

Monroeville Historic Preservation Commission

Rehabilitation, New Construction & Demolition

Guidelines

for

The Monroeville Downtown Historic District

Recorded in The National Register of Historic Places September 16, 2009

Guidelines Amended July 21, 2016

Commission Members:

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STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings are used to certify historic rehabilitations and are also used for grant-funded projects.

STANDARD #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.

STANDARD #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.

STANDARD #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.

STANDARD #4: Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

STANDARD #5: Distinctive features, finishes, hardware, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be retained and preserved.

STANDARD # 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. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

STANDARD #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.

STANDARD # 8: Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

STANDARD # 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 massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

STANDARD # 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.

LIST OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

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REHABILITATION GUIDELINES

Rehabilitation Guidelines address issues dealing with changes in appearance of existing buildings: Style, Storefronts, Awnings, Signs, Upper Story Windows, Access, Doors, Rear Entrances, Roofs, Cornices, Materials, Wood, Masonry, Metals, and Color.

STYLE

A basic premise of historic rehabilitation is “to thy building’s own style be true.” In other words, do not attempt to make a building look earlier or more ornate than it is. In appearance, the Monroeville Downtown Historic District consists mostly of one and two story brick buildings. Building forms are typically simple with flat roofs and projecting cornices.

STOREFRONTS

Through time, many of the historic commercial buildings in Monroeville have been altered in keeping with changing trends and fashions. For example, one trend, which swept through cities across the country in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, was concealing the ornamental details and materials of the historic facade behind a plain front in order to make the building appear modern and streamlined. In Monroeville, change occurred more often on storefronts than on the upper levels of the facades. The first approach in rehabilitation is to uncover an original façade without damaging the structure, whenever possible. When the original facade no longer exists, the current structure may be preserved as it is, the façade recreated based on historical or physical evidence, or a new design composed of traditional features that are compatible with nearby buildings may be created. A few storefronts have evolved over the years and have acquired their own sense of identity, such as the Monroe County Bank Building, which at one time had a corner-facing storefront. For more detailed information on Storefront Rehabilitation, refer to [Preservation Brief #11, Storefronts](#).

AWNINGS

In addition to being an inexpensive way to add color and vitality to a streetscape, awnings are practical. Retractable canvas awnings are energy efficient and may dramatically reduce gain heat in the summer. Storefront awnings provide shade for merchandise in the display window and a sheltered entrance for customers. Location, material, color, and shape are key features to consider when reviewing an awning COA.

Aluminum awnings and rigid flat metal canopies added in the midcentury or later still exist in the Monroeville Historic District. Such awnings may be appropriate for buildings built in the 1950s and 1960s if they are compatible with the scale and structure of adjacent structures.

SIGNS

Signs are not only a means for identifying individual businesses, but they also add to the general character of Monroeville. Signs provide color, vitality, and interest. They can create a sense of unity and definition to the streetscape. The signage design guidelines should be used as an overlay, or in addition to Monroeville’s existing sign ordinance. Signs should be evaluated based on design, location, type, material, lighting, and size. Flashing and electric scrolling signs are not permitted.

UPPER STORY WINDOWS, ACCESS, DOORS, AND REAR ENTRANCES:

In Monroeville, commercial activity was focused on the first level while the second level often provided storage space, office space for professionals, and/or living space for merchants. The rhythm created by the pattern of vertical upper story windows is a very important unifying feature of downtown. Today, many upper floors in Monroeville's downtown are unoccupied, and the closed windows create a negative image. Better access to these upper stories may be an important design issue in the future. Rehabilitation of back entrances is increasingly important for public use as off-street parking lots are developed behind buildings. Use material and colors that coordinate with the main facade. [Refer to Preservation Brief #3, for technical information on Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings.](#)

ROOFS AND CORNICES

A distinguishing feature of commercial buildings is their roofline. In Monroeville most commercial buildings have flat roofs and parapets that often display corbelled brick work. This upper part of the facade is an especially important ornamental feature of Monroeville's many one-story buildings. The ornamental cornice at the top of the facade gives the building a "finished" look. The repetition of cornices along the street creates a horizontal line, which visually unifies the block.

MATERIALS, WOOD, MASONRY, AND METALS:

As downtowns evolved, early frame buildings were replaced with fire resistant masonry construction. In Monroeville, one and two story brick buildings replaced many original frame buildings. Masonry encompasses a wide variety of natural and manufactured materials, including, but not limited to: brick, tile, terra cotta, stone, cast stone, and concrete, as well as mortar. Color, texture, mortar joints, and bond patterns define the overall character of downtown buildings. Brick is the dominant material in downtown Monroeville. In several cases brick buildings have been covered with inappropriate materials, such as plywood panels. Sheet metal paneling is not an appropriate material for storefronts.

Another key issue in Monroeville may be the maintenance of brick, including repointing. The Preservation Briefs provide technical information on issues such as: Brief #1 – [Assessing Cleaning and Water Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings](#), Brief #2 – [Repointing Mortar Joints](#), Brief #6 - [Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings](#), Brief #7 - [The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra Cotta](#). It is important to preserve other materials found on historic commercial buildings, such as plate glass windows, cast iron supporting columns, stamped metal, [vitriolite](#) or [Cararra glass](#), and decorative woodwork. Vitriolite panels may be repaired or replaced by providers such as Vitriolite Specialists at www.vitriolitespecialist.com.

REHABILITATION

COLOR

Color is an inexpensive practical way to breathe new life into downtown buildings. Painting an unpainted structure turns a low maintenance material into a high maintenance one, and may detract from the structure's original beauty. The use of color can have a dramatic positive or negative impact on the district.

When considering painting a structure within the Historic District, please refer to the [Monroeville HPC Color Palette guidelines](#) or sample exterior historic palettes available at City Hall or local paint stores before submitting a COA. Note that any repainting of colors already approved after the 2009 guidelines were adopted is considered maintenance and does not require a COA. However, any paint applied prior to 2009 that is being re-used, or any new color being considered, must be approved with a COA by the HPC.

REHABILITATION

STYLE - #1

*Respect the original design
of the building.*

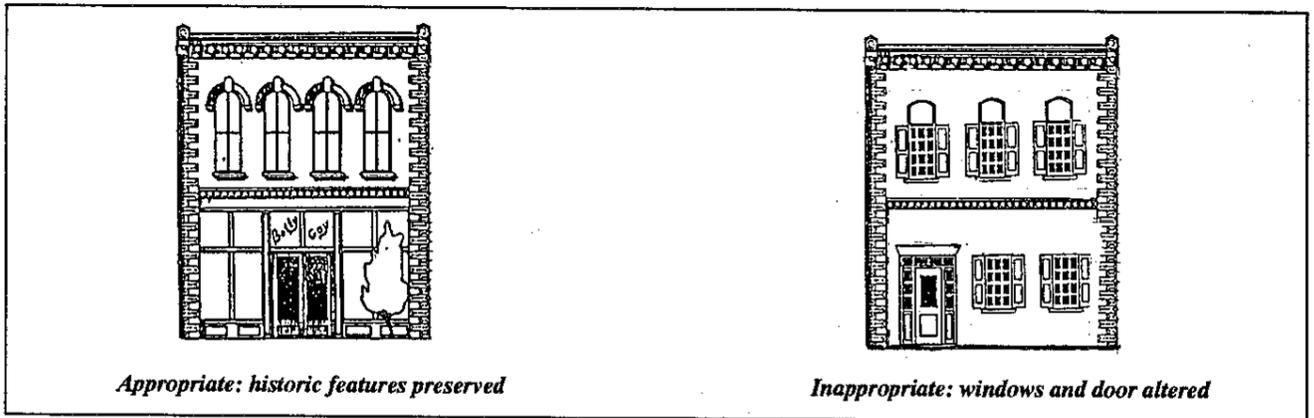
PRESERVATION: Preserve and retain architectural details and character—defining features of a building. (See [Preservation Brief #17](#)) Repair, rather than replace, the existing historic details and ornamentation.

ALTERATIONS: Preserve older alterations that have achieved historic significance based on their age (older than 50 years) or design character. More recent alterations that are not historically significant may be removed.

REPLACEMENT FEATURES: Replacement of missing architectural elements, including lighting and hardware, should be based on accurate duplication of original features. Avoid adding details which make the building appear older, younger, more ornate, or plainer than it originally was.

REPLACEMENT MATERIALS: When repairing or replacing lost or deteriorated features, it is always best to use the same material as the original feature. If a substitute material is employed, it should visually duplicate historic materials, with particular attention to color and texture. Choose a substitute material that has physical properties similar to historic material and take into consideration factors such as durability, thermal expansion, and moisture penetration. (See [Preservation Brief #16](#))

REPLACEMENT DESIGNS: Where reconstruction of an element is impossible because of a lack of historical evidence, then a new design that relates to the building in general size, scale, and material may be considered. Do not add fake historic designs or theme images such as Colonial era light fixtures or Victorian gingerbread trim.

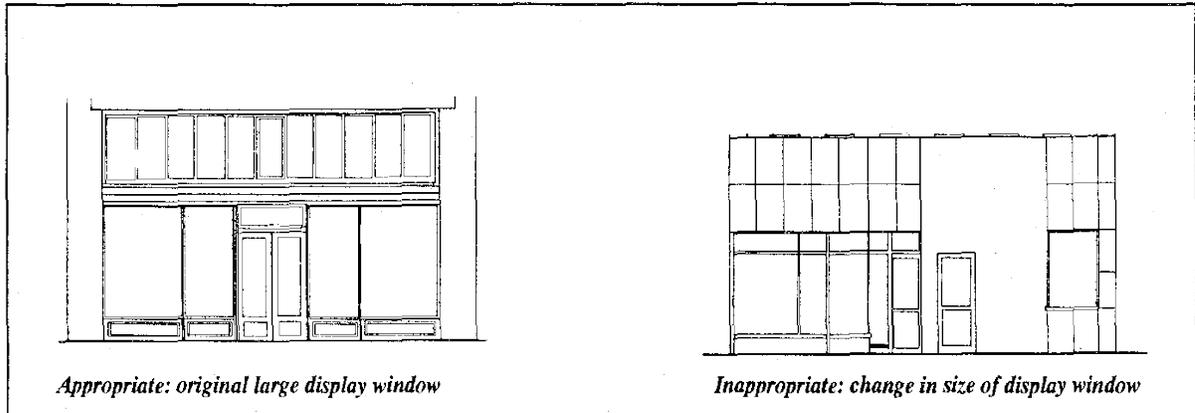


REHABILITATION

STOREFRONT - #2

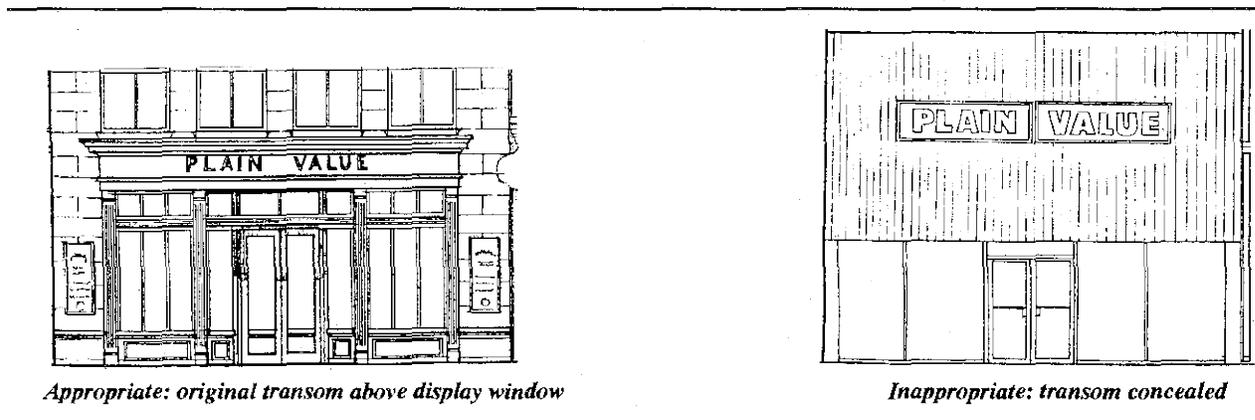
Preserve existing historic storefronts. Retain characteristic storefront features.

DISPLAY WINDOW: Maintain the original dimensions and transparent nature of the display window. Historically inappropriate glass is not admissible.



COLUMNS: Maintain cast iron columns and brick and stone piers which frame the storefront.

TRANSOM: Retain original shape and transparency of the transom. Do not place a sign over the transom. If an interior ceiling has been lowered below the transom, it should be recessed from the storefront. Do not place air conditioning units in the transom.

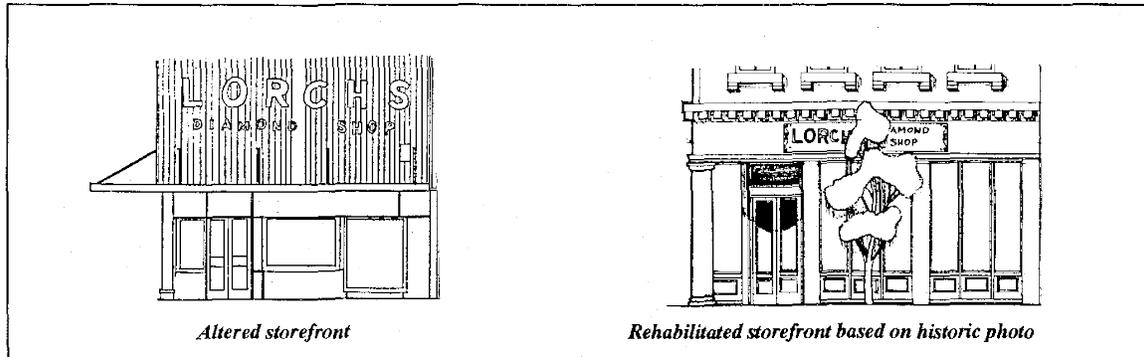


REHABILITATION

RECONSTRUCTED STOREFRONT - #3

Reconstruction of a historic storefront should be based on physical evidence and historical documentation such as photographs.

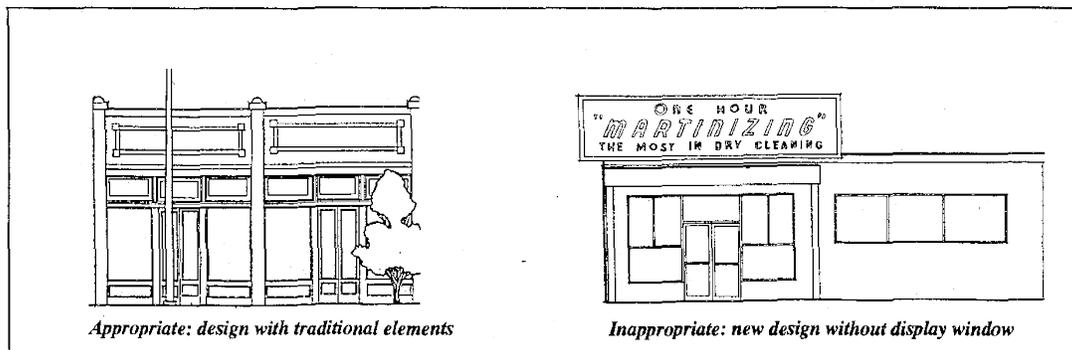
RECONSTRUCTION: Obtain historic photographs of downtown and historical background about the building by contacting City Hall, Main Street Monroeville, or state archives.



NEW STOREFRONT-- #4

If documentation of the original storefront does not exist, design a new storefront that is compatible with the materials, size, scale, and character, or distinctive features, of nearby buildings.

NEW DESIGN: Respect the original design of the building and visual character of the district. Do not add early colonial features, attempt to create a theme, or make a building more ornamental than it originally was. The new design should incorporate characteristic elements of a traditional storefront, including the display window, transom, recessed entrance, and bulkhead using compatible materials. (see [Preservation Brief #11](#))



REHABILITATION

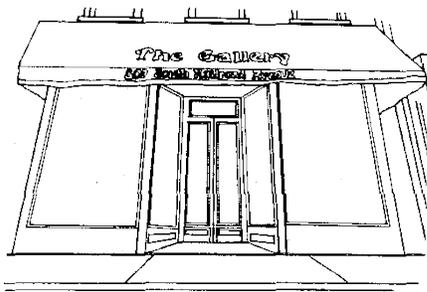
AWNINGS - #5

Awnings should be compatible with the design of the building and the streetscape.

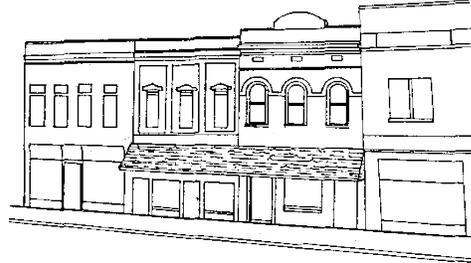
PRESERVATION: Preserve original canopies and awning hardware where feasible.

MATERIALS: Fabric awnings are appropriate. Vinyl coated canvas and acrylic awnings may be acceptable. Metal awnings may be appropriate in a few instances, but rough sawn wood, plastic, or asphalt shingle awnings give an immobile, hard, mansard-like appearance and are not appropriate.

DESIGN: Retractable or fixed standard shed-type canvas awnings are appropriate. Fake mansard roofs and rustic wood shingle awnings are inappropriate. Carefully coordinate the awning color and shape with other building design features.



Appropriate: shed fabric awning



Inappropriate: wood shingle awning

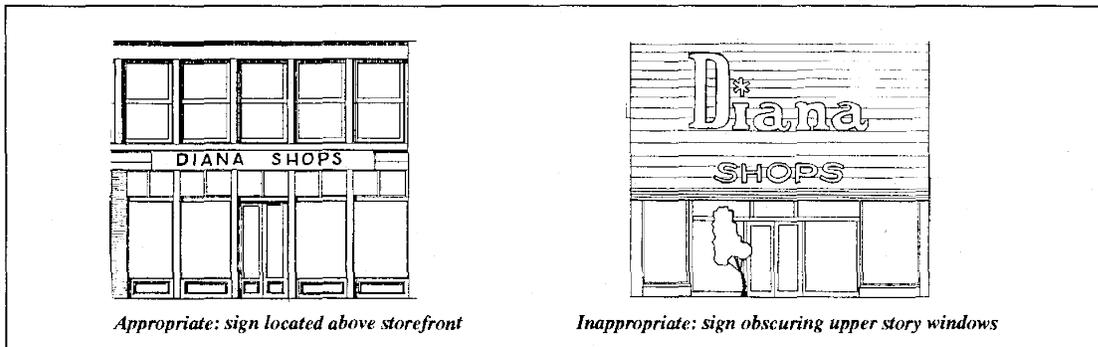
LOCATION: The awning should fit the dimensions of the storefront within the masonry opening and should not obscure architectural details. Mount the awning just above or just below the transom. Where feasible, align the awning so that it is the same height as others on the block. Upper story awnings should fit inside the window surround. Arched windows should have awnings shaped like the curvature of the arch, and rectangular windows should have rectangular awnings.

REHABILITATION

SIGNS - #6

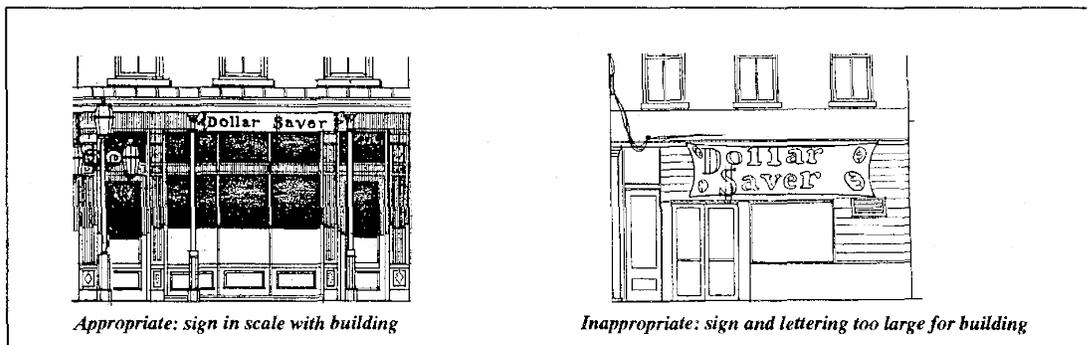
Signs should complement rather than compete with the character of the building and downtown district.

LOCATION: Signage must conform to all city ordinances. Signage must conform in color and design to the historic characteristics and flow of the district. Signs should not cover or obscure architectural features of a building or neighboring buildings. Locate signs on flat unadorned parts of the facade or apply directly onto the glass storefront. Hanging signs should not project more than 40 inches beyond adjoining buildings or obscure the view of the streetscape. A hanging sign should be at least 8 feet off the ground. Signs should not be located on the roof. They should be aligned with others in the area in order to create a more uniform appearance. Hence, a bottom row façade sign may be inappropriate.



TYPES: A variety of signs may adorn a building, but, as a general rule, a business should not have more than three signs. Awning signs and small facade sign panels can attract the attention of passing motorists or pedestrians across the street. Signs painted on storefront windows and doors attract the attention of pedestrians. New signs should use existing mounting apparatus when possible. If new bolt holes or brackets are necessary for sign installation, care should be taken to ensure that installation does not damage historic building materials in any way. Bolting through mortar joints typically avoids damage to historic stone or brick. Rotating signs, roof signs, or signs that flash or blink at intervals are not considered appropriate.

SIZE: Size should be determined by the scale of the building, not whether the sign is meant to be viewed by a passing motorist or pedestrian. Generally, lettering should not exceed 18 inches high. Square footage is limited to a maximum of 64 sf per street footage.

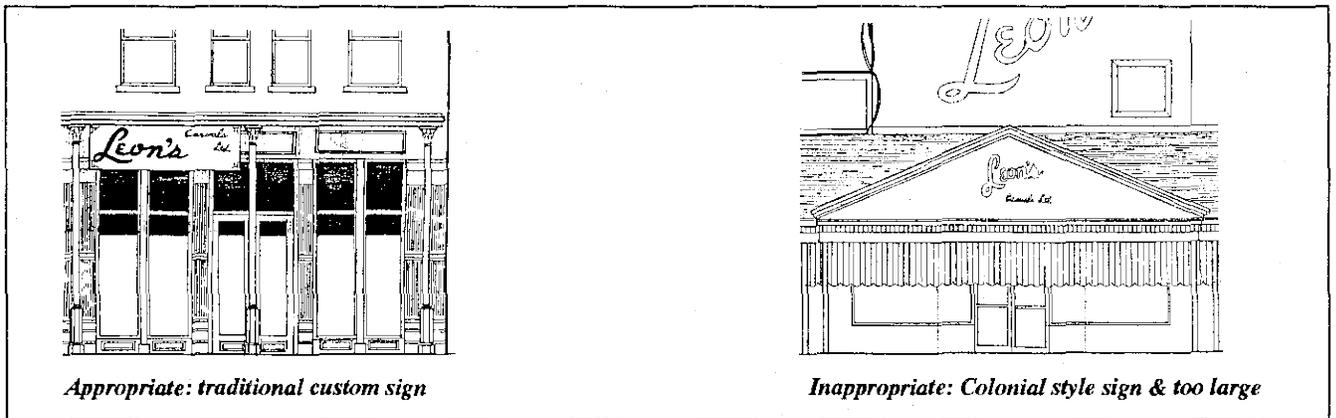


REHABILITATION

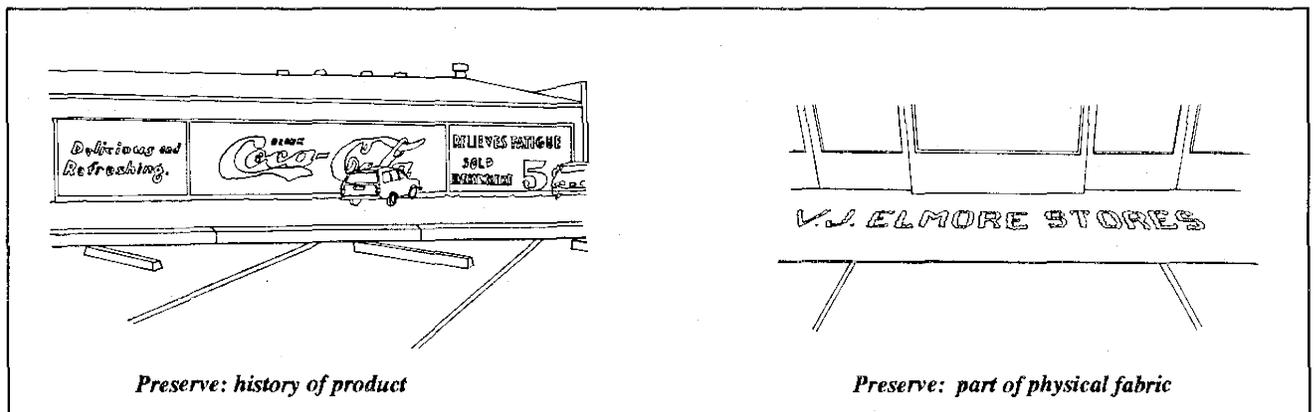
SIGNS-continued

MATERIALS: Sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic building. Traditional signs were often painted on finished wood or metal panels. Signs painted onto fabric awnings are effective. Unfinished plywood and plastic signs may not be appropriate in the downtown.

DESIGN: New signs should not attempt to look older than the building. Colonial designs are not appropriate on Victorian buildings. Custom signs are preferable to mass-produced, standardized signs. Simple designs that are subordinate to the building are appropriate. Where several businesses occupy a building, it is best to coordinate the signs. Typeface should be limited to no more than two fonts per sign. When possible, avoid lettering that appears too contemporary compared with the age of the historic building.



LIGHTING: Sign lighting should be subdued or indirect. Internally lit plastic signs are not appropriate. Incandescent lights are preferable to the harsh, cold appearance of fluorescent lights. Flashing lights or electric scrolling signs are not appropriate.



REHABILITATION

SIGNS-continued

HISTORIC SIGNS: Retain historic signs whenever possible. ([See Preservation Brief #25.](#)) Preserve signs that: reflect the history of a building or district; are characteristic of a particular historic period or style; are associated with events, people, or places; are evidence of the history of a product or business; display excellent craftsmanship, use of materials, or design; are incorporated into the buildings design or physical fabric.

In the Monroeville Historic District, “ghost signs” remain, painted relics from previous businesses, such as those from Barnett & Jackson Hardware on Alabama Avenue. These historical records should be preserved and maintained. Refer to the Preservation brief #24, [The Preservation of Historic Signs](#), for more information.

MURALS: A mural is a singular work of art painted or otherwise directly applied (with property owner and HPC approval) on a building, structure, fence, or other object within public view. The work does not contain text, graphics, or symbols which specifically advertise or promote a business, product, or service; nor does it promote a specific political candidate, party, or point of view. Therefore, a mural is directly applied. A mural-style duplication on wood, canvas, or other materials that must be anchored or hung to a building is classified as a sign.

Graffiti is any writing, drawing, etching, or other placement of a mark of paint, ink, dye or similar substance on a building, sidewalk, structure, fence or other object without authorization or consent from the property owner or possessor. Murals erected without the approval of the HPC are considered graffiti.

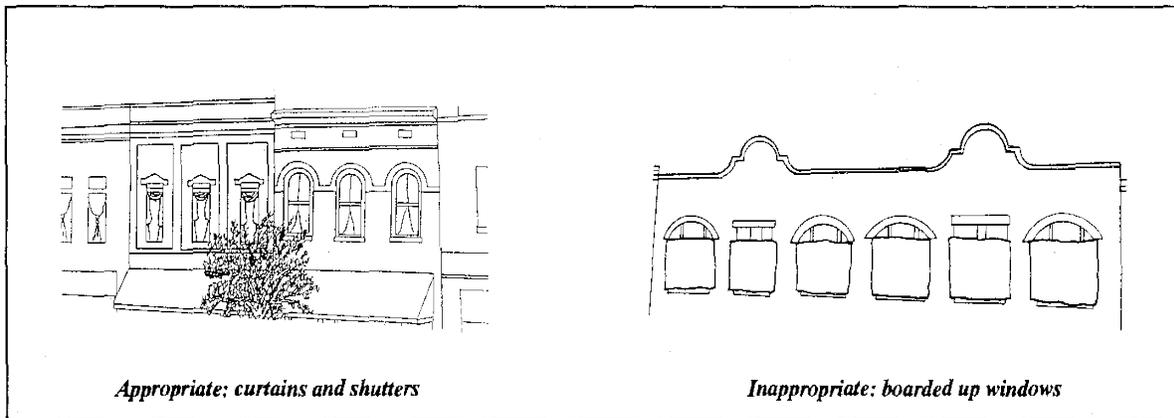
REHABILITATION

UPPER STORY WINDOWS- #7

Preserve the size, shape, details, and transparency of upper story windows.

PRESERVATION: The glass, sash, hardware, and window surrounds, including the lintel or decorative window hoods, should be preserved and maintained. Add shutters to the exterior only if they originally existed. Shutters should be operable or should at least appear to be operable; when closed over an opening, they should fit the size of the opening. (See [Preservation Brief #9](#), Wooden Windows.)

RE-ESTABLISHMENT: Consider reopening closed or blocked windows. In some cases, closed exterior shutters may be used to define original window dimensions. Instead of boarding up windows when the second story is not in use, hang curtains or interior shutters to give the building an occupied appearance. Historically inappropriate glass is not admissible.



REPLACEMENT: Replacement windows are only recommended when historic windows cannot be rehabilitated. When replacement windows are installed, they should match the historic window in size, style, and materials and have the same number of panes. Interior storm windows are preferable to exterior ones. Wood windows are recommended, but painted metal windows may be acceptable. (See [Preservation Brief #3](#), Improving Energy Efficiency.)

UPPER FLOOR ACCESS - #8

Improve access to the upper floors where feasible.

LOCATION: New stairs, elevator shafts, and balconies should be located on the rear or side facade. Consider opportunities to combine exit stairs with adjacent buildings. New stairs should be of a simple design and should not attempt to create a historical appearance.

REHABILITATION

DOORS - #9

Preserve the original front doors and opening.

PRESERVATION: The original size and shape of door openings should be maintained, not in-filled. Original doors and door hardware should be repaired and maintained. Replacement doors, when necessary, should be compatible with the original doors in terms of style, size, material, and glass panel configuration. Replacement hardware, including locks and door handles, should complement the historic style of the original building. Historically inappropriate glass is not admissible.

NEW OPENINGS: When the creation of new openings is necessary in order to meet fire codes, they should be located on sides or to the rear of buildings, rather than on the front. New openings, when permitted, should be compatible in scale, size, proportion, and placement to historic openings.

CLOSING AN OPENING: If the blocking of an opening is allowed, infill materials should be compatible with the building and should be placed 2" to 6" back from the building face. Use of fixed reflective glass is not recommended.

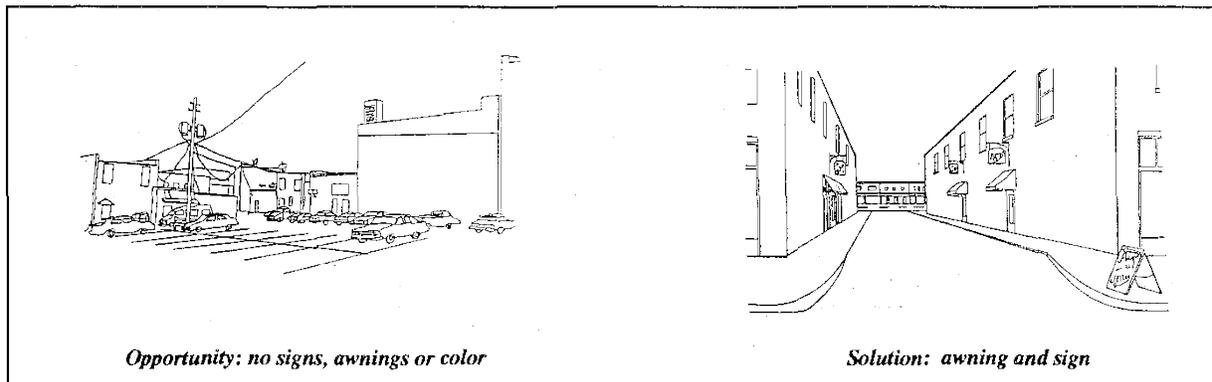
REAR ENTRANCES - #10

Develop rear and alley entrances for public and service use where feasible.

SIGNAGE: On rear and alley entrances use a smaller version of the main sign to identify the entrance. Improvements to rear facades and entrances can be important. When the rear facade of a building is visible from a parking lot, the addition of an awning or signage that designates the point of access and identifies a building will help guide customers to their destination.

LIGHTING: Provide lighting at the rear entrance.

MATERIALS & COLORS: Employ materials and colors that coordinate with the main facade so that customers will learn to recognize both entrances as related to the same business.



REHABILITATION

ROOFS - #11

Preserve the original roof form.

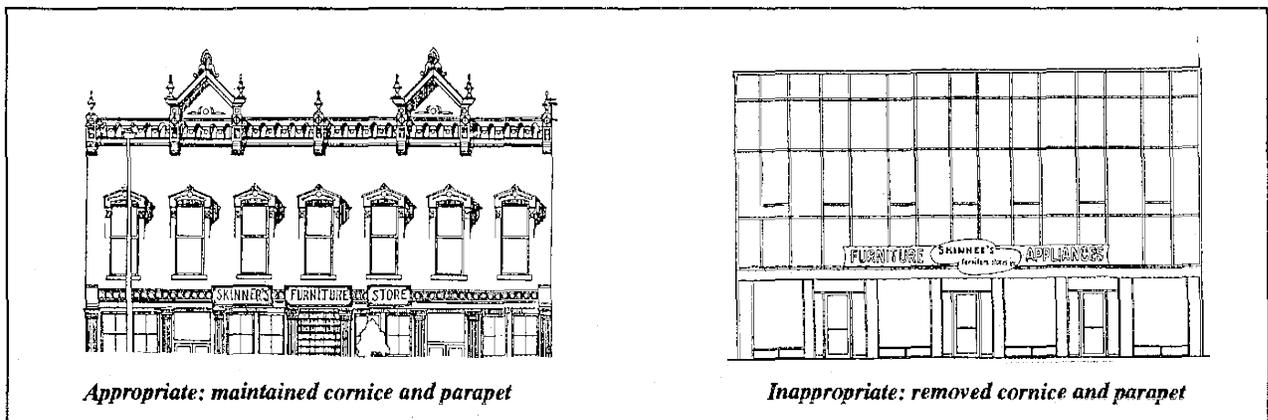
SLOPE: Preserve the pitch of the original roof. Roofs of most commercial buildings in the Monroeville Historic District have a parapet wall in front of a flat roof. Adding a new fake mansard roof is not appropriate. Skylights and roof decks not visible from street may be acceptable.

MAINTENANCE: Retain and preserve original roofing materials where feasible. Regularly maintain your roof as a shelter against water penetration. Clean and maintain the roof drainage system.

CORNICES - #12

Preserve the ornamental cornice and parapet.

MAINTENANCE: Brick, stone, or metal cornices and parapets should not be altered or removed.



RECONSTRUCTION: Reconstruction of a cornice should be based on documentation. When exact reconstruction of details is not feasible, consider developing a simplified interpretation of the original. Missing sections or parts should match the profile of the original. The cornice should be positioned so that it is aligned with the others on the block. Where feasible, replacement cornices should employ the original materials. Fiberglass and other synthetic materials may be acceptable substitutes. (see [Preservation Brief #16](#), Substitute Materials.)

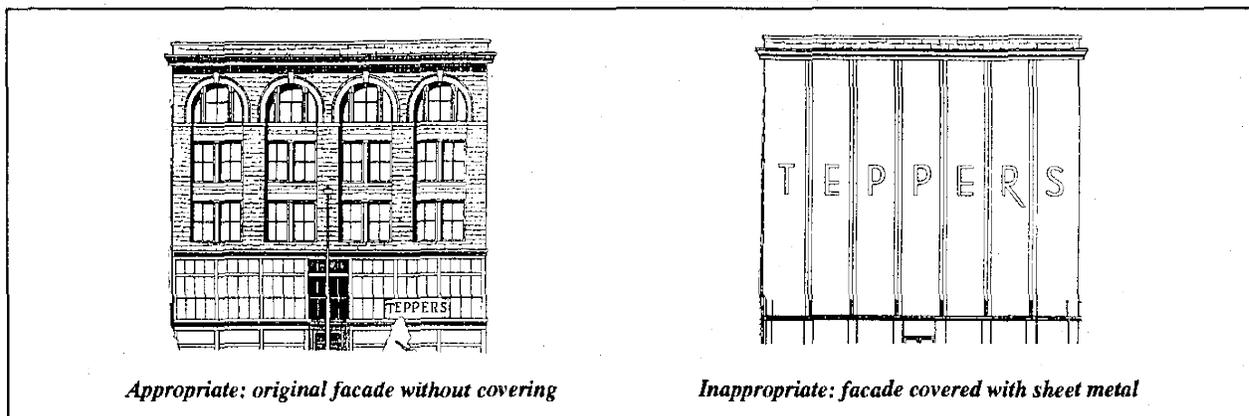
MATERIALS - #13

Uncover original exterior materials where feasible.

UNCOVERING: Exterior walls and details should not be obscured, covered, or removed. Rustic wood, synthetic and metal siding, and stucco should not be used to cover walls or details. When possible, material covering original wall surfaces that must be removed should be done in such a way that the original structure is not damaged. Materials that have become part of the historic district's character should not be removed without COA approval from the HPC.

REHABILITATION

MATERIALS - #13 (continued)



WOOD - #14

Exterior wood details and original siding should be preserved.

PAINTING and CLEANING: Keep a protective coating of paint on wood. Only remove paint down to the bare wood when absolutely necessary. Paint should be removed from wood using the gentlest means possible. Do not sandblast or use high-pressure water or abrasive chemicals to remove paint. Do a test patch prior to undertaking any cleaning method. ([See Preservation Brief #10, Paint Problems.](#))

SIDING: Deteriorated wood should be repaired or replaced with material that duplicates it in terms of size, shape, and texture. Never cover original wood siding with aluminum, vinyl siding, or other veneers.

MASONRY - #15

Original masonry including brick, stone, terra cotta, and stucco walls and details should be preserved and maintained.

PAINTING and CLEANING: Cleaning of masonry should be done by the gentlest means possible. Never sandblast a masonry building. Do a test patch prior to undertaking any cleaning method. Do not paint unpainted masonry. Once painted, it is often better to repaint rather than remove paint. Lime washes are appropriate alternatives to paint and may help blend unpainted with partially painted surfaces. Carefully investigate the condition of masonry before removing external materials. (See Preservation Briefs Number 1 [Cleaning Historic Masonry](#), Number 6 [Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning](#), Number 7 [Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra Cotta.](#))

REPAIRING: Waterproofing sealants should not be used on masonry, unless they are vapor permeable. Repairs should match the historic masonry in size, shape, texture, and color. Repointing of existing masonry should incorporate the same mortar mix, tooling, and color as the historic masonry pointing. (See Preservation Brief #2, [Repointing Mortar Joints](#))

REHABILITATION

METALS - #16

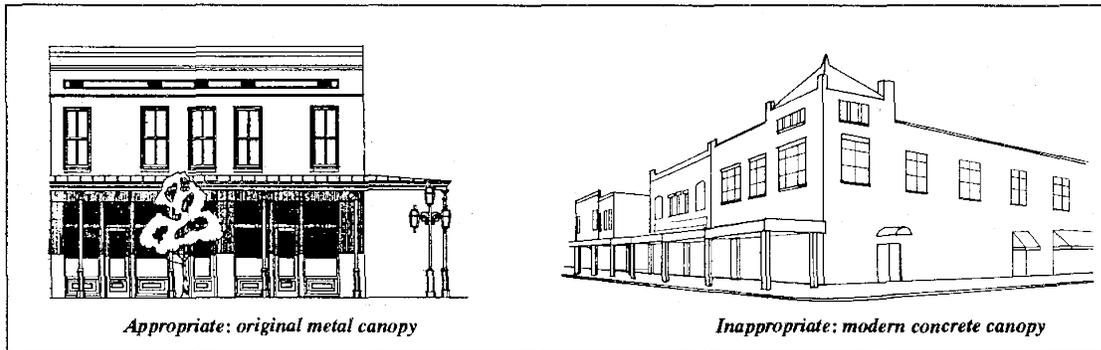
Architectural metals such as cast iron columns, steel, and decorative stamped metal should be retained and preserved.

CLEANING: Remove rust from metal. While abrasive techniques may be appropriate for the removal of paint and rust from iron, soft metals such as zinc, lead, tin, and copper should be cleaned with chemicals. Do a test patch prior to undertaking any cleaning method. After cleaning, metals should be primed and painted. Do not expose unprotected metal.

CANOPIES - #17

Maintain original canopies and balconies.

PRESERVATION: Although canopies, porches, and balconies are not commonly found on commercial buildings, when they exist, they are distinctive features. Original materials, details, shape, outline, and roof height should be retained. Enclosing canopies and balconies is not appropriate if it destroys the visual openness of the porch appearance. Concrete canopies or covered walkways are not appropriate.



COLOR - #18

Employ color schemes that will complement neighboring buildings and coordinate facade elements in an overall composition.

COMPATIBILITY: Use colors that are historically appropriate or compatible. Study the colors on nearby buildings and incorporate, not copy, them into your schemes so that your building is compatible and complementary with neighboring buildings. Refer to the HPC PowerPoint presentation for help choosing appropriate colors, and find samples of appropriate historical era palettes at City Hall and at local paint stores.

NATURAL TONES: The natural colors of brick and stone are more appropriate than bright hues. Start with the natural color of the building itself as the base.

TRIM: Built-in features of the facade such as doors, window frames, molding, and cornices can be contrasted with an accent color a shade lighter or darker than the base.