DOWNTOWN
HISTORIC DESIGN STANDARDS

AS ADOPTED
JULY 2024

San Francisco Planning

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Cover photo of old downtown historic buildings at Union Square, by iStock / travelview

1 ABOUT

San Francisco Downtown Historic Design Standards

San Francisco's historic and cultural resources include iconic architectural masterpieces, monuments to historic events, and sites associated with cultural legacies and social movements. The City's historic Conservation Districts make up some of the most important commercial centers for visitors and residents in San Francisco. The vitality of the Districts' streetscapes are dependent on the existence and the success of storefront businesses and well-maintained buildings. Conservation of these resources allows for their long-term enjoyment to educate, to celebrate, to support local businesses and communities, and to instill meaning and authenticity in our environment.

STANDARDS

Design standards play a vital role by providing direction on how to preserve, respect, and promote these historic and cultural assets. In response to changing marketing and advertising strategies designed to attract customers, storefronts are the most commonly altered architectural feature in commercial buildings. The purpose of San Francisco's Downtown Historic Design Standards (Standards) is to protect and enhance the character of the Districts and historic buildings by encouraging storefront designs, signage, building maintenance, and other elements that allow tenants to successfully convey their image and products, complement the public realm, and respect the architectural features of the Districts.

The Standards are grounded in the Secretary of Interior's Standards (SOIS). The Standards are a nationally-accepted philosophical framework designed to promote responsible practices in decision-making for alterations to historic properties. The Standards are not prescriptive; however, the Standards require consideration of the unique and collective characteristics of each historic resource when developing a project.

These characteristics are often referred to as "character-defining features" and are key features that illustrate an architectural style and/or contribute to the overall District. This document includes brief overviews of each Conservation District, highlighting common character-defining features of buildings and of the Districts that may be relevant to your proposal, including but not limited to, exterior materials, types of detailing, scale, color, finishes, and such.

Conformance with these Standards authorizes the Planning Department to approve a prescribed range of minor project scopes. Note that the approaches outlined in these Standards express best practices when altering or modifying or improving historic buildings; additionally, the principles can be applied to projects beyond the minor scopes discussed.

MINOR SCOPES OF WORK & APPLICABILITY

These Standards are most applicable to projects proposing minor scopes of work at properties within the Downtown Conservation Districts, which are located within a C-3 Zoning District. However the general principles discussed in these Standards may be applicable to other properties throughout the City. These minor scopes are a pre-defined list, including, but not limited to storefront alterations, signage and awnings, limited accessibility upgrades to entries, limited restoration, ordinary maintenance and repair to exterior building facades, security measures (including gates, grilles, cameras, and lighting), and temporary signage or decorative installations. Most of these minor scopes can be reviewed administratively through the Minor Permit to Alter entitlement process, and a few are eligible for action over-the-counter.

For the most current information on those scopes that are eligible for Minor Permit to Alter process, please review the Qualifying Minor Scopes of Work, which are periodically updated by the HPC, (https://sfplanning.org/resource/qualifying-minor-scopes-work).

Further, for the most updated information on which minor scopes are eligible for review without requiring an entitlement and thus eligible for over-the-counter review, please consult Article 10 and Article 11 of the Planning Code, specifically at this time, Sections 1005(e), 1110(g), and 1111.1(c).

For more details, please speak with Planning Department staff at the Planning Information Counter (PIC).

Details for conformance with Planning Code and Department standards seek to ensure any alterations to character-defining features or other modifications are consistent and compatible with the character of the property and/or district. Not all of the minor scopes of work are detailed in these Standards; more details for review are available in the Qualifying Minor Scopes of Work delegation motion.

Please note that scopes ineligible for the Minor Permit to Alter process or over-the-counter review will likely constitute a Major Alteration project scope, as discussed in Planning Code Sections 1006.2 and 1111.1, and require an entitlement application subject to review and action by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Although these Standards largely pertain to more commonplace, smaller scale interventions, the Department encourages the conversion of existing commercial structures to residential uses. This can be done without impairing the character of historic buildings, and is a process that the City has recently streamlined.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 67

The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation (SOIS) are the general framework to assist the long-term preservation of a property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features.

The SOIS are as follows:

1. Compatible Use: A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.

2. Retain and Preserve Historic Character: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

3. Recognize Historic Periods: Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

4. Retain and Preserve Significant Alterations: Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

5. Preserve Distinctive Features: Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

6. Repair Rather than Replace Historic Features: Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

7. Clean Using Gentlest Means Possible: Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

8. Protect and Preserve Archeological Resources: Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

9. Design for Compatibility and Differentiation: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. Design for Reversibility: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.


P. SIMON BUILDING
MARION BUILDING
VENETA

Repair vs. Replacement

Repairing historic materials is economical, environmentally sensitive, and supports the local economy. The baseline recommendations outlined in these Standards encourage the retention of historic materials in order to maintain the historic character of a property. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of distinctive features, documentation must be provided to show that the feature is in disrepair. All new work shall preserve, enhance or restore, and not damage or destroy historic character. The work shall be compatible with or increase compatibility with the character of the property or the district and features including material, size, architectural details, fenestration, scale, proportions, and massing. The historic rehabilitation process involves these major steps, in order of importance:

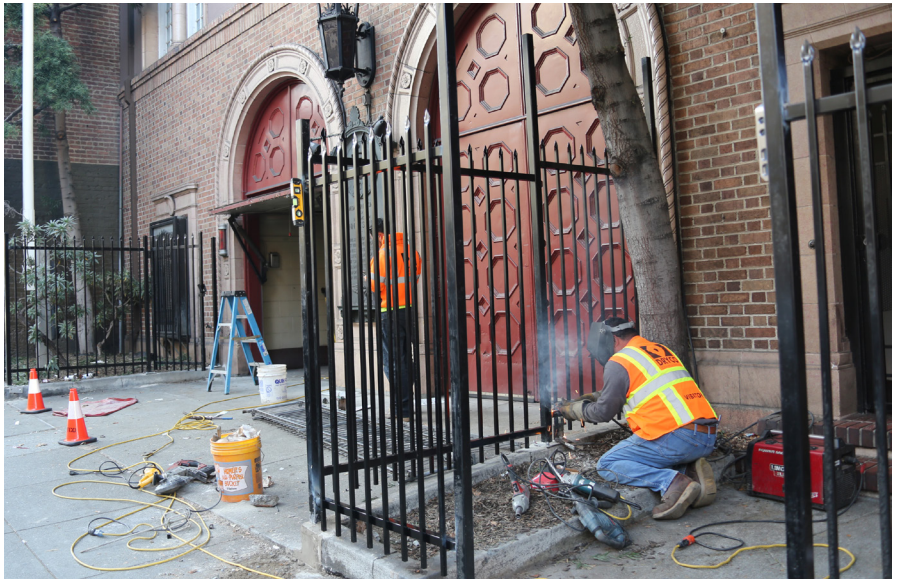
1. Identify historic materials and character-defining features
2. Protect, stabilize and maintain those materials and features
3. Repair historic materials and features in-kind or with compatible materials
4. If beyond repair, replace historic features with new that matches the historic material, and is based on documentation
5. Perform sensitive updates for health and safety issues (code compliance)
6. Design new features compatible with character-defining features, yet differentiated from the historic portions
7. Alter or add to building only after it is determined that those needs cannot be met otherwise

For the most efficient Permit review by preservation planners:

Plan details to include, as applicable: Descriptions of cladding, doors, windows and storefront systems including dimensions, operation, materials and finishes for all exterior surfaces, connection details to historic materials, dimensions of any projections over the right of way, details about repair

Photographs to show existing conditions

Material samples may be useful and/or requested. These are most commonly requested to confirm cladding finishes, texture and color; and of metals to review for finish and reflectivity



Preservation of historic building fabric helps to maintain what makes a historic property distinct. Documenting the existing conditions of defining features, as well as ensuring the compatibility of any new materials or features, is key.

Overview of Downtown Conservation Districts

These condensed overviews of the seven downtown Conservation Districts highlight elements, or character-defining features, that are most relevant for the scopes outlined in these Standards. For more details on each District, please review the appropriate Appendix to Article 11. For more information about an individual Landmark building, as listed in Article 10 of the Planning Code, please review the Designating Ordinance, available via the SF Property Information Map (PIM).

Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter

The pattern of development is one of small-scaled, light- colored buildings predominantly four to eight stories in height. Since the entire area was built in less than 20 years, and the major portion in less than 10 years, buildings were constructed in similar styles and structural technology, by architects trained in Beaux Arts. The buildings relate to each other, in large part by the alignment of cornice and belt course lines. The buildings used compatible detailing, primarily Classical and Renaissance, colors, materials, massing, and scale.

Buildings are usually clad in masonry materials over a supporting structure. The cladding materials include terra cotta, glazed brick, stone and stucco, with painted wood and metal sometimes used for window sash and ornament. The materials are generally colored light or medium earth tones, including white, cream, buff, yellow, and brown. Individual buildings generally use a few different tones of one color. To express the mass and weight of the structure, masonry materials are used on multidimensional wall surfaces with texture and depth, which simulates the qualities necessary to support the weight of a load-bearing wall. *(Appendix E to Article 11 of the Planning Code)*

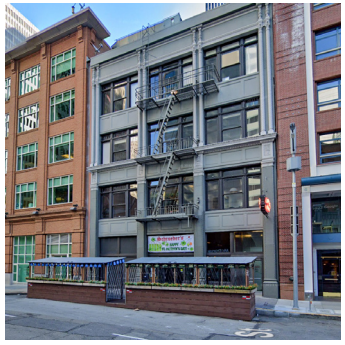
New Montgomery-Mission – Second Street

Rebuilt between 1906 and 1933 this district represents a collection of masonry commercial loft buildings that exhibit a high level of historic architectural integrity and create a cohesive district of two-to-eight story masonry buildings of similar scale, massing, setback, materials, fenestration pattern, style, and architectural detailing. Most of the contributing buildings are designed in the American Commercial Style and feature facades divided into a tripartite arrangement consisting of a base, shaft, and capital. With the exceptions of corner buildings, Second Street, Mission and Howard Streets have a smaller, more intimate scale. The primary building materials are earthtone bricks, stone or terra cotta, with ornamental details executed in a variety of materials including terra cotta, metal, stucco and stone. The materials are generally colored light or medium earth tones, including white, cream, buff, yellow, and brown. Individual buildings generally use a few different tones of one color. *(Appendix F to Article 11 of the Planning Code)*

Commercial-Leidesdorff

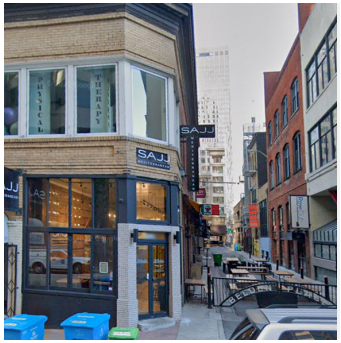
The buildings are of small scale, created by elaborate detailing and low height. A major influence on scale is the degree to which the total facade plane is broken into smaller parts. Window and door openings are relatively small, creating large wall areas, which are frequently heavily ornamented. The bay width is generally from 15 feet to 20 feet. The buildings are not constructed in a single style, but with ornament drawn from a variety of historical sources, primarily classical sources. Buildings are either clad in masonry over a supporting structure, or are constructed of masonry with load-bearing walls. The cladding materials include brick, terra cotta, stucco, and stone, painted wood and metal are sometimes used for window sash and ornament. The materials are generally colored of light or medium earth tones, including cream, buff, yellow, grey, and brown. Individual buildings generally use a few different tones of one color, highlighting the ornament. *(Appendix G to Article 11 of the Planning Code)*

Front-California



The District still retains its post-fire appearance, as most of the architecturally significant buildings were constructed in the short period from 1907 through 1918. The buildings on Front Street are generally in the two- to four-story range, while most of the buildings on California Street are in the four- to seven-story range. Facade materials include exposed brick, stucco, metal, and terra cotta panels. Colors include white, grey masonry and terra cotta, red brick, and deep reds and greens. The texture of the buildings varies from smooth stucco to richly textured and ornamented terra cotta panels. The buildings' ornament is generally derived from Renaissance sources and the buildings employ similar scale, height, fenestration, texture, and materials. Existing fenestration (windows, entrances) rhythms and proportions which have been established by lot width or bay width should be repeated in new structures. The spacing and size of window openings should follow the sequence set by historic structures. Most glass areas should be broken up by mullions so that the scale of glazed areas is compatible with that the neighboring buildings. *(Appendix H to Article 11 of the Planning Code)*

Kearny-Belden



The Kearny Street facades are elaborate designs, while the Belden Street facades are utilitarian in character. The treatment of the facades reflects the differing character of the streets. Buildings are either clad in masonry over a supporting structure, or are constructed of masonry with load-bearing walls. The cladding materials include brick, terra cotta, and stucco, with painted wood and metal sometimes used for window sash and ornament. Materials have rough surface treatments, especially those located on the alleys, reflecting the building's utilitarian nature. The materials are generally colored of light or medium earth tones, including cream, buff, yellow and red. Individual buildings generally use a few different tones of one color, highlighting the ornament. The buildings are of small scale, created by the buildings' elaborate detailing and low height. A major influence on scale is the degree to which the total facade plane is broken into smaller parts which relate to human scale. Window and door openings are relatively small, creating large wall areas, which are frequently heavily ornamented. The bay width is generally from 15 feet to 20 feet. *(Appendix I to Article 11 of the Planning Code)*

Pine-Sansome

The distinguishing characteristic of the District is the relationship between the street and alley network and the series of distinguished office and financial buildings from the early part of the twentieth century. The buildings in the District are of high design quality, executed in a variety of ornamental styles. Examples of Classical Moderne, Skyscraper Gothic, Gothic, Georgian Revival, as well as the more familiar buildings derived from Renaissance sources, create a rich mix of twentieth century styles. Buildings are constructed of masonry or terra cotta, or various shades of brick. The buildings are light-colored grays or cream colors, with some red brick buildings. Through the use of rich detailing, often executed in deep relief, textural facades are emphasized. The buildings are of small to moderate scale with bay widths generally from 20 feet to 30 feet. Wider frontages are often broken up by articulation of the facade, making the buildings appear narrower. The street frontages are broken up by the aforementioned alleys, further limiting the scale of the District. The base is generally delineated from the rest of the building, giving the District an intimate scale at the street. *(Appendix J to Article 11 of the Planning Code)*

Mint-Mission

The District encompasses a cohesive concentration of reinforced concrete and brick masonry buildings constructed between 1906 and 1930. Most buildings in the District are constructed on through-lots with visible rear elevations. The buildings are primarily constructed of reinforced concrete and brick masonry and are largely industrial in style and feature Classical Revival detailing typical of early 20th century commercial architecture in San Francisco. Buildings in the District are primarily clad in terra cotta, smooth and polychrome brick, stone tiles and smooth or rusticated stucco or concrete. Ornamentation materials are largely stucco, brick, terra cotta tile, and wood. Wood is commonly used for window framing, millwork and ornamentation. Materials and paint are generally light colors and light to medium earth tones. *(Appendix K to Article 11 of the Planning Code)*

Map of Downtown Conservation Districts

Understanding the Building: Historic vs. Altered

The Planning Code categorizes buildings within these Conservation areas as Significant or Contributory (Categories I-IV). However, this designation may not fully assist with determining what makes a building historic. There is a combination of elements, including materials, finishes, building composition, windows, architectural details, ornamentation, along with street-level details, as well as commercial storefronts and building entries, which express a building's architectural style and/or collective belonging with a group of buildings part of a Conservation District. These elements, also known as character-defining features, make up the architectural features of a historic building or storefront. The repetition of these features creates a visual unity on the street that should be preserved. Collectively, they establish a sense of place, provide a "human scale" and add rich detail to the public realm.

Existing buildings and historic storefronts in the Conservation Districts generally date from the late 19th to early 20th century. Buildings undergo alterations over time, and the ground-level storefronts are often modified from one occupant to the next. To determine how a historic building or storefront design has been altered over time, notice the vertical and horizontal organization of the building, the type of cladding, location and expanse of the glazing, architectural details (such a beltcourses, cornices, friezes, or window surrounds), and entrances on the existing building to provide clues on how to guide your proposal.

RECOMMENDED: Obtain a permit for exploratory investigation to determine whether the area of focus has been altered, search for historic materials and if extant, and consider restoration options. A preservation planner can discuss with you at the Planning Information Counter, or a Project Review meeting can be scheduled for more detailed discussion.

Photo by Leonid Andronov / iStock

Conducting Historic Research

In addition to reviewing existing conditions at the existing building, you may wish to also conduct some preliminary historic research on the property to learn more about its historic appearance, clarify whether specific existing elements are historic or not, and provide context for proposed alterations to a historic property. To start, you can look up the property address on the San Francisco Property Information Map and then click on the "Historic Preservation" tab to see if there are any links to photos taken by the City, such as an Assessor-Recorder photo, a 1976 survey photo, or a photo taken as part of another historic evaluation.[1] The Planning Department's Historic Resources Review application contains a reference guide entitled "How to Research a Property's History" that provides additional resources for conducting historic research on a building.[2] Lastly, the San Francisco Public Library's "How to Research a San Francisco Building" guide gives detailed information on how to learn more about a building in the city and is especially useful in providing links to multiple online resources for historic photos.[3]

Historic photograph of 420 Taylor Street taken by the San Francisco Office of Assessor-Recorder

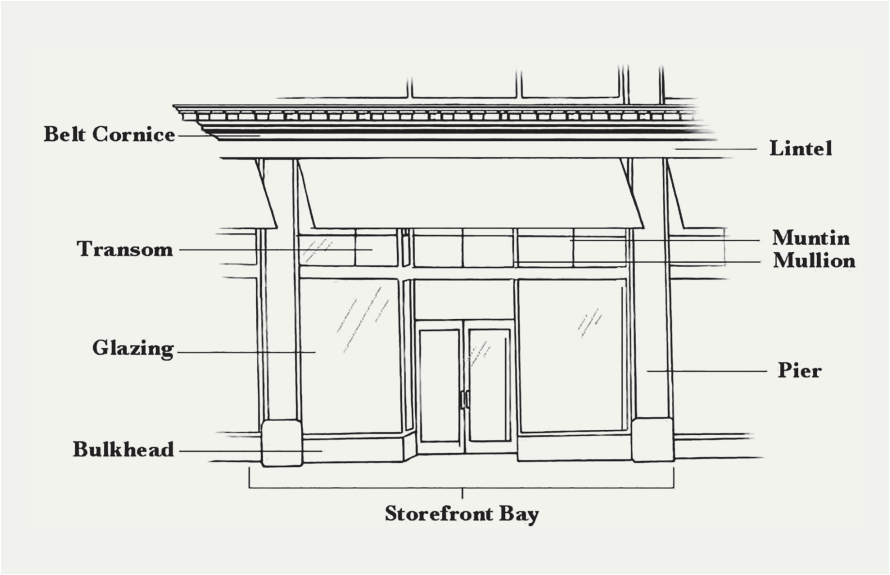
1 San Francisco Planning Department, "San Francisco Property Information Map," *https://sfplanninggis.org/pim/*.

2 San Francisco Planning Department, "Historic Resources Review Application (HRR)," *https://sfplanning.org/sites/default/files/forms/HRR_Application.pdf*.

3 San Francisco Public Library, "How to Research a San Francisco Building," *https://sfpl.org/locations/main-library/sf-history-center/how-research-san-francisco-building*.

Storefront Glossary

The vitality of our commercial streetscapes is dependent on the existence and the success of storefront businesses. In response to changing marketing and advertising strategies designed to draw customers, storefronts are the most commonly altered architectural feature in commercial buildings. Sometimes those alterations are considered significant in themselves and worthy of preservation. There are a number of elements that make up the character-defining features of a historic storefront. Collectively, they create visual unity, establish a sense of place, provide a "human scale" and add rich detail to the public realm. Where applicable, new design that balances marketing, an active public realm, and respect for the character-defining features of the building will also protect and enhance these historic resources. There are some characteristics that are typically shared among commercial architecture of this period, and they are discussed here for reference.



Belt Cornice: A projecting, horizontal molding, similar to a cornice, separating parts of a façade, especially used to delineate the first and second floors. A belt course is a similar feature that does not delineate floors, but rather provides a horizontal decorate element at intermediate levels of a façade.

Bulkhead: The low, often paneled base of a storefront bay that supports the glazing and elevates merchandise for pedestrian viewing. In the Conservation Districts, storefront display windows were traditionally placed upon a one- to two-foot high solid base, also called a bulkhead. Primarily rectilinear or angled in design, of frame, natural stone or tile construction, and often with raised patterns. The bulkhead serves two functions: it raises a window display closer to eye level, to take advantage of the line of vision and to more effectively showcase merchandise to better capture the attention of the pedestrian; and it acts as a kickplate, that, compared to glazing, can better withstand the impact of window shoppers' shoes.

Glazing: The large panes of clear glass within the storefront bay where goods and services are displayed and supported by the bulkhead and framed by the piers. The storefront display windows within the Conservation Districts typically consist of large panes of plate glass set in metal or wood frames with the primary purpose of allowing passersby to see goods or services available inside. The historic metal framing systems have a particularly narrow profile in comparison to modern aluminum storefront framing systems. Vertical framing elements were sometimes omitted at the entry recess corners, with just a butt-joint between the two panes of glass. Most storefront display windows have been altered or replaced.

Lintel: The horizontal structural element that spans above the storefront bays to support the weight of the upper façade.

Mullion: The vertical element that separates window units or storefront glazing; typically not a structural support for the building.

Muntin: The small molding or bar that separates the individual panes of a multi-paned window, such as in a transom.

Pier: The vertical structural or decorative elements, also known as a column, which supports and/or frames the glazing. To support the weight of the masonry above the storefront, decorative cast iron columns or masonry piers were often added, as more decorative elements known as pilasters.

Storefront Bay: Defined by the height of the lintel and separated by piers, a storefront bay is composed of bulkhead, glazing, transom, and entry.

Storefront Entry: Traditionally, storefront entrance doors were made with full-height glass framed in wood or metal, with a transom window often set directly above the door. The entries are typically recessed 2'-6" to 6' from the sidewalk, which allows protection from the rain and wind, creates additional display frontage, and the repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of defined commercial spaces that helps establish a sense of scale and identifies business entrances. These are traditionally recessed entries with landings paved with mosaic tiles, terrazzo, or patterned concrete. The ceilings of recessed areas were finished with stucco or wood panels.

Transom: The small, operable or inoperable framed windows above the glazing and below the lintel that filter light into the ground floor space; sometimes sheltered by awnings. Transom windows, located above the main display windows and entries, are a common feature of commercial storefronts.[4] The placement of these windows was made possible by generously proportioned tall ceilings within the commercial interiors. Transom windows were often operable and provided ventilation to the interior. Transom windows were typically glazed with clear, textured, leaded or stained glass, set in wood or metal frames, and allowed additional areas of signage.

4 In some instances this is more accurately referred to as a Clerestory window.

2 THE STANDARDS

A . Storefronts

B. Buildings & Entries

C. Signage

D. Awnings, Canopies, and Marquees

E. Temporary Activations

A. Storefronts

The individual storefront bay is defined by the height of the lintel and separated by piers. Appropriate alignment and proportions of the storefront bay are critical in creating a regular appearance within the district, without strict uniformity. The configuration of a storefront façade refers to the relationship between, and general proportions of, various storefront infill components, such as door location, setback, bulkhead, display window dimensions, transom windows, historic materials and details. A single building containing multiple storefronts may distinguish each storefront, while maintaining building unity. Separate buildings should remain visually distinct. Storefronts should be confined to storefront components and typical signage rather than utilized for further branding.

Please review the *Overview of Conservation Districts* and *Storefront Glossary* available in these Standards for more information on terms referenced in this section.

Use this section as reference for projects including replacement, restoration, or modification of historic and non-historic storefronts and/or storefront elements; creating new or utilizing new openings for mechanical; installation or replacement of exterior security elements; and accessible entries.

A.1 STOREFRONTS: STREET PRESENCE: RHYTHM, REGULARITY, DESIGN, TRANSPARENCY

» Preserve storefront character-defining features where present.

» Remove contemporary cladding and storefront systems using the gentlest means possible to uncover and restore altered or obscured historic storefront materials.

» Design new storefront systems and features based on physical or photographic evidence that references the typical configuration, proportion, scale, and profile from the building's period of significance.

» Integrate architectural components at the base of modified buildings into the overall design of the structure.

» Entries must comply with the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Installation of actuators is preferable at non-historic glazing, and not installed to damage or obscure character-defining features. Qualified historic buildings may use the alternative provisions of the California Historical Building Code (CHBC) to preserve significant historic features when upgrading buildings. Preserve historically significant doors and other features for reuse if possible. If preservation is not an option, replace with a new door of the same design that is compatible with the storefront's style and material. To create required level landings when a character-defining feature is extant at the entry vestibule, salvage and reuse material in the new design.

Replacement Storefront Design

When features are deteriorated beyond repair and/or alterations are proposed to non-historic storefronts, design replacement storefronts as follows:

» Maintain the depth and configuration of storefront bays and entrances, including recessed entries. Setback the storefront system slightly from the building face so it is not flush with face of building;

» Design solid and uniform spandrel panels (also known as transom bars) consistent with storefront framing or other architectural features from the building;

» Replacement storefront glazing shall include mullions as narrow and as limited as possible, while still allowing for structural stability of the new glazing, to maximize visibility into interior activity and merchandising;

» Retain the height of the historic bulkhead or closely match the dimensions, generally between 18" and 24" tall, with a rectilinear or chamfered (angled) projection;

» Restore transom windows. Clear glass is encouraged; however translucent or patterned glass is also compatible.

Contemporary storefronts can be installed in historic openings without damaging or obscuring significant features. This can be accomplished while maintaining high transparency, utilizing durable modern materials, and designing historically appropriate storefront configurations.

A.1 STOREFRONTS: STREET PRESENCE: RHYTHM, REGULARITY, DESIGN, TRANSPARENCY

Interiors

» Maximize storefront transparency into the interior through the use of clear glazing to match the historic display glazing design.

» Provide substantial setbacks from the inside face of the glass for interior drop soffits to avoid obscuring views into the storefront.

This storefront example shows an appropriate location for ADA push buttons, the retention of the historic entry shape, appropriate bulkhead material, and a contemporary window framing system with depth, similar to an historic frame.

Storefront Transparency & General Merchandising

» Utilize clear glglass for all ground-floor windows, including areas where back-of-house functions, such as stock rooms, break rooms, and corridors are present.

» For active use tenant spaces with one frontage, frontage must be fenestrated with transparent windows and doorways for no less than 60% of the street frontage at the ground level and allow visibility to the inside of the building.

Transparency into the entire interior of a space can be achieved regardless of ceiling height and programmatic needs.

To ensure visibility into the building, the area of pedestrian eye level (between 4 feet and 8 feet in height), within 4 feet from the surface of the window glass must be at least 75% open to perpendicular view. For potential exceptions, an entitlement application subject to review and action by the Historic Preservation Commission may be required.

» For active use tenant spaces with at least two frontages, frontages must be fenestrated with transparent windows and doorways for no less than 60% of the street frontage at the ground level or contain window displays of at least four feet in depth to allow visibility to the inside of the building or activate the street.

» Integrate all branding, marketing, and visual merchandising features on the interior of the building to avoid obscuring exterior character-defining features and the overall historic architectural expression of the building.

A.2 STOREFRONTS: MATERIALS / FINISHES / COLOR

- Replace historic storefront materials to match where remnants of the historic exist. When no historic storefront materials remain, replace non-historic storefront materials with new high-quality materials that are compatible with the historic property and reference the original storefront material and configuration, if documentation is available.
  - Replacement materials for storefront system framing, including doors, mullions and spandrel panel, shall be a darker color and non-reflective or brushed appearance. Common selections include powder-coated metals, non-glossy or non-reflective aluminum. and painted wood.
  - Replacement materials for bulkhead cladding shall match or otherwise be compatible with historic materials, typically painted wood, decorative metal, small ceramic tile or masonry.
- Limit the number of exterior colors to different tones of one or two colors, the second color often used to delineate the bulkhead. Choice of colors shall be determined by the nature of the building's historic character, and colors of building elements shall relate to each other. (See the *Overview of Conservation Districts* for color options).
- Previously unpainted masonry, brickwork, and stonework shall remain unpainted.
- In the Kearny-Mason-Market-Sutter (KMMS) Conservation District, finishes are of natural stone, smooth, and/or painted exteriors. Please review *Overview of Conservation Districts* in these Standards for details on other Districts.
- Design newly integrated features such as security gates and louver grilles with finishes that match the storefront system.
- Reference Section B.2 in these Standards for best practices on repair and replacement of Building cladding.
- Materials used near sidewalks and adjacent to building entrances shall be highly durable and easily maintained.

A.3 STOREFRONTS: SECURITY FEATURES / LIGHTING

Security Gates & Grilles

- Integrate security gates and grilles into the overall design and construction of a new storefront.
- Design new security gates and grilles to be a minimum of 75% open and transparent to perpendicular view.
- Retain or install scissor gates when other systems may not be appropriate.
- Locate the housing for roll-down security gates within soffits or on the interior to avoid obscuring glazing or exterior features.
- Locate attachments for retractable gates or security grilles hidden behind an architectural element, tucked into a framed pocket opening, mounted on the interior, attached to a storefront return, or mounted high enough above the glazing system so as to conceal housing mechanisms and to minimize visibility during daytime and/or business operating hours.
- Some existing security gates and grilles can be re-used. Please consult with the Planning Information Counter, or review Section 145.1 of the Planning Code.

Storefront Lighting & Cameras

- Design and scale light fixtures to be compatible with the storefront and character-defining features of the building.
- Design and locate exterior accent lighting to be discreet so that it is minimally visible and will not damage any character-defining features. Avoid exterior illumination of the storefronts and the building as a branding mechanism.
- Locate exterior security cameras to be discreet, minimally visible and avoid damage to any character-defining feature.
- Mount light fixtures within soffits of recessed storefront entrances.
- Route all conduit to the interior of the building.

Consider anti-shatter films which can be applied to glazing as an alternative to opaque gates or grilles.

A.4 STOREFRONTS: SYSTEMS

- Locate mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems in an interior room or a rooftop mechanical penthouse. When exterior installation is required, systems shall be located on a non-visible facade away from public view.
- If exterior equipment cannot be located on a non-visible facade, minimize its appearance as much as possible and incorporate translucent glass, films, or decorative grilles when feasible to help conceal the equipment and maintain the historic character.
- Install limited new openings or introduce grilles or louvers at existing openings of modest size.
- Avoid or minimize the installation of louvers or building systems behind storefront glazing.
- Locate new openings or new louvers in discreet locations.
- Select architectural or decorative grilles or louvers that are compatible with the general character, color and details of the building or District.
- Metals are likely the most common material for use as grilles or louvers. Ensure these are brushed or powder-coated, and non-reflective.

The decorative architectural grilles have been installed to conceal mechanical intake and exhaust vents, and incorporated into the storefront design.

STOREFRONTS: CASE STUDIES

These two case study examples, both located in Article 11 Conservation Districts, reflect the use of the *Downtown Historic Design Standards* to inform the design of new storefronts. They are intended to demonstrate how distinct existing and historic conditions can lead to different applications of the design standards. 92 2nd Street had intact historic storefront elements and a historic photograph to inform a new storefront's configuration and materials, while 240 Stockton Street had no remaining historic storefront elements and limited documentation. But through utilization of the Department's policies and Standards, both projects led to a compatible and appropriate design for replacement storefronts.

92 2nd Street

This property is located in the New Montgomery-Mission-2nd Street Article 11 Conservation District but is also Article 10 Individual Landmark No. 271, the Burdette Building. The building was constructed in 1903 and the storefront was modified several times throughout the 20th century. A review of existing conditions against a 1929 photograph of the building indicated that several historic storefront elements—including entrance locations, cast iron columns, interior bulkhead framing, and brick facade cladding—was extant behind later alterations. These remaining historic elements and the 1929 photograph guided the design of the new wood storefront system with marble bulkheads.

1929 photograph of 92 2nd Street (UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library)

2016 photograph of 92 2nd Street (San Francisco Planning Department)

2024 photograph of 92 2nd Street (San Francisco Planning Department)

STOREFRONTS: CASE STUDIES

240 Stockon Street

The historic cladding at the base of the building was largely intact, so the storefronts and entries were installed strictly within existing openings while a limited amount of terra cotta restoration matching the existing/historic was undertaken.

The typical base, display, and transom/clerestory configuration was implemented, with a mix of darkly colored natural stone at the bulkhead and powder coated metal storefront systems.

Minimal documentation was available, but it was sufficient to allow for the generally accurate (if somewhat abstracted) return of the historic form of the storefront columns and capitals.

Altogether, the mix of new materials and finishes alongside traditional compositions and forms resulted in a compatible but differentiated design.

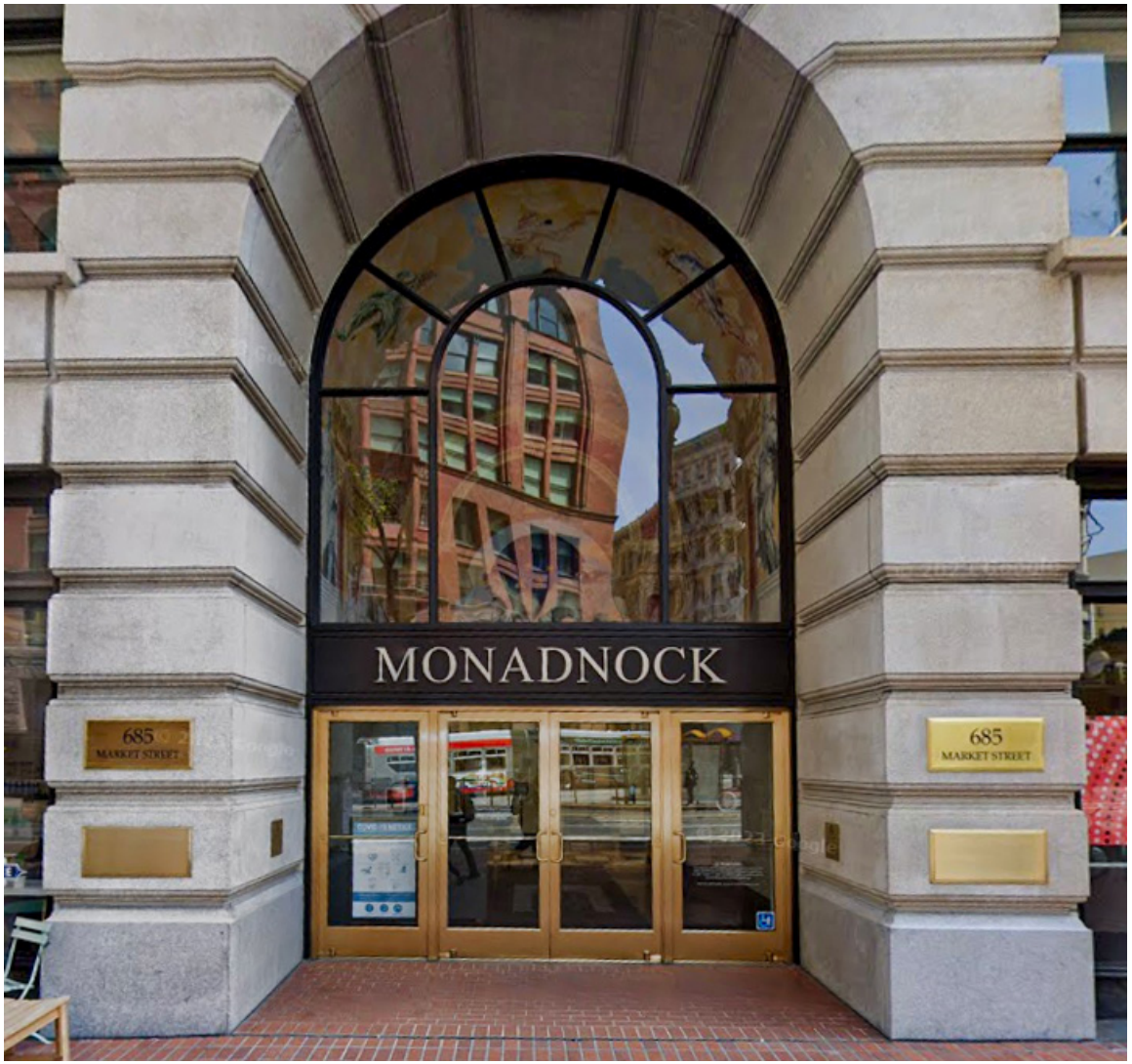
2024 photographs of 240 Stockton Street (San Francisco Planning Department)

B. Buildings & Entries

Please review the *Overview of Conservation Districts* and Storefront Glossary available in these Standards for more information on terms referenced in this section.

Many commercial buildings often celebrated the entry, and historically had large central or corner entrances of single or double doors featuring a full frame and large, central glass light. Typically, historic buildings have an entrance to each storefront in addition to one main entrance to upper floors, opening directly onto the sidewalk. The main building door, giving access to upper floors, is similar in appearance, but often less impressive than the storefront door(s).

Use this section as a reference for projects including painting, removal of non-historic cladding and replacement with compatible cladding, door replacements, in-kind replacement of decorative elements, accessible entries and ordinary maintenance and repair.



B.1 BUILDINGS & ENTRIES: STREET PRESENCE: RHYTHM, REGULARITY, DESIGN

- Review the Overview of Conservation Districts for a discussion of these features applicable to individual Districts.
- Maintain historic position, which includes the depth and configuration of entrances.
- Retain recessed entrances. Where an entry is not recessed, maintain it in its historic position, where possible.
- Review Section A.1 of these Standards for discussion on accessible entries.

Primary building entries often lead to publicly-accessible lobby areas. A proposal to modify publicly-accessible entries may ultimately be approvable over-the-counter but require review and approval by a preservation planner. Please review the *Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation and Repair vs Replacement* sections in these Standards to guide your proposal. A preservation planner can discuss with you at the Planning Information Counter, or a Project Review meeting can be scheduled for more detailed discussion.

B.2 BUILDINGS & ENTRIES: MATERIALS / FINISHES / COLOR

Building Cladding

» Utilize traditional building materials. Terra cotta, brick, simulated or natural stone and scored stucco convey permanence and shall be used when architecturally appropriate.

» New brick shall match the color and type of historic brickwork.

» Particular attention shall be paid to the point at which different materials join together. These 'edges' shall be clean and organized.

» Replacement façade material shall be similar in profile to the traditional cladding material.

» Previously unpainted masonry, brickwork, and stonework shall remain unpainted.

» In the Kearny-Mason-Market-Sutter (KMMS) Conservation District, finishes are of natural stone, smooth, and/or painted exteriors. Please review Overview of Conservation Districts in these Standards for details on other Districts.

» Limit the number of exterior colors to different tones of one or two colors, the second color often used to delineate the bulkhead. Choice of colors shall be determined by the nature of the building's historic character, and colors of building elements shall relate to each other. (See the *Overview of Conservation Districts* for color details).

» Materials used near sidewalks and adjacent to building entrances shall be highly durable and easily maintained.

Primary Entry

» Utilize character-defining features to inspire design. If historic design is not known, use a wood-framed or metal-framed glass door in a traditional design.

» Maintain features that are important to the character of the historic door, including the door, door frame, threshold, glass panes, paneling, hardware, detailing transoms and flanking side lights.

» All primary entrance doors shall be predominantly glazed.

» Wider metal frames are generally encouraged over narrow frames.

» Utilize contemporary or traditional materials and finishes that directly reference character-defining materials and finishes. Dark, non-reflective or non-glossy finish, powder-coated metals and painted wood are compatible options.

» Smooth and painted with a satin or flat finish, non-reflective or non-glossy metals, powder-coated aluminum finishes.

C. Signage

A number of variables influence signage needs; however, the overall goal shall be a proposal that balances tenant visibility and respects the character-defining features of the building. Achieving this goal will support businesses and protect historic resources. To avoid visual clutter within the public right-of-way it is important to scale signage with the character of the building or district. Signs are a vital part of all Downtown businesses. They serve as markers and create individual identities for businesses. Storefront signs are often the most common feature to be modified. Article 6 of the Planning Code establishes the foundation for signage requirements.

Owners are encouraged to develop an overall sign program to facilitate permit review and approval as well as to clarify expectations for new and existing tenants. The appropriate number, size, location, and material, method of illumination and method of attachment are the key components to a sign program. A preservation planner can discuss with you at the Planning Information Counter, or a Project Review meeting can be scheduled for more detailed discussion.

These types of signs are **not permitted:**

- General advertising signs and banners;
- Roof signs;
- Signage above 100 feet;
- Moving signs, strobe lights, or signs that project an image on a surface
- Internally illuminated box signs with glass or plastic lenses (aka cabinet signs);
- Internally illuminated fabric signs or awnings; and flashing signs;
- Properties within the Market Street Special Sign District and Transit Center Special Sign District outline further requirements (visit https://sfplanninggis.org/pim/ to learn if your property is within one of these special sign districts)

A note on legal, non-conforming signs:

- Neon signs, specifically those that do not conform to current Planning Code, may be removed for rehabilitation and re-installed at same location within 18 months.
- In C-3 zoning districts, legal non-conforming signs can be reused, as long as there is no increase in area. This includes but is not limited to any extensions in the form of writing, representation, emblem or any figure of similar character, which shall in itself constitute a new sign and thus be subject to current Planning Code requirements for Signs.

C.1 SIGNAGE: STREET PRESENCE: NUMBER, LOCATION

Number

» Each business elevation is allowed one projecting (blade) sign, one wall sign, signage on awning valances (conforming to these Standards) and window signs. On a case-by-case basis, signage in excess of these Standards will be considered.

Location

» Signage shall not extend below, above, or across other storefronts or along a frontage associated with a different use.

» Upper-level retailers can locate signage at upper levelss, below the maximum height of 100 feet. Street-level signage at the entry is encouraged.

» Building signage, often for primary building tenants, is permitted at upper levels below the cornice line, or similar architectural feature, below the maximum height of 100 feet.

» Do not cover, damage or obscure character-defining features, architectural details or window openings.

C.2 SIGNAGE: MATERIALS / FINISHES / COLOR

» Design signs to be constructed of durable high-quality materials that retain their characteristics within a high-traffic area over time. Common compatible materials selections include metal with a powder-coated or heavily brushed finish.

» Utilize materials that are compatible with the color, craftsmanship, and finishes associated with the districts. Glossy or highly reflective surfaces are inconsistent.

C.3 SIGNAGE: ILLUMINATION

- Indirectly illuminate signs or externally illuminate signs such as by installing an external fixture to illuminate the sign or by using a reverse channel halo-lit means of illumination. Review Section A.4 in these Standards for details about exterior lighting design, placement and installation.
- Design an opaque background that does not transmit light and text. Individually illuminate logos.
- Existing neon signs can be repaired and utilized at the same location.

C.4 SIGNAGE: ATTACHMENT METHOD & DETAILS

- Minimize the visibility of conduit and raceways associated with a sign. If raceways must be exposed, finish them to match the facade or integrated into the overall design of the sign.
- Reduce the depth of signs, by placing the transformer in a remote location and not housed within the sign itself.
- Do not cover, damage or obscure any character-defining features for sign installation.
- Select attachment methods which allow for removal without adversely impacting the exterior.
- Reuse existing anchor points from previous signage when feasible, to avoid further damage to historic facade cladding. Provide specifications for patching/repair of former signage anchor points that will not be reused.
- For non-terra cotta masonry buildings, anchor through mortar joints whenever possible or attach to the jamb of a non-historic storefront system. In rare instances, attachment to non-terra cotta masonry cladding may be necessary to account for projection or wind loads.
- Do not anchor signage into cast iron or terra cotta elements of a building.
- Pin-mount non-illuminated letters or logos into the mortar joints of masonry.
- Pin-mount signs on a thin raceway that is mounted flat and horizontally within the signband or spandrel.

D. Awnings, Canopies, and Marquees

Historically, awnings, canopies, and marquees have provided a number of important functions for commercial storefronts. Not only did they provide climate control, these features were used to protect merchandise and displays from glare and fading and window shoppers from bad weather. Today, awnings, canopies, and marquees come in a variety of shapes, sizes, frames, and fabrics, but their primary function has shifted from shelter to signage. When used correctly, these features still allow a business to attract customers, express its individuality, respect the architecture of the building, and compliment the public realm. Section 136.1 of the Planning Code establishes the foundation of requirements for awnings, canopies, and marquees.

D.1 AWNINGS: STREET PRESENCE: NUMBER, LOCATION

Number

» One awning per storefront bay opening is allowed.

Location

» Locate awnings between any piers or columns which define the individual storefront bay.

» Locate awnings to relate to storefront bay openings. Do not cover the transom windows of the building.

» Do not cover, damage or obscure character-defining features, architectural details or window openings.

» Design awnings of the sloped variety unless the shape of the opening is arched, in which case an awning must follow the contour of the opening. The underside of the awning is to remain open.

» Retractable and operable awnings are encouraged.

D.2 AWNINGS: MATERIALS / FINISHES / COLOR

» Awning material is to be of a non-vinyl cloth or canvas with a matte finish or a material similar in appearance and texture.

» Limit valances to no more than 12 inches in height, unframed and flexible.

D.3 AWNINGS: PROJECTION / DIMENSIONS

- All portions of any permitted awning shall be not less than eight feet above the finished grade, excluding any valance that shall not be less than seven feet above the finished grade.
- When the width of all awnings is ten feet or less along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed six feet from the face of any supporting building and the vertical distance from the top to the bottom of such awnings shall not exceed six feet, including any valance.
- When the width of all awnings exceeds ten feet measured along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed four feet from the face of the supporting building and the vertical distance from the top to the bottom of such awnings shall not exceed four feet, including any valance.

D.4 AWNINGS: ATTACHMENT METHOD

- Attach awning structure at the lintel or transom bar, to building returns, or non-historic cladding.
- Attach awnings in a manner that allows for their removal without adversely impacting the exterior of the subject building. Do not anchor into any cast iron or terra cotta elements of a building.
- Do not cover, damage or obscure character-defining features, architectural details or window openings for awning installation.

D.5 CANOPIES: STREET PRESENCE: NUMBER, LOCATION

- Canopies shall not be spaced closer than twenty feet from each other, measured from centerline to centerline.
- Canopies shall be placed above entryways; see Section D.7 for more details.

D.6 CANOPIES: MATERIALS / FINISHES / COLOR

- Canopies shall be constructed of high-quality materials, generally with a textile or similar covering over powder-coated metal frames and support columns.

Photo by Thomas Hawk

D.7 CANOPIES: PROJECTION / DIMENSIONS

- The width of a canopy shall not exceed the width of the entry opening, and in no case exceed ten feet.
- If a valance is desired, it shall not exceed more than twelve inches in height and shall be unframed and flexible.
- The horizontal projection of any canopy may extend to a point two feet from the curb, with outer column supports located within the outer 1/3rd of the sidewalk and being no less than four feet from the building face.
- The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of canopies shall not exceed two feet, including any valance.
- All portions of any canopy, excluding the column supports and excluding any valance which may be not less than seven feet above the finished grade, shall be not less than eight feet above the finished grade.

D.8 CANOPIES: ATTACHMENT METHOD

- Canopies shall be attached to the building directly above entryways.
- The number of required attachments shall be minimized and located in sacrificial areas, such as mortar joints, non-historic storefronts, undecorated wall surfaces, and window or entry returns.

D.9 MARQUEES: STREET PRESENCE: NUMBER, LOCATION

- Marquees shall be placed above entryways; see Section D.11 for more details.
- Marquees are limited to one per tenant along any given building frontage.

D.10 MARQUEES: MATERIALS / FINISHES / COLOR

- New marquees shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Compatible materials and finishes include but are not limited to metal with a powder-coated, polymer, marine-grade, or heavy galvanized finish.
- When repairing or modifying an existing historic marquee, utilize the same material(s) or a substitute that matches in appearance, texture, and tooling.

Photo by Steve Rhodes

D.11 MARQUEES: PROJECTION / DIMENSIONS

- The width of a new marquee shall not exceed the width of the entry opening.
- The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any marquee shall not exceed three feet and the horizontal projection shall not extend beyond a point closer than two feet from the curb.
- Provided it does not extend beyond the entry opening, a marquee that projects more than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line shall not exceed ten feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less. All portions shall not be less than twelve feet nor more than sixteen feet in height above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine. Each building frontage shall be considered separately.
- Provided it does not extend beyond the entry opening, a marquee that projects less than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line shall not exceed twenty-five feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less. All portions shall not be less than ten feet nor more than sixteen feet in height above the finished grade, nor higher than windowsill level exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine. Each building frontage shall be considered separately.

D.12 MARQUEES: ATTACHMENT METHOD

- Marquees shall be attached to the building directly above entryways.
- The number of required attachments shall be minimized and located in sacrificial areas, such as mortar joints, non-historic storefronts, undecorated wall surfaces, and window or entry returns.

E. Temporary Activations

Celebrate grand openings and holidays, support new launches and highlight other temporary marketing needs by installing temporary signage or temporary decorative or artistic display on the building in which the use if located. For a 60-day period, these installations are allowed in the C-3-R Zoning District, a majority of which is within the Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter (KMMS) Conservation District. Temporary uses are discussed in Article 2 of the Planning Code, and for these 60-day uses more specifically in Section 205.1.

- Attach installations in a manner that allows for their removal without adversely impacting the exterior of the subject building. Do not anchor into any cast iron or terra cotta elements of a building.
- Do not damage character-defining features for temporary installations.
- A temporary sign, decorative or artistic display is allowed to extend a maximum height of 16 feet above the roofline of the building to which it is affixed.

San Francisco Planning

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