

Washington, DC, is known for its low-slung skyline, majestic avenues, and leafy residential neighborhoods. Its commercial and residential streets are largely defined by a pedestrian scale enlivened by bay, oriel and show windows, tower-like features, porches, and other architectural embellishments that the city has encouraged by allowing building projections into the public right-of-way since 1872. Bay windows are probably the best-known type of building projection, and the city has traditionally used these projections to encourage architectural variety along its streets. Additional requirements and new types of building projections have been allowed over time in response to the changing urban environment and architectural trends. Today, our city allows 25 different types of building projections to occupy public space.



Washington, DC, has a recognizable urban and architectural character resulting from our unique legacy of city planning, building traditions, and natural features. DC's dual role as both the nation's capital and a local city-of-neighborhoods adds to this richness and contributes to its recognizable and varied urban form. The defining characteristics of DC's image are numerous, and range in scale from the profile of the skyline, down to the finer-grained pedestrian experience of streetscapes and building facades. The use of building projections, while not unique to DC, has evolved here in a distinct way as one of these defining characteristics.

#### Height Limit and Skyline

The city's skyline is internationally recognizable with its low to mid-rise buildings punctuated by the Washington Monument and Capitol dome.

#### Federal Buildings and Open Spaces

The National Mall, Smithsonian buildings, and Federal Triangle are just a few examples of the grand and formal architecture that defines the monumental core of our capital city.

#### Public Space and Park-like Streets

Beyond the National Mall and monumental core are the city's leafy residential neighborhoods, known for their wide streets, generous green spaces and tree canopy.

#### Distinct Residential Architecture

Bay windows, towers, and porches are several building projection types that create a well-defined and consistent rhythm and scale.

#### Projections in Other US Cities

| <i>City</i>      | <i>Below Grade</i>           | <i>Above Grade</i>   | <i>Steps<br/>(example)</i> |
|------------------|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Washington, DC   | Areaways,<br>Vaults, Tunnels | Awnings, Canopies, Marquees, Port<br>Cocheres, Steps, Ramps, Porches,<br>Show Windows, Bay Windows, Oriel<br>Windows, Towers, Colonnades,<br>Market Sheds, Loading Platforms and<br>Scales | Up to 10'                  |
| Indianapolis, IN | --                           | --   | --                         |
| Los Angeles, CA  | --                           | Awnings, Canopies, Marquees  | --                         |
| Seattle, WA      | Areaways                     | Awnings, Canopies, and Marquees  | --                         |
| Philadelphia, PA | Vaults                       | Oriel Windows, "Bulk" Window,<br>Balconies, Awnings, Canopies,<br>Marquees, Wheelchair Elevators   | --                         |
| New York, NY     | Areaways,<br>Vaults, Tunnels | Balconies, Steps, Marquees (ramps<br>allowed on historic buildings being<br>updated)   | Up to 18"                  |

Washington, DC's projection allowances in the public right-of-way are more generous than any other North American municipality, largely enabled by the broad avenues and streets laid out in our various historic plans. Our city allows 25 different projections (including several categories of below-grade projections), significantly more than any other US city. Other cities allow awnings, canopies, and marquees - but not all. DC is the only city with projection regulations allowing bay windows, towers, porches, colonnades, port cocheres, loading platforms, market sheds, and scales.

## Landscaped “Public Parking”



K Street NW – circa 1880

“ . . . the corporation of the city of Washington be, and hereby authorized to set apart from time to time, as parks, to be adorned with shade-trees, walks, and enclosed with curbstones, not exceeding one half of the width of any and all avenues and streets in the said city of Washington, leaving a roadway of not less than thirty-five feet in width in the centre of said avenues and streets, or two such roadways on each side of the park in the centre of the same . . . “

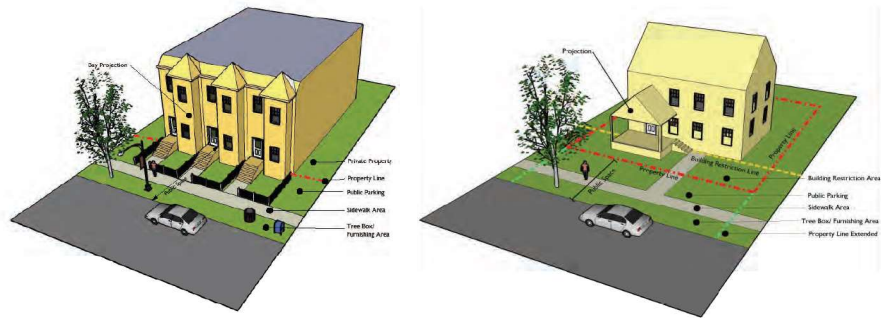
- Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1870



In Washington DC, building allowances are closely related to how the city managed its wide streets. The city began creating landscaped areas within the right-of-way between sidewalks and property lines in 1870 to reduce the cost of maintaining the imperial widths of streets. This area is referred to as “public parking”, with “parking” being an evolution of the idea of “park land”. The establishment of a landscaped “public parking” system meant the city had an area of right-of-way predictably set aside for green space that went beyond what was needed for roadway and sidewalks. Within this area, building projections could be allowed with confidence as the public space would not be needed for other uses. The first landscaped “public parking” installed in the city was in the 1300 block of K Street, NW, shown here. Building projections were allowed into city streets in 1872, shortly after the creation of landscaped “public parking”. The city’s projection regulations still refer to “public parking” to determine what type of projections are allowed and how far they can extend into the street right-of-way.



## What are Building Projections?



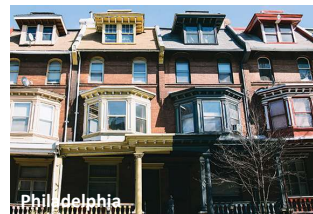
Some properties in outlying areas of the city have building restriction lines indicating an area of private property where buildings are not allowed. This area is also regulated as public space and indicates an area that the city has the right to use for sidewalks, landscapes, and utilities. Building restriction lines were created to extend the landscaped “public parking” system throughout the city. Projections are also allowed to extend over building restriction lines. The projection regulations frequently refer to “the lot line or building restriction line” as the references to measure projection allowances.

## Landscaped “Public Parking”: The Green Space that Holds the City Together



Today, almost all streets in the District of Columbia have an area set aside and regulated as landscaped “public parking”. In the example shown here – Taylor Street NW, between 13th Street and Arkansas Avenue - landscaped “public parking” lines every street and provides linear green spaces connecting traditional parks. Building projections are allowed in the green space lining streets. Certain projections are also allowed into the wide sidewalks of commercial areas.

## Projections



Many large American cities that developed before World War II have distinctive, memorable architectural qualities that define them. Examples include the tiered skyscrapers of New York City or the Queen Anne homes in San Francisco. Although Washington, DC, is not the only American city with bay windows or other projections associated with residential buildings, our city's projections have a distinct character and scale. The images above include window projections in four American cities: Washington, DC, Boston, San Francisco, and Philadelphia. A trained eye can quickly identify which city is pictured by these window projections.



## Design Goals



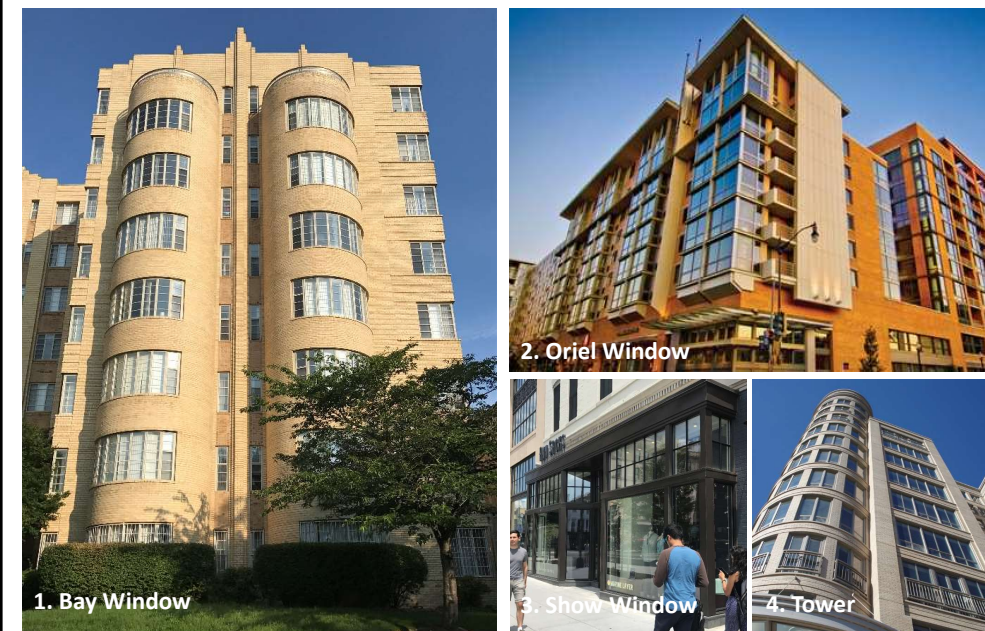
Washington, DC's distinct projections – and, consequently, much of the city's architecture – are, in part, the result of conscious efforts to encourage image-defining building embellishments. Past versions of the construction code illustrate how projection allowances were used to create distinct architectural forms and achieve specific goals (from upper right moving around clockwise):

- Enhanced views along avenues were created with tower projections allowed only on specific corners of Pennsylvania Avenue that intersected with landscape-“parked” streets, all corners where avenues intersected with avenues, and all corners where avenues intersected with landscape-“parked” streets;
- Picturesque residential streets with varying rooflines were created by requiring the height of bay windows to be no higher than the window sill of the top floor and towers that had to extend over the roof line;
- Victorian detail and visual interest were created by requiring ornamentation on the corners of bay windows;
- Movement of light and air into adjacent buildings was ensured by requiring bay windows to have angled sides; and,
- A human scale with potential for social interaction along residential streets was created by allowing porch projections and requiring porch floors to be no more than five feet above the adjacent grade.

Projections were also used to differentiate residential and commercial areas. Bay and oriel windows, towers, and step projections were traditionally allowed in residential zones only, and towers and show windows were allowed in commercial zones. This changed in 2013, when allowances were expanded to include a greater menu of projection options in commercial and mixed-use zones.



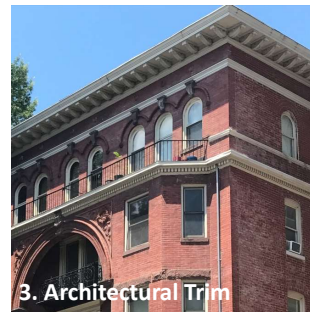
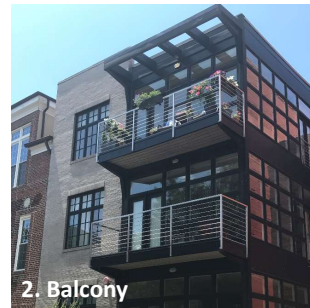
Above Grade: Bay Windows, Oriel Windows, Show Windows, and Towers



Almost all the city's above grade projections are allowed if they meet the intent to embellish a building. The examples shown here include enclosed spaces that are above grade and an extension of interior space. There are four types of this type of projection:

1. Bay Windows – A structure with windows that projects from the façade of a building, starting at or below grade and is unlimited in height, and is not intended for the display of merchandise or services;
2. Oriel Windows – A structure with windows that projects from the façade of a building, does not touch grade, and is not intended for the display of merchandise or services;
3. Show Windows – A structure with windows that projects from the façade of a building, is limited in height to the ground floor, and is intended for the display of merchandise or services; and,
4. Towers – A structure that projects from the façade of the building and extends above the roofline of the building to which it is attached.

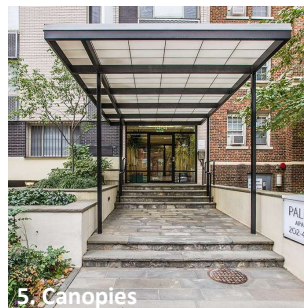
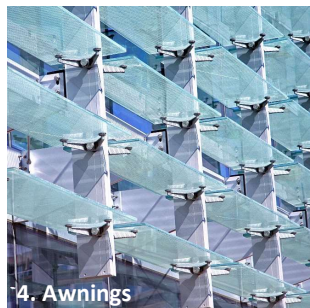
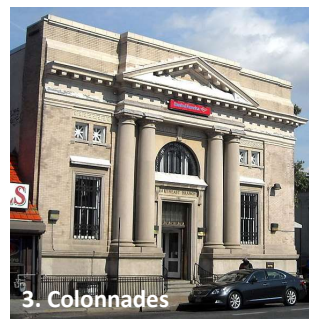
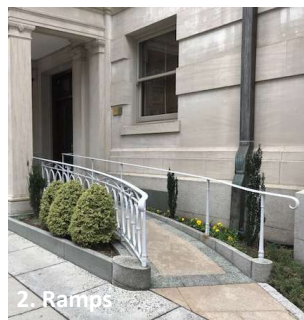
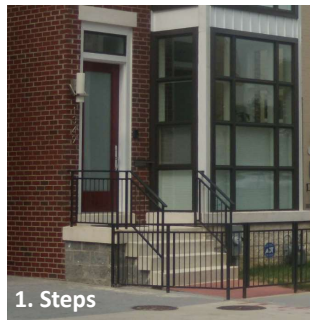
Above Grade: Porches, Balconies, and Architectural Trim



Additional types of above grade projections also allowed with the intent to embellish a building:

1. Porches - An above-grade structure with or without a roof that is open on all sides of the projection over the lot line or building restriction line, vertical elements connecting the floor to a roof (if it has one), and is accessible from the attached building;
2. Balconies – a platform that projects from the wall of a building, is enclosed by a railing, and is accessible from the attached building; and,
3. Architectural Trim – cornices, pilasters, roof overhangs, water tables, bases, etc.

Above Grade: Steps, Ramps, Canopies, Awnings, Marquees, and Colonnades



Additional types of above grade projections also allowed with the intent to embellish a building:

1. Steps – A change in elevation, consisting of one or more risers.
2. Ramps – A walking surface that has a running slope steeper than a 5%.
3. Colonnades – A series of columns placed at regular intervals that supports a structure above.
4. Awnings – A lightweight frame structure over which a covering is attached; provides weather protection, identity or decoration; is partially or wholly supported by a building; and, located on porches and over doors, windows, or show windows.
5. Canopies – A permanent structure of rigid construction over which a covering is attached; provides weather protection, identity, or decoration; is structurally independent or supported by attachment to a building on one or more sides; and, located over doors, windows, or show windows.
6. Marquees – A canopy with a roof that is sloped less than 25 degrees, supported directly from a building, and provides cover for an entrance.



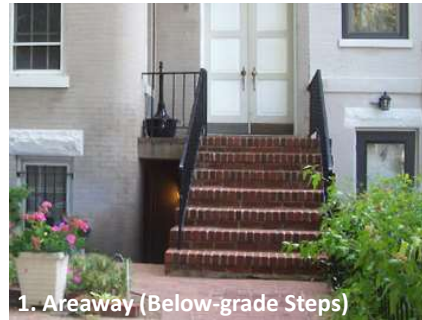
#### Below Grade: Areaways and Vaults



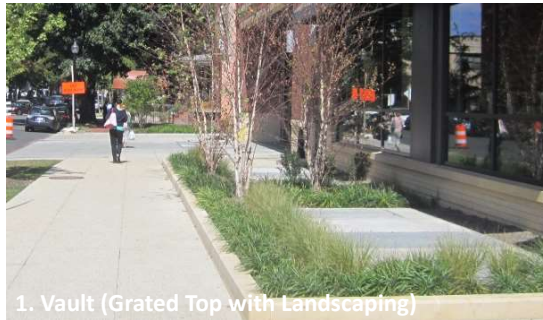
1. Areaway (Window Well)



1. Vault (Solid Top)



1. Areaway (Below-grade Steps)



1. Vault (Grated Top with Landscaping)

The projection regulations also allow subsurface projections into the public right-of-way. These are projections that are entirely below grade, barely or not visible from the street, and associated with the function of a building. There are two types of subsurface projections allowed:

1. Areaways – below grade projections that are open to the sky, allowing light and access to basements and cellars (window wells and below-grade steps); and,
2. Vaults – below grade projections that have solid or grated (with landscape shielding) tops and used to house utility equipment, access to areaways, storage or readily moved personal property and equipment, sales or office space, fuel tanks, vehicle parking, ducts, pipes or wiring, air shafts, housing of fans or other similar items which can be removed or relocated if a vault space is removed.

## The Regulations: Projection Amounts Depend on Zoning, Street Width, and Landscape-“Public Parking”

| DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SAFETY CODE SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS AND PROVISIONS RELATIVE TO PROJECTIONS AND ENCROACHMENTS BEYOND BUILDING LINES  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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Things to keep in mind . . .



**Window Projections – Minimum Widths**



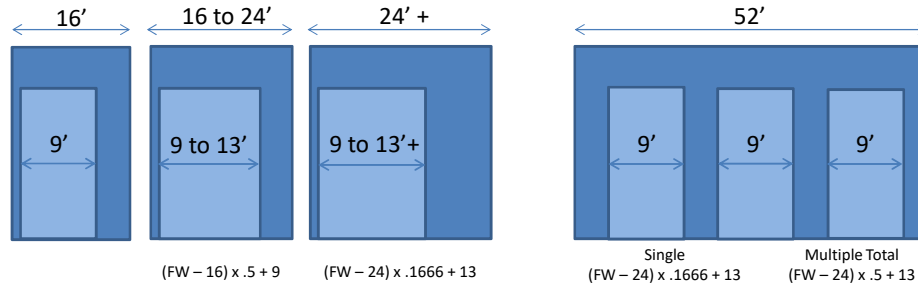
There are several specific requirements to be aware of when considering projection allowances:

1. There is a 16' minimum façade width requirement before any window projections and towers are allowed; balconies and porches are not subject to this minimum façade width requirement; and,
2. Window projections are required to have a minimum 9' width.



## Things to keep in mind . . .

Widths and number of bay windows are determined by width of the building facade



### SINGLE PROJECTIONS

**Facades 16' Wide**  
Minimum width for bay window projection; single projection of 9' allowed

**Facades 16 to 24' Wide**  
Increase 6" for every foot of increase over 16' and up to 24'

**Facades Over 24' Wide**  
Increase 2" for every foot of increase over 24'

### MULTIPLE PROJECTIONS

**Facades 24' Wide**  
Minimum width for multiple bay window projection

**Facades Over 24' Wide**  
Total width of all projections to increase 6" for every foot over 24'

Allowances for the width of bay windows, oriel windows, and towers have been designed to ensure that projections: read as secondary elements within a building's overall form; create visual interest and articulation of building facades; and introduce an intermediary architectural scale between that of the overall building mass and the scale of a person. This is achieved by calculating the maximum width allowed for a single projection and the maximum aggregate width allowed for all projections based on the width of a building at the lot line. That total width of a single projection increases at a rate of 2" for every foot of building width, while the total aggregate width of all projections increases at a width of 6" for every foot of building width. The effect is that wider buildings are allowed a greater aggregate width of all windows that can only be realized through multiple single projections. These regulations are specifically designed to incentivize multiple smaller projections over a single, more monolithic projection.

Things to keep in mind . . .

Balconies and porches unlimited in width unless connected to bay, oriel, or show windows.



Independent balconies and windows on the same floor are required to be separated.



Balconies connected to bay windows count toward the allowed width of bay windows.



Independent balcony allowances do not specify minimum or maximum width.

There are other allowances in the code that ensure building projections contribute to varied, differentiated embellishments that further articulate building forms:

1. Porches on a building façade that also have window projections at the same floor have their width counted toward the width allowed for projecting windows; and,
2. Balconies connected to projecting windows at the same floor have their width count toward with width allowed for projecting windows.

Things to keep in mind . . .

Minimum clearances to curb applies to all projections and is based on street width:

|                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| <i>40' to less than 50'</i>     | <i>6'</i>  |
| <i>50' to less than 60'</i>     | <i>8'</i>  |
| <i>60 to and including 80'</i>  | <i>10'</i> |
| <i>80' to and including 90'</i> | <i>12'</i> |
| <i>More than 90'</i>            | <i>15'</i> |

All projections are prohibited on segments of nine streets listed in the regulations.

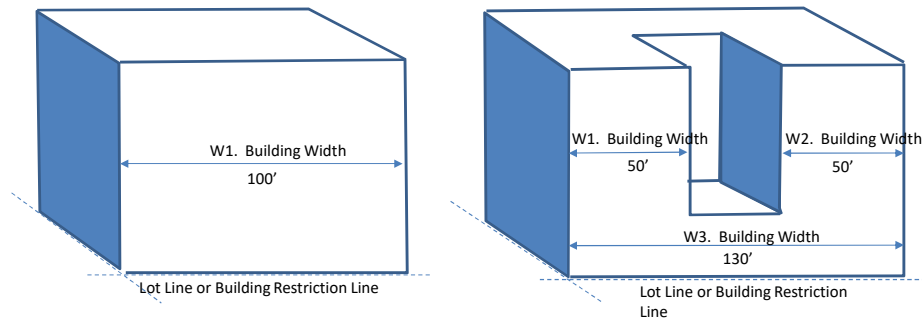
No projections allowed on street less than 60' in width unless otherwise specified (ie. steps, water tables, sills, etc.).



Additional restrictions include prohibitions on all projections for certain streets identified in the projection regulations and limits on streets less than 60' wide. Allowances must also comply with minimum distances from the curb, as shown here.



### Calculating building width



Allowances continue to evolve and require clarification in response to architectural trends and best practices. The diagrams here illustrate a recently adopted clarification that explains the definition of floor-by-floor calculation of building widths. This method is used for determining allowable widths of window projections, on a floor-by-floor basis, when portions of a single building are not built up against the lot line or building restriction line.

## What's Next?



There is a long and rich history of evolving building projection regulations incentivizing urban design goals for the city's public space and its users. As our city adapts to changes in population, climate, architectural innovation and construction trends, is there a need to refine and update our projection regulations?

How can we better leverage building projections as a tool to protect the city's long-term interests, encourage a more predictable regulatory and permitting process, and guide the character and usability of the city's public space?