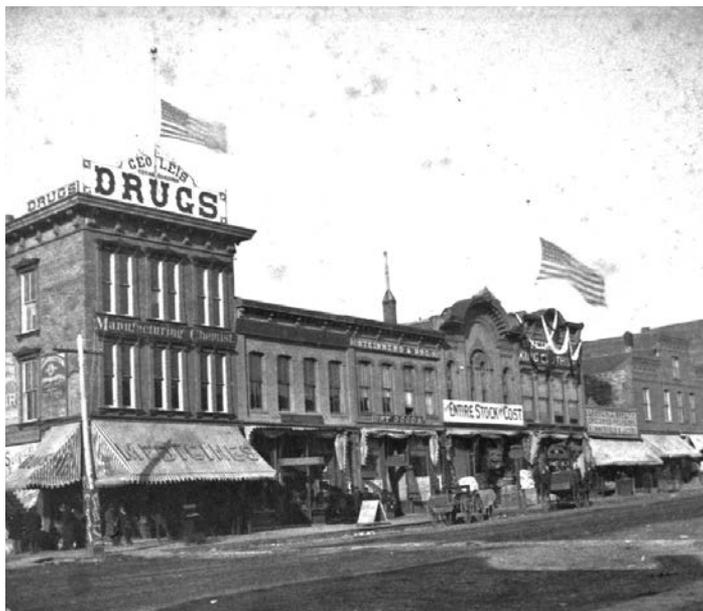


Guidelines for Signs in Historic Districts and on Individually Listed properties in accordance with KSA 75-2724, Kansas State Historic Preservation Law



According to the state preservation law (KSA 75-2724), new signs and awnings (that require a local permit) installed on buildings individually listed in the state or national register or those within a historic district are subject to review in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. This document is intended to illustrate the *Standards* and provide specific examples of signs and awnings that do and do not meet the *Standards*.

Historic Background: Signs

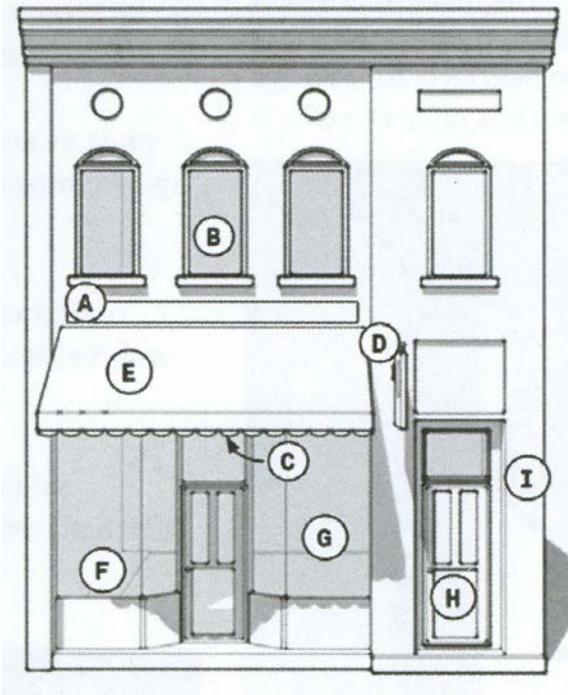
Historically, signs were placed in various locations on commercial buildings. The most common location was directly above the transom. They were often installed flush against the façade and featured simple lettering identifying the name or nature of the business. Blade signs, perpendicular to the façade, were also common.



700 block of South Kansas Avenue, Topeka 1930-1939. Note placement of signs.

While it is always preferable to retain historic signs if they are present, they are often missing or the business has changed and a new sign needs to be created. The appropriate new design for a sign will be one that is compatible with a sign that would have been in use during the period of significance of the building or district. Sometimes it is possible to locate a historic photo of the building or district to determine what would have been used historically. If there is no historical evidence, it is appropriate to install a sign that is compatible with the building in terms of representative size, scale, and materials. Illuminated signs were not common until the introduction of neon in the 1920s; however, illuminated signs are often desired. These guidelines are intended to provide guidance for signs that are appropriate in historic settings.

Typical Historic Sign Treatment



- A. Cornice or Belt Sign
- B. Upper-floor Window Sign
- C. Transom or Frieze Sign (below awning)
- D. Hanging "Blade" Sign
- E. Awning Sign
- F. Lower Display Window Sign
- G. Central Display Window Sign
- H. Glazed Door Sign
- I. Wall Sign for Upper Floor Tenants

Use this diagram as a reference for locating signs on historic commercial buildings.

Every building is different and each sign must be reviewed with respect to the individual characteristics of the building. Guidance for appropriate new signs on commercial buildings in historic districts is found in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings: Storefronts (located on the National Park Service website: nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_storefronts.htm) and also Preservation Brief #25: The Preservation of Historic Signs (located on the National Park Service website: nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief25.htm). According to the Standards and Guidelines,

“Using new illuminated signs; inappropriately scaled signs and logos; signs that project over the sidewalk unless they were a characteristic feature of the historic building; or other types of signs that obscure, damage, or destroy remaining character-defining features of the historic building” is not recommended.

When creating a new sign for a historic building or district refer to the following examples:

Signs that are compatible with historic buildings and districts:

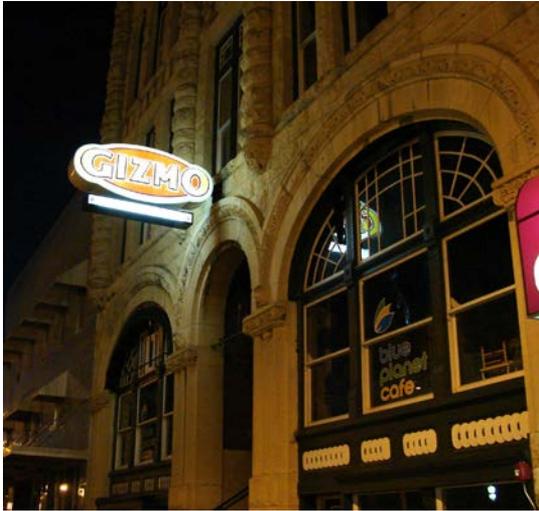
- Channel letters with or without internal illumination
- Neon signs that are compatible in size, scale and placement
- Interior illuminated shaped logo signs
- Reverse-lit channel letters
- Non-illuminated signs that are compatible in size, scale, and placement
- Decal signs/window signs

Non-Illuminated



Examples of compatible signs on historic commercial buildings, clockwise, decal sign in transom; flush panel sign over transoms, channel letters above second story windows.

Illuminated



Examples of compatible illuminated signs; shaped logo sign attached perpendicular to the building (top) and non-illuminated flush signs with multiple spotlight fixtures (bottom).

Signs that are *not compatible* with historic buildings and districts:

- Interior illuminated plastic box signs
- LED text signs unless on a theater marquis
- Signs that inappropriately extend across more than one storefront
- Signs that obscure or damage character-defining features
- Signs that are inappropriately scaled or are too large for the building



This internally illuminated plastic box sign is incompatible in size, placement, and materials.



This sign would be compatible if it did not span two buildings.



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