Chapter 4

Site Features

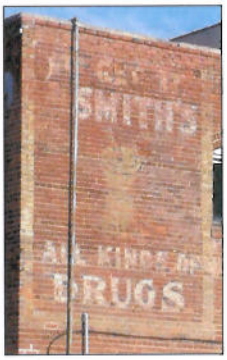
Non-Residential Guidelines

4.1 Signage & Awnings

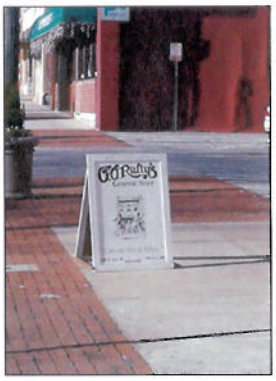
Signs, as much as the buildings in which they serve, can contribute greatly to the overall sense of place of downtown Salisbury—positively or negatively. The purpose of design review of signs and awnings is to ensure that design, location, materials, and colors are consistent with the character and scale of the building and are in keeping with the historic nature of downtown while also promoting and accommodating retail and street activity.

Signs in the downtown come in many different forms. Wall, projecting, awnings, window, and sandwich board signs are the most common found in the district.

Sign design is addressed in these guidelines, but overall size, location, and sign type falls under Article IX of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Salisbury.



Historic painted wall sign



Sandwich board sign

Wall signs

Projecting sign

Window sign

Awning sign

Sign Guidelines

1. Retain and preserve signage that is original or is important in defining the overall historic character of a building.
2. Signs should be compatible with the architectural character of the building in size, scale, materials and style. If possible, base new sign designs on historic documentation such as old photographs.
3. Use traditional materials commonly found on turn-of-the century commercial buildings such as wood, metal, or stone or use modern materials that have the appearance of traditional.
4. Whether they are wall-mounted, freestanding, affixed to awnings, or placed on the sidewalk, signs should be placed in locations that do not obscure any historic architectural features of the building or obstruct any views or vistas of Salisbury's historic downtown.

Wall-sign appropriately mounted within flat area above storefront.

5. Wall signs should be flush-mounted on flat surfaces and done in such a way that does not destroy or conceal architectural features or details.
6. Wall-mounted signs on friezes, lintels, spandrels, and fascias over storefront windows should be of an appropriate size and fit within these surfaces.
7. Projecting signs:
   - Should be carefully designed to reflect the character of the building and be compatible with other adjacent signage.
   - Should have visually appealing elements such as shapes, painted or applied letters; two or three dimensional icons, etc. should be considered.
   - Mounting hardware should be an attractive and integral part of the sign design.
   - May be constructed of a variety of materials including wood, metal, appropriate plastics and composites.
8. Install freestanding signs appropriately, such as on well-landscaped ground bases or low standards.
9. Signs illuminated from within are generally not appropriate. Lighting for externally illuminated signs should be simple and unobtrusive and should not obscure the content of the sign or the building façade.

10. Sidewalk Signs:

- Within the allowable size, height, and dimensions, creative shapes that reflect the type or theme of the business being advertised are encouraged (e.g., ice cream shop may display a sign in the shape of an ice cream cone.)
- The sign lettering should have a finished look. Signs with chalk boards or dry erase boards may be permitted.
- The signs should only be used to inform pedestrians about the business name, location, and type of goods available at the shop, sale items, or other similar factual and business-oriented messages.
- The signs should not include statements expressing political, religious, sexually explicit, or personal opinions that are not a component of the economic activity offered by the shop.

Awning Guidelines

11. Awnings should be made of cloth or other woven fabric such as canvas. Metal awnings are generally not appropriate, but can be used in some instances if they are compatible with the historic character of the building. Vinyl or plastic awnings are not appropriate.

12. Base the design of new awnings on historic documentation of the building or examples from buildings of similar style and age. Awnings for new buildings should be of similar materials, size, and scale of that commonly found in the historic district.

13. Mount awnings in a manner that does not obscure or damage historic architectural features of the building. Awnings should be placed appropriately above the transom and projecting over individual window or door openings. They should fit within the window or door opening. A continuous awning is not appropriate.

Awning properly fit within bay area created by window

14. Back-lit awnings or those with interior illumination are not appropriate in the historic districts.

15. Select awning colors that are appropriate to the design of the building.

4.2 Parking & Paving

Parking areas serve a utility function more than anything else. They provide vehicular access to the consumer while also facilitating various service functions and commercial deliveries. With appropriate paving materials, landscaping and screening, a parking area can be designed to minimize its impact on the historic downtown and, with some creativity, be an attractive area for parking, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, or even as a public gathering space for events and festivals.

The location of parking areas in downtown Salisbury is a product of the orientation of the main building on the lot. Most off-street parking areas are either to the rear of buildings fronting on a street or are within an interior area of the block. There are, unfortunately, instances in downtown Salisbury where a building may have a suburban orientation with the main structure set back far from the street with parking in the front. This is simply not appropriate in a historic downtown.

Downtown Salisbury has a variety of paving materials such as brick and concrete pavers, bomanite, concrete, and asphalt. Generally, parking areas are concrete while sidewalks, alleyways, and public spaces have brick or concrete pavers. There are other modern paving treatments such as stamped concrete that may be appropriate providing the design complements the downtown district.

Parking Guidelines

1. Whenever possible, retain and preserve the historic configuration and materials of paved areas such as alleys and sidewalks
2. Parking in downtown should be located to the rear of the building. In certain cases, it may be appropriate for parking to be located to the side and rear of the structure. Parking lots should not be located on a corner lot.
3. Appropriate materials that complement a historic district (such as brick pavers) are encouraged to be used in the design of a parking area. This would minimize the aesthetic impact of an expansive parking area while also facilitating more efficient pedestrian & vehicular circulation.

4. Whenever possible, use effective screening methods for parking areas such as landscaping, wrought-iron or wooden fences, and masonry walls that are compatible with the adjacent structures and district.
5. Gravel and unpaved parking areas or pedestrian walkways are not appropriate.
6. Parking structures should be compatible with the district in design, materials, and fenestration. Structures should incorporate street level retail or offices with upper floors used for parking.

4.3 Landscaping & Streetscape

Streetscape elements such as landscaping and street furniture can have a tremendous impact on an urban historic district. While they can be mostly functional, such as a shade tree or a sidewalk bench, they can also be an attractive, pedestrian-friendly element that helps define space and encourages commerce, dining, and interaction.

These elements should be considered in any design for new construction, parking areas, and sidewalk retail.

Landscaping & Streetscape Guidelines

Landscaping

1. Retain and maintain specific landscape features that are character-defining elements of the historic district, including large trees, parks, hedges, foundation plantings, grassy lawns, and ground cover.

Magnolia Park

2. New landscaping areas should use planting materials compatible with the historic district and appropriate in the urban environment.
3. The removal of any tree larger than eighteen inches in diameter at four-and a-half feet above the ground requires a certificate of appropriateness.
4. Remove a diseased, mature tree only on a written certification of its condition by an arborist, a landscape architect, a cooperative agent, or a city-designated agent. If it is necessary to remove a large tree or a hedge because of storm damage, replace it with a new tree or hedge of the same species or with a similar appearance.
5. Pruning techniques that promote the health and natural growth of the tree are encouraged. Unnatural pruning techniques such as topping, stubbing, dehorning or lopping are not appropriate. Tree pruning should follow accepted industry standards for arborists (ANSI 300A Standards).
6. If it is necessary to remove a large tree because of disease or storm damage, replace it with a new tree of the same species or with a similar appearance.

7. Appropriate landscaping should be used to screen parking lots, utilities, garbage receptacles, and other service areas.
8. Plantings should not obstruct the view of historic structures, façades, or architectural details.

Streetscape

9. Sidewalk furniture including benches, trash receptacles, tree grates, etc. should be of a material and color that is compatible with a historic downtown. Brightly colored or contemporary street furniture is not appropriate.

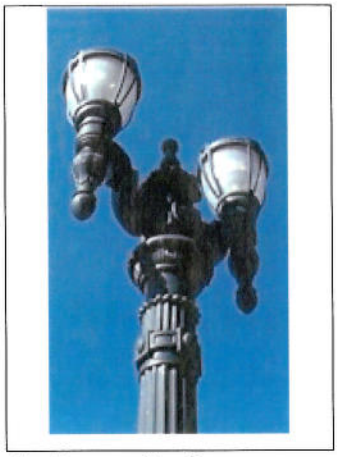
Sidewalk retail at Rufty's market.

10. Sidewalk retail and cafés are encouraged in downtown provided they use appropriate street furniture, do not significantly obstruct historic structures or architectural features, and do not create a hazard for the pedestrian.
11. Retain and preserve historic fences and walls. Modern fencing such as chain link is incompatible in the downtown historic district.
12. Landscape elements such as fences, gates, and walls are appropriate in downtown to screen parking lots or service areas. They should be compatible with the existing structure and be made of appropriate materials such as masonry, wrought iron, and wood.

4.4 Lighting

Lighting in downtown serves several purposes including security, facilitating vehicular and pedestrian traffic, illumination of signage and façades, and accentuating architectural details of buildings. Whenever designing lighting elements in downtown, it is important to consider the level of lighting as well as the scale and overall design of the lighting fixture.

Lighting Guidelines



1. Introduce exterior lighting that is compatible with the historic nature of the structure, the property, and district. Compatibility of exterior lighting and lighting fixtures is assessed in terms of design, material, use, size, scale, color, and brightness.
2. Whether lighting the street or parking areas, appropriate fixtures should be selected that are compatible with existing fixtures and the historic character of the district.
3. When mounting lighting fixtures on buildings, select those that are as unobtrusive as possible and whose installation will not damage or conceal any historic architectural features.
4. Rather than indiscriminately lighting areas, introduce subtle lighting qualities by carefully locating light sources.
5. Introduce lighting levels that provide adequate safety, yet do not detract from or overly emphasize the structure or the property.
6. Introduce directional lighting that does not spill light onto adjacent properties. Exterior lighting in parking lots should be directed into the parking area itself.

4.5 Art

Installation of art in downtown and other locally designated historic districts creates focal points, destinations and vitality in or near landscaped areas, sidewalks, street medians, pocket plazas and similar public spaces. The Confederate Monument on West Innes Street and the mural on West Fisher Street are examples of existing art that have become downtown Salisbury landmarks. The second example illustrates how blank walls or surfaces can provide a suitable framework for installation of artwork. Design review of art installations in historic districts should be content-neutral while ensuring that the overall scale, durability of the piece and manner of installation are compatible with the historic character of the downtown.

Art Guidelines

Location

1. Artwork should be appropriately-scaled for the intended space.

2. Landscaping, seating, interpretive signage and other improvements to enhance the setting and the viewing experience are encouraged.

3. In selecting locations for wall-mounted art, such as murals, mosaics or metal installations, avoid areas that are important to the overall design or architectural rhythm of the building.

4. Artwork should not conceal or result in the removal of character-defining details or features.

Materials

5. Durable materials intended for exterior applications should be used.

6. Artwork should be cared for and refurbished as required by the nature of the material to maintain the appropriate appearance of the piece.

7. Select materials for pedestals, paving or walkways that are typical of those found in the district, except where they are integral to the art itself.

Installation

8. Methods of stabilization or attachment should be fully reversible and not cause damage to historic materials.
9. Accessories to the artwork such as mounting hardware or lighting should be unobtrusive and screened from view as much as possible