



# COMMERCIAL SIGNS

Signs help draw customers inside businesses and play a crucial role in maintaining the character of the Old Georgetown Historic District. The Old Georgetown Board (OGB) reviews the compatibility of new signs by considering the type, size, location, material, and illumination on sign applications. The District's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) regulates the installation of signs, controlling the number, size, location, and materials. All new signs in Georgetown must not exceed allowable signage area permitted by D.C. Building Code and must be consistent with the [D.C. Historic Preservation Office sign guidelines](#); OGB recommendations may be more restrictive than what D.C. regulations allow.

## GENERAL CRITERIA

### SIZE

- Letters and logos should be no taller than 12 inches.

### LOCATION

- Signs should not obstruct or damage architectural features or ornament.
- One principal sign per street façade per business; storefront or door decal signs should be limited in size and related to operation hours and secondary information.
- Wall signs are appropriate for most ground-floor businesses; blade signs are appropriate for non-ground-floor businesses or where retail frontage is not on the street. Banner signs may be installed at Cady's Alley and considered on a case-by-case basis elsewhere.

### CONTENT

- Limit text to the name of the business and trade; listing of products or services is not compatible.
- Hours of operation and secondary information may be displayed on storefront or door, but not on main sign.
- No more than two colors, including black or white.
- No trademark symbols or visual clutter.
- One line of text in business name is preferred.

### ILLUMINATION

- Due to the high level of street lighting in the historic district, non-illuminated signs are preferred.
- Internal illumination, uplighting, new neon signs, and visible raceways, conduits, and junction boxes are not allowed.
- If light fixtures are used, they should be as small and minimal in number as possible.
- Halo lighting or reverse-channel lighting may be considered appropriate.

### MOUNTING

- Signs must be carefully mounted in such a way as to minimize damage to the building, including installing through mortar joints or using non-staining removable epoxy or non-staining structural silicone.

## ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS BY SIGN TYPE

### WALL AND WINDOW

- Window signs should not obstruct interior views, should not contain redundant information with main sign, and should not contain tag lines.
- Pin-mounted and reverse-channel-letter signs may be installed on a panel to minimize wall penetrations.

### BLADE

- Must be rigid and may not pivot or swing back and forth.
- Must have a minimum clearance height of 8 feet.
- Brackets on fabric banner signs must be no longer than the width of the banner. It is preferred that brackets are terminated with simple flat ends.

### AWNING

- Signage should be limited to valance and should be no taller than 12 inches.
- Should be made of treated, weather-durable fabric.
- Should have no sides and no enclosed underside.
- Shape must correspond to and fit within the opening at which it is installed.
- Should not be illuminated, internally or externally.
- Must have a minimum clearance height of 8 feet.

### HISTORIC

- While abandoned signs from recent tenants should be removed, retention of historic signs is encouraged. Historic signs do not reduce the amount of allowable signage.

### TEMPORARY

- Temporary signs are defined as signs that will be in place less than 60 days and are reviewed by the DC Historic Preservation Office. Any sign that will be in place for more than 60 days must be reviewed by the OGB.
- The Board strongly discourages visual clutter in the public space, such as sandwich boards.



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## SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- A map or satellite image showing the property's location in Georgetown.
- Photos of the property, including one showing the entire building facade.
- Scaled drawings of sign – front, side, and section – including dimensions, materials, and mounting details.
- Scaled and dimensioned elevation drawings or photos, illustrating existing and proposed signs on building.
- Illumination details with power source information.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

e-mail: [georgetown@cfa.gov](mailto:georgetown@cfa.gov)

phone: 202.504.2200

web: [www.cfa.gov/project-review/georgetown](http://www.cfa.gov/project-review/georgetown)