

Guidelines for Signage on Heritage Buildings



'Signage' is defined as lettered or symbolic messages affixed or adhered to heritage buildings, including billboards, banners, flags, awnings, canopies, marquees, plaques, signboards, painted signs, hanging or projecting signs, fascia signs and rooftop signs.

The City of Winnipeg adopts a simple rule of thumb: the less intrusive a sign, the better. Appropriate new signage is a minimal intervention, utilizes gentlest means, and does not damage or obscure character-defining elements.

	Recommended	Not Recommended
1	Recreating missing signage where sufficient physical or documentary evidence exists, and the building's current use allows. (Note: not applicable to historical painted-on signage. Refer to Guideline 7 below).	Installing signage for which there is insufficient physical or documentary evidence.
2	Using signage of a scale and design that is compatible with the historic building and its context.	Introducing a new design that is dominant, overpowering and incompatible in size, scale, material, style or colour with the historic building and its context.
3	Using lighting to illuminate signage with fixtures and light temperatures that are in keeping with the restoration period or compatible with the historic building.	Using lighting that is incompatible with the restoration period or with the historic building (i.e. high lumens (very bright) and cool blue in colour).
4	Using high quality and durable materials compatible with the building's period and style.	Using materials such as acrylic panels, plastics, and other materials that are not compatible with the building's period, style, and context.
5	Locating signage in appropriate areas such as on the building's original signage band.	Placing a sign so that it obscures or conceals a significant element on the building or its neighbour.
6	Mounting into existing anchor holes or making new ones in mortar joints. Mounting details may require the seal of a professional engineering consultant.	Anchoring signs into faces of the masonry units. Installing signage without consulting with a professional engineering consultant.
7	Retain existing painted-on signage as is, even if it has faded. Do not repaint these to make them look new. The weathered sign is likely a character-defining element.	Repainting or removing existing painted-on signage. Applying new painted-on signage to unpainted masonry walls.

Guidelines for Signage on Heritage Buildings Continued

Permits

The City of Winnipeg monitors the installation of signage on designated heritage buildings, called Listed Historical Resources, in an effort to ensure best practices in the conservation of our historic stock. New signage on a heritage building will require an application for a Heritage Permit and subject to review by Department staff and/or the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

Signs on buildings located within the Downtown boundary are also subject to review and permit issued by the Zoning Office and the Urban Design Unit. These are separate processes from Heritage Permitting. For information, contact the Zoning and Permits office at 204-986-5140.

Signage installation may only proceed after a Heritage Permit and other signage permits are obtained.

Sign Design

Signage should be sensitive to a building's character. To foster this, applicants are welcome to contact Heritage Unit staff at any point to discuss ideas or submit informal designs for review.

Digital signs are not permitted on designated heritage buildings under the Downtown Zoning By-law.

Sign Location & Installation

In general, the placement of a sign must heed heritage design guidelines and other by-laws (e.g. for instance, as per the Downtown Zoning By-law, use identification signs within the Character Sector, including the Exchange District, must be located below 25 feet in height). Signage not meeting zoning by-law regulations will need to apply for a variance.

Installation should cause as little damage as possible to the building's original materials - improperly installed signs can cause irreversible damage to the building envelope. If holes exist from previous signage, applicants are encouraged to reuse those. Anchors should always be installed into mortar joints rather than into masonry units.

In order to prevent improper installation, the submission of mounting details is mandatory for the issuance of a Heritage Permit. The details should outline the sign's appearance: dimensions, material, colours, etc. as well as summarize the anchor assembly, including quantity, size, amount and type of anchors, and where the proposed signage will be located. Photos, shop drawings, renderings, etc. are all acceptable forms for conveying these details. Refer to Heritage Review Application Requirements, available online.

Other Information

Painted-on signs dating from a significant era of the building's history are generally considered character-defining elements and should be retained to preserve the building's distinct identity.

Owners of buildings with multiple signs are encouraged to develop a signage master plan for best look.

Most local sign companies are familiar with the City of Winnipeg's signage requirements and can be of great help when designing and installing signage, as well securing permits.

For more information please contact: Heritage Unit
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204-986-4722
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