

SECTION IV: GUIDELINES FOR SITE DESIGN

Site design refers to the arrangement, placement and orientation of buildings and site features on a parcel. It also includes the relationship between buildings and site features on one parcel to neighboring properties and the public realm. Site design considers street frontage, building setbacks, parking, signage, service and utilities, fencing and screen walls.

This Section is divided into two categories: **Required Guidelines** and **Recommended Guidelines**. Guidelines in the “Required” category are subject to review for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Those in the “Recommended” category are exempt from requiring a COA, per the exemptions listed in the ordinance and repeated in Section 1 of this document. They are provided here as helpful information



Site design considers street frontage, building setbacks, parking, signage, service and utilities, fencing and screen walls. Shallow front yards, continuous planting strip, and fences are site features noted in this image.

IN THIS SECTION

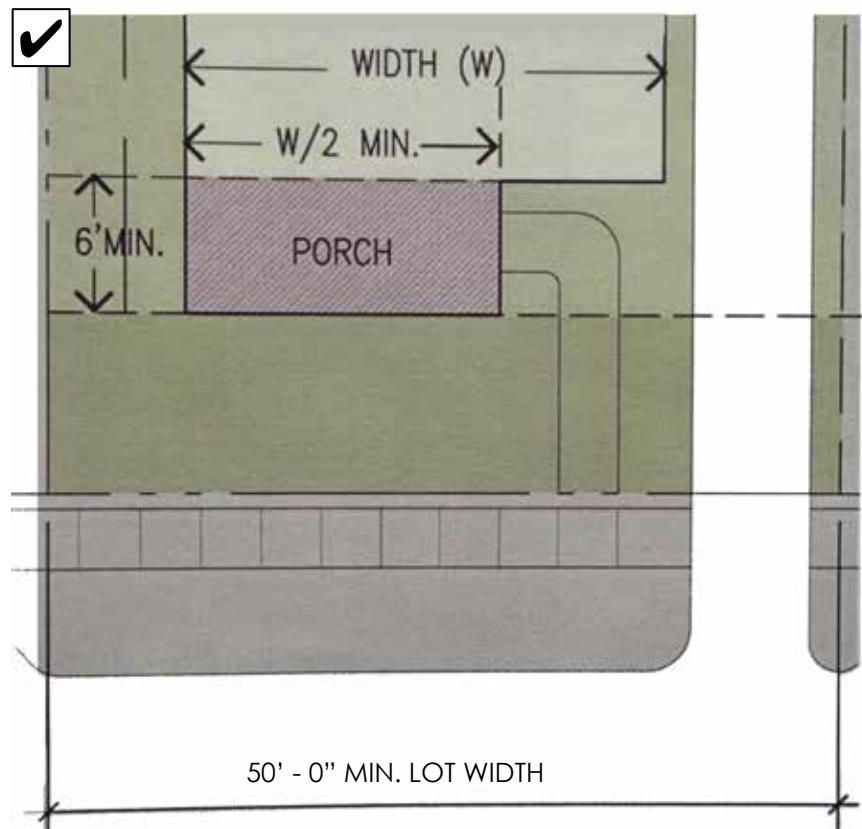
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REQUIRED GUIDELINES

A. STREET FRONTAGE

Intent: Street Frontage refers to the character and orientation of a building with respect to the way it relates to the street. All construction should be compatible and primary façades should face the street as do the existing contributing historic buildings. Primary entrances should be oriented to the street.

1. Front porches shall be provided on any new residential construction. They are essential defining features of historic houses in the District.
 - a. Minimum porch width: 50% of total width of building.
 - b. Minimum porch depth: 6 feet.



Minimum porch width requirement.

B. BUILDING SETBACKS

Intent: The general approach for compatible building setbacks is to match the most frequently occurring setback of historic buildings on the blockface or facing blockface(s).

1. Whereas all building setbacks (i.e., front, rear, and sides) are important, matching the front building setback condition, including a porch where applicable, is considered of primary importance.

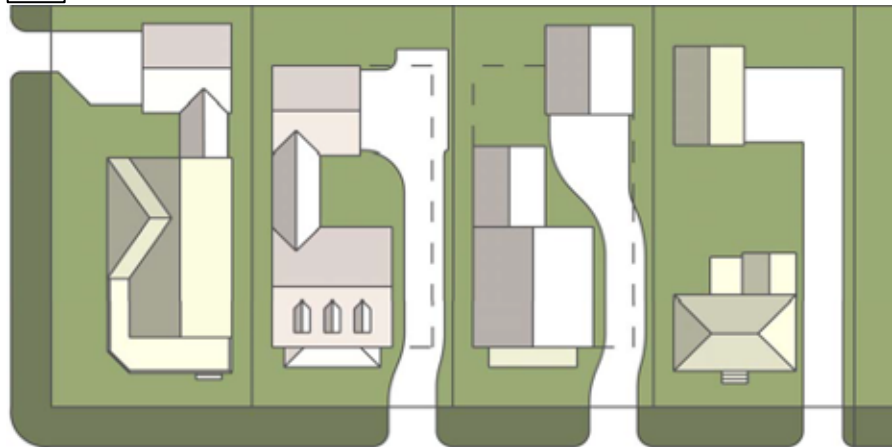


Match the most frequently occurring setback of historic buildings on the blockface. This includes the front porch. The front building alignment of the building footprint to the right is inappropriate. Prevailing building setbacks tend to be 10' on East and West streets and 5' on North and South streets.

C. PARKING AND DRIVEWAYS

Intent: Parking should be located to the rear of the lot to ensure that the proposed project is compatible with contributing buildings along the block face. Driveways should also be minimized and should reflect traditional access patterns.

1. New construction shall provide off-street parking as required in the Houston Code.
2. Driveway access to the garage on interior lots is limited to a single driveway with a maximum width of 10 feet at any point within the front half of the lot. Driveways must be placed to the side of the dwelling for interior lots.
3. On corner lots, garage access shall be from the side street.
4. Exception: On lots of insufficient width (generally 25 feet wide), a porous parking pad in compliance with City codes may be placed in front of the building for off-street parking. Variances may be granted for special circumstances.
5. Driveway material must be concrete, stone, brick pavers, or gravel.

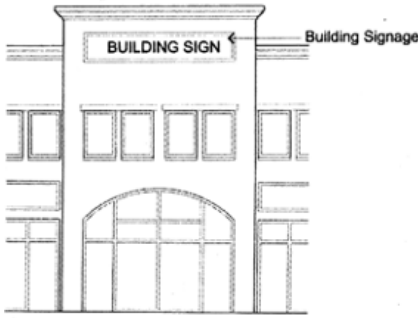


Appropriate configurations for garages and driveway access.

D. SIGNAGE

Intent: While Old Sixth Ward is predominantly residential in character, there are a few small scale commercial buildings in the District which typically will have signs. There are also instances of residential structures that have been converted to a small office or other commercial uses. Signage within the District should be designed and painted in a manner to respect the historic character of the buildings and the neighborhood. The following guidelines identify general design requirements. Note that these guidelines do not regulate sign content.

1. **A SIGN SHOULD BE:**
 - a. Appropriate in size and scale.
 - b. Constructed of high quality materials and craftsmanship.
 - c. Located in a logical place on the building or in the front yard, and should not obstruct key elements or details of the building.
 - d. (If lighted) Illuminated indirectly and using an external light source.
2. **ADDRESS NUMBERS.** All residential and commercial buildings are required by the Houston Code to identify their street address numerals. Address numerals should conform to the following guidelines:
 - a. Numerals should be displayed near the main entry and clearly visible from the street fronting the building.
 - b. Numerals may consist of individual characters or a decorative panel.
 - c. Numerals should be no more than 6 inches in height. Panels should be no more than 1 square foot in area.



3. **COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE.** These guidelines apply to on-premises signage. Signs are classified into the following types:

- Building Signage
- Sign Band
- Bracket Signs
- Window Signs
- Monument and Pole Signs
- Post Signs



Appropriate Upper Level Sign.

Recommendations for specific sign types are as follows:

a. **Upper Level Sign:** An upper level sign is one that is located near the cornice line of a facade. It is often used to identify a building's name or business, as examples, but with no intent to limit content.

1) Placement:

An Upper Level Sign should:

- (a) Be placed near the top of the building
- (b) Be placed above upper floor windows
- (c) Be mounted directly on the wall surface
- (d) Face a public street
- (e) Be placed on a maximum of two building sides
- (f) Signs may be cut or carved.
- (g) Roof signs are inappropriate.

2) Dimensions:

- (a) A maximum of 20 square feet for each sign is appropriate.
- (b) Sign letters height are 16" maximum.
- (c) All parts of a sign, including text and graphics, are counted toward total square feet of the sign area.

3) Letter materials:

- (a) Sign may be metal, stone, wood, paint, carved, or plaster. Plastic letters are inappropriate.

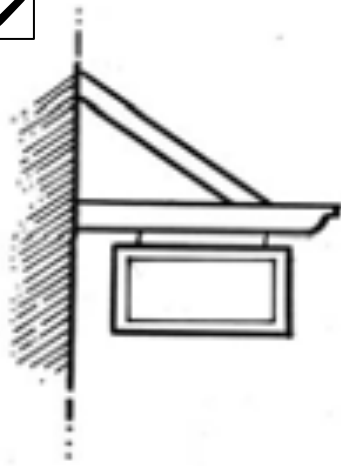
- 4) Lighting of Upper Level Signs:
 - (a) Front-lit signs (illuminated by an external light source) are acceptable. Backlit or channel cut lighting is inappropriate.
- 5) Other provisions:
 - (a) Neon signs are inappropriate.
 - (b) Signs shall be static; no rotating, electronic, or digital signs are appropriate.

b. **Sign Band:** This type of wall sign is primarily for uses at the street level.

- 1) Placement:
 - (a) Sign shall be mounted on the building face between the first and second floor window openings.
 - (b) Sign shall be integrated with the composition of the façade.
 - (c) Background may be the building wall or "backboard".
 - (d) Profile of the sign shall be essentially flush.
 - (e) Bottom edge of sign shall be located a minimum of 10' above sidewalk.
- 2) Dimensions:
 - (a) Backboard and overall band width is limited to 60% of bay width.
 - (b) Backboard may have a maximum height of 24".
 - (c) Letter heights are 18" maximum.
- 3) Letter or backboard materials:
 - (a) Sign may be metal, stone, wood, paint, carved, plaster, or plastic; cabinet signs are not permitted.
- 4) Lighting:
 - (a) Front-lit signs (illuminated by an external light source) are acceptable.
- 5) Other provisions:
 - (a) No neon signs are permitted.
 - (b) Consistency of the sign bands in a single building is recommended.



Appropriate signs within the sign band.



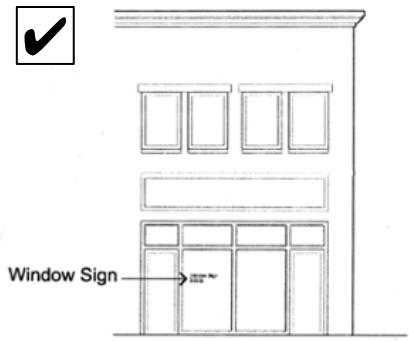
Appropriate bracket signs.

c. **Bracket (Projecting) Signs:** These may be used in place of a sign band, or in addition to a sign band if located in an arcade or if the bracket sign is not in conflict with the sign band. Bracket signs may include symbols such as barber poles.

- 1) Placement:
 - (a) Sign must be perpendicular to the principal building façade.
 - (b) Sign may be held by brackets, cantilevered, or suspended under a canopy.
 - (c) Sign placement must allow a minimum sidewalk height clearance of 8'.
 - (d) For residential buildings converted to commercial use, a sign panel hanging from the porch beam is acceptable.
- 2) Dimensions:
 - (a) Sign may be a maximum of 6 square feet.
 - (b) Bracketed signs may project a maximum of 48" from the building face but may not project over a public right-of-way.
 - (c) Double-sided signs are permitted.
 - (d) Letters may have a maximum height of 10".
 - (e) Logos or artwork may be a maximum of 18" in any dimension.
- 3) Materials:
 - (a) Sign may be metal and/or wood.
- 4) Lighting:
 - (a) Externally projected lighting is permitted.
- 5) Design:
 - (a) A logo may be included on the face of the sign.
- 6) Other provisions:
 - (a) No neon signs are permitted.
 - (b) Any signage that is approved as appropriate but encroaches over a public right-of-way must obtain a license agreement from the Finance & Administration department.

d. **Window Signs.** These signs are intended for the pedestrian. They include applied graphics such as name, hours of operation, telephone numbers, and street numbers. "Open/closed" hanging signs are acceptable.

- 1) Placement:
 - (a) Signs may be placed on storefront windows and doors.
 - (b) Signs may be applied to the interior surface of glass only.
 - (c) Signs may not substantially obscure visibility through the window; signage should be located in the upper third of the window.
- 2) Dimensions:
 - (a) Window graphics are limited to 5% of total glass area of the storefront.
 - (b) Lettering size may be a maximum of 6".
- 3) Letter Materials:
 - (a) Signs may be vinyl, gold leaf, painted, or stick-on plastic.
- 4) Lighting:
 - (a) Lighting of window signs is not permitted.



e. **Post Signs.** These signs are appropriate for residential structures that have been converted to commercial use. These are typically small and understated signs meant to be relatively unobtrusive in a neighborhood setting.

- 1) Placement:
 - (a) Sign should be perpendicular to the ground, near the entrance to the property.
 - (b) Sign may be parallel or perpendicular to the front façade.
 - (c) Sign must be on the property and may not encroach into the right-of-way.



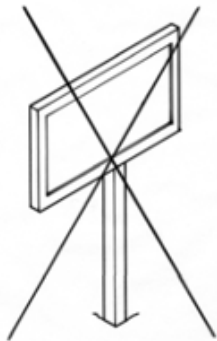
Inappropriate post sign (with single centered post).



Appropriate offset single post sign.



Appropriate double post sign.



Single, centered post sign is not recommended

- 2) Configuration of Post Signs:
 - (a) Sign may be a double post with framed panel or an offset single post with bracketed or suspended panel.
 - (b) Double-sided signs are acceptable.
 - (c) A single post with centered panel is not recommended.
 - (d) Signs must be essentially two-dimensional. Small structures or kiosk-type designs are not appropriate.
- 3) Dimensions:
 - (a) Sign panel should be a maximum of 6 square feet;
 - (b) Overall sign should be a maximum height of 4 feet above grade.
- 4) Materials:
 - (a) Sign may be metal and/or wood.
- 5) Lighting:
 - (a) Post signs should not be illuminated.

f. **Other inappropriate** sign types include:

- 1) Monument and Pole Signs (ones with centered, single post). These types of signs are not appropriate for use within the District.
- 2) Large or illuminated signs behind the glass storefront that advertise on a permanent basis.
- 3) Applied window signs, such as cardboard panels.
- 4) Trailer signs (moveable signs with wheels).

4. **TEMPORARY SIGNAGE.** Temporary signs are used to provide information related to activities or events that typically have a limited time for their use. Examples of temporary signage types (without limiting the content) include: Seasonal signs

- Seasonal signs
- Promotional and sale signs
- Announcement signs
- Event signs
- Real estate signs
- Political campaign signs
- Future or ongoing construction

a. **Time limit for display of a temporary sign:**

A temporary sign should be removed once it is no longer in use. A temporary signs should be removed within seven (7) days after the end of the period of its intended use.

b. **Appropriate temporary sign types:**

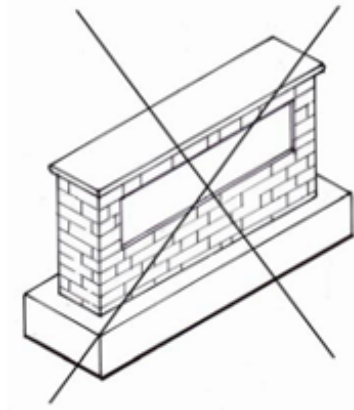
Appropriate temporary signs are:

- A window sign, located on the inside of the glass
- A free-standing post sign
- A panel (such as wood or metal) on a wire or metal frame
- A panel mounted on a fence

c. **Inappropriate temporary sign types:**

Appropriate temporary signs are:

- Pennants
- Banners



Monument signs are not recommended.



Pennant and banner signs are inappropriate.

d. Size limit for Temporary Signs:

A temporary sign should not exceed these size limits by sign type (without limiting sign content):

- Window sign: 2 and 1/2 square feet in area
- Free-standing post sign: 3 square feet in area (for each face)
- A free-standing sandwich board: 3 square feet in area (for each face)
- A panel on a wire or metal frame: 3 square feet in area (for each face)
- A panel mounted on a fence: 6 square feet in area

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

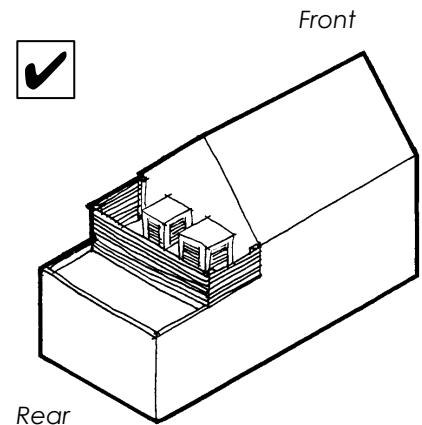
E. SERVICE AND UTILITIES

Intent: Service elements should be visually subordinate and located at the rear of the building. Service elements should not be located within any street-fronting yard setback. Service elements visible from a public street shall be screened by an opaque wall or fence of sufficient height to completely obscure the equipment. A landscape screen, such as a hedge, may be used, provided that it is opaque and maintained at the appropriate height.

Recommendations for Specific Elements:

1. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Certain mechanical equipment items may be located on the roof, provided that they are screened from view by an opaque screen compatible with the architecture of the building. The screen shall be of sufficient height to completely obscure the equipment when viewed from any point in a public right-of-way.
- b. Plumbing vents, roof attic vents, electrical, cable/telephone service lines, and satellite dishes should not be located on any roof plane facing the street frontage.



Certain mechanical equipment items may be located on the roof, provided that they are screened from view by an opaque screen compatible with the architecture of the building.

F. FENCING AND SCREEN WALLS

Intent: There are front and rear yard types of fence. The front yard fence is a low, open fence that is intended to define the front yard area, rather than to provide a visual screen or security. A front yard fence should complement the historic building style. A rear yard fence can define the rear yard and also provide privacy. It too should complement the historic building style if it is visible from the street. Fences are not required.

1. Front yard fencing (applies also to side streets on corner lots):

a. Type:

- 1) This low, mostly open fencing is intended primarily to define the front yard area, rather than to provide any visual screen or security.
- 2) Wood picket fencing, and ornamental steel rail and picket fencing are recommended fence types.

b. Height:

- 1) The body (pickets) of the fence may be a maximum of 60 inches high. Posts, which may include decorative finials, may be a maximum of 66 inches high.



Wood picket fencing, and ornamental steel rail and picket fencing are recommended fence types.



Examples of front yard fencing that meet the guidelines.



Appropriate rear/side yard privacy fence.

c. Placement of Front Yard Fencing:

- 1) Fencing may be placed along any street frontage and may return to the building face or to intersect with privacy fencing at appropriate locations.

2. **Rear yard and privacy fencing.**

a. Type:

- 1) This mostly opaque fencing is intended to provide a visual screen or barrier.

b. Height:

- 1) Fence may be a maximum of 6 feet high.

c. Placement:

- 1) Fencing may be used to enclose rear yards and to screen unsightly elements, such as mechanical equipment, dumpsters, etc.
- 2) Privacy fences may enclose side yards, provided that they are set back a minimum of 10 feet from the front building facade.

3. **Materials**

a. The following materials not recommended for fencing or screen walls include:

- 1) Chain link, with or without inserts
- 2) Corrugated or formed metal panels
- 3) Plain concrete masonry
- 4) Concrete or pre-cast concrete
- 5) Barbed wire or razor wire