

## 7. *Guidelines for Building Accessories and Signs*

*Building accessories* are items attached to or located near buildings that are intended to increase comfort or convenience; improve safety or access; or support building systems. Building accessories also include signs, which identify the use of a building or site or for marketing. Building accessories that may negatively impact the historical character of a building and the streetscape should be placed inside the building, if possible, or in areas not readily visible from the public way.

### A. **Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs)**

- (1) **Definition.** Automatic teller machines, or ATMs, are unstaffed, electronic banking facilities that are generally available at all hours. An ATM may be a panel that is installed in a vestibule or on the façade of a building, frequently at banks.
- (2) **Required review.** An ATM proposed for the exterior of a building requires Commission approval. Those located inside a building do not require Commission review.
- (3) **Incompatible with Historic District.** ATMs are generally incompatible with the character of the Historic District and their placement should be carefully considered prior to undergoing any rehabilitation project. The installation of ATMs can disrupt the streetscape by replacing historic character-defining open storefronts with solid panels or by causing irreversible damage to historic materials. For these reasons, every effort should be made to install an ATM on the interior of a building. If an ATM cannot be located on the interior, they should be installed in a manner that is reversible and does not damage or obscure a character-defining feature of the building. ATMs should be installed on the sides and rears of buildings whenever possible.

### B. **Night Depositories**

- (1) **Definition.** A night depository is a small opening in a bank wall that houses a receptacle for making deposits when the bank is closed. In historic banks they generally were installed on a street-facing elevation, often near the main entrance. Night depositories have been evident on Frederick banks at least since the early twentieth century.
- (2) **Review Required.** Night depositories require Commission approval prior to installation.
- (3) **Placement.** Night depositories must be installed where they do not damage or conceal character-defining architectural elements. If installed in a masonry wall, the night depository should correspond with the mortar joints. Night depositories installed in new construction should correspond with the placement of historic night depositories.
- (4) **Size.** The size of night depositories should correspond to the size of historic night depositories.
- (5) **Materials.** Night depositories must be fabricated from metal, with a finish that matches other metallic finishes on the building or, in the absence of other metallic finishes on the building, a finish that is compatible with the wall material.

### C. **Telecommunication Accessories**

- (1) **Definition.** Telecommunication accessories are those devices necessary for transmission of telephone and television signals; cellular data; internet connections including Wi-Fi; and related services.

- (2) **Placement.** Telecommunication accessories must be installed in the least obtrusive location possible in order to minimize visibility from the street and so that they do not detract from the setting or streetscape. Telecommunication accessories can often be installed in several locations on a property and still received the necessary signals or service. It is the responsibility of the property owner or applicant to inform installers of the regulations pertaining to the Historic District.
- (3) **Size.** All telecommunication accessories shall be the smallest size possible, consistent with the requirements for reception and transmission. Some flexibility may be granted when such structures will be installed in locations not visible from the street.
- (4) **Screening.** The Commission may require a telecommunication accessory to be screened to minimize impacts to historic buildings and the streetscape. Screening methods may include, but are not limited to, partitions, panels, or cabinets. Plant materials may be appropriate in some cases, but should always be utilized in conjunction with a permanent screening method.
- (5) **Color.** When attached to a building, telecommunication accessories shall match the predominant color of the underlying surface. Free-standing telecommunication accessories should have a finish color that reduces its visual prominence in the streetscape or landscape.

#### **D. Utility Boxes and Meters**

- (1) **Definition.** Utility boxes and meters are used to monitor the use of gas, water, electricity, and other related services.
- (2) **Placement.** The Commission will only approve the installation of a new utility box or meter on the front of a building if no other option is available. The Commission may require documentation supporting a request to install a utility box or meter on the front of a building including evidence that alternatives are technically infeasible.
- (3) **Screening.** In some situations the Commission may require the utility box or meter to be screened from view from the public right-of-way.
- (4) **Painting utility boxes.** The Commission may require boxes and meters to be painted to match the building.
- (5) **Junction boxes.** Junction boxes placed by utility companies must be approved by the Commission and must be screened from view from the public right-of-way by the applicant, to the extent possible.

#### **E. Vending Machines**

- (1) **Definition.** Vending machines are stations for purchasing or dispensing small-scale items. They are usually free-standing, box-shaped objects.
- (2) **Limits of approval.** City code does not permit vending machines on streets and sidewalks in the Historic District. Vending machines on private property must be placed so that they are not visible from the street.
- (3) **Newspaper boxes.** Newspaper boxes are exempt from review by City code.

#### **F. Literature Racks**

- (1) **Definition.** Literature racks, usually made of wood, metal, or plastic, are stands intended to store pamphlets, newspapers, flyers, and other papers for public distribution.
- (2) **Placement.** The Commission will not approve permanently installed literature racks on a public way or where they are visible from a public way.

## G. Accessories to Improve Access for the Disabled

- (1) **Definition.** Accessories that enhance access for disabled people include, but are not limited to, ramps, railing, and new entrances.
- (2) **Compliance with ADA.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) establishes standards for accommodating the movement of disabled people to and through buildings. ADA requirements should be met in a manner that results in the least amount of damage to historic buildings, while providing adequate access to the disabled.
- (3) **Information about ADA.** The National Park Service, the U. S. Department of Justice, and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development provide guidance on complying with ADA requirements. [\*Preservation Brief 32, Making Historic Properties Accessible\*](#), is a helpful resource. The Justice Department maintains a telephone hotline to answer basic questions about ADA requirements (800-872-2253). The Maryland Building Rehabilitation Code Hotline can interpret the state’s “Smart Codes” for historic properties (866-424-6269; Maryland Relay for the Deaf: 800-735-2258).

## H. Exterior Lighting

- (1) **Definition.** Exterior lighting encompasses fixtures attached to buildings, fixtures on freestanding poles, and fixtures placed at ground level. The Commission reviews lighting on public ways and on private property.
- (2) **Preserve historic lighting.** Historic fixtures should be preserved and repaired if possible.
- (3) **Attached fixtures.** Historically, few buildings in the Historic District had attached fixtures; however, for safety and convenience many property owners want fixtures to light entrances. Fixtures with specific style references are not permitted unless they are consistent with the style of the building or documented with photographic or physical evidence as historically having been used on the building. Coach lamps will not be approved.
  - a. **Size.** Attached fixtures should generally be small in scale. In most cases this means no more than 12” to 16” in height. However, larger fixtures may be appropriate when they are appropriately scaled for the size of the building and where they do not detract from the streetscape.
  - b. **Attachment.** On masonry walls, fixtures must be attached in mortar joints to prevent damage to historic fabric. Mounting blocks are generally not approved.
- (4) **Fixtures on poles.** Light poles and their fixtures must be pedestrian in scale. In the public right-of-way light poles are placed by the City, according to approved standards. See Chapter 8, Section M, for additional guidance. The Commission may approve pole lights on private property to light a walk or doorway. The scale and intensity of the fixture shall reflect this limited use.
- (5) **Security lights.** The Commission may approve the attachment of security lights to the building, on the ground, or on a pole. Security lights are generally utilitarian in nature and are to be placed where they are minimally noticeable, while serving the lighting purpose.
- (6) **Gas lights.** Gas lights attached to houses will not be approved unless documentary or physical evidence indicates that they once existed on the building. Gas lights on poles may be approved on a case-by-case basis.
- (7) **Finish.** Light fixtures should have a satin, antique, oil-rubbed, aged, or black matte finish. Bright brass and chrome or polished finishes will not be approved.

- (8) **Light quality and intensity.** Light fixtures with permanent bulbs must have a color temperature of 4500 K or less so that it does not project cool, blue tones. The Commission recommends the same for fixtures with replaceable bulbs. Replaceable bulbs should be sized appropriately for the fixture.
- (9) **Artistic lighting.** Artistic lighting that is intended to highlight architectural features by creating sharp or contrasting shadows, such as up-lighting, is generally only appropriate for monuments; public squares or plazas; and the following historic building types: commercial, institutional, industrial, and places of worship. Artistic lighting will not be approved in cases where it would negatively impact surrounding historic structures or the streetscape regardless of building type. General floodlighting of historic buildings will not be approved.

## I. Mechanical Equipment

- (1) **Definition.** HVAC systems, including air conditioning units, heat pumps, air compressors, vents, and other types of mechanical equipment placed outside of buildings, are subject to Commission review.
- (2) **Placement.** Mechanical equipment must be installed so that it will not destroy or damage building materials.
- (3) **Rooftop mechanicals.** Rooftop mechanical units are permitted if they can be installed so they are not visible from the public right-of-way. If rooftop mechanical equipment cannot be installed so it is not visible from the street, it must be screened from view, in a manner approved by the Commission.
- (4) **Placement of cables and wires.** Cables and wires should be placed underground whenever possible. If this is not an option, they should be placed on side or rear elevations.
- (5) **Window units.** Air conditioning window units are not within the purview of the Commission, unless their installation will result in damage or the removal of any building parts or materials.
- (6) **Vents.** Vents include openings intended to eliminate exhaust or exchange air. They may be round, rectangular or square, with or without louvers. Vents must be placed as discretely as possible. They must be installed so they are not readily visible from the public right-of-way and their finish color should correspond with the wall or trim color, unless mounted in a clear material. Their location should be considerate of the impact on adjacent historic buildings and their installation should result in minimal damage to historic fabric.

## J. Signs

- (1) **Definition.** A sign is any device, structure, painting, or visual image designed to be seen by the public for the purpose of advertising or identifying a business, product, or service. Signage can incorporate graphics, symbols, letters, or numbers. All signage must be in accordance with the City Code. Signs come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and types, including the following that are acceptable in the Historic District:
  - a. **Panel sign.** A sign that is fastened directly to a signboard or wall.
  - b. **Projecting or hanging sign.** A two-sided sign that hangs from a bracket or is suspended from an overhang, usually perpendicular to the building. Hanging signs are intended to be seen by pedestrians on the sidewalk.
  - c. **Window sign.** Signage that is applied directly to a window or within 12” of a window intended to be seen from the street or sidewalk.

- d. **Awning sign.** Signage that is painted or applied to the slope or valance of an awning.
  - e. **Freestanding sign.** A sign that is not attached to a building and that is supported by posts or similar construction.
  - f. **Sidewalk or entrance sign.** Rarely, signage has been incorporated into the sidewalk in front of a building or in the paving at the front entrance.
  - g. **Building directory.** A sign that lists the occupants of a building. The Commission encourages the use of building directories for multi-tenanted buildings, instead of the installation of a sign for each tenant.
  - h. **Painted sign.** Signs that are painted directly on the finish wall material of a building.
- (2) **Historic signs.**
- a. **Definition.** A historic sign is one that conveys a significant aspect or period of history related to the specific building to which it is attached or the City in general long after the commercial or advertising value no longer applies. Historic signs are generally those:
    - i. Associated with historic figures, events, or places;
    - ii. Providing evidence of the history of a product, business, or service;
    - iii. Reflective of the history of the building or the development of the area;
    - iv. Characteristic of a specific historic period (such as gold leaf on glass or neon);
    - v. Integral to the building's design or physical materials;
    - vi. Outstanding examples of sign maker's art (ex. excellent craftsmanship, use of materials, or design);
    - vii. Important in defining the character of a district (ex. marquees in a theater district).
  - b. **Preserve historic signs.** Historic signs must be identified, repaired and preserved. New signage should be installed in a way that does not damage historic signage. In some cases, the Commission may approve covering a historic sign in order to accommodate modern signage.
- (3) **Appropriate size, scale, and design.** Signage must not obscure or overwhelm architectural details. The size and location of signage must be compatible with the architecture, scale, and design of the building. The City Code specifies the amount of signage allowed and parameters regarding its placement; however, the Commission does not have to allow the maximum signage allowed by the code. The Commission considers the style of signage, its impact on the building, its placement, and other aesthetic factors.
- (4) **Projecting signs.** Projecting signs in the Historic District cannot extend more than 30" into the public right-of-way and the bottom of the sign must be at least eight feet from the ground. Projecting sign must be installed so that historic fabric is not damaged. For example, signs attached to masonry walls must be attached into mortar joints.
- (6) **Permitted materials.** Wood signs are preferred and Medium Density Overlay (MDO) is permitted. All wood and MDO signs must be painted. Signs with a rustic appearance generally will not be approved. Metal may be approved for signs. Vinyl letters and graphics are acceptable. Dimensional acrylic lettering and graphics will only be approved if they have a matte finish. Signs with illuminated tubes, such as neon or fluorescent, will only be approved if they are appropriate for the style and age of the building. Individual letters may be installed flush to a backer panel or rail but may not be individually pin mounted to a wall. Signs painted directly on walls will only be permitted on masonry where it is currently painted or coated or on wood siding or wood panels.
- (7) **Types of signs that will not be approved.** The following types of signs are not permitted: light-emitting diode (LED) signs; pin-mounted letters mounted directly on walls; signs with

moving, lighted characters; plastic signs; cabinet signs; and signs on video screens or monitors. Banners may only be installed as permitted by the City Code. Vinyl that mimics frosted glass will only be permitted for lettering or graphics and will not be approved for entire windows. Neon or fluorescent tube-type signs and signs painted directly on walls will only be approved as described in (6) above.

- (8) Lighting for signs.** Light fixtures may be installed to externally illuminate signs, but flashing or blinking lights will not be approved. Light fixtures for signs should be unobtrusive and comply with Section H. Their appearance and placement should be compatible with the building façade.

**K. Historic and commemorative markers.** Historic and commemorative markers are plaques that contain information about aspects of the community's culture. When installed on historic structures, plaques must be scaled appropriately for the building and be installed so they do not damage or obscure character-defining features or historic materials. Free-standing markers may not dominate a streetscape or block views of buildings.

#### **L. Energy Conserving Features**

- (1) Definition.** Energy conserving features include treatments that reduce the amount of energy expended in heating, cooling, or construction. The Commission will approve the use of energy conserving features if they do not obscure, damage, or cause the removal of historic features or materials.
- (2) Commission approval.** Treatments that do not require Commission approval include caulking, weather-stripping, mechanical repairs to windows, retrofitting doors to fit openings, and interior treatments such as insulation, window treatments, and interior storm windows. Treatments that require Commission approval include, but are not be limited to, the installation of storm/screen doors and windows, the application of window films, and the installation of awnings, shading devices, and photovoltaic materials.
- (3) Shading devices.** Shading devices, such as awnings, intended to conserve energy may be approved on existing buildings if they do not obscure character-defining features or damage historic materials. See Chapter 5, Section S for additional guidelines regarding awnings.
- (4) Photovoltaic materials and solar water heating systems.** Photovoltaic materials convert solar energy into electric power and may consist of panels, films, shingles, or tiles. Solar water heating systems include solar collectors for heating water that is delivered to a storage tank. On existing buildings these materials and features may be approved if they are not visible from the street, if they do not extend higher than the existing building, and if they do not destroy or damage historic material. On new construction they should be integrated into the overall design of the building or otherwise be located where they will not detract from the setting or streetscape.

#### **M. Miscellaneous Features**

- (1) Items included.** Miscellaneous features include, but are not limited to, items such as mailboxes, house numbers, security devices, lightning rods, weathervanes, and fire department connections. Such features that must be approved by the Commission. These items are generally reviewed under the Administrative Approval Program (see Chapter 1). Approval is not required for hose bibs or electrical outlets. Installation of new

miscellaneous features shall be done in a way that minimizes damage to historic materials and should be reversible whenever possible.

- (2) **Appropriate designs and placement.** Features that are important to safety, such as house numbers and fire department connections, must be placed as required by regulations; however, the regulations generally present some latitude, allowing the Commission to select locations that will be less damaging to historic fabric or less obtrusive.
- (3) **House numbers.** The size, scale, and materials of house numbers should be compatible with the building. Individual numerals should be mounted on the wall or on a wood component of the opening. Plaques should be sized so they complement the entrance and other features of the building. Gold foil numerals are appropriately placed in transoms over the door.
- (4) **Mailboxes.** Mailboxes should generally be rectangular, with the long dimension running vertically. Historic mailboxes that remain in the Historic District commonly have these proportions. Mailboxes with the longest dimension running horizontally are generally not appropriate in the Historic District and are more commonly found along rural routes.
- (5) **Finish.** Mailboxes must have a satin, antique, oil-rubbed, aged, or black matte finish. Bright brass and chrome or polished finishes will not be approved.