POLICIES OF THE READING BOARD OF HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

SIGNS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Signs play a vital role in both identifying a property and contributing to the image of a neighborhood. The signage in a commercial district changes often as the district evolves and businesses change hands. Design guidelines are necessary to provide standards for designing and erecting signs within the City's four (4) historic districts. Although the City's Sign Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance were written to establish minimum standards, some of the guidelines in this policy may in fact be more stringent.

1.2 All signs (including temporary signs) to be located in the four [4] Reading Historic Districts (Callowhill, Centre Park, Prince and Penn's Common) require HARB approval. Some signs which have a relatively minor impact on a district may be approved by Reading's Historic Preservation Specialist (at his/her discretion). Examples are:

- The change of a sign face on an already existing sign
- Minor changes to an existing blade sign
- Vinyl cling signs
- Sandwich board signs
- Hours of operation and/or open signs
- Temporary signs

1.3 The Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings" (the Standards) identify two (2) primary standards that directly influence the treatment of secondary design elements, such as signs.

a. First, the distinctive features, which are important in defining the historic character of the individual property and the overall neighborhood, should be identified, retained and preserved by establishing limitations on size, number and location. Signs can be incorporated so that those features are not obscured or destroyed.

b. Second, the addition of signs should be compatible with the massing, scale, size, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of both the property and neighborhood.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Sign: Any text or graphic representation used to promote or convey a message pertaining to a business, residence, or other information.
2.2 Sign Area: The area within a single, continuous perimeter enclosing the most extreme limits of the sign, including the background or frame that distinguishes the sign from its structural support.
2.3 Window sign: Any type of temporary or permanent sign installed in a window consisting of, but not limited to a vinyl or solid material. Window signs may include but are not limited to: the business name, "OPEN" signs, signs posting hours of operation, or signs noting credit cards accepted.
2.4 Wall sign: Is a sign that is mounted on a building facade often located in the signboard area above a storefront window.
2.5 Projecting sign (sometimes called a blade sign): A sign with the same graphic presented on both sides that hangs perpendicular to the building facade.
2.6 Awning sign: A sign that is integral to an awning usually consisting of lettering that is printed or painted onto the valance (drop) or on the shed surface.
2.7 Individual letter sign: A sign comprised of individual letters that are mounted to a sign board or building facade.
2.8 Sandwich board sign (sometimes called an a-frame sign): A free standing temporary sign displayed outside a business during business hours to advertise hours of operation, an event or a promotion and is not intended as permanent signage.
2.9 Box sign: A sign that has one or two faces mounted in a box or frame that may have interior illumination.
2.10 Banner: A type of sign that is made of a flexible material. Banners are typically not allowed by Zoning as a permanent sign.
2.11 Temporary sign: A sign of any material that is placed for no more than 30 days.

3. REQUIREMENTS

3.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

a. The purpose of signs should be primarily for identification and not for advertizing services or products. The sign message should be kept as simple as possible and include the business name and logo and other appropriate graphics such as borders.
b. Businesses are limited to one wall sign or window sign, plus one projecting sign.
c. The maximum square footage of a sign (height x length) should not exceed the dimension of the width of the property frontage multiplied by two (2).
d. Signs should never obscure architectural details or features, particularly windows.
e. The design, scale, shape and the sign material should reflect the business and be compatible with the building style and overall character of the block.
f. Signs should be limited to two (2) or three (3) colors that compliment the building.
g. Signs must be made of durable materials and kept in good condition. They may be painted or stained wood (not plywood), anodized aluminum, painted metal or a weather resistant sign board material such as MDO (medium density overlay, HDPE (high-density polyethylene), or HDU (high density

urethane). Wooden signs are preferred.

h. Lettering should be limited in size (no larger than 10" tall) and coverage. The lettering style should be compatible with the building. Serif typefaces are recommended to be used for text, with the exception that sans serif typefaces may be used when integral to an official company graphic symbol or logo, or when in keeping with the architectural style of the building.
i. Within thirty (30) days of terminating occupancy of a property, a tenant or owner should remove all signs associated with their former occupancy and repair underlying building surfaces as required. The Board may grant approval for the preservation of existing signs beyond thirty (30) days of terminating occupancy at their discretion and in accordance with the Standards. Failure to remove existing signs does not constitute grounds for approval of future applications for the reuse of existing signage.
j. Signs left by a prior occupant are not considered approved and must be submitted for approval as a new sign for a new occupant or business.
k. Off-premise advertising signs are not permitted.
l. Roof top signs are not permitted.
m. Flashing, blinking or electronically moving signs of any kind are not permitted.
n. Moving parts of any kind such as ribbons, streamers or spinners are prohibited.
o. Hardware for signs should be installed with care so as to limit damage to the building façade. In the case of a masonry building, hardware should be anchored into mortar joints.

3.2 SIGNS MOUNTED ON A FAÇADE

a. Areas above storefront display windows and entrances and below second floor window sills are preferred for primary identification signs.
b. The space between rows of windows on upper floors is appropriate for small signs.
c. Small signs on upper story windows are appropriate for identification of upstairs tenants.

3.3 PROJECTING SIGNS

a. Projecting signs must be hung so that the bottom of the sign is no less than 8' above the sidewalk and projects no further than 42" from the building.
b. Hardware for projecting signs should be integrated into the architecture.
c. Projecting signs should be limited to the first story or the area above the storefront display windows and entrances, and below second floor window sills.

3.4 WINDOW SIGNS

a. Permanent window signs may not cover more than 30% of a display window glass as required by zoning regulations.
b. Identification window signs on a display window are limited to a maximum of 10" letters.
c. Window signs must not be opaque or obscure displays.
d. Windows should not be cluttered with advertisements. A minimum of 50% of each storefront window must be un-littered with products and window signs that would limit view of the interior space from the sidewalk.
e. Any sign that is located within 24" of a display window shall be considered a window sign.

3.5 SANDWICH BOARD AND SIDEWALK SIGNS

a. Free-standing sandwich board and sidewalk signs are permitted but shall be

limited to one per business and may be displayed only during normal business hours as long as they do not obstruct the public right-of-way.

b. Placement of sandwich board and sidewalk signs in the public right-of-way must allow a minimum of 5' of unobstructed sidewalk clearance. They must also be reviewed by the Public Works Department.
c. Sandwich board and sidewalk signs must be stable and weighted so as to be windproof.

3.6 SIGN LIGHTING

a. Lighting of signs should be warm and illuminate the sign area only. Exterior illuminated signs are encouraged. External spot lights or gooseneck lights are generally approved.
b. Interior illuminated plastic or box signs, LED or neon signs are discouraged.

3.7 AWNING SIGNAGE

a. Awning signs may not have internal illumination.
b. The business name and logo may be incorporated into the design of canopies and awnings.

3.8 TEMPORARY SIGNS

a. The purpose of temporary signs should be primarily to identify special on-premise services or events (Grand Opening, Sale, etc.).
b. All general recommendations (see section 3.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS) apply to temporary signs.
c. Temporary signs are limited to one wall mounted or window sign per façade.
d. Temporary signs may be displayed for a period of 30 consecutive days in any 6 month interval.
e. Temporary signs are limited in size to 30% of the area of a display window or 12 square feet whichever is smaller.
f. The location of temporary signs is limited to the first floor portion of the facade or in the signboard area below the second floor window and must be securely fastened to building.
g. Temporary sandwich board signs in public rights-of-way must be reviewed by Public Works Department
h. Temporary banners, which span the airspace above a public right-of-way, are limited to 100 square feet of total area. The sign design and method of fastening must be reviewed and approved by the Public Works Department. Temporary signs suspended above a State highway also require Penn Dot approval.

4. SUBMITTALS:

4.1 The following submission requirements for signage shall be submitted for review and approval by the HARB:

a. A photograph of the entire façade of the building (from the sidewalk to the highest point of the roof).
b. Scaled dimensioned drawings for the proposed sign showing lettering font, size and design.
c. A façade drawing or rendering with the sign sized and located as proposed.
d. If the sign is a window sign the size of the display window must be included.
e. The colors of the sign must be indicated in the drawings or renderings and color chips supplied.
f. If lighting is proposed, a manufacturer's product data sheet or catalog page

must be submitted showing the type, size, and color of the light fixture. In addition, the location of the light fixtures must be indicated on the façade drawing or rendering.

4.2 The submission requirements for signage that can be reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation Specialist are the same as above.

(Adopted July 15, 2014)