

Building Facades

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE H-1 DISTRICT

A commercial building’s façade—its front or principle exterior wall—contains most of the features that contribute architectural character. The façade generally consists of two main parts:

- the storefront at ground level and
- the upper stories



PARTS OF A COMMERCIAL FAÇADE

LOWER FAÇADE: ground floor commercial space

STOREFRONT: transparent opening into the building

1. **Display window:** permits view of merchandise; primary source of daylight
2. **Bulkhead:** supports display window
3. **Transom:** additional source of daylight; limited ventilation
4. **Recessed entry:** sheltered and inviting entrance to ground floor space
5. **Storefront doors:** access to ground floor space; light and ventilation
6. **Entry paving:** transition from public to private space, business identity
7. **Pier:** supports upper façade; defines limits of storefront
8. **Storefront cornice:** decorative treatment of lintel creating storefront opening

9. **Upper floor entry:** direct access from sidewalk to upper floor spaces

UPPER FAÇADE: upper floor space

10. **Masonry wall:** building enclosure; gives appearance of solidity

11. **Brick detailing:** adds visual interest to masonry wall

12. **Upper floor windows:** light and ventilation for upper floor uses

13. **Lintel:** structural support over a masonry opening; may have decorative treatment

14. **Parapet:** hides sloping roof; provides skyline identity

15. **Cornice:** decorative treatment of parapet for building identity

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Building facades make up the “face” of a commercial street.

Both the upper and lower facades are important to the character of a commercial building.

Durable materials and refined detailing on commercial buildings help express the civic character and economic importance of downtown Roanoke.

Buildings that reflect their age and style are an important part of Roanoke’s history.

GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION

- **Recommended** actions or treatments are indicated by ✓.
- Actions or treatments **not recommended** are indicated by X.

Retaining Important Features

✓ Identify the architectural features and materials of a building’s façade that are important to its character before undertaking any alterations. Important features include those that:

DEFINITIONS

Bulkhead: The solid panel at the bottom of a storefront that supports a display window.

Consolidate: To make a deteriorated element solid through the application of a binding materials, such as epoxy.

Cornice: Decorated trim work placed along the top of a wall or over an opening.

Façade: The front or principle exterior face of a building.

Lintel: A horizontal beam over an opening which carries the weight of the structure above.

Parapet: The portion of an exterior wall that extends above the roofline.

Pier: A vertical structural support, usually rectangular.

Rehabilitation: Making possible a compatible new use for a building through repair, alterations, or additions while preserving portions or features that are important to the building’s historic or architectural character.

Storefront: The ground-floor portion of a commercial building that contains the entrance and large display windows.

Transom: A fixed or operable sash above a door or window.

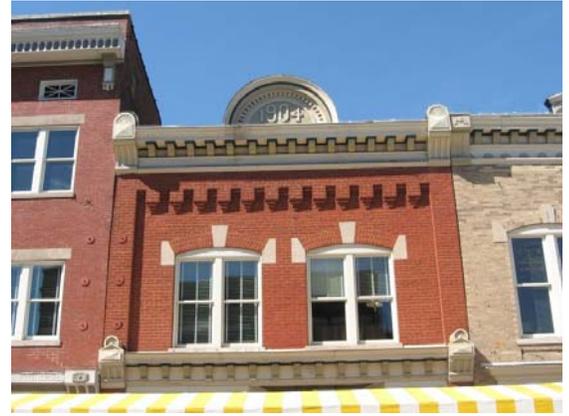
- survive from the building's original construction,
- are distinctive or have architectural interest,
- are examples of quality craftsmanship, and
- would make the building less attractive or unrecognizable if removed.



The terra cotta capitals and sheet-metal cornice above and the masonry arches and concrete sills below are original, distinctive, possessed of architectural interest, and would lessen the appearance of the building if they were removed or concealed. They and similar façade features of other buildings should be identified and protected during remodeling.



- ✓ Consult old photographs, construction drawings, and descriptive building records and look at similar buildings in the district to identify your building's historic features.
- ✓ Retain important features and evaluate their condition to determine necessary repairs or appropriate rehabilitations.
- ✓ Employ the services of experience professionals, as necessary, to evaluate the appropriateness of repairs, treatments, and alterations.

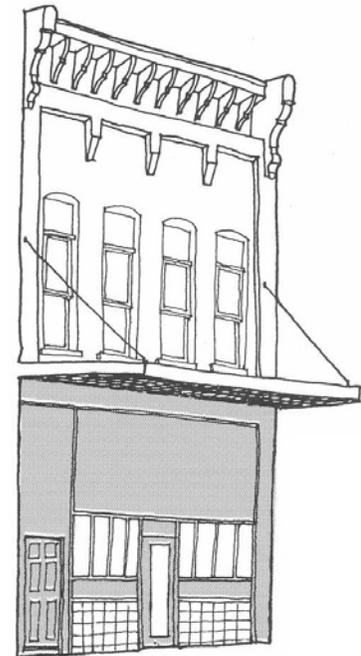


Corbelled brickwork, sheet-metal cornices, and ornamentation should be retained and preserved.

Removing Inappropriate Treatments

X Do not use alterations, such as cover-up materials, oversized signs, or extreme color schemes, that:

- damage or obscure characteristic features of the façade,
- change or destroy the traditional relationship between the upper and lower portions of the façade,
- call undue attention to the façade, and
- are out of character with neighboring buildings.



The use of cover-up materials, uniform paint color, and a canopy that extends across the building's full width make this storefront appear cut off from the rest of the building façade.

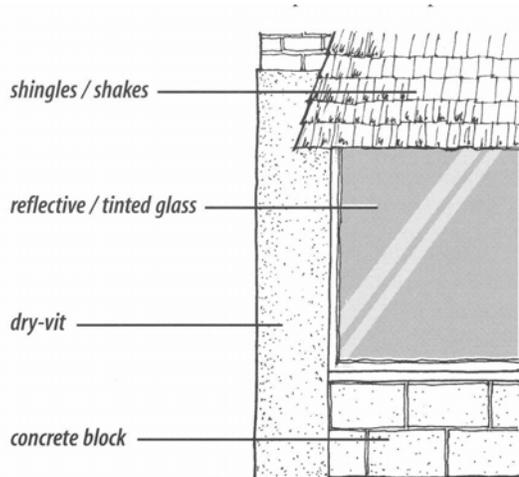
TECHNICAL RESOURCES

The National Park Service **Preservation Briefs** are an excellent source of information on appropriate preservation techniques. They may be accessed electronically at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>

✓ Remove inappropriate façade treatments if removal will not damage building surfaces.

✗ Do not use of the following inappropriate materials:

- wood shingles or shakes,
- wood, metal, or vinyl clapboard,
- plywood,
- permastone or other simulated stone,
- dryvit or other simulated stucco,
- reflective or heavily tinted “privacy” glass, and
- common concrete block, painted or unpainted.

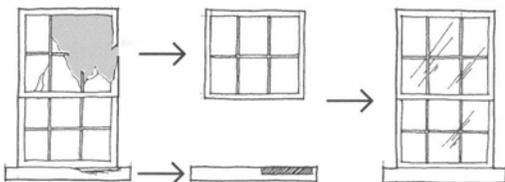


Materials not routinely found in early commercial buildings or that have a rough or unfinished appearance are inappropriate for downtown commercial buildings.

Repairing Damage

✓ Repair deteriorated materials and features by patching, reinforcing or consolidating instead of removing or replacing them.

✓ Replace important materials and features that cannot be repaired with new or reconditioned elements of the same design and material.



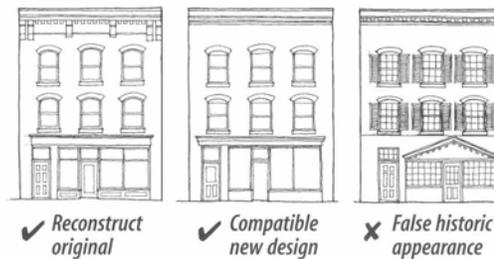
Appropriate repairs to this window include replacing broken or missing parts of the upper sash and using epoxy filler to consolidate the deteriorated sill.

Rehabilitation and Other Alterations

✓ Rehabilitate rather than demolish a building with a damaged façade, by either

- reconstructing the historic appearance if there is sufficient evidence to do so or
- designing a new façade that is compatible with existing features.

✓ Recognize a building as a product of its own time; do not try to give a building the false appearance of an earlier historic period.



When a building façade is severely damaged, appropriate alternatives include reconstructing its historic appearance or designing a compatible new façade. Giving the façade a false historical appearance of an earlier period, however, is not appropriate.

✓ Consider the building’s original features when adding a balcony.

✓ Choose appropriate treatments of alterations that will not damage characteristic features or materials and are in keeping with the overall design or appearance of a building.

✓ Keep the design of a storefront subordinate to the overall façade. Do not allow ground-floor commercial space to overwhelm the façade as a whole.



Signs and color schemes that extend beyond the first floor overwhelm the façade as a whole and should not be used.