

DESIGN GUIDELINES**FOR COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND
MIXED-USE BUILDINGS****WALL MATERIALS**

Original wall materials such as brick, stone and terra cotta should be repaired and maintained. Dry-vit and other imitation stucco (EIFS) or siding materials should all be avoided. Metal siding or panels, mansard canopies, and other types of “false fronts” should be removed. The original materials of your building were selected to complement its design and overall appearance. Adding non-original siding materials and “false fronts” not only detracts from the building’s appearance, but can damage the wall structure behind.

MASONRY

When individual pieces of brick, stone or terra cotta are beyond repair, they should be replaced to match the originals in terms of size, color, finish and texture. Masonry surfaces should be properly tuckpointed to avoid moisture seepage and excessive wear on the masonry. Mortar and grout should match the originals in terms of color, texture, consistency and joint profile. Portland cement should never be used as mortar, since it is harder than the original masonry and can cause serious damage. Masonry should never be sandblasted, since this also causes serious damage to the material. Masonry should be cleaned using the least aggressive method possible (such as low velocity water, steam or chemical cleaning) after conducting tests on inconspicuous areas.



- **DO** repair or replace original building materials with matching materials
- **DO** remove non-original siding materials, “false fronts,” and mansard roofs or canopies
- **DO** tuckpoint masonry with mortar that matches the original in color, consistency and joint profile
- **DO** clean masonry with the gentlest-possible method, such as with low-velocity water, steam or chemical cleaning

- **DON'T** use materials not otherwise found on the building
- **DON'T** use imitation stucco or siding materials such as Dry-vit, aluminum siding or metal panels
- **DON'T** add “false fronts” or mansard roofs that cover or obscure the facade of the building
- **DON'T** sandblast, high-power waterblast, or tuckpoint masonry with portland cement



- **DO** restore the original size of any filled in or covered over upper-story window openings and repair/replace windows in "like-kind" to match
- **DO** remove exterior-mounted security grilles and install new security grilles inside the storefront if possible
- **DON'T** fill in or cover over upper-story window openings
- **DON'T** install security grilles on the exterior of the buildings unless they are concealed or as unobtrusive as possible



DECORATIVE FEATURES

Original decorative features such as cast-iron piers, terra-cotta masonry, ceramic tile, pressed metal ornament, wrought iron grille work and cast stone should be repaired and maintained, and not obscured by changes to the building. These features greatly add to the uniqueness and attractiveness of your building. Missing features or deteriorated features beyond repair should be replaced to match whenever possible.

DOORS AND UPPER-STORY WINDOWS

New windows and doors should be sized to fit within existing openings, and not require the openings to be partially infilled. All broken and missing windows should be replaced with new glass, and window frames and sashes should be repaired. Storefront doors should have glass panels and be commercial-looking in character. Please note that work done to wood windows and doors in residential portions of the building is generally ineligible for a rebate and will not be permitted in the program.

SECURITY GRILLES

Security grilles, screens and enclosures should be as inconspicuous as possible and compatible with other elements of the storefront. If grilles are used, they should be installed on the inside face of doors and windows. All exposed portions

of the grilles, screens or enclosures should be painted. Less obtrusive security devices and alarm systems are preferred alternative security measures.

LIGHTING

The use of accent lighting to illuminate building facades is highly encouraged and may be done with projecting or concealed fixtures. Such fixtures should be as inconspicuous as possible and compatible with the building's design. In general, the entire facade should not be washed in bright light, but lighting should be used to accentuate individual building features.



HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic buildings are important visual "anchors" in commercial districts and often establish the architectural character of these areas. Facades and storefronts of historic buildings should be repaired and well maintained. Original features and materials such as bulkheads, transoms, window framing systems, and cast-iron piers should all be maintained. Deteriorated original features should be repaired whenever possible, and missing features should be replaced to match the originals. Projects involving historic buildings must adhere to *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*.



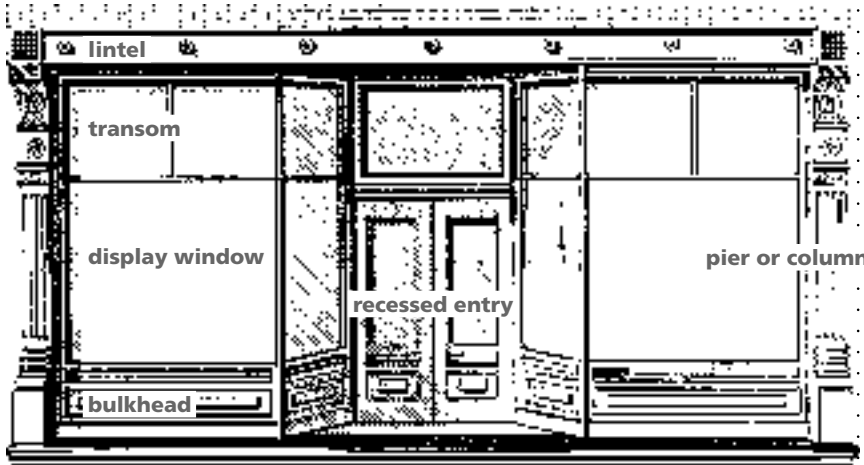
- **DO** use *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* for historic buildings (available from City staff)

STOREFRONTS

The overall pattern of storefronts and piers/columns should be maintained as much as possible. Storefronts should not be enclosed or filled in, and window openings should not be reduced in size. If original openings have previously been altered or filled in, the openings should be restored to their original size and configuration.

In general, **storefronts** should incorporate such typical architectural features as recessed entries, display windows, and bulkheads, in keeping with the original design of the building. Bulkheads (the low wall area under a storefront window) should generally be no more than 24 inches high. Storefronts in the same building should have a consistent design and relate to the entire building as a whole.

Storefront windows should accommodate window displays and allow views into the retail space of the building. The large undivided sheets of glass typical of display windows should be maintained. Sheets of glass should generally be no less than five feet wide. In many older buildings, transom windows were part of the original storefront design and should also be maintained. Clear glass should be used for storefront windows; glass block and tinted, spandrel, mirrored or opaque glass should all be avoided. Window framing systems should be as thin as possible, and glass should not be deeply recessed into the frame. Framing systems should generally be painted dark colors, and anodized bronze and natural aluminum finishes should be avoided.



- **DO** keep/restore the original height and display window area (the height and width of the storefront opening) of storefronts which have been filled in or covered over
- **DO** keep/replace storefront windows with large sheets of clear glass to allow views into the retail space
- **DO** keep/replace transoms (the small windows above a door or window) and recessed entries
- **DO** keep/replace bulkheads (the low wall area under a storefront window)



- **DON'T** change the building's overall pattern and spacing of piers/columns and storefront openings
- **DON'T** reduce the size, cover over, block or fill in original storefront openings
- **DON'T** use sheets of glass with less than a five-foot width in storefront display windows
- **DON'T** use solid doors, glass block or tinted, opaque or mirrored glass
- **DON'T** add bulkheads (the low wall area under a storefront window) more than 24 inches high

SIGNS

The major purpose of a commercial sign is to identify a business and its merchandise and services.

Signs should not be large and overbearing or cluttered with excessive information. They should be simple and coordinated with other neighboring signs. Randomly located signs, signs containing too much information, too many signs, and signs that are too large for individual shops and compact neighborhood shopping areas are often hard to read and easily missed by pedestrian shoppers and drivers. Such signs can give local shopping areas a cluttered, confusing and unattractive image. Simple signs with a consistent size and location from one storefront to the next make locating businesses easier. Moveable, flashing LED signs should also be avoided.

Signs on the same building should have a consistent **location**, size, and overall pattern and be compatible with one another.

Signs should be constructed out of durable high-quality **materials**, and should be kept well maintained. Plywood, plastic and Styrofoam should not be used.

Signs may be **illuminated** using external lighting fixtures such as gooseneck lamps, but the fixtures should be simple, unobtrusive and not obscure the graphics of the sign. Signs with internal illumination should have opaque face panels with routed letters, so that only the letters are backlit (rather than the entire face of the sign).

Types of Signs. Signs with individual letters (e.g., channel, cutout, and neon letters) are strongly encouraged, and individual letters should generally not be more than 30 inches high. Large projecting



- **DON'T** mount signs in areas where they cover up windows or decorative features of the building
- **DON'T** size or locate signs so that they extend above, below or beyond storefront openings, sign panels or "sign bands" (the wall area above the storefront window)
- **DON'T** install roof signs, signs with moving or flashing parts, or projecting signs that project more than five feet from the face of the building or extend above the roof line
- **DON'T** use letters more than 30 inches high
- **DON'T** clutter the building with too many signs, affix paper signs to the storefront windows or use materials that are not high quality and durable, such as plywood, plastic or Styrofoam
- **DON'T** use freestanding signs or poles more than 15 feet high or that project over the public right-of-way

- **DO** establish a consistent location and size for all signs on the same building
- **DO** use neon or simple external lighting like gooseneck fixtures when illuminating signs; for backlit signs, only illuminate the letters of the sign (rather than the entire face of the sign)
- **DO** conceal electrical transformer boxes, conduit and electrical raceways
- **DO** reuse and restore historic signs when possible



signs can overwhelm a building and should generally be avoided. Small projecting signs and banners, however, can create visual interest and are encouraged. Freestanding monument signs should be simple in design and not exceed 15 feet in height or project over the public right-of-way.

Signs for prior businesses, illegal signs, roof signs, billboards and unused structural sign supports should all be removed. Portable signs and large signs on upper facades should be avoided. Rooftop signs on or above the parapet or cornice of buildings, billboards and other outdoor advertising signs painted or mounted on structures should be strictly avoided.

Temporary signs should advertise short-term sale promotions only, and paper signs should generally be avoided. Temporary signs should not be placed on any part of the building except in display windows, and should not occupy more than 25% of a window area. It is easier for shoppers to read a few simple, well-placed sale signs than to try to read a display window cluttered with many signs.

The reuse and restoration of **historic signs** is strongly encouraged. If historic signs are to be retained, they should be refurbished and restored. Lettering may be modified to reflect the current business.

Electrical transformer boxes, conduit, and raceways should all be concealed from public view. If a raceway cannot be mounted internally (on the inside of the building), the exposed metal surfaces of the raceway should be finished to match the background wall or integrated into the overall design of the sign. Unused electrical equipment should be removed.

AWNINGS

Awnings should be mounted in a **location** that respects the original design of the building, such as storefront bays, piers and columns, decorative moldings, and window and door patterns. In general, awnings should not obscure piers, columns, and decorative features such as terra-cotta ornament and metal grillwork. Awnings should be designed to project over individual window and door openings and not be a continuous feature extending over masonry piers or arches or up the facade of the building. Awnings should be mounted within the actual window or door opening, on the wood or metal framing (not on the wall surrounding the opening). In storefronts with transom windows, awnings were often mounted on the horizontal framing bar separating the lower and upper portions of the window. Awnings should have a minimum clearance of 7'-6" above the sidewalk.

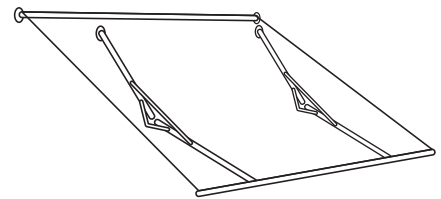
Types of Awnings. Retractable awnings and shed-type awnings are strongly encouraged. Awnings without end panels are more transparent and allow better views into the storefronts. Awnings should project out at least 3 feet and not be steeply pitched. Convex or box awnings should generally not be used; convex (bullnose or domed) awnings may, however, be appropriate for some locations with round-arched window and door openings. Awnings should be of woven cloth fabric, not vinyl, metal or rubber. "Bubble" awnings or awnings that extend up the front of a building, that cover decorative features, or that have an exaggerated scale, should not be used. Elongated bullnose entrance canopies and canopies with sidewalk supports should not be used.

Illuminated Awnings. "Bubble" awnings and other types of awnings where the entire awning is backlit or illuminated should not be used.

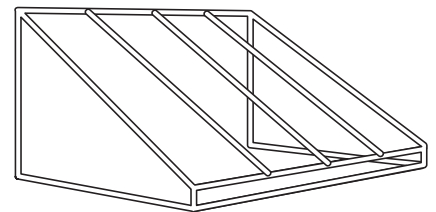
Signs on awnings should be on the horizontal valance (or awning flap) of the awning. Signs may also be on the main panels of the awning, but such signs should not cover the entire awning with words, phone numbers, etc.



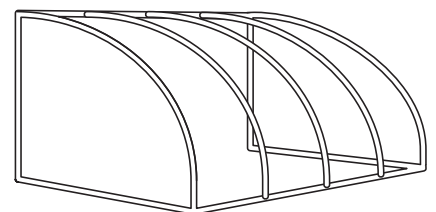
RETRACTABLE AWNING—Encouraged



SHED-TYPE AWNING—Encouraged



BUBBLE AWNING—Not Acceptable



- **DO** mount awnings within individual bays or storefront openings
- **DO** use retractable or traditional shed-type awnings; for storefront windows with transoms, awnings should be mounted on transom bars (the awning flap) or small logos on the awning itself
- **DO** use awnings of woven cloth or linen fabric, and limit signs on awnings to the valance (the awning flap) or small logos on the awning itself

- **DON'T** use awnings that extend up the building wall, cover decorative features, or stretch continuously across masonry piers or arches
- **DON'T** use "bubble" awnings, exaggerated-shaped awnings, elongated bullnose entrance canopies or canopy supports attached to the sidewalk
- **DON'T** use metal, vinyl or rubber awnings, or awnings that are internally illuminated or covered with signs, phone numbers, etc.

CITY PERMIT INFORMATION

BUILDING PERMITS

Building permits are issued by the Department of Buildings, City Hall, Room 800, 121 North LaSalle Street, (312) 744-6479. Permits are required for all additions, alterations and new construction, as well as most types of repair work. For example, replacing windows or storefronts, or a change in the number of doors and windows, would all require a building permit; likewise, concrete and masonry work also requires a building permit. Building permits must be clearly displayed at the construction site.



Architectural drawings are not required for most facade-only improvements; in most instances a rough design sketch will suffice. In instances where a substantial amount of work is to be done such as structural changes, installation of new window framing, the change of the fire rating on a part of the facade, or a change in the size of windows, the Department of Buildings may, however, require a set of architectural drawings.

BARRICADE PERMITS

A permit is required for setting up a barricade for work. Tuckpointing and cleaning of brick masonry does not normally require a barricade permit. Barricade permits are issued by the Department of Transportation, Construction Compliance, City Hall, Room 802, 121 North LaSalle Street, (312) 744-4652.

AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

Awnings or canopies that extend two feet or more over the public right-of-way require a permit from the Department of Revenue, Compensation Unit, 333 South State Street, Room 310, (312) 747-9035. This permit can only be issued after the City Council has passed a special ordinance for the awning or canopy (allow at least 12 weeks for issuance of the permit). A permit for an awning or canopy that extends less than two feet over the public right-of-way can be issued by the Department of Buildings.

ELECTRICAL PERMITS

Electrical permits are required for light fixtures, neon signs, and lighted window displays. Electrical permits are issued by the Department of Buildings, Electrical Inspections, City Hall, Room 803, 121 North LaSalle Street, (312) 744-3460.

For more information about City permits, contact
Business Express at (312) 744-CITY.