



# CITY OF SNOHOMISH

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July 11, 2024

## Planning Director Code Interpretation

### SIGNS ON BUILDINGS WITH MANSARD STYLE ROOF FORMS OUTSIDE THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

#### Issue

How should building signs be regulated on commercial buildings with mansard style roof forms when there is no appropriate sign area, such as an architectural sign band, integrated into the building?

#### Applicable Snohomish Municipal Code (SMC) provisions

##### **SMC 14.05.050 Administration and interpretation**

- A. The City Planner shall interpret and apply this Development Code consistently. As may be necessary, the City Planner shall render new interpretations in writing, file said interpretations, and apply said interpretations in future like instances.
- B. In the event of conflict, 1) specific provisions shall prevail over general provisions, 2) text shall prevail over headings, captions, illustrations, and citation references, and 3) Chapter 36.70B RCW shall prevail over this Development Code.
- C. Regulations, conditions, or procedural requirements that are specific to an individual land use shall supersede regulations, conditions, or procedural requirements of general application.
- D. A land use includes the necessary structures to support the use unless specifically prohibited or the context clearly indicates otherwise.
- E. The word “shall” is mandatory and the word “may” is discretionary. The word “should” is mandatory unless the City Planner determines that application of the particular provision is not necessary to implement the purposes of the Development Code as set forth in SMC 14.05.020.

##### **SMC 14.25.030 Definitions – B**

**Building sign:** any sign that is painted on, or attached directly to or supported by, an exterior building wall, including facade signs, awning signs, canopy signs, and marquees, but excluding window signs. Also referred to as a wall sign.

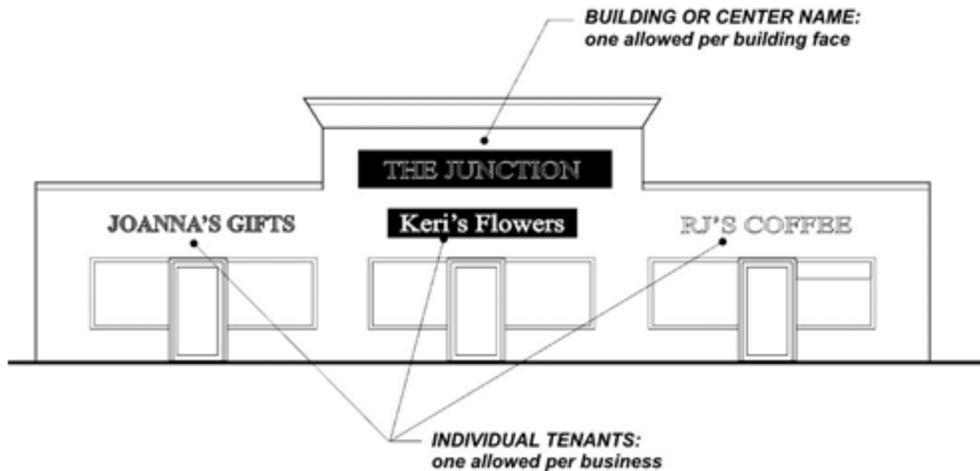
##### **SMC 14.245.070 Building Signs.**

Building signs shall comply with the following regulations:

- A. Building signs must not extend higher than the building eave, parapet, roof, or cornice on which they are mounted.

- B. The maximum allowable sign face area is twenty-five square feet plus 10 percent of the building facade area facing the street or main parking area, except that a business with frontage on a City street and a State highway, where the building is visible from the highway, may have an additional building sign that faces the highway, which sign shall not exceed eighty square feet in area and shall be constructed of individual, internally illuminated (or back lit) letters. This total allowable area shall include awning and marquee signs but shall not include the area allowed for blade signs or shingle signs that are mounted perpendicular to the building facade pursuant to subsection D.
- C. The building signs must be integrated into the architectural design of the building and must be located in a manner compatible with other signs on the same building.
- D. Each tenant may also display a single blade or shingle sign that has a face perpendicular to the building, provided that the sign is no larger than three square feet, is no less than eight feet above the ground, and does not extend more than three feet from the building or beyond an existing architectural canopy.
- E. In the case of a multi-tenant building, the owner or the management of the building is responsible for allocation of sign area among the tenants and shall be a coapplicant on all sign applications pertaining to the building and property.
- F. The illustration below depicts typical building signs as allowed by this section.

Total amount of sign: 25 s.f. + 10% if façade facing the street or main parking area.



### Applicable Design Standards

**Historic District Design Standards, Glossary (page 110)**

**Mansard roof:** a four-sided hipped roof featuring two slopes on each side, the lower slope being very steep, almost vertical, and the upper slopes being extremely shallow.

**General Design Standards, Glossary (page 28)**

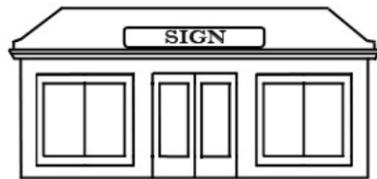
**Historic District Design Standards, Glossary (page 108)**

**Eave:** the edge of a roof that projects over an outside wall.

**Historic District Design Standards, Section V.1.B.2 (page 58)**

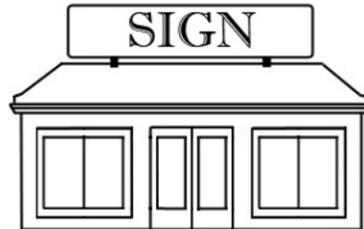
Signs installed on buildings with mansard roofs shall not project above the highest peak of the roof, and shall be oriented perpendicular to the surrounding grade. Mansard roofs are defined as a roof having a slope in two planes on each side of the building, the lower plane being steeper, and the upper not easily seen from the ground.

**CONSISTENT**



Appropriate sign placement on building with mansard roof.

**INCONSISTENT**



Inappropriate sign placement projects above the roof peak.

**Interpretation**

**Discussion:**

Pursuant to SMC 14.245.070(A), building signs must not extend higher than the building eave, parapet, roof, or cornice on which they are mounted. Subsection C requires new buildings to consider sign placement in the architectural design. This section was adopted under Ordinance 2109 in April 2006.

Signs located in the Historic District are subject to this section in addition to the sign standards contained in the Historic District Design Standards adopted by Resolution 1372 in December 2017. Elsewhere in the city, there are no secondary design standards regulating sign appearance or location.

As written, SMC 14.245.070(A) could be construed to deny a structure with a mansard style roof form from being able to install wall signs to the extent allowable by the code. Unless the building was designed with an architectural sign band, or there is sufficient blank wall space at sign height, there is no alternative location except above the eave to install a sign. Buildings that were constructed prior to the requirement for integrated sign area in SMC 14.245.070(C) are more likely to have this issue.

The design standard in Section V.1.B.2 of the Historic District Design Standards appears to take this issue into consideration, providing for sign placement above the building eave but below the highest peak of the roof.

There is an apparent conflict between Section V.1.B.2 of the Historic District Design Standards and SMC 14.245.070(A).

**Analysis:**

Commercial buildings with mansard style roof forms that do not have appropriate sign areas, such as an architectural sign band, integrated into the building were likely construction prior to 2006 when the requirement for sign area integration was adopted. In those cases, and where a building sign of a size allowable by the calculations of SMC 14.245.070(B) would otherwise be

denied, the standards that apply to mansard roofs in the Historic District should apply, regardless of the building location.

**Conclusion**

Commercial buildings with mansard style roof forms that were constructed prior to 2006 and do not have an integrated sign area may use the sign placement standards of Section V.1.B.2 of the Historic District Design Standards, provided that there is no other viable location to install a building sign without being denied the sign calculation allowed by SMC 14.245.070(B). In such cases, the sign placement shall be affixed as close to the eave as is practicable.

Dated this 11<sup>th</sup> day of July 2024.



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Brooke Eidem, AICP  
Planning Director

**NOTE:**

This decision is made pursuant to the authority granted to the Planning Director in accordance with SMC 14.05.050. Any aggrieved party to the Planning Director's Decision and administrative determination may appeal the decision to the Hearing Examiner following the procedures contained in Chapter 14.75 SMC. If no timely appeal is filed, then the Planning Director's Decision shall be final. Appeals must be filed with City Clerk within 14 days from the date of this decision. Appeals must include a filing fee of \$500 (five hundred dollars).