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Central Business Core District Design Guidelines

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The Pembroke Strategic Growth Area has evolved from its beginning as an early 20th century speculative subdivision named Sunnybrook, situated along the railroad between Norfolk and Virginia Beach, to an increasingly prominent position as the urban core of the City of Virginia Beach. What began as a vision for a ‘downtown’ as set out in the 1991 Central Business District Master Plan led to the establishment of the B-3A Pembroke Central Business Core District and the development of the Virginia Beach Town Center.

In 2003, Town Center and the area surrounding it became the Pembroke Strategic Growth Area, one of several key areas targeted to absorb our City’s future growth. In order to determine how to manage and achieve this growth, the City adopted master plans for each of its Strategic Growth Areas. The Pembroke Strategic Growth Area 4 Implementation Plan
INTRODUCTION

(referred to in this document as the Pembroke SGA Plan) was adopted in 2009 to establish a shared, long term vision - and an implementation strategy to achieve that vision - for the Pembroke SGA. The Plan divides the Pembroke SGA into six ‘urban districts,’ with each district possessing a slightly different purpose and design character. The ‘CBD/Core’ District is envisioned as a strong urban nucleus with high density, commercial development that will serve as a focal point for region-serving retail, hotel, and office uses while also creating an urban skyline for Virginia Beach. As development moves away from the Core district, land use densities will decrease, but the urban framework continues. The creation of this urban framework, particularly when the existing ‘canvas’ is suburban, requires a combination of appropriate zoning regulations and design guidelines that address both the public and private realm.

Purpose

The purpose of the Central Business Core District Design Guidelines is to:

a. Assist property owners and developers regarding appropriate site, building, and sign design for the District.
b. Encourage innovation and creativity in the design and use of sites, buildings, and signage in the District;
c. Enhance the visual appeal, and thus the general ambience of the District, making it a more pleasant place for residents and visitors;
d. Encourage replacement of legally, nonconforming buildings and signage with those that meet the new zoning regulations and the Design Guidelines;
e. Enable an alternate means by which a development can comply with zoning regulations and achieve the goals of those regulations without following a strictly prescribed form.

These Design Guidelines are not mandatory requirements; they are voluntary and strongly encouraged.
INTRODUCTION

As noted above, these Guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the zoning regulations of the Central Business Core (CBC) District (Article 22 of the City Zoning Ordinance). In addition to the specific regulations for the Central Business Core (CBC) District, there are two other sets of available provisions for development. The first of these, “Optional Forms of Development,” is a by-right option by which one or more of the prescribed (required) forms may be altered or even eliminated if certain building features and/or elements described in these Guidelines are provided. The OFD provisions in Section 2206 are intended to provide the opportunity for a different, but equally desirable, means of accomplishing the same end result as would be provided by the regulations of the Zoning Ordinance.

The second provision, “Special Exception for Alternative Compliance,” applies to development proposals that, while not conforming to the applicable Design Guidelines, are nonetheless visually attractive and advance the goals of the District. Therefore, in recognition that not all design criteria in these Guidelines may be workable or appropriate for every design, the Alternative Compliance provisions of Section 2205 may be used as an alternative to strict conformity with the Design Guidelines and with the Code. Such decisions will be made by City Council on a case-by-case basis with the overall purposes of the Design Guidelines and the Code as the guiding principles.

Development Principles

These Guidelines are based on the following Development Principles as provided in the Pembroke Strategic Growth Area 4 Implementation Plan:

1. Efficient use of land resources

Applying the land use techniques of compact development, infill development, and shifting toward more structured parking areas are key components to successfully achieving a more efficient pattern of growth. The benefits include reduced sprawl, protection of existing stable neighborhoods, increased protection of farmland and open spaces, reduced dependency on the automobile and more cost-effective use of existing infrastructure.
2. Full use of urban services

Compact development patterns mean more people will benefit from using existing public infrastructure and services such as roads, schools, water, sewer, police, fire, rescue and others. While expansion of some existing facilities and services will be necessary, the findings of many studies across the county show that, in the long run, low-density sprawl costs more tax dollars to serve than does compact development.

3. Compatible mix of uses

Providing a complementary and vertical blend of residential and non-residential uses within reasonable walking distances of one another is an important part of a successful compact development strategy. Effective mixed-use developments also have a ‘critical mass’ where the mixture of uses is such that the need for an automobile for routine trips for goods and services is significantly diminished. Architectural design considerations and controlling the hours of business operations must be factored into the land use strategy.

4. Transportation opportunities

Compact development patterns afford greater choice of transportation alternatives and less overall congestion than is otherwise experienced in communities that are almost exclusively suburban. This contributes to decreased dependence on the automobile, especially the single occupied vehicle, reduction in citywide vehicle miles traveled, increased opportunities for more efficient and cost-effective forms of shared and mass transportation and opportunities to commute by walking or biking. Other opportunities include local and metropolitan transit systems to link to regional and interstate transportation systems which leads to cleaner air and safer travel.

5. Detailed human-scale design

Urban areas that are safe, well-designed, and attractive are a key community goal. It is important for these areas to be built at a ‘human-scale,’ especially as people experience activity along the streets, sidewalks, and public spaces. Urban streetscapes are designed

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with special paving, landscaping, lighting, and other features that create an interesting and inviting environment. When designed and built with quality in mind, these physical elements galvanize to foster a positive sense of urban place, one that is enjoying a resurgence of public interest in many communities across the country. As is the case in nature, cities evolve and gradually adapt to changes in their physical environment.

6. Environmental stewardship

Sustaining the urban setting requires public and private involvement in improving and maintaining the various components of the natural and built infrastructure. Private development practices utilizing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design™ (LEED) and other certification type construction have now been incorporated into public planning practice. Many rural and suburban municipalities promote this through incentives, while major metropolitans incorporate sustainable building practices into their ordinance, regulations and planning documents.
Streets communicate the quality of the public environment and the care a city has for its residents. Collectively, streets are the largest area of public space in the city. Accordingly, their design should be of the highest quality and should ensure that they are intended for all of modes of transportation – from the motor vehicles that traditionally travel along most of the width of the street, to the bicycles that share that width, to the pedestrian that travels the sidewalk along the edge.

Design Principle 5, presented earlier in these Guidelines, stresses the importance of streets and the creation of the ‘streetscape’ that frames each street:

Urban areas that are safe, well-designed, and attractive are a key community goal. It is important for these areas to be built at a ‘human-scale,’ especially as people experience activity along the streets, sidewalks, and public spaces. Urban streetscapes are designed with special paving, landscaping, lighting, and other features that create an interesting and inviting environment.

Design is important for all facets of the streetscape, including the overall street network, the number and width of vehicular travel lanes, and an especially careful consideration of the sidewalk element, which contains much more than just a paved walking path. These Guidelines promote streets that are integral components of the overall urban design of the District.

As new streets are created, continue the grid pattern established in Town Center and reinforced in the Pembroke SGA Plan. Expanding the public street network will provide alternate travel routes and open up parcels for higher density development with greater visibility.
As properties are developed, they should be designed to provide existing and/or new rights-of-way with adequate space to accommodate all functions of the street, including vehicle lanes, bike lanes, medians, and sidewalks as designated in the Pembroke SGA Plan.

Curb cuts and driveways should be kept to a minimum, especially on internal, pedestrian-oriented streets.

Sidewalks should be constructed or retrofitted to provide the following four zones:

1. The Building Frontage Zone;
2. The Pedestrian / Movement Zone;
3. The Furniture / Tree Zone; and
4. The Curb Zone.

Incorporating these four zones into the streetscape design will foster a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.
The ideal width for sidewalks in the CBC District is 20 feet, as measured from the back of the curb to the building facade. A width of 20 feet provides each of the four sidewalk zones the necessary space for each to function as intended.

- To ensure it functions as intended, the Pedestrian / Movement Zone should have a clear width of 6 to 8 feet. It should remain a clear and convenient passage route.

- The typical width of the Furniture / Tree Zone should be 8 feet. The Furniture / Tree Zone may contain street trees and other plant material, lighting, seating, trash receptacles, public art, bike racks, traffic signage, and utility access. If there is adequate width, trees should be placed in 8-foot tree wells.

When adjacent to ground-level retail uses, the Frontage Zone should be primarily hardscape (concrete; brick; pavers; etc. as permitted by City Public Works Standards).

Where permitted by the CBC District regulations and the City Code, outdoor dining areas are appropriate within the Frontage Zone. In all cases, however, a minimum 6-foot wide continuous path of travel must be maintained.
To provide for the privacy of residents, residential units with individual entries on the street adjacent to the Frontage Zone ideally should be set back to the maximum ‘build-to’ depth allowed by the District regulations. The setback area should be planted and may also include walkways, porches, raised planters, solid walls to a maximum of 3 feet high above sidewalk elevation, and ‘transparent’ fences (e.g., wrought-iron, tubular steel) to a maximum height of 3 feet above sidewalk elevation.
The relationship of buildings to the public and private spaces around them is critical to the overall success of the Central Business Core District. Building placement, massing, and appearance define this relationship. Each building’s architectural style, form, rhythm of bays and openings, architectural details, exterior materials, textures, and color work together to provide an environment that encourages pedestrians to linger and experience everything around them. Design elements such as windows, awnings, canopies, seating, and the extension of interior uses, such as dining, into the sidewalk area create an active street environment that makes for a great urban place.

**Placement**

The street is often described by urban designers as “a large outdoor room.” The ability to shape this room exists on every street, and its walls are defined by the primary façades of its buildings, which create a street wall. The proximity of the building to the street (placement) and the continuity of buildings placed along the street create the street wall, which is one of the most important components of an urban area.

3.1 To maintain a consistent street wall, avoid large gaps between buildings, unless the area is used for outdoor amenity space, such as a plaza or forecourt.
3.2 High rise buildings (buildings greater than ten stories) should be set back at the ground floor to the minimum build-to line and/or stepped back with increasing heights. Setbacks and stepbacks help maintain an adequate provision of light, air, and views at the street.

**Massing**

How building mass is distributed on a site usually has the greatest impact on a project’s overall appearance and on the strength of the street wall. Breaking the footprint of a large building into smaller parts and varying a building’s height through the creation of smaller structures or façades is a valuable concept when designing large projects that consume half a block or more. Sculpting a building’s massing can also help avoid big bulky structures that result in visual monotony rather than visual interest. It is the well-balanced variety of building massing and textures of shadow, light, and material that, in total, add to the richness of the District’s built environment.

3.3 Break large projects into a series of appropriately scaled buildings so that no building has a width above the 5th Floor that is more than 250 feet.

3.4 Buildings and additions should be designed so the mass of the first 3 floors is proportionate to the street. Because the first 3 floors are closest to the street and thus interact most directly with passing pedestrians and vehicles, it is there that the scale and proportion are the most critical.
Building towers greatly affect the appearance of the overall skyline. The proportion of height to width is critical to avoid the ‘monolithic block’ appearance. Reducing the bulk of the top of a tower (“sculpting” the tower) can make it more attractive.

Towers should have slender massing and sound proportions:

- Towers should have their massing designed to reduce overall bulk and to appear slender.
- Towers may extend directly up from the property line at the street and are not required to be setback.
- Tower siting and massing should maintain key views to important natural and man-made features.
3 BUILDINGS

3.7

Tower forms should appear simple yet elegant, and add an endearing sculptural form to the skyline.

✦ Towers should be designed to achieve a simple faceted geometry (employing varied floor plans), and exhibit big, simple moves. They should not appear overwrought or to have over-manipulated elements.

✦ A building’s top should be delineated with a change of detail and meet the sky with a thinner form, or tapered overhang.

✦ If a project has more than one tower, they should be complementary to each other and employ the same architectural design approach.

Façades

3.8

Façades of buildings that face the street should incorporate human-scale detailing through the use of reveals, belt courses, cornices, overhangs, light fixtures, expression of structural or architectural bays, recessed windows or doors, material or material module changes, color and/or texture differences, or strongly expressed mullions.

ROW Encroachments – Decorative architectural features like those listed above that encroach into the public right-of-way may be permitted administratively if they comply with all applicable design guidelines. See Sec. 33-114.3 of the City Code.
All sides of a building should be continuous in design. No side should be unimproved. All architectural details, such as roof lines and parapets, should continue around all sides of a structure.

**Entrances**

Canopies, awnings, and similar features along the façades of buildings are encouraged to add interest and articulation to the streetscape. Such features should be designed to complement the streetscape of the area and should be sized and placed so as to be proportionate with other features on the façade. The shape, design, and color of such features should coordinate with the color and style of the building façade to which the feature is affixed. No such feature may interfere with the growth or maintenance of street trees or the lighting of the sidewalk. A minimum overhead clearance of 8' from the ground must be maintained.

**ROW Encroachments** – Awnings, canopies, and similar features that encroach into the public right-of-way may be permitted administratively if they comply with all applicable design guidelines. See Sec. 33-114.3 of the City Code.
Buildings with frontage at the intersection of two streets should provide a building entrance at the corner to enhance activity at the intersection. In lieu of providing such an entrance, enhancement of the building at the intersection is encouraged through additional building mass, distinctive architectural elements, different building materials, changes in building planes, or changes in building shape.

The primary entrances should be oriented to the sidewalk and the primary pedestrian ways. If a courtyard is part of the overall design, an entrance may be located on it as well. Entrances can also be better defined by varying pavement treatments.

Building entries may be recessed to emphasize the entrance, increase window display area, and provide a sheltered transition to the interior.

- Building entrances should provide shade from the sun and weather protection for pedestrians. This may involve overhangs, arcades, roofs, porches, alcoves, porticos, awnings, or any combination of these features.

- The entry to a store or restaurant unit should be centered on the façade and be highly ‘transparent.’ Solid doors are discouraged.
Materials

3.14 Feature long-lived and sustainable materials, including brick, stone, tinted and textured concrete masonry, and glass. EIFS should not be used below the second floor elevation except when used as soffits. The material palette should provide variety, reinforce massing and changes in the horizontal or vertical plane.

3.15 Employ a different architectural treatment at the pedestrian level (first 1 to 3 floors) than on the upper floors, and feature high-quality materials that add scale, texture, and variety at the pedestrian level.
An identifiable break should be provided between a building’s retail floors (ground level and, in some cases, 2nd and 3rd floors) and upper floors. This break may consist of a change in material, change in fenestration, or similar means.

To add variety and visual interest, the utilization of ‘layering’ of materials and colors on the exterior of a building is important. Layering should be used in relationship to the building’s structural elements.
Lighting

3.18 Exterior building lighting can accentuate the building design and the overall ambiance of the area by using the following techniques:

- Highlighting architectural details and features with lighting integrated into the building design.
- Façade lighting not resulting in excessive light and glare.
- Use of lighting that promotes energy conservation and efficiency. Safety is encouraged through the use of “white” light (LED and fluorescents, rather than high-pressure sodium).

3.19 Each project should develop a system or family of lighting with layers that contribute to the night-time experience, including façade uplighting, sign and display window illumination, landscape, and streetscape lighting.

3.20 Integrate security lighting into the architectural and landscape lighting system. Security lighting should not be distinguishable from the project’s overall lighting system.
3.21 Exterior lighting shall be shielded to reduce glare and eliminate light being cast into the night sky.

**ROW Encroachments** – Building-mounted light fixtures that encroach into the public right-of-way may be permitted administratively if they meet all applicable design guidelines. See Sec. 33-114.3 of the City Code.

Mechanical Equipment and Service Areas

3.22 Ground level mechanical equipment that cannot be located inside the building should be screened with an enclosure or structure incorporated into the main building. The design, materials, and colors should be complementary with the main building.

3.23 Rooftop mechanical equipment (including elevator rooms) should be screened so as to be ‘invisible’ from the ground adjacent to the building as well as from approaches to the building. Horizontal (flat) roof forms should be screened by extensions of the building wall planes (parapet).

3.24 Loading and trash collection areas should be concealed from view to the greatest extent possible and are ideally located inside the building. Access to these areas should be minimized and arranged so that maneuvering is avoided on public streets. A vertical clearance of at least 14 feet is recommended.
Parking Structures

Traditionally, the design of parking structures takes a secondary position to the development of larger projects. Parking structures are often treated as nothing more than buildings having the sole function of providing a place for people to park their cars and not as an integral part of the design fabric of the locale. The following guidelines are intended to encourage parking structures that are integrated into the desired design fabric of the CBC District and the immediate area in which they are located, so that ultimately, parking structures will be viewed as long-term, quality amenities to the city and not as utilitarian 'quick-fixes' for a parking problem.

3.25 The exterior façade should maintain a horizontal line throughout. The sloping nature of the interior structure, necessary in the design of parking structures, should not be repeated on the exterior façade.

3.26 The height and mass of the structure should be consistent with the urban design fabric within which the structure is to be located (e.g., a 7 story parking structure should not be situated in an area that consists of primarily 2 to 3 story structures).
Parking structures should have an external ‘skin’ designed to improve the building’s appearance over the basic concrete structure of ramps, walls and columns. This can include heavy-gage metal screen, pre-cast concrete panels, laminated glass or photovoltaic panels.

Parking structures should integrate sustainable design features such as photovoltaic panels (especially on the top parking deck), renewable materials with proven longevity, and stormwater treatment wherever possible.

Pedestrian access to and from a parking structure should be well-defined and attractive. Vertical circulation cores (elevator and stairs) should be located on the primary pedestrian corners and be highlighted architecturally so visitors can easily find and access these entry points. Directional signs should be provided at internal exits to identify streets and help orient pedestrians as they exit the parking facility.
Proper security is an important aspect of parking structure operations. A safe, secure environment for patrons, employees, and vehicles is critical. Adequate security measures should be an integral part of the design. The overall design of the structure should be such that it provides for easy surveillance from the street. The proper placement and design of windows, lighting, and landscaping increases the ability for police and others to observe intruders and maximizes the potential to deter crime.

**Elevators** - Elevators should be located along the exterior periphery of the building, preferably on a street side and oriented so that the elevator lobby is visible from the street at each level. The back of the elevator cab and shaft should be made of glass or other similar transparent material that will allow maximum surveillance from the exterior.

**Stairways** - As with elevators, stairways should be located along the exterior periphery of the building, preferably on a street side and oriented so that the stairway is visible from the street at each level. Glass or a similar transparent material should be used to allow visibility.

**Access** - Pedestrian access into and out of the building should be channeled thorough only one or two points to allow surveillance either by a cashier or a remote television camera.
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With the higher densities found in urban locales, outdoor open space is at a premium. The public, semi-public, and private outdoor spaces around a building are instrumental in determining the success of a use at a particular location. Often it is these spaces that act as the transition between the use and the public domain of the street and sidewalk. The types of amenities placed in these spaces and the landscape plantings selected to define and accent them should promote and assist in this transition. Private outdoor spaces are also important, especially for developments with residential uses.

4.1 Sidewalk Cafes

Outdoor spaces and amenities are encouraged at the street level in order to enliven the sidewalk for shoppers, employees, and residents. Depending on the amount of pedestrian traffic, a minimum 6 to 8 feet of clearance should be maintained in the “Pedestrian/Movement” zone of the sidewalk.

4.2 Entry Forecourts

Entry forecourts announce the function and importance of primary building entrances. They should provide a clear, comfortable transition between exterior and interior space.
4.3 Courtyards

Courtyards are fully or partially enclosed outdoor spaces that are conducive to smaller, more private social interactions.

4.4 Plazas

Plazas are common open space areas typically amenable to larger public gatherings. They are readily accessible from the street and nearby buildings.
4.5 **Corner Plazas**

The corner of a block where a building entrance is oriented to the corner is often conducive to an outdoor plaza. Corner plazas should be appropriate in scale and in the amenities they provide (intimate for residential, more open for commercial).

4.6 **Parks**

Parks can take many forms in urban areas. Large or small, green or hardscape, active or passive, urban parks improve the quality of life for residents and visitors of the District.

4.7 **Rooftop Spaces**

Rooftops can take advantage of otherwise wasted space in dense urban areas where ground level space is at a premium. Rooftops are often the forgotten fifth side of a building and are visible from surrounding taller buildings. Improving rooftops with plantings, seating, and other amenities greatly enhances views from above and provides valuable outdoor amenity space.
The character, personality and spirit of a city is often conveyed most vividly through its arts and culture. As a relatively young city, Virginia Beach has not yet developed a landscape of significant public art. It is vital, therefore, to continue the efforts begun at Town Center, which has been designated as an Arts & Cultural District. In order to integrate public art in the overall vision of each project’s architecture, landscape, and open space design, the artist should be incorporated into the design team early in the process. Use of the following goals will assist in integrating art into the landscape:

- **Artistic excellence** / Aim for the highest aesthetic standards by enabling artists to create original and sustainable artwork, with attention to design, materials, construction, and location, and in keeping with the best practices in maintenance and conservation.
- **Image** / Generate visual interest by creating focal points, meeting places, modifiers or definers that will enhance the area’s image locally, regionally, and nationally.
- **Authentic Sense of Place** / Enliven and enhance the unique quality of Downtown’s diverse visual and cultural environments. Provide meaningful opportunities for communities to participate in cultural planning, and a means for citizens to identify with each other through arts and culture in common areas.
- **Cultural Literacy** / Foster common currency for social and economic exchange between residents, and attract visitors by ensuring that they have access to visual ‘clues’ that will help them navigate and embrace a potentially unfamiliar environment. This can be achieved through promotional materials and tours as well as artwork.
- **Responsiveness** / Without formally injecting art into the early stages of the planning process for each new development, it will either be left out, or appear out of sync with the overall growth of the built environment.
“The Kiss” in Virginia Beach’s Town Center.

“Wings” is a large-scale kinetic sculpture outside of the Sandler Center in Virginia Beach’s Town Center.

“Sway’d” was a temporary, interactive public art display installed on a vacant lot in Salt Lake City, UT.
"Cloud Gate" reflects Chicago's famous skyline and the clouds above.

Crown Fountain in Chicago's Millennium Park projects images of the faces of Chicago's citizens. During the warmer months, a fountain shoots water from the tower into reflecting pools, giving the appearance that the faces are spouting the water from their mouths.
Signs are one of the most noticeable visual elements of any urban area. Not only do signs communicate information about the goods or services being offered at a particular establishment, they also communicate something about the quality of the particular business and contribute to the image of the area as a whole. Well-designed signs that communicate their message clearly, but without attempting to compete for attention, will help maintain a quality visual environment in the Central Business Core District.

### Applicability

The Design Guidelines in this chapter can be applied to all new signage, including replacements of existing signs, within the Central Business Core District. Except for signs that encroach into the public right-of-way, the Design Guidelines listed below as “Encouraged” are not mandatory requirements, but are voluntary standards for sizing, designing, and locating signs within the District. The Design Guidelines supplement, but do not supersede, the mandatory requirements for signs that are set forth in Article 2, Part B and Article 22, Part C of the City Zoning Ordinance and are listed below as “Required.”

**ROW Encroachments** – Signs that encroach into the public right-of-way may be permitted administratively if they comply with all applicable design guidelines. See Sec. 33-114.3 of the City Code.

### General Guidelines

#### Materials

**Encouraged**

Materials should be durable and capable of withstanding wind, rain, and direct sun without undue weathering. Except when used for banners or awning signs, cloth or flexible materials are not suitable material for exterior use.

Signs should be made of materials that are compatible with and complementary to the architectural design of the building façade.
5.2 Proportionality

Encouraged

Signs should not dominate the building façade on which they are located. The size, scale, and shape of a sign should be appropriate to the façade or other building feature, such as a window. Achieving this objective is not accomplished merely by a sign’s conforming to the maximum size requirements of Article 22, Part C, as it is entirely possible for a sign that is allowed to be of a certain size to look out of proportion (too large or too small) to its location.

Proportionality refers not only to the size, scale, and shape of a single sign, but to all of the signage on a particular building. A building façade may appear to be overwhelmed by too many signs, even if each individual sign is, by itself, perfectly proportional to the building façade on which it is located. Similarly, if signs are placed too closely to each other, they all compete for attention (a phenomenon known as “shouting”). Rather, the placement of multiple signs should be such that the eye is drawn to only one sign at a time.
5.3 Integration

Encouraged
Where a business has more than one sign, all signs should be designed to be compatible with each other in terms of materials, color, lettering style and logo usage. Multiple signs for a single enterprise are more effective visually when they are coordinated.

Signs should be placed so as not to obscure or visually overwhelm architectural features of a building. Notable building elements should be allowed to stand out without distraction from oversized or too much signage on or near such building elements, or from signage that is oddly shaped or colored in such manner as to clash with nearby building elements. Design elements of a building, such as window patterns, are helpful in determining the shape of signage for that building.

Signs should be designed with regard for, and to integrate with, the architectural style, historical significance, and/or inherent character of the building. Signs should fit on a building as if they were one of its architectural elements. Signs should enhance the primary design elements or unique architectural features of the building. Particularly with older buildings, extreme care should be taken not to obscure, damage, or otherwise interfere with design details and architectural features that contribute to the building’s character.

Signage should be compatible not only with the building on which it is located, but with the scale and character of other signage in the immediate vicinity.
5.4 Legibility

**Encouraged**
Messages on signs should be brief. A sign with a succinct message is easier to read, looks cleaner, and is more attractive because it is not cluttered.

Business hours, telephone numbers, sales information, listings of goods or services (except as indicated in the name of the business), brand names carried, and credit cards accepted, should not be included on a business’s primary sign.

Words and lettering should be properly spaced. If they are too close together, the message will be more difficult to read. Spacing them too far apart causes the viewer to read each item individually, which also obscures the message.

Lettering and graphic elements such as logos should not be placed so as to make the sign difficult to read. This guideline does not prevent lettering and graphic elements from overlapping, so long as the overall message remains clearly legible.

Lettering and logos should not occupy more than 75% of the sign face. At the same time, large areas of blank space convey no message and the overall size of the sign can be reduced.

The number of lettering styles on a sign should be limited, as a general guideline, to no more than two for small signs or three for larger ones.

Backgrounds should be avoided, but when necessary, should blend with the building façade. There should be sufficient contrast between the background and the message to enable the sign to be read easily.
5.5 Color

Encouraged
Colors that are complementary, yet provide good contrast with one another, should be used, and excessive and uncoordinated use of colors avoided. The most effective graphics are produced when light colored letters and images are placed on a dark, contrasting colored background or vice-versa.

The number of distinct colors on a sign, exclusive of different shades of the same color, should be limited to no more than three.

Colors should complement the materials or paint scheme of the buildings, including accent and trim colors.

Bright “day-glo” colors should generally be avoided, as they are distracting and do not blend well with other background colors.

5.6 Illumination

Required
Light sources must be directed toward the sign and shall not shine into adjacent property or cause glare for motorists and pedestrians.

Encouraged
External fixtures should be small and unobtrusive. Oversized light fixtures that are out of scale with the sign and structure should be avoided.

Signs should be illuminated only at the minimum level to ensure readability at night.
Specific Sign Types

5.7 Awning Signs

**Required**
- Allowance
- Number (max)
- Area (max)
- Horizontal extension (max)
- Vertical clearance (min)
- Illumination

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Allowance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st and 2nd story awnings only</td>
<td>1 per awning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 sf</td>
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<td>3’</td>
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<td>8’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Encouraged**

The shape, design, and color of awning signs should coordinate with the color and style of the awning and building façade to which the awning is affixed.

Awnings should conform to the applicable design guidelines referenced in Ch. 3 of this document.

**In lieu of wall signs:**

- Allowance
- Area (max)
- Number (max)

Awning signs greater than 2 sf permitted in lieu of wall signs must comply with applicable design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and above.

- Ground story establishments with no wall sign
  - 1 sf per linear foot of building frontage
  - 1 per establishment per building façade
5.8 Banner Signs

Required
Allowance
Buildings 32’ or greater in height

Horizontal extension (max)
5’

Placement height (min/max)
15’ min clearance and no higher than top of building façade

Illumination
External only

Securely mounted perpendicularly to vertical building wall

Consistent size, shape, style, and mounting hardware on each building façade

All banner signs must comply with applicable design guidelines in Chapter 3, general design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and above.
### 5.9 Building Crown Signs

**Required**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowance/Number (max)</th>
<th>Buildings 32’ high or greater/2 per building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Buildings 52’ high or greater/4 per building</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement height (min)</td>
<td>Upper 25% of building façade and no higher than top of building façade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Size (max)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Horizontal Extension (max)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;75 sf</td>
<td>1’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75'-99’</td>
<td>2’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100'-149’</td>
<td>2’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150'-199’</td>
<td>3’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200’ or more</td>
<td>3’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Illumination**

Internal or external

*Cabinet signs are not permitted.*

*Buildings with more than 2 crown signs must comply with applicable design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and below.*

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**Encouraged (Required for buildings with more than two crown signs)**

Building crown signs should be carefully designed and located so as to promote readability, proportionality, and integration.

Signs should be located where architectural features or details suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign.

Raceways are discouraged, but when necessary, should not exceed 25% of sign height and should blend with the building façade.

Backgrounds are discouraged, but when necessary, should blend with the building façade.

Signs should be illuminated in such manner as to reflect that the sign is one feature of the building façade rather than the focal point of the entire façade.
Canopy Signs

**Required**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowance</th>
<th>Ground story establishments only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number (max)</td>
<td>1 per canopy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height (max)</td>
<td>2’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth (max)</td>
<td>1’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (max)</td>
<td>2 sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal extension (max)</td>
<td>3’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical clearance (min)</td>
<td>8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illumination</td>
<td>Internal or external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet signs are not permitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Encouraged**

The design, color and materials of canopy signs should coordinate with the canopy and building façade to which the canopy is affixed.

Canopies should conform to the applicable design guidelines referenced in Ch. 3 of this document.

**In lieu of wall signs:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowance</th>
<th>Ground story establishments with no wall sign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area (max)</td>
<td>1 sf per linear foot of building frontage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number (max)</td>
<td>1 per establishment per building façade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canopy signs greater than 2 sf permitted in lieu of wall signs must comply with applicable design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and above.
5.11 Freestanding Signs

**Required**

**Allowance**

City Council approval only, unless replacing existing freestanding sign (see Sec. 215(c)).

Cabinet signs are not permitted.

**Encouraged**

Freestanding signs should be constructed out of materials that complement the building structure and design.

Backgrounds should be opaque and of a non-reflective material.

Freestanding monument signs should be placed so as to be perpendicular to the street.
5.12 Hanging Signs

**Required**
- Allowance
- Number (max)
  - Area (max)
  - Horizontal extension (max)
  - Vertical clearance (min)
  - Illumination

Ground story establishments only
1 per establishment per building façade
9 sf
3'
8' External only

Establishments may have either one hanging sign or one projecting sign for each building façade.

Sign may have a maximum of two faces, which must be parallel.

Cabinet signs are not permitted.

**Encouraged**
- Mounting hardware for hanging signs should be attractive and an integral part of the sign design. Metal brackets with decorative and complex shapes are encouraged where appropriate to add to the character of the building.

Hanging signs should not cover architectural details of the building façade and should be integrated with architectural façade elements.
5.13 **Information Board Signs**

**Required**
- **Allowance**
- **Number (max)**
- **Lettering Height (max)**
- **Horizontal extension (max)**
- **Illumination**

Ground story establishments only
- 1 per building façade
- 2”
- 6”
- Internal or external

Must be placed in weather-resistant closed display cabinet.

**Encouraged**

Information board signs should be placed in a location in which illumination is sufficient without spot or other lighting specific to the information board. If such placement is impractical, lighting sufficient only to illuminate the information board is acceptable.

Signs and the display cabinets in which they are located should be appropriate in size, location, and design to the character and architectural detail of the building as well as to the character of the establishment.

Information board signs and the display cabinets in which they are located should be constructed out of materials that complement both the building structure and its use.
5.14 Marquee Signs

**Required**

- **Allowance**
  - **Buildings occupied by theaters, cinemas, performing arts facilities or similar venues only**
  - 1 per establishment per building façade
  - **Vertical clearance (min)**
  - 9'
  - **Top of sign (max)**
  - 18'
  - **Illumination**
  - Internal or external

Cabinet signs are not permitted.

All marquee signs must comply with applicable design guidelines in Chapter 3, general design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and below.

Marquee signs should be made of materials that are compatible with and complementary to the architectural design of the marquee itself.

The size of marquee signs should be proportionate to the size of the face of the marquee to which they are affixed.

Lights framing marquee signs should be of uniform size, shape, spacing, color and brightness and should be no brighter than reasonably necessary to outline the marquee in keeping with the pedestrian-oriented nature of the District.
### Projecting Signs

#### Required

- **Allowance**
- **Number (max)**
- **Area (max)**
- **Horizontal extension (max)**
- **Vertical clearance (min)**
- **Illumination**

Establishments may have either one hanging sign or one projecting sign for each building façade.

Sign may have a maximum of two faces, which must be parallel.

Cabinet signs are not permitted.

- **Ground story establishments only**
- 1 per building façade
- **Area (max)**
- 9 sq
- **Horizontal extension (max)**
- 3’
- **Vertical clearance (min)**
- 8’
- **Illumination**
- External only

#### Encouraged

- **Projecting signs should have two finished sides that are the same on both sides.**

Signs with visually interesting elements, such as square or rectangular shapes with painted or applied letters, two or three dimensional symbols or icons, irregular outlines, and/or internal cut-outs, are encouraged.

Sign supports and brackets should be compatible with the design and scale of the sign and the architectural design of the building.

Projecting signs should not cover architectural details of the building façade and should be integrated with architectural façade elements.
**In lieu of wall signs:**

- **Allowance**
  - Area (max)
  - Number (max)

Projecting signs greater than 9 sf permitted in lieu of wall signs must comply with applicable design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and above.

- Ground story establishments only
  - 1 sf per linear foot of building façade
  - 1 per building façade
5.16 Sidewalk Signs

**Required**

- **Ground story establishments only**
- **Allowance**
  - Number (max): 1 sign per building façade
  - Area (max): 6 sq ft
- **Placement**
- **Sidewalk horizontal clearance (min)**: 8' horizontal clearance
- **Material**
  - Framed in wood, wood composite or metal with a professional finish;
  - incorporated insert with fixed message or chalkboard, dry erase board, or similar material

**Illumination**

- Not permitted

**Design**

- Sandwich board/A-frame style (hinged at top)

No merchandise or other material may be placed on or hung from sign. Sidewalk signs must not be left outside overnight.

*Sidewalk signs that are not sandwich board/A-frame style (hinged at top) must comply with applicable design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and below.

**Encouraged**

- Lettering and graphic elements on sidewalk signs should be drawn by hand.

- Signs should be uncluttered and easily legible.
### 5.17 Table Umbrella Signs

**Required**
- Number (max): 2 per umbrella
- Area (max): 2 sf
- Illumination: Not permitted

**Encouraged**
Table umbrella signs should be of a single color that contrasts well with the background material of the umbrella.
5.18 Wall Signs

**Required**

| Allowance | 1st and 2nd story establishments only |
| Area (max) | 1 sf per linear foot of building façade or 60 sf, whichever smaller |
| Number (max) | 1 per establishment per building façade |
| Horizontal extension (max) | 1’ |
| Placement height (max) | No higher than building façade |
| Illumination | Internal or external |

Cabinet signs are not permitted.

**Encouraged**

Wall signs should be located where architectural features or details suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign. The best location for a wall sign is generally a band or blank area between the first and second or second and third floors of a building under 45 feet in height so as to maintain a pedestrian scale.

To the extent possible, wall signs should be placed at a height consistent with that of wall signs on the same or adjacent buildings; if, however, such placement would conflict with the previous guideline regarding placement where architectural details suggest, the compliance with previous guideline is preferable.

Raceways are discouraged, but when necessary, should not exceed 25% of sign height and should blend with the building façade.

Backgrounds are discouraged, but when necessary, should blend with building façade.
### Window Signs

**Required**

- **Area (max)**
- **Restrictions**

Neon signs are only permitted in windows and must comply with applicable design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and below.

**Encouraged**

Window signs should allow pedestrians to see clearly into the establishment.

Window signs should not compete with wall signs or other types of signage on the façade, but should complement the façade.

Window signs should be designed so as not to appear incongruous in the window setting, whether because of size, color, or placement.

High-quality materials should be used. Paper, cardboard, and plastic signs hung in a window should be avoided.

Creative design of graphics and lettering is encouraged.

Neon signs should be no brighter than necessary to allow passersby to easily read the message of the sign.

**In lieu of wall signs:**

- **Allocated area (max)**
- **Number (max)**

Window signs greater than 10% of window area permitted in lieu of wall signs must comply with applicable design guidelines in Sections 5.1-5.6 and above.

- 1 sf per linear foot of building façade
- 1 per establishment per building façade
Sustainable design and building practices can reduce pollution, save money, and enhance the quality of our built environment. Designed properly, many of these practices can serve multiple purposes, like managing stormwater while providing outdoor amenity space. Certification programs like Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), EarthCraft, and the Sustainable SITES Initiative (SITES™) are encouraged as they provide standards for assessing sustainable design and materials. However, even small, inexpensive features can go a long way to contributing to sustainable design.

### 6.1 Alternative Modes of Transportation

Encouraging alternative modes of transportation, including mass transit, bikes, walking, and low or no-emission vehicles will contribute to improved air quality.

![This street in Portland Oregon accommodates pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists of all ages and abilities. Photo credit: www.pedbikeimages.org/Laura Sandt](image)

### 6.2 Bicycle Parking

Bicycle parking should be installed near building entrances in safe, well-lit locations that are convenient for cyclists but not in the way of pedestrians. Bike racks can take many forms and should be designed with both form and function in mind.

![The classic “inverted U” provides two resting points for the bike frame, preventing the bike from tipping and enabling the frame and both tires to](image)
6.3 Bioretention Areas

Bioretention areas capture and treat stormwater runoff as it filters into the ground and replenishes groundwater. With appropriate plantings, these areas can enhance and soften the hardscape of the urban area. They can also take advantage of underutilized spaces, like road medians, parking lot islands, pavement edges, and courtyards.

6.4 Blue Roofs

To get both cooling and stormwater detention benefits, blue roofs use controls atop the roof’s downspouts to detain stormwater runoff flow from the roof. The water is eventually released to a stormwater harvesting or infiltration system at a controlled flow rate.

6.5 Building Materials

Use building materials made from sustainable resources and manufacturing processes.

6.6 Charging Stations

Charging stations for electric vehicles will become more common in the future. These can be designed as simply as a parking meter or come complete with solar panels and a canopy for shelter.
6.7 **Cool Roofs**

A simple way to save energy is to paint your rooftop with a reflective coating. By reflecting the sun’s energy rather than absorbing it, rooftops can be more than 25% more energy efficient and can offset the urban heat island effect caused by high concentrations of dark surfaces. Cool roof coatings can also extend the life of a roof by 5 to 10 years.

New York City’s “CoolRoofs Program” encourages building owners to paint their roofs with a reflective coating.

6.8 **Green Roofs**

Green roofs are rooftop areas that are partially or completely covered with vegetation. Also known as living roofs, vegetated or planted roofs, rooftop gardens and rooftop parks, the benefits of green roofs are multi-fold. Planting these overlooked surfaces can improve air quality, mitigate urban heat islands, provide outdoor amenity space, improve acoustic insulation, and offer visual relief for neighboring buildings. rooftops can even support urban agriculture.

Planted roof on building in downtown Portland, OR.

Before and After: Eagle Street Farm is a 6,000 sq. ft. green roof organic vegetable farm atop a warehouse in Brooklyn, NY.
6.9 Native Plantings and Soils

Using native plant and tree species along with soil restoration will boost the survivability of plants in a harsh, urban environment. These plant materials and soils reduce runoff from otherwise impervious, compacted surfaces. Adequate soil volume is essential for healthy, long-term sustainable growth for plant material.

6.10 Open Space Preservation

Natural open space is even more important in urban areas because of its scarcity. In addition to providing relief from the urban hardscape, natural open space can provide valuable outdoor amenity space for walking, hiking, and biking, protect waterways from erosion and runoff, and increase urban tree canopy. In particular, natural features such as mature trees or treestands that provide urban tree canopy or riparian buffers that protect natural waterways should be preserved and enhanced.

6.11 Plant Walls

Plant walls, also called “vertical gardens” or “living walls,” can add visual interest to an otherwise blank wall or other area in need of screening while providing thermal and acoustic insulation and cleaning the air. Wall systems and plant materials should be carefully chosen to ensure survivability. Location, coverage, size, and design flexibility should all be carefully considered when designing a plant wall.
6.12 Rainwater Harvesting

Harvested rainwater can be collected in rain barrels, cisterns, or underground storage tanks and used for non-potable uses (plant irrigation, toilet flushing, exterior washing, fire suppression, chilled water cooling towers, and water features). This method not only conserves potable water but also helps manage stormwater.

6.13 Solar Panels

Solar panels can easily be integrated into building design to provide a non-polluting source of energy.

6.14 Waste Reduction and Recycling

Recycling programs should be incorporated into commercial and multi-family facilities so that recycling is easy and convenient for employees, customers and residents.
6.15 **Wind Turbines**

Although wind turbines are more successful in open areas, wind energy can also be harnessed above the rooftops in urban areas.

*Urban wind turbine in San Francisco, CA.*