



## BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

# SIGN POLICY STATEMENT (GENERAL)

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
2 George Street, Third Floor

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY  
Charleston, South Carolina 29401      843-724-3781      Fax: 843-724-3772      [www.charleston-sc.gov](http://www.charleston-sc.gov)

By motion of the Board of Architectural Review at the November 28, 2007 meeting, the following guidelines were adopted regarding the installation of signs in the Old and Historic and Old City Districts:

As part of the built environment, signs have a significant visual impact. In the past, businesses were primarily locally-owned and signs reflected local aesthetics. In the global age, many businesses answer to national or international corporate entities. Signs developed by these global marketers are often intended for suburban, high-traffic areas and are not compatible with pedestrian-oriented streets. Therefor the Board of Architectural Review makes the following statement of policy:

1. Standard corporate sign packages that make no reference to their context, surroundings or background generally will not be allowed. Signs should respect the size, scale and design of the building.
2. Signs should be reviewed as part of an overall graphics system for a building. If multiple tenants occupy one building, their signs should be coordinated in terms of size and placement.
3. Signs should contain the business name and the minimum amount of information necessary to convey the type of business. Repetitive signs or extraneous information will not be allowed.
4. Sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic building and should not obscure significant architectural features. Lighted signs are generally not appropriate for the historic district.
5. Signs should be attached to the building carefully to prevent damage to historic fabric (for example, fittings should penetrate mortar joints rather than brick).
6. This policy statement is intended to supplement, not supersede, previous site specific signage policy statements.

This policy statement was approved by resolution by the Board of Architectural Review on January 9, 2008.



# SIGN POLICY STATEMENT

(OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT AND OLD CITY DISTRICT)

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
2 George Street, Third Floor

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Charleston, South Carolina 29401    843-724-3781    Fax: 843-724-3772    [www.charleston-sc.gov](http://www.charleston-sc.gov)

By motion of the Board of Architectural Review - Small (BAR-S) on September 8, 2022 and of the Board of Architectural Review - Large (BAR-L) September 14, 2022, the following guidelines were amended regarding the installation of signs in the Old and Historic District and the Old City District.

As part of the built environment, signs have a significant visual impact. In the past, businesses were primarily locally owned, and signs reflected the local aesthetics of the time. In the global age, many businesses answer to national or international corporate entities. Signs developed by these global marketers are often intended for high-traffic metropolitan or suburban areas and are not compatible with the architectural heritage of Charleston. Therefore, the Board of Architectural Review makes the following statement of policy:

1. Signs should respect the architectural character of the building and its immediate surroundings, in addition to the building's size, scale, design, and material. The submission of a comprehensive sign package for a structure is strongly encouraged.
2. There shall be no presumption of approval for corporate logos or branding; instead, signs will be reviewed as part of an overall graphics system for a building, regardless of when the submission for approval is made. If multiple tenants occupy one building, their requests for signage, if any, will be reviewed in terms of size and placement so as to avoid a cluttered appearance to the whole of the building and its context. Private agreements regarding tenant signage to which the City is not a party are irrelevant to the submission for approval and will not be considered.
3. Signs should contain the business name and the minimum amount of information, if any, necessary to convey the type of business. Repetitive signs or extraneous information, such as telephone numbers, hours of operation, products and or services sold, etc., will not be allowed.
4. Sign materials should be compatible with those of the building and should not obscure significant architectural features. Illuminated signs, including neon and neon substitutes, are not generally permitted for the Old and Historic District and Old City District but will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
5. All illuminated signage is to be reviewed and approved by the City Architect before an Approval is entered into the Government Management System by Staff.
6. Signs must be attached to the building carefully to prevent damage to historic fabric (for example, fitting should penetrate mortar joints rather than brick).
7. This policy statement supersedes the signage policy dated November 28, 2007.

These policy statement Amendments were approved by resolution by the BAR-S on September 8, 2022, and BAR-L on September 14, 2022.



BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

**SIGN POLICY STATEMENT**  
(HISTORIC CORRIDOR DISTRICT)

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
2 George Street, Third Floor

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Charleston, South Carolina 29401      843-724-3781      Fax: 843-724-3772      [www.charleston-sc.gov](http://www.charleston-sc.gov)

By motion of the Board of Architectural Review - Small (BAR-S) on September 8 and of the Board of Architectural Review - Large (BAR-L) September 14, 2022, the following guidelines were amended regarding the installation of signs in the Historic Corridor District.

As part of the built environment, signs have a significant visual impact. In the past, businesses were primarily locally owned, and signs reflected the local aesthetics of the time. In the global age, many businesses answer to national or international corporate entities. Signs developed by these global marketers are often intended for high-traffic metropolitan or suburban areas and are not compatible with the architectural heritage of Charleston. Therefore, the Board of Architectural Review makes the following statement of policy:

1. Signs should respect the architectural character of the building and its immediate surroundings, in addition to the building's size, scale, design, and material. The submission of a comprehensive sign package for a structure is strongly encouraged.
2. There shall be no presumption of approval for corporate logos or branding; instead, signs will be reviewed as part of an overall graphics system for a building, regardless of when the submission for approval is made. If multiple tenants occupy one building, their requests for signage, if any, will be reviewed in terms of size and placement so as to avoid a cluttered appearance to the whole of the building and its context. Private agreements regarding tenant signage to which the City is not a party are irrelevant to the submission for approval and will not be considered.
3. Signs should contain the business name and the minimum amount of information, if any, necessary to convey the type of business. Repetitive signs or extraneous information, such as telephone numbers, hours of operation, products and or services sold, etc., will not be allowed.
4. Sign materials should be compatible with those of the building, whether it be historic or not, and should not obscure significant architectural features. Illuminated signs may be considered if they are muted in tone and brightness, where the submission demonstrates the signage to be harmonious with the building and its context and is aesthetically congruous with the size of the building. External sign illumination is to be a neutral white. Only internal sign illumination which identifies the building may be allowed. Color for internal sign illumination, including neon and neon substitutes, may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
5. Signs must be attached to the building carefully to prevent damage to historic fabric (for example, fitting should penetrate mortar joints rather than brick).
6. All illuminated signage is to be reviewed and approved by the City Architect before an Approval is entered into the Government Management System by Staff.
7. This policy statement supersedes the signage policy dated November 28, 2007.

These policy statement Amendments were approved by resolution by the BAR-S on September 8, 2022, and BAR-L on September 14, 2022.



BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

**POLICY STATEMENT FOR SIGNS**  
**(KING STREET)**

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
2 George Street, Third Floor

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY  
Charleston, South Carolina 29401      843-724-3781      Fax: 843-724-3772      [www.charleston-sc.gov](http://www.charleston-sc.gov)

By motion of the Board of Architectural Review at their December 10, 2014 meeting, the following guidelines were adopted for King Street signage to aid the general public and the Preservation Staff as new signs are reviewed.

1. Design: Each sign shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Generally a façade sign shall be appropriately proportioned to the storefront, and its design shall be compatible with the architectural style of the façade.
2. Materials:
  - a. The signs shall incorporate materials, colors, and design elements that are appropriate to the surrounding context.
  - b. Channel letters, sandblasted signs, and plastic letters or plastic sign faces generally will not be permitted.
  - c. Reader boards are not permitted.
3. Illumination:
  - a. External or internal illumination generally will not be permitted. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.
  - b. The use of exposed neon is generally not permitted.
  - c. No flashing electronic signs will be permitted.
  - d. Parking lot directional signs are not to be illuminated.
4. Banners: Banners generally will not be permitted on King Street.
5. Menu Boards: Menu boards shall not exceed six (6) square feet. Permanently displayed menus may be properly installed inside the business window, or in an approved wall-mounted display case adjacent to the business entrance.
6. Right angle signs: Right angle signs should be of a unique design reflecting the character or nature of the business, relate to the architecture of the building and its context, and must be appropriately scaled to the building façade.
7. The application of extraneous information, such as telephone numbers, hours of operation, products and/or services sold, etc., is generally not permitted on façade, awning, or right-angle signs. Some of this information may be permitted as window graphics.
8. Awnings:
  - a. An awning should fit over only the opening that it covers and not extend across the entire façade.
  - b. Vinyl awnings will not be permitted.
  - c. Graphics generally will be permitted only on the valence.
9. A business may utilize up to two out of four signage options (façade sign, awning sign, window sign or right angle sign), except that a right angle sign may not be used in combination with an awning sign.

The above criteria are intended to provide a general framework for sign design and approval in this area of the City of Charleston. Staff is to address each application on a case-by-case basis.

APPROVED BY RESOLUTION:

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Chair, Board of Architectural Review

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Date



BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

## POLICY STATEMENT FOR SIGNS

(209-227 MEETING STREET)

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
2 George Street, Third Floor

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The properties in question constitute the City's largest collection of cast iron facades for which the City of Charleston holds conservation easements. These storefronts should be carefully maintained, and be treated consistently in regard to their signage.

1. Primary signs are to be placed in the flat fascia area above the storefronts. The traditional location of permanent signs would have been in this location, or on the glass storefront.
2. Alternative locations for signage would include the transom above the primary entrance or the glass storefront.
3. Typical signs should be individually mounted three-dimensional letters, or painted flat façade signs of such length, width and depth to fit the storefront fascia.
4. Awnings, right angle signs and rooftop additions are not permitted.



# SIGN POLICY STATEMENT

(WESTERN END OF SPRING STREET AND CANNON STREET CORRIDOR)

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
2 George Street, Third Floor

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY  
Charleston, South Carolina 29401      843-724-3781      Fax: 843-724-3772      [www.charleston-sc.gov](http://www.charleston-sc.gov)

As non-conforming signs in Charleston are changed, the City and the BAR have a unique opportunity to improve the visual quality and character of the western end of the Spring and Cannon corridor. The following guidelines were adopted for the above mentioned signs to aid the general public and the Preservation Staff as these signs are changed:

1. Size: Each sign shall be evaluated on a case by case basis. Generally, the height shall be limited to no taller than 12 feet, with each sign face no greater than 35 square feet.
2. Materials: The sign shall incorporate materials, colors, and design elements that are appropriate to the surrounding context. Plastic sign faces are not allowed.
3. Illumination:
  - a. Externally Illuminated: Light sources shall be shielded in order to direct light onto the sign face only. Fixtures shall be hidden through planting or other means unless the fixtures are decorative. Light output shall be a maximum of 10 foot-candles.
  - b. Internally Illuminated: Sign face is to be constructed of aluminum or similar material. Text and/or graphics are to be routed from the sign face and backed with translucent plastic to form the only lighted portion of the sign.
  - c. Channel Letters: Reverse-channel letters (backlit) may be used.
  - d. Neon: The use of exposed neon is generally not permitted.
4. Extraneous Information: The application of extraneous information, such as telephone numbers, hours of operation, etc. is not permitted.
5. Directional Signs: Parking lot directional signs, etc. shall not be illuminated.
6. Reader boards: The use of reader boards will not be permitted.

The above criteria are intended to provide a general framework for sign design and approval in this area of the City of Charleston. Staff is to address each application on a case by case basis.

This policy statement was approved by resolution by the Board of Architectural Review on February 28, 2001.



# POLICY STATEMENT FOR SIGNS

(MARKET STREET)

CITY OF CHARLESTON  
2 George Street, Third Floor

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY  
Charleston, South Carolina 29401      843-724-3781      Fax: 843-724-3772      [www.charleston-sc.gov](http://www.charleston-sc.gov)

The following guidelines were adopted for Market Street signage to aid the general public and the Preservation Staff as new signs are reviewed:

1. Design: Each sign shall be evaluated on a case by case basis. Generally a façade sign shall be appropriately proportioned to the storefront, and its design shall be compatible with the architectural style of the façade.
2. Materials:
  - a. The sign shall incorporate materials, colors and design elements that are appropriate to the surrounding context.
  - b. Individually pin-mounted letters are encouraged as generally they do not detract from the architecture.
  - c. Channel letters, sandblasted signs and plastic letters or sign faces generally will not be permitted.
  - d. No reader boards.
3. Illumination:
  - a. External or internal illumination generally will not be permitted.
  - b. The use of exposed neon generally will not be permitted.
  - c. No flashing electronic signs will be permitted.
  - d. Parking lot directional signs are not to be permitted.
4. Banners: Banners generally will not be permitted.
5. Menu Boards: Menu boards shall not exceed six (6) square feet. Permanently displayed menus may be properly installed inside the business window or in an approved wall mounted display case adjacent to the business entrance. Only one menu board will be permitted per establishment.
6. Right Angle Signs:
  - a. Will generally not be permitted in conjunction with façade signs or awnings.
  - b. Shall not exceed nine (9) square feet in size.
7. The application of extraneous information, such as telephone numbers, hours of operation, products and/or services sold, etc. is not permitted on façade signs. Some of this information may be permitted as window graphics.

8. Awnings:

- a. Awnings should fit over only the opening that it covers and not extend across the entire façade.
- b. Vinyl will not be permitted.
- c. Graphics general will only be permitted on a valence.

The above criteria are intended to provide a general framework for sign design and approval in this area of the City of Charleston. Staff is to address each application on a case by case basis.

This policy statement was approved by resolution by the Board of Architectural Review on January 8, 2003.