

Downtown Hightstown Design Manual

Guidelines for the (planned) Downtown Core and Downtown Gateway Zones*

This design manual is intended to work hand in hand with the goals of the Master Plan and its subsequent re-examination reports. It is a set of facade improvement and volumetric standards for buildings in downtown Hightstown. Its purpose is to present and illustrate design concepts and guidelines towards an overall language of maintaining and enhancing the historic character of downtown Hightstown. The manual is written in simple language with several images of new construction, renovation, or historic preservation projects in the downtown core (DTC) and downtown gateway (DTG) zones.

**The terms Downtown Core (DTC) and Downtown Gateway (DTG) are part of the proposed zoning changes in the 2014 Master Plan Re-examination. The DTC zone is currently proposed to be, in essence the present CC-1 and CC-2 zones, whereas the DTG zone is proposed to be, in essence the present RPO zone. Revised ordinance language has not been written yet for these zones, so these guidelines are an intent to support and facilitate a development process forthcoming.*





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Guidelines for the (planned) Downtown Core
and Downtown Gateway Zones



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Stockton Street Solutions





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Downtown Hightstown Design Manual



History of Hightstown

From the Master Plan of the Borough of Hightstown

In 1721 an Indian trail ran between Perth Amboy and Burlington. John and Mary Hight found a place along the trail where it crossed the Rocky Brook. They noticed there was enough change in elevation along the stream to construct and operate a mill, so they settled in what we now know as Hightstown. Almost thirty years later they had a village with a gristmill, a blacksmith shop, an inn and a small cluster of assorted buildings. By 1761 the original Indian trail had been replaced by the “King’s Highway” along what is now Mercer and Main Street. Revolutionary troops traveled the highway on their way to the Battle of Monmouth.

In 1816 the highway became a turnpike, chartered by the State legislature as a toll road between South Amboy and Bordentown. It had two tollgates, or pikes, one in Old Bridge, where State Highway 18 now crosses and a second where the highway intersected with the Old Bridge-Brunswick Turnpike. The town bustled, as it quickly became a hub for farmers’ produce on their way to South Amboy and New York to the north and Camden and Philadelphia to the south. Migrant workers made a valuable contribution to the success of farming in the area. Hightstown became the commercial and transportation center of this lucrative agricultural area.

The turnpike through Hightstown was very well used. About the same time, in 1826, Colonel John Stevens built the nation’s first steam locomotive and displayed and demonstrated it on his Hoboken estate. When the turnpike could no longer handle the volume of traffic, horses and stagecoaches that used the highway, the State legislature agreed to permit a rail line and expand freight and passenger service.

On February 4th, 1830 the legislature granted a charter for the state’s first commercial railroad to the

Camden and Amboy Railroad and Transportation Company (C&A). Interestingly, the charter was approved despite heavy opposition from small, but powerful special interest groups, like stagecoach owners and canal promoters. There was so much public support for the rail that it took only ten minutes to sell the entire railroad stock of one million dollars. In contrast, a similar stock sale for the Delaware and Raritan Canal charter at the same point in time yielded only \$100,000 in a few days, and took an entire year to become fully funded.

With the State’s charter in hand, the C&A elected Colonel Stevens’ son, Robert to be its president, and his other son Edwin, treasurer. In the fall of 1830 Robert Stevens ventured off to England, where the railroad industry had progressed a little farther than it had in the States. During this trip, Stevens crafted a wooden model of the first “T” shaped rail. It was innovative and people were wary of it. He had to call on the good graces of a friend of his father’s who owned a mill in Wales in order to get the new rail manufactured. No one else in England was willing to produce his new rail design. Nonetheless, the Stevens’ rail became, and remains the standard of modern railroads, as does the hook-headed spikes, which he developed at the same time.

With the rails and spikes under production, Stevens ordered a new steam locomotive from Robert Stephenson and Co. then he headed home. In May of 1831 the first rails arrived in the U.S. and in August the locomotive, “John Bull” arrived. It was literally in pieces. Assembly was required. A brave, 22 year old man named Isaac Dripps was charged with the responsibility of putting it together. He had never even seen a locomotive before. And yet, on November 12th, 1831, the “John Bull” made its maiden run, amidst a flurry of public promotion and celebration.

The rail line was complete to Hightstown by the Fall of 1832. The entire line was finally finished by January of 1834. It was initially laid on large stone blocks, called sleepers, which were built by inmates at the Sing Sing Prison in New York. In the Winter of 1832 Robert Stevens was anxious to complete the construction through to South Amboy and the stones from Sing Sing were not arriving fast enough, so he ordered the rails to be installed on logs set in a stone bed. This invention of necessity became yet another industry standard that would last. He had created the modern railroad tie.

The railroad line continued to be successful and the "John Bull" ran continuously until 1866. In 1892 it made one last run to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago before it was retired to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., where it remains today.

Railroading certainly helped Hightstown prosper. She developed as an agrarian hub with farmers' co-ops and produce packing companies. In the late 1890's a lot of new inventions started to change Hightstown. The Borough started to develop public utilities, like water, telephone and electricity. Around the turn of the century, automobiles ushered in new opportunities and manufacturing began. Native Lace Works joined the Hightstown Smyrna Rug Company which came to the Borough in 1898. By 1910 the Reed Brothers Brick Plant had shipped 2,000,000 bricks. And the town was now large enough to support a hotel, a theater, banks, a public library, and a school system. Hightstown was no longer simply a big farmers' market.

With the introduction of cars and the paving of State Highway Route 33 in 1919, rail service started to decline. Passenger service was ultimately discontinued in 1940, and freight service continued only until the mid-1960's. By then the present day New Jersey Turnpike was well used and the first Hightstown by-pass, otherwise known as Route 130,

was also quite popular. Vehicular traffic moved in and around Hightstown extensively and continues to do so today.

It's obvious that the railroad played a big part in the history of Hightstown. It is equally noteworthy that Hightstown played a significant role in the history of railroading in this state and the country. The town has been a vibrant commercial center, first for agriculture and later for industry. Its location at the crossroads of a number of different transportation routes has been central to the development of the Borough since the beginning. Therefore, it is only logical that these aspects of Hightstown's past, railroading, the town center, and transportation should continue to be central to planning within the municipality.



What is a Design Manual?

The Design Manual is an accumulation of recommendations created to direct and lead Hightstown in its endeavor to conserve and enhance the appearance of the downtown zones, preserve historical and/or architectural assets, and assist property owners in working together towards a common goal of drawing business to their stores. Design guidelines encourage property owners to effectively work together as new construction and restoration develops, and as tenants and landlords change.

The design criteria and associated guidelines form the core of the design manual. Each guideline or criteria contains a “background” paragraph that describes the history of that criterion. This will help explain why this criterion is important in preserving the character of Hightstown. The guidelines are not formulas or specific solutions, but are meant to be flexible recommendations to develop compatibility within the district. Additionally, there are proven methods utilized by older towns throughout the country to enhance the visibility and walkability of their downtowns.

The guidelines are intentionally flexible and recommend different solutions for various issues. This creates interest and a catalyst for exploration by newcomers and the seasoned shoppers as the downtown evolves year to year, season to season.

Why a Design Manual?

The Borough recognizes patterns of changes in development which have resulted in the loss of historical architectural design features, and the creation of undesirable, non-compatible and sometimes visually unattractive street frontages, which results in a decline in property values and the prosperity of the business, and residential, community as a whole. The Borough, via the Planning Board will conduct design reviews with the assistance of the Architectural Review Committee for all new construction in the DTC and DTG zones. For renovations, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) will review the projects in these zones.

Changes-in-use/tenant may also affect the outside appearance of structures within the DTC and DTG zones. These reviews would be overseen by Historic Preservation Commission, and the recommendations would be mandatory. with enforcement by the building department.

Examples of undesirable changes which have affected the visual landscape of the DTC and DTG zones are: loss of street front windows in exchange for long blank solid walls, diverse incompatible signage, and inconsistent building façade changes resulting in the loss of a visually cohesive downtown area. The Borough desires to bring back its Historic Downtown village feel and encourage investment, reinvestment, and the consumer confidence it once enjoyed.



Statement of Intent

It is the desire of the Borough Council and Planning Board that the DTC and DTG zones as per the 2014 Re-examination amendment encourage non-residential uses on the first floor; particularly the type of uses that would transform Hightstown into a destination. A complete list of appropriate uses is yet to be determined. All of the uses would be oriented to pedestrian shopping.

Architectural & Design Standards set forth in Section 1 shall be followed to ensure integrated and compatible design with respect to the relationship and location of buildings, architectural façade design, circulation, walkways, landscape amenity, and buffer features. To the greatest extent practical, they should be incorporated into a form-based ordinance.

EXAMPLES of ACCEPTABLE FIRST FLOOR USES IN THE DTC ZONE:

1. Retail stores, including but not limited to the sale of antiques, art, dry goods, variety and general merchandise, clothing, fabrics, floor covering, food, books, hardware, supplies or furnishings, pets, sale or repair of jewelry, sporting goods, watches and clocks, optical goods, musical, professional and office supplies.
2. Personal Services, including but not limited to barbershops, hair and nail salons, photographers, funeral homes, shoe repairs, tailors, newspaper, printers, frame shops, Laundromats and travel agencies.
3. Restaurants, including cafes, take-outs, coffee shops and delis.

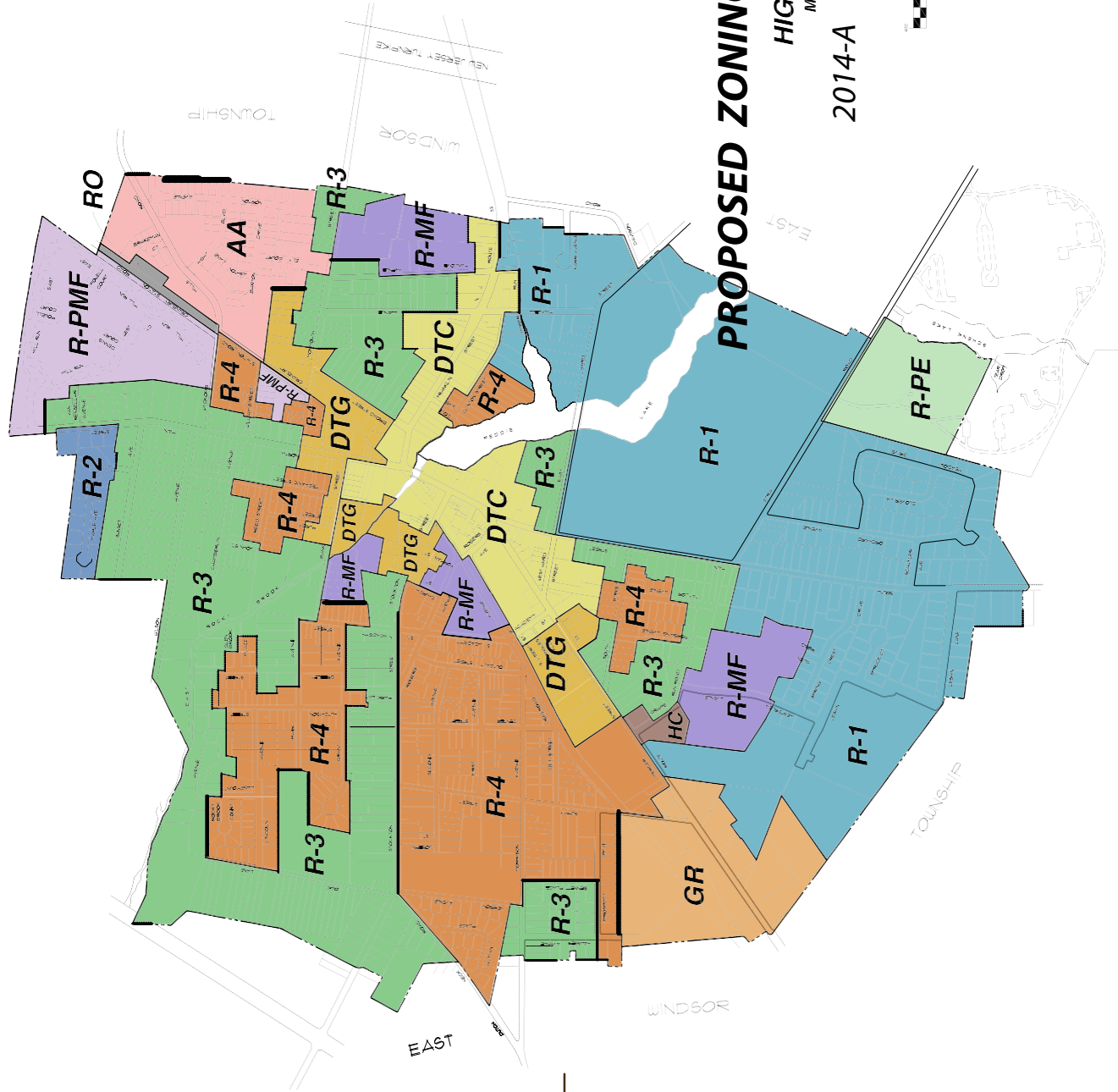
ACCEPTABLE SECOND FLOOR USES IN THE DTC ZONE:

1. With a single door at grade; Professional and private offices, including but not limited to real estate, accounting, insurance, architects, psychologists and lawyers.
2. With a single door at grade; Medical offices and facilities, including but not limited to bank, saving and loan associations, credit unions and other financial institutions.

EXAMPLES of ACCEPTABLE USES IN THE DTG ZONE:

1. Professional and private offices, including but not limited to real estate, accounting, insurance, architects, psychologists and lawyers.
2. Medical offices and facilities, including but not limited to bank, saving and loan associations, credit unions and other financial institutions.
3. Restaurants, including cafes, take-outs, coffee shops and delis.
4. Public parks, playgrounds, buildings, structures and uses owned and operated by the Borough of Hightstown.

In the DTG zone no building shall be erected that is not residential in style and volume, and no existing houses/buildings shall be structurally altered. This zone is a gateway to the DTC zone and the existing historic structures are meant to remain intact with limited facade renovations.



PROPOSED ZONING MAP

HIGHTSTOWN BOROUGH
MERCER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

2014-A

Design Review Process

New development, renovation projects, change of use or change of tenant in the DTC or DTG zones shall require a design review meeting with the Historic Preservation Commission. The Historic Preservation Commission will review the project site, architecture and landscape plans with the owner/landlord and/or tenant along with this design manual to ensure consistency, (or planned inconsistency.) The Historic Preservation Commission will then recommend approval, denial or approval with certain conditions to the Planning Board or the Architectural Review Committee.

NOTE: These architectural reviews are meant to provide a framework for what the Borough desires in the future for those wishing to build in the downtown or undergo renovations. It is not meant to add extra cost to the renovations, but rather to elevate the value of all the properties in the DTC and DTG zones through the creation of an attractive streetscape environment. (Note: as an added incentive to follow the ARC or HPCs recommendations, the Borough may adopt an ordinance to waive certain fees or processes.)

INFORMATION NEEDED FOR PROJECT REVIEW:

The following information will be required for the Historic Preservation Commission/Architectural Review Committee to fully understand the project and its impact on the downtown. Information for presentation should be at a size and format to convey the requested changes. The following are possible types of submission materials, but none of them are “required”:

Renovation

- Architectural elevations of all affected sides of the project at an adequate scale to portray the renovations. Elevations should include adjacent

- buildings on each side of the proposed project.
- Descriptions of the methods of cleaning, maintaining, restoring or improving existing building materials.

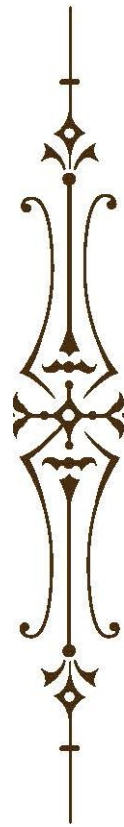
New Construction

- All floor plans at a minimum of 1/8” = 1’-0”.
- All elevations at a minimum of 1/8” = 1’-0”.
- Material samples showing actual materials to be used, their color, and details showing how they will be used. The HPC/ARC may recommend colors, but will not require a particular color or colors, and will not veto a project based on colors.

INFORMATION NEEDED FOR SIGN REVIEW:

- Elevation drawing of the sign on the elevation of the building. Drawings need to be at 1/8” or 1/4” scale. Show dimensions of the sign and the lettering in the style (font) to be used.
- Provide dimensions of the building and lot width measured along the frontage that the sign is proposed to be placed.
- Call out the materials and colors used for the sign background and lettering. Provide actual color samples.
- Conformance with the Hightstown Borough Sign Ordinance *

* The HPC/ARC may consider special exceptions to the sign ordinance within the DTC and DTG zones for recommendation to the Planning Board. This specific type of exception is the only type that would not require formal submission to, and approval by the Planning Board.



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Downtown Hightstown Design Manual



Section 1:

Design Guidelines

The DTC zone is the historic commercial center of the Borough of Hightstown and the DTG zone is the transition between residential and the DTC zone. Design standards are necessary to preserve and enhance the built environment in the zone. The Borough recognizes patterns of architectural and façade changes which have resulted in the loss of architectural design integrity and the historic visual appeal which once was part of Hightstown's built landscape. The Borough desires to institute architectural standards on all new development, renovations, and/or changes in-use-which would affect the outside appearance of any structures. In accordance with a future form-based ordinance, the following guidelines and standards would be used to prepare and review the physical, visual, and spatial character and overall appearance of all site plan applications and all development in the DTC and DTG.

Each individual building facade plays an important role in the makeup of the downtown district. Storefronts, window displays, signage, color, canopies, and architectural details all play an integral part in the successful design of individual buildings.

Property owners or tenants who wish to improve their buildings should begin by assessing the current visual condition of the entire façade:

- How will storefront improvements relate to the entire visual impact of the building?
- How will the proposed renovation relate to neighboring buildings?
- How will the storefront improvement relate to the historic upper portion of the building?
- What changes are needed to improve the appearance and integrity of the upper portion of

the building?

- Will the proposed changes of a tenant space be different than the other spaces in the building?

These design guidelines serve as a guide for various improvement projects. They are intended to suggest ways in which property/business owners can take advantage of Hightstown's charm and history. To apply for design assistance, contact the Hightstown Construction Department or the Hightstown Historic Preservation Commission for assistance.



Design Principles:

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION

Many buildings in downtown Hightstown retain their original character; but there are also a few buildings that have been altered so drastically since first constructed that little remains of their original design. Old photographs are helpful in determining the original appearance of buildings, and an abundance of photographic evidence is available at the Hightstown Historical Society.

To the extent possible, modification of storefronts and building facades should seek to remove inconsistent layers of siding and signage to emphasize the design and materials of the original building. New designs may be appropriate if the building has been altered to the point that the original character has been destroyed. Any new design should respect the proportions as well as the detailing of the original design and should use materials which are consistent with those used in the original facade. New design elements such as cloth awnings, flower boxes or signage which did not exist at previous times may be appropriate to give the building both color and character. Care must be taken so design elements are not applied which attempt to make a building appear as if it is from a period or style that is inappropriate for the zone.

GENERAL PRINCIPALS FOR RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION ARE TAKEN FROM THE SECRETARY OF INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION.

- All work should be of a character and quality that maintains the distinguishing features of the building and environment. The removal of architectural features is not permitted.

- Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. In the event of replacement, new materials should match the original in composition, design, texture and appearance. Duplication of original design based on physical or pictorial evidence is preferable to using conjectural of “period” designs or using parts of other buildings.
- Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship characteristic of structures of a period should be treated sensitively. Furthermore, if changes in use of a building are contemplated, they should be accomplished with minimum alteration to the structure and fabric.
- In general, it is expected that buildings will be restored to their original appearance. However, alterations to buildings are sometimes significant because they reflect the history of the building and the district. This significance should be respected and restoration to an “original” appearance may not always be desirable. All buildings should be recognized as products of their own time.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

New infill buildings should fit into the fabric of existing buildings and the overall streetscape, and not present a jarring contrast with what is already in place. Therefore, design guidelines for existing storefronts also hold true for new construction. The basic principle for new construction in DTC zone is to maintain the scale and character of present buildings. Generally new structures should provide height, massing, setback, material, and rhythm compatibility to surrounding structures.

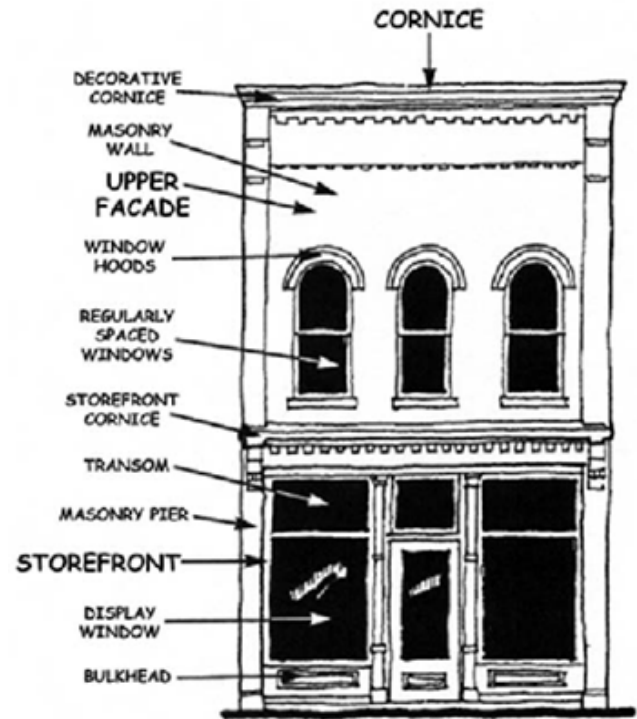
Traditional Facade:

The traditional commercial storefront can be considered the most important element that sets apart and gives historical significance and character to downtown Hightstown. The majority of our historical buildings date from the late 1800's to the early 1900's. When originally constructed, our downtown buildings shared a consistency in design and proportion that was key to creating a strong visual image. This consistency was and is still important in conveying how our downtown is perceived by the client who seeks goods and services here. A visually unified downtown can go a long way in attracting people to our downtown as well as to the individual shops and businesses that are located here.

Changes have occurred to our buildings over the years in response to various merchandising trends, technology, fires, floods, and changing tenants. In most cases the changes affected the storefront area while the upper facade remained intact.

Most revisions to the storefront areas are superficial, leaving the structural integrity of the original storefront design intact. In some of these cases the original storefronts may still be in place but covered over or in need of maintenance and repair.

The basic commercial facade consists of three parts: the storefront with an entrance and large window displays, the upper masonry facade with regularly spaced windows, and the decorative cornice that caps the building. These components may appear in various shapes, sizes, and styles but the result is essentially the same facade. In downtown Hightstown, the typical building facade is a two story masonry construction. The image to the right is representative of a building that may have existed at the turn of the century, but which does not or did not exist in Hightstown. This style would be a welcome addition for new construction.



TRADITIONAL
FACADE
COMPONENTS

KEY FEATURES TO CONSIDER:

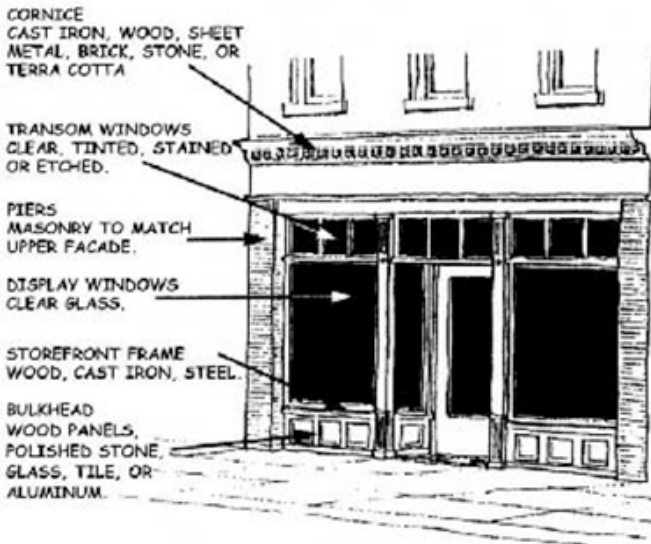
1. The storefront should be composed almost entirely of glass. If glass panes exist, they should be maintained rather than removed for one piece of glass. This removal adversely impacts the feel of the downtown from a pedestrian point of view.
2. The entry should be maintained and restored in its original location and configuration. If the original entry is gone, the new entry should be designed and placed considering traditional design themes and its relationship to the overall building facade and symmetry.
3. Transom windows that are covered or blocked should be reopened and restored.
4. Storefront bulkheads should be restored or renovated.

5. Original elements such as cast iron columns, storefront cornices, entry doors, and lighting fixtures should be restored.
6. Signage should be integrated into the storefront design. However, perpendicular hanging signs would be acceptable alterations.
7. Lighting should be integrated into the storefront design.
8. Awnings should be integrated into the storefront design.

The storefront design must be true to the time period in which the building was constructed. Renovating late 19th century buildings with colonial motifs and mansard roofs is certainly inappropriate. (See image bottom right.) Additionally, renovating storefronts to present period design motifs would be out of character with the downtown fabric.

When planning the renovation of a storefront, it could be very helpful to contact the Hightstown Historical Society to see if there are historic photographs available. Old photographs can be a valuable tool to help determine original design, materials, and signage used on the buildings.

COMMON STOREFRONT MATERIALS



Storefront Design

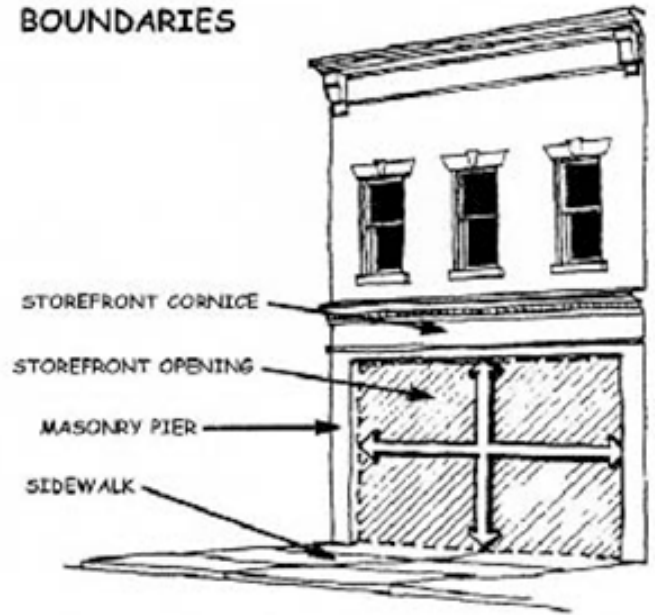
The traditional Hightstown building facade has a well-defined opening that the original storefront filled. The opening is bounded on each side by piers, which were usually constructed of masonry. It is bounded on the top by the storefront cornice, which is the structural member supporting the upper facade, and bounded below by the sidewalk.

The storefront is composed almost entirely of windows. The large glazed opening of the storefront serves to display goods the business has to sell as well as to allow natural light deep into the store thus minimizing the need for artificial light sources.

The visual openness of the storefront is also important because it is part of the overall proportion system of the facade. The proportion of window to wall areas in the traditional facade calls for more glass and less wall at the storefront level, balanced by more wall and less glass on the upper facade.

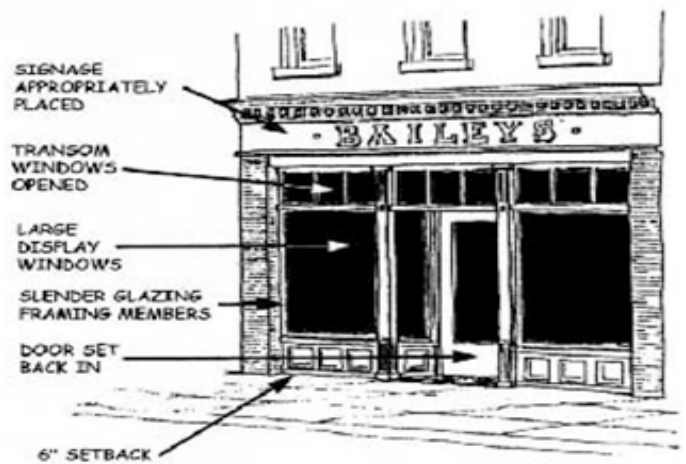
When these buildings were built, their owners recognized the importance of maintaining these proportions so that the downtown would maintain a consistent theme, thus making it an attractive place for its customers to do business. (See left image)

STOREFRONT BOUNDARIES

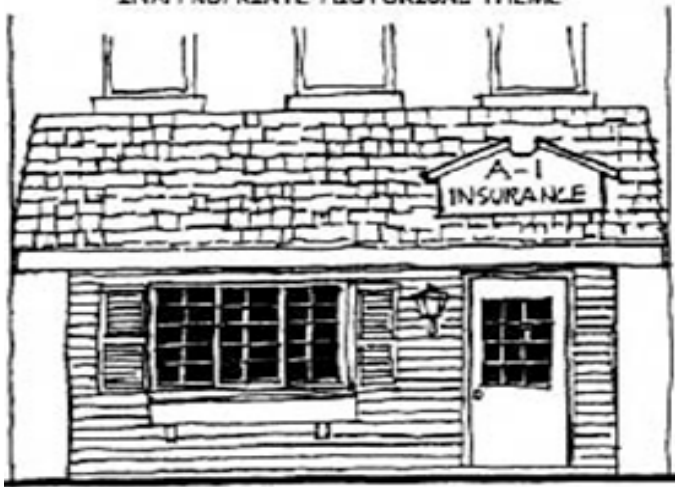


TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT DESIGN

STOREFRONT FITS WITHIN BOUNDARIES



INAPPROPRIATE HISTORICAL THEME





Detailing

Downtown Hightstown has an assortment of masonry structures from the 1860's through the 1930's in Italianate, Classical Revival, and Deco styles, to name a few. The architectural ornamentation includes a variety of decorative features characteristic of early commercial storefronts. Articulated tin cornices, corbelled brickwork, pronounced window lintels and sills are examples of the ornamentation most often seen in Hightstown's Downtown Core Zone.

GUIDELINES:

1. The characteristic architectural features should never be removed or altered unless it is absolutely necessary. If something must be removed, something should be added to enhance the traditional character of the building. A give and take, or in this case a take and give process.
2. Building alterations should restore architectural details of cornices, lintels, brick arches, chimneys and ironwork of the original building as appropriate and feasible.
3. Where detailing has already been removed, every effort should be made to replicate them. The use of the extensive historic photographic records of the Hightstown Historical Society is highly recommended to discover missing detailing.
4. Infill architecture should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shape, cornice lines and brick work.
5. When infill structures or a long expanse of structures is planned, there should be no two structures alike within a group of four and no more than two structures in a row of the same height. (See Proportion Section)

STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

In considering improvements to the storefront it is very important that the original opening be recognized and maintained. The remodeled

storefront should be designed to fit inside the original opening and not extend beyond or in front of it.

The basic storefront design should include large windows with thin framing members, recessed entrance with overhead transom, a storefront cornice, exposed structural element or a horizontal sign panel at the top of the storefront to separate it from the upper facade, and low bulkheads at the base to protect the windows and act as a platform for window displays. The basic configuration can be constructed from traditional or contemporary material, achieving the same results.

STOREFRONT MATERIALS

When designing a new storefront or renovating an existing storefront, remember that the goal should be a transparent facade. Keeping the storefront materials simple and unobtrusive will help you achieve this goal. There is no need to introduce additional types of building materials to those that originally existed on your building. Whether building new or renovating an existing storefront, use materials that perform their intended function well and use these materials consistently throughout the design. By doing so, you accomplish simplicity in the design and create uniformity in the overall storefront appearance. Always try to utilize existing materials. It is better to repair them than to replace them.

TYPICAL EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS AND THEIR LOCATION ON THE STOREFRONT:

1. Storefront Frame - wood, cast iron, anodized aluminum. With anodized aluminum, steps should be taken to “dress” up the frame to an historic appearance.
2. Display Windows - clear glass.
3. Transom Windows - clear, tinted, stained, or etched glass.
4. Entrance Door - wood or aluminum with a large glass panel at least in size.

5. Bulkheads - wood panels, polished stone, glass, tile, metal clad plywood parts.
6. Storefront Cornice - wood, cast iron, sheet metal
7. Side Piers - should be same material as upper facade. (typically brick or stone)

Certain materials should never be used on the traditional commercial building because they have no relationship to the original building’s design themes and therefore flaw the consistency of appearance of the building and the downtown area. Such inappropriate materials include: cultured stone, fake brick, rough textured wood siding, wooden shingles on mansard roofs, gravel aggregate materials, vinyl siding, vinyl windows, vinyl/PVC railings and stucco materials.

FAÇADE OPENINGS

It is important to recognize the difference between upper story openings and storefront, or street level openings. There is a much greater transparent or glazed open area at storefront level, for pedestrians to have a better view of the merchandise displayed behind, there are wide windows and little or no spacing between openings. Upper story openings are predominantly narrow with a vertical orientation that accomplishes double-hung windows. These double hung windows should have between two and four lites. Never one and never more than four unless the window is excessively large.

Guidelines

1. The size and proportion of windows and door openings of an infill building should be similar to those on the adjacent façades.
2. Avoid infill panels when providing new windows in existing masonry openings.
3. Storefront restoration should return the facade to its original character appropriate.
4. Avoid concealing the original façade.
5. Avoid PVC/Vinyl materials.

The majority of storefronts have very common elements that include (1) entries, (2) kick plates, (3) display windows, (4) transom windows and a horizontal area for a canopy or sign.

TRANSOM WINDOWS

Transom windows are smaller windows above the display windows that functioned as early energy savers. They allowed daylight to enter deep into the interior of the space. When operable, they allowed excessive heat to escape. Transoms also continued the transparent quality of the storefront up to the top “frame” of the front facade, and are therefore an important element in the proportion of the building front.

Guidelines:

Often transom windows can still be found in downtown buildings underneath exterior cover-ups, and or above dropped ceilings. They should be retained whenever possible. If the ceiling inside the store has been lowered, the ceiling could slope up 2 to 3 feet back to meet the transom, or dark painted panels can be placed behind transom windows to help simulate transparency and depth.

DISPLAY WINDOWS

The display window is the link between the pedestrian environment outside and the business inside.

Guidelines:

1. A minimum of seventy-five percent (75%) of the front street level facade shall be transparent.
2. For remodeling, the original size, division and shape of display windows within the overall storefront frame should be preserved or recreated.
3. For an infill building, window frames should be wood, or appropriately colored aluminum in a profile in keeping with Hightstown’s historic character.
4. Reflective or mirrored glass is prohibited.
5. Heavily tinted glass on the first floor or street level should not be used because it conveys a conflicting modern design feeling. It also creates a blank wall effect, which may be offensive to the pedestrian. Such glass gives the appearance of

the property being vacant, un- or under-occupied and otherwise detracts from the property value and the perception of economic activity and viability of the business located there.

ENTRIES

Commercial storefront entries were typically recessed from the front plane of the structure. This provided a sheltered transition area to the interior of the store, more area for display space, and helped to emphasize the location of the entrance.

Guidelines:

1. Recessed entries should be retained in existing buildings and required in new storefront construction.
2. Commercial entry doors use large, glass panels with vertical proportions to aid a sense of invitation and openness to the business.
3. Solid or residential-type doors with small areas of glass should be avoided.
4. Openings containing double entry doors should be retained.
5. Painted wood doors and wood framing are preferred. Aluminum doors and doorframes, aluminum windows and their accessories with a clear aluminum finish are not acceptable, although colored anodized aluminum is acceptable, but with an historic character enhancing profile.

KICK PLATES

The kick plate, or bulkhead, functions to protect the display window by raising the glass area to a safer and more easily viewed height. Historically, materials have included wood panels, stone, brick and ceramic tile.

Guidelines:

1. The original kick plate materials should always be retained, maintained, or uncovered when possible.



Maintenance and Repair

Exterior materials will be addressed more extensively than those of the interior, as interiors are often dictated by business related items such as image, display, and theme. However, considerable attention should be made in inviting the original building design to work both inside and out.

Before considering any repair or remodeling, materials should be examined by an architect or contractor as to their actual condition and potential for cleaning or repair. Once evaluated, cleaning and repair may proceed. All work should be professionally done, as proper equipment, working experience, and basic knowledge can be utilized. We will briefly describe repair and maintenance for the store owner's basic familiarity.

WOOD

Hightstown's existing buildings use wood on the exterior primarily for window and door framing, trim, cornices, bracing and brackets. Although masonry dominates storefronts, maintenance and repair of wood is essential in restoring original building design and integrity. Wood accents the masonry, and is the material people actually put their hands on. This is a comforting, inviting material.

ARCHITECTURAL METALS

Architectural metals such as cast iron, galvanized steel, aluminum, copper, zinc, and tin, are used sparingly at roof parapet and flashing. Aluminum is also used for flashing, but mainly for window frames and doors.

Any metal encountered can be cleaned. As with masonry, care should be taken to avoid damage by using gentle methods. Sandblasting is to be avoided with cast iron being the only exception. Softer metals can be cleaned with solvents or sanding.

Ferrous metals (metals with an iron content and magnetic), such as steel door frames, should be painted. Copper, stainless steel, or other similar metals, were meant to be exposed. Aluminum can be left unfinished, painted, or factory finished with a baked coating.

Most metals in need of repair can be fabricated and replaced. Metals damaged beyond repair may be replaced by wood or other metal. Fiberglass or epoxy, may be used sparingly depending on the application and location in the facade. Dissimilar metals must be insulated from each other to avoid electrolysis, a naturally occurring reaction.

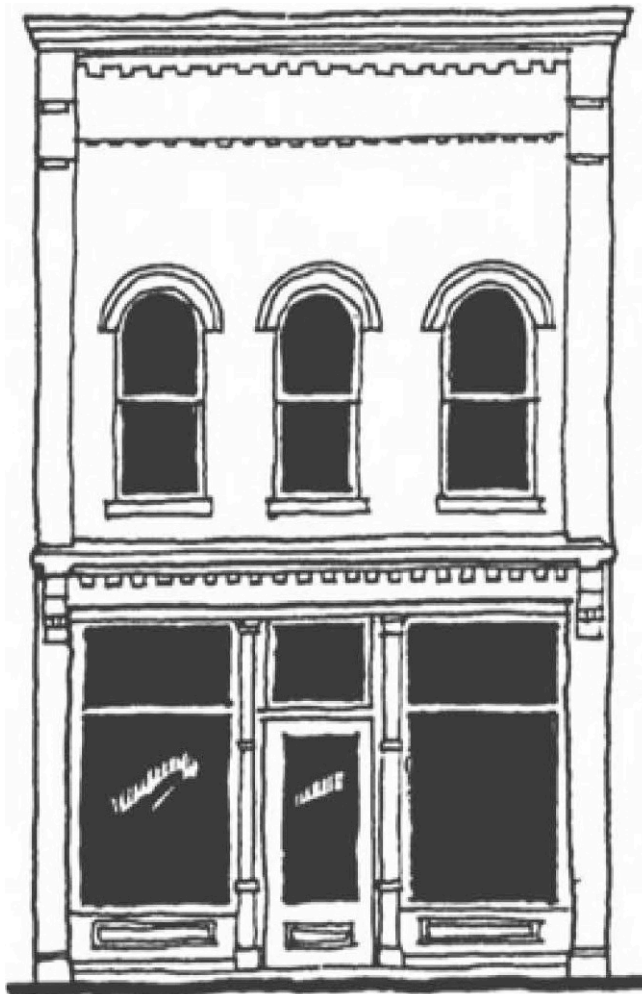
Paint Color

As with materials, the color scheme chosen for the facade should be sensitive to the time period the building was built. To determine the color scheme to be used, consult a professional or go to the local paint store and ask to see color cards for historic paint colors and their combinations.

If you have a masonry facade that is already painted and the paint seems to be holding - paint it again. If masonry is to be repainted, the colors used should be within the natural color range of the existing material.

Guidelines:

1. The color of buildings should relate to the adjacent buildings colors to create a harmonious effect.
2. Avoid colors which visually overpower or strongly contrast with adjacent building colors and established downtown color schemes as a whole.
3. The color of brick or other natural building materials should dictate the color family choice.
4. Colors should accentuate the architectural details of the building. The levels of coloration might be broken down as follows:
5. Base Color-Major Trim Color-Minor Trim Color-Accent Color.



BASE COLOR

- WALL SURFACES
- STOREFRONT PIERS
- CORNICE - WHEN SAME MATERIAL AS WALL

MAJOR COLOR

- CORNICES
- WINDOW HOODS
- WINDOW SASHES
- STOREFRONT CORNICE
- STOREFRONT COLUMNS
- STOREFRONT & BULKHEADS

MINOR COLOR

- WINDOW SASH
- DOORS

ACCENT COLORS

- SMALL DETAILS ON WINDOW HOODS, CORNICES, COLUMNS & BULKHEADS

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Masonry

As in most towns, a large number of Hightstown's buildings consist of brick masonry. There also exists some structures consisting of stone, and concrete block. It should not be an assumption that all masonry needs cleaning. Several buildings have already been cleaned and repaired, and others were never painted. Minor staining or discoloration can sometimes add character to a structure, or simply remain as an acceptable condition. If, however, the masonry is unacceptable, several cleaning methods may be used.

WATER CLEANING

Washing with water and a detergent is the simplest of all methods and is successful on lightly soiled masonry. This method is probably the easiest for the amateur, but also time consuming. Water cleaning involves two steps. The first is spraying to presoak the masonry, removing dirt deposits not tightly bonded to the surface. The second is time consuming and more difficult as it involves scrubbing with a hand or power brush. Whether done by an amateur or professional, care must be taken to use water efficiently. Cracks in walls or around openings can lead to interior water damage. Brick cleaning should be done before finishing the interior of that particular wall. Water cleaning should be avoided in cold weather, absorbed water can freeze and fracture surfaces. Test washing a small area of the wall will determine how long it takes and who will finish the job.

HIGH PRESSURE WATER CLEANING

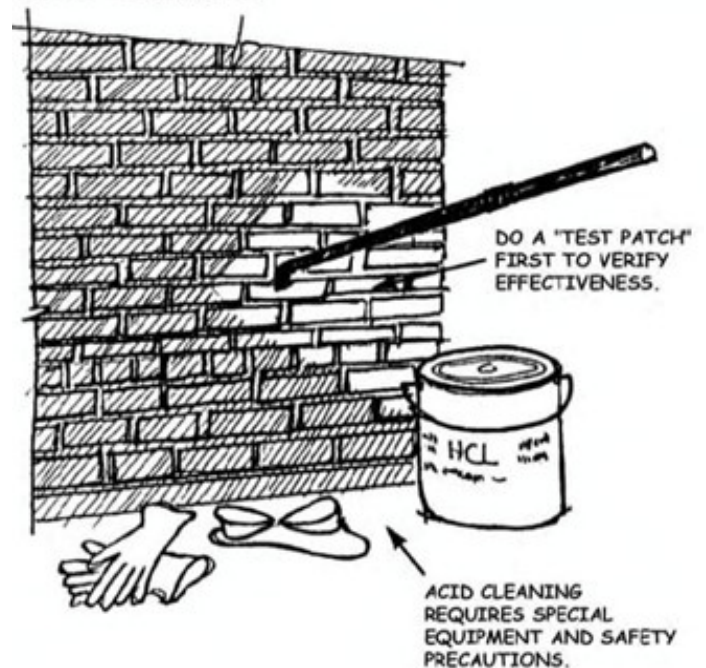
A newer method is to use special equipment that develops enough hydraulic pressure to "force spray" masonry. High amounts of pressure actually injects water into the surface of the masonry, forcing out dirt and staining. Even though less water is used in this process, interior water damage is still a concern as pressure can force water into openings. High pressure water cleaning should be done only

be professionals and should not exceed 600 p.s.i. (pounds per square inch).

CHEMICAL CLEANING

Due to the large variety of chemicals, potential toxicity, clean-up, and specialized equipment, professional help must be seriously considered. Chemical cleaning is best utilized for paint removal and elimination of deep stains. Care must be taken in the use of acids. Even in a diluted solution, acids can harm limestone and marble.

ACID CLEANING



SANDBLASTING

Not for the amateur, sandblasting is the most effective method of removing paint, stains, and deposits. It is also the most detrimental, especially when considering brick. Sandblasting removes the outer surface of the brick, exposing the softer inner surface. This leaves the brick more susceptible to weathering. Sandblasting also pits the surface, leaving horizontal areas and pockets for moisture

and dirt to collect. We strongly recommend sandblasting not be used on masonry unless it exists in an interior area protected from weather. The pitting and roughness it creates can then be used to an aesthetic advantage without the potential of premature weathering damage. A free test cleaning of a small area of the wall is usually done by a reputable contractor, as they can observe results and better determine a cost estimate.

TUCK POINTING

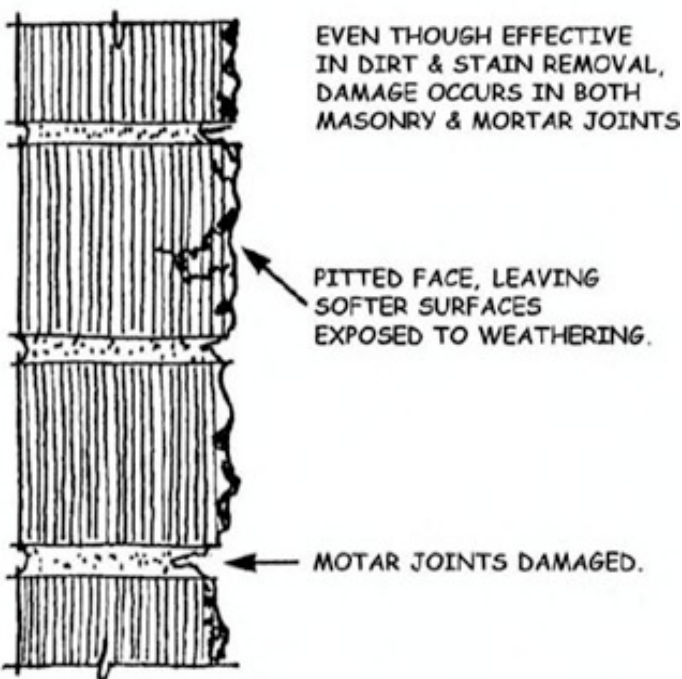
Weathering of masonry also involves the mortar joints. If masonry is to be cleaned, the addition of new mortar to the joints is necessary. This is called tuck pointing. The joints are first thoroughly cleaned out to existing sound mortar. Then, the new mortar is filled in and finished to match the depth and style of the intended original joint. The recommended mortar formula is two parts lime, one part white Portland cement, and eight to ten parts natural aggregate (sand). The best color match can be achieved by matching the sand color to the sand used originally in the historic mortar. Add color pigment if needed to match existing mortar, but do

not exceed 10% of total weight. After tuck pointing, the surrounding masonry must be cleaned as it is impossible to fill joints without touching them with mortar.

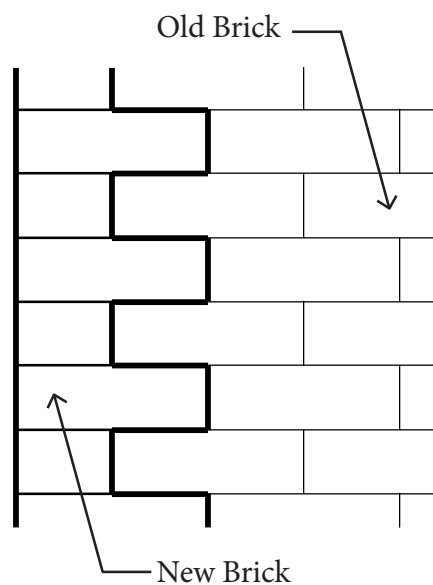
TOOTHING

An occasion may arise when an opening must be cut into or enlarged in an existing masonry wall. As the opening is cut into the wall, every masonry unit is cut back to the adjacent vertical joint. This allows new masonry units to be set in such a way as to blend in with existing masonry while creating a stronger joint.

SAND BLASTING



TOOTHING





Windows

Windows are one of the most prominent and important features of storefronts. Unfortunately, they are often the most altered and neglected of the storefront materials. Window replacement can be expensive and although marketed as energy saving, replacement really doesn't significantly save energy. The rate of return from the original cost and installation to the point of breaking even is a significant number of years. Additionally, the amount of energy expended to manufacture the windows should also be taken into account.

As an alternative, an interior single lite "storm" window can provide the same energy efficiency as window replacement, while maintaining the historic character of the original facade. Since, the cause of a draft is both due to air leaks and warm air cooling and falling upon touching the glass, the interior "storm" window solves both.

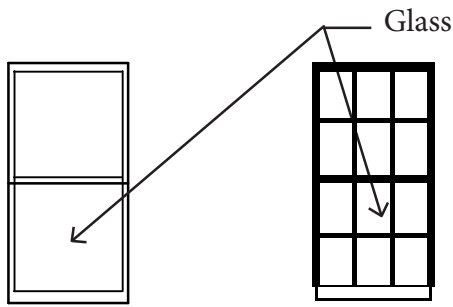
A window should only be replaced if it has deteriorated beyond repair, has been so severally altered that it can't serve it's intended purpose, or throws off the character of the structure.

For new construction, quality windows contain several attributes.

1. Energy Conservation. Modern units can be purchased with double or triple glazing as well as with a variety of gases between the lites. They can be thermally broken, which means the frame does not transfer temperature from the outside in. Both glazing and frames contain an air space and gasketing to eliminate frost and moisture penetration.
2. Light Quality. Proper sizing of the storefront window can enhance the amount of natural light entering. Glass can also be rated to control the type of light entering through, such as E-rated

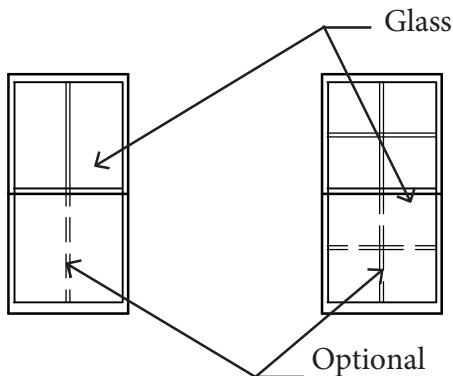


DOUBLE HUNG WINDOWS



AVOID

AVOID



DESIREABLE

DESIREABLE

glass which prevents discoloring of merchandise. This can be valuable to the store owner for merchandise display.

3. Aesthetics. Window manufacturers offer a wide variety of color, shape, and style of standard units. With additional cost, custom units can be made to fit any opening or building style. Properly designed windows will enhance the original character of the buildings.

If windows are completely replaced, the new units should contain the same proportions as the original. (This is not to be confused with replacement units that may be presently installed.) Consideration should be given to the location and sizes of horizontal and vertical mullions that provide design continuity throughout the building. Always use the

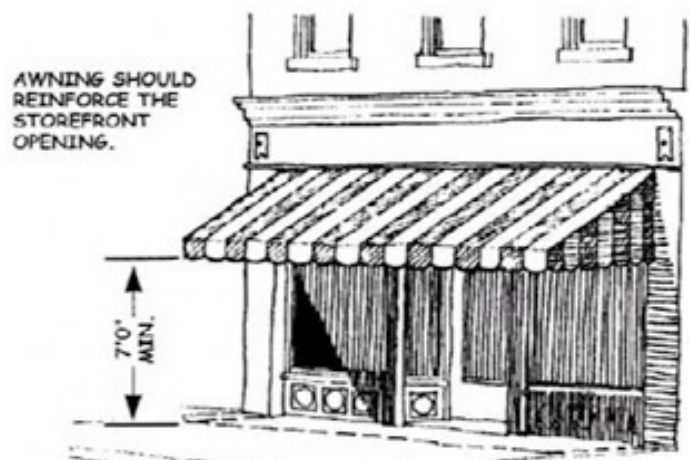
entire original window opening, even if the opening was partially filled in from previous remodeling.

AWNINGS

The canvas awning was an important design element of the traditional storefront. Photographic records show how the use of awnings softened an otherwise hard and rigid streetscape. Their main function was to shade the building and the merchandise located within; however, they were retractable to allow more daylight in when needed.

Secondarily, the awnings provided shelter for pedestrians from sun and rain, added color, and acted as a transition between the storefront and the upper façade. Only on occasion was the awning used for signage and in the case of Hightstown, this is discouraged. In these cases, lettering on the awning was primarily located on the valance, making it visible in either the lowered or raised position.

If an awning is to be used, its shape should reinforce the frame of the storefront opening. It should be attached below the storefront cornice or sign panel and should not cover the piers on either side of the storefront. The standard street level awning should be mounted such that its valance is approximately seven feet from the building and no less than seven feet (7'-0") from the ground. (See image below.)



The awning can also be a useful tool to disguise inappropriate storefront alterations while maintaining the proportions of the traditional storefront.

Awnings are available in several materials and colors of varying cost and durability. They are also available in a variety of profiles. However, the traditional commercial awning material is canvas and its profile is the watershed design. Other profiles tend to be too contemporary when placed on a traditional facade.

Awning color should be selected to insure compatibility with your building and with the color of adjacent buildings.

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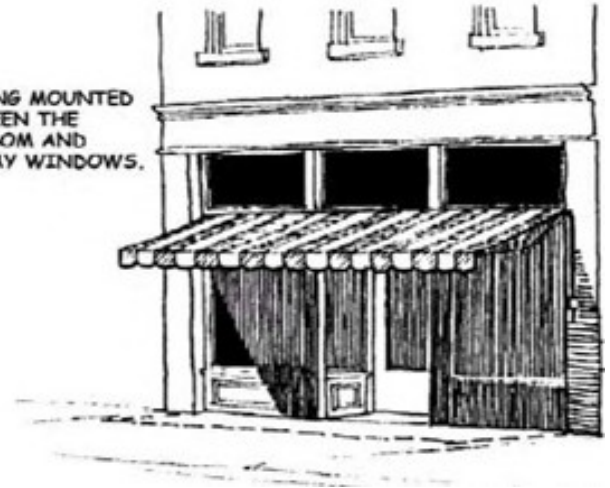
Awning color should be selected to insure compatibility with your building and with the color of adjacent buildings.

The Borough of Hightstown would promote the addition of awnings in just about every case in the DTC zone.

Guidelines for Awnings:

1. Retractable or operable awnings are encouraged. Fixed awnings should mimic the profile of operable units.
2. The emphasis of the awning should remain one of shelter and protection, rather than signage. In keeping with this, the awning should be loose and flowing, not stretched tight, subtle and subdued in color, not bright, extending well out over the sidewalk, not a mere window dressing.
3. The width of awnings should fit the geometry

AWNING MOUNTED BETWEEN THE TRANSOM AND DISPLAY WINDOWS.



of the building façade. They should not extend across multiple storefronts of different buildings, but should reflect the window or door openings below.

4. The use of water-repellent or vinyl-coated canvas is in keeping with awnings of the time. Plastic or aluminum awnings or canopies are not appropriate.
5. Fixed, round-headed awnings will be considered only over arched windows or doors, and only if placed below or within the arched lintel.
6. The awning valance, or skirt, shall be proportioned to the size of the awning, but shall not exceed twelve (12) inches in height.
7. Fixed awnings should incorporate a “free” valance that allows movement with the wind.
8. Signing on awnings is permitted (in place of other sign types) on the end panel or front valance only. Use lettering size proportional to the space available. However, this location is discouraged.
9. Back lighting of the awnings is inappropriate.
10. Use plain or striped fabrics. Large areas of bright colors are inappropriate.



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Signs and Graphics

Storefront signs are those which are located on the horizontal band dividing the storefront windows from the upper façade of the building. During the peak of commercial activity in Hightstown, the signs in the historic commercial district had a distinct character that was a part of the overall streetscape. Many of the historic buildings were built to accommodate a storefront sign band in their original design. The efforts of the Design Manual are not meant to turn back the clock, but rather to preserve and enhance that distinct and historic character of Hightstown. All signage is subject to Hightstown building and zoning codes.

Present day urban design with small town examples, shows that perpendicular signs bring in more business and enhance the character of a downtown. When building/wall mounted signs proliferated, shoppers came on foot or by carriage with ample time to view the different wall signs. Today with the automobile a perpendicular sign is more visible to motorists and safer as they do not have to take their eyes off the road ahead.

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS:

1. The storefront sign should be used to display the primarily name of the business only. Use only one line of lettering if possible, leaving out secondary information.
2. Use simple, bold lettering with sufficient contrast between the lettering and the background.
3. “Trademark” or “Logo” signs may not be acceptable if the color and character of the sign is not in keeping with the historic character of the area.
4. The maximum area of the sign is regulated by the sign ordinance.
5. Graphics in the sign are included in the maximum allowable area.

QUANTITIES, LOCATIONS AND SIZE

In the past, streetscapes had a variety of sign types that not only identified the business, but also the

name of the buildings, dates of construction, etc. The signs were simple, bold and well crafted. Lettering was in clear, no-nonsense styles, maximizing the contrast between the background and the lettering. Varying sign types can be found in the historic streetscape including: (1) architectural signs, (2) storefront signs, (3) window signs, (4) awnings, (5) projecting signs, and (6) painted wall signs and murals. Every building should select the most appropriate sign type for its architecture and location but, there should be no more than two of the same type in a row and there shall be more than four types before repeats can occur.

GUIDELINES:

1. The maintenance and restoration of any existing historic signs is encouraged in lieu of replacement. “Historic” shall signify prior to 1940.
2. Signage for a business not located within the building is not acceptable. Only one sign that contains the business name or graphic logo is permitted per street facing side. The exception is that a window sign may be used in addition to other sign types.
3. Signage should be located in such a way as to not obscure any architectural features of the building. A projecting sign with two faces is considered



Perpendicular Sign

one sign. Signs are important to the store owner for reasons of advertising, identity, and image. As they are an extremely visible element of the storefront, signs must be used carefully so as not to detract from facades. With a little forethought and careful planning, signage can embrace the store owners needs, their brand image as well as Hightstown's image.

PERPENDICULAR SIGNS:

Perpendicular signs are at right angles to the building face, either fixed to the wall or hanging from a bracket. Their major advantage over storefront or window signs is their ability to be seen by pedestrians and motorists from a distance down the street. If they get too large, however, they can obscure each other, so it is important to keep them small and simple. Only one projecting sign is permitted per building provided no other signs exist. The sign shall not extend further than three feet, six inches (3'-6") from the face of the building and shall not exceed six square feet (6 SF) in area. Projecting signs shall not be less than 10 feet from the grade beneath and shall not extend above the second story window sill or roof line, which ever is lower.

SIZE

Big does not necessarily mean powerful. Primary signs of proper size can combine with the entire storefront to become more meaningful than just the sign itself. The sign must be subordinate to the building, not the opposite. Actual size may vary, but the sign shall not exceed two and a half feet high. This size is appropriate for distances the sign will be read from in a downtown setting. The main letters should not be less than six inches (6") nor more than twelve inches (12") high. Lettering should account for at least fifty and no more than sixty percent of a signboard.

LETTERS:

Letter styles are numerous and vary tremendously. The store owner should have no problem finding a style representing the desired image. Letters are also available in many colors. Choose a color that

compliments the building as well as contrasts with the background of the signboard.

Light letters on a dark background provide the easiest reading. Because of the large variety of letters and letter types, it is recommended that a sign or advertising company be utilized.

MESSAGE

Messages should be kept simple in content. The major function of the sign is to introduce the storefront and its contents. Wording should be minimal and slogans avoided. Descriptive words should be used rather than providing listings of items to be sold. Simple wording is easily read by pedestrians and street traffic without becoming distracting.

PLACEMENT:

Storefronts should be limited to two signs - one primary and one secondary. The primary sign should be located above storefront display windows but below the sills of second floor windows. On many examples of turn-of-the-century buildings a continuous brick ledge or corbelling is used to separate the second floor and above from the storefront below. This space is ideal for sign placement, as it was often created for this purpose. In some instances, newer buildings contain areas above the highest windows for signage. This location is not acceptable. Other options for a primary sign location can be a perpendicular hanging sign. This is preferred over a wall sign as it is more visible to pedestrians and motorists, or an awning provided the awning is properly integrated with the building. Types of secondary signage include hanging, window, awning, or any sign that is located below the primary sign. Window signs should consist of a material and color that contrasts with the display, while being small enough to not interfere with the display area. (This is described further in the sign ordinance)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNS

Architectural signs are integrated into the building

fabric and are constructed of permanent materials such as stone or cast metal. Names and the dates of construction were common signs included on the façade. They were typically located in the roof parapet detailing or in a cornerstone detail.

These add a sense of history and place, to the character and fabric of Hightstown.

Guidelines:

1. Preserve existing architectural signs.
2. Promote the use of the original building names in new signage.

WINDOW SIGNS

Window signs were historically applied on the inside of the glass, painted directly onto the storefront glass, upper floor windows and doorways. The main focus of this style of signage is to target and inform approaching pedestrian. Therefore, window lettering typically provides more detailed information about the business. Today, most window signs are made of vinyl and applied to the outside of the window. Signs hanging on the window are less desirable and create a disorganized unplanned look. Lighted signs are prohibited.

Guidelines:

1. It may often be desirable to keep the display space clear. In these cases, insert the sign at the base or the head of the window, or both.
2. Keep the lettering small remembering that the reader will be in close proximity to the sign. Use several lines where necessary and consider curving the top line at the head of the window.
3. See the sign ordinance for signage calculations in the window area.
4. Display street numbers on or directly above the door, and business hours on the inside of the door or in an adjacent window.

LIGHTING

In the nineteenth century, Hightstown would have been dimly lit. Today we expect our cities to be bright

and lively at night. We must achieve an acceptable standard of lighting without compromising the essential character of the historic setting.

Guidelines:

1. Use indirect lighting and place spotlights discreetly, in such a way as to shield the source from pedestrians and vehicular traffic.
2. Neon lights or neon-like lights are not permitted.
3. Do not use flashing, moving or intermittent lights.
4. Do not use internally or back-lit signs, either projecting, wall mounted, or hung inside the window.
5. Do not use changeable or movable letters or graphics.

MATERIALS

Apart from architectural signs, the original exterior signs of Hightstown were constructed of wood and then painted. Window signs were painted, etched or gilded. Today a great range of materials are available, including metals and plastics, and their unconditioned use can lead to a confusion of signage, which detracts from the unique character of Hightstown. Modern sign materials are acceptable provided their design is handled with an understanding of the Victorian spirit. An exception is made in the case of internally lit and back-lit signs, their nature is inherently foreign to the solid character of brick and wood Victorian architecture and they are bound to strike a false and distracting note in the streetscape, which is why they are not permitted.

Guidelines:

Use painted wood where practicable. It is the authentic material and will look appropriate against the weathered brick of Hightstown's commercial façades. Modern materials that simulate wood may be acceptable, and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

1. Supporting brackets for projecting signs should be metal, painted a dark color.

COORDINATION OF SIGNS

At the time of the commercial boom in Hightstown (1860's – 1900's) most buildings were owned and occupied by single businesses. Merchants thought of their entire façade as potential sign space. For this reason, the signs were all well coordinated. Ownership and business use patterns have changed over the years, and many buildings now contain multiple businesses. It is important that tenants and owners cooperate to design a sign package, which will help to reunify the building façade.

Guidelines:

1. Multiple-tenant buildings should submit a Sign Package that includes building elevations (drawn to scale), sign types, locations and sizes. Do not put up signs piecemeal. View the building as a whole and plan a unified design strategy to take advantage of all possible sign locations.
2. Tenants and owners should use a common lettering style and color scheme on the building
3. Design the Sign Package to emphasize the whole width and geometry of storefronts and individual buildings. Avoid the use of unified signage across multiple buildings that are obviously separate and of different and distinct scale or architecture.
4. Consider giving the entire building an identifiable name, i.e. "Hightstown Mercantile", with individual business signs near the entrances, or on a common directory.

INSTALLATION

With the high turnover of businesses in many of the historic buildings, signage has become temporary in nature. Every effort must be made to make sure that damage to the building is minimized when signage is installed.

Guidelines:

1. The installation of any signage or graphics must have a minimal impact on the building and must allow the building to return to its original condition upon signage removal.
2. Reuse of existing mounting brackets, studs or holes is desirable. Never drill holes into bricks, stones, etc.

*All Signage must be in compliance with the Sign Ordinance of the Borough of Hightstown unless a variance is granted by the Historic Preservation Commission or the Planning Board.



Lighting

Lighting on the façade of a building is an important element when considering visibility during evening hours. Lighting can add special character to the nighttime appearance of the downtown. It can illuminate building entrances, pedestrian walkways, advertising, or bathe special architectural features on the facades of buildings. However, if left without consideration of the entire downtown experience, unchecked lighting can produce visual chaos, waste energy, and create safety concerns. Storefront lighting should be tastefully done either to highlight a retail product, architectural details, or signage. Flashing lights, flashing signage, or excessively bright lights are not acceptable. Generally the street lighting installed by the city provides good illumination of the lower portion of the building facade. To attract attention to the storefront area itself, a couple traditional lighting methods are listed below.

Guidelines:

1. Lighting fixtures should be concealed or integrated into the overall design of the project. The light source should be hidden from direct pedestrian or motorist view.
2. Well-lit display windows
3. Attract attention to items in your window
4. Residual light washes the sidewalk and attracts pedestrians
5. Light over the recessed entry door
6. Light signage in the window

Pedestrian-Oriented Design

Throughout history there have been places in cities where people could go to see people, and be seen. Downtown Hightstown has served a traditional role as a place where people can meet, see others, and be seen themselves. This is part of what makes a downtown special. It is often the downtown “main street” that distinguishes small towns from generic suburban environments. Maintaining the pedestrian quality of the main street through the use of “pedestrian-oriented design” is critical.

Guidelines:

1. The design of the building should help make the street enjoyable, visually interesting and comfortable. Individual buildings should be integrated with the streetscape to bring activity within the building in direct contact with the people on the sidewalk.
2. Avoid blank walls, closed curtains, and neglected storefronts. These are all pedestrian turn-offs. Put two or three in a row and you’ve killed the attraction to pedestrians. It doesn’t work in a mall and it doesn’t work downtown.
3. Natural light should be allowed to penetrate into the store interior.
4. Displays should allow the customer a full view of the store interior.
5. Window displays should be attractive when viewed from both the sidewalk and the store interior.
6. Light fixtures should be hidden from view.
7. Window displays should allow people in the store to see out.
8. Existing uninteresting street facades can be enhanced with detailing, artwork, landscaping or other visually interesting features.



Pedestrian Access

Building and business identity are important considerations to the store owner. Accesses must be considered important to insure convenience, safety, and repeat business of the customer. Pedestrian access must be associated with parking and a clear identity of entry points.

FRONT ENTRANCE

If at all possible, the front entrance should be the most important. Front entrances are integral to storefront design, giving the street the “hometown” image, inviting browsing and window shopping. Canopies, color, signage, and proportions of the building can combine with the front entrance to create a strong image.

REAR AND SIDE ENTRANCE

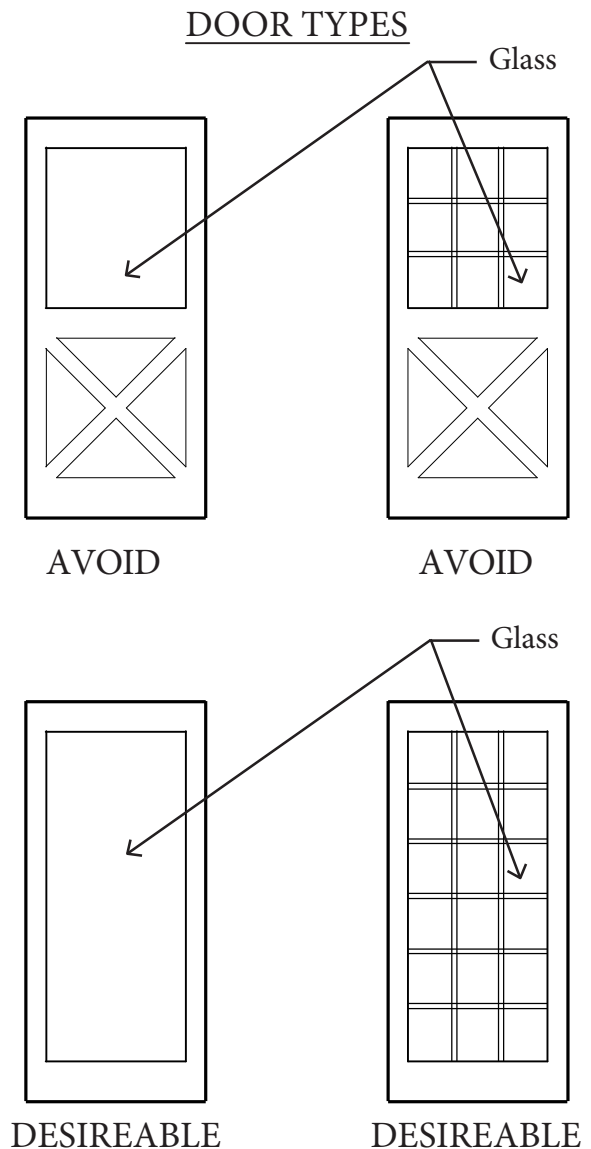
In the past, rear entrances served as service entrances only and were not intended for public use. Today, with the emphasis on automobile parking taking place behind businesses, the rear entrance is an important public access. Rear and side entrance treatments should include the entire exposed rear and side walls for identity. The potential impact of these walls is often overlooked. The 2014 Master Plan Re-examination stresses the contributing aspect of rear entries to the pedestrian experience.

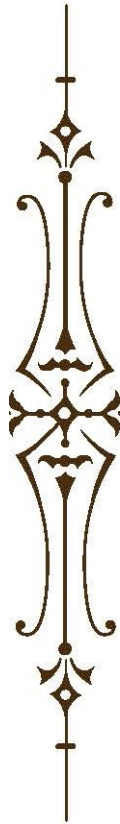
Guidelines:

1. The rear façade entrance should be clean and well maintained and present a welcome appearance. A small sign, awnings, display windows and planter boxes can improve the appearance.
2. A combination of front entrances with side or rear entrances is called “double fronting.” There are certain advantages to double fronting:

Front, side, or rear entrances must share a common characteristic of presenting an attractive door to the pedestrian. Usually, the best doors are the original units properly maintained and repaired. If these are beyond repair, new doors can be made to closely resemble the original doors.

Another option is to use simple, cleanly designed aluminum doors that will not detract from existing wall treatment. The so-called Colonial, Georgian, or Early American doors are poor representations of their namesake.





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Storefront Elements

Strong storefront elements can be copied and extended across the sidewall. Examples are facade trim, window head millwork, wall accent trim, or paint color. The introduction of these elements add a horizontal or vertical rhythm, and interrupt an otherwise monotonous wall. This also prepares the pedestrian for what they will see when approaching their storefront.

DOORS AND WINDOWS

When a sidewall is exposed, and is adjacent to parking or pedestrian access, the introduction of a door would serve not only as an entrance, but would add interest to the wall as well. The door should include trim and other physical amenities to be inviting and avoid the appearance of a hole in the wall. The addition of windows visually opens the wall and buildings interior to the pedestrian. Caution should be used when adding doors, windows, and their amenities to avoid competing with main entrance.

Also, the design of new elements should be thought about carefully to tie into the styles of historic Hightstown. In most cases, “off the shelf” doors and windows from big box home centers will be out of character and context. Appropriate doors and windows can be ordered from a local lumber yard or home center. (See image at left for desirable door styles as well as those to avoid.

BLANK SIDEWALLS OF BUILDINGS

The introduction of vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes, as well as adjacent building demolition will create a potential of exposing sidewalls. These walls are more difficult to aesthetically treat because there is less to work with.

Trim is held to a minimum, and there generally are few windows, doors, or other features to treat. However, there are several treatments that can be used to help “dress up” a blank wall.

PAINTING AND CLEANING

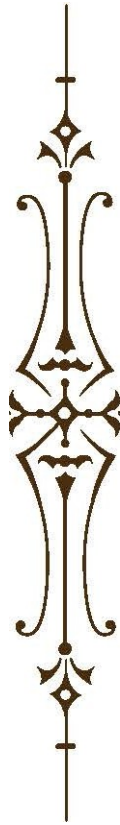
If it is determined that the wall in question contains sufficient architectural elements to leave unaltered, cleaning and painting may be satisfactory. It is important though to keep in mind that painted masonry is costly to maintain, requiring touch-ups every few years. In the long run, chemically cleaning/removing paint from the exterior surface may be more cost effective. Cleaning, painting, and repair of wood and metal trim will compliment the remainder of the wall.

GRAPHICS / MURALS

Wall graphics can be visually unappealing if done incorrectly. Too many colors, colors used incorrectly, proportion, and type of graphic can become distracting and sometimes worse than a blank wall. We strongly urge the following:

1. Submit a colored and correctly scaled drawing of the graphic and sidewall for review and approval of the design committee.
2. The graphic relates directly to the store’s product or intent. This assigns a definite purpose to the graphic, other than merely covering a wall.
3. If you would like to consider a mural, contact the Hightstown Cultural Arts Commission and they will assist with finding an appropriate artist to paint the wall mural.





Landscaping

While there is little photographic evidence of extensive landscaping in downtown Hightstown in the past, there are many roles, which plants and related landscape amenities can assume either as central features or as adjuncts to modern urban development. They include a variety of clearly functional uses such as the creation of shade, the buffering of active pedestrian areas from streets and parking lots, and the screening of unsightly development. Also included are equally important visual uses such as helping to establish a comfortable environment adjacent to large buildings, reducing heat-gain associated with large paved areas, providing a sense of structure and organization to urban open spaces, and adding a wide variety of color and texture to the overall setting.

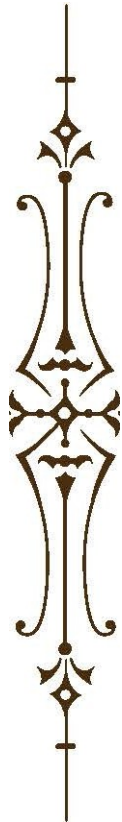
Landscaping of the streetscape can help to soften the pedestrian environment along the sidewalk by adding color and life to an otherwise hard, somewhat noisy area. Plantings can be used at rear and side entrances of buildings to make them more attractive. These plantings can be permanent or in planters which are portable. Plantings can be used to screen trash receptacles, non accessible doorways, and parking areas.

It should be noted that landscaping requires maintenance and is susceptible to damage. If you incorporate plantings into your plans they must be maintained. An empty or poorly maintained flower box can be unsightly. Shrubbery or trees that are not properly or regularly trimmed could be an eyesore.

Consult with a qualified nursery to select plantings which will perform well given the locations and conditions of your site.

Guidelines:

1. Highlight important architectural features and structures by use of distinctive landscaping.
2. Visually and physically buffer parking lots from adjacent buildings and pedestrian walkways with groupings of plant materials.
3. Frame and edge existing and proposed building where feasible with appropriate types of plant material to achieve human scale.
4. Carefully locate street trees and shrub plantings with the downtown area to buffer and separate walkways from traffic. Create shade where needed for pedestrians establish more clearly defined pedestrian use areas.
5. Provide canopy trees to shade parked cars, but establish where practical. Tree planting in parking lot islands will reduce heat-gain and should be encouraged.
6. Avoid fruit bearing trees and shrubs.
7. Thorned shrubbery is prohibited.
8. Flowering/colorful plantings are encouraged.



Visual Screening

In attempting to create the most aesthetic pedestrian experience possible, it is important to conceal the visually intrusive material from view. Historically, utility areas or service entrances were located off of a service alley. Today, many of those service alleys or streets are now utilized by pedestrians as entrances from off street parking areas. Also, the amount of mechanical equipment has increased dramatically; therefore it is important to minimize the visual impact as much as possible. Trash receptacles, condensing units, electrical transformers, and other types of equipment are obtrusive and often impair pedestrian traffic. As essential as they may be, these objects do little to add to the aesthetics of the building. In some cases they can become “canvases” for artwork. If you would like your utility equipment painted in an artful manner, please contact the Hightstown Cultural Arts Commission.

Guidelines:

1. Elimination: If possible, eliminate these objects. Trash receptacles can be located inside if there is space available without endangering health or creating an odor problem. Air conditioning condensers can be roof mounted and electrical transformers can be installed inside the building. However, this is a costly procedure as transformers must be housed in a fire-rated and ventilated area.
2. Placement: The most economical method of “screening” is placing unwanted objects away from pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Consideration should be given to access for maintenance and pickup especially if the objects in question are trash receptacles. Attention should also be given to adjacent property owners and their pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns.
3. Concealment: In many instances, trash receptacles, condensers, or transformers must occupy the same general area desired for pedestrians. The only option is concealment.

There are many visual barriers available on the market. Wood fences, or metal fences with wood or plastic slats are a few. These are acceptable, but a preferable method is to construct visual barriers with materials consistent with the adjacent building. A blending of materials is more compatible with the storefront. Another method of concealment is the use of landscaping. With professional assistance, the proper pattern and species of plants can be realized. It should be noted that landscaping will need care.

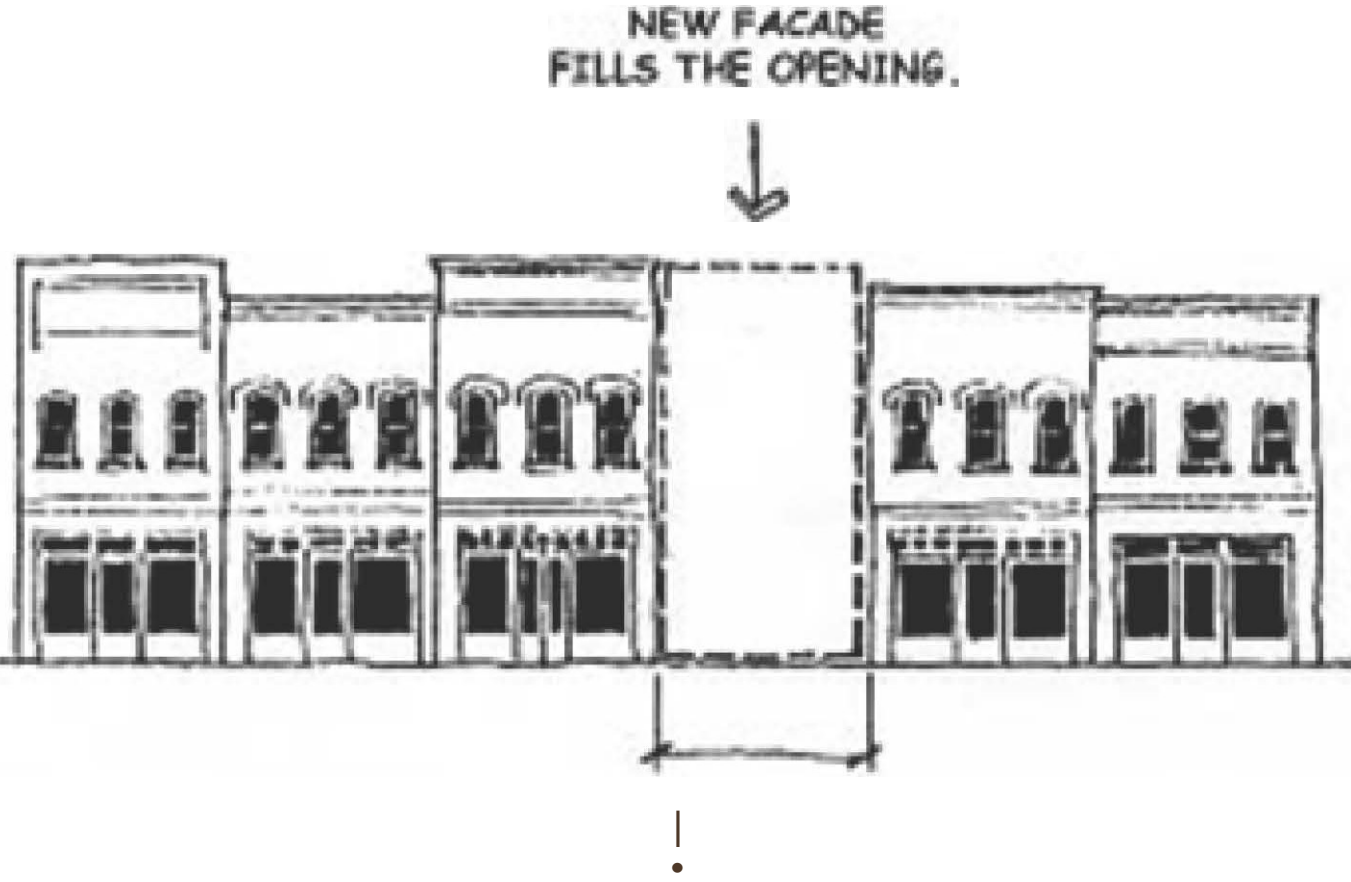
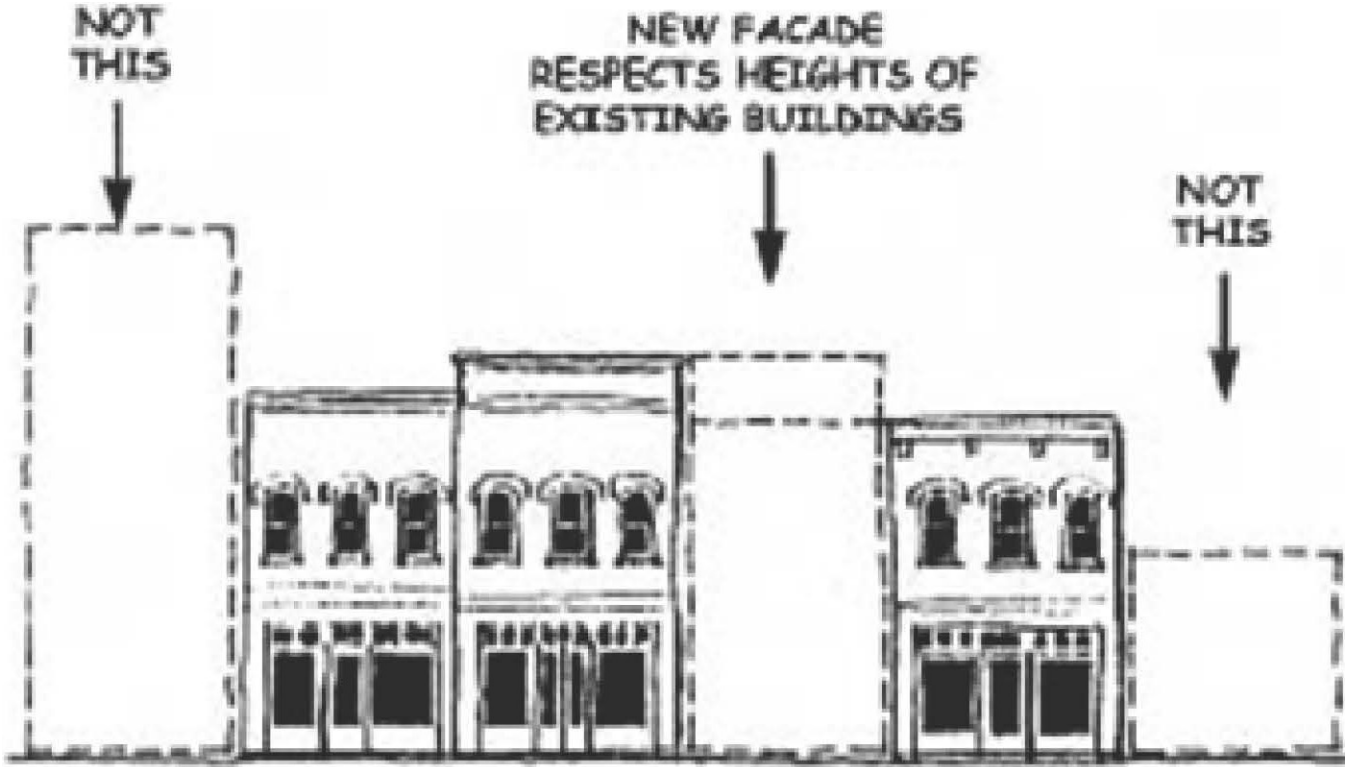
4. Artwork: Paint them to attract rather than detract. Utilize them as a “canvas” for a mural. Any size can be a mural.

Parking

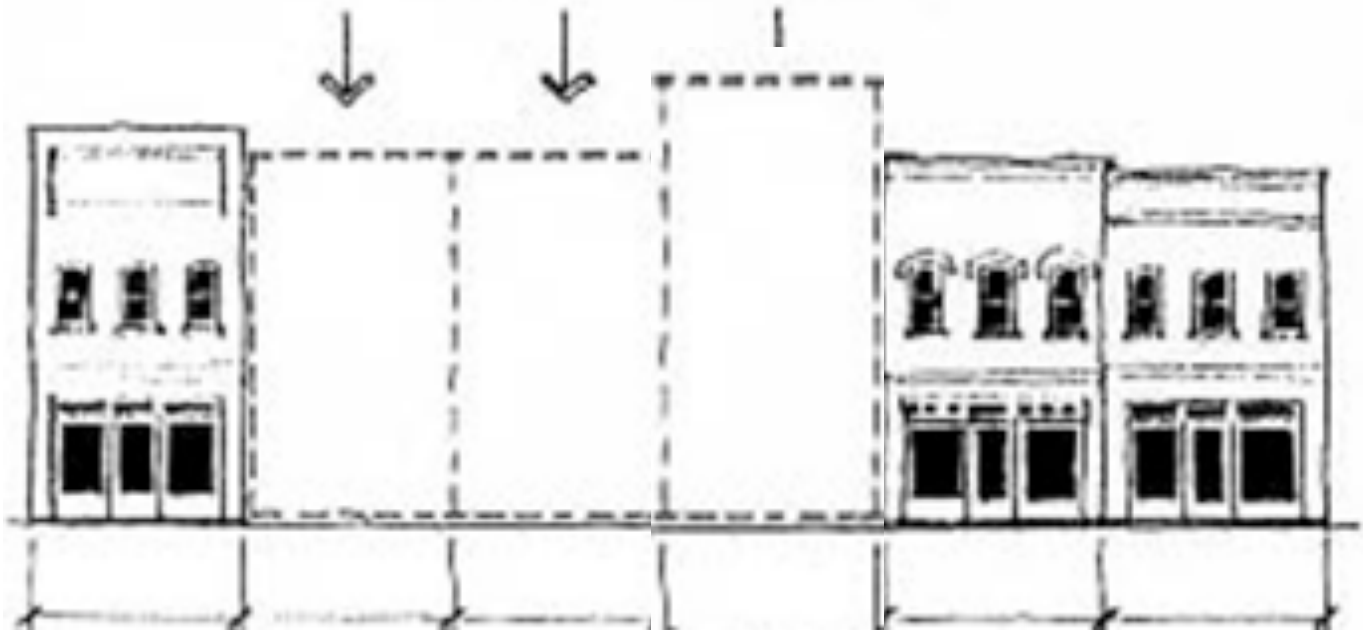
The proper placement of the parking areas in a traditional downtown are important factors in ensuring commercial success and maintaining a unique pedestrian experience.

Guidelines:

1. Every effort should be made to maximize the retail space directly on Main Street and locate parking areas behind the buildings.
2. Parking lots should be screened from the street and the sidewalk either by walls, plantings, or both. If walls are used, their material should be compatible with the walls of existing adjacent buildings. Walls should be at least eighteen inches (18”) high.
3. Parking structures should take advantage of the topography of the site to conceal the structure to the extent possible from public view. The same care should be taken in the design of the parking as with any other building regarding setbacks, height, proportions façade openings, detailing and materials. The structure should complement the streetscape through the accent landscaping or other pedestrian amenities.
4. Parking structures should be designed to minimize the use of blank facades directly on the street. The first level should be developed as commercial space with parking located behind the upper façade.



NEW FACADE RECREATES
RHYTHM OF EXISTING FACADES
BY DIVIDING SPACE INTO BAYS.



Infill Structures

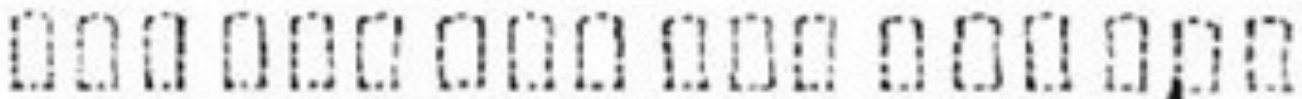
PROPORTION

The height and width of infill structures will be determined by the proportions of buildings immediately adjacent. Height should be varied but not overly high or low. This is one of the important elements to consider when designing new structures or additions to existing structures. Varied heights can mix with each other in visually interesting ways, however a building, which is significantly taller or shorter than adjacent development, will seriously disrupt the existing scale of the downtown area. The width of a new structure should fill the entire void between buildings. If the void is very wide, the facade should be broken up into discernible bays which mimic the rhythm of facades on the streetscape.

Guidelines:

1. The heights of new buildings shall conform to the average height of buildings on the block.

2. The height of new buildings shall not exceed three (3) stories nor be higher or lower than the adjacent building by more than ten percent (10%). The minimum height requirement is two (2) stories, and within ten percent (10%) of existing adjacent buildings.
3. Owners should strive to maintain compatibility with adjacent cornice lines, floor to floor heights where these are strongly expressed, sign bands, and any other elements which serve to unify the street elevation as a whole.
4. The proportion of infill buildings should be sympathetic to the proportion of their neighbors.
5. Break up building masses into units of scale that



STOREFRONT RHYTHM

WINDOW RHYTHM

relate to adjacent structures.

- Design façade details, window openings and entries to conform to approximately the same proportional patterns of adjacent structures.

SIZING

New construction on vacant lots in downtown should be encouraged. The success of these buildings can be enhanced by recreating the original rhythm of existing building facades. It is important that individual buildings act as part of the entire street facade. When a building is missing and a parking lot or park takes its place, the streetscape is disrupted where these obvious “holes” exist.

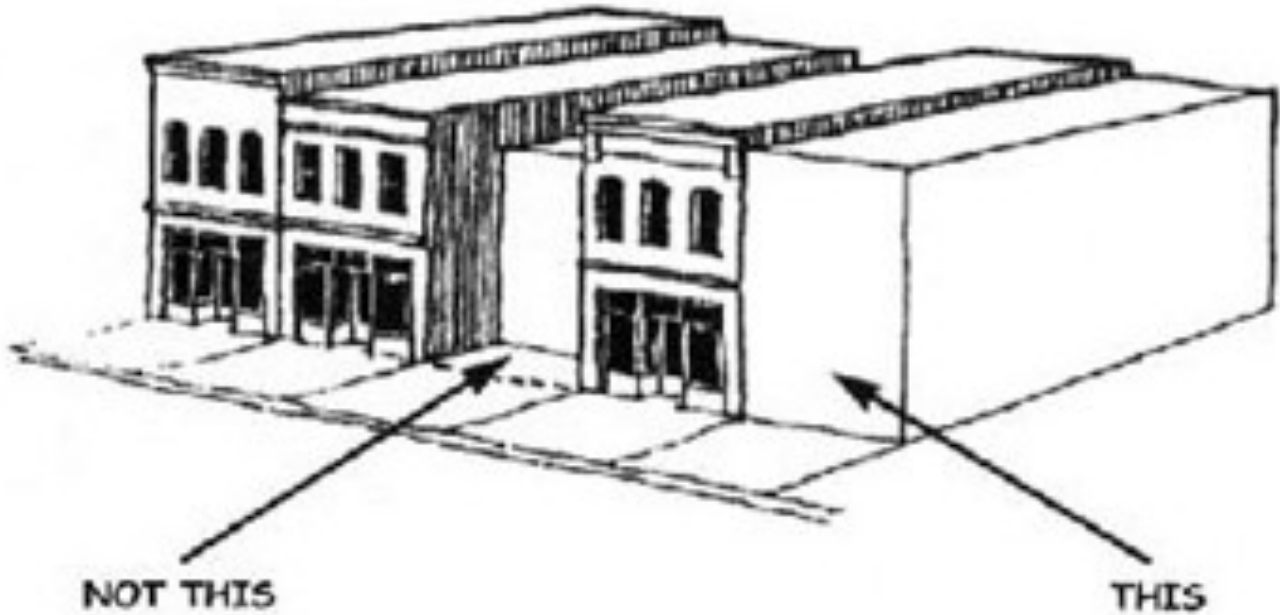
The design of new buildings must be appropriate and compatible with neighboring buildings. Because these infill buildings are new they should look new and not attempt to duplicate historic structures.

There appearance, however should be sensitive to the characteristics of its surrounding buildings. Infill structures must take design cues from existing architectural parameters already established in downtown.

See left and above for images of infill structures.

COMPOSITION

The organization of elements of new facades should be similar to that of surrounding facades. Storefront cornice heights, cornice heights, bulkhead heights, rhythms that exist throughout the block should be carried out in the new facade. Existing window opening patterns of the upper facade and existing window openings of the lower storefront should be acknowledged in the new design. The ratio of window opening to solid wall should also be sympathetic to nearby buildings.



NEW FACADES ARE BUILT FLUSH WITH THE EXISTING STOREFRONTS.

See image on the next page.

BUILDING SETBACK

Infill structures should align their facades flush with the adjacent buildings to reinforce the rhythm and consistency of the streetscape. Nothing does more to negatively change the social space of a small downtown street than the front building setback. The recent emphasis on the automobile and parking lots in front of commercial structures can effectively destroy the pedestrian experience. It is far better to build right up to the sidewalk and facilitate the chances for browsing, social interaction and people watching. On occasion creating public space with a

larger building setback can be successful, if the emphasis remains on creating a space that complements and enhances the streetscape. See image on the next page.

Guidelines:

1. Infill buildings shall be built to the Main Street front property line, flush to adjacent buildings. Exceptions may be granted if the setback is pedestrian oriented and contributes to the quality and character of Main Street.
2. Arcades adjacent to Main Street sidewalks are encouraged to increase the effective width of the narrow sidewalks and provide a sheltered pedestrian path along store display windows.
3. No side setbacks are allowed unless next to a public pedestrian way.

MATERIALS

Almost all of the buildings within the commercial core were constructed with brick, stone or wood. Most of the original downtown buildings built in the 1850's and 1860's were constructed of wood, almost all of which were lost to fire or decay and were replaced by masonry structures. The most dominant building material in downtown Hightstown is brick. Infill facades should be constructed with materials similar to that of the adjacent buildings and should blend in with the other architectural styles. Material color should be chosen that is compatible with adjacent facades.

Guidelines:

1. An infill building and façade should be composed of materials similar to original adjacent façades (example: local brick or stone).
2. New buildings should not stand out against the others but be compatible with the general area.
3. The use of exposed or painted concrete masonry units is not acceptable.
4. The use of materials that attempt to mimic traditional materials is unacceptable. An example would be fiberglass panels that are molded to look like real brick, or vinyl molded to look like wood horizontal lap siding.

ROOFS

One of the major differences between residential and commercial buildings is the roof pitch or roofline. Residential structures usually have some form of sloping or pitched roof, whereas commercial structures are known for their relatively flat roofs, often hidden by the extension of the from wall plane. If this vertical extension is low, it is known as a parapet, if the extension beyond the roof plane is great, sometimes doubling the height of the building,

it is known as a false front.

Guidelines:

1. The predominant roof shape in the commercial core is flat (slightly sloped to drain), with articulated parapets. These parapets, often embellished with brick detailing, are often stepped or sloped to achieve a visually interesting yet harmonious sequence along the building façade.
2. Infill building roofs shall be flat or gently pitched and hidden behind parapet walls that articulate the rhythm of the building.
3. Roof edges should be related in size and proportion to adjacent buildings.
4. Top edges of parapets or false fronts should be emphasized with corbeling, brackets, etc.

CHAIN BUILDING DESIGNS

Chain buildings, such as those that have been designed to reflect a corporate/franchise appearance, have been designed in such a way as to make the services or goods sold immediately recognizable through the use of a specific architectural design, materials, and colors of the building.

These were first developed on or near high-speed freeways where taking the time to read a sign would be too difficult. Such designs are generally in conflict with the characteristics of pedestrian oriented commercial storefronts.

Guidelines:

1. Chain buildings utilizing their corporate standards are prohibited.
2. Chain building designs that meld into the fabric of the historic downtown are acceptable with review by the Architectural Review Committee and the Hightstown Historic Preservation Commission.



APPENDIX A

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S "STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION."

The following Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

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 historic materials or alteration 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 in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.
7. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
8. 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.
9. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
10. 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 massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
11. 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.





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Downtown Hightstown Design Manual

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