

# DESIGN GUIDELINES

*for* LOWER DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT



LOWER DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
AND DENVER COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT



# Lower Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines

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# Introduction to Design Guidelines

## Design Guidance In Lower Downtown

These design guidelines emerged from the Lower Downtown neighborhood planning process (1995-1998) and while they are not a part of the **Neighborhood Plan**, the principles upon which they rest are incorporated into the **Plan**. The sections found here that deal with **Contributing** and **Noncontributing Buildings** are not intended to be all-inclusive. The **LPC's *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmarks and Landmark Districts*** are the primary source for guidelines for **Contributing** and **Noncontributing Buildings**; these guidelines supplement them.

The sections of the Design Guidelines that deal with **Contemporary** and new buildings are more comprehensive and address many topics that are unique to Lower Downtown, commercial districts in general, or the requirements of modern technology and uses. Rather than supplementing existing guidelines, the guidelines for **Contemporary** and New Buildings fill a gap where very little guidance existed before.

To develop real property in Lower Downtown, the project proposer and development team must consult not only these guidelines, but also: Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code; the Design Guidelines for the Lower Downtown Streetscape; the Denver Zoning Code; the **LPC's *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmarks and Landmark Districts*** as amended; the Denver Comprehensive Plan; the **Streetscape Plan**; and the **Lower Downtown Neighborhood Plan**.

## Language and Definitions

Definitions, acronyms and abbreviations used in the Design Guidelines follow. Words that are specifically defined herein are printed in **bold letters** wherever they are found.

**Abut, Abutting**. Immediately adjacent to, beside. Buildings are also abutting if they are separated by a public right-of-way (like an alley or street) upon which there are no intervening buildings.

**Active commercial uses**. Active commercial uses are those uses that promote the comings and goings of more than a few pedestrians on a regular basis.

**Additional parking**. **Additional parking** is parking which can be included in a project in addition to the **minimum parking** without special approval in the following amounts:

- One space per 1500 square feet for commercial uses
- One half space per unit for residential uses

**Applicant**: The proposer of alterations to existing buildings or construction of new buildings in the Historic District who has filed an application for review of the project by the LDD/DRB.



**Articulation.** How each element, such as a window, door, cornice, floor line, or column, is architecturally expressed that is, called out as special or distinct from other elements by the designer. This can be done through use of color, change of material or texture, and so on. The idea is to make these elements read differently from others while still retaining a pleasing composition overall.

**Borrowed light basements.** The interior first floor is set back by some means from the streetfront face to allow for light wells or skylights providing light into a habitable basement area. The result is to push the storefront and street-level windows some distance back from the sidewalk and pedestrians.

**Building height.** Building **height** is the **height** of a building as measured from a point defined in the city Zoning Ordinance and extending to the roof deck of the subject building, but not including parapets, cornices, elevator overruns, stair towers extending onto the roof, mechanical equipment or **mechanical penthouses**, certain architectural rooftop elements, or other such elements as discussed herein.

55 feet is the **height-by-right** in Lower Downtown. Based on established criteria, the **LDD/DRB** may grant additional **height** up to a maximum of 85 feet, 100 feet, and in certain districts, 130 feet. For buildings above 55 feet that are not located in the **SRDs**, the **height** alone of a proposed building relative to its **context** may be considered a reason for denial of the project. For projects located in the **SRDs**, all elements of context must be addressed except that projects cannot be denied approval on the basis of height alone.

**Compatibility, Compatible.** **Compatibility**, or to be **compatible**, is a condition wherein two or more entities are combined to achieve desirable aftereffects for the whole and each other. It is the ability of different components, whether similar or dissimilar, to function together and stand together without disharmony or conflict (in other words, complementary but not necessarily similar or the same). The intent of the proposed guidelines is that new buildings should not replicate existing ones.

**Context.** **Context** consists of the conditions that form the setting within which a building is experienced. It derives from a Middle English word that meant □coherence,□ and there is an implication of disparate elements harmoniously woven together. As used here, **context** consists of all the external factors that have a formative influence on the appearance of an area, including height, mass, **massing**, **scaling elements**, design, materials, location on site, and so forth. Context applies to all sites.

In Lower Downtown, the **contributing buildings** in a proposed site's vicinity establish **context**. There are three types of **context**: primary, secondary and district-wide. Primary **context** is applied to **Part 1 decisions** in the design review process. Secondary **context** is used in **Part 2 decisions**. **District-wide context** is used when the **LDD/DRB** determines that there are no **contribution buildings** in a site's primary or secondary **context**.

Primary **context** is used to determine the general **height** and **massing** -- the envelope -- of a proposed building. It is established by the **contributing buildings** located within 300' in all directions from any point on the property line of a proposed site.

Secondary **context** is used to determine the finer grain details of a proposed building. The geographic parameters used to determine secondary **context** are as follows:

- X For sites on named streets, **context** is established by **contributing buildings** located on the face block on which the project is located, the face block immediately across the street and the face block across the alley.
- X For corner buildings, **context** is established by **contributing buildings** located one-half block in each direction from the corner, including both sides of each half block.
- X For sites on numbered streets, **context** is established by **contributing buildings** located the face block on which a project is located, the face block immediately across the street, and both face blocks on each of the blocks that **abut** the block of the proposed project.

For sites in which **context** is not provided due to the absence of proximate **contributing buildings**, **context** is the historic architectural character of the entire **District**.

**Contemporary Buildings**: See **contributing buildings**

**Contributing, noncontributing, and contemporary buildings**. **Contributing buildings** are those determined to be of historic significance. Determination was made in an authorized survey conducted by the City of Denver Landmark Preservation Commission and recorded within the designation of the Lower Downtown Historic District. A map identifying **contributing buildings** can be found in the ordinance establishing the **District**. Buildings considered **noncontributing** were not, at that time, found to be of historical significance. **Contemporary buildings** are buildings built after 1941.

**Design vocabulary**. The physical attributes, characteristics, and details that make up a building: put simply, the elements one can see when looking at the building. These include, at one extreme, the size, shape, color, and texture of its materials. At the other extreme is the way the building handles setbacks and the **articulation** of the **facade** or **elevation** through alignment of elements (such as windows, cornices, or columns). Further examples include texture, scaling elements, color, material changes, and window mullions and muntins.

**Elevation, facade, and primary facade**. **Facade**, or **primary elevation**, when used in conjunction with buildings, refers to any street-facing wall of a building, or a street wall. **Elevation** refers to the walls of a building that do not face the street, such as side or alley walls.

**Excess parking**. Excess parking is parking in an amount greater than the sum of (i) the minimum required parking (see MP8.1), and (ii) the additional parking (see MP8.2) permitted in any structure without the consent of the LDD/DRB. See also, minimum parking and additional parking.

**Facade**. See **Elevation**

**Height.** See **Building Height**

**Human scale.** See **Scale**

**Mass, Massing.** A building's **mass** is synonymous with its volume, or the total gross cubic volume of space it occupies on the site. **Massing** is the way in which its volume, or **mass**, is distributed on the site which parts are higher, lower, wider, or narrower, and what pops up and where. **Massing** is an important consideration in helping a building fit comfortably into its **context**. The aspects of a building's form include its visual treatment in the variations of **heights** and widths of its **mass**, as well as its overall **height** and stepbacks. Two buildings can have the same **mass** but entirely different **massings**. (See **Building height**).

Related to a building's **mass** is its width. Establishing visually appropriate building widths defined as the distance the **facade** of a single new building extends along the street without a break in **massing** is important to maintaining Lower Downtown's character. This break in the visual **massing** may be accomplished in any number of ways, including an expression of two distinct buildings, a break in a portion of the **facade** with a different function (such as a door or passageway), a change of wall plane (such as recessing part of a segment), a change of column spacing, or a change of materials, color, texture, or detailing.

**Mechanical penthouse.** See **Penthouse**

**Minimum parking.** For those structures subject to parking requirements, **minimum parking** is:

- One space per 750 square feet for commercial uses
- One space per unit for residential uses

**Mixed use.** **Mixed use** buildings are buildings with more than one use.

**Noncontributing buildings.** See **Contributing Buildings**

**Part 1 approval, Part 1 decision.** A decision made by the LDD/DRB in the process of reviewing and approving alterations to existing buildings or construction of new buildings. A decision that approves or denies an applicant's proposal for a project's the building envelope, (defined as the building's height, mass, form, stepbacks, site plan, contextual fit, etc.), and the concept of the basic exterior facade appearances, including identification of major materials.

**Part 2 approval, Part 2 decision.** A decision made by the LDD/DRB in the process of reviewing and approving alterations to existing buildings or construction of new buildings. A decision that approves or denies an applicant's proposal for a project's building details. Such building details shall include materials, color, windows, entrances, scaling devices, and other exterior details.

**Pedestrian friendly.** “**Pedestrian friendly**” is a measure of the quality of an environment from the perspective of a person on foot. A **pedestrian friendly** environment is a place where people can enjoy public life in a comfortable setting. The Lower Downtown Neighborhood Plan seeks to foster this kind of an environment by recommending several community development strategies, including approaches to land use, building design, historic preservation, streetscape design, transportation, mobility, traffic management, parking, and economic development. For example, the **Plan’s** design guidelines advance **pedestrian friendliness** through such things as build-to-property-line requirements, minimum and maximum **heights**, and **human scale** development, all of which serve to enclose and define public space and to create a pedestrian environment people understand and to which they can relate. **Mixed-use** development puts people and eyes on the street at all hours, helping to reduce crime and increase a feeling of security. Historic preservation adds interest to streets and a sense of place that, in turn, promotes use and enjoyment of the public realm. Streetscape elements provide amenities and convenience. Use of alternative modes of transportation reduces traffic entering the District. Parking strategies encourage a “park-once environment” where, upon arrival, it is possible to do a variety of things by walking between them. Taken together these elements, and others in the Neighborhood Plan, shape the District’s urban structure to support pedestrian use, safety, comfort and enjoyment.

**Penthouse, residential penthouse and mechanical penthouse.** A structure or portion of a structure located on the roof of a building (a **penthouse** usually has its own roof as well). It is generally a roof element, and may or may not contain habitable space. Often it contains or hides building equipment. It is generally set back from the roof edge of the main part of the building and covers only a small portion of that roof.

For purposes of this document, a **residential penthouse** is any rooftop **penthouse** containing habitable space; a **mechanical penthouse** does not. Note, however, that not all mechanical equipment is placed inside a **penthouse**.

**Period of significance.** Lower Downtown’s **period of significance** is established on the National Register of Historic Places to be from 1860 through 1941.

**Primary facade.** See **Elevation**

**Residential penthouse.** See **Penthouse**

**Scale, human scale, and scaling elements.** A visual concept regarding the relative size of a building’s architectural parts compared to the whole or to the human figure, created by introducing into the design some unit that acts as a visual measuring rod.

There are many types of **scale**, **human scale** being most commonly used; even when a different **scale** is referred to, it always refers back to the **human scale**. For example, a cathedral or governmental building may have a seemingly bigger-than-life, or monumental, **scale**: its **scale** is altogether larger than the human figure, and is intended to be so as this results in a humbling effect on the observer. In a smaller-than-life, or miniature, **scale**, everyday things shrink down to less than what the observer would expect. A **scale** model an architectural design tool that

represents a building prior to its construction is an extreme example of miniature **scale**. In our physical environment, miniature **scale** can be seen when, for example, a three-story building is squeezed into the **height** of what otherwise would have been a two-story building. This effort of a developer or designer to pick up an extra story can result in unsettling visual consequences.

A building will have **scale** (i.e., **human scale**) . . . if there are elements of it which can be (metaphorically) used as steps, through which the observer will intellectually reach, grasp, or comprehend the building. The steps in that sense are the elements of a building that are known to the observer, the elements with which he is familiar and whose dimensions one knows in relationship to oneself. (A. C. Antoniadis, *Architecture and Allied Design*, 3rd ed., Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1992).

**Scaling elements** range from small items recognizable close-up, such as a unit of masonry, doorknob, or window muntin, to larger ones such as doors, windows, awnings, balconies, railings, and signs. The division of a building vertically (by expressing the floor lines in the construction) and horizontally (through column spacing) adds enormously to a viewer's ability to get a sense of how the building stacks up, how tall or wide it is, and how comfortable he or she feels with it.

A building without **scaling elements** can take on whole new meanings and create unsettling feelings. The more difficult it is to relate to a building as a human being, the more uncomfortable it makes the viewer to be near it. At worst, such a building may feel threatening or unfriendly, and thus be avoided. At best, the observer will be visually confused by the building and its relationship to him or her.

**Scaling elements.** See **Scale**

**Screen, screening.** To screen cars or parking means to visually obscure to a degree what is behind the screen. The intent is not to hide or make disappear the subject of the screening, but to diminish its prominence or push it visually into the background. The screen becomes the dominant focus instead of the subject behind it. A screen can be mostly solid or mostly transparent depending on the purpose it is to serve and the subject behind it.

**Sign.** A sign is an object or device or part thereof situated outdoors or indoors which is used to identify or advertise a business. Refer to the *Denver Zoning Code* for more information.

**Sign, Arcade.** A wall or projecting sign attached to the roof or wall of an arcade.

**Sign, Awning.** A sign printed on the surface of an awning or canopy.

**Sign, Ghost.** A historic painted wall sign.

**Sign, Ground.** A sign supported by poles, uprights or braces extending from the ground or an object on the ground but not attached to any part of any building.

**Sign, Projecting.** A sign attached perpendicular to the wall of a building. In LoDo, projecting signs are required to be iconic shaped signs.

**Sign, Temporary.** Any sign or advertising display constructed of cloth, canvas, fabric, paper, plywood or other light material intended to be displayed for a short period of time.

**Sign, Wall.** A sign attached-to or painted on the outside of a building. Wall signs are often located in the traditional sign band above a storefront.



# Design Guidelines for Contributing Buildings

## Principle 1. Preservation of Contributing Buildings

Additions, alterations to, and rehabilitation of **contributing buildings** shall retain and preserve the historic character of the building.

### Policy 1.1 Facades and Primary Elevations

The removal, alteration, or replacement of features on the **facade** of an historic building must not alter the character of the building.

#### *Recommendations:*

##### **1.1.1** Removal or alteration of historic features

Requirement: Removal of original materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

##### **1.1.2** Deteriorated historic features

Requirement: Deteriorated original features shall be repaired rather than replaced.

Requirement: Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, new features shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.

##### **1.1.3** Replacement of missing features

Requirement: Replacement of missing features shall be documented for historical accuracy.

##### **1.1.4** New Features

Requirement: New features that change the historic character of the building shall be denied approval.

##### **1.1.5** Railings, walls, fences, and gates

Requirement: Railings, walls, fences, and gates shall be constructed from substantial materials.

Preference: Patios and decks should be sized in relation to the existing building.

### 1.1.6 Balconies

Preference: New balconies should be prohibited on **primary facades** and rooftop additions.

### 1.1.7 Windows

Requirement: Historic windows should be repaired and retained. Partial or total replacement must be justified by a detailed survey of existing conditions.

Requirement: Preserve the functional and decorative features of original windows.

Requirement: If replacement of any original window is necessary, match it as closely as possible. Important features include frames, sash, muntins, mullions, glazing, sills, heads, jambs, moldings, operation, and groupings of windows.

Requirement: Windows shall be clear, and shall have transparent, non-tinted, and non-reflective glass.

Requirement: Reflective, opaque, translucent, or tinted film shall not be applied to glass.

Preference: Storefronts should be transparent and enhance the pedestrian experience.

Preference: Low-E glass is approved, but must include the clearest available glass.

## Policy 1.2 Alleys and side elevations

Alleys and side **elevations** of historic buildings are an integral part of the character of a building.

### *Recommendations:*

#### 1.2.1 Subordination to **primary facade**

Requirement: Alley and side **elevations**, while important, must remain subordinate to the **primary facade** or other street wall **elevation**.

#### 1.2.2 Alterations to alleys and side **elevations**

Requirement: Alterations to alleys and side **elevations** shall not alter one's ability to perceive the building's historic character.

## Policy 1.3 Major Additions

Additions to historic structures should be unobtrusive, and should not overwhelm the building.

***Recommendations:***

**1.3.1 Intensity of Review**

Requirement: Review of the design of a proposed addition to an historic structure shall be as intensive as for alterations to street **facades**.

**1.3.2 Design, materials, and color**

Requirement: Design, materials, and color shall be consistent with the district's historic **context**.

Preference: Additions and alterations should defer to than the original structure.

**Policy 1.4 Rooftop additions**

Rooftop additions must be subordinate to the historic structure on which they are located.

***Recommendations:***

**1.4.1 Design Considerations**

Requirement: Rooftop additions shall remain visually subordinate to the building.

Requirement: Rooftop additions shall have a **compatible** and proportional relationship with the historic building and shall not change its character.

**1.4.2 Stepbacks**

Preference: Rooftop additions should stepback a minimum of 15' from the facade of the building.

**1.4.3 Height**

Requirement: Rooftop additions shall be no higher than 20' above the roof deck of the building.

Preference: Rooftop additions should be one story structures with a maximum height of 15'.

**Policy 1.5 Awnings**

The design of awnings and the materials used are related to the style and use of the buildings they are placed on.

***Recommendations:***

**1.5.1 Retail Storefronts**

Preference: Where traditional retail storefronts exist or will be replaced, canvas awnings should be used.

**1.5.2 Industrial or Warehouse Buildings**

Preference: Where industrial or warehouse architecture exists, more latitude should be allowed in the awning materials and design.

# Design Guidelines for Non-Contributing and Contemporary Buildings

## Principle 2. Alterations to Noncontributing Buildings

Alterations to **noncontributing buildings** should be designed to help the building better fit its **context**.

### Policy 2.1 Change to Contributing Status

A **noncontributing building** built within the **period of significance** but substantially altered may be reclassified as a **contributing building**, but it must be brought into compliance with its original historic facade by means of restoration or replication.

#### *Recommendations:*

Requirement: Project proposers who seek contributing status for noncontributing structures shall comply with the guidelines and standards set forth by the Secretary of the Interior.

Requirement: Project proposers who seek contributing status for noncontributing structures shall comply with the guidelines of the Landmark Preservation Commission and the **LDD/DRB**.

Requirement: The restoration or replication must be documented for authenticity.

### Policy 2.2 Building Additions and Alterations

Additions to and alterations of **noncontributing buildings** should be designed to harmonize with the original building and to help the finished project better fit its **context**.

#### *Recommendations:*

#### **2.2.1** Relationship of addition to original building

Preference: Additions should be sympathetic and subordinate to the original design of the building.

#### **2.2.2** Relationship of finished building to **context**

Preference: Additions should help the finished building better fit its **context**.

### **Principle 3. Alterations of Contemporary Buildings**

A **contemporary building** should remain an expression of its time.

#### **Policy 3.1 Facade Alterations**

**Facade** alterations should be sympathetic and subordinate to the original design of the building.

#### **Policy 3.2 Building Additions**

Building additions should be sympathetic and subordinate to the building's **context**.

#### **Policy 3.3 Applicable Guidelines**

Guidelines for new buildings shall apply to **contemporary buildings**.



# Design Guidelines for New Buildings

## Principle 4. Building Height and Massing

**Height** and **massing** are important determinants of **compatibility**.

### Policy 4.1. Building Heights

To encourage new buildings and additions to existing buildings to reflect their **context**, the guidelines below specify requirements and preferences regarding **heights** of new buildings.

#### *Recommendations:*

##### 4.1.1 Measuring **heights**

Requirement: In all cases, the **height** of a building shall be measured according to the Denver Zoning Code, except that measurement shall be to the roof deck at the street **facade(s)**.

##### 4.1.2 Minimum **heights**

Preference: Buildings facing the 16th Street Mall should be at least four stories tall.

Preference: All other new buildings should be at least two stories tall.

##### 4.1.3 Maximum **height**

Requirement: Maximum **height** shall be 55 feet (not counting rooftop elements), except as provided as follows:

###### 4.1.3.1 Modest Exceptions

The **LDD/DRB** may grant a modest exception to the 55-foot **height** limit if the exception helps the proposed new building to be more in **context** with the nearby buildings due to alignments of cornices, windows, or sill or story courses. A modest exception does not exceed five feet.

###### 4.1.3.2 The Eighty-five Foot Exception

The **LDD/DRB** may grant an exception to the 55-foot **height** limit of up to an additional 30 feet, under the following conditions:

Requirement: The building must include residential uses in a minimum amount equal to the floor area over the 55-foot limit; these residential uses may be located anywhere in the building.

Requirement: The building must be in context.

Requirement: All other design guidelines for new construction shall apply to projects eligible for the eighty-five foot exception.

#### **4.1.3.3 The Fifteen Foot Residential Penthouse Exception**

The **LDD/DRB** may grant an exception of up to an additional 15 feet to the 85 foot **height** limit under the following conditions:

##### **Height**

The combined total height of the building and the residential penthouse may not penetrate the area above 100 feet.

##### **Use**

The **penthouse** shall be used exclusively for residential or residential support purposes.

##### **Coverage**

Maximum roof coverage shall not exceed one third of the roof deck.

##### **Stepbacks**

- X A stepback of at least 15 feet from any public street shall be required.
- X For buildings more than 75 feet wide, a stepback of at least 15 feet shall be required on side **elevations**.
- X Stepbacks on alleys shall be a minimum of 15 feet; the stepback can be reduced by one foot for each foot the building is set back from the alley lot line.
- X Stepbacks shall be measured from the outside face of, and perpendicular to, the exterior wall at which they begin.

## Compatibility

The **penthouse** shall be **compatible** with the rest of the building and with the building's context.

All other design guidelines for new construction shall apply to **Residential Penthouses**.

### 4.1.3.4 The 130 Foot Exception

The **LDD/DRB** may grant an exception to the 55-foot **height** limit of up to an additional 75 feet, under the following conditions:

#### Special Review Districts

In the following specially designated areas, building **height** may increase to 130 feet:

- The Market Street District - 18<sup>th</sup> Street to 19th Street, from the alley between Larimer and Market streets to the alley between Market and Blake streets.
- The 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall District - The first four lots on the north east side of 16th Street from the alley between Larimer and Market streets to Market Street, and the first four lots on the south west side of 16th Street from the alley between Larimer and Market streets to the alley between Blake and Wazee streets.
- The Postal Annex District - The postal annex block and the blocks to the south and west of it as far as the B-7 zone line

(For a discussion of the relationship between height and context in the Special Review Districts or **SRDs**, see Item B, Historic Preservation Section, Lower Downtown Neighborhood Plan.)

## *Requirements*

With the exception of height, the building must be in context.

When the building abuts a **contributing building** of 85 feet tall or less, the building shall not be higher than 85 feet for a horizontal distance of 25 feet from the **contributing building**.

The proposed building shall be constructed of superior-quality materials.

The building shall include residential uses in a minimum amount equal to the floor area over 55 feet, configured in any manner.

**Requirements (continued):**

If the building is in the 16th Street Mall District,

- it shall have entrances onto the mall.
- it shall be subject to the Sunlight on the Mall provisions of the zoning ordinance.
- it shall include residential uses in a minimum amount equal to the floor area over 85 feet, configured in any manner.
- the street level shall be devoted to retail space or art galleries.

If the building is in the Postal Annex District,

- the portion that **abuts** the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall shall be subject to the “Sunlight on the Mall” provisions.
- the portion that **abuts** the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall shall be devoted to retail space or art galleries.
- the portion that **abuts** Cherry Creek shall be subject to view corridor setbacks.

Projects eligible for the 130 foot exception shall be subject to special review procedures.

Residential or **mechanical penthouses** shall not penetrate the plane above 130 feet.

In addition to these requirements, all other design guidelines for new construction shall apply to projects proposed for any of the special review districts.

**4.1.4** Appearance of **height** in stories

Preference: The exterior expression of the 55-foot-high building should read as up to four stories.

Preference: The exterior expression of the 85-foot-high building should read as up to six stories.

**4.1.5** **Height** of rooftop structures and appurtenances

Requirement: No roof structure or appurtenance (e.g., elevator, **mechanical penthouse**, telecommunications equipment, stair towers, or mechanical equipment) shall exceed 15 feet in **height**, with the following exceptions:

- The **LDD/DRB** may grant a modest exception to the 15-foot limitation for elevator overruns and where the applicant demonstrates unusual conditions.
- The **LDD/DRB** may grant exceptions to the 15-foot limitation for certain roof structures and appurtenances. These include, but are not limited to, steeples, clock towers, water towers, or other significant architectural features.

Requirement: No roof structure or appurtenance (e.g., elevator, **mechanical penthouse**, telecommunications equipment, stair towers, or mechanical equipment) shall be closer than 15 feet to the street facade of the building, except that the **LDD/DRB** may grant a modest exceptions to the 15-foot setback if the applicant demonstrates unusual conditions.

Requirement: No roof structure or appurtenance may penetrate the 100' plane except ornamental features.

## **Policy 4.2. Building Massing**

Strong features of Lower Downtown's physical character are the rectilinear and blocky nature of its existing buildings and the area's block-alley-block pattern. New buildings shall be designed such that their **massing** is consistent and **compatible** with the historical **context**. Building **height** and building widths, and variations in them, are important aspects of **massing**.

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **4.2.1 Variations in height**

Preference: For a single building whose site is more than 100 feet in width along the street facade, height should be varied.

Preference: The variation of **height** should take place in 18- to 30-foot horizontal increments.

#### **4.2.2 Appearance of widths**

Requirement: Buildings shall not block alleys.

Requirement: The design of a facade shall not extend across alleys.

Requirement: Upper-level connections across alleys shall be consistent in size and location with existing historic connections.

Requirement: Upper-level connections across alleys shall be set back from the **facades** of the buildings which they connect.

Preference: The maximum width of a building or building segment along a named street should be 100 feet.

Preference: Upper level connections should be primarily for the purpose of circulation.

Preference: Upper level connections should not exceed twenty five feet in width.

## Principle 5. Building Design

The placement of architectural elements, that is, the **articulation** of visual features and forms, is very important to building in continuity and to the Lower Downtown physical experience. New building **facades** shall express the characteristic **articulation** of these features and forms in a manner **compatible** with the historic **context**. Other visible **elevations** such as walls found in alleys or side walls of buildings can be seen easily and contribute significantly to the overall impression of the built environment.

### Policy 5.1. Street Walls

Building placement on the site and the continuity of **facades** along the streets must reinforce the tradition of Lower Downtown's historic building fabric.

#### *Recommendations:*

##### 5.1.1 Continuity of street wall facade

Requirement: A continuous street wall shall be constructed along property lines facing public streets.

Preference: There should not be a setback in the facade below 55 feet.

Preference: Elements of a storefront's walls may be recessed up to 2 feet from the property line.

Preference: A storefront entry may be recessed 5 feet from the property line, or 3 feet from the face of the store front if the storefront has been recessed up to 2 feet.

Preference: Decorative elements that extend beyond the facade should be permitted.

Preference: Decorative elements that extend beyond the facade should not become a dominant feature of **facades**.

Preference: Decorative elements that extend beyond the **facade** should not extend to the ground level.

##### 5.1.2 Corner buildings

Requirement: The quality of design and materials for both street walls is equally important.

Requirement: Buildings located on corners at the intersection of streets shall emphasize the corner.



### 5.1.3 Floor-to-floor heights

Floor-to-floor heights as stated here serve facade-expression purposes (i.e., how the building looks from the street) and are not intended to be taken literally as measurements from an actual floor to an actual floor.

Preference: Street level minimum: 14 feet  
Upper level minimum: 11 feet \*

Preferences: Street level maximum: 20 feet  
Upper level maximum: 14 feet

\* See Design of Free-Standing Parking Structures, Rec. 9.2.2 for parking garage exception.

### 5.1.4 Borrowed light basements

Requirement: **Borrowed light basements** shall not be permitted.

## Policy 5.2. Non-Street Wall Elevations

Buildings often have more than one or two sides visible to the street; walls may also be visible from nearby buildings or rooftops. All visible **elevations** are crucial to Lower Downtown's character, and walls must be designed accordingly.

Historically, alley **facades** were the backs of buildings: where deliveries were made and trash disposed of. Their designs were a lesser priority than those of street **facades**, and they often looked more cluttered with smaller windows and a variety of materials, textures, setbacks, doors, docks and colors. In addition, alleys provided light and air. Today, alleys are well-used for many of the same purposes, but design treatment along them must also respect and respond to new uses, such as greater pedestrian activity, and to views from shops, restaurants, residences, and offices.

### *Recommendations:*

#### 5.2.1 Design of visible sidewall **elevations**

Requirement: Sidewall **facades**, whether seen from the street or nearby buildings, shall continue to reflect the **context** in which they exist and shall be **compatible** with the architecture of the street **facades**.

### 5.2.2 Alley elevations

Preference: Alley **elevations** should not be treated as **primary facades** and should be permitted greater freedom of expression than **primary** street wall **facades**.

Preference: Considerations should be made for providing trash enclosures and delivery areas, as well as fire escapes and electrical, telephone, and CATV pedestals, all of which take up considerable space that should not occupy alley rights-of-way.

### Policy 5.3. Facade Compositions

A building's **scale**, **articulation** and definition are critical factors in determining how well it fits its **context**.

#### *Recommendations:*

#### 5.3.1 Building **articulation** and definition

Requirement: A building's expression shall be composed of a base, a middle, and a top.

Requirement: The base shall include the street-level story or the first and second stories together.

Requirement: Building entries shall be articulated.

Requirement: The building shall have a consistent, **articulated** bay rhythm.

Preference: Vertical elements, such as columns, arches, vertical windows, and others, are strongly encouraged.

Preference: Architectural features, such as windows and doors, doorways, and courses, should be delineated.

Preference: The building should have a well-**articulated** top.

#### 5.3.2 Windows

Requirement: Windows shall be recessed at least one brick width.

Requirement: Windows shall have sills.

Requirement: Windows shall have transparent, nontinted, and nonreflective glass.

Requirement: Reflective or tinted film shall not be applied to glass.

Requirement: Window openings shall have vertical proportions.

Requirement: Window openings shall not create horizontal bands across **facades**.

Requirement: A minimum of two-thirds of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of street-level **facades** shall be transparent.

Preference: Street-level windows should be of the storefront or divided-light industrial types, with sills, and should begin no higher than two-and-a-half feet above the sidewalk.

Preference: Operable windows should be used above the first floor.

### 5.3.3 Balconies

Requirement: Balconies shall not be a dominant feature of **facades**.

Requirement: Balconies shall be located above the building's base.

Requirement: Balconies shall contribute to the horizontal and vertical expression of the building.

Requirement: Balconies shall not be continuous across the entire facade or elevation of the building.

Requirement: Railings on balconies shall be transparent.

Preference: Balconies should not be placed on **primary facades** below 55 feet.

Preference: Balconies should not exceed 10 feet in length

Preference: Balconies should not be set back into the facade of the building.

Preference: Balconies should not project more than 5 feet from the facade.

### 5.3.4 Scale

Requirement: Building **facades** shall be designed with appropriate **human scale** and **scaling elements**.

Preference: **Scaling elements** may include, but are not limited to, expressions of materials by means of texture, color, and size; **articulation** of floor lines and structural grids; attention to details, including **articulation** of doors, windows, and balconies; **articulation** of cornices and banding; use of color changes; and streetfront or storefront **articulation**, including the use of awnings, canopies, signs, transoms, and kick plates.

## Principle 6. Architectural Details, Materials, and Colors

A building's materials, details, and colors are important factors in establishing its **compatibility** with its **context**.

### Policy 6.1. Details and Elements

Appropriate use and detailing of architectural elements help create a building that is comfortable in its **context**.

#### *Recommendations:*

##### 6.1.1 Architectural Elements

Preference: The use of expressive architectural elements is encouraged. Examples include varied materials, columns, decorative relief, arches, and elaborate cornices and parapets.

### Policy 6.2. Materials and Craftsmanship

The materials currently existing in Lower Downtown are predominantly walls of brick masonry usually left natural, but sometimes painted.

#### *Recommendations:*

##### 6.2.1 Materials

Requirement: Traditional masonry (e.g., brick, stone, terra-cotta tile, or ceramic tile) shall be used for street **facades**.

Preference: Also appropriate are certain constrained uses of metals, such as steel lintels, cast iron columns, metal decorative elements, and wood trim at storefronts.

Preference: Nontraditional materials used on street **facades** should be **compatible** with the historic **context**.

##### 6.2.2 Craftsmanship

Preference: High quality craftsmanship is encouraged.

### **Policy 6.3. Color**

Color plays an important role in Lower Downtown, and attention must be paid to its use on the building.

#### ***Recommendations:***

##### **6.3.1 Painted Masonry**

Preference: Masonry should not be painted.

##### **6.3.2 Bright Colors**

Preference: Bright colors should only be used for accents and decorative details such as window details, storefronts, and entrances.

# Design Guidelines for All Buildings

## Principle 7. Building Awnings, and Lighting

Building awnings and lighting play an important role in helping establish the perceived liveliness and safety of Lower Downtown street life.

### Policy 7.1. Awnings

Awnings are like eyebrows over storefront windows: they help shade the merchandise from harsh sunlight and the observer from glare.

Materials, configuration, dimensions, and location of awnings must be appropriate to the building. For requirements related to awning signage, refer to Appendix A: Signs.

#### *Recommendations:*

##### **7.1.1** Design

Requirement: Awnings shall be designed as integral elements of building **façade**.

Preference: Awnings should be a minimum of three feet deep (front to back).

Preference: Awnings should be functional, actually offering people and merchandise shelter from rain and sun.

##### **7.1.2** Placement

Preference: A continuous band of awning should not obscure architectural details.

##### **7.1.3** Materials

Requirement: Awnings shall be constructed of traditional materials, such as fabric, metal and glass.

Requirement: Plastic awnings shall not be permitted.



## **Policy 7.2. Lighting**

All exterior lighting shall be of a relatively low level in keeping with the overall historic character of Lower Downtown.

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **7.2.1 Floodlighting**

Requirement: General floodlighting of any exterior building surface is not permitted.

#### **7.2.2 Exterior Downlighting**

Preference: Lighting of sidewalk surfaces shall be generally discouraged except at defined dining areas. Within these areas, lighting shall be kept at the lowest possible level.

## **Principle 8. Rooftops and Mechanical Elements**

All roof structures and appurtenances (e.g., elevators, **mechanical penthouses**, stair towers, and mechanical equipment) must work within the overall design of the building. They also offer opportunities to enhance the building's overall architectural effect.

### **Policy 8.1. General Design Considerations**

Rooftop elements pose special problems: historically, most were not screened, but neither were they generally visible from the street due to high cornices.

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **8.1.1 Rooftop Elements**

Requirement: Rooftop and mechanical elements shall not be placed on **penthouses**.

Preference: Rooftop elements should be neutral, unless another approach can be demonstrated as superior

Preference: Rooftop elements should be neutral unless they are a significant part of the facade or elevation design.

#### **8.1.2 Placement**

Requirement: Rooftop vents and other equipment that generates noise or odors shall be located away from neighboring residences or pedestrians.

Requirement: Noise from equipment, such as air conditioning units and cooling towers, shall comply with City ordinance.

Preference: If a **mechanical penthouse** enclosure is to be used to minimize noise from rooftop equipment, it should be integrated into the building's rooftop design.

### **8.1.3 Height Limits**

Requirement: **Height** limits for general roof structures and appurtenances are subject to provisions found in Policy 4.1.

### **8.1.4 Expression**

Preference: A wider range of forms and expression should be encouraged on **mechanical penthouses** than on the building proper.

## **Policy 8.2 Telecommunications Equipment**

Like other non-decorative rooftop appurtenances, telecommunications equipment must be unobtrusive.

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **8.2.1 Placement**

Requirement: Mounting telecommunications equipment shall be prohibited on the facade of any building.

Requirement: If telecommunications equipment is to be roof mounted, it shall be no closer than 15 feet from the street facade of the building.

Requirement: If telecommunications equipment is to be wall mounted, it shall be permitted only on the face of roof top appurtenances (stair, elevator, mechanical enclosures, etc.)

#### **8.2.2 Height**

Requirement: The **height** of telecommunications equipment shall not exceed the maximum **height** applicable to rooftop appurtenances. (See Design Guidelines for New Buildings, Rec. 4.1.5)

Requirement: The **height** of antennas, equipment boxes and screening shall remain below a view plane which starts at the outside edge of the parapet and slopes back and up at a 45 degree angle.

### **8.2.3 Screening**

Requirement: All equipment, roof and wall mounted, shall be grouped and **screened** (top and sides) within a single enclosure.

Requirement: **Screen** color shall match the basic building or roof top appurtenance color.

# Design Guidelines for Parking Uses

## Principle 9. Parking Structures and Parking in Other Buildings

It is important that parking garages and parking located in **mixed use** buildings be compatible with their **context** as defined in Lower Downtown's Neighborhood Plan.

### Policy 9.1. Considerations for All Parking Uses.

Space devoted to automobiles must contribute as much as possible to pleasant pedestrian experiences along Lower Downtown's streets.

#### *Recommendations:*

##### 9.1.1 Design

Requirement: On street-facing **elevations**, parking uses at grade or on the first level up shall be set back from the property lot lines a minimum of 16 feet.

Requirement: The set back from the street-facing property lot line to the start of the parking use shall be designed for retail or **active commercial uses**.

Requirement: Sloped ramps shall not be expressed on any **facade** of a building.

Preference: Parking should be located underground.

Preference: Above ground level, wrapping of parking uses with other uses is encouraged.

Preference: **Facades** enclosing parking uses should be attractive and **compatible** with surrounding buildings.

##### 9.1.2 Screening

To **screen** cars or parking means to visually obscure to a degree what is behind the **screen**. The intent is not to hide or make disappear the subject of the **screening**, but to diminish its prominence or push it visually into the background. The **screen** becomes the dominant focus instead of the subject behind it. A **screen** can be mostly solid or mostly transparent depending on the purpose it is to serve and the subject behind it.

Requirement: Parking ramps and parked cars shall be **screened** from public view and adjacent buildings.

Requirement: Top level parking shall be **screened**.

Preference: **Screening** of top level parking should result in a visually interesting roofscape.

### 9.1.3 Lighting

Requirement: To prevent glare, interior and exterior building lighting shall be **screened** from view from within neighboring buildings and from sidewalks.

Requirement: Car headlamps shall be **screened** from view from within neighboring buildings from sidewalks.

Requirement: Rooftop lighting shall be directed and **screened**.

Preference: Low level lighting on rooftops is preferred over pole lights.

### 9.1.4 Access

Requirement: Stairs and elevators that serve parking uses shall direct people to a prominent, well lit, and attractive pedestrian entries/exits to the street.

Requirement: Pedestrian entries shall be separate from vehicular entries.

Requirement: Curb cuts shall not flare.

Preference: Automobile ingress and egress should be located away from intersections.

Preference: Automobile ingress and egress should be located on the street with the least pedestrian traffic.

### 9.1.5 Mitigation Requirement

Requirement: Noise, light, and air pollution shall be mitigated.

## Policy 9.2 Design of Free-Standing Parking Structures

Free-standing parking structures must meet the same design guidelines as other buildings, as well as those applicable to parking structures in general, and the following special provisions:

### *Recommendations:*

#### 9.2.1 Maximum Height

Requirement: The maximum **height** of a free-standing parking structure shall be 55'.

### 9.2.2 Floor-to-floor heights

Requirement: The exterior expression of parking structures shall reflect minimum floor-to-floor **heights** on the first floor. (See Design Guidelines for New Buildings, Rec. 5.1.4)

Preference: On floors above the first floor, minimum floor-to-floor **heights** may vary from floor-to-floor **height** guidelines for other structures. (See Design Guidelines for New Buildings, Rec. 5.1.4)

### 9.2.3 Openings

Preference: Openings need not be glazed.

Preference: In the absence of storefronts on the ground level, architectural grillwork or other architecturally interesting, articulated walls are encouraged for non-street wall elevations.

### 9.2.4 Siting of parking structures

Preference: Parking structures should be neither less than 125 feet nor greater than 200 feet in width along a named street.

Preference: Use of corner sites for parking structures is discouraged.

Requirement: If a free-standing parking structure is constructed on a corner site, any ground floor street-facing **elevations** shall be wrapped in retail or other **active commercial use**.

Requirement: If a free-standing parking structure is constructed on a corner site, any street-facing second floor **elevations** must be wrapped in other than parking uses.

## Policy 9.3 Design of parking areas in mixed use buildings

In other than freestanding parking structures, the design of parking areas must be an integral element of the structure and shall comply, to the extent feasible, with guidelines for parking structures.

### *Recommendations:*

#### 9.3.1 Maximum floor area for parking uses

Requirement: No parking above grade shall occupy more than 50% of the gross floor area of a structure.

### 9.3.2 Parking uses above ground

Preference: Parking use should occur only at or below ground level.

### **Policy 9.4 Design of parking areas that abut existing residential uses.**

Managing the impacts of parking uses on neighboring residential uses requires sensitive and creative design.

#### ***Recommendations:***

#### **9.4.1 Mitigation Requirement**

Requirement: Noise, light, and air pollution shall be mitigated where residential occupancies **abut** parking uses, directly, across the street, or across the alley.

Preference: That portion of those walls located within 20 feet of residential units should not have open-to-the-air wall penetrations.

Preference: Those walls that face residential units should provide visual interest and vitality the entire length of the facade.

### **Policy 9.5 Off-street Parking**

The design goal of parking in Lower Downtown is to meet the needs of the neighborhood's users without causing the profile of buildings to negatively impact the historic character of the District.

## Design Guidelines for the Public Realm

Many of the principles, policies, requirements, and preferences stated below apply to both the public realm and the private sector. The importance of public seating, for example the reasons for it, locations for it, and its design and nature can be applied to the outdoor spaces that accompany privately owned buildings in Lower Downtown.

Quite often, too, improvements in the public realm will be paid for and designed by developers whose properties **abut** a public sidewalk, street, or alley. It is important that the developer understand what is expected in the course of developing the property.

### Principle 10 Streets and Sidewalks

Lower Downtown's streets and sidewalks are its primary open spaces and the sites of most social contacts a result, in part, of the ease of walking in Lower Downtown. Providing innumerable opportunities for meeting and visiting with friends and strangers, the many sidewalks and streets are also, in effect, the living rooms of the neighborhood.

#### Policy 10.1 Pedestrian Friendly Design

An active street is one of the primary goals of all the design guidelines. If a building cannot provide such opportunities at the time it is to be constructed, the building should be designed for future transition to such **active uses**.

#### *Recommendations:*

##### 10.1.1 First Floor Facades

Requirement: The first floor **facade** of a building shall be designed to be **pedestrian friendly**.

##### 10.1.2 Housing and Office Uses at Street Level

Preference: If housing is to be accommodated on the street-level, live/work spaces rather than live-only spaces should be provided.

Preference: If office use is to be accommodated on the street-level, uses with active foot traffic and display windows are encouraged.



## **Policy 10.2 Streetscapes**

The City of Denver's *Streetscape Design Guidelines for Lower Downtown* includes a master plan for curb-to-curb street widths and the widths of sidewalks, as well as for street trees and lighting. Every property abutting public rights-of-way is required to meet certain development standards.

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **10.2.1 Streetscape Development Agreements**

Requirement: All new and redeveloping buildings shall have an approved Streetscape Development Agreement that complies with the *Streetscape Design Guidelines for Lower Downtown*.

#### **10.2.2 Materials**

Preference: Concrete, brick, and stone should be used for sidewalk paving.

Preference: The stone blocks and cobblestones found in Lower Downtown's streets should be preserved.

## **Policy 10.3 Public Seating**

Public seating is a crucial factor in a civil cityscape: no one should wander the streets whether shopping, chatting, or eating without a place to rest. To suit its purpose, seating must be well thought-out and properly placed. But because seating in a city center is often so rare, most people . . . will sit where there are places to sit (William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*).

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **10.3.1 Provide seating**

Preference: Seating, in the form of benches, planters, kiosks, leaning rails, or other workable elements should be provided in sufficient quantities and at appropriate locations.

#### **10.3.2 Design**

Preference: Seating should be at least 16 inches deep, or, if the seating has backs, 14 inches deep with the backs at least 12 inches high.

Preference: Seating heights should not be less than 12 inches nor more than 30 inches above the adjacent walking surface.

## **Policy 10.4 Sidewalk Merchant Zones**

The sidewalk is the realm of the pedestrian. But other uses can peacefully coexist, provided certain considerations are made and rules followed.

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **10.4.1 Restaurants and dining**

Requirement: Railings shall enclose dining areas.

Requirement: No features of a dining area shall overhang the boundary defined in its revocable permit.

Requirement: Railing design shall be reviewed and approved by the **LDD/DRB**.

#### **10.4.2 Other sidewalk vendors**

Requirement: Sidewalk vendors shall not block the pedestrian way.

Requirement: Sidewalk vendors shall not despoil the sidewalks with grease, litter or other debris.

## **Principle 11 Alleys**

Attention to alleys is essential to maintaining Lower Downtown's historic character. Alleys are a part of the Lower Downtown open-space network and, like streets and sidewalks, play a vital role in the circulation of the district. And like streets, they offer opportunities for spontaneity and a variety of experiences.

### **Policy 11.1 The Importance of Alleys**

Alleys are a critical thread in the district's fabric and thus must be preserved, enhanced, and used.

#### ***Recommendations:***

##### **11.1.1 Alleys must be alleys**

Requirement: Alleys shall remain open for public use.

Requirement: Alleys shall offer the primary access to a building's services including trash collection, deliveries and pick-ups, and electrical transformers, TV cable, telephone, and other utilities as well as access to limited parking.

Requirement: The lighting of alleys shall keep safety in mind without permitting glare into nearby residential units.

#### **11.1.2** Alleys offer opportunities for adjacent properties

Preference: Buildings should open onto alleys.

Preference: Open spaces or courtyards off alleys should be open visually to the alleys.

## **Principle 12. Open Spaces**

Open spaces such as parks or simply leftover spaces in the urban fabric nearly all have the potential to be well-used outdoor places.

These guidelines apply both to public open space (e.g., on public property or rights-of-way) and to private open space (e.g., plazas or courtyards between buildings or inside a building complex with some public access).

### **Policy 12.1. Open Space Design Criteria**

Open spaces are necessary and valuable in the urban **context**, but they are not all equally good. Making a good open-space area takes considerable thought and design.

#### ***Recommendations:***

##### **12.1.1** General considerations

Requirement: All private open-space plans shall be approved by the **LDD/DRB**.

Preference: Open spaces, as defined herein, should provide opportunities for seating, landscaping, and varieties of paving.

Preference: Breezes and sunlight, where an element of the environment, should be incorporated into open space design.

Preference: Opportunities for food and eating should be offered wherever possible.

##### **12.1.2** Open spaces and buildings

Requirement: All open spaces shall be considered an integral part of a project's design.

Requirement: Buildings facing onto open space shall support and contribute to that open space in its functional and facade design, especially at ground level.

Preference: Generally, the greater the degree of enclosure, the greater the participant's feeling of being a part of the open space.

Preference: A building's width and **height** should both contribute to an open space's feeling of proper enclosure.

Preference: Reflected light from nearby buildings should be incorporated into open space design.

### **Principle 13. Public Art**

Public art is that extra something that brings people together for a moment or longer, sparks conversation, and enlivens the urban experience for all. For requirements related to works of art that is also signage, refer to Appendix A: Signs.

#### **Policy 13.1. Encourage Public Art**

Private and public property owners and developers should investigate all opportunities and, where feasible, should incorporate art into their projects.

## Change history to design guidelines

May 16, 2002: Original adoption of design guidelines

June 19, 2007: Addition of section 1.1.7 addressing windows

November 6, 2014: Minor revisions and formatting; addition of Appendix A on signs. (The revised document supersedes the following policy previously adopted by the Lower Downtown Design Review Board: *Administrative Review for Signs in the Lower Downtown Historic District – 2013.*)

Adopted by the Lower Downtown Design Review Board on November 6, 2014

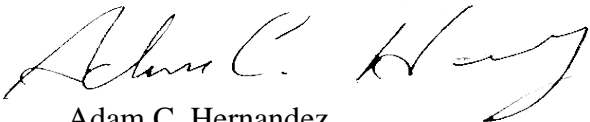
Approval by the Chair of the Lower Downtown Design Review Board:



Arther T. Cowperthwaite

Date: 11/14/14

Approval by the City Attorney for Legality:



Adam C. Hernandez

Date: 11/14/14

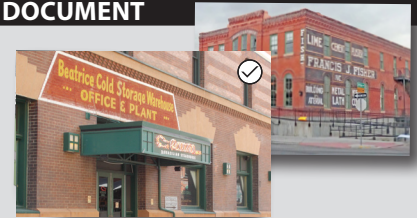
# APPENDIX A: STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS

## *Lower Downtown Historic District*

This chapter includes:

- Introduction .....Page A-2
- Format of the Standards and Guidelines .....Page A-3
- Overall Signage Considerations ..... Page A-4
- Landmark Design Review ..... Page A-6
- Sign Hierarchy ..... Page A-8
- Sign Planning and Design ..... Page A-8
- Treatment of Historic Signs .....Page A-15
- Sign Types .....Page A-16
  - Wall Signs .....Page A-18
  - Canopy and Awning Signs .....Page A-19
  - Arcade Signs..... Page A-20
  - Window and Door Signage.....Page A-21
  - Projecting Signs ..... Page A-22
- Temporary Signs..... Page A-23
- Works of Art Signage..... Page A-24

### ILLUSTRATIONS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT



*The design guidelines include many photographs and diagrams to illustrate acceptable or unacceptable approaches. The illustrations are provided as examples and are not intended to indicate the only options.*

*If there appears to be a conflict between the text of the design guidelines and a related illustration, the text shall prevail.*

### KEY TO ILLUSTRATION SYMBOLS



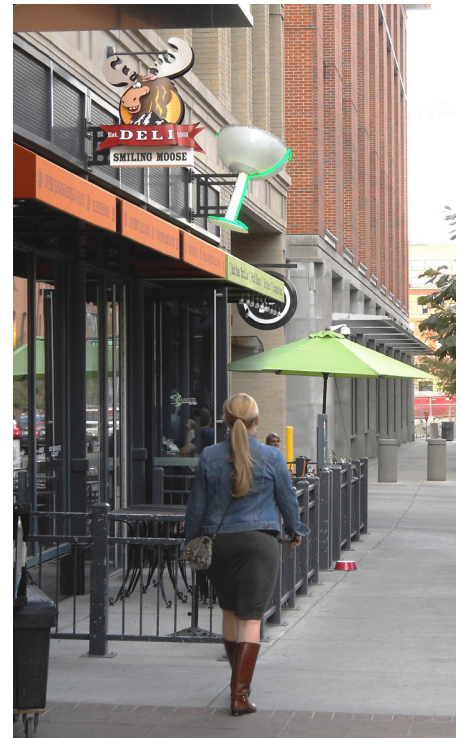
**A checkmark** on an illustration indicates an approach that is generally appropriate.



**An X mark** on an illustration indicates an approach that is generally inappropriate.



Historic photo looking up 17th Street from Union Station, ca. 1901, courtesy of Denver Public Library, L.C. McClure Collection, Call No. MCC-9.



Signs add to the vibrancy and character of the Lower Downtown Historic District (LoDo). Creative and whimsical signage brands LoDo as a unique and lively Denver neighborhood, and is consistent with the district’s legacy of varied commercial signage.

In LoDo, signs are intended to:

- Help establish and reinforce the perceived liveliness and safety of lower downtown street life
- Promote neighborhood-serving and one-of-a-kind retail
- Enhance the district’s pedestrian-friendly and human scale architecture
- Promote district variety and quality, expressed in architectural elements, textures, materials and details

- Preserve and highlight the unique historic character of the district
- Preserve the grittiness and authenticity of Lower Downtown’s commercial and industrial past

*(Sources: The Lower Downtown Neighborhood Plan, 2000; Lower Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines, as amended)*

For businesses, signs are essential. Signage plays an important role in identifying the location of a business and attracting customers. Signs should be both integral to a building’s design and noticeable to customers.

This Appendix provides standards and guidelines for signage within LoDo and should be used in concert with the Lower Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines. These guidelines are intended to encourage signs that create

a lively pedestrian-friendly atmosphere while also respecting the district’s unique industrial and commercial heritage. These standards and guidelines cover:

- **Signage planning** including the number and types of signs, lighting, installation of signs, and coordinating signage to be consistent with building and district character. A sign hierarchy illustration is included in Figure 1 on page A-8.
- **The treatment of historic signs**
- **The location and design review of new signs** including standards and guidelines for different sign types. An illustration showing typical sign types in LoDo is shown in Figure 2 on pages A-16 and A-17.
- **Temporary Signs**, including banners and sandwich boards.
- **Works of Art Signage**



# Format of the Standards and Guidelines



Four components - Principles, Intent Statements, Design Standards and Design Guidelines - work together to set a framework for evaluating signage in LoDo. The purpose is to meet district goals, while also encouraging creativity and flexibility. Exceptions to the Design Standards and Design Guidelines may be granted if more appropriate solutions, consistent with the Guiding Principles and Intent Statements, are achieved. It is the applicant's responsibility to show that alternative solutions are consistent with and effectively implement the expressed Guiding Principles and Intent.

Photographs and illustrations are included to further expand the standards and guidelines, and to visually delineate examples.

The sign evaluation framework includes:

## 1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles are a set of overarching principles that express the overall goals for all signage in the district.

## 2. INTENT STATEMENTS

Intent Statements establish objectives for each sign topic. In circumstances where the appropriateness or applicability of a Design Standard or Design Guideline is in question, the Intent Statements will provide additional direction.

## 3. DESIGN STANDARDS

Design Standards are specific criteria that provide direction for achieving the Intent Statements. Standards denote issues that are considered essential. Design Standards are the equivalent of the "Requirements" delineated in the Lower Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines.

## 4. DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design Guidelines delineate preferred approaches and practices to achieve the objectives set forth in the Intent Statements. Guidelines are relevant and often important to achieving the Intent Statement, and are pertinent to the review process.



# Overall Signage Considerations



1. This signage was installed to limit impacts to character defining features of the building, such as the cast iron columns.



2. This building has an original sign band centered over the front door which would be a good signage location for a future user.

## OVERALL SIGNAGE CONSIDERATIONS

When planning signage for a building:

### 1. Establish objectives for signage

Signage should provide clear, legible information about a business while also appealing to prospective customers. A signage plan should demonstrate forethought in the design, size, placement and graphic format of each sign to ensure an integrated signage strategy and design. Every proposed sign should have a purpose. Refer to the sign hierarchy in Figure 1 on page A-8 to help plan signs for historic buildings and districts.

### 2. Limit impacts on character-defining features

A building's historic architecture, such as its cast iron columns and decorative banding, is important to protect. These features may also be a major draw to customers and provide a unique business identity. Plan signage to highlight, rather than cover or physically impact, these elements.

### 3. Find original sign locations on a building

Step back and examine a building from across the street. Does it have a recessed or framed horizontal band over the storefront or below the roof parapet? Does the building have large shop windows? Many historic and even modern buildings are designed with sign bands. Similarly, large shop windows were intended for pedestrian scale advertising. Use of these originally designed sign spaces will ensure that new signage is well integrated into a building's architecture.



# Overall Signage Considerations (continued)

## OVERALL SIGNAGE CONSIDERATIONS (CONTINUED)

### 4. Ensure sign compatibility with building and site

Consider what type and size of signage would best fit the architecture and scale of a historic building. What signage would best relate to a building's original vertical and horizontal patterns? Are the proposed signs made of high quality materials that correspond with the building and its surroundings? Appropriately placed and sized signage, crafted of durable materials, can reinforce the architecture of a historic building and its surroundings, and attract customers. Conversely, maximizing signage may often lead to visual clutter that does not promote business activity.

### 5. Consider impacts on the block

Is the building located in a historic district next to other historic buildings? Is the building in a residential setting? Consider placing signs at the same height and similar façade locations as adjacent commercial buildings to provide an integrated block appearance. When located next to residential uses, consider the visual impact, as well as the potential "light spray" impacts, of signage.

### 6. Create graphic interest

A generic sign box does little to acknowledge a business' location in a unique historic district or on an historic landmark site. Ensure that any proposed signage lives up to its historic landmark or district location, and is distinctive. In most cases, this translates into signage that is creative and visually interesting, providing pedestrians with a sense of curiosity and delight.



3. Ensure sign compatibility with building and site. Due to the building's architectural details, this building offered few locations for signage. The awning and window signage reinforces the building's architecture.



4. While a close replication of a historic sign, this signage is distinctive and visually interesting.



# Landmark Design Review



5. Examples of signs approved through an administrative review process.

Historic design review and approval is required for signs similar to other projects in the district. Landmark design review of signs follows the design review process delineated in Chapter 30 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code and other policies adopted by the Lower Downtown Design Review Board (the Board).

Applicants complete and submit a landmark sign review application and checklist to begin the design review process. Landmark preservation staff reviews applications for completeness and conformance with these standards and guidelines. Signs not conforming to these design standards or guidelines also require Board consideration.

Comprehensive sign plans and projecting signs require design review and approval by the Board. See "Comprehensive Sign Plans" to the right.

## ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

Small signs that meet landmark design guidelines may be administratively approved by city staff.

This includes wall, window, door, awning and arcade signs that meet these design standards and guidelines and all other city requirements, such as zoning.

All other signs require Board approval. Landmark preservation staff is solely responsible for determining whether the sign design standards and guidelines are met. Examples of signs eligible for administrative review are shown on this page.

## COMPREHENSIVE SIGN PLANS

Three types of Comprehensive Sign Plans are reviewed by the Board:

**Projecting signs:** Required when projecting signs are proposed for a multi-use building. The review is needed to ensure a balanced and coordinated system of signs; to avoid visual clutter; and to encourage expressive, high quality graphics that enhance the urban pedestrian environment. Refer to Article 10.10.16 of the Denver Zoning Code.

**Large facilities:** An owner of a large facility (such as a building with minimum ground floor area of 50,000 square feet) can propose a comprehensive sign plan when more flexibility in size, types and location of signage is desired. Signs must meet certain criteria relating to design excellence, quality of materials, and other factors. Refer to Article 10.10.3.3 of the Denver Zoning Code.

**Upper story signage:** Required when upper story signage is requested. Refer to page A-14.

## Landmark Design Review (continued)



6. The Lower Downtown Design Review Board considers all proposals for projecting signs.

### ZONING AND PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Signage proposals must meet zoning requirements for the lower downtown zone district. The Denver Zoning Code provides standards and requirements for signs throughout the city. Article 10 of the Denver Zoning Code sets forth base standards for signs, including permitted sign types, locations, quantity, area, height and illumination.

Most signs require zoning permits to ensure compliance with lower downtown zone district sign requirements. For more information on signage that does not require design review or permits, see “No Permits Required” to the right for more information.

Some sign types allowed by zoning may not be appropriate for a historic building. Historic design review supplements zoning requirements and, at times, may be more restrictive. Historic design review may result in less signage (smaller signs, fewer signs, etc.) than allowed by zoning.

The Denver Zoning Code prohibits some sign types in Lower Downtown. These include:

- Rooftop signs
- Signs that flash, blink or fluctuate, or which are animated
- Signs advertising a business at an address other than the location where sign is installed (off-site advertising)
- Temporary banners and signage mounted perpendicular to the wall, on upper floors or railings in public rights-of-way.
- Commercial flags

For more information refer to the Denver Zoning Code.

Additional city permits and approvals may also apply. See “Denver Sign Permitting” to the right for more information.

### DENVER SIGN PERMITTING

In addition to landmark design review, most signs in the district and require a zoning permit. Additional permits and approvals may also be needed, depending on the sign type and design, including:

- » Construction permits
- » Electrical permits
- » Public Works Encumbrance permits (sign poles and posts in public rights-of-way)
- » Public Works Occupancy permits (temporary signs)

Denver’s Development Services has published a customer guide on signage to help applicants plan sign projects, and to navigate design review and permit requirements.

### NO PERMITS REQUIRED

Some signs can be installed without design review or zoning permits, including:

- » One or two small signs, 4 square feet or less in size, per street front on a first-floor window, door or wall, limited to the name and/or address of the occupant. Transparent rather than solid signs are preferred if installed on windows and doors.
- » Temporary banners or bills for 45 days or less advertising an event or product at the same address. Must be located at ground level windows or walls, and not on railings in public rights-of-way. Size limits apply.
- » Other temporary signs allowed by the Denver Zoning Code, such as small for lease or for sale signs, and directional signage subject to size, lighting and other requirements.





## Figure 1 • Sign Hierarchy

When planning signage for commercial buildings it is important to understand the purpose that each sign can play, and to consider the hierarchy and scale of signs types, messages and designs. “Layering” information will help visitors obtain the information they need, while also ensuring that every proposed sign has an objective. With a few exceptions, most building signage plans should provide for both primary and secondary signage. This signage should be attractive and visually interesting. Iconic shaped signs add an extra layer of artistry and appeal, and can help to convey the unique personality and character of the building occupant.

**1. Primary signage** – limited size, strategically placed, typically viewed from longer distances, often located above entrance or storefront. Typically 1 sign per business.



**2. Secondary signage** – typically provides additional information at smaller size than primary signage. Viewed from shorter distances, smaller in scale and at pedestrian level. Typically 1 to 3 signs per business.



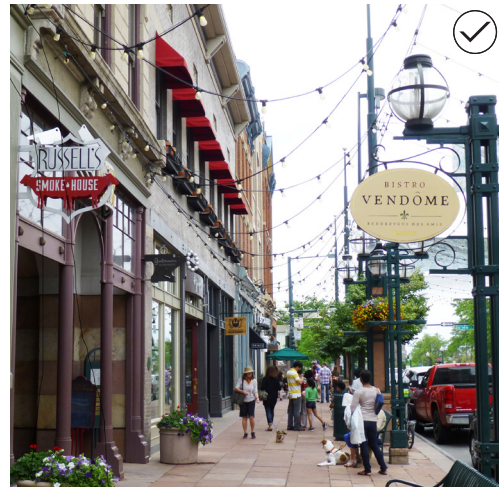
**3. Iconic signage** – creates visual interest for pedestrians and enhances the urban environment. Viewed from walkable distances, small to medium scale projecting shape signs, with artistic three-dimensional imagery. Typically 1 sign per business.



# Sign Planning and Design



7. Use a variety of sign types to create visual interest. This business used a projecting iconic sign, an awning sign and window signage.



8. The projecting signs on this block are of similar size and all mounted at the same height.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1a To encourage diverse signage that attracts customers and enhances the pedestrian experience
- 1b To create a visually-interesting and lively streetscape
- 1c To plan signage that works in concert with historic building and historic district character
- 1d To preserve authenticity of Lower Downtown's commercial and industrial past
- 1e To plan signage to support the mixed use character of the district, including residential uses

## INTENT STATEMENT

- 1.1 Plan signage on a building and site carefully, following the Overall Signage Considerations on pp. A-4 and A-5, and the Signage Hierarchy on p. A-8.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 1.1a Ensure that design, size, placement and graphic format of signs are integrated and compatible with the building and site.
- 1.1b Coordinate signage size, location, materials and placement on a building to correlate with other adjacent buildings and the surrounding context.
- 1.1c Design signage to attract customers, but to also be subordinate to the historic architecture and surroundings, and compatible with surrounding uses.
- 1.1d Design wayfinding signage to correspond with the design, materials and quality of other signage on a building or site, but at the minimum size necessary to achieve wayfinding goals.
- 1.1e Design signs that comply with zoning requirements, including the special provisions in Article 10 of the Denver Zoning Code that call for projecting signs to be iconic, vibrant and sculptural.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 1.1f Use a variety of signage types to create visual interest and appeal following the sign hierarchy diagram in Figure 1, page A-8.
- 1.1g Convey new information for each additional sign type added in order to create visual interest and prevent sign redundancy.
- 1.1h Avoid ground-mounted signs except for wayfinding and unusual circumstances.

# Sign Planning and Design (continued)



9. Coordinate sign locations, types and sizes to create consistency among multiple tenants in one building, such as the multiple retail tenants in this building.



10. Create signs that are attractive and readable during the day and at night. This sign is not very readable in the day time.

## INTENT STATEMENT

1.2 Design signs to enhance impact on the pedestrian realm, not to maximize square footage or number of signs allowed by zoning.

1.2a Design signs to be human-scaled rather than automobile-oriented so they are easily viewed by pedestrians at sidewalk level.

1.2b Create signs that are attractive and readable during the day and at night.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

1.2c Use signs to highlight pedestrian entrances to businesses and multi-family buildings.

1.2d Provide small pedestrian-friendly signs off alleys when customers are anticipated to access alleys for services. (Consider truck traffic, garbage pick-up and security in design and placement of signage.)

1.2.e Consider street trees and other streetscape amenities when determining signage design and placement.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

1.3a Coordinate sign locations, types and sizes to create consistency in business identification among multiple tenants.

1.3b Do not use projecting signs for tenants without direct street access.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

1.3c Use a tenant panel or directory sign at first floor level to identify upper-floor tenants. Refer to 6 on page A-16.

1.3d Do not use more than three sign types per tenant and/or building if possible.

## INTENT STATEMENT

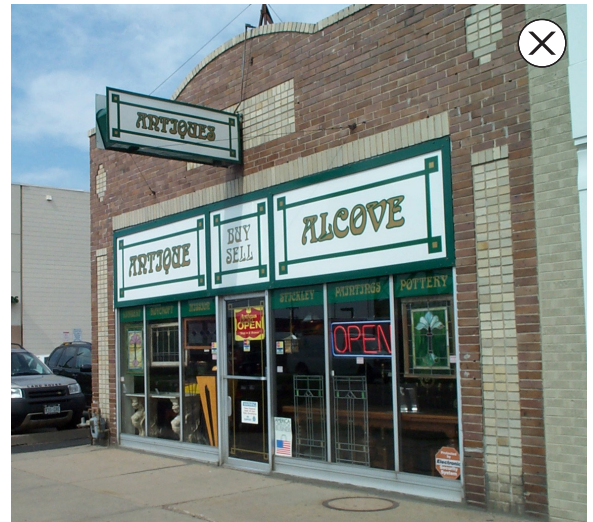
1.3 Coordinate signage on buildings with multiple tenants.



# Sign Planning and Design (continued)



11. Locate signs at or near the business entry.



12. Do not remove, alter, cover or visually obstruct historic architectural features, such as windows, columns or decorative horizontal banding.

## INTENT STATEMENT

- 1.4 Locate signage on a commercial building consistent with traditional signage patterns.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 1.4a Locate signs at the pedestrian first-floor level of the building at or near the business entry.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 1.4b Place a sign above or near the primary entrance to an establishment, preferably in a traditional location such as a historic sign band to avoid obscuring architectural details.
- 1.4c Integrate signage into the architectural design of new buildings, particularly sign bands and canopies at building entries. Use an existing sign bracket, if possible.

## INTENT STATEMENT

- 1.5 Plan signage to emphasize and reinforce a building's architecture.



13. Design signs to reinforce a building's architectural features such as this transparent sign located in a historic sign band.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 1.5a Design signs to be in scale with and in proportion with a building's facade and its historic context.
- 1.5b Do not remove, alter, cover or visually obstruct historic architectural features, such as windows, columns or decorative horizontal banding.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 1.5c Design signs to reinforce a building's articulation and rhythm, and architectural features.



## Sign Planning and Design (continued)



14. These photos show well crafted signs of high quality construction with durable finishes.



15. Remove remnants of old signage that will not be reused, including brackets and exposed conduit.

### INTENT STATEMENT

- 1.6 Design signs to minimize visual clutter.

### DESIGN STANDARDS

- 1.6a When planning signage for a new use, remove remnants of old signage that will not be reused, such as sign brackets and conduit, and appropriately patch any resulting damage or holes.

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 1.6b Maximize sign impact and minimize visual clutter by limiting the number of signs per use to three signs whenever possible.
- 1.6c Do not overpower a historic building or district with repetitive signs on a historic façade or site.

### INTENT STATEMENT

- 1.7 Create signs using high quality materials and finishes that complement the durable materials found on historic buildings.

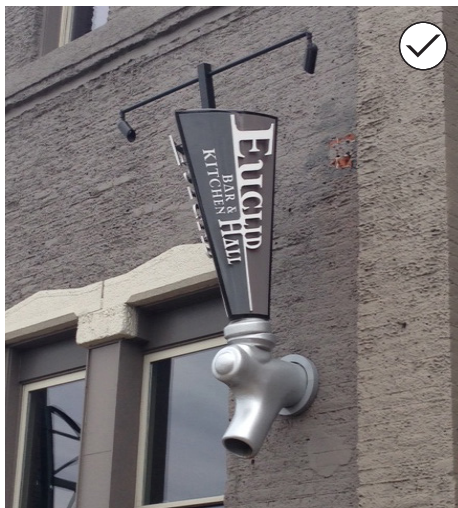
### DESIGN STANDARDS

- 1.7a Use permanent, durable materials such as metals, metal composites, and other high quality materials.
- 1.7b Do not use signs with plastic faces, although acrylic may be used for lettering and logos adhered to storefront windows and doors.
- 1.7c Create well crafted signs of high quality construction with durable finishes.

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 1.7d Avoid using reflective materials.
- 1.7e Use newly created materials if they meet the intent of the design guidelines in this chapter.

# Sign Planning and Design (continued)



16. Direct lighting toward a sign from an external shielded lamp if possible. Use simply designed unobtrusive lamps, such as these contemporary fixtures.



17. Use halo (left), LED and neon lighting (right) for signs when externally focused lighting is not possible.



## INTENT STATEMENT

- 1.8 Preserve the character-defining features of a historic building when installing a sign.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 1.8a Limit physical damage to historic buildings caused by the installation of signs.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 1.8b Install sign brackets into mortar joints or wood materials, rather than into masonry or cast iron, whenever possible.
- 1.8c Minimize the number of sign anchor points when mounting into masonry if no other option exists.
- 1.8d Use an existing sign bracket, if possible.

## INTENT STATEMENT

- 1.9 Locate and design sign illumination to minimize impacts on a historic building and its surrounding context.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 1.9a Do not use an internally-lit plastic or glowing box.
- 1.9b Locate the power source for signs so that it is not visible on a building façade.
- 1.9c Do not install exposed conduit, races or junction boxes on the primary elevation of a building.
- 1.9d Do not cast light on adjacent properties or upper-floor residences.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 1.9e Direct lighting toward a sign from an external shielded lamp if possible.
- 1.9f Use simply designed unobtrusive lamps, such as goose neck lamps or simple contemporary fixtures, for external lighting sources.
- 1.9g Use halo, LED or exposed neon for lighting signs when externally focused lighting is not possible.
- 1.9h Use a warm temperature of light, similar to daylight.
- 1.9i Ensure lighting type, design, size and numbers correspond with signage and building design.



18. Examples of signs that meet the Design Standards for upper story signs.

## INTENT STATEMENT

1.10 To allow upper story signage in unusual cases to acknowledge a signature tenant, while also ensuring that the overall signage program enhances the pedestrian streetscape.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 1.10a Upper story signage will only be considered as part of a Comprehensive Sign Plan for a building. All upper story signs are subject to Board approval.
- 1.10b Only a single signature tenant, such as a user which occupies all or the majority of a building, qualifies for upper level signage.
- 1.10c Only consider upper story signs for contemporary or non-contributing buildings when all of the following apply:
  - (1) Standards 1.10a – b above are met, as well as other Sign Standards and Guidelines in this Appendix,
  - (2) Proposal is for an unlit flush-mounted or painted wall sign,
  - (2) Sign design is integrated into a building's architecture,
  - (3) Limited to primary elevation(s), with a maximum of 1 sign per building (or major building component),
  - (4) Signage is located just below the roof line consistent with the district's historic character, and
  - (5) Signage is of simple design and minimal size needed to provide readable signage within the district.
- 1.10d Only consider upper story wall signs for primary facades of historic buildings when all of the following apply:
  - (1) Standards 1.10a – b above are met, as well as other Sign Standards and Guidelines in this Appendix,
  - (2) A historic sign band is present and the proposed signage is located within this band,
  - (3) Historically significant signage will not be removed or covered, and
  - (4) Proposal is for an unlit flush-mounted (typically individual letters) painted wall sign.
- 1.10e Only consider upper story signs for side elevations of historic buildings when all of the following apply:
  - (1) 1.10a – b above are met, as well as other Sign Standards and Guidelines in this Appendix,
  - (2) Proposal is an unlit painted wall sign on a previously painted or covered non-decorative wall surface,
  - (3) Limited to 1 per building side, with placement just below roof line consistent with the district's historic character,
  - (4) Signage is well-designed and compatible with the scale and architecture of the building, and
  - (5) Signage will not cover or visually compete with historic features or signage.





19. Leave a historic painted “ghost” sign exposed.



20. Retain and repair historic signs, such as neon signs.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE

2a To preserve historic signs in order to maintain the character and history of Denver’s historic commercial buildings and districts

### INTENT STATEMENT

2.1 Maintain an existing historic sign.

### PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC SIGNS

*For more information on the preservation of historic signs, refer to National Park Service Preservation Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs.*

### DESIGN STANDARDS

2.1a Retain an existing historic sign, generally regarded as a sign located on a building for 50 years or more where one or more of the following applies:

- (1) Associated with historic figures, events or places,
- (2) Provides evidence of the history of the product, business or service advertised,
- (3) Contributes to the history of the building, surroundings or historic district,
- (4) Integral to the building’s design or physical fabric,
- (5) Attached in a way that removal could harm the integrity of a historic property’s design or damage its materials,
- (6) An outstanding example of the sign maker’s art because of its craftsmanship, use of materials or design, or
- (7) Recognized as a popular focal point in the community.

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

2.1b Repair and keep historic signs, such as neon signs, functional whenever possible. Encourage replication or recreation of missing historic signage when all of the following applies:

- (1) The signage contributes to the history of the building, surroundings or historic district,
- (2) The recreation of this signage will not physically damage historic building materials or require removal of other historic building features that have significance in their own right,
- (3) The signage is reasonably associated with the new use,
- (4) The missing signage is well-documented and sufficient information exists to accurately recreate it, and
- (5) The signage is compatible with historic building architecture.

### INTENT STATEMENT

2.2 Preserve a historic painted wall sign.

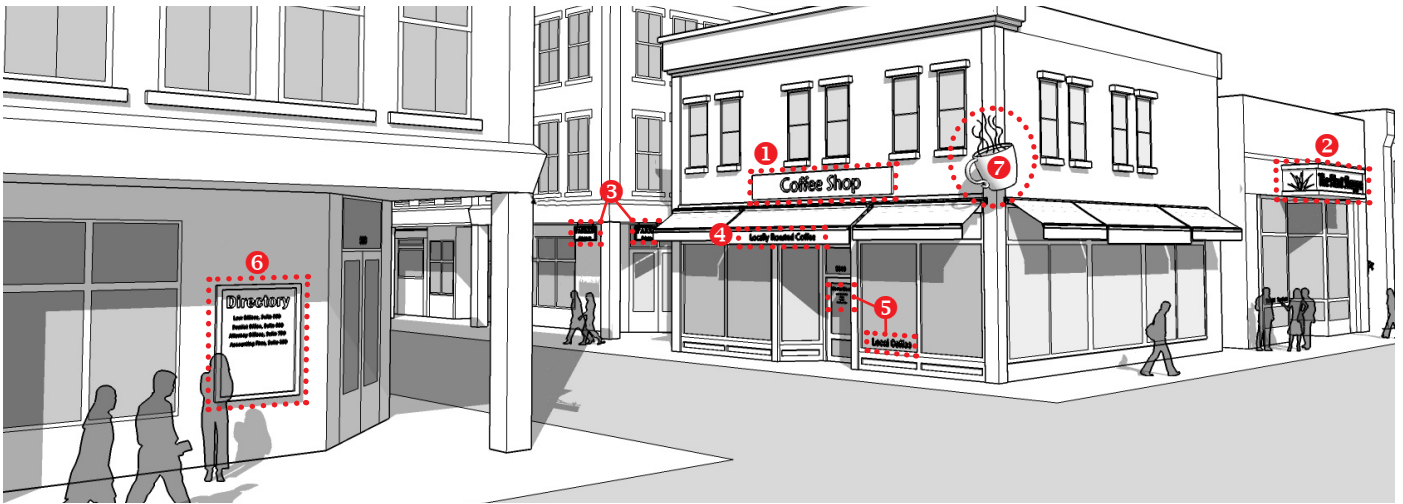
### DESIGN GUIDELINES

2.2a Leave a historic painted wall sign, or “ghost sign” exposed.

2.2b Do not restore a historic wall sign unless the sign is in extremely poor condition since over-restoration can cause confusion over the age of the building and the sign, and the time period featured in the sign.

## Figure 2 • Sign Types for Commercial Buildings

Traditional sign types in Denver are illustrated below and on the following page. The sign types are described for informational purposes and do not necessarily illustrate sign locations or designs that would be compatible for all specific circumstances. Most commercial buildings should have both primary and secondary signage. Refer to the sign hierarchy in Figure 1 on page A-8 for more information.



### PRIMARY SIGNAGE

#### 1. Wall Sign

A sign attached to or painted on the outside of a building. Wall signs are typically mounted flush in the traditional sign band above a storefront. Other wall signs can be mounted flush or within 2 feet of the wall surface per zoning requirements.



#### 2. Canopy Sign

A sign printed or affixed to the surface of a canopy or attached to a canopy, often providing functional shade and protection. Typically found over entrances for commercial warehouse buildings.



#### 3. Arcade Sign

A sign attached to the roof or wall of an arcade and located totally within the outside limits of the arcade structure. Arcade signs are typically unlit or externally lit two-dimensional signs 6 square feet or less in size. These signs can be mounted either parallel to the wall in an entry arcade or perpendicular to the wall in a longer arcade.





## SECONDARY SIGNAGE

## FIG. 2 (CONTINUED)

### 4. Awning Sign

A sign printed or affixed to the surface of an awning. The signage lettering appears incidental and is limited to 10 square feet per awning face. Awning signage may be primary signage in some cases.



### 5. Window and Door Signs

A sign or symbol located on a window pane or within 3 feet of the interior of a business intended to be seen from the street. Typically provides secondary information and comprises 15 percent or less of each window's area.



### 6. Directory Sign

A wall or ground sign indicating the names and locations of three or more building tenants on a consolidated panel. Also called a joint identification sign.



## ICONIC SIGNAGE

### 7. Projecting Shaped Signs

An iconographic three-dimensional sign attached to and projecting from the wall of a building, typically perpendicular to a facade. These signs are restricted to first floor level and are typically 12 square feet or less in face area. See "Special Provisions for Projecting Signs" on page A-22.



## WORKS OF ART

A painting or mural located on the side of a building provided the city considers it a work of art, generally with no more than 5 percent of the sign area displaying the business name or logo.



## TEMPORARY SIGNS

Temporary banners or bills installed at or on ground level windows or walls, for 45 days or less. Also, sandwich boards, which require permits from Public Works and have size, mounting and location requirements. Size limits and other restrictions apply per zoning and Public Works requirements.





21. When using an existing sign band, provide space between the sign and the sign band edge. Keep sign flush with painted or pin mounted letters.



22. A slightly arched sign can still be considered a wall sign if it extends off the wall plane by 2 feet or less. This wall sign does not obstruct architectural details of the building.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE

3a To ensure wall sign designs enhance the architectural character of a building and its context.

## INTENT STATEMENT

3.1 Design wall signs to compliment a historic building

## PROHIBITED SIGN TYPES

Certain sign types are not allowed by the Denver Zoning Code. These include:

- » *Rooftop signs.*
- » *Signs that flash, blink, fluctuate or which are animated (specific exceptions apply).*
- » *Signage advertising products or services via a television set or monitor mounted in or on a storefront.*
- » *Digital reader signage.*
- » *Temporary banners on upper floors or railings in public rights-of-way.*
- » *Signs advertising a business or product available at a different or off-site location.*

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 3.1a When using an existing sign band, provide space between the sign and the sign band border or edge to follow a traditional application.
- 3.1b When using an existing sign band, keep signage flush to the wall surface.
- 3.1c Do not design wall signs that project in front of adjacent architectural details, such as a wall band frame.
- 3.1d Do not use internally lit boxes.
- 3.1e Mount directory signs for upper-story tenant on wall next to entry providing access to these businesses.
- 3.1f Ensure signage is compatible with building architecture. Refer to Sign Planning and Design on pp. A-9 through A-11.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 3.1g Limit wall signs to 1 sign per building façade, except for unusual circumstances as denoted in these Standards and Guidelines, with sign size and design in scale with building architecture and surrounding context.
- 3.1h Use wall signs in combination with a projecting sign or window signage.
- 3.1i Painted, individually lettered or solid backed wall signs made of one or two durable materials, such as aluminum, bronze or high quality manmade materials, are generally appropriate.
- 3.1j When designing signs outside of sign bands, signs can have a little more depth, typically up to 3-1/2 inches. Deeper signs often have a clunky appearance and are not subordinate to the architectural details of the structure.
- 3.1k Consider a slightly arched wall sign that is not flush on the wall, extending up to 2' off the wall plane, on a large undecorated wall surface outside of a wall band.
- 3.1l Design directory signs as flush-mounted unlit or externally lit signs.





23. Use a canopy sign on a warehouse or industrial building where one would be traditionally found.



24. Use traditional triangular shaped awnings comprised of high quality canvas to frame a storefront window or door.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4a To accent and reinforce historic architectural features with canopy and awning signage

4b To avoid adversely affecting the character of a historic building or district when adding canopy and awning signage

## INTENT STATEMENT

4.1 Use canopy signs to accent entries.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 4.1a Use a canopy where one existed historically or on warehouse and industrial buildings where one would be traditionally found.
- 4.1b Do not cover or remove architectural details when mounting signage to a historic canopy.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 4.1c Use canopy signs as primary or secondary signage.
- 4.1d When adding signage to canopies, either keep signage contained within the outer limits of the canopy or mount above or below canopy.

## INTENT STATEMENT

4.2 Use awning signage to enhance storefront.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 4.2a Limit signage on awnings to text and logos on bottom horizontal band of awning of front face of awning (not on awning returns), and to 10 square feet in area per awning face.
- 4.2b Do not use arched or bubble shaped awnings.
- 4.2c Use high quality canvas and similar high quality materials for awnings.
- 4.2d Do not use plastic or shiny materials for awnings.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 4.2e Use awnings as secondary signage to accent an entry or window.
- 4.2f Use traditional triangular shaped awnings to frame a storefront window or door.
- 4.2g Use awnings as primary signage in unusual circumstances only.
- 4.2h Ensure that awning signs have a minimum 3' depth to provide a traditional appearance and to offer shade for merchandise and pedestrians alike.





25. The photo shows a traditional arcade sign hanging perpendicular to the wall.



26. An arcade sign may be mounted parallel to the building front inside an entry arcade.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE

5a To complement the architecture of a pedestrian arcade with compatible arcade signage

## INTENT STATEMENT

5.1 Use arcade signs for businesses with entries located through arcades

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 5.1a Hang signs from arcade roofs using simple brackets and either unlit or indirectly lit.
- 5.1b Keep arcade sign shapes simple when hanging perpendicular to a wall plane underneath a long arcade.
- 5.1c Design hanging arcade signs to fit within the columns and/or walls supporting the arcade, and to provide significant space between the sign and the columns and/or walls supporting the arcade.
- 5.1d Do not cover columns, supports or other architectural details.
- 5.1e Do not mount signage to decorative columns, supports or other architectural details of the structure or arcade.
- 5.1f Ensure signage is scaled to be compatible with architectural features.
- 5.1g An arcade sign may be mounted parallel to the building front inside an entry arcade.
- 5.1h If lighting is desired, use unobtrusive indirect lighting.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

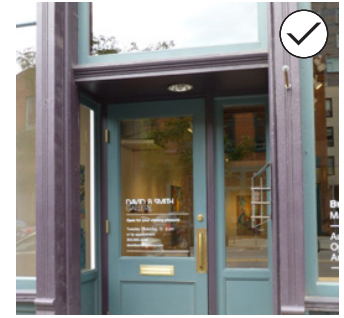
- 5.1i Limit hanging arcade signs to one per business, typically no more than 6 square feet in size and no more than 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches in depth.
- 5.1j Consider a wall sign at a recessed entry (sign is parallel to wall), particularly when there are limited opportunities for primary signage elsewhere on the building. In these cases:
  - (1) Design well crafted artful signs, preferably with artful shapes.
  - (2) Do not design signs that cover or obstruct views of architectural features.
  - (3) Light externally if possible. If internal lighting is preferred, use halo lighting with a hidden or unobtrusive light source, and a slender design, generally inches 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches depth or less.



27. Use window signage to provide supplemental information not available on other sign types.



28. When designing a window sign, limit opaque and solid materials to no more than 10 percent of the sign area to avoid blocking visibility in and out of the window.



29. Use door signage to provide basic business information. Individual or printed lettering is recommended.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

6a To create pedestrian interest with informative and visually appealing window and door signage

6b To prevent visual clutter, and ensure high visibility both in and out of a storefront

## INTENT STATEMENT

6.1 Use storefront windows as supplemental signage while also maintaining transparency to and from a business.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 6.1a Plan window signage to draw the pedestrian's eye into a business and to create additional interest.
- 6.1b Ensure that signage covers no more than 20 percent of a window area to ensure visual transparency in and out of shop windows.
- 6.1c Limit opaque and solid materials to no more than 10 percent of a window's area, and place appropriately to avoid blocking visibility in and out of a window.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 6.1d Use painted, individual lettering or other transparent forms, rather than signs with solid backing or banding in most cases.
- 6.1e Use window signage to provide supplemental information on products, services and atmosphere such as "Fresh Oysters, Fine Dining and Fun Times," not available on other sign types.
- 6.1f Avoid repeating business wording and logos in every window when this information already exists on other signs.

## INTENT STATEMENT

6.2 Apply simple business identificationsignage to entry doors.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 6.2a Use door signage to identify business name, address, hours of operation and a possible logo if needed.
- 6.2.1b Limit signage on doors to 4 square feet in area.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 6.2c Use individual or printed lettering with clear backing applied to glass, rather than solid backed signs if possible.



30. Projecting iconic signs should be three-dimensional objects which are sculptural. These signs display abstracted and exaggerated forms.



31. Create eye-catching and well-crafted three-dimensional objects for iconic projecting signage. This sign contains more literal images of the service provided by this tenant.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE

7a To enliven the pedestrian environment with unique, expressive and iconic shaped signage

7b To ensure projecting signs match the architectural quality and materials of historic buildings, and reinforce historic building and district character

## INTENT STATEMENTS

7.1 Design projecting signs to be three-dimensional iconographic and vibrant images to enhance the pedestrian experience

## DESIGN STANDARDS

7.1a Create eye-catching and well-crafted three-dimensional objects to portray a business' persona or service with as few words as possible.

7.1b Keep wording and logos to a minimum on a three-dimensional object, but ensure any wording is readable. The sign should not be the main business signage for the use.

7.1c Propose projecting signs to be sculptural, three-dimensional objects which are either literal forms or abstracted interpretations.

7.1d Limit rectangular forms, cut-out logos or built-up layers of flat stock to the minority of the overall sign area.

7.1e Locate projecting shaped signs at or immediately above ground level, advertising uses with direct street level access (e.g., ground floor, garden level, etc.)

## SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR PROJECTING SIGNS

*The Denver Zoning Code allows projecting signs for most commercial areas in the city. Historic building occupants located in LoDo must use projecting iconic shaped signs when projecting signs are desired. These signs help to create a unique downtown shopping and commercial experience. Additional information on allowed sign types can be found in the Denver Zoning Code.*

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

7.1f Design shaped signs so that the image, rather than words, are visible from the street or further down the block.

7.1g Abstracted, exaggerated or embellished interpretations of literal forms are preferred.

7.1h Design projecting signs to be a maximum of 12 square feet in surface area.

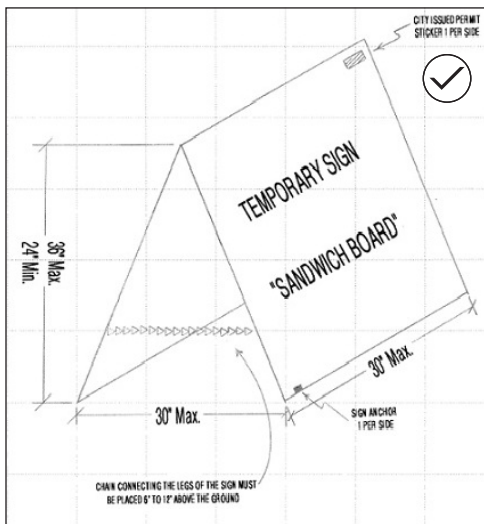
7.1i Limit shaped projecting signs to one per façade or business, except for corner buildings where visibility cannot be gained from both streets without an additional sign.

7.1j Use simple bracket designs that serve as a backdrop to hold the three-dimensional imagery.

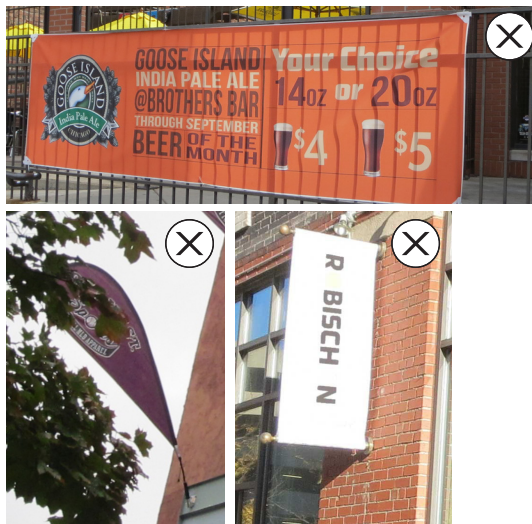
7.1k For lighting, refer to guidelines 1.9a-i.



# Temporary Signs



32. Mount small sandwich boards on public sidewalks and ensure they are weighted down and permitted.



33. Do not install sign types, such as commercial flags and projecting banners. Do not install banners on railings in public rights-of-way.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE

- 8a. To accommodate temporary signs to meet business needs while not compromising the visual quality of the district
- 8b. To ensure that temporary signs comply with city zoning and permitting requirements

## INTENT STATEMENTS

- 8.1 Design temporary signage to enhance and not detract from district's historic character

## DESIGN STANDARDS

- 8.1a Mount sandwich boards on public sidewalks to be a maximum of 3 feet above grade and 30" wide, and ensure they are weighted down. Additional permit and requirements apply per Department of Public Works.
- 8.1b Do not install sandwich boards or other portable signage on private property per zoning requirements.
- 8.1c Ensure that temporary banner, bills and signage are located on ground level windows and walls.
- 8.1d Ensure that temporary signage meets size and time limits set out by the Denver Zoning Code.
- 8.1e Do not install temporary banners or bills on upper floors or railings in public rights-of-way.
- 8.1f Obtain zoning permits and landmark design review when required. Refer to "No Permits Required" and "Denver Sign Permitting" on p. A-7.
- 8.1g Do not use temporary sign types prohibited by zoning requirements. Refer to Page A-7 for more information.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 8.1h Use sandwich boards with a finished and high-quality appearance, such as painted wood or anodized aluminum frames.
- 8.1i Avoid rough-cut plywood, plastic frames, vinyl, plastic or highly reflective materials.
- 8.1j Design and construct temporary signs that are consistent with the quality of signage and buildings materials in the district.

# Works of Art



32. Design public art signage to be primarily artistic in nature and add to blank stuccoed wall surfaces.



33. When installing works of art, do not damage significant historical materials, such as brick walls. In the example above, the mural is painted on a canvas, rather than directly onto the brick walls.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE

9a To encourage public art consistent with Principle 13 of the Design Guidelines for Lower Downtown Historic District

9b. To add public art signage to blank building walls to enliven the urban streetscape and reinforce the district's identity as an arts district

## INTENT STATEMENTS

9.1 Encourage signage that qualifies as works of art, while also preserving historic building materials, fabric and design.

## WORKS OF ART SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS

*Public Art signage must meet the definition of "works of public art" set out in Section 20-86 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code. Section 10.10.3.2 of the Denver Zoning Code includes additional requirements for art that also advertise a business or sponsoring organization. Public works of art signage requires zoning approval and permit. Denver Arts and Venues will also need to verify that the proposed signage qualifies as a "works of public art."*

## DESIGN STANDARDS

9.1a Design public art signage to be primarily artistic in nature.

9.1b Ensure that signage meets zoning requirements for works of art, and the "works of public art" definitions found in the Denver Municipal Code. See "Works of Art Signage Requirements" below.

9.1c Limit the name or logo of a sponsoring organization to no more than 5 percent of the sign area. Consult the Denver Zoning Code for more information.

9.1d When designing and installing works of art signage, do not damage significant historic materials, such as brick walls, or obscure a building's architectural features.

9.1e. Do not paint signage onto unpainted brick or masonry walls.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

9.1f Add public art signage to stuccoed and other blank wall surfaces, such as walls facing side-streets, parking lots, and alleys.