



SAN FRANCISCO  
PLANNING  
DEPARTMENT

## GENERAL PLANNING INFORMATION

# Awnings, Canopies and Marquees

Planning Department  
1650 Mission Street  
Suite 400  
San Francisco, CA  
94103-9425

T: 415.558.6378  
F: 415.558.6409

Date:  
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Subject:  
**Awnings, Canopies and Marquees**

Planning Code Section 136 (12) , 136.1, 136.2, 186, 790.20,  
790.26, 790.58; and Building Code.

## Introduction

### AWNINGS

Historically, awnings have provided a number of important functions for commercial storefronts. Not only did they provide climate control, awnings were used to protect merchandise and displays from glare and fading and window shoppers from bad weather. Today, awnings come in a variety of shapes, sizes, frames, and fabrics, but their primary function has shifted from shelter to signage. When used correctly, awnings still allow a business to attract customers, express its individuality, respect the architecture of the building, and compliment the public realm. When used incorrectly, awnings create visual clutter along the streetscape, obscure important architectural features of the building, and weaken the identity and presence of the business. The standards below detail the various size, number, and locations that generally respect the character of the district and should be used for awning design and construction.

### MARQUEES AND CANOPIES

Marquees and canopies commonly refer to large structures placed over the entrance to most theaters and hotels. Both marquees and canopies gained popularity during the beginning of the 20th century, when the size and prominence of the signage associated with them also grew. Historically, materials commonly used in marquee or canopy construction were steel, bronze, copper, and aluminum. They often also possessed elaborately painted patterns, and pressed sheet metal ornamentation. Methods of illumination varied; however, white or yellow flashing bulbs were commonly used. Over time, and reaching their peak in the late 1930s, marquees and canopies increased in size, possessed increasingly elaborate designs, large text, and substantially projected into the public right-of-way to be further distinguished from other types of business in the immediate area. The construction of these sign types has decreased over time and is no longer permitted for new projects in many zoning districts.

Some historic marquees, canopies, or any other large, projecting signs, as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code, may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of a historic theater.

## Definitions

### *Awning*

According to **Section 790.20** of the Planning Code, an awning is defined as a light roof-like structure, supported entirely by the exterior wall of a building; consisting of a fixed or movable frame covered with cloth, plastic or metal; extending over doors, windows, and/or show windows; with the purpose of providing protection from sun and rain and/or embellishment of the facade; as further regulated in Sections 4506 and 5211 of the Building Code.



### *Canopy*

According to **Section 790.26** of the Planning Code, a canopy is defined as light roof-like structure, supported by the exterior wall of a building and on columns or wholly on columns, consisting of a fixed or movable frame covered with approved cloth, plastic or metal, extending over entrance doorways only, with the purpose of providing protection from sun and rain and embellishment of the facade, as further regulated in Sections 4504, 4506, 4508, and 5213 of the Building Code.



### *Marquees*

According to **Section 790.58** of the Planning Code, a marquee is defined as a permanent roofed structure attached to and supported entirely by a building; including any object or decoration attached to or part of said marquee; no part of which shall be used for occupancy or storage; with the purpose of providing protection from sun and rain or embellishment of the facade, as further regulated in Sections 414 and 4506 of the Building Code.



# Awnings

Permitted sizes as obstructions over streets and alleys and in required setbacks in **NC-1, Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District, and for Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts**

- The horizontal projection of any awning shall not exceed four (4) feet from the face of a building.
- The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any awning shall not exceed four (4) feet, including any valance.

Permitted sizes in most **Mixed Use Districts, including South of Market and Eastern Neighborhoods, most NC Districts, and North of Market Residential Special Use District**

- All portions of any permitted awning shall be not less than eight (8) feet above the finished grade, excluding any valance which shall not be less than seven (7) feet above the finished grade.
- No portion of any awning shall be higher than the windowsill level of the lowest story (if any), exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine, provided that no such awning shall in any case exceed a height of sixteen (16) feet or the roofline of the building to which it is attached, whichever is lower.
- When the width of all awnings is less than ten (10) feet 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 (6) feet, including any valance.
- When the width of all awnings exceeds ten (10) feet measured along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed four (4) 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.

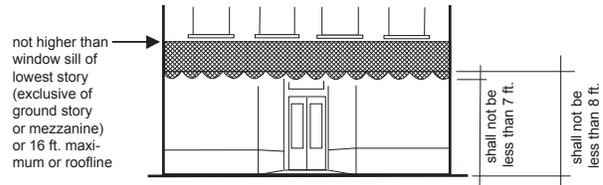


Figure 136.1(a)-1

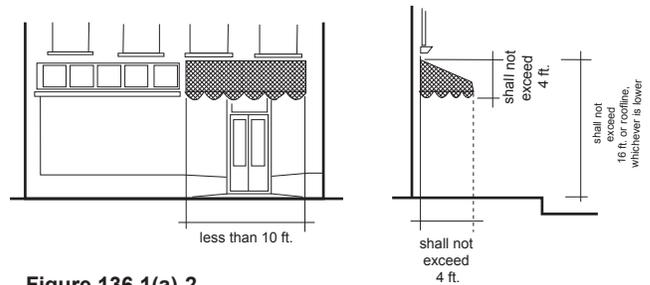


Figure 136.1(a)-2

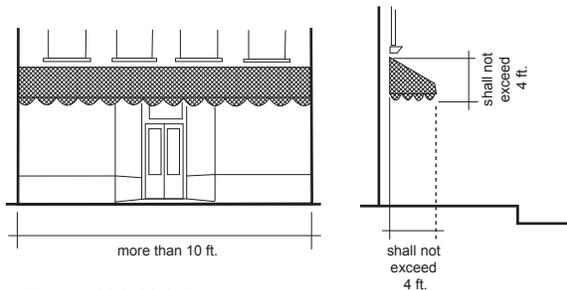


Figure 136.1(a)-3



# Awnings within Article 11 Conservation Districts

A Minor Permit to Alter may be issued provided awnings meet the following criteria:

## Permitted features:

### Size

- Awnings shall be constructed of a non-vinyl cloth or canvas with a matte finish or a material similar in appearance and texture.
- Valances shall not exceed more than 12 inches in height and shall be unframed and flexible.
- Awnings shall be 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 must remain open.
- Retractable and operable awnings are encouraged.
- A fixed awning may be acceptable if it expresses the same characteristics as a retractable awning or has a free-moving valance, and does not appear to be rigid, hard, or inflexible.

### Number

- One awning per occupied storefront opening is allowed.
- Quantity may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will be based on the cumulative number and location of business signs attached to the subject building, including the existing and proposed signage.

### Location

- Awnings shall be attached to the storefront at the lintel or transom bar.
- Awnings shall be located at a level that relates to the storefront opening.
- Awnings shall not cover the first floor of the transom windows of the building.
- Awnings shall not obscure or negatively impact the character-defining features of the subject building.

## Non-permitted features:

### Size

- Novelty awnings
- Awnings illuminated from below or internally
- Box awnings
- Waterfall awnings
- Awnings that exceed the width of the storefront opening or associated commercial window opening. In no case shall an awning extend over more than one storefront opening.
- Text on the sloped portion of the awning.
- Awnings that obscure, cover or alter any of the architectural or character-defining features of the building.

### Number

- A single awning spanning across multiple commercial storefronts and that obscures character-defining features is not permitted.

### Location

- Awnings shall not extend so far into the public right of way that it impedes pedestrian traffic, nor shall it extend outside the piers and lintel of the storefront opening.



## Canopies

Permitted sizes as obstructions over streets and alleys and required setbacks in; **NC-1, Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District**, and for Limited Commercial Uses in **Residential and RTO Districts**

- No canopies are allowed.

Permitted sizes in most **Mixed Use Districts**, including **South of Market and Eastern Neighborhoods**, most **NC Districts**, and **North of Market Residential Special Use District**

- The maximum width of any canopy shall be ten (10) feet.
- The horizontal projection of any canopy may extend to a point two (2) feet from the curb. Outer column supports shall be located in the outer 1/3 of the sidewalk and shall be no less than four (4) feet from the building face. This ensures adequate clear space along the sidewalk.
- The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of the canopy shall not exceed two (2) feet, including any valance.
- All portions of any canopy, excluding the column supports and excluding any valance which may be not less than seven (7) feet above the finished grade, shall be not less than eight (8) feet above the finished grade.
- Canopies shall not be spaced closer than twenty (20) feet from each other, measured from centerline to centerline.

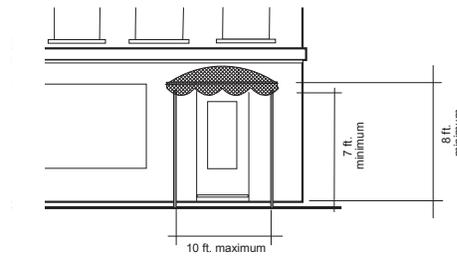


Figure 136.1(b)2-1

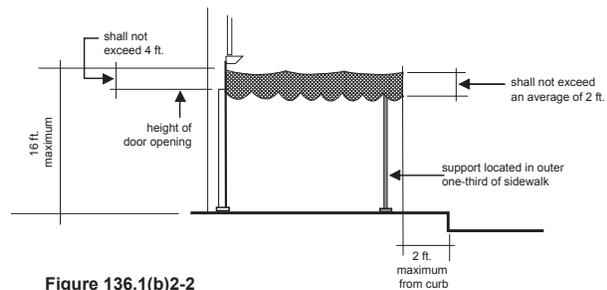


Figure 136.1(b)2-2

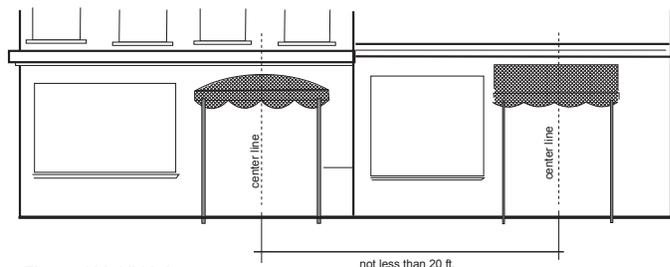


Figure 136.1(b)2-3



## Canopies within Article 11 Conservation Districts

Canopies are a hybrid of an awning and marquee. They have typically been found on entrances to the upper-stories of commercial and residential buildings. They feature a metal frame clad with fabric that projects from a building entrance over the sidewalk to the curb, where it is supported on vertical posts.

A Minor Permit to Alter may be issued provided canopies meet the following criteria:

### General Requirements

- The installation, alteration or removal of canopies are subject to review and approval by the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission).
- All work to canopy signage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Some historic canopies or other large projecting signs as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of the building.

### Permitted features:

- Canopies shall be attached to the building directly above the entrance.
- If a valance is desired on a canopy, it shall not exceed more than twelve (12) inches in height and be unframed and flexible.

### Not permitted:

- The width of a canopy shall not exceed the width of the entrance opening.



## Marquees

Permitted sizes as obstructions over streets and alleys and in required setbacks in **NC-1, Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District**, and for Limited Commercial Uses in **Residential and RTO Districts**

- No marquees are allowed.

Permitted sizes in most **Mixed Use Districts**, including **South of Market and Eastern Neighborhoods**, most **NC Districts**, and **North of Market Residential Special Use District**

- The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any marquee shall not exceed three (3) feet and the horizontal projection shall not extend beyond a point not closer than two (2) feet from the curb.
- A marquee that projects more than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line:
  - Shall not exceed ten (10) 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 (12) feet nor more than 16 feet in height above the finished grade,
  - Shall not be higher than windowsill level exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine.
  - Each building frontage shall be considered separately.
- A marquee projecting less than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line:
  - Shall not exceed twenty five (25) feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less.
  - All portions of such marquee shall not be less than ten (10) feet nor more than sixteen (16) feet above the finished grade,
  - Shall not be higher than the windowsill level or windows on

the building facade on which the marquee is placed, exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine.

- Each building frontage shall be considered separately.
- A marquee projecting less than four (4) feet from the property line and not exceeding two (2) feet in thickness may extend over the total length of the building along the direction of the street.
  - All portions of such marquee shall not be less than 10 feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level or windows on the building facade on which the marquee is placed, exclusive of ground story and mezzanine.

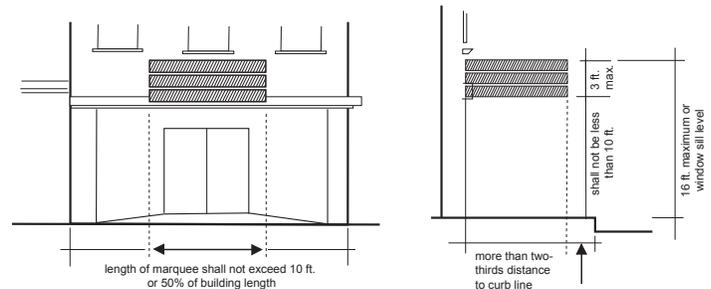


Figure 136.1(c)2(A)

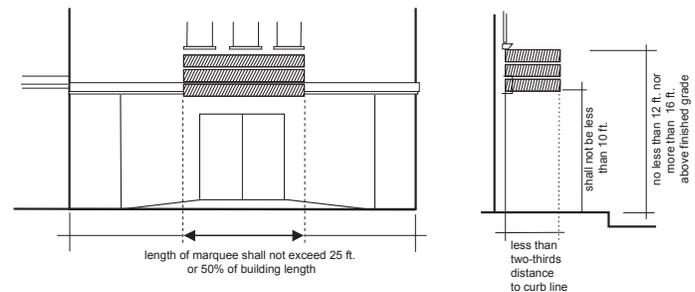


Figure 136.1(c)2(B)

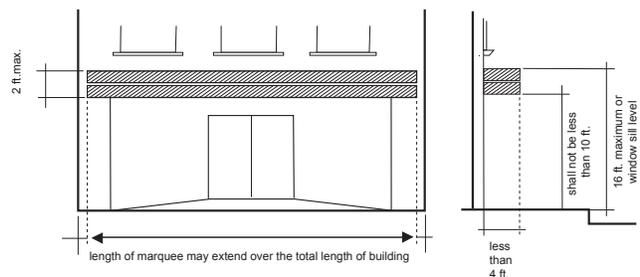


Figure 136.1(c)2(C)

## Marquees within Article 11 Conservation Districts

Historically, marquees are roof-like shelters that are placed over the entrances to buildings and project out several feet from the facade. They have typically been constructed from steel, bronze, copper, and aluminum and feature elaborate painted patterns and pressed sheet metal ornamentation.

A Minor Permit to Alter may be issued provided marquees meets the following criteria:

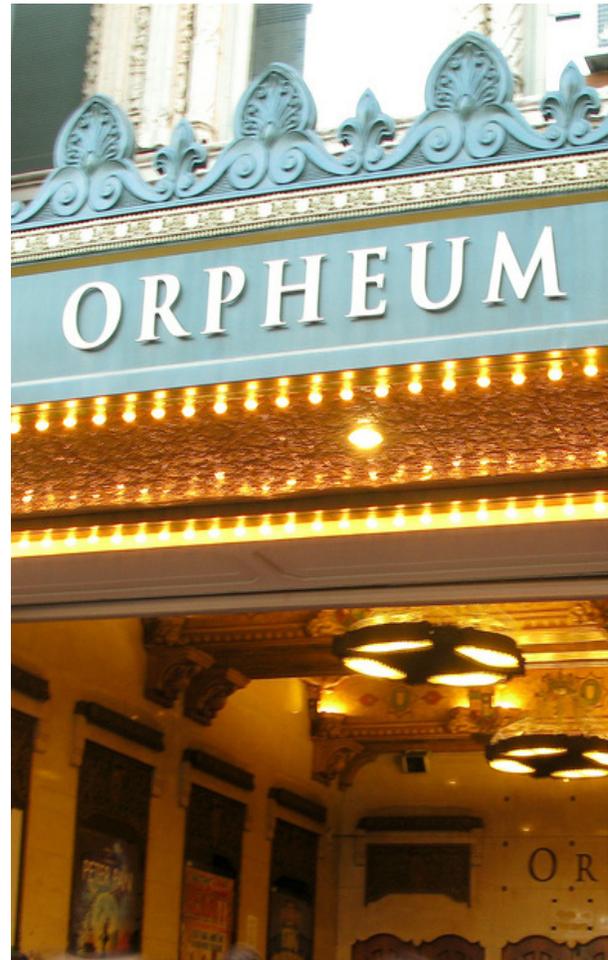
### General Requirements:

- The installation, alteration or removal of marquees are subject to review and approval by the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission).
- All work to marquee signage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Some historic marquees or other large projecting signs as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of the building.

### Permitted features:

- Marquees shall be attached to the building directly above the entrance.

### Non-permitted features:



## Additional Information

According to Section 136c (12) marquees, awnings and canopies can be considered permitted obstructions over streets and alleys and in required setbacks in P (Public Zoning), C (Commercial Zoning), M (Industrial Zoning), DTR (Downtown Residential Zoning) and SSO (Service Secondary Office Zoning) districts and for Limited Commercial Uses (LCU) in Residential and RTO (Residential Transit Oriented) Districts.

They are limited by Section 136.1, 186, and other provisions of the Planning Code, and they are also regulated by the Building Code.

There are restrictions to signs on canopies, marquees and awnings located in Special Sign Districts (SUD) such as North of Market SUD.

# Awnings

|   |   | <b>AWNINGS</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>MIXED USE DISTRICTS AND NORTH OF MARKET SPECIAL USE DISTRICT</b>                                       | <b>Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use District</b><br><br><b>South of Market Mixed Use District</b><br><br><b>All Other Mixed Use District</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When the width of all awnings is less than ten (10') feet along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed six (6') 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 (6') feet, including any valance.</li> <li>When the width of all awnings exceeds ten (10') feet measured along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed four (4') 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 (4') feet, including any valance.</li> </ul>  |
|   | <b>Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The horizontal projection of any awning shall not exceed four (4') feet from the face of a building.</li> <li>The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any awning shall not exceed four (4') feet, including any valance.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND FOR LIMITED COMMERCIAL USES IN RESIDENTIAL AND RTO DISTRICTS</b> | <b>NC-1 and Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The horizontal projection of any awning shall not exceed four (4') feet from the face of a building.</li> <li>The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any awning shall not exceed four (4') feet, including any valance.</li> </ul>  |
|   | <b>All other Neighborhood Commercial District</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When the width of all awnings is ten (10') 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 (6') feet, including any valance.</li> <li>When the width of all awnings exceeds ten (10') feet measured along the direction of the street, the horizontal projection of such awnings shall not exceed four (4') 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 (4') feet, including any valance.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND/OR DISTRICTS</b>  | <b>Article 11, or in historical buildings and Districts.</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awnings should be constructed out of cloth or a material similar in appearance and texture.</li> <li>If a skirt is desired, it shall not exceed more than 12 (12) inches in height and be unframed and flexible.</li> <li>The awning shall be attached to the storefront at the lintel or transom bar.</li> <li>A fixed awning may be acceptable if it expresses the same characteristics as retractable awnings or has a free-moving valance, and does not appear to be rigid, hard, or inflexible. Retractable and operable awnings are encouraged.</li> <li>Awnings shall be 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 shall remain open.</li> </ul> |

# Canopies

|   |   | <b>CANOPIES</b>   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>MIXED USE DISTRICTS AND NORTH OF MARKET SPECIAL USE DISTRICT</b>                                       | <b>Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use District</b><br><br><b>South of Market Mixed Use District</b><br><br><b>All Other Mixed Use District</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The maximum width of any canopy shall be ten (10') feet.</li> <li>• The horizontal projection of any canopy may extend to a point two (2') feet from the curb.</li> <li>• The outer column support shall be located in the outer 1/3 of the sidewalk and shall be no less than four (4') feet from the building face to ensure adequate clear space along the sidewalk.</li> <li>• The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of the canopy 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 (7') feet above the finished grade, shall be not less than eight (8') feet above the finished grade.</li> <li>• Canopies shall not be spaced closer than twenty (20') feet from each other, measured from centerline to centerline.</li> </ul>  |
|   | <b>Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No canopy shall be permitted in any Residential Neighborhood Commercial District.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND FOR LIMITED COMMERCIAL USES IN RESIDENTIAL AND RTO DISTRICTS</b> | <b>NC-1 and Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No canopy shall be permitted in any NC-1 District or for Limited Commercial Uses in Residential and RTO Districts.</li> </ul>  |
|   | <b>All other Neighborhood Commercial District</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The maximum width of any canopy shall be ten (10') feet.</li> <li>• The horizontal projection of any canopy may extend to a point not closer than two (2') feet from the curb. The outer column support shall be located in the outer 1/3 of the sidewalk and shall be no less than four (4') feet from the building face to ensure adequate clear space along the sidewalk.</li> <li>• The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of the canopy shall not exceed an average of two (2') feet, including any valance. The highest point of the canopy shall not exceed a point four feet above the door opening or sixteen (16') feet, whichever is less.</li> <li>• 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 (8') feet above the finished grade. Canopies shall not be spaced closer than twenty (20') feet from each other, measured from centerline to centerline.</li> </ul> |
| <b>HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND/OR DISTRICTS</b>  | <b>Article 11, or in historical buildings and Districts.</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Canopies</b> are subject to review and approval by the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission).</li> <li>• All work to canopy signage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.</li> <li>• Some historic canopies or other large projecting signs as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of the building.</li> <li>• Canopies shall be attached to the building directly above the entrance.</li> <li>• If a skirt is desired on a canopy, it shall not exceed more than twelve (12) inches in height and be unframed and flexible.</li> </ul>   |

# Marquees

|  |   | MARQUEES   |
|--|---|--|
| MIXED USE DISTRICTS AND NORTH OF MARKET SPECIAL USE DISTRICT                                       | <b>Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use District</b><br><br><b>South of Market Mixed Use District</b><br><br><b>All Other Mixed Use District</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any marquee shall not exceed three (3') feet and the horizontal projection shall not extend beyond a line on the sidewalk not closer than two (2') feet from the curb.</li> <li>A marquee projecting more than of the distance from the property line to the curb shall not exceed ten (10') feet or 50 percent of the width of the building, along the direction of the street, whichever is less.</li> <li>All portions of such marquee shall be not less than twelve (12') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet in height above the finished grade, nor higher than the window-sill level of the floor immediately above. Each building frontage shall be considered separately.</li> <li>A marquee projecting less than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb shall not exceed twenty-five (25') feet or 50 percent of the width of the building, along the direction of the street, whichever is less.</li> <li>All portions of such marquee shall be not less than ten (10') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level of the floor immediately above.</li> <li>Each building frontage shall be considered separately.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <b>Chinatown Residential Neighborhood Commercial District</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No marquee shall be permitted in any Residential Neighborhood Commercial District.</li> </ul>   |
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|  | <b>All other Neighborhood Commercial District</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The vertical distance from the top to the bottom of any marquee shall not exceed three (3') feet and the horizontal projection shall not extend beyond a point not closer than two (2') feet from the curb.</li> <li>A marquee projecting more than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line shall not exceed ten (10') feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less.</li> <li>All portions of such marquee shall be not less than twelve (12') feet nor more than sixteen (16') 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.</li> <li>A marquee projecting less than 2/3 of the distance from the property line to the curb line shall not exceed twenty-five (25') feet or 50 percent of the length of the building along the direction of the street, whichever is less.</li> <li>All portions of such marquee shall be not less than ten (10') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level or windows on the building facade on which the marquee is placed, exclusive of the ground story and mezzanine. Each building frontage shall be considered separately.</li> <li>A marquee projecting less than four (4') feet from the property line and not exceeding two feet in thickness may extend over the total length of the building along the direction of the street.</li> <li>All portions of such marquee shall not be less than ten (10') feet nor more than sixteen (16') feet above the finished grade, nor higher than the windowsill level or windows on the building facade on which the marquee is placed, exclusive of ground story and mezzanine. Each building frontage shall be considered separately.</li> </ul> |
| HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND/OR DISTRICTS  | <b>Article 11, or in historical buildings and Districts.</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Marquees</b> are subject to review and approval by the HPC (Historic Preservation Commission).</li> <li>All work to marquee signage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be assessed using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.</li> <li>Some historic marquees or other large projecting signs as defined by Section 188(e) of the Planning Code may be rehabilitated or reconstructed in order to preserve the character of the building.</li> <li>Marquees shall be attached to the building directly above the entrance.</li> </ul>  |



**SAN FRANCISCO  
PLANNING  
DEPARTMENT**

**FOR OTHER PLANNING INFORMATION:  
Call or visit the San Francisco Planning Department**

**Central Reception**

1650 Mission Street, Suite 400  
San Francisco CA 94103-2479

TEL: **415.558.6378**

FAX: **415.558.6409**

WEB: **<http://www.sfplanning.org>**

**Planning Information Center (PIC)**

1660 Mission Street, First Floor  
San Francisco CA 94103-2479

TEL: **415.558.6377**

*Planning staff are available by phone and at the PIC counter.  
No appointment is necessary.*