

# Farmville, Virginia Historic Design Guidelines

# FARMVILLE — DOWNTOWN — PARTNERSHIP

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*Cover photo courtesy of George Burruss.*

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# 1

# Introduction

## *How to Use this Document*

Main Street, USA, is the heart of every community in the country. History and geography have shaped a unique character for each of the thousands of small towns and cities – giving each location a unique fingerprint. The built environment that remains is a visual testament to the strength, character and determination of the people that call that location home.

Over the years, buildings change or are demolished as current design trends, natural disasters, and time influence them. All of these buildings and changes, together, form the stage where life is lived, and memories are built. When buildings are unsympathetically altered or left to deteriorate, they visually undermine the entire streetscape and the sense of place.

Downtown Farmville, Virginia is no different. The streetscape of North Main Street creates a unique blend of many architectural styles spanning almost 200 years. The Farmville Downtown Partnership recognizes that our built environment is a precious commodity worthy of preserving, renovating, and bringing forward into new, dynamic uses through adaptive reuse.

This booklet exists to provide guidance to those who have chosen to undertake façade improvements to their downtown commercial buildings. In this guide, you will find a description of the architectural styles that comprise downtown, a collection of standard best practices to support preservation/renovation projects, links to technical pamphlets on specific issues available for free from the National Park Service, and a visual explanation of the local sign ordinance in the B1 and B2 zoning districts that will assist with interpretation of that ordinance.

Through the tools in this booklet, we hope to support ongoing efforts to maintain a healthy, vibrant downtown community that identifies Farmville, Virginia as the heart of central Virginia.

*The flow chart on the following page describes the process of applying for and receiving grant funds from the Farmville Downtown Partnership.*

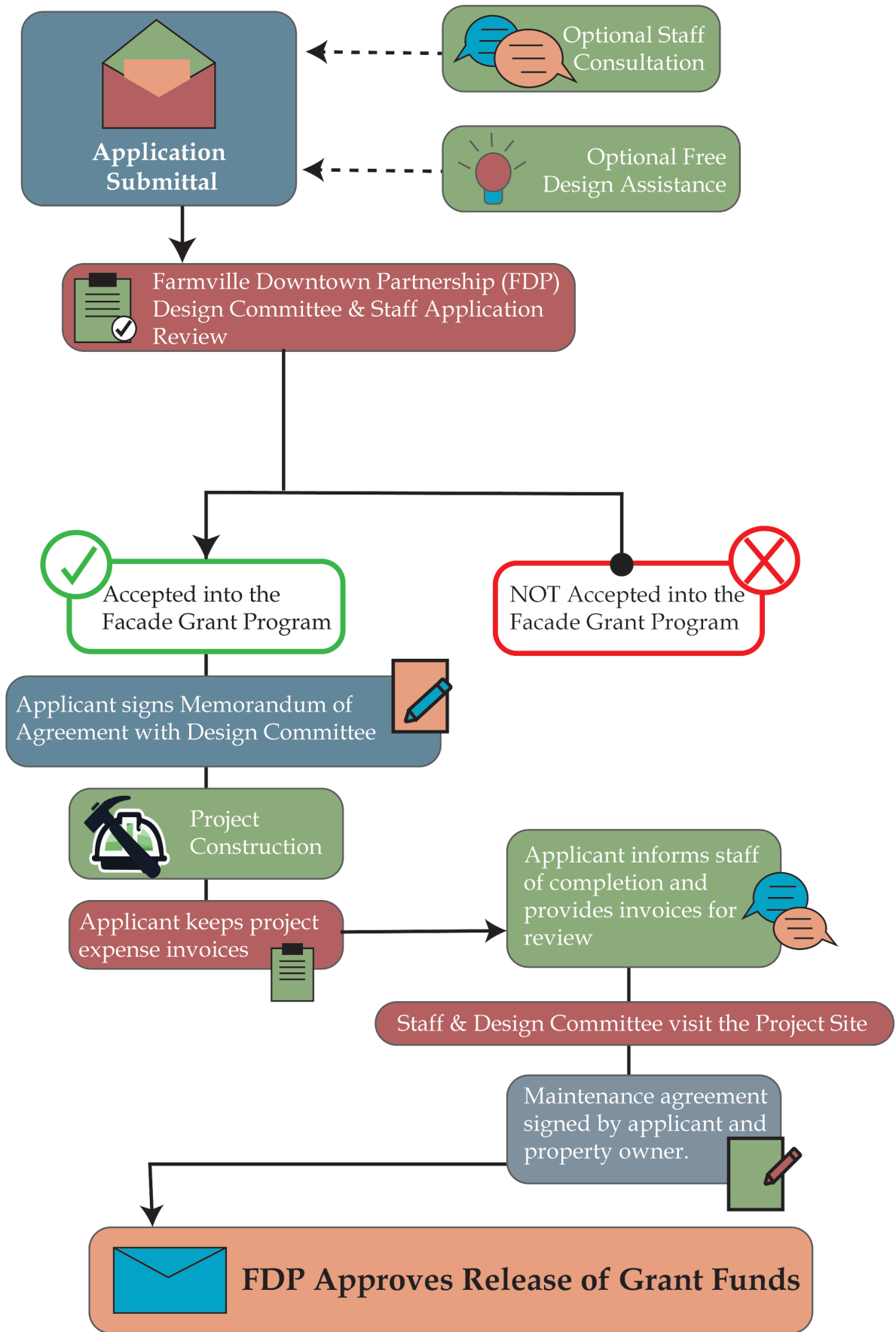


Figure 1: Farmville Downtown Partnership Grant Funding Flow Chart

# 1 History

## *The Historic District*

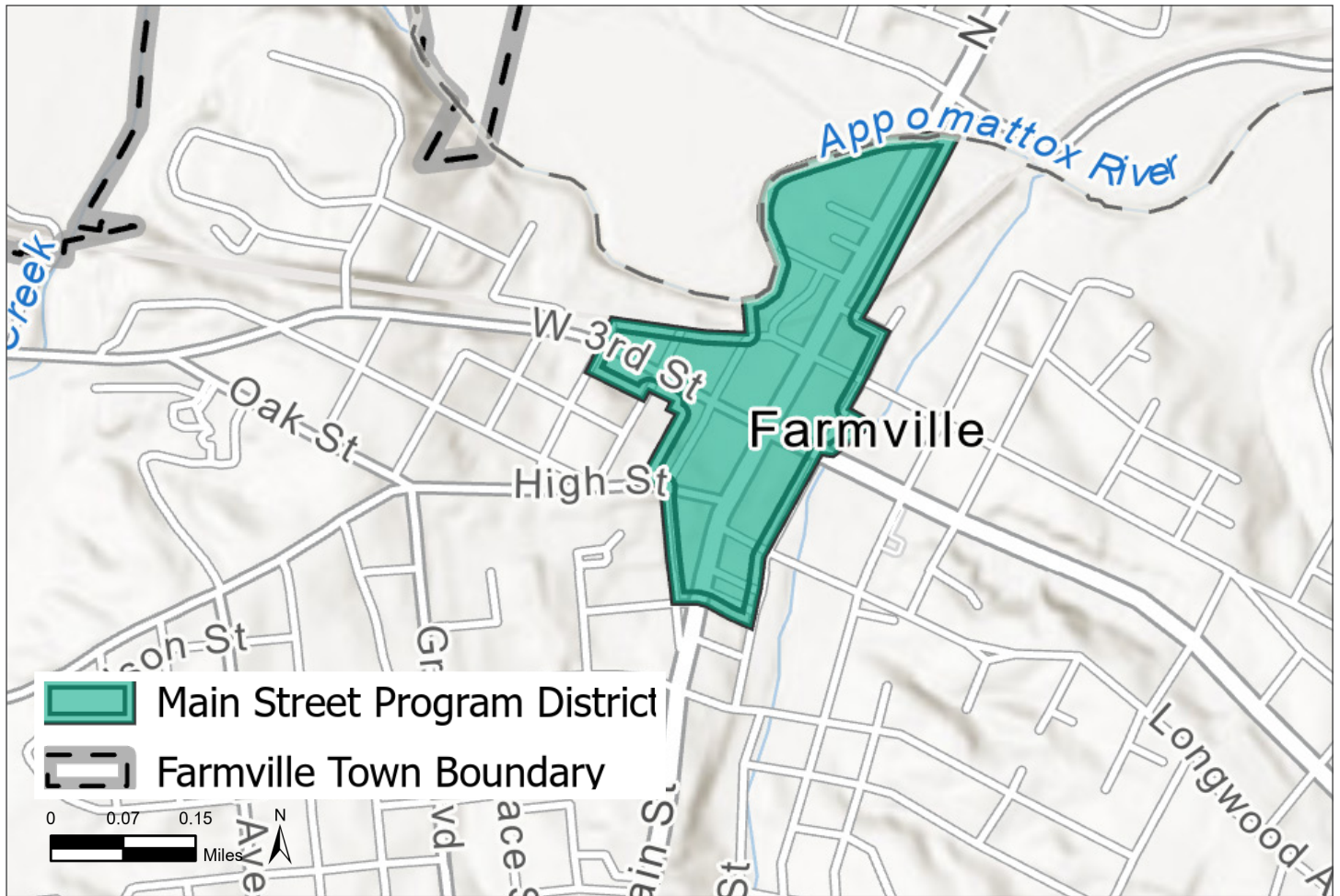


Figure 2: Downtown Farmville Historic District

First established in 1798 and formally incorporated in 1912, the Town of Farmville, Virginia remains one of the older settlements in the United States. Adjacent to Prince Edward and Cumberland County, Farmville lies near the center of the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is known for its picturesque Downtown, which possesses architectural features that are reflective of many eras of its history. During the 1800s, the commercial district was the main hub in the Town for local tobacco growers to store their crop in warehouses before it would be transported to other markets. This commercial district now features a stock of well-preserved buildings dating back to the 19th and early 20th centuries, each exuding its own architectural charm and interest. Figure 1 depicts the boundary lines for the Main Street District at the center of the community along the banks of the Appomattox River.

# 2

## Architecture

### *Styles*



Figure 3: 308 N. Main St.

Farmville’s historic downtown commercial district is a charming testament to the Town’s rich heritage and enduring character. Walking along Main Street, visitors find themselves transported to a bygone era, where the rare sight of detailed brick facades and ornate storefronts hark back to a time when construction was of a quality seldom seen today. The district is a vibrant tapestry of local businesses, boutiques, and eateries, each contributing to the area’s cultural vibrancy. The architectural diversity, from Greek Revival-style structures to Victorian-era gems, reflects the evolving tastes and economic prosperity of the downtown through the years.

A noteworthy example of Greek Revival era design is the J.H. Whitfield Company building, situated at 308 North Main Street. Constructed circa 1840, this two-story structure incorporates distinct Greek Revival features; notable features include the uniquely-preserved decorative recessed rectangular panels above each window, as well as the ornate window heads. Additionally, the building boasts a bracketed cornice that spans the top of the storefront, adding a touch of architectural flair that speaks to the evolving styles of that era.

# Victorian Italianate



Figure 4: 119 N. Main St.



Figure 5: 214 N. Main St.

Although the style originated from England in the early 19th century, the Victorian Italianate style also became popular in the United States after the Civil War. An example of this style can be found in the Doyne Building, located on 114 North Main Street. The Doyne Building is Farmville’s first mortuary; Constructed in 1887, it embodies the Victorian Italianate architectural trends of the time, with an array of brick colors, segmented arched brick window heads, cast metal bracketed cornices, and storefronts constructed of cast metal pilasters. A few key elements of this style are: tall narrow rectangular or arched windows, entrances with decorative details (such as columns and brackets) single or double doors, bay windows, mass-produced cast iron or pressed metal decorative elements, and deep overhanging eaves with prominent decorative brackets and wide cornices. Other examples of historic buildings in Farmville that embody this style are displayed above.



# Neoclassical

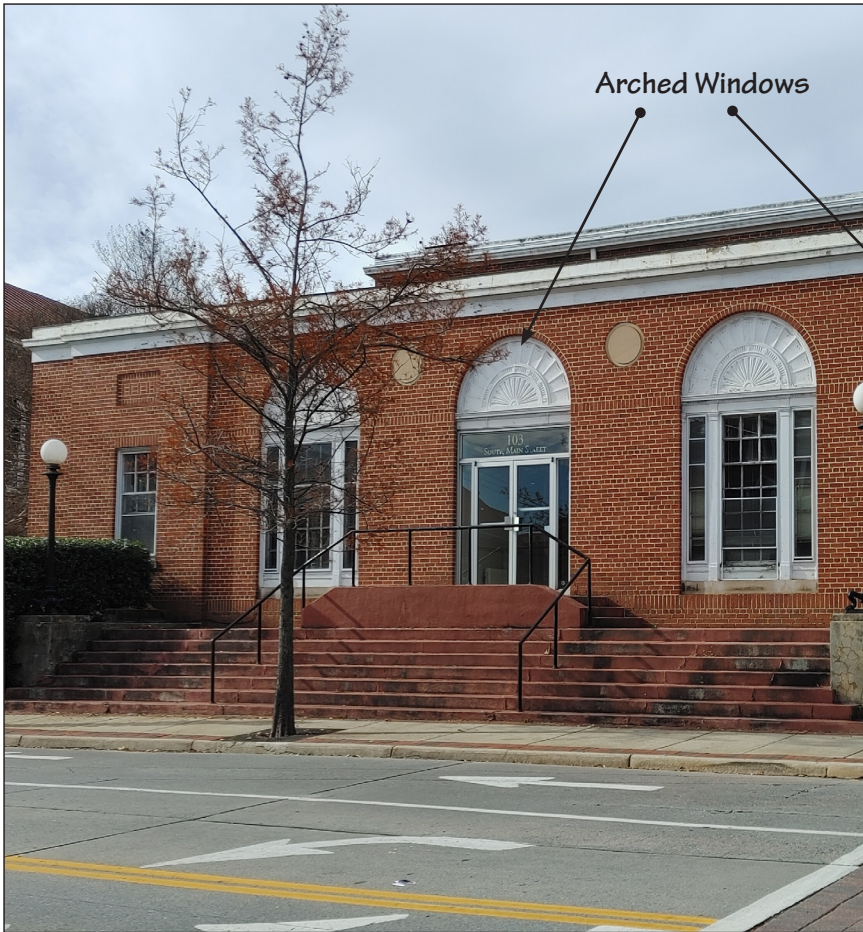


Figure 6: 217 W. 3rd St.

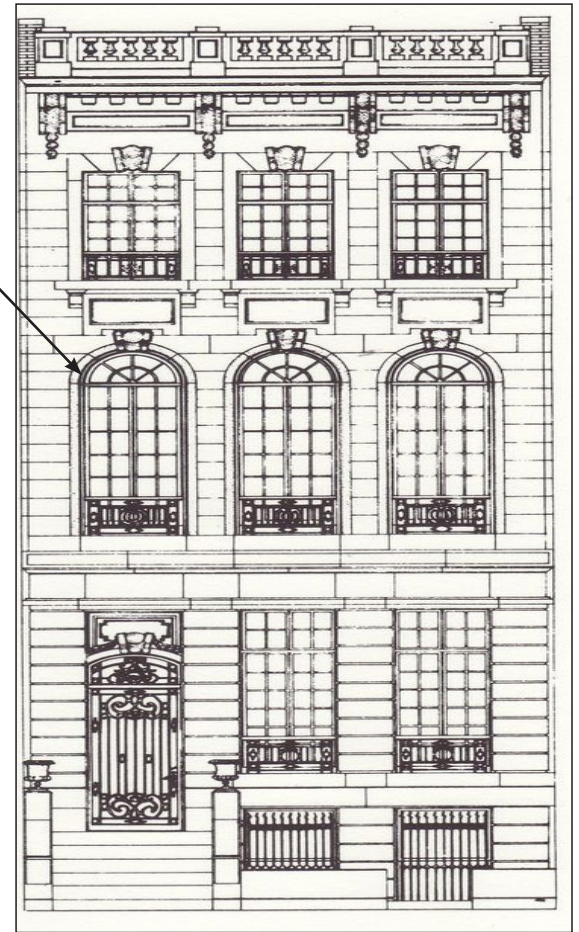


Figure 7: Neoclassical Architecture Example

Neoclassical is an architectural style known for its simplicity and sophistication. It can be found on commercial structures along Main Street, with two notable buildings being the Prince Edward County Courthouse and the Farmville Federal Building. Most of the buildings dating from the 1910s and 1920s feature dentiled and modillioned cornices, round-arched window openings with keystones, Doric pilasters, and paneled parapets.

# Greek Revival



Figure 8: 308 N Main St.



Figure 9: Greek Revival Architecture Example

The Greek Revival style became prevalent in the United States during the late 18th century, with its influence persisting into the mid-1900s. Inspired by the democratic ideals of ancient Greece, this architectural movement reflected a profound admiration of classical Greek design elements and sought to evoke a sense of grandeur and civic virtue. Characterized by its symmetrical facades, prominent columns, and pediments, Greek Revival structures often featured Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian columns supporting a pediment adorned with classical motifs. An example of this popular style is the J.H. Whitfield Company, located at 308 North Main Street.

# Art Deco



Figure 10: 205 N. Main St.

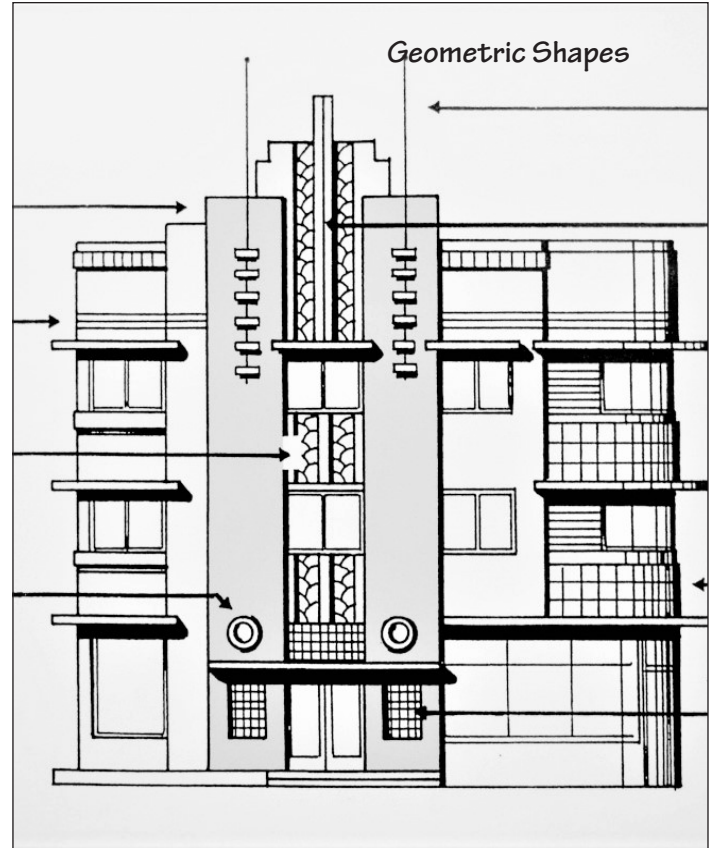


Figure 11: Art Deco Architecture Example

Art Deco was a short-lived but popular architectural style during the 1920s. A few characteristics of this style are materials such as stucco, terracotta and decorative glass, geometric shapes, bright and contrasting colors, and parapets that resemble towers. Art deco is non-traditional to Farmville, but can be spotted on a few buildings throughout the historic district. 205 North Main Street is an example of a commercial building with art deco features. The building's exterior is stucco with geometric features at the two parapets.

## *Mid-century Modern Architecture*



Figure 12: 127 N. Main St.



Figure 13: 201 N. Main St.

Farmville's modern architecture has seamlessly woven itself into the town's historic fabric, presenting a juxtaposition of tradition and innovation. Characterized by clean lines, geometric shapes, and a focus on functionality, modern structures in Farmville embody a progressive spirit while respecting the town's historic building pattern. 127 N. Main St and 201 N. Main St. are examples of some of Farmville's modern buildings, featuring tall storefront glass simplistic and colorful designs. Additionally, the incorporation of sustainable building practices and energy-efficient technologies in modern constructions reflects the Farmville's community's pursuit of a "greener" future. As the Town evolves, modern architecture serves not only as a testament to contemporary design principles but also as a dynamic dialogue between past and present, enriching the architectural tapestry of Farmville.

# 3

## Architectural Elements

### Windows

Windows are character-defining features on many historic buildings. Their size, sash type, framing, details, and arrangements play a major part in defining the style, scale, and character of a building. The function of windows adds light to the interior of a building, provides ventilation, and allows a visual link to the outside. On commercial buildings, the upper facade contains windows that help define the character of the building and may provide a pattern of openings with neighboring buildings to form the street wall of the entire block. Facade windows may be more decorated than windows on secondary elevations, which may be more utilitarian and may have been blocked in or covered up. It is best practice to complete a condition survey before replacing historic windows.

### Wood Windows

Historic wood windows are of better quality than today's wood framed windows, as historic wood has better resistance to water and insect damage and saves energy costs if repaired properly. It is best practice to rehabilitate and repair historic wood windows in lieu of replacing.

### Repair or Replace

In the event that a historic wood window cannot be repaired, replacing it with another wood framed window is acceptable. All replacements must be done with moisture-reduced and/or wood-resin composite wood. New windows should match the original design and dimensions.

Using vinyl windows is not the best option. They need to be replaced often, and in many cases they cannot be replaced at all.

For more information:  
[Wood Windows](#)



Figure 14: Single Hung, The Doyne Building



Figure 15: Single Hung Panes, 308 N. Main St

*Replacing historic windows with contemporary vinyl windows detracts from the overall aesthetic and appeal of Downtown Farmville.*

# Windows

## Metal Framed Windows

Like wooden windows, metal framed windows can be rehabilitated or repaired. Signs that a metal framed window should be rehabilitated include severely chipped paint, cracked glass, split masonry, lifting of putty around glazing, and corroded metal. (Typically identifiable by warped, jammed or failing frames.)



Figure 16: Metal Windows, 205 North Main St.

Please consult with a professional for window replacement advice.

## Repair or Replace

**Repair:** To repair metal framed windows, it is best practice to use a dent straightening technique, cold stitching, and modern welding. For chipped paint, a micro abrasive cleaning solution is recommended.

**Replace:** It is acceptable to replace metal-framed windows if they display irreparable damage. When replacing the window, it is best practice to keep the same window style with respect to the historic character and dimensions of the original. The new window should fit tightly within the existing opening without sub-frames or panning.

For more information:  
[Steel Windows](#)

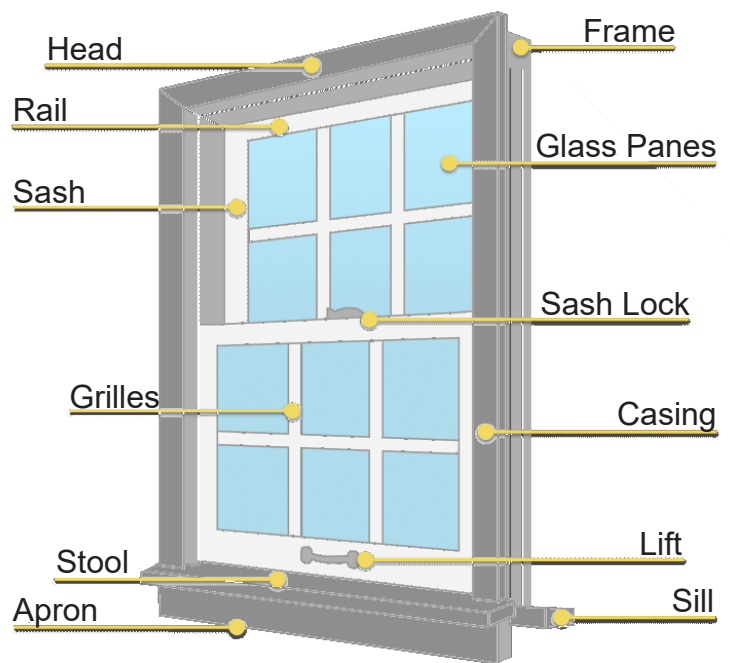


Figure 17: Window Diagram

# Doors

Doors are an important focal point of an entrance and often a character-defining feature of the architectural style of a building. Commercial buildings typically have their original wood-and-glass doors, or they may have more recently installed aluminum frame doors.

## Repair or Replace

**Repair:** When repairing an existing or original wooden door (and surrounding trim), try to use matching materials. Keep or maintain the original hardware.

**Replace:** When replacing historic doors that are beyond repair, a new door of the same size, design, material, and type as the original should be used. The material should be chosen with respect to the historic style of the building, including number and orientation of panel, location, and size of any glass panes.

For more information:  
[Exterior Paint Problems](#)



Figure 19: Double Wooden Door with side panels and transom.



Figure 18: Decorative wooden door with transom

Replacing existing doors with fiberglass or composite materials is not recommended.

# Storefronts



The storefront of a historic commercial building is one of the most significant parts of its facade. Transparent windows are designed to draw customers into the business as well as to display the merchandise sold there. At night, the lit storefront illuminates the sidewalk and adds visual interest for downtown visitors. Many of the traditional storefronts in Farmville’s downtown historic district date from the late 19th century.



Figure 20: Building 6 Storefront



Figure 21: Storefront Diagram

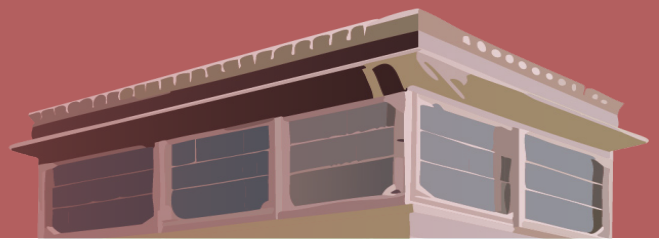
## Repair or Replace

**Repair:** Preserve the original storefront whenever possible. When maintaining or restoring a storefront, special attention must go towards repairing missing elements, such as cornices, window frames, and transoms.

*Preserve the original storefront wherever possible.*

**Replace:** If storefront must be replaced, keep the original size and material. If elements are damaged beyond repair, replace them with simplified elements that are in alignment with the character, design, and materials of the existing building. For more information: [Storefronts](#), [Substitute Materials](#), [Awnings](#).





# Architectural Details and Trim

Examples of decorative items that add richness and integrity to the historic building design can be:

- Window/door surrounds
- Caps
- Columns and Piers
- Cornice Trim
- Brackets
- Masonry Patterns
- Metal roof cresting
- Finials

## Repair or Replace

**Repair:** Historic architectural detailing should be maintained and preserved.

**Replace:** If the detailing is deteriorated beyond repair, it should be duplicated using historic building materials. Using a substitute that matches the historic composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities is also acceptable. Any missing details should match the historic materials as closely as possible.

**Historic architectural detailing should be maintained and preserved.**



Figure 22: 233 N. Main St. Detail



Figure 23: Davidson Building, 229 N. Main St. Detail

# Cornices and Parapets



Cornices are located at the junction between the roof and the wall and are typically made of galvanized metal.

A parapet is a low, protective wall at the edge of a terrace, balcony, or roof, especially that part of an exterior wall, fire wall, or party wall that rises above a roof. These elements may be an extension of the material and design of the wall, or they may be a separate design. They are often a decorative feature and may be made of brick, stone, cast stone, wood, or metal.

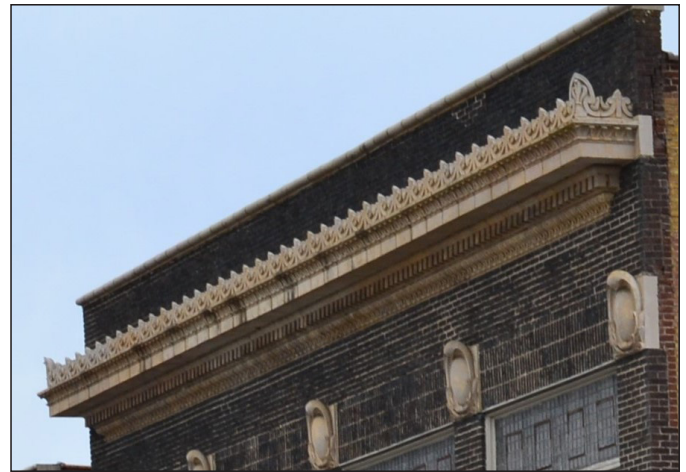


Figure 25: Davidson Building, 229 N. Main St. Cornice and Parapet detail

Figure 24: Davidson Building, 229 N. Main St.

## Repair or Replace

Repair/Replace: Removing cornices or parapet elements are not recommended, especially if they are aspects of the original design. If the original trim must be replaced, the materials used should not convey a different period of construction or architectural style.



Figure 26: 119 N. Main St.

# 4 Materials

## Brick

Masonry has been one of the most significant and commonly used materials in building construction since the classical era. Brick is the most common masonry type used in Farmville's downtown historic district and is seen on many commercial, residential, and institutional buildings. Older bricks from the 18th and 19th centuries were made of clay formed in a mold and fired in a kiln to harden. Later in the 19th and early 20th centuries, bricks became much more dense and harder due to an extrusion process and higher kiln temperatures. These finely textured smooth bricks are commonly known as pressed bricks and are not as susceptible to deterioration as the earlier molded bricks.

### Repair or Replace

Repair: Masonry features important to defining the character of the building should be maintained. When repairing brick, it is best practice to leave sound mortar intact and only repair mortar that has been deteriorated. When possible, avoid damaging the masonry when removing old paint or repainting the bricks. For best results, clean the brick first with a low pressure water wash (no more than 200 PSI). After washing it, allow the masonry to dry up to 14 days before applying primer and paint. Please follow any local environmental guidelines for chemical cleaning and disposal.

Do not sandblast historic brick, as it will remove hard outer surface and make the brick more vulnerable to moisture and the elements.

Replaced: If deteriorated mortar has to be replaced, refer to the National Park Service guidelines, including in the Appendix to this document.

For more information:

[Repointing](#)

[Abrasive Cleaning](#)

*Historic Design Guidelines*



Figure 27: Example 1 of Damaged Brick



Figure 28: Example 2 of Damaged Brick

**Do not sandblast historic brick.**

# Stucco

Stucco is an exterior plaster applied in 2 to 3 part coating, and is mainly used on homes and small scale commercial buildings. This material is commonly used throughout the U.S. and is often used to disguise or imitate other materials.

## Repair or Replace

**Repair:** An assessment of the stucco should be done before deciding whether it should be repaired or replaced. It is best practice to check around window and door openings for deteriorating stucco and intrusive vegetation. When repairing existing stucco material, it is best practice to use the whitewashing technique, which offers protection and stability, while the stucco hardens. It is imperative that excessive water is drained away from the material; replacing/fixing roofs, gutters, downspouts, and flashing are a few solutions to keep water out. When fixing hairline cracks, the suggestion is to use a thin slurry coat consisting of the finish coat ingredients; using commercially available caulking compounds is not recommended.

**Replace:** If stucco is to be replaced, that the material should be similar to the original material. A sand or float finish is preferred as it matches best with many historical stucco buildings.

**Consult with a professional plasterer to ensure repairs are done correctly.**



Figure 29: Example of Damaged Stucco 1

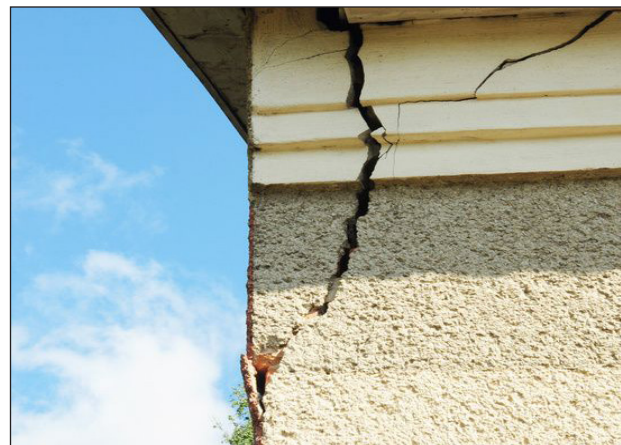


Figure 30: Example of Damaged Stucco 2

For more information:  
[Stucco](#)

# 5

## Sign Requirements



Figure 31: Historic Farmville Sign, Farmville VA

**Signage is an important tool that downtown businesses use to share their message and identify their location. The Main Street District falls into two zoning districts, B1 and B2, each with Town of Farmville sign criteria, which is part of the Town’s Zoning Ordinance and required by law. This section serves to assist in interpreting allowable signs and size specifications.** Per the Town of Farmville, no sign shall be approved for use unless it has been inspected by appropriate the town officials. In order to have a complete signage approval, one must submit a permit and undergo zoning approval. Please see below for the application process and requirements. Before zoning approval, one must apply for a sign permit from the Town of Farmville.

For additional information, please refer to: <https://www.farmvilleva.com/212/Community-Development> for additional information.

The permit application should include but is not only limited to:

- •The location of the sign structure, the name and address of the sign owner and of the sign erector, a drawing showing the design and location of the sign, and other pertinent information the building official may require to ensure compliance with this chapter or other ordinances of the town.
- •A plan showing the location of existing and proposed sign(s) on building facade(s) or grounds and exterior dimensions of buildings subject to the sign permit.
- •Scaled drawings showing dimensions, scale, and elevation of proposed sign(s) to include specific materials, hardware, and methods of mounting and illumination.
- •All signs shall be erected within six (6) months from the date of approval of the sign permit; otherwise, the permit shall become null and void and a new permit shall be required. The zoning administrator may grant one (1) extension of the permit for a period of six (6) months, but in no case shall a permit be valid for more than a total of twelve (12) months. Extensions may be granted only when the proposed sign is in compliance with all current applicable regulations.

# B1 Zoning

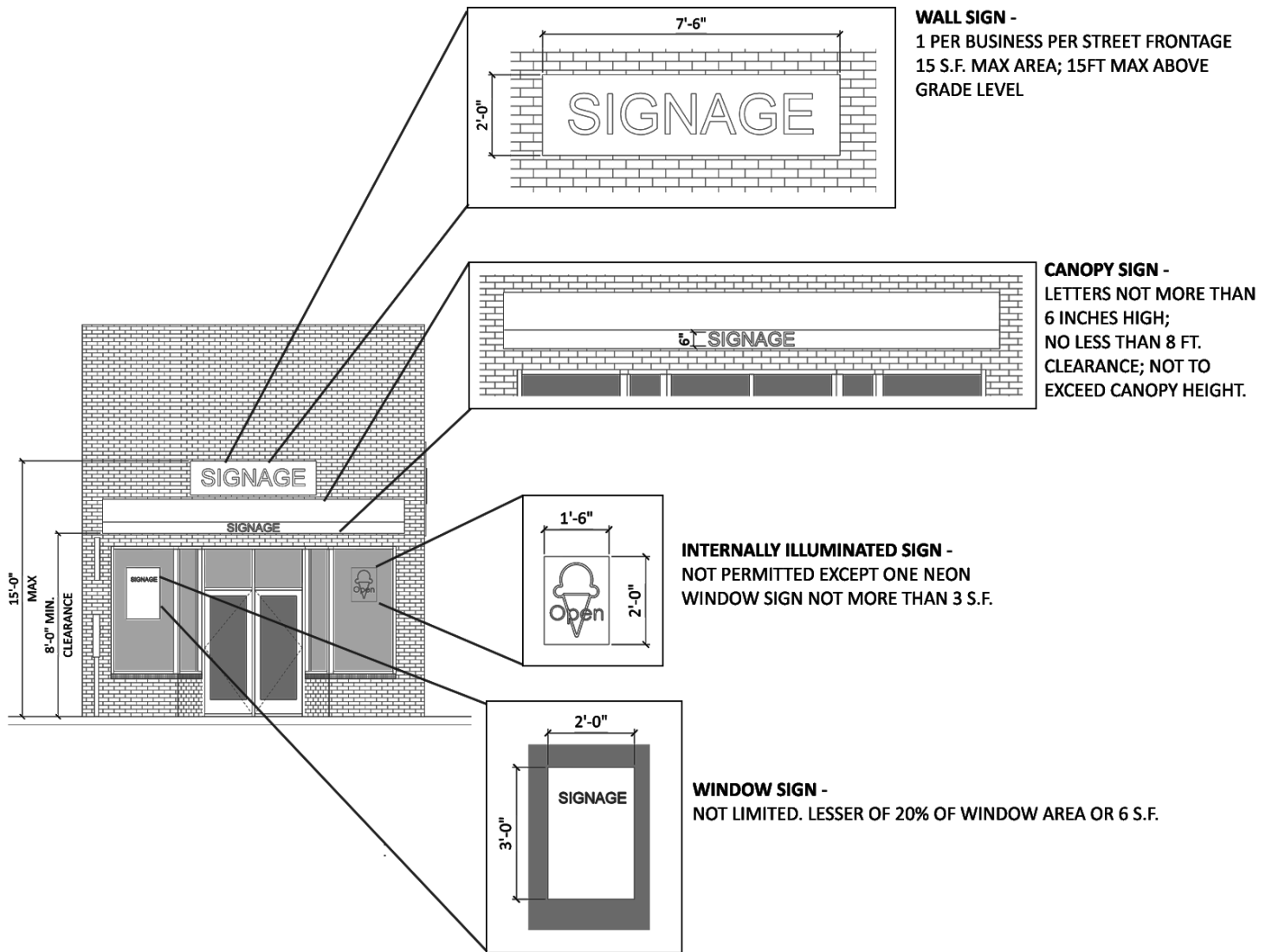


Figure 32: B1 Zoning Allowable Signage Diagram

# B1 Zoning

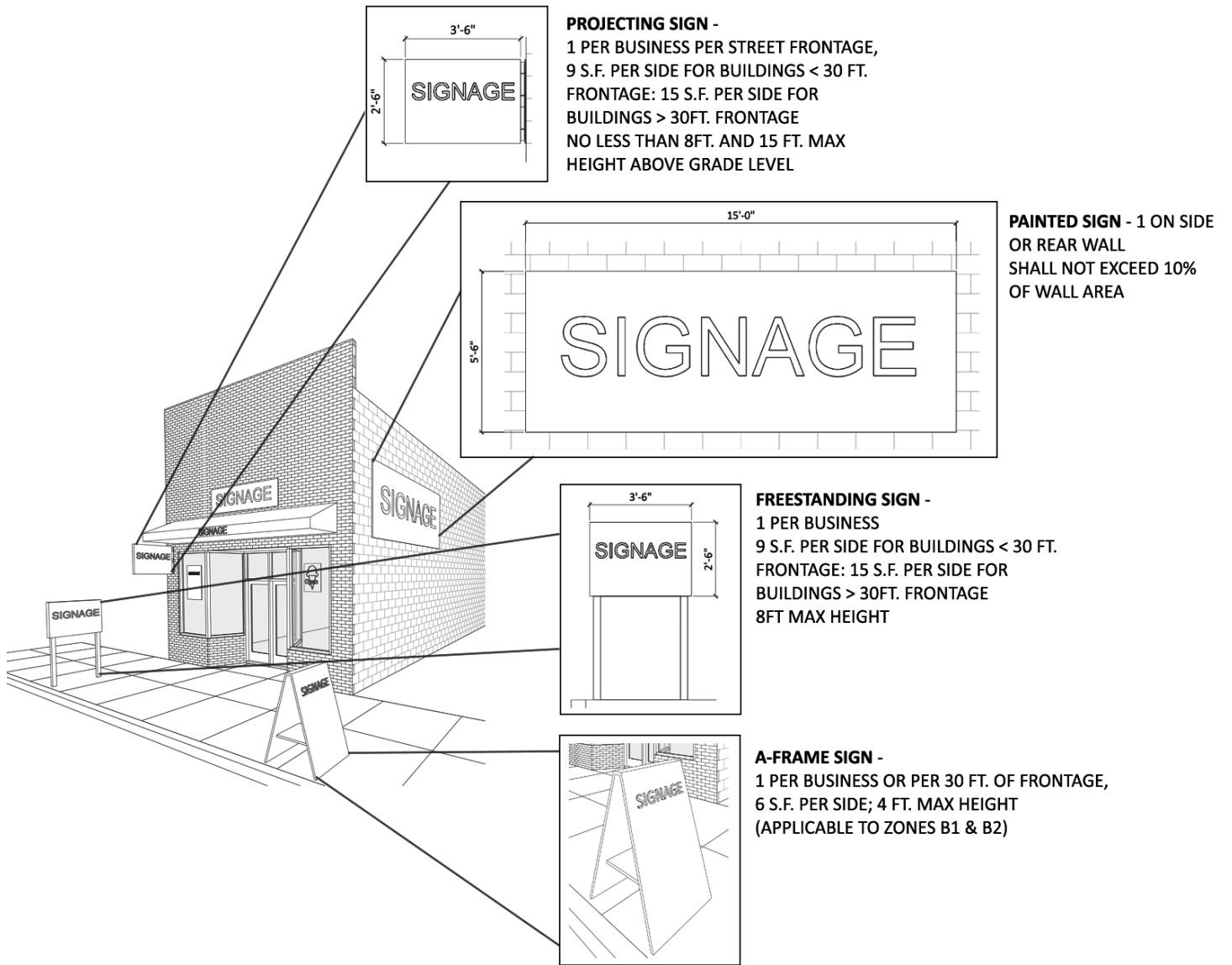


Figure 33: B1 Zoning Allowable Signage Diagram 2

# B2 Zoning

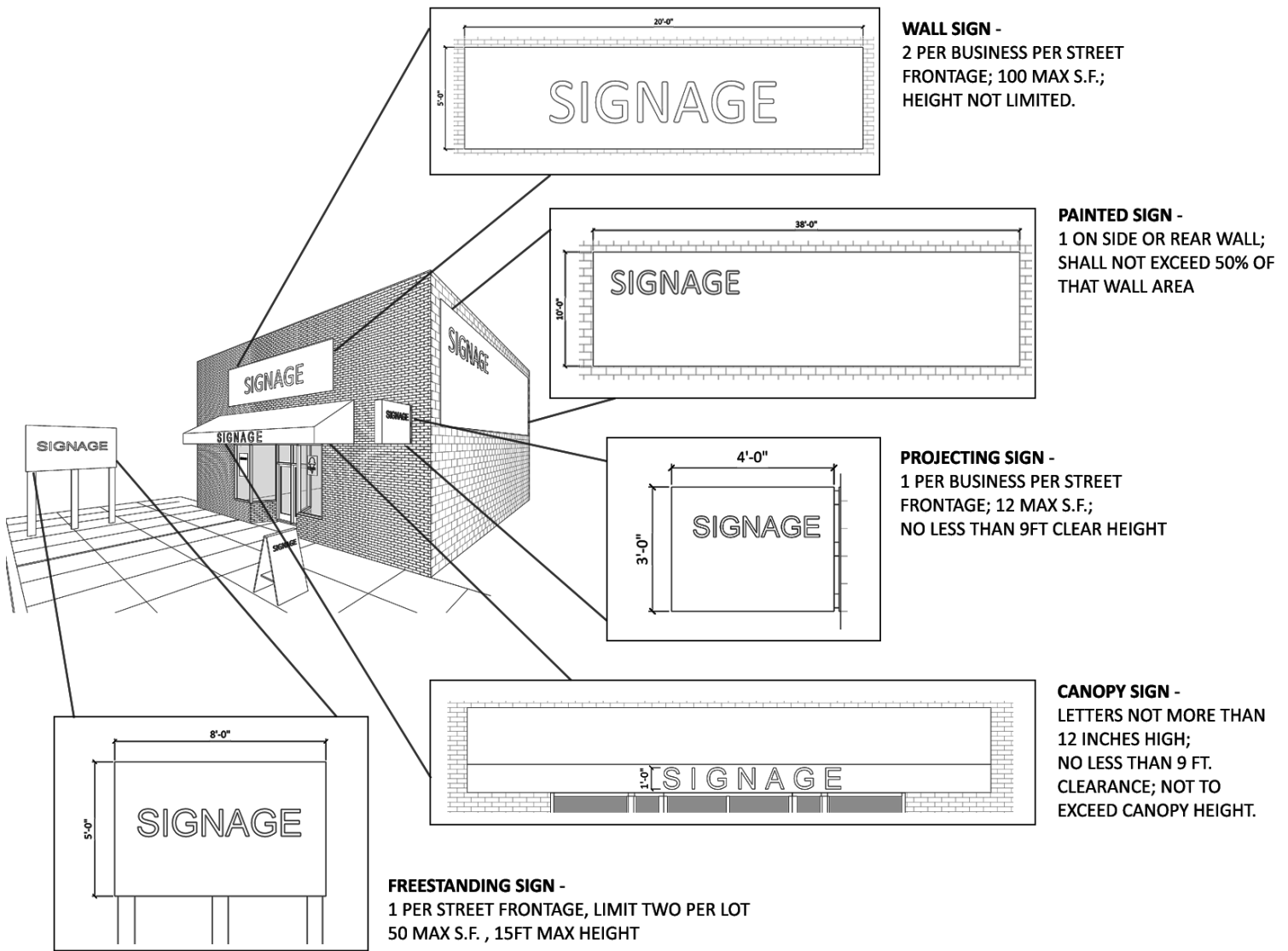


Figure 34: B2 Zoning Allowable Signage Diagram



# Sign Requirements

The following sign types are prohibited in the B1 and B2 zoning districts.

## Prohibited Per the Town of Farmville

- Inflatable, moving or rotating, animated, or flashing signs lighted in a varying degree including strobe lights.
- Off-premises signs.
- Signs or parts of a sign located anywhere on the roof or wall of a building so that they shall extend above or beyond the perimeter of the building's roof, wall, or parapet wall or into a front, side or rear yard setback.
- Signs illuminated with sodium halide lights; and any illuminated sign that emits excessive levels of light as determined by the zoning administrator.
- Abandoned sign structures.
- Changeable copy signs, except as specifically permitted by this zoning ordinance.
- Any signs, including posters and handbills, affixed to or painted on any structures, trees or other natural vegetation, rocks, or poles.
- Any sign that may be confused with or obstruct the view of any authorized traffic sign or signal, or obstruct the sight-distance triangle at any road intersection, or extend into the public right-of-way or otherwise create a distraction for drivers. Any such sign is subject to immediate removal and disposal by an authorized town official as a nuisance.
- Portable signs, including those on wheels, except A-frame/sandwich boards complying with the provisions of this section.
- Signs that prevent free ingress or egress from any door, window, fire escape, or that prevent free access from one (1) part of a roof to any other part or otherwise adversely affect safety or are in violation of any building code or other applicable law.
- Signs that emit smoke, visible vapors, particles, sound, odor, or open flames used to attract public attention.
- Mirrors or mirror devices on, in, or as part of a sign.
- Signs placed, affixed or painted on a motor vehicle or trailer parked with the primary purpose of providing signage, and not used in the normal conduct of business.
- Signs located in the public right-of-way, unless approved and erected by the town.
- Mobile billboards.
- Any sign representing or depicting specified sexual activities or specified anatomical areas or sexually oriented goods. Any sign containing obscene text or pictures as defined by the Virginia Code.
- Signs advertising activities or products that are illegal under federal, state, town or county law.

# Sign Requirements



Figure 35: Love Sign, Farmville VA

## Exemptions

The following exemptions are permitted in the B1 and B2 zoning districts.

- Signs erected by a governmental body or required by law, including official traffic signs or sign structures, provisional warning signs or sign structures, and temporary signs indicating danger.
- Minor signs as defined by this chapter not exceeding three (3) total signs per street frontage per parcel.
- Change of message of an approved sign.
- Painting, repainting, cleaning, and other normal maintenance and repair of signs or sign structures, unless a structural change is made.
- A sign displayed on an operable truck, bus or other vehicle, while in use in the normal course of business with the exception of mobile billboards that are prohibited.
- Flags of the United States of America, Commonwealth of Virginia, Town of Farmville, Longwood University or other flags displayed for non-commercial purposes.
- Any property actively offered for sale or lease may display one sign per street frontage in addition to those otherwise allowed by this chapter, limited to a maximum area of twelve (12) square feet in all zoning districts. Such signs shall be removed when the property is no longer offered for sale or lease and shall not be banner type signs.
- Signs affixed to the interior of a permanent fence of a recreational or sports facility at a private community recreational use, public facility, or educational facility.
- Menu boards for drive-in restaurants.