



**City of Buffalo Heritage Preservation Advisory Board**  
**Downtown Building Design Guidelines**  
**April 2025**

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# Introduction to Downtown Building Design Guidelines

## Preserving the Past, Shaping the Future

As we develop the Downtown Building Design Guidelines, it is essential to honor the historic structures that form the foundation of Buffalo's downtown character. The buildings constructed between 1895 and 1917 have withstood the test of time, telling the story of our community's growth and resilience.

27 Central Ave - 1895 (The Park Hotel)



2 Division St E - 1888 (Fogerty Building)



1 Division St W - 1899 (MSP Brewing Co)



25 1st Ave NE - 1902 (Sternberg Building)



32 Central Ave - 1902 (Post Office Purity Dairy)



122 Central Ave - 1903 (Masons Building)



10 Central Ave - 1913 (Beutner Drug)



22 Division St E - 1915 (Schmidt Drug)



2 1sr Ave NE - 1917 (National Bank Building)



What gives these buildings their timeless appeal? True to their era, they are constructed of brick, with upper facades that range from simple designs to more ornate cornices. Their evenly spaced, medium-to-large window openings are often accented with decorative window hoods. Traditional storefronts feature large display windows, transom windows, and recessed entries, all contributing to the inviting and historic character of downtown. These architectural details should serve as inspiration for new residential and commercial buildings, ensuring they complement and preserve the character of our community. By thoughtfully integrating preservation with modern needs, these guidelines will ensure that future development respects our architectural heritage while fostering a vibrant and sustainable downtown for generations to come.

## **Overview of Downtown Design Guidelines**

Storefront improvements do not have to be costly. Often, simple updates like a fresh coat of paint, a new sign, an awning, lighting fixtures, or flower boxes and planters can make a significant impact. Fortunately, many commercial buildings in downtown Buffalo have retained much of their unique architectural features. Grant funding now available through the City of Buffalo Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) can help property owners reverse previous alterations that may have diminished the building's original character or assist in making updates that support the historic aesthetic of downtown.

While these Downtown Design Guidelines offer a comprehensive reference, they are not meant to address every situation or resolve every unique issue. Instead, they provide foundational information about effective physical improvements, based on recommendations from the Minnesota State Heritage Preservation Commission, that have been proven to support downtown revitalization.

The Downtown Design Guidelines are designed to help property owners, building managers, preservation consultants, architects, contractors, and project reviewers apply the best practices to their projects. They are not intended to offer case-specific advice or address rare exceptions. Approaches that align with the Minnesota State Heritage Preservation Commission are labeled “Recommended or Encouraged,” while those that conflict are listed as “Not Recommended or Not Encouraged.”

These guidelines aim to preserve the authentic character of our historic buildings while providing inspiring examples for the design of future commercial and residential developments in the downtown and surrounding areas.



***Image: Looking south on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE***

## **Minnesota State Heritage Preservation Standards of Rehabilitation**

The Minnesota State Heritage Preservation Standards are neither technical nor prescriptive but are intended to promote responsible preservation practices that help protect our state's irreplaceable cultural resources. For example, they cannot, in and of themselves, be used to make essential decisions about which features of the historic building should be saved and which can be changed. But once a treatment is selected, the Standards provide philosophical consistency to the work. The following is a summary:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historical materials or alterations of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features should be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacements of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the mass, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

### **A note from the National Heritage Preservation Guidelines:**

While locally tailored guidelines are ideal, the National Park Service's *Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* can be highly effective and are often adopted by communities. However, as these guidelines are designed to apply to diverse contexts across the nation, they are intentionally broad and require thoughtful interpretation to fit local needs. (Reference: Page 95, National Heritage Preservation Guidelines)

## **Recommendations for Maintaining and Improving Your Property**

A range of property improvements, such as critical maintenance, repairs, rehabilitation, and the restoration of storefronts or facades, may be eligible for grant funding. Eligibility for all such activities is subject to review and approval by the Buffalo Heritage Preservation Advisory Board and Housing & Redevelopment Authority.

### **Eligible Improvements Include:**

1. **Signage** – Repair, removal, or replacement associated with property improvements.
2. **Awnings** – Installation or repair of fabric awnings in connection with property improvements.
3. **Storefront** – Removal of inappropriate coverings or additions; repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of display windows, transom windows, and lighting.
4. **Lighting** – Installation of exterior fixtures for signage and building lighting.
5. **Doors and Upper-Story Windows** – Repair, replacement, and rehabilitation; restoration of window sashes and exterior doors; installation of storm windows in conjunction with significant facade improvements.
6. **Painting** – Surface preparation, cleaning, and painting.
7. **Brick and Stone Masonry** – Structural repairs, cleaning, repointing, and painting.
8. **Architectural Metals** – Repair, cleaning, refinishing, painting, duplication, and restoration of exterior features such as cast iron or pressed tin.
9. **Exterior Woodwork** – Repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of windowsills, door frames, bulkheads, storefront cornices, roof cornices, window hoods, and decorative moldings.

### **Ineligible Improvements Include:**

1. Any activity that violates the local building code enforced by the City of Buffalo.
2. Work conducted on a property currently under a code violation.
3. Projects not part of the building's physical structure, such as exterior patio seating, sidewalk improvements, or movable elements.

## Signs, Awnings and Canopies

Signs hold as much importance today as they did in the 19th and early 20th centuries, remaining a vital component of storefronts. They have a significant impact on the overall image of our city as a well-designed sign leaves a strong impression on passersby, whether they are potential customers or visitors.

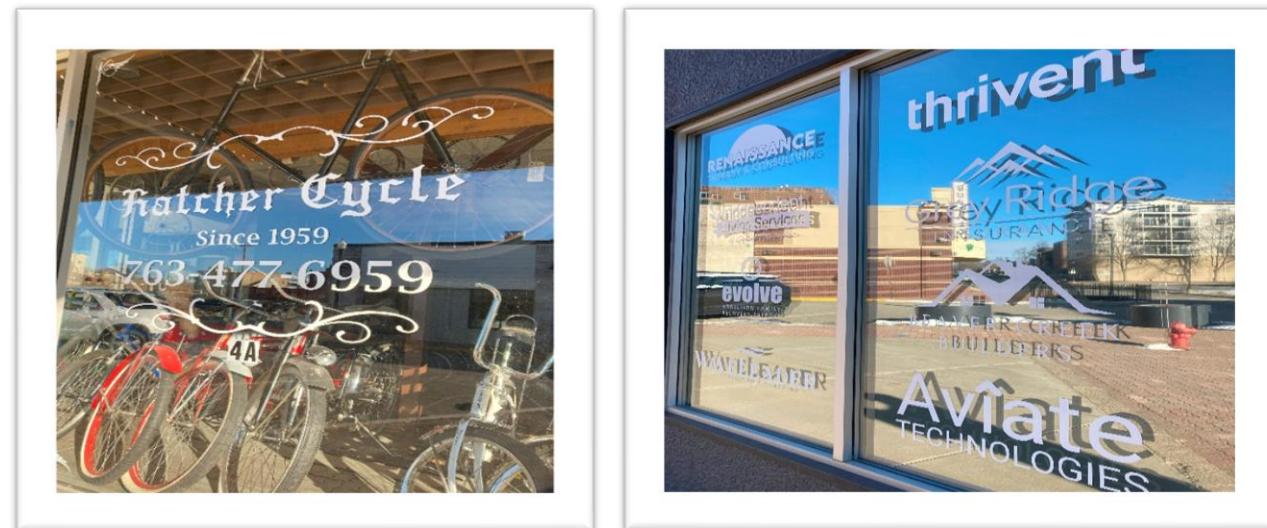
Simple, appropriately sized, and attractively designed signs, awnings, and canopies constructed from suitable materials and properly positioned can enhance both the business and the town's atmosphere. These elements can accentuate and complement the architecture and details of a building, while also serving as an effective advertisement. They boost curb appeal, encourage foot traffic, and foster a welcoming environment. Given that downtown's primary thoroughfares—Division Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Northeast, and Highway 25—serve as major arteries, it's essential for businesses to utilize signage that not only attracts shoppers but also increases awareness of their presence, contributing to the vibrancy and appeal of the area.

The following pages contain illustrations of proper examples of recommended sign types.

**Flush Signs** are designed to be viewed from a distance, typically when directly facing a building's façade or from across the street. Ideally, these signs should be positioned on an empty panel above a door or display windows to maximize visibility and maintain the building's aesthetic appeal.



**Window Signs** are placed on the inside of a display window or door. These signs are typically best viewed from close proximity, though their visibility may vary depending on the configuration of the building's windows.



**Projecting Signs** are designed to capture the attention of pedestrians as they extend over the sidewalk. They are particularly effective on buildings located directly adjacent to the sidewalk.

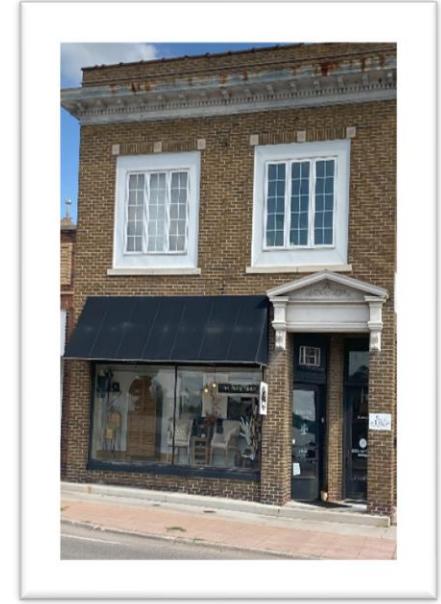




**Freestanding Signs** are ideal for structures set back at least ten feet from the sidewalk. These signs help inform pedestrians of a business's presence, especially when the building is partially obscured from view.



**Awnings and Canopies** serve both functional and decorative purposes. They offer sun protection for merchandise displayed in windows and provide shelter for pedestrians. Additionally, they add a vibrant touch of color, enhancing the visual appeal of individual buildings and stores while contributing to the charm of the entire streetscape.



**The Heritage Preservation Advisory Board recommends:**

**Placement and Design of Signs:**

- **Preserving Architectural Features:** Signs, awnings, and canopies should be positioned to avoid covering or overshadowing key architectural details, such as cornices, trim, windows, decorative brickwork, or other distinctive structural elements.
- **Pedestrian and Traffic Orientation:** Signs should be oriented and detailed to engage pedestrians and slow-moving vehicular traffic effectively. They should be designed to appeal to those observing them at close range and at a slower pace.
- **Proportional Signage:** Storefront display windows and doors should have a limited number and size of signs to maintain clarity and avoid visual clutter. Using one appropriately sized sign rather than multiple signs ensures better balance and avoids confusion or distraction. Sign dimensions must align with the City of Buffalo Zoning Code.

- **Avoiding Competing Elements:** Overlapping or conflicting signs can detract from the visual appeal and cause distraction. Similarly, mismatched styles or patterns in canopies can confuse both pedestrians and motorists. Consistency and harmony enhance the overall streetscape.

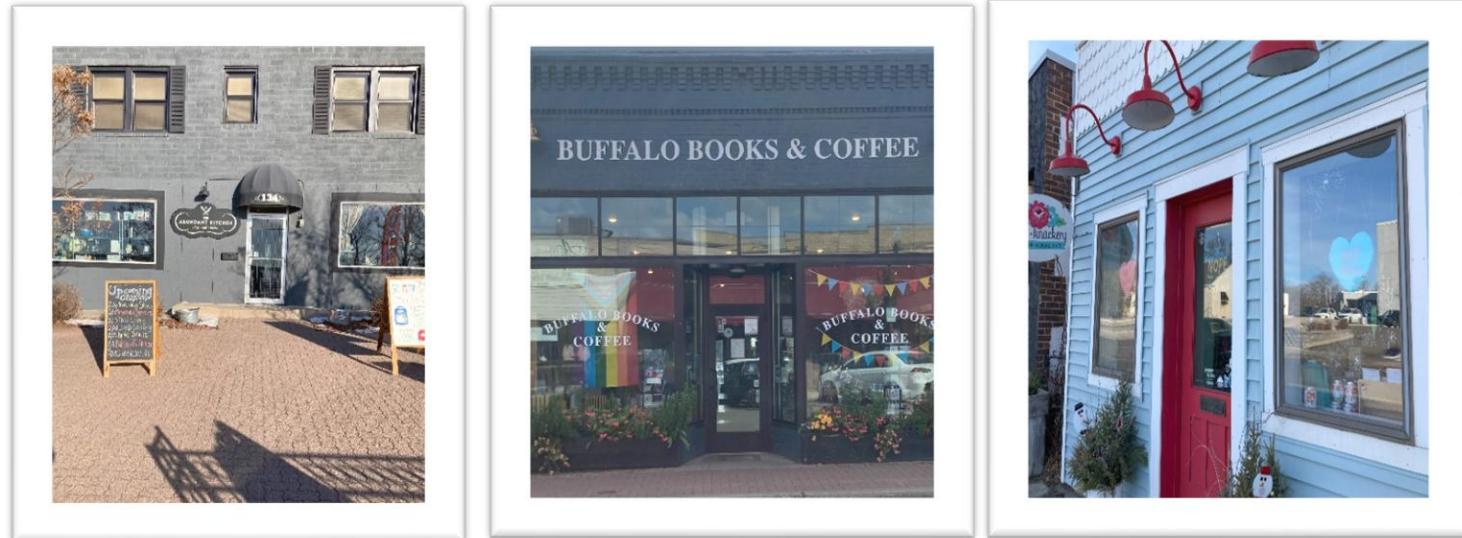
### **Construction and Design of Signs:**

- **Materials and Design Harmony:** Signs should use materials and designs that reflect the building's historical period and storefront style. Colors for signs, awnings, or canopies should complement the storefront façade's paint scheme. Incorporating building elements into the sign design, where feasible, enhances cohesion.
- **Quality and Craftsmanship:** Artisan-crafted signs and high-quality materials specifically designed for handcrafted signs by the sign industry should be prioritized for durability and aesthetic appeal.
- **Simplicity in Lettering and Message:** The lettering on signs should be minimal, and the message should be concise and direct to avoid clutter and maintain clarity.
- **Awnings for Function and Style:** Awnings, whether fixed or retractable, should serve both functional and aesthetic purposes. They can be applied to both ground-level and upper-floor windows as needed to maintain the architectural style.
- **Material and Fit:** Awnings or canopies should be made from a weather-treated canvas or other natural-looking materials. Plastic, wood, or metal materials are inappropriate. The awning or canopy should be appropriately sized, fitting neatly within the storefront area and avoiding coverage of architectural elements.

### **Lighting of Signs:**

- **External Lighting:** Use external lighting fixtures instead of internally lit plastic fixtures. This includes avoiding neon signs and focusing on spotlights. Lighting should illuminate only the sign itself, minimizing spillovers onto the surrounding area.
- **Fixture Compatibility:** Visible lighting fixtures should complement the building's architectural period, adding to the overall aesthetic rather than detracting from it.
- **Classic Design Elements:** Signs incorporating wrought iron borders, scrollwork, and gold leaf lettering on doors or windows convey a sense of quality and thoughtful design. These elements create a timeless, elegant appeal.
- **Avoid Plastic Backlit Signs:** Internally lit plastic signs are not harmonious with most building designs and can detract from the overall aesthetic.
- **Unified Signage:** Avoid competing signs with differing forms or styles, as this creates confusion.
- **Highlight Architectural Features:** Quality architectural elements, such as cornices, should be accentuated and not obscured by signage or lighting fixtures.

Combining multiple types of signs with a cohesive design approach can enhance the experience for both drivers and pedestrians. When planning new signage for your business, carefully consider how each sign contributes to a unified design and complement the overall architectural style of the building.



## Characteristics of Effective Signs

1. **Legibility:** Signs should be easy to read, featuring simple and clean lettering styles.
2. **Clarity of Message:** The wording should be straightforward and concise, allowing the message to be quickly understood.
3. **Strategic Placement:** Signs must be positioned where they are highly visible and accessible to the intended audience.
4. **Attractiveness:** Design elements should grab attention and hold it long enough for the message to be conveyed.
5. **Durability:** Signs should be constructed with high-quality materials to withstand the elements and maintain a polished, well-maintained appearance.



## Signs

### Encouraged:

- Replacing, repairing, or installing signs that are appropriately scaled to the building and storefront.
- Maintaining and restoring historic signs.
- Choosing sign materials and designs that reflect the period of the building and complement the storefront architecture.
- Utilizing artisan-crafted signs and quality materials, such as painted metal or wood. Lettering should be made of durable materials like wood, painted plastics, metals, or prefabricated pin-mounted letters.
- Installing signs on architecturally appropriate locations such as the sign band, windows, doors, or awnings.
- Using fin or blade signs projected from the building to attract the attention of pedestrians or parallel traffic.
- Exploring creative graphics and materials that uphold high standards of legibility and character.
- Keeping sign lettering minimal with a clear and concise message. Substituting a logo or illustration to effectively communicate the business's nature when appropriate.
- Incorporating flexibility into signage and its components to accommodate changes or upgrades.
- Painting window signs that act as secondary signage or provide additional business information, such as store hours or types of services.
- Installing three-dimensional, fixed signs that include an icon of the business type, business name, and/or logo.
- Removing outdated advertisements or other temporary signs.
- Ensuring all signage complies with the City of Buffalo's regulations.

### Strongly Discouraged

- Installing too many signs on your storefront or building, creating visual clutter.
- Covering windows, cornices, or decorative architectural details with signs or other elements.
- Obstructing visibility into your storefront with signs, shelving, or other obstructions.
- Painting signs directly onto the building's surface.

**Note:** Always install signs through mortar joints rather than masonry to ensure that lights, signs, and awnings can be removed or replaced without causing permanent damage to the structure.

## Awnings

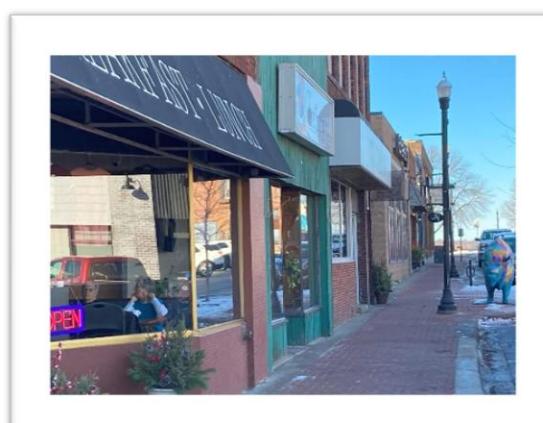
### Encouraged:

- Installing canvas or metal awnings that complement the building's architecture.
- Using individual awnings for each storefront in a multi-store building to preserve the structure's detail, rhythm, and frame while defining individual business identities.
- Installing retractable or fixed awnings to suit functionality and style preferences.
- Illuminating storefronts and sidewalks from beneath the awning for enhanced visibility and appeal.
- Maintaining a consistent size, profile, and location for awnings on a single building with multiple storefronts while allowing font styles to vary between businesses.
- Designing creative awning shapes that enhance and complement the overall building design.
- Locating signage on the valance of the awning, with letters no taller than 12 inches. Signage should be simple, durable, and visually appealing.
- Using removable signage (e.g., sewn-on letters) to allow for easy updates when retail tenants change, ensuring the awning remains undamaged.
- Considering the orientation of signage to maximize visibility for pedestrian traffic when using an awning for advertising purposes.

### Strongly Discouraged

- Using backlit or internally illuminated plastic awnings, as they detract from the building's character.
- Concealing architectural details such as transoms or storefront cornices with awnings or other elements, which diminishes the building's historical and visual appeal.
- Selecting materials other than canvas or metal, including vinyl, that may not complement the building's design or durability standards.
- Using bubble, concave, or convex awning forms were not common to early storefront
- Choosing vinyl coated fabric, fixed metal, transparent or opaque vinyl or wood awnings.

**Note:** Install awnings, lights, and signs through **mortar joints**, not masonry, to allow for future removal or replacement without damaging the structure.

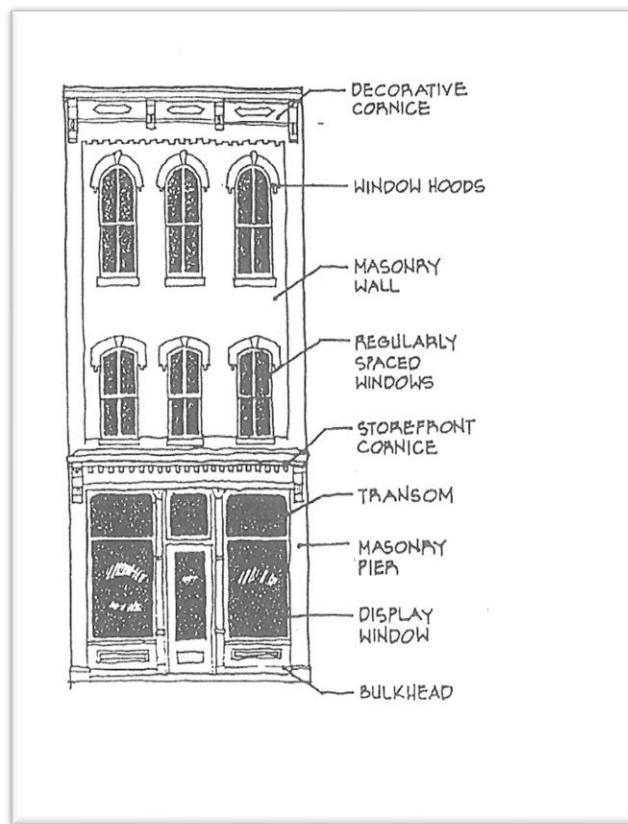


## Storefronts and Lighting

The traditional commercial storefront is often regarded as the cornerstone of a “Main Street”, setting the tone for a cohesive and visually appealing downtown. Consistency across storefronts contributes significantly to a strong and unified visual identity. Over time, technological advancements, shifting tenant needs, and evolving merchandising trends led to frequent changes in storefronts, while upper façades either remained unchanged, deteriorated, or were concealed.

A typical commercial façade consists of three main components:

1. **The storefront**, featuring the entrance and display windows.
2. **The upper façade**, characterized by regularly spaced windows.
3. **The cornice**, which serves as the architectural cap of the building.



**To maintain the historic integrity of these façades, the Heritage Preservation Advisory Board recommends:**

### **Storefronts and Entrances:**

- **Compatibility:** Storefronts should harmonize with the upper floors to preserve the building's overall character and visual integrity.
- **Display Windows:** Retail, service, and restaurant establishments should feature large pane display windows at ground level to maintain a welcoming and functional appearance.

- **Unified Design:** Buildings with multiple storefronts should achieve a cohesive look by using architecturally compatible materials, including matching colors, details, awnings, signage, and lighting.
- **Preservation:** Retain original proportions of display window glass and preserve special features such as transoms, leaded glass, or other decorative details.
- **Defined Entrances:** Entrances should be accentuated with architectural elements such as lintels, pediments, pilasters, columns, porticos, porches, railings, or balustrades, creating an inviting and distinct entryway.
- **Repair Over Replacement:** Avoid replacing an entire storefront when repair and restoration are feasible and sufficient.

### **Service Areas and Mechanical Equipment:**

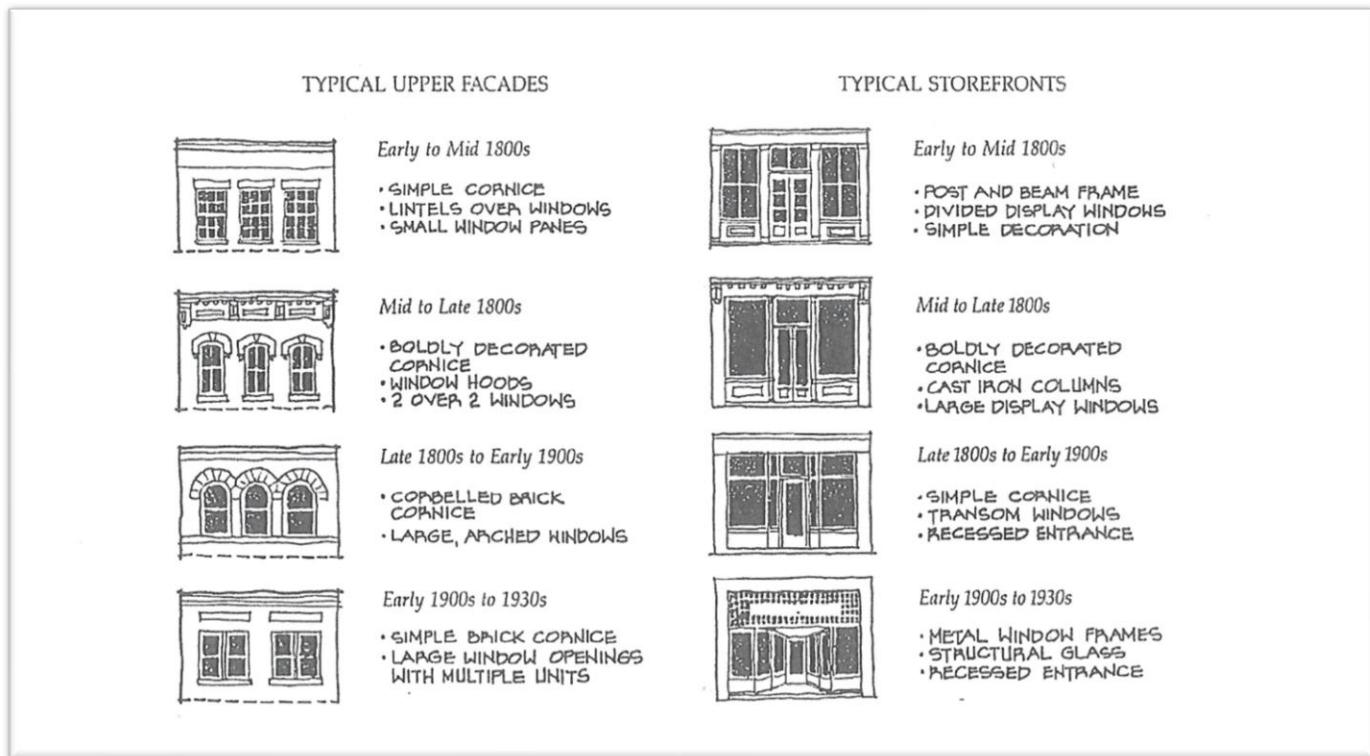
- **Location:** Loading areas, waste facilities, air conditioning units, exhaust and vent stacks, elevator penthouses, and antennae should be located at the rear of the building or appropriately screened from view to maintain aesthetic appeal.
- **Interior Refuse Rooms:** The use of interior refuse rooms is encouraged as an alternative to external dumpsters or other waste removal methods.
- **Fire Escapes:** Fire escapes on front facades are discouraged as they detract from the architectural integrity of the building.
- **Screening and Maintenance:** Dumpsters and mechanical equipment should be shielded from public view, ideally placed at the rear of the property. These areas should be kept clean and organized to avoid projecting an uninviting impression to customers and passersby.

### **Storefront Design:**

#### **Encouraged:**

- Installing storefronts that harmonize with the building's existing structural frame.
- Repairing, restoring, and enhancing storefront materials to maintain their integrity and appeal.
- Repainting and repairing brick or other masonry elements to preserve the building's character.
- Removing old paint from masonry façades using non-toxic, biodegradable methods to protect the underlying materials.
- Retaining the original proportions of display window glass and preserving unique features such as transoms and leaded glass.

- Creating a cohesive look for multiple storefronts within a single building by utilizing compatible materials, colors, details, awnings, signage, and lighting.



### **Strongly Discouraged:**

- Installing façade or material treatments that are historically inaccurate or incompatible, such as imitation brick or stone.
- Removing existing materials that contribute to the building's original architectural character.
- Painting unpainted masonry, particularly in historic districts or on landmark buildings.
- Using materials that do not closely match the color, size, texture, pattern, or quality of the existing building materials (e.g., replacing cement mortar with caulk).
- Covering, altering, or damaging architectural elements of the façade with signs, awnings, or other additions.
- Cleaning brick or other masonry using sandblasting or harsh chemicals, which can damage the materials.

### **Storefront Components:**

#### **Encouraged:**

- Restoring or repairing original window bases that remain in place.
- Using sturdy, easy-to-maintain materials to create a new, appropriate storefront window base. Suitable materials include brick, concrete, hardwood, metal panels, ceramic tiles, and other masonry materials.
- Selecting window base materials that are consistent with the original design of the building.

- Maintaining or designing window bases for multiple storefronts in a single building with consistent heights and uniform materials.
- Ensuring window bases are installed at a height no greater than 2 feet 2 inches from the ground to maintain the architectural integrity and historical proportions of buildings, contributing to a cohesive and attractive streetscape.

#### **Strongly Discouraged:**

- Removing a window base that was part of the original building design or served to conceal portions of the building's mechanical systems.
- Inconsistently varying the height of window bases within a single storefront building.
- Using non-durable materials, such as low-grade plywood, that are difficult to maintain and prone to wear.

#### **Storefront Lighting:**

##### **Encouraged:**

- Illuminating interior display areas to highlight merchandise or services within the building.
- Balancing building lighting with existing street lighting to maintain visual harmony.
- Selectively using exterior-mounted light fixtures, such as sconces or downlights, to enhance the building's overall appearance.
- Employing lighting to highlight signage or emphasize unique architectural details.
- Choosing lighting fixtures that complement the period and style of the structure.
- Concealing light sources to maintain a clean and polished look.
- Installing daylight sensors to optimize lighting control and energy efficiency.

##### **Strongly Discouraged:**

- Installing flashing, pulsing, or moving lights that create significant glare or distractions.
- Outlining windows, doors, or storefronts with neon tubing.
- Overusing light fixtures can lead to visual clutter and excessive illumination.
- Applying fixtures in a manner that causes irreversible damage to masonry or other façade materials.

**Note:** Always install fixtures through mortar joints, not masonry, to allow for easy removal or replacement without causing permanent harm to the building's structure.

## Windows and Doors

Windows and doors are often the first features people notice about a business or property. You only get one chance to make a great first impression, so ensure your building stands out by following these guidelines when updating its façade.



### **The Heritage Preservation Advisory Board Recommends:**

#### **Windows and Shutters:**

- Windows should complement the building's style, materials, color, and architectural details.
- Upper windows should be aligned vertically with storefronts and entrances to maintain visual harmony.
- The rhythm of window openings should be preserved; avoid blocking windows or using undersized or oversized replacements. Openings, windows, and decorative trim should remain consistent with the building's original design.
- Existing windows should be retained whenever possible. If replacement is unavoidable, new windows should match the originals in size, material, and style.
- Where appropriate to the building's design, shutters should be added to all front-facing windows and those visible from the street. Proper hardware should be used to ensure secure and historically accurate installation.



***Image: The windows of this building were boarded up which took away from the façade of the structure.***

## **Window Display:**

### **Encouraged:**

- Restoring or increasing the amount of transparent glass on storefronts to enhance visibility and openness.
- Replacing dark-tinted or textured glass with clear glass to create a welcoming and visible interior.
- Retaining original window openings, decorative trim, and design elements consistent with the building's historic character.
- Preserving historic features, such as window frames, unique glazing, and decorative moldings.
- Ensuring window heights align and sizes are unified where appropriate to maintain architectural harmony.
- Painting window frames to add visual interest and complement the overall aesthetic.
- Installing aluminum or wood frame windows that provide thermal insulation and minimize condensation.

### **Strongly Discouraged:**

- Blocking visibility into display areas by covering or obstructing display windows.
- Using materials or items such as glass blocks, woodwork, paint, signage, lowered ceilings, shelves, refrigeration units, cases, posters, or anything that prevents views into the business, except for temporarily marketed products.
- Disrupting the rhythm of window openings by blocking them, or by installing undersized or oversized windows.
- Covering or concealing existing window trim with metal or other materials.
- Removing historic windows or their components when restoration and maintenance are viable options.
- Using less durable materials, such as Plexiglass, for window installations.
- Neglecting to maintain or repair broken or boarded-up display windows.

## Transom Windows

### Encouraged:

- Restoring or maintaining the original pattern and style of transom windows.
- Using materials and designs that are compatible with or match the storefront system.
- Preserving and restoring stained glass panes in transom windows when appropriate and feasible.
- Allowing modifications to transom windows only for necessary modern improvements.
- Restoring and maintaining transom windows even if they are temporarily concealed by awnings, as awnings may be removed in the future.

### Strongly Discouraged:

- Covering or filling transom windows with paint, signage, masonry, glass block, wood, or ventilation/mechanical systems.



*Image: This façade has been restored to its original appearance by removing covering from transom windows.*

## Windows and Doors



**Encouraged:**

- Restoring or replacing doors with commercial doors that are historically or architecturally appropriate.
- Installing storefront doors made of glass or incorporating significant glass elements to enhance visibility into the building.
- Adding new doors as needed to meet accessibility requirements for individuals with disabilities.
- Preserving the continuity of storefronts along primary business streets by locating loading and service entrances on the side or rear of the building whenever possible.
- Installing new or maintaining existing durable wood or metal frame doors that can be painted in various colors to highlight the business entry and add visual appeal.
- Using folding or sliding doors to create an inviting connection between the business and the sidewalk, fostering engagement with pedestrians.

**Strongly Discouraged:**

- Adding new doors that are not required by code and are inconsistent with the building's architectural style or storefront design.
- Sealing or closing off existing entrances or doorways using any material.
- Blocking doors with merchandise or other obstructions, impeding accessibility or visibility.
- Installing doors that swing outward directly onto the sidewalk, creating safety hazards for pedestrians.
- Replacing or covering glass door panels with opaque materials that limit or prevent visibility.
- Obscuring doorways with signage, interior display cases, or woodwork that detracts from the storefront's overall aesthetic.
- Modifications that replicate paint colors or exterior decorations from other periods.

## Painting

The appearance of downtown Buffalo's buildings reflects the vitality of the community. Each building should be respected as a product of its own era, avoiding modifications that mimic the paint colors or exterior decorations of other periods.

The original materials used for wall facings, such as brick, sheet metal, cast iron, and historically appropriate paint colors, contribute to the unique character of each building and enhance the visual harmony of the streetscape. Covering these original details with inappropriate materials like aluminum or vinyl siding diminishes a building's architectural identity and its connection to the surrounding neighborhood.

Repairing and maintaining exterior decorative features and paint coatings is a more effective and sustainable solution for addressing a deteriorating façade. Preserving the quality of original materials helps ensure the longevity of the building. Painting is a powerful way to enhance your building's appearance. Selecting the right combination of colors can unify the elements of your façade and create a cohesive relationship with neighboring structures.



### **The Heritage Preservation Advisory Board Recommends:**

#### **Painting:**

- All wood structures and trims should be prepared for repainting by manual scraping to uncover original architectural details, if present. Sandblasting, pressurized water, or steam should not be used for cleaning.
- While painting is a reversible treatment, colors should be selected from palettes appropriate to the building's period and applied to architectural features in historically accurate ways.

- Single-color schemes and contemporary color choices should be avoided for historic buildings. Accent colors and the contrast between light and dark tones should align with the building's original character.
- The selected color palette should reflect the era in which the building was constructed. Historic color palettes are readily available at paint companies.
- Bright, stark white should be avoided as it is not historically accurate. In many cases, the original colors can be determined through research and should be considered for repainting.

**Encouraged:**

- Select paint colors that complement the color of the larger building.
- Coordinating the colors of all storefront components as marketing for your business
- Using paint colors to accentuate architectural details such as dentils, rosettes, cornice line etc.
- Exploring how painting storefronts or buildings in selective locations might increase visibility of the business without seeming inconsistent or out of character with other districts.
- Maintaining painted or other colored storefront elements that have faded, peeled or flaked due to weather conditions.

**Strongly Discouraged:**

- Painting masonry (brick) that hasn't been painted before.
- Selecting colors that detract from the overall image of the storefront or building.



Consider utilizing historical color guidelines offered by various retailers, such as Sherwin Williams' historic exterior color palettes, Benjamin Moore's historic color collection, and the National Trust Historic Paint Colors by Valspar.

## Building Materials & Architectural Elements

The hidden assets of Buffalo's community lie in the harmonious relationships between natural elements like Buffalo Lake and man-made structures. The downtown architecture represents these connections, defined by scale, mass, pattern, materials, shapes, and colors. The following guidelines aim to preserve and enhance these features.

### **Brickwork:**

- Clean brick buildings, many of which in Buffalo were built using historically local materials, with the gentlest methods, such as steam or low-pressure water. Avoid sandblasting or abrasive cleaning methods.
- Brick, as one of the most durable and low-maintenance building materials, requires only periodic cleaning and repointing to preserve its original appearance and longevity.
- Repointing, the process of removing deteriorated mortar and replacing it with new mortar, should be performed when necessary. Properly executed, repointing restores the visual and physical integrity of masonry. Improper repointing can detract from the building's appearance and cause damage.
- Match new mortar to the original in strength, color, composition, depth, and joint type during repointing.
- Painting over unpainted brick is discouraged.
- If brick is already painted, it may be cleaned using chemical paint removers, ensuring that the masonry will not be damaged. Note that older buildings sometimes used lower-quality brick intended to be protected by paint.
- Repair stucco by removing only damaged areas and patching with new stucco that matches the original in strength, composition, color, and texture.
- Replace decorative masonry features only if they are missing or too deteriorated to repair, using physical evidence to guide accurate reproduction.

### **Cast Iron:**

- Use wire brushing to remove loose paint, rust, or deteriorating materials. Avoid chemical removers, but low-pressure sandblasting may be used for removal when necessary.
- Recast missing cast iron parts using aluminum, fiberglass, or reinforced gypsum polymer cement.
- Apply proper priming and rust-inhibitive paint products designed for exterior metal surfaces to protect.

### **Sheet Metal Work:**

- Clean sheet metal using chemical paint removers if needed. Avoid sandblasting or using abrasive methods, as these can damage the material.
- Repair or replace damaged sections with accurately duplicated materials from a commercial sheet metal shop or use automobile fiberglass compounds for filling and patching.

- Apply proper priming and paint with oil-based products to prevent rust and ensure durability.

### **New Buildings or Additions Orientation:**

- Buildings should face a street or public space to maintain a welcoming façade.
- Structures should align with the sidewalk, avoiding setbacks.
- Corner buildings should feature at least two prominent façades, designed to address their visibility and prominence.
- Off-street parking areas should be placed at the side or rear of the building to minimize their impact on the streetscape.

### **Scale and Mass:**

- The overall scale, massing, and proportions should complement adjacent and surrounding buildings.
- Changes in scale and mass should be introduced through graduated increments, such as wall offsets or roofline variations.
- Long, uninterrupted walls and roof planes should be avoided.
- Exposed building sides should feature a defined base and a cap or cornice for visual balance.

### **Materials and Detail:**

- Materials, details, and colors should align with the building's design and complement surrounding structures.
- Original architectural features should be retained and replaced only when necessary.
- In attached buildings, the materials and patterns of adjacent structures should influence the design for cohesion.
- Artificial siding and trim materials are discouraged.

### **Roofs and Walls:**

- Roof forms should complement the building's architectural style as well as the character of neighboring structures.
- Incorporating features like belvederes (rooftop elements), masonry chimneys, and decorative cornices is encouraged when appropriate.
- Flat roofs should be avoided on one- and one-and-a-half-story buildings.
- The building's front façade, facing the street, should be emphasized with thoughtful window patterns, proportional designs, distinct entrance treatments, and detailed architectural elements.
- Side and rear walls visible to the public should maintain a design consistent with the front façade for overall harmony.