

# STOREFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES



Historic commercial storefronts in Louisville are important to the establishment of the historic character of a district. In most historic commercial buildings, a facade includes several key character-defining features. These standard elements are found on historic commercial buildings throughout commercial districts, and collectively create a recognizable and repetitious visual pattern. Key character-defining features of a commercial building facade should be preserved. Where features have deteriorated or need to be rebuilt, key elements to consider include large display windows and doors, transoms, relatively thin framing elements, a cornice element, low bulkheads, and tile entry flooring. Some of these elements, as well as key characteristics of 19th and 20th century storefronts in Louisville are identified below, with guidelines to follow.

## Storefront Elements

- A. Upper Facade
- B. Lower Facade
- C. Storefront
- D. Cornice
- E. Upper-Floor Window
- F. Sign Band
- G. Transom
- H. Display Window
- I. Entry
- J. Piers
- K. Bulkhead

### 19th Century Storefront



### 20th Century Storefront





Preserve key character-defining features of a historic commercial storefront.

**SF.1 Preserve key character-defining features of a historic commercial storefront.**

- » Retain all historic storefront elements, including historically significant later alterations that are historic in their own right.
- » Retain an original opening on a historic storefront. Transitions from one storefront to another should be clearly defined.
- » Maintain the commercial character of the storefront, even if the use changes. Blinds or insulated curtains may be added for privacy and thermal performance.
- » Do not remove a historic material from a storefront, as each material contributes significantly to a storefront's architectural character.
- » Do not add an element to a storefront that has no historic precedent, such as the installation of coach lanterns, false mansard designs, small-paned windows, or inoperable shutters.
- » Do not add a false front, false story, or a pent eave to the roof of a commercial building.
- » Do not use a storefront design element that is historically inappropriate such as small-pane windows or a colonial door.
- » Do not use rough-textured wood siding or simulated masonry.

**SF.2 Repair an altered storefront to its original design when appropriate.**

- » Maintain the original scale, proportion, and organization of architectural elements when repairing a historic storefront.
- » Use a material for repair that reflects the style, color, texture, and detailing of the original material.

**Repetition Creates Streetscape Rhythm**



Maintain the original scale, proportion, and organization of architectural elements when repairing a historic storefront. On the left, regular and repeated placement of storefronts, piers, and upper-level windows combine to create streetscape rhythm. On the right, unsympathetic window and storefront alterations disrupt this rhythm and are inappropriate.

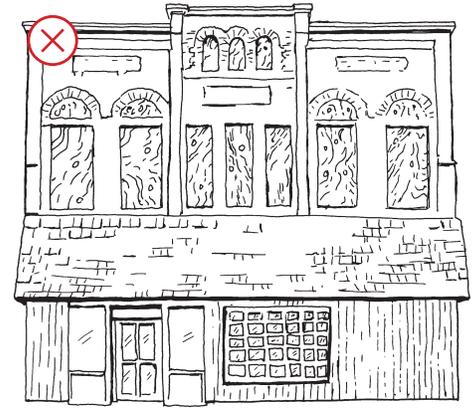
**SF.3 Reconstruct an altered storefront to its original design.**

- » Use historic, pictorial, and physical documentation to construct a historic storefront when the original is missing.
- » Where extensive deterioration requires complete reconstruction, use the original form and detail of a storefront as a model to convey the same appearance.

**SF.4 If a historic storefront must be replaced, replace it to be consistent with the historic location.**

- » Where evidence does not exist, a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material, and color of the historic building and district is appropriate.
- » Design a replacement storefront to be compatible with and complementary to neighboring storefronts, but to also be recognizable of its own era.
- » Use historic materials where historic storefronts must be replaced in part or in whole. Cast iron, limestone, or wood are appropriate materials for storefront replacement. Wood or stone panels are appropriate for bulkheads replacement, and cast iron, wood, or sheet metal are appropriate for cornice replacement.
- » Do not install an inappropriately-scaled sign that obscures or damages a surviving storefront feature.
- » Incorporate a facade alteration that has attained historic or architectural significance, but is not original, into a new storefront design or renovation.
- » Do not recreate a conjectural historic design if there is insufficient physical or documentary evidence.
- » Do not use a rustic finish on masonry that will simulate aged masonry.

**Alterations Disguise Character**



*Reconstruct an altered storefront to its original design.*



Preserve the original doors and windows on the primary facade.

### Emphasize Transparency



Preserve the original doors and windows on the primary facade. The photo above shows the historic use of expansive plate-glass windows that were used to advertise goods to passersby. The bottom diagram shows how an inappropriate alteration reduces a storefront's transparency, diminishing its historic character.

## Storefront Transparency and Entrances

The transparency of the commercial storefront and the location of the entrance are key-defining features of a historic storefront. The entrance should be clearly marked and preserved. Traditionally, the transparency created large display windows, allowed sunlight to illuminate the interior store, and created a human scale for pedestrians passing through. The transparency and entrance should be preserved wherever possible.

### SF.5 Preserve the original doors and windows on the primary facade.

- » Maintain the transparency of the storefront by maintaining original window and door openings, with large sheets of glass and doors that are in character with the preservation district.

### SF.6 Repair an altered door or window to its original design.

- » Use historic photographs when determining the original character of the doors and windows.
- » Where evidence does not exist, use a contemporary interpretation of traditional windows and doors, that are compatible with neighboring storefronts.

### SF.7 Replace a historic door or window on a traditional storefront to be consistent with the historic context.

- » Use large sheets of clear glass to replace a storefront display window.
- » Emphasize the transparent character of storefronts. Generally, 60% of the wall surface at the sidewalk level should be transparent.
- » Use a replacement door that reflects the storefront's original character. A door should have large glass panels and be made of wood, painted steel, aluminum, or other material that reflects the style, color, texture, and detailing of the historic material.
- » Use a replacement door that exhibits a visual quality and composition similar to a historic storefront door in the district.
- » Do not apply reflective or insulating film to window glass.
- » Do not use smoked, tinted, low-E, or reflective glass on a building facade that can be seen from the public right-of-way.

### SF.8 Install a screen or storm door with a simple, narrow-frame design that does not conceal or distract from the historic door.

- » Paint or finish a metal screen or storm door to match the inner door.
- » Install an interior storm door if possible.

### SF.9 If given the chance between a primary and secondary entrance, install a storm door on a secondary entrance.

### SF.10 Install security bars of simple design that do not obscure the architectural character of the original doors or damage historic fabric.

- » Mount commercial security bars inside the glass and so that they can retract out of sight during business hours.
- » Paint security bars an unobtrusive color that does not detract from the historic door.

## Storefront Awnings

On some storefronts, awnings represent a key character-defining feature of a historic commercial building. Historic awnings should be preserved. New awnings may be added in a manner that retains the character of a historic building.

### SF.11 Preserve an original storefront awning.

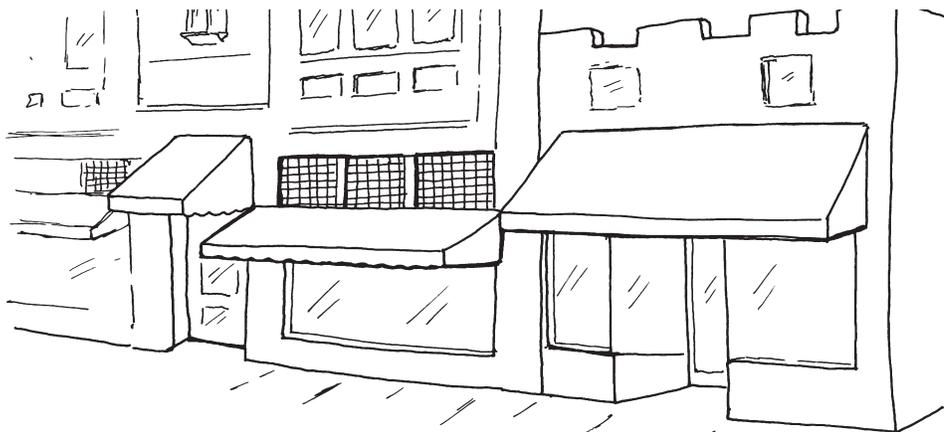
### SF.12 Repair an altered awning to its original design.

- » Use historic photographs when determining the original character of the awning.

### SF.13 Replace a historic awning on a traditional storefront to be consistent with the historic context.

- » Design an awning to complement existing architectural features. An awning should not overwhelm the facade.
- » Design an awning to be of matte-finish, weather-proofed fabric of traditional form, and of a color that complements the building.
- » Attach an awning between the window display area and the sign-board or second-floor window sill. An awning should be attached below the transom line where historic prism glass is present.
- » Install an awning so that the valance has significant clearance (typically about 7'6" above the sidewalk).
- » Do not damage the historic structure when installing an awning. Hardware should be limited to that which is required for structural stability and should be driven into mortar joints, not masonry. Install the awning so that it can be removed.
- » Do not use fiberglass, metal, plastic, or back lit awnings that have contemporary shapes.

## Awnings Offer Shelter and Signage in Historic Commercial Districts



### Installation Tips:

- » Select awnings of weatherproofed canvas in a traditional form.
- » Choose a solid or striped color.
- » Attach at the cornice line (right) or below reflective-glass transoms (left).
- » Do not damage the wall during attachment.
- » Limit signage to the bottom flaps.

