



# PRESERVATION GUIDELINE **1**

## VIRGIN ISLANDS STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE Department of Planning and Natural Resources

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### SIGNS WITHIN THE CHARLOTTE AMALIE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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#### INTRODUCTION:

The size, color and shape of signs within Historic Districts are governed by two factors; specific requirements as set out in Title 29; Chapter 3, Section 225 and 231 of the Virgin Islands Code and standards determined by the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Commission, a body with reviewing functions also established by state statute. Any sign erected within the Virgin Islands must be approved by the Department of Public Works and, if within the St. Thomas/St. John or St. Croix Historic and Architectural Control Districts, must first be approved by the Historic Preservation Committee on their respective island districts. Procedures for erecting signs within any of the Historic Districts are detailed below.

The definition of terms used in this paper is as follows:

**A SIGN:** is defined as any publicly displayed board, placard, or other object bearing advertising, information, or any picture or writing.

**Business Sign:** A sign which directs attention to a business by exhibiting its name on the premises it occupies. A business sign may have a logo or a trade name and may have the date of the business's founding. Telephone number, street address, and a listing of the products the business sells are not allowed on the business sign.

**Identification Sign:** A nameplate of an institution, public or semi-public facility or the name of a building.

**Flush Sign:** Method of the sign's attachment to the building where it occurs flat against the building.

**Hanging Sign:** Method of the sign's attachment to the building where it occurs perpendicular to the building.

**Directional Sign:** A sign which directs attention to a historic feature or destination located off the premises to which it refers. Examples: Fort Christian, Rothchild Francis Square etc. Such a sign shall not be used for commercial purposes.

**Directory Sign:** A sign which directs attention to a group of businesses and is placed off site or on the building itself in a high visible area.

**Door Leaf Sign:** A special sign applied to a door shutter.

**Address Sign:** A sign with the number of a street and or quarter address of a building.

1. Size. Maximum size is no more than 8“ x 11”. Give dimensions such as: 2X2, in every square feet cited henceforth.
2. Shape. Simple rectangular signs are allowed for the door leaf signs.
3. Quantity. Only one (1) sign is allowed.
4. Placement. The signs should be placed to clearly identify the project to the passerby without obstructing pedestrian and other traffic.
5. Temporary signs and banners celebrating or announcing special events of cultural and public importance are allowable if sponsored by a civic organization. Their size, form and placement must be determined in consultation with the Commission. These signs or banners are allowable for a period not to exceed three (3) months.
6. Political banners are not allowed in the District.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURES:**

**APPLICATIONS WITHIN THE HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL DISTRICTS OF ST. THOMAS/STJOHN AND ST. CROIX**

Applications for new signs or sign changes for properties within the Historic Districts should be submitted to the

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & NATURAL RESOURCES  
St. Thomas-St. John Historic Preservation Committee  
Dronningens Gade 71 & 72A  
Charlotte Amalie, Virgin Islands 00802**

The application consists of a formal letter of application which indicates:

1. The name of the business including full corporate name, registered trade name or trademarks and logo if applicable.
2. The nature of the business.
3. The type and number of signs proposed.
4. The applicant’s name, address and telephone number.
5. The location and street address of the property (not the mailing address).

**If the applicant is not the owner of the property, then the property owner authorization on page two of the application must be filled out and signed.**

## **GENERAL SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS:**

- A. Owners of properties with multiple tenants must submit a conceptual signage plan for their properties for review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission. Individual tenants of these properties must conform to the overall signage plans.
- B. Owners of properties shall comply with existing law requiring property address signs on their properties showing street name; lot number and quarter of the address.
- C. No off-premise signs are allowed except as part of uniform directories described below under Directory Signs. Sandwich boards or "A" signs and signs carried by barkers are considered off-premise signs and are not allowed.
- D. Internally lit, rotating, or flashing signs are not allowed. Highly reflective mirror-like finishes are not allowed on signs.
- E. Roof mounted signs are not allowed. Signs may not be placed more than fifteen (15) feet above grade unless approved by the Commission.
- F. All signs must relate to existing architectural features in placement, design and proportions. Signs shall not obscure architectural features, such as quoins, pilasters, cornices, panels or the inside masonry jamb of the doors.
- G. Only specific product names or merchandise sold by the business shall be allowed on door leaf signs. Examples could be SEIKO; LANCOME; LOCAL CRAFTS etc.
- H. Decals, and paper or plastic paste-on signs used for advertising commercial affiliation, acceptance of credit cards, or any purpose whatsoever are prohibited from all exterior surfaces or those exposed to the exterior of any establishment.
- I. Historical signs and markers require approval of the Committee.
- J. Awnings: Are not an historic architectural feature of the district, but are allowed in the St. Thomas/St. John Historic District ONLY. Therefore, the placement, color and installation of any awning must be reviewed and approved by the St. Thomas/St. John Committee. It must fit within the architectural features of a building. Long, unbroken awnings which stretch across the facade are not allowed. Name, logo, or wording on awnings is considered signage and is not allowed. Consultation with the Commission is required. **NOTE:** Awnings are NOT approved within the St. Croix Historic and Architectural Control Districts.
- K. Descriptive language on directories is subject to approval of the Committee.

## **DESIGN STANDARDS:**

Much of sign design is determined by the Virgin Islands Code and by the V.I. Historic Preservation Committee requirements. Materials, colors and lettering are all factors which are subject to interpretation. Sign placement is strongly related to the building's architecture. The following standards shall serve as a guide to the design.

1. **Materials** – Traditionally wood has been and continues to be used for signs in the Virgin Islands.

Other materials such as hard plastics and metals are acceptable only if they are durable, do not shatter under stress and have dull finishes.

2. **Colors** – Sign colors should harmonize with the color of the building. Florescent and strident colors are not allowed. All signage of each individual business premise shall have a consistent color and design scheme. Where a building contains two or more adjoining businesses, their color scheme shall not clash.
3. **Lettering** – Lettering shall be legible and standardized. Letters may be raised, engraved or painted.
4. **Illumination** – Illumination of flush or hanging business signs is allowed only for businesses operated at night. It should be sufficient only for lighting the sign and the light sources must not shine into the eye of passerby on the streets and sidewalks or into neighboring properties.
5. **Execution** – The signage of each individual business must be uniform in design and material. Where several businesses occupy one building, the signage of businesses shall harmonize in placement.

## **HANGING SIGNS:**

Hanging signs are those placed perpendicular to the building's wall mounted on a bracket for identification of the business.

1. **Size** - The size of haning signs is four (4) Square feet.
2. **Shape** – Hanging signs are general square or rectangle in shape, but other shapes are acceptable.
3. **Quantity** – One (1) hanging sign per business per facade is allowed.
4. **Placement** – Placement is determined by the building's architectural features. The bottom of the sign must be a minimum of eight feet-six inches (8'-6") above the grade of the sidewalk, a maximum of eight inches (8") from the wall, and shall not extend beyond the curb line of the sidewalk.
5. **Mounting** – Signs shall be mounted so as to be minimally disturbing to the historic fabric of a building. Single wood or wrought iron brackets shall be used for mounting. All brackets on a building shall be of the same style, size and mounted at the same level.

## **FLUSH SIGNS:**

Flush signs are those placed for identification on a wall.

1. **Size** - The size of flush signs is determined by the type of sign and the architectural features and scale of the building in consultation with the Committee.

Nameplates of firms and professional offices shall not exceed two (2) square feet.

1. Name of building i.e. Grand Hotel, Petheny Building, for public or private use shall not exceed twenty (20) square feet overall and shall only be comprised of individually mounted letters. Business

signs shall not exceed five (5) square feet in gross area.

Building address signs shall not exceed one (1) square foot and shall be of traditional design, material and execution.

Both size and proportion of the sign are determined by its location and the architectural features and scale of the building. In some cases, the maximum size will not be allowed if it conflicts with the building. Flush signs must line up with door or other openings or be designed to fit within an existing panel on the wall. A flush mounted sign may be wood with painted letters or individual letters mounted on the building. If the sign is made up of individual letters rather than a board, they must conform to the size and placement guidelines.

2. **Shape** – Flush signs are almost always rectangular to complement the basic components of the building on which they are attached. Other choices may be considered, depending on the individual building.
3. **Quantity** – One (1) hanging sign per business per facade is allowed.
4. **Placement** – Placement is determined by the building’s architectural features. The bottom of the sign must be a minimum of eight feet-six inches (8’-6”) above the grade of the sidewalk, a maximum of eight inches (8”) from the wall, and shall not extend beyond the curb line of the sidewalk.
5. **Mounting** – Signs shall be mounted so as to be minimally disturbing to the historic fabric of a building. Single wood or wrought iron brackets should be used for mounting. All brackets on a building should be of the same style, size and mounted at the same level.

## **DIRECTORY SIGNS:**

The only off-premise signs allowed within the Historic and Architectural Control Districts are uniform directories set up collectively by several merchants or businessmen on a single street or alley. These signs must follow a standard format, and should allow for flexibility to change the names as businesses change. All directories require approval of the Committee.

1. **Size** – The size of a directory is determined by the location where it shall be placed. However, no mounted directory shall exceed eight (8) square feet except for a free standing directory subject to the approval of the Committee. Each leaf or nameplate shall be no larger than twenty-four (24”) square inches. Existing architectural features must be taken into account when determining the size and placement of the sign. The main portion may be wood or metal with a dull finish. Individual nameplates can be of the same or contrasting material. Lettering styles for nameplates may vary but colors must remain the same.
2. **Shape** – Directories shall be rectangular in shape with the larger dimension running vertically. Nameplates shall be rectangular with the longer proportion running horizontally.
3. **Quantity** – No more than two (2) directories are allowed per building. If two are permitted, then placement shall be at either end of an alley or courtyard.

## **DOOR LEAF SIGNS:**

Door leaf signs are relatively recent additions to the historic towns of the Virgin Islands and are not historic. Door leaf signs shall be mounted on exterior doors so that they can only be seen when the business is open. It is used to advertise product sold within the stores. Their use should be minimized. No door leaf signs are allowed above the first floor.

1. **Size** – An individual door shutter or mini business sign of not more than one (1) square foot and/or single plates of not more than thirty (30”) square inches each may be affixed to each door shutter half. The aggregate area of all signage per door leaf shall not exceed two and a half (2 ½) square feet depending on the placement of each door leaf. If uniform sized plates are used, spacing equal to the depth of the plate is recommended. In all cases the plates must have a uniform width and be aligned vertically above each other.

NOTE: It has been common practice by the Historic Preservation Committee to limit the size of door shutter leaf sign to 12” long x 2 ½” high.

2. **Shape** – Rectangular plates are preferred.
3. **Quantity** – No more than five (5) plates equaling 120 square inches are allowed to be attached per door shutter. For content: Products advertised shall be limited to major name brand supplies or products sold by the store. No more than twenty (20) name plates shall be allowed for a store that has four doors. No more than ten (10) name plates shall be allowed for a store with two (2) doors.
4. **Placement** – Rectangular plates should be mounted horizontally. They should not obscure architectural features, such as panels or molding. They should be evenly placed, lined up vertically and horizontally and where possible, kept at eye level. A wide range of material is acceptable but all door leaf signs of a business premise must be of the same material and color. Lettering style may vary. Color must be uniform throughout.

## **TEMPORARY SIGNS:**

Temporary signs are allowable in the historic districts. They must, however, be located on the premises to which they refer. Their main use is to identify construction projects, sale of property or other special circumstances related thereto. Advertising is not permitted. Sale signs, movable signs and display of merchandise are prohibited on the exterior of the premises or in the public domain.

**With the letter of application, the following information is also required to insure full consideration of the proposal:**

1. Three (3) copies of a scale drawing of the signs and lettering detailing the dimensions of the signs and indication of their placement on the building. In the case of hanging signs, the dimensions of the bracket or other supports must be shown with the dimensions of the projection and the height above grade.
2. Paint samples, or color chip of the proposed colors. A rendered drawing detailing the colors is also required.
3. A description or sample of the materials to be used and an indication of their finishes.

4. Sufficient photographs to illustrate the architectural character of the entire building, its principal facade, and all the locations of proposed and existing signs. Where signs are proposed for properties with more than one side exposed to a public thoroughfare, photographs must show all street elevations. A minimum of two (2) photographs are required. One photo must show the building in its surrounding context.

**St. Thomas/St. John Historic Preservation Committee hold their meetings the second Tuesday of each month, beginning at 1:00p.m. The St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee holds their meetings the first Friday of each month, beginning at 1:00pm (unless otherwise noted). The agenda is established two weeks or ten (10) working days before the meeting date. Applicants are advised to submit their application with supporting documents/plans/photographs two weeks prior to the meeting date. The application is deemed incomplete without the attachments. Inquiries should be directed to the:**

**Department of Planning & Natural Resources  
St. Thomas-St. John Historic Preservation Committee  
Dronningens Gade 71 & 72A  
Charlotte Amalie, VI 00802  
340-776-8605**

**Or**

**Department of Planning & Natural Resources  
St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee  
Fort Frederik Museum  
198 Strand Street  
St. Croix, VI 00840  
340-772-2021**

**\*\*\*AFTER OBTAINING APPROVAL FROM THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE FOR YOUR SIGN, THE NEXT STEP IS TO APPLY FOR A SIGNAGE PERMIT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.**