, transom, and entry.

Transom: The small, operable or inoperable framed windows above the glazing and below the lintel that filter light into the ground floor space; sometimes sheltered by awnings.

COURSE OF ACTION

Determining the appropriate course of action depends upon the overall integrity, or how much historic storefront components remain at the ground level. The integrity should be taken into consideration before determining the best approach for rehabilitation. While there is no hard-and-fast rule that can be stated, it is important that a deliberate, thoughtful process be employed in which the following questions are answered:

What are the characteristics of the base of the building?

The storefront may be intact, modified or contemporary. If many or all of the historic elements are missing, a simplified new interpretation of those elements may be appropriate. On the other hand, if the building is 95% intact, with only the bulkhead missing and information about the original design is available, then an accurate reconstruction would be preferred.

What are the characteristics of nearby or adjacent storefronts?

If the storefront is one of three similar all in a row, and one of the three retain its historic details, then reconstruction of the altered storefronts would be a preferred option. Another more flexible option would be a rehabilitation based on a simplified design, as long as typical storefront components are incorporated into the design.

What is the significance of the property?

Sometimes previous alterations to historic buildings acquire significance of their own. These historically significant alterations should be preserved.

RECOMMENDED



This storefront retains historic elements such as the transoms, bulkheads and piers.

RECOMMENDED



The contemporary storefront above has maintained many of the typical historic features of early 20th century commercial architecture.



The rehabilitation project above preserved historic elements, such as the terra cotta tiles and cast iron framework. However, many other historic elements were missing, such as the transom windows and storefront pier material, were reconstructed based on historic documentation. It is common to use more than one green approach in a rehabilitation project.



Removing, obscuring, or damaging historic features through installation of new features is discouraged, such as this historic beltcourse partially concealed with an aluminum panel.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Storefront Standards for the Conservation Districts are based on general recommendations that apply to rehabilitation. Rehabilitation acknowledges the need to alter a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

In order to be compatible with historic storefronts, new storefronts should follow the standards set out in this document, which provide for flexibility in design review. Designing new features to be subordinate to historic features creates a balance of new and old, allowing features to be seen as products of their own time, yet be compatible with remaining historic elements of the facade. The most successfully rehabilitated storefronts combine contemporary design with sensitivity to the historic storefront components.

Preserve

Preserve the storefront's historic style, form, materials, proportions, and configuration when it is intact. Distinguish between historic materials and inappropriate past interventions. Do not remove, obscure, or damage historic character-defining features.

Repair

Repair historic features that are damaged based on adequate evidence using identical or similar materials that convey the same form, design, and overall visual appearance as the historic feature in terms of details, finish, and color. Repair is preferred over replacement.

Replace

When repair is not possible, replacement of the original design based on historic documentation or physical evidence is preferred. Do not reconstruct details from speculation that could give a false impression of the history of the building. If evidence is missing, consider a simplified interpretation of historic elements. Also, consider the retention of previously-installed compatible alterations.

STOREFRONT EVALUATION

HISTORIC VS. ALTERED

To help determine if you have a historic storefront, look for the following storefront characteristics that are typically shared among commercial architecture of this period:

Buildings undergo alterations over time. To determine how a historic storefront design has been altered over time, notice the location of the glazing, bay, cornice, and entrances on the existing building to provide clues.

Historic Storefronts

- Bulkheads: Primarily rectangular in design, of frame, natural stone or tile construction, and often with raised patterns.
- Glazing: Merchants in the early 20th century relied on extensive window displays to advertise their goods and the installation of large sheets of plate glass provided maximum exposure.
- Large Central or Corner Entrances: Many commercial buildings historically had large central or corner entrances of single or double doors.
- Transoms: Over the display windows and entrances were transom windows, usually made of clear, textured, leaded, or stained glass, allowing light into the building and additional areas of signage and display.
- Cast Iron Pilasters: To support the weight of the masonry above the storefront, decorative cast iron columns or masonry piers were often added.

Altered Storefronts

- Glazing: If the display windows have small panes rather than very large panes of glass, they have most likely been replaced.
- Bay: If there is irregular spacing among the bays where a storefront pier does not align with the upper facade piers, it is most likely a non-historic storefront.
- Beltcourse: If the beltcourse or watertable is not visible or has been removed, or if the lintel is not defined within the storefront, the height has likely been altered.
- Entrances: If the building entrance is no longer in the historic location or made of contemporary materials, it has been replaced.



The profile on this pier and bulkhead are indicative of historic commercial architecture and should be preserved.



The historic wood panel ceiling in this recessed entry is historic and should be retained.

FAÇADE & STREET WALL

Historically, storefronts were integrated into the overall façade design, with the same treatment used for all tenant spaces within a structure. However, as tenants have modified their individual sections of the storefront, the overall design intent of some buildings has become lost. The storefront and upper façade should create a single architectural image by aligning architectural framework within the design and using similar cladding materials. The following recommendations supplement Article 11.

Materials

Buildings within Conservation Districts are traditionally clad in masonry materials, which include terra cotta, brick, natural stone, and smooth or scored stucco, over a supporting structure. If historic material is discovered when the existing cladding is removed, Department Preservation Staff must be notified immediately. If significant historic features remain, it must be retained and the storefront approvals may be changed to reflect this new condition. Storefronts with no remaining historic architectural components may be re-clad or replaced with new modern materials when no historic fabric remains. If replacement material is necessary, use materials that are compatible in texture and physical makeup.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Cladding Materials:** Utilize traditional building materials: Terra cotta, brick, simulated or natural stone and scored stucco convey permanence and should be used when architecturally appropriate. New brick should match the color and type of historic brickwork. Particular attention should be paid to the point at which different materials join together. These 'edges' should be clean and organized.
- **Profile:** The replacement façade material should be similar in profile to the traditional cladding material.
- **Color:** The number of exterior colors should be limited to different tones of one color. Choice of colors should be determined by the nature of the building's historic character, and colors of building elements should relate to each other. Traditional materials are generally colored light or medium earth tones, including white, cream, buff, yellow, and brown. (See Section 6 related Appendices in Article 11 Districts).
- **Texture:** Smooth and painted with a satin or flat finish.
- **Vandalism Precaution:** Quick, consistent and complete removal of graffiti discourages "tagging." Surfaces treated with antigraffiti clear coatings resist penetration of graffiti and simplifies graffiti removal, while not altering the natural surface appearance. Antigraffiti clear coatings also protect against weathering and environmental-related stains, contributing to a well-maintained appearance.
- **Durability & Maintenance:** Materials used near sidewalks and adjacent to building entrances should be highly durable and easily maintained.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Cladding Materials:** Although painted wood and metal are sometimes used for window sashes, bulkheads and ornament; decorative concrete block, applied false-brick veneer, vinyl or aluminum siding, cedar shakes, textured plywood, EFIS materials and plastic are not appropriate for use on buildings within the Districts.
- **Obstruction of Historic Building Materials:** Do not cover, damage or remove historic building materials.



These three storefronts have been individually designed and altered. They neither relate to each other nor the historic building materials. This application is discouraged.



The building above contains multiple storefronts that have a consistent alignment and composition. This creates a cohesive façade while maintaining storefront distinction.



The street wall to the left lacks horizontal alignment and a cohesive composition, which results in a disconnected overall appearance.



The horizontal features of the three commercial businesses to the left are aligned. Each storefront relates to the others which results in a cohesive street wall.

Design

The configuration of a storefront façade refers to the relationship between, and general proportions of, various storefront infill components, such as door location, setback, bulkhead, display window dimensions, transom windows, historic materials and details. Together the storefront design provides clarity and lends interest to the façade, which maintains the interest of pedestrians.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Alignment:** Alignment of horizontal features on building façades is one of the strongest characteristics of the street and should be preserved. Typical elements to keep in alignment with others in the block include: window moldings, top of display windows and belt cornices. This helps reinforce the visual harmony of the district.
- **Setback:** Most storefronts extend right up to the sidewalk, known as “zero setback,” resulting in a consistent street wall.
- **Composition:** The wall-to-window ratio; storefront height; window spacing, height, and type; roof and cornice forms; materials and texture should present a visually-balanced composition, complementary to adjacent storefronts to provide a sense of cohesiveness in the district without strict uniformity.



These buildings have no ground level setbacks, which creates a defined street wall and edge. The horizontal elements are consistently aligned along each building and the entire street wall relates to create a cohesive block.

- **Simplified Interpretation:** Where a historic storefront is missing, and no evidence of its character exists, a simplified interpretation is appropriate. Take cues from building patterns, scale, and proportions of nearby buildings and storefronts. An alternative storefront design must continue to convey the characteristics of typical historic storefronts in the Conservation Districts.
- **Storefront Distinction:** A single building containing multiple storefronts should distinguish each storefront, while maintaining building unity. Separate buildings should remain visually distinct. See Interim Storefront Solutions, “Storefront Rehabilitation Program” in this document.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Color:** Inappropriate colors include fluorescents, bright primary hues and black as an overall façade color.
- **Blank Walls:** If visible from a public way, blank walls should be softened by incorporating painted signage, artistic murals and, where possible, fenestration is encouraged.
- **Exact Replication:** Infill construction should clearly be contemporary and not be exact historic reproductions that could confuse an observer.



This storefront has undergone a number of inappropriate alterations. The most obvious, black paint, provides too much contrast with the streetwall and is discouraged.

CORNER LOTS

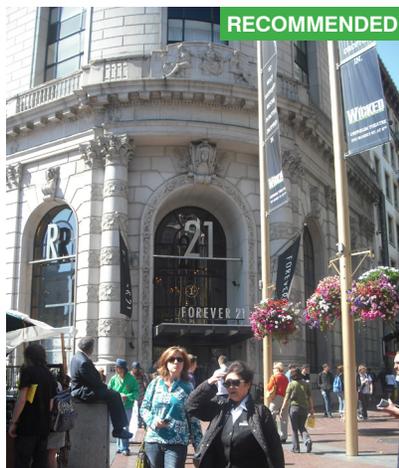
Many buildings on corner lots exhibit special features that emphasize the corner and add accent to both intersecting streets, providing visual interest to pedestrians.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Emphasis of Corner Lot:** Corner entrances, storefront windows, and displays that extend along both street façades are examples of elements that emphasize corner lot locations and are encouraged.
- **Windows:** Where entrances are not located at the corner, storefront windows should turn the corner. There should be one or two storefront windows on each side of the building, this draws the interest of the pedestrian.



These corner lot storefronts have incorporated corner entrances and displays that extending along both side elevations. This is encouraged.



STOREFRONT BAY

The individual storefront bay is defined by the height of the lintel and separated by piers. Appropriate alignment and proportions of the storefront bay are critical in creating a unified appearance within the district.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Alignment of Storefront:** Within a single storefront, windows should be consistent in height and design with storefront doors to create a cohesive appearance; however, slight variations in alignment can add visual interest.
- **Piers:** Piers at the sides of a storefront should be visible and match the upper façade. If historic piers exist under the modern cladding, the historic piers should be uncovered, repaired and left exposed. If historic piers do not exist under the modern cladding, new piers should replicate the historic materials in terms of details, finish, color and overall visual appearance.
- **Design Modifications:** When making modifications, treat and design the piers and lintel as a single architectural component. The lintel establishes the top of the storefront bay, visually separating it from the upper floors.
- **Storefront Infill:** Typically composed of the bulkhead, glazing, transom, and entry. Keeping these components within the historic bay minimizes visual discontinuity.
- **Proportion:** Maintain proper proportions of the storefront bay. Typically, the glazing extends from the bulkhead to the lintel and between the piers.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Alignment:** Major deviations in the alignment of a storefront and between adjacent buildings disrupt the visual continuity of the street and should be avoided.

- **Obstruction:** Elements such as signs and awnings that obscure the spacing of the bays and/or the elements that define those bays should be avoided.
- **Size:** Any enlargement or reduction in the size of the storefront opening, such as infill with opaque or solid materials, should be avoided.

BELOW: The lintel and pier are clearly visible and serve to separate the storefront from the upper façade and adjacent storefronts, making each storefront visually distinct.



ABOVE: The accumulation of signage blocks the storefront openings and appears haphazard. This application is discouraged.

ENTRANCES

Typically, historic buildings have an entrance to each storefront in addition to one main entrance to upper floors, opening directly onto the sidewalk. A service door may also exist for access to building systems.

Primary Storefront Entry

Traditionally, storefront entrance doors were made with full-height glass framed in wood or metal, with a transom window often set directly above the door. The entries are typically recessed 2'-6" to 6' from the sidewalk, which allows protection from the rain and wind, creates additional display frontage, and the repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of defined commercial spaces that helps establish a sense of scale and identifies business entrances. The recessed areas are paved with mosaic tiles, terrazzo, or patterned concrete. Historically, these paved areas within the recess were viewed as an opportunity for the business name, typically in mosaic tile or inlaid metal letters. The ceilings of recessed areas were finished with stucco or wood panels.



ABOVE: This building has a large storefront double door entrance with excellent transparency from the sidewalk. This is typical of historic storefront design and is encouraged.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Preservation:** Retention of the historic door and entry system, whether recessed or flush with the public walk, is encouraged.
- **Maintain Historic Position:** The depth and configuration of storefront entrances should be maintained. Where applicable, do not infill a historic recessed theatre entrance (partially or completely).
- **Replacement Doors:** If an entrance is missing, a new entrance may be reconstructed with historic documentation. If using a new compatible design, it should be based upon the traditional design elements. Aluminum or bronze doors can be made more compatible by being painted a dark color, and by selecting a design in the proportions of the historic door.
- **Preservation and ADA Compliance:** Entries must comply with the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Preserve historically significant doors and reuse if possible. Qualified

historic buildings may use the alternative provisions of the California Historical Building Code (CHBC) to preserve significant historic features when upgrading buildings. If preservation is not an option, replace with a new door of the same design that is compatible with the storefront's style and material.

- **Design:** Differentiate the primary entrance from the secondary access to upper floors by maintaining each entry within its own bay. Entries should be clearly marked, provide a sense of welcome and easy passage. They should be located on the front of buildings.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Reconstruction:** Avoid recreating designs based on conjecture rather than clear documentation.
- **New Entrances:** Do not locate new entrances on a primary façade where it would alter or change the position of the piers and function of the historic primary entrance.



These contemporary entry doors have been located within the historic storefront. Original cast iron elements such as columns, bulkheads and the prism glass transoms have been restored. This treatment is recommended.



This historic storefront entrance includes a traditional door made primarily of glass and framed in bronze.

Secondary Entry

The main building door, giving access to upper floors, is similar in appearance, but less impressive than the storefront door.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Loading and Building Service Entrances:** May be glazed or solid doors and should be located on the side or rear of buildings, whenever possible, or shared with other adjacent businesses. When not possible, they should be located away from corners or street intersections and away from main entrances and primary storefront displays.
- **Maintain Position:** Recessed storefront entrances should be maintained. Where an entry is not recessed, maintain it in its historic position, where possible.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Non-Use:** Do not seal secondary doors shut in an irreversible manner. Any work that is done must be reversible so that the door can be used at a later time, if necessary.

Door Materials

RECOMMENDED:

- **Predominant Glazing:** All primary entrance doors should be predominantly glazed with a painted wood or brushed metal frame.
- **Door Frame:** Wider metal frames are generally encouraged over narrow frames.
- **Door Features:** Maintain features that are important to the character of the historic door, including the door, door frame, threshold, glass panes, paneling, hardware, detailing transoms and flanking side lights.
- **Historic Design:** If historic design is not known, use a wood-framed or metal-framed glass door in a traditional design.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Door Frame:** Avoid unfinished aluminum or stainless steel frames.



LEFT: The double doors are emphasized by the recessed entry, which also creates additional window display space to draw in pedestrians.

RIGHT: This door is not predominately glazed and is inconsistent with the buildings architectural character.

BULKHEAD

In the Conservation Districts, storefront display windows were traditionally placed upon a one to two foot high solid base, also called a bulkhead. The bulkhead serves two functions: it raises a window display closer to eye level, to take advantage of the line of vision and to more effectively showcase merchandise to better capture the attention of the pedestrian; and it acts as a kickplate, that, compared to glazing, can better withstand the impact of window shoppers' shoes.

RECOMMENDED:

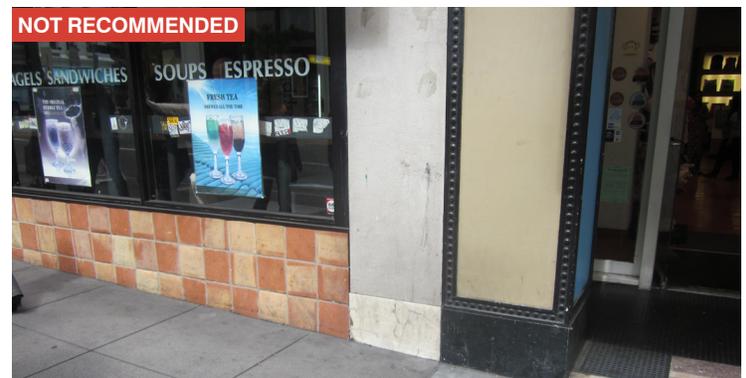
- **Preservation:** Restore historic bulkhead finishes, where they remain. Contact Planning Department Staff to obtain more information on specific treatments recommendations for various finishes.



- **Materials:** Historic bulkheads are typically made of painted wood, decorative metal, small ceramic tiles, or masonry. Replacements should match or be compatible with such materials. Wood or metal bulkheads should be articulated with paneling or molding.
- **Height:** The storefront bulkhead should be of a consistent height and appearance with the historic one that exists on the building. Depending on topography and where physical or documentary evidence is unavailable, the bulkhead should generally be between 18" and 24".
- **Consistency:** If a portion of the historic bulkhead exists, the new portions of the bulkhead should match.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Materials:** Corrugated aluminum, shingles, artificial siding, plywood, EIFS, and clear or unfinished aluminum are not permitted.



ABOVE RIGHT: The replacement tilework that makes up the bulkhead should match the historic materials which have been preserved on the pier to its right.

ABOVE LEFT: The preservation of historic elements, such as this decorative bulkhead is encouraged.

BELOW LEFT: This simple storefront has retained the original marble bulkhead, entry door surround and transom. This is encouraged.

STOREFRONT DISPLAY WINDOWS

The storefront display windows within the Conservation Districts typically consist of large panes of plate glass set in metal or wood frames with the primary purpose of allowing passersby to see goods or services available inside. The historic metal framing systems have a particularly narrow profile in comparison to modern aluminum storefront framing systems. Vertical framing elements were sometimes omitted at the entry recess corners, with just a butt-joint between the two panes of glass. Most storefront display windows have been altered or replaced.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Preservation:** The functional and decorative features, such as the historic frame, sash, muntins, mullions, glazing, and sills of a historic window should be preserved.
- **Materials:** The storefront should be transparent by use of clear glass in doors and storefront areas allowing visibility into and out of the store to create an engaging and dynamic retail environment.

- **Mullion Profile:** Mullions separate individual panes of a window and should be as narrow and as limited in number as possible to maximize visibility into interior activity and merchandising. The mullion profile should be a darkly painted wood or a dark colored pre-finished or painted metal.
- **Blocked-out Windows:** Large pane glazing should be reintroduced if the historic glazing is no longer intact.

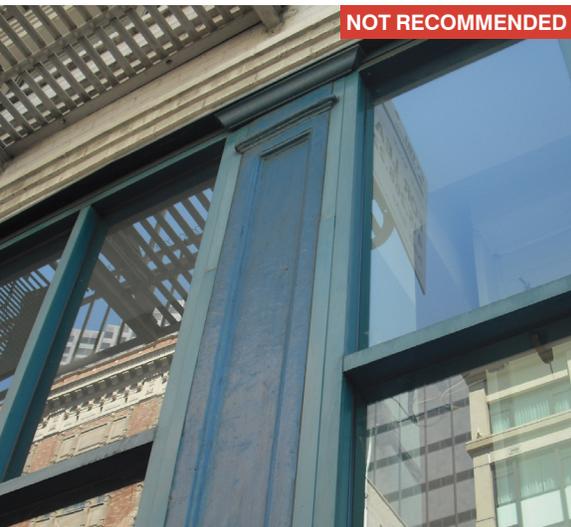
NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Materials:** Vinyl, plastic, clear or unfinished aluminum, and other reflective materials are not permitted.
- **Broken or Boarded Windows:** These negatively impact businesses and the district and should be fixed in a timely manner.
- **Plexiglas:** Replacement materials instead of glass should be avoided.

A pre-finished aluminum storefront frame was installed flush with the face of the cast iron pier, which flattens the profile and reduces the dominant role of certain architectural features.

The pictured storefront framing system is much wider than what was used historically and, therefore, should be avoided.

This new storefront has large expanses of glazing that were inspired by historic drawings of the building.



- **Operable Windows:** Sliding, hinged or folding windows are discouraged because of the number of divisions they create within an opening – this minimizes visibility between interior and exterior activities when windows are closed. However, operable windows designed with very limited divisions and large glazing similar to traditional ground floor storefronts will be considered.
- **Recessed Window:** The window glazing should not be deeply recessed in the window frame, as this was not done historically and does not convey a period effect.



This new storefront was recreated based on historic photographs. It features appropriate proportions, materials, and signage. This is recommended.



Opaque or painted glass should not be used within the transom windows. If clear glass cannot be used, translucent patterned glass is a preferred alternative. This restricts light entering the store and is not recommended.

TRANSOMS

Transom windows, located above the main display windows and entries, are a common feature of commercial storefronts. The placement of these windows was made possible by generously proportioned tall ceilings within the commercial interiors. Transom windows were often operable and provided ventilation to the interior. Transom windows were typically glazed with clear or textured panes of glass and set in wood or metal frames. In recent years, transom windows have been altered by painting the glazing; installing mechanical louvers; replacing glazing with plywood panels; installing signboards that cover the windows; or installing interior suspended ceilings. In some cases, the windows have been completely removed and infilled.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Frame Materials:** The transom frame above the entrance doors and display windows should match the material and finish of the storefront.
- **Replacement Glass:** If the historic transom glass is missing and no physical or documentary evidence exists, install new glass, and ensure that it is a consistent size and configuration. Clear glass is encouraged; however translucent or patterned glass is also compatible. Consider the use of operable transom windows while installing new or reconstructed transoms.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Blocked-out Windows:** Avoid blocked-out transom windows. If the transom must be blocked, retain the glass, but consider using a translucent finish to retain the historic design intent and storefront proportions.

BUILDING SYSTEMS

RECOMMENDED:

- **Location:** A building's mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems should be located in an interior room or a rooftop mechanical penthouse. When exterior installation is required, systems should be located on a non-visible facade away from public view.
- **Concealment:** If exterior equipment cannot be located on a non-visible facade, efforts should be taken to minimize their visual impact by covering with a decorative metal grille. A grille in combination with an awning may be used where appropriate.

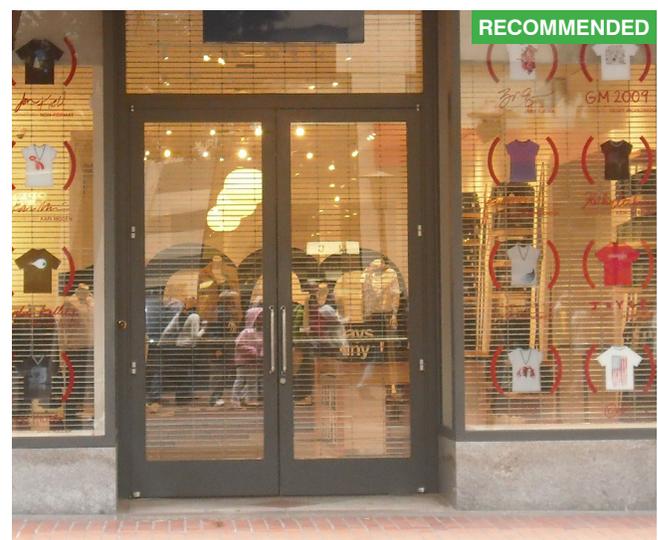
NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Location:** When located on a visible exterior facade, the building's mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems should not obscure or remove historic architectural features or enlarge the openings or framework.
- **Concealment:** Use of an awning to cover a building's mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems provides only partial concealment and systems will remain visible to pedestrians.

The decorative architectural grills below have been installed to conceal mechanical intake and exhaust louvres. The grills have been incorporated into the storefront design. This treatment is recommended.



The open security grates below are installed on the interior so that when open, all mechanisms are concealed, which is encouraged. They also allow merchandise to be viewed even when the store is closed.



SECURITY

Many security measures create the impression that the retail area is unsafe, particularly when gates are rolled down and locked. This does not contribute to a pedestrian-friendly environment and it ultimately hurts business. A series of rolled-down, solid metal security doors present a long, featureless façade at the sidewalk, which is unsightly and generally out of character with the architecture of buildings within the Districts. Transparent security doors provide the same level of security as solid grates, and allow lighted window displays to be seen at night, accommodating both design and security considerations.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Security Door Design:** Security doors should be installed on the inside of the storefront, with the housing mechanisms and guide rails concealed. They can be hidden behind an architectural element, tucked into a framed pocket opening, mounted on the interior, or mounted high enough above the glazing system so as to remain unseen from the sidewalk.

- **Grilles:** The use of open or mesh grilles is encouraged because they have less impact on historic features. Grilles should be made of decorative metal in a configuration that is suitable for the scale and design of the entrance. They can also be simple metal grilles that are fully concealed when open.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Security Door Design:** Scissor-type security gates, solid roll-down grates and permanent metal bars installed either on the inside or outside of windows are discouraged.
- **Exterior Security Doors:** Security door housing should not be mounted to storefront exteriors; this contributes to the clutter on the exterior and can damage and obscure architectural features.



LEFT: When an external security grate is installed, its operational mechanism should be hidden from view. When fully retracted, the security grate should be concealed within the façade or behind the cladding.

RIGHT: The external roll-down security grate has its housing mechanism clearly in view from the street, which is discouraged.

SEISMIC UPGRADES

Seismic strength within buildings is achieved through the reinforcement of structural elements. Steel braced frames are added to resist lateral loads arising from winds or earthquakes.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Location:** A braced frame should be placed within the exterior wall (between the exterior masonry and the interior finish). Diagonal structural braces should be located within the interior space, setback from ground floor display windows.
- **Structural Design:** Different configurations can be utilized to minimize their effect on the existing architecture. Utilizing moment frames can minimize the effect on the existing architecture if properly designed to conform to the historic opening sizes.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

- **Location:** For historic buildings, exterior applications of bracing are not appropriate. Braces penetrating the exterior of the storefront or placed within the storefront display area should be avoided.
- **Structural Design:** Reinforced seismic walls should not enclose storefront openings.

Reference Material:

The Preservation Committee of the American Institute of Architects San Francisco Chapter prepared the *Architectural Design Guide for Exterior Treatments of Unreinforced Masonry Buildings during Seismic Retrofit*, November 1991, for the San Francisco Planning Department, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board and the City Planning Commission to assist in the application and review of seismic upgrade methods.

The seismic bracing is clearly visible and detracts from the historic facade. This application is discouraged.



INTERIM STOREFRONT SOLUTIONS

Some of the design standards may take more time and money to implement than others. In the interim, building owners of vacant storefronts and tenants during renovation can take some simple measures that can serve as place holders until permanent rehabilitation occurs at the storefront.

RECOMMENDED:

- **Cleaning and Painting:** These simple solutions offer dramatic improvements to a façade. This provides a well-maintained appearance and ensures a long life for many traditional façade materials.
- **Protect against vandalism and graffiti:** Apply a removable clear acrylic shielding to the glazing and treat façade materials with an anti-graffiti coating.

- **San Francisco Article 11 Conservation Districts Signs & Awnings Standards:** Comply with the recommendations detailed in these standards.
- **Storefront Rehabilitation Program:** For buildings with multiple tenant storefronts that have been subjected to inconsistent alterations over the years, consider a long-term plan that will serve as a guide for current and future tenants to better create visual continuity among all of the building's storefronts. Please contact the Department Preservation Staff for consultation.
- **San Francisco's "Art in Storefronts" Program:** This innovative program temporarily places original art installations by San Francisco artists in vacant storefront windows to reinvigorate neighborhoods and commercial corridors while engaging local artists. Art in Storefronts is a pilot program in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development and Triple Base Gallery.

RECOMMENDED



The "Everything is OK" installation by artists, Christopher Simmons and Tim Belonax, fills a vacant storefront on Market Street.



For more information:

Robynn Takayama
 San Francisco Arts Commission
 Tel: 415-252-2598
 E-mail: robynn.takayama@sfgov.org



GENERAL MERCHANDISING REQUIREMENTS

Acknowledging that store branding and identification often extends beyond the application of signage and awnings to the exterior of a tenant building, the purpose of these requirements is to give the Planning Department, owners and tenants a tool to ensure that tenant spaces remain transparent to the exterior, contribute to the activity of the public realm, and do not evolve into de facto sign boards for tenants.

Planning Department approval is granted provided that the following storefront transparency requirements are applied to the ground-floor and sometimes the 2nd floor windows where applicable:

- All windows must be of clear glass.
- Any translucent, opaque films, or adhesive signage applied to or installed directly behind storefront glass should not exceed one-third of the glass area.
- Any shelving, counter, or partitions over 3' in height must be setback a minimum of 10' from the inside face of the storefront glass or must be 75% open and transparent.
- All signage applied to or installed directly behind storefront glass should not exceed one-third of the glass area.
- Solid roll-down security doors should not be installed on either the exterior of the building or behind any storefront openings.
- Blinds, shades, or curtains are not allowed at the ground-floor level open and transparent.



ABOVE: The large glass with jewelry display windows highlights merchandise, while allowing visibility into the store, which is encouraged.

CENTER: The large pane of glass combined with movable mannequins below allow clear visibility into the store, which is encouraged.

BELOW: The translucent shelving that supports this window shoe display increases visibility from the street, which is encouraged.

Typical movable window display items such as mannequins, small display podiums, and merchandise that permit clear visibility into the interior of the tenant space are permitted and encouraged.

The Planning Department is authorized to grant on a case-by-case basis flexibility from the requirements cited above in order to respond to site-specific constraints or for the exceptional projects that demonstrate to create a positive pedestrian experience.

Retail establishments that meet the definition of a department store as defined in this document are exempt from the visual merchandising requirements of this document except at the following storefront locations within the building:

- All customer entrances and the storefront windows at the ground and 2nd floor immediately adjacent to those entrances.
- All storefront corner windows at the ground and 2nd floor located at an intersection and on both street elevations.



The partition is set back behind the storefront display and takes up no more than one third of the glass area.

Visual Merchandising for Large Department Stores

The Planning Department acknowledges the unique factors and the historic tradition associated with visual merchandising of large department stores due to their size, location, and variety of merchandise. In addition, the transformation of department store windows, such as during holidays, holds as much historic significance as the buildings in which they occupy.

For the purposes of this document a department store is defined as a single retail establishment located within a building that provides XXXXXX square feet devoted to the sale of a wide range of durable goods and at the same time offering the choice of multiple merchandise lines, at variable price points, in all product categories.

REFERENCES

1. Applications for Permits to Alter, City and County of San Francisco Municipal Planning Code, Article 11, Section 1111. <http://www.municode.com/Resources/gateway.asp?pid=14139&sid=5>
2. Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings, The National Park Service Preservation Brief 6 <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief06.htm>
3. How to Document a Building's History, San Francisco Planning Department Preservation Bulletin 16, Appendix B
4. Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter Conservation District, City and County of San Francisco Municipal Code Planning Code, Article 11, Appendix E <http://www.municode.com/Resources/gateway.asp?pid=14139&sid=5>
5. Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter Signs & Awnings Standards
6. The National Park Service Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation: <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/TPS/tax/rhb/stand.htm>
7. Preservation of Buildings and Districts of Architectural, Historical, and Aesthetic Importance in the C-3 Districts, City and County of San Francisco Municipal Code Planning Code, Article 11 <http://www.municode.com/Resources/gateway.asp?pid=14139&sid=5>
8. Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts, The National Park Service Preservation Brief 11 <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief11.htm>



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*Planning staff are available by phone and at the PIC counter.
No appointment is necessary.*



SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT

GENERAL PLANNING INFORMATION

Awnings, Canopies and Marquees

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Date:
November 2012

Subject:
Awnings, Canopies and Marquees

Planning Code Section 136 (12) , 136.1, 136.2, 186, 790.20,
790.26, 790.58; and Building Code.

Introduction

AWNINGS

Historically, awnings have provided a number of important functions for commercial storefronts. Not only did they provide climate control, awnings were used to protect merchandise and displays from glare and fading and window shoppers from bad weather. Today, awnings come in a variety of shapes, sizes, frames, and fabrics, but their primary function has shifted from shelter to signage. When used correctly, awnings still allow a business to attract customers, express its individuality, respect the architecture of the building, and compliment the public realm. When used incorrectly, awnings create visual clutter along the streetscape, obscure important architectural features of the building, and weaken the identity and presence of the business. The standards below detail the various size, number, and locations that generally respect the character of the district and should be used for awning design and construction.

MARQUEES AND CANOPIES

Marquees and canopies commonly refer to large structures placed over the entrance to most theaters and hotels. Both marquees and canopies gained popularity during the beginning of the 20th century, when the size and prominence of the signage associated with them also grew. Historically, materials commonly used in marquee or canopy construction were steel, bronze, copper, and aluminum. They often also possessed elaborately painted patterns, and pressed sheet metal ornamentation. Methods of illumination varied; however, white or yellow flashing bulbs were commonly used. Over time, and reaching their peak in the late 1930s, marquees and canopies increased in size, possessed increasingly elaborate designs, large text, and substantially projected into the public right-of-way to be further distinguished from other types of business in the immediate area. The construction of these sign types has decreased over time and is no longer permitted for new projects in many zoning districts.

Some historic marquees, canopies, or any other large, projecting signs, as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code, may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of a historic theater.

Definitions

Awning

According to **Section 790.20** of the Planning Code, an awning is defined as a light roof-like structure, supported entirely by the exterior wall of a building; consisting of a fixed or movable frame covered with cloth, plastic or metal; extending over doors, windows, and/or show windows; with the purpose of providing protection from sun and rain and/or embellishment of the facade; as further regulated in Sections 4506 and 5211 of the Building Code.



Canopy

According to **Section 790.26** of the Planning Code, a canopy is defined as light roof-like structure, supported by the exterior wall of a building and on columns or wholly on columns, consisting of a fixed or movable frame covered with approved cloth, plastic or metal, extending over entrance doorways only, with the purpose of providing protection from sun and rain and embellishment of the facade, as further regulated in Sections 4504, 4506, 4508, and 5213 of the Building Code.



Marquees

According to **Section 790.58** of the Planning Code, a marquee is defined as a permanent roofed structure attached to and supported entirely by a building; including any object or decoration attached to or part of said marquee; no part of which shall be used for occupancy or storage; with the purpose of providing protection from sun and rain or embellishment of the facade, as further regulated in Sections 414 and 4506 of the Building Code.



Awnings

Permitted sizes as obstructions over streets and alleys and in required setbacks in **NC-1, Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District, and for Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts**

- The horizontal projection of any awning shall not exceed four (4) feet from the face of a building.
- The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any awning shall not exceed four (4) feet, including any valance.

Permitted sizes in most **Mixed Use Districts, including South of Market and Eastern Neighborhoods, most NC Districts, and North of Market Residential Special Use District**

- All portions of any permitted awning shall be not less than eight (8) feet above the finished grade, excluding any valance which shall not be less than seven (7) feet above the finished grade.
- No portion of any awning shall be higher than the windowsill level of the lowest story (if any), exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine, provided that no such awning shall in any case exceed a height of sixteen (16) feet or the roofline of the building to which it is attached, whichever is lower.
- When the width of all awnings is less than ten (10) feet along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed six feet from the face of any supporting building and the vertical distance from the top to the bottom of such awnings shall not exceed six (6) feet, including any valance.
- When the width of all awnings exceeds ten (10) feet measured along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed four (4) feet from the face of the supporting building and the vertical distance from the top to the bottom of such awnings shall not exceed four feet, including any valance.

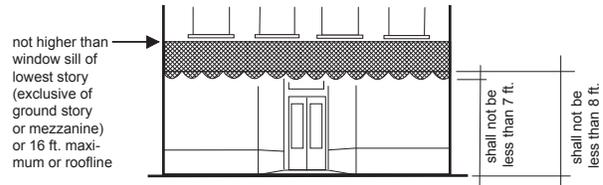


Figure 136.1(a)-1

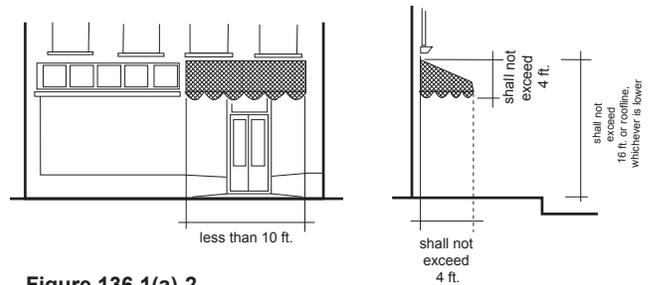


Figure 136.1(a)-2

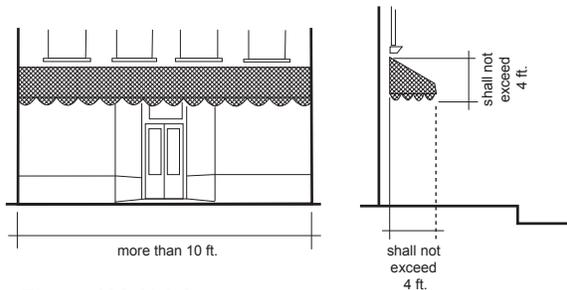


Figure 136.1(a)-3



Awnings within Article 11 Conservation Districts

A Minor Permit to Alter may be issued provided awnings meet the following criteria:

Permitted features:

Size

- Awnings shall be constructed of a non-vinyl cloth or canvas with a matte finish or a material similar in appearance and texture.
- Valances shall not exceed more than 12 inches in height and shall be unframed and flexible.
- Awnings shall be of the sloped variety unless the shape of the opening is arched, in which case an awning must follow the contour of the opening. The underside of the awning must remain open.
- Retractable and operable awnings are encouraged.
- A fixed awning may be acceptable if it expresses the same characteristics as a retractable awning or has a free-moving valance, and does not appear to be rigid, hard, or inflexible.

Number

- One awning per occupied storefront opening is allowed.
- Quantity may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will be based on the cumulative number and location of business signs attached to the subject building, including the existing and proposed signage.

Location

- Awnings shall be attached to the storefront at the lintel or transom bar.
- Awnings shall be located at a level that relates to the storefront opening.
- Awnings shall not cover the first floor of the transom windows of the building.
- Awnings shall not obscure or negatively impact the character-defining features of the subject building.

Non-permitted features:

Size

- Novelty awnings
- Awnings illuminated from below or internally
- Box awnings
- Waterfall awnings
- Awnings that exceed the width of the storefront opening or associated commercial window opening. In no case shall an awning extend over more than one storefront opening.
- Text on the sloped portion of the awning.
- Awnings that obscure, cover or alter any of the architectural or character-defining features of the building.

Number

- A single awning spanning across multiple commercial storefronts and that obscures character-defining features is not permitted.

Location

- Awnings shall not extend so far into the public right of way that it impedes pedestrian traffic, nor shall it extend outside the piers and lintel of the storefront opening.



Canopies

Permitted sizes as obstructions over streets and alleys and required setbacks in; **NC-1, Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District**, and for Limited Commercial Uses in **Residential and RTO Districts**

- No canopies are allowed.

Permitted sizes in most **Mixed Use Districts**, including **South of Market and Eastern Neighborhoods**, most **NC Districts**, and **North of Market Residential Special Use District**

- The maximum width of any canopy shall be ten (10) feet.
- The horizontal projection of any canopy may extend to a point two (2) feet from the curb. Outer column supports shall be located in the outer 1/3 of the sidewalk and shall be no less than four (4) feet from the building face. This ensures adequate clear space along the sidewalk.
- The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of the canopy shall not exceed two (2) feet, including any valance.
- All portions of any canopy, excluding the column supports and excluding any valance which may be not less than seven (7) feet above the finished grade, shall be not less than eight (8) feet above the finished grade.
- Canopies shall not be spaced closer than twenty (20) feet from each other, measured from centerline to centerline.

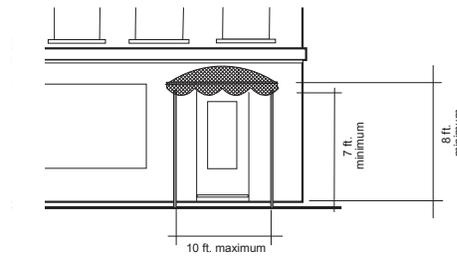


Figure 136.1(b)2-1

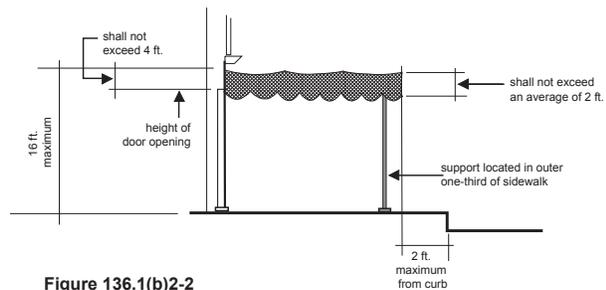


Figure 136.1(b)2-2

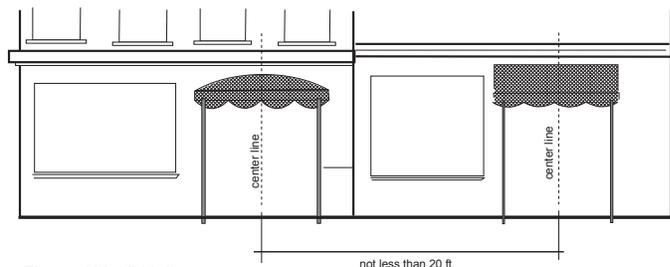


Figure 136.1(b)2-3



Canopies within Article 11 Conservation Districts

Canopies are a hybrid of an awning and marquee. They have typically been found on entrances to the upper-stories of commercial and residential buildings. They feature a metal frame clad with fabric that projects from a building entrance over the sidewalk to the curb, where it is supported on vertical posts.

A Minor Permit to Alter may be issued provided canopies meet the following criteria:

General Requirements

- The installation, alteration or removal of canopies are subject to review and approval by the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission).
- All work to canopy signage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Some historic canopies or other large projecting signs as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of the building.

Permitted features:

- Canopies shall be attached to the building directly above the entrance.
- If a valance is desired on a canopy, it shall not exceed more than twelve (12) inches in height and be unframed and flexible.

Not permitted:

- The width of a canopy shall not exceed the width of the entrance opening.



Marquees

Permitted sizes as obstructions over streets and alleys and in required setbacks in **NC-1, Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District**, and for Limited Commercial Uses in **Residential and RTO Districts**

- No marquees are allowed.

Permitted sizes in most **Mixed Use Districts**, including **South of Market and Eastern Neighborhoods**, most **NC Districts**, and **North of Market Residential Special Use District**

- The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any marquee shall not exceed three (3) feet and the horizontal projection shall not extend beyond a point not closer than two (2) feet from the curb.
- A marquee that projects more than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line:
 - Shall not exceed ten (10) feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less.
 - All portions shall not be less than twelve (12) feet nor more than 16 feet in height above the finished grade,
 - Shall not be higher than windowsill level exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine.
 - Each building frontage shall be considered separately.
- A marquee projecting less than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line:
 - Shall not exceed twenty five (25) feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less.
 - All portions of such marquee shall not be less than ten (10) feet nor more than sixteen (16) feet above the finished grade,
 - Shall not be higher than the windowsill level or windows on

the building facade on which the marquee is placed, exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine.

- Each building frontage shall be considered separately.
- A marquee projecting less than four (4) feet from the property line and not exceeding two (2) feet in thickness may extend over the total length of the building along the direction of the street.
 - All portions of such marquee shall not be less than 10 feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level or windows on the building facade on which the marquee is placed, exclusive of ground story and mezzanine.

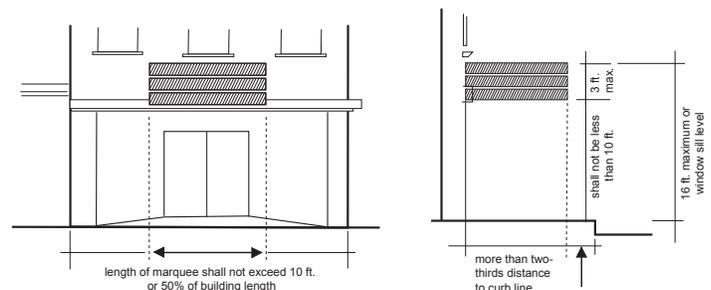


Figure 136.1(c)2(A)

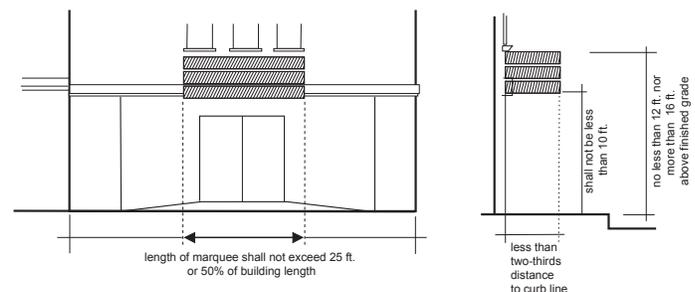


Figure 136.1(c)2(B)

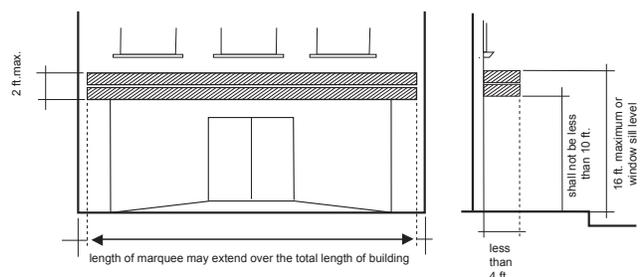


Figure 136.1(c)2(C)

Marquees within Article 11 Conservation Districts

Historically, marquees are roof-like shelters that are placed over the entrances to buildings and project out several feet from the facade. They have typically been constructed from steel, bronze, copper, and aluminum and feature elaborate painted patterns and pressed sheet metal ornamentation.

A Minor Permit to Alter may be issued provided marquees meets the following criteria:

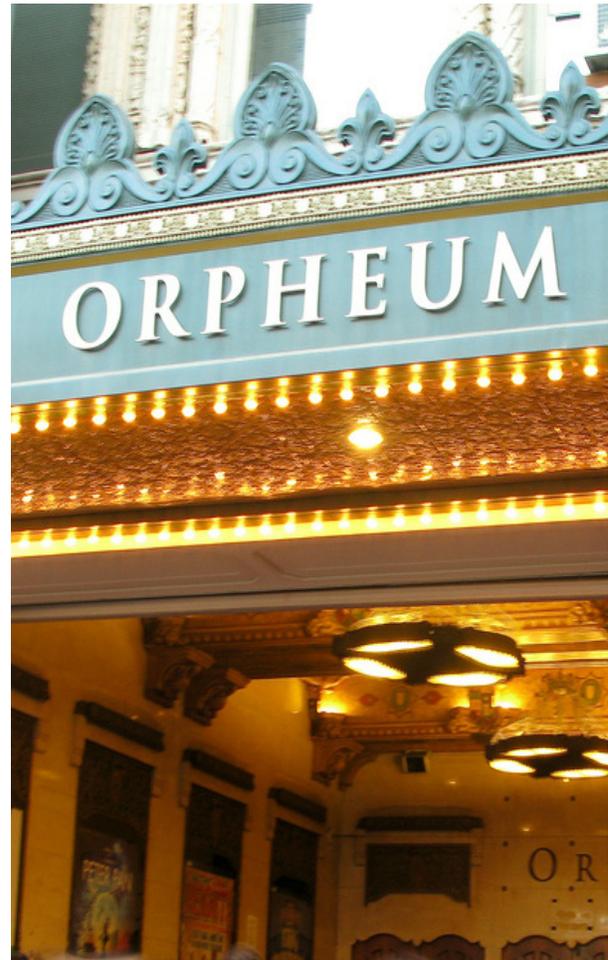
General Requirements:

- The installation, alteration or removal of marquees are subject to review and approval by the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission).
- All work to marquee signage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Some historic marquees or other large projecting signs as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of the building.

Permitted features:

- Marquees shall be attached to the building directly above the entrance.

Non-permitted features:



Additional Information

According to Section 136c (12) marquees, awnings and canopies can be considered permitted obstructions over streets and alleys and in required setbacks in P (Public Zoning), C (Commercial Zoning), M (Industrial Zoning), DTR (Downtown Residential Zoning) and SSO (Service Secondary Office Zoning) districts and for Limited Commercial Uses (LCU) in Residential and RTO (Residential Transit Oriented) Districts.

They are limited by Section 136.1, 186, and other provisions of the Planning Code, and they are also regulated by the Building Code.

There are restrictions to signs on canopies, marquees and awnings located in Special Sign Districts (SUD) such as North of Market SUD.

Awnings

		AWNINGS
MIXED USE DISTRICTS AND NORTH OF MARKET SPECIAL USE DISTRICT	Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use District South of Market Mixed Use District All Other Mixed Use District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the width of all awnings is less than ten (10') feet along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed six (6') feet from the face of any supporting building and the vertical distance from the top to the bottom of such awnings shall not exceed six (6') feet, including any valance. When the width of all awnings exceeds ten (10') feet measured along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed four (4') feet from the face of the supporting building and the vertical distance from the top to the bottom of such awnings shall not exceed four (4') feet, including any valance.
	Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The horizontal projection of any awning shall not exceed four (4') feet from the face of a building. The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any awning shall not exceed four (4') feet, including any valance.
NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND FOR LIMITED COMMERCIAL USES IN RESIDENTIAL AND RTO DISTRICTS	NC-1 and Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The horizontal projection of any awning shall not exceed four (4') feet from the face of a building. The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any awning shall not exceed four (4') feet, including any valance.
	All other Neighborhood Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the width of all awnings is ten (10') feet or less along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed six feet from the face of any supporting building and the vertical distance from the top to the bottom of such awnings shall not exceed six (6') feet, including any valance. When the width of all awnings exceeds ten (10') feet measured along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed four (4') feet from the face of the supporting building and the vertical distance from the top to the bottom of such awnings shall not exceed four (4') feet, including any valance.
HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND/OR DISTRICTS	Article 11, or in historical buildings and Districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awnings should be constructed out of cloth or a material similar in appearance and texture. If a skirt is desired, it shall not exceed more than 12 (12) inches in height and be unframed and flexible. The awning shall be attached to the storefront at the lintel or transom bar. A fixed awning may be acceptable if it expresses the same characteristics as retractable awnings or has a free-moving valance, and does not appear to be rigid, hard, or inflexible. Retractable and operable awnings are encouraged. Awnings shall be of the sloped variety unless the shape of the opening is arched, in which case an awning must follow the contour of the opening. The underside of the awning shall remain open.

Canopies

		CANOPIES
MIXED USE DISTRICTS AND NORTH OF MARKET SPECIAL USE DISTRICT	Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use District South of Market Mixed Use District All Other Mixed Use District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The maximum width of any canopy shall be ten (10') feet. • The horizontal projection of any canopy may extend to a point two (2') feet from the curb. • The outer column support shall be located in the outer 1/3 of the sidewalk and shall be no less than four (4') feet from the building face to ensure adequate clear space along the sidewalk. • The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of the canopy shall not exceed two feet, including any valance. All portions of any canopy, excluding the column supports and excluding any valance which may be not less than seven (7') feet above the finished grade, shall be not less than eight (8') feet above the finished grade. • Canopies shall not be spaced closer than twenty (20') feet from each other, measured from centerline to centerline.
	Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No canopy shall be permitted in any Residential Neighborhood Commercial District.
NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND FOR LIMITED COMMERCIAL USES IN RESIDENTIAL AND RTO DISTRICTS	NC-1 and Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No canopy shall be permitted in any NC-1 District or for Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts.
	All other Neighborhood Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The maximum width of any canopy shall be ten (10') feet. • The horizontal projection of any canopy may extend to a point not closer than two (2') feet from the curb. The outer column support shall be located in the outer 1/3 of the sidewalk and shall be no less than four (4') feet from the building face to ensure adequate clear space along the sidewalk. • The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of the canopy shall not exceed an average of two (2') feet, including any valance. The highest point of the canopy shall not exceed a point four feet above the door opening or sixteen (16') feet, whichever is less. • All portions of any canopy, excluding the column supports and excluding any valance which may be not less than seven feet above the finished grade, shall be not less than eight (8') feet above the finished grade. Canopies shall not be spaced closer than twenty (20') feet from each other, measured from centerline to centerline.
HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND/OR DISTRICTS	Article 11, or in historical buildings and Districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canopies are subject to review and approval by the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission). • All work to canopy signage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. • Some historic canopies or other large projecting signs as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of the building. • Canopies shall be attached to the building directly above the entrance. • If a skirt is desired on a canopy, it shall not exceed more than twelve (12) inches in height and be unframed and flexible.

Marquees

		MARQUEES
MIXED USE DISTRICTS AND NORTH OF MARKET SPECIAL USE DISTRICT	Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use District South of Market Mixed Use District All Other Mixed Use District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any marquee shall not exceed three (3') feet and the horizontal projection shall not extend beyond a line on the sidewalk not closer than two (2') feet from the curb. A marquee projecting more than of the distance from the property line to the curb shall not exceed ten (10') feet or 50 percent of the width of the building, along the direction of the street, whichever is less. All portions of such marquee shall be not less than twelve (12') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet in height above the finished grade, nor higher than the window-sill level of the floor immediately above. Each building frontage shall be considered separately. A marquee projecting less than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb shall not exceed twenty-five (25') feet or 50 percent of the width of the building, along the direction of the street, whichever is less. All portions of such marquee shall be not less than ten (10') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level of the floor immediately above. Each building frontage shall be considered separately.
	Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No marquee shall be permitted in any Residential Neighborhood Commercial District.
NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND FOR LIMITED COMMERCIAL USES IN RESIDENTIAL AND RTO DISTRICTS	NC-1 and Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No marquee shall be permitted in any NC-1 District or for Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts.
	All other Neighborhood Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any marquee shall not exceed three (3') feet and the horizontal projection shall not extend beyond a point not closer than two (2') feet from the curb. A marquee projecting more than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line shall not exceed ten (10') feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less. All portions of such marquee shall be not less than twelve (12') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet in height above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine. Each building frontage shall be considered separately. A marquee projecting less than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line shall not exceed twenty-five (25') feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less. All portions of such marquee shall be not less than ten (10') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level or windows on the building facade on which the marquee is placed, exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine. Each building frontage shall be considered separately. A marquee projecting less than four (4') feet from the property line and not exceeding two feet in thickness may extend over the total length of the building along the direction of the street. All portions of such marquee shall not be less than ten (10') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level or windows on the building facade on which the marquee is placed, exclusive of ground story and mezzanine. Each building frontage shall be considered separately.
HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND/OR DISTRICTS	Article 11, or in historical buildings and Districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marquees are subject to review and approval by the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission). All work to marquee signage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Some historic marquees or other large projecting signs as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of the building. Marquees shall be attached to the building directly above the entrance.



**SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT**

**FOR OTHER PLANNING INFORMATION:
Call or visit the San Francisco Planning Department**

Central Reception

1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco CA 94103-2479

TEL: **415.558.6378**

FAX: **415.558.6409**

WEB: **<http://www.sfplanning.org>**

Planning Information Center (PIC)

1660 Mission Street, First Floor
San Francisco CA 94103-2479

TEL: **415.558.6377**

*Planning staff are available by phone and at the PIC counter.
No appointment is necessary.*



SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT

GENERAL PLANNING INFORMATION

Signs

Planning Department
1650 Mission Street
Suite 400
San Francisco, CA
94103-9425

T: 415.558.6378
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Date:
November 2012

Subject:
Sign Controls, Planning Code Article 6

Introduction

The San Francisco General Plan sets forth a comprehensive set of policies that intend to guide, control, and regulate growth and development. Zoning law which implements these principles are codified in the San Francisco Planning Code in order to promote and protect public health, safety, peace, morals, comfort, convenience and general welfare of San Francisco and its residents. Sign controls are found predominately in Article 6 of the Planning Code and exist for the following reason:

- To safeguard and enhance property values in residential, commercial and industrial areas.
- To protect public investment in and the character and dignity of public buildings.
- To protect open spaces and thoroughfares.
- To protect the distinctive appearance of San Francisco due to its unique geography, topography, street patterns, skyline and architectural features.
- To provide an environment that promotes the development of business in the City.
- To encourage sound practices and lessen objectionable effects in respect to size and placement of signs.
- To aid in the attraction of tourists and other visitors who are so important to the economy of the City and County.
- To reduce hazards to motorists and pedestrians traveling on the public way; and thereby to promote the public health, safety and welfare.

In order to accomplish the purposes stated above, a permit is required to install, replace, reconstruct, expand, intensify, or relocate any sign unless it is specifically exempted from the regulations. Signs must conform to the provisions set forth in Article 6 and other applicable sections of the Planning Code.

Sign Definitions

Definition of a Sign

A sign is defined as any structure, part thereof, or device or inscription which is located upon, attached to, or painted, projected or represented on any land or right-of-way, or on the outside of any building or structure including an awning, canopy, marquee or similar appendage, or affixed to the glass on the outside or inside of a window so as to be seen from the outside of the building, and which displays or includes any numeral, letter, word, model, banner, emblem, insignia, symbol, device, light, trademark, or other representation used as, or in the nature of, an announcement, advertisement, attention-arrester, direction, warning, or designation by or of any person, firm, group, organization, place, commodity, product, service, business, profession, enterprise or industry.

Business Sign

A sign which directs attention to a business, commodity, service, industry or other activity which is sold, offered, or conducted, other than incidentally, on the premises upon which such sign is located, or to which it is affixed.

Identifying Sign

An identifying sign is a sign for a use listed in Article 2 of the Planning Code as either a principal or a conditional use permitted in an R District, regardless of the district in which the use itself may be located. Such sign serves to tell only the name, address and lawful use of the premises upon which the sign is located, or to which it is affixed. A bulletin board of a public, charitable or religious institution, used to display announcements relative to meetings to be held on the premises, shall be deemed an identifying sign.

General Advertising Sign

A General Advertising Sign is a sign, legally erected prior to the effective date of Section 611 of the Planning Code, which directs attention to a business, commodity, industry or other activity which is sold, offered or conducted elsewhere than on the premises upon which sign is located, or to which it is affixed, and which is sold, offered or conducted on such premises only incidentally if at all.

No new general advertising signs shall be permitted at any location within the City and County of San Francisco as of March 5, 2002, when voters approved Proposition G.



Example of a business sign



Example of an identifying sign



Example of a general advertising sign

Automobile Service Stations

There are special standards for automobile service stations. Generally two oil company signs are permitted per site with varying height and area determined by proximity to a property line and the zoning district the property is located in.

Nonconforming Sign

If a sign was lawfully installed but no longer conforms to the requirements of the Planning Code, it may continue to remain but can not be replaced, intensified, or expanded in any way except to conform to current standards. A change in copy of a nonconforming sign is only allowed if it is for the same business, otherwise it would be considered a new sign and would need to be made conforming. A nonconforming sign that is voluntarily removed may not be replaced. However, if a sign is destroyed by fire or other calamity it may be replaced subject to the criteria set forth in Sections 181(d) and 188(b) of the Planning Code.



Example of a gas station, free standing sign

Sign Types



Example of a wall sign

Wall Sign

A sign painted directly on the wall or placed flat against a building wall with its copy parallel to the wall to which it is attached and not protruding more than the thickness of the sign cabinet. The sign cabinet can not be thicker than necessary to accommodate the electrical box. This is thought to be no more than one foot. One must show such necessity to provide an electrical box thicker than one foot.

A window sign could be a wall sign if the wall is completely made of glass. Typically wall signs are located above the storefront transom. Wall signs consisting of individual letters mounted to the building facade are encouraged; large, opaque sign panels behind individual letters are discouraged.



Example of a projecting sign

Wall signs should be centered on horizontal surfaces, within bays or over storefront openings and should not extend above, below, or beyond the storefront the related business occupies.

Projecting Sign

A projecting business sign extends beyond a street property line or a building setback line. A sign placed flat against a wall of a building parallel to a street or alley shall not be deemed to project for purposes of this definition. A sign on an awning, canopy or marquee shall be deemed to project to the extent that such sign extends beyond a street property line or a building setback line.



Example of an awning sign

Sign on Awnings or Marquees

A sign on an awning or marquee is another type of a projecting sign. Awnings, canopies and marquees are defined in Article 7 of the Planning Code, and regulated by Section 136.1 of the same code, and they may not be allowed in certain zoning districts.

A sign on an awning, canopy or marquee shall be considered to project to the extent that such sign extends beyond a street property line or a building setback line. Since awnings and marquees have many faces, all sign copy on each face shall be computed within one rectangular perimeter formed by extending lines around the extreme limits of writing, representation, or any figure of similar character depicted on the surface of the face of the awning or marquee.

Window Sign

A sign painted directly on the surface of a window glass or placed in front of or behind the surface of a window glass. Generally frontages with active uses that are not residential or PDR must be fenestrated with transparent windows and doorways for no less than 60 percent of the street frontage at the ground level and allow visibility to the inside of the building. The installation of any window sign must comply with these transparency requirements.



Example of a window sign

Freestanding Sign

A freestanding sign is supported by columns or post and is in no part supported by a building. Height limitations for freestanding signs vary by zoning district. Freestanding signs for automobile service stations have separate and distinct regulations from other freestanding business signs.



Example of a freestanding sign

Roof Sign

A sign or any portion thereof erected or painted on or over the roof covering any portion of a building, and either supported on the roof or on an independent structural frame or sign tower, or located on the side or roof of a penthouse, roof tank, roof shed, elevator housing or other roof structure.



Example of a roof sign

Illumination



Example of a nonilluminated sign



Example of an indirectly illuminated sign



Example of a directly illuminated sign

The character of signs and other features projecting from buildings are an important part of the visual appeal of a street and the general quality and economic stability of neighborhoods. Opportunities exist to relate these signs and projections more effectively to street design and building design.

Physical characteristics of signs set them apart. Whether signs are directly illuminated, indirectly illuminated, nonilluminated, projecting, single or multiple, at the appropriate height or contained in the adequate area, the physical features set signs apart not only from each other, but also from where they are or not allowed.

Methods and Standards of Illumination

- Signs should appear to be indirectly illuminated.
- Text logos should be individually illuminated.
- Lighting conduits should be internal and not visible.
- Signs should have an opaque background that does not transmit light with the text and logos individually illuminated.
- There should be no flash or display animation, or moving text on a sign.
- In order to reduce the depth and profile of a sign, the transformer should be located in a remote location and not housed within the sign itself.
- A sign may also be reduced in profile or depth by using a light emitting diodes ("LED") method of illumination. For more information on LED lighting, please contact your sign contractor.

Nonilluminated Sign

A sign which is not illuminated, either directly or indirectly.

Indirectly Illuminated Sign

A sign illuminated with a light directed primarily toward such sign and so shielded that no direct rays from the light are visible elsewhere than on the lot where said illumination occurs. If not effectively so shielded, such sign shall be deemed to be a directly illuminated sign.

Directly Illuminated Sign

A sign designed to give forth artificial light directly (or through transparent or translucent material) from a source of light within such sign, including but not limited to neon and exposed lamp signs.

How to Measure Signs

Area of a Sign

The entire area within a single continuous rectangular perimeter formed by extending lines around the extreme limits of writing, representation, emblem, or any figure of similar character, including any frame or other material or color forming an integral part of the display or used to differentiate such sign from the background against which it is placed; excluding the necessary supports or uprights on which such sign is placed but including any sign tower. Where a sign has two or more faces, the area of all faces shall be included in determining the area of the sign, except that where two such faces are placed back to back and are at no point more than two feet from one another, the area of the sign shall be taken as the area of one face if the two faces are of equal area, or as the area of the larger face if the two faces are of unequal area.

Height of a Sign

The vertical distance from the uppermost point used in measuring the area of a sign to the ground immediately below such point or to the level of the upper surface of the nearest curb of a street, alley or highway (other than a structurally elevated roadway), whichever measurement permits the greater elevation of the sign.

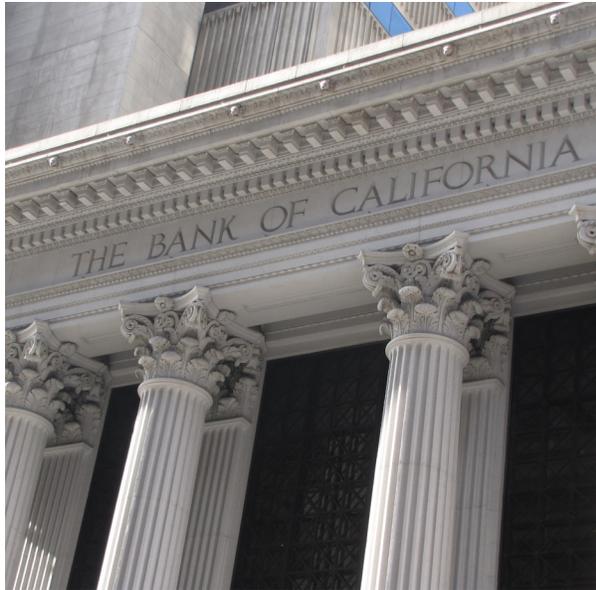
Projection

The horizontal distance by which the furthestmost point used in measuring the area of a sign extends beyond a street property line or a building setback line. A sign placed flat against a wall of a building parallel to a street or alley shall not be deemed to project for purposes of this definition. A sign on an awning, canopy or marquee shall be deemed to project to the extent that such sign extends beyond a street property line or a building setback line.



Vintage Signs, Signs on Historic Buildings & Signs in Historic Districts

Signs proposed for installation on historical, architectural and aesthetic landmarks, as well as in any historic or conservation district are subject to specialized review concerning design, materials, placement and number, and methods of illumination and attachment. Sign permits in historic districts must be accompanied by an Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness Application and sign permits in conservation districts must be accompanied by a Minor Permit to Alter Application.



Example of a historic sign

Historic Sign and Historic Sign Districts

A historic sign is a sign which depicts a land use, a business activity, a public activity, a social activity or historical figure or an activity or use that recalls the City's historic past, as permitted by Sections 303 and 608.14 of the Planning Code.

A historic sign district is a specific geographic area depicted on the Zoning Map of the City and County of San Francisco, pursuant to Section 302 of this Code, within which historic signs may be permitted by Conditional Use authorization by the Planning Commission pursuant to Sections 303 and 608.14 of the Planning Code.



Example of a vintage sign

Vintage Signs

Signs which depict in text or graphic form a particular residential, business, cultural, economic, recreational, or other valued resource which is deemed by the Planning Commission to be a cultural artifact that contributes to the visual identity and historic character of a City neighborhood can be designated and shall be considered a vintage sign and allowed to be restored, reconstructed, maintained and technologically improved on a property by Conditional Use authorization of the Planning Commission.



Example of a historic movie theater sign

Historic Movie Theater Projecting Sign

A Historic Movie Theater Sign is a projecting business sign attached to a Qualified Movie Theater, as defined in Section 188(e)(1) of the Planning Code. Such signs are typically characterized by (i) perpendicularity to the primary facade of the building, (ii) fixed display of the name of the establishment, often in large lettering descending vertically throughout the length of the sign; (iii) a narrow width that extends for a majority of the vertical distance of a building's facade, typically terminating at or slightly above the roofline, and (iv) an overall scale and nature such that the sign comprises a significant and character defining architectural feature of the building to which it is attached.

Historic Movie Theater Marquee Sign

A Historic Movie Theater Marquee Sign is a marquee, as defined in Section 790.58, attached to a Qualified Movie Theater, as defined in Section 188(e)(1).

Signs within Article 11 Conservation Districts

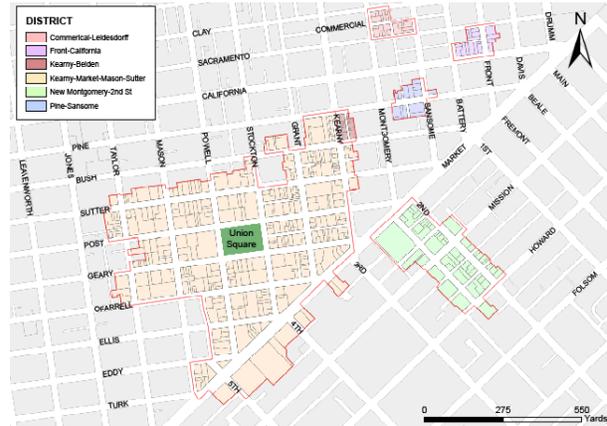
Introduction

Signs are a vital part of all Downtown businesses. They serve as markers and create individual identities for businesses. Storefront signs are often the most common feature to be modified.

Article 11 of the Planning Code is the basic law governing preservation of buildings and districts architectural importance in the C-3 Districts (mostly downtown) of San Francisco.

These following standards are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and are meant to provide tenants and property owners with clear design guidance for all new commercial signs. Conformance with these standards authorizes the Department to administratively approve signage without a Historic Preservation Commission public hearing. Please note that the Sign Standards will be used by the Department to evaluate all new sign permit applications and while only those proposals that meet the standards will be approved, the Department will review all proposals on a case-by-case basis.

The information within this document is divided into general requirements for all signs and those requirements that are specific to each type. The general requirements address materials, methods of attachments, and methods of illumination. Additional requirements by sign type are outlined to address size, number, and location. All subsections are meant to provide clear instructions to meet the minimum requirements of this document. There are also images to serve as examples and to better express the intent of the standards.



Map of Downtown Article 11 Historic Districts



The purpose of this document is to avoid overwhelming and confusing streetscapes as shown above. In this example the signs and awnings do not correspond well to the appropriate business, extend over bays and storefronts, and they obscure the architectural features of the buildings.

Requirements for Signs within Article 11 Conservation Districts



DO NOT EXTEND SIGN BEYOND OPENING WIDTH



DO NOT INSTALL BOX SIGNS WITH ACRYLIC LENSES



DO NOT OBSCURE GLAZING WITH LARGE SIGNAGE



KEEP SIGN WITHIN STOREFRONT WIDTH



USE INDIVIDUAL LETTERS



TEMPORARY SIGNS LESS THAN 25% OF GLASS

General Requirements

- Signs may not extend beyond the width of the storefront opening.
- Signage, painted on glass doors, windows, and transoms, where the sign does not exceed 25% of the glazed area, is permitted.
- Non-illuminated letters or logos may be pin-mounted into the masonry if it is mounted into the mortar joints.
- Reduce the depth of signs, by placing the transformer in a remote location and not housed within the sign itself.
- Signs may be pin-mounted on a thin raceway that is mounted flat and horizontally within the signband or spandrel.
- Signs that are located on the inside of a storefront should be setback a minimum of 6" from the display glass.
- Small identification signs or plaques for second and third story tenants installed adjacent to the ground floor entrances are permitted.

Not Permitted

- General advertising signs and banners;
- Internally illuminated box signs with glass or plastic lenses;
- Internally illuminated fabric signs or awnings; and flashing signs,
- Moving signs, strobe lights, or signs that project an image on a surface
- Signage above the architectural base of the building

Sign Permits

- Business signs may be permitted as of right, or with conditions depending on the zoning districts and depending on their features such as type, area, number, material, illumination, animation, etc.
- In conservation districts a sign permit must be accompanied by a Minor Permit to Alter Application. (Article 11)
- In historic districts, a sign permit must be accompanied by an Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness Application. (Article 10)

Number and Placement of Signs

- Scale of signs and placement on the building shall be appropriate to the elements of the building and historic applications.
- One sign per ground floor tenant may be permitted.
- In buildings with more than one ground floor commercial tenant, one sign per establishment is permitted.
- The placement of the sign shall be in close proximity to the establishment that is identified on the sign.
- A ground floor establishment with a corner storefront may have one sign on each building façade.
- Upper story establishments are allowed to have one sign adjacent to the building entrance.

Materials

- Signs shall be constructed of durable high-quality materials that retain their characteristics within a high-traffic area over time.
- Materials shall be compatible with the color, craftsmanship, and finishes associated with the district. Glossy or highly reflective surfaces will not be approved.

Method of Attachment

- All signs shall be attached in a manner that avoids damaging or obscuring any of the character-defining features associated with the subject building.
- For non-terra cotta masonry buildings, signs shall be anchored through mortar joints or attached to the jamb of a non-historic storefront system.
- Under no circumstances shall a sign be anchored to any cast iron or terra cotta elements of a building.



Example of one sign per store



Example of compatible and non-glossy sign materials



Example of sign attachment

- Signs shall be attached in a manner that allows for their removal without adversely impacting the exterior of the subject building.
- The visibility of conduit and raceways associated with a sign shall be minimized; however, if raceways must be exposed, they should be finished to match the facade or integrated into the overall design of the sign.

Methods of Illumination

- All signs shall appear to be indirectly illuminated or externally illuminated such as by installing an external fixture to illuminate the sign or by using a reverse channel halo-lit means of illumination.
- All signs shall have an opaque background that does not transmit light and text. Logos shall be individually illuminated.
- Unless a sign has been determined to be of historic significance, no sign or awning should flash or display animation or moving text.
- In order to reduce the depth and profile of a sign, the transformer should be located in a remote location and not housed within the sign itself.
- A sign may also be reduced in profile or depth by using a light emitting diode (LED) method of illumination. For more information on LED lighting please contact your sign contractor.
- All conduit required for all new signage must be concealed and may never be attached or left exposed on the face of the building, the sign structure, or the sign itself.



Example of an indirectly-lit sign with a shallow profile.

Projecting Signs

When used incorrectly, blade signs create visual clutter, overwhelm pedestrians and drivers with visual stimulation, and obscure or damage architectural details of the building. The standards below detail the various sizes and locations that generally respect the character of the district. All proposals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Size and Placement

- Scale of signs and placement on the building shall be appropriate to the elements of the building and historic applications.
- Signs shall relate to the character-defining features of the building.
- Signs near the base of the building shall relate to the pedestrian scale.
- Signs shall not extend above the roof line.
- Covering, altering or obscuring architectural details or window openings shall be avoided.
- Projecting signs shall be located on or immediately adjacent to the storefronts corresponding to the business and shall not extend below, above, or across other storefronts or along a frontage associated with a different use.

Location

- Projecting signs may not be located above the window sill of the first residential floor of a building, nor shall any portion of a sign be located at a height above the lintel of the corresponding storefront, unless it has been determined by the Planning Department Preservation Staff or the Historic Preservation Commission that an alternate location is acceptable in order to avoid obscuring or adversely impacting the character-defining features of the subject building.
- Signs shall be located in an area that does not obscure any of the building's character-defining features.
- Important factors to be considered are:
 - The amount of linear street frontage occupied by the business
 - The overall character-defining features of the building
 - The width of the sidewalk
 - The number of adjacent existing and potential establishments within the subject building
 - The floor-to-ceiling height of the commercial space visible from the public right-of-way.



LEFT: These overscaled signs overpower the building and the storefront. This excessive application of signs is discouraged.

RIGHT: The blade sign is attached according to the standards; it is anchored through the mortar joints, avoiding damage to the masonry.

Wall Signs

Wall signs are commonly comprised of signboards or individual die-cut letters that run parallel to the facade of a building. Often paired with a blade sign, wall signs have increased in size and number throughout the districts. Today, there are a number of examples throughout the city where wall signs appear at an overwhelming scale and blanket significant architectural details. When used correctly, wall signs express individuality, attract customers, and respect the architectural features of the building. The standards below detail the various sizes and locations that generally respect the character of the district. In general, the size of wall signs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Size and Placement

- Scale of signs and placement on the building shall be appropriate to the elements of the building and historic applications. Wall signs consisting of individual letters mounted to the facade are encouraged.
- Large opaque sign panels behind individual letters are discouraged.
- Wall signs covering, altering, or obscuring architectural details or window openings should be avoided.
- Wall signs that obscure, cover, damage, or alter architectural elements such as friezes, lintels, spandrels, and historic sign bands will not be approved.
- Wall signs shall be located at a height that relates to a pedestrian scale.
- Wall signs shall be centered on horizontal surfaces, within bays or over storefront openings and shall not extend above, below, or beyond the storefront the related business occupies.
- Wall signs shall maintain a physical separation between all tenant signage so that it is clear which signs relate directly to the respective business.

Location

- Wall signs shall be located in an area that does not obscure any of the character-defining features associated with the subject building.
- The location of wall signs allowed for any one establishment will be based on the following factors:
 - The amount of linear street frontage occupied by the business;
 - The cumulative number and location of business signs attached to the subject building, including all existing and proposed signage.



This wall sign is centered on the storefront, scaled proportionally to sign band and does not alter any character-defining features. This treatment is recommended.

Sign Permits

Permits

Certain kinds of signs that do not require a permit are listed in Section 603 and the following list below:

- 1) Unless otherwise prohibited, a sign painted or repainted on a door or window in an NC, C, or M district.
- 2) Ordinary maintenance and minor repairs which do not involve replacement, alteration, reconstruction, relocation, intensification or expansion of the sign.
- 3) Temporary sale or lease signs, temporary signs of persons and firms connected with work on buildings under actual construction or alteration, and temporary business signs.
- 4) A mere change of copy on a sign the customary use of which involves frequent and periodic changes of copy (i.e. theater marquee). A change in copy for all other signs (including a change of business name), change from general advertising to business sign, and any increase in sign area shall constitute a new sign and require a permit.

A permit is needed to install, place, replace, reconstruct or relocate, expand, change business sign copy, intensify in illumination or other aspect, or expand in area or dimension for all signs. Sometimes a permit may not be required under the Building Code (i.e. painted non-illuminated or projecting signs up to 2.5 square feet) but is still required to be reviewed under the Planning Code.

Permit Application

When a permit is required for a sign, a permit should be filed with the Central Permit Bureau of the Department of Building Inspection together with a permit fee and the completed permit application shall be accompanied by construction documents that include the following :

- A plot plan that shows the location of the proposed sign as well as all other existing signs on the site and their dimensions. The length of the business frontage along the public right-of-way and sidewalk should be indicated.
- Scaled front and lateral elevation drawings of the building with the sign including the dimensions, materials, and any other required details of construction as necessary depending on sign type.
- Detailed drawings of the proposed sign copy.
- Photographs of the entire subject site.

Your application to install or alter a sign will not be reviewed if any of the above listed materials are missing.

Nothing in the sign regulations shall be deemed to permit any use of property that is otherwise prohibited by the Planning Code, or to permit any sign that is prohibited by the regulations of any special sign district or the standards or procedures of any Redevelopment Plan or any other Code or legal restriction.



**SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT**

FOR OTHER PLANNING INFORMATION: Call or visit the San Francisco Planning Department

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1660 Mission Street, First Floor
San Francisco CA 94103-2479

TEL: **415.558.6377**

*Planning staff are available by phone and at the PIC counter.
No appointment is necessary.*