

# HISTORIC DOWNTOWN BROWNSVILLE HANDBOOK

TOPICS FOR PRESERVING AND ENHANCING OUR TREASURED ASSETS



## BROWNSVILLE, TENNESSEE

ADOPTED: DECEMBER 20, 2012

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN BROWNSVILLE HANDBOOK  
TOPICS FOR PRESERVING AND ENHANCING OUR TREASURED ASSETS

For:  
CITY OF BROWNSVILLE, TENNESSEE  
October 2012



The city of Brownsville Planning Department in conjunction with the Tennessee Downtowns initiative, offers additional information in planning and reviewing exterior changes. Design guidelines governing the historic business district fall under the purview of the Historic Zoning Commission. For more information, contact the Planning Department at Brownsville City Hall, 111 North Washington, 731-772-1212, or visit the city of Brownsville website at [Brownsvilletn.gov](http://Brownsvilletn.gov).

Disclaimer:

This handbook is NOT a set of standards, ordinances, or requirements, for buildings in Downtown Brownsville. It is not a formula or specific solution. Its purpose is to present and illustrate flexible design concepts and practices to assist owners and contractors of new construction, renovation, or historic preservation projects in Downtown Brownsville.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE

The city of Brownsville gratefully acknowledges the dedication of staff and volunteers for their participation in the Tennessee Downtowns program, and their work on the Design Project, Downtown Master Plan, and this Handbook. We also thank the State of Tennessee, Economic and Community Development and Main Street leaders Kimberly Nyberg and Amy New for their training and guidance. In addition, we are extremely appreciative of the assistance, support, and encouragement of our mentor Laura Todd, Executive Director of Main Street Collierville.

The City of Brownsville and the Downtown Steering Committee would like to thank the follow building owners for graciously permitting their facades to be used in the Master Plan renderings: Mr. James Hughes owner of Las Palmas, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Campbell owners of Lock Stock & Barrel, Ms. Lori Daniele owner of Milano's, Mr. Ronnie Hooper owner of Destiny Worship, and Ms. Karen Paquco and Ms. Patricia Hannah owners of Somewhere in Time.

Downtown revitalization and historic preservation are part of a larger plan to position Brownsville as West Tennessee's most desirable city, a thriving community where small town values, quality of life, diversity, and entrepreneurial spirit are honored daily. Community residents, business owners, and civic leaders are to be commended for engaging in the community-wide planning initiative that set forth the goals and actions to advance our community over the next five to fifteen years. Please see the full plan, Brownsville on the Move, at our website: [www.brownsvilletn.gov](http://www.brownsvilletn.gov).

### City of Brownsville

Jo Matherne, Mayor

Tom Skehan, SWTDD Regional Planner

Sharon Hayes, Director of Planning

Rhonda Thompson, Grants Administrator

### Tennessee Downtowns Steering Committee & Design Team

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## THE MAIN STREET APPROACH

The Main Street approach combines historic preservation with downtown development to create a working, growing and aesthetically pleasing business center. (For more information on Tennessee Main Street, go to [tennesseemainstreet.org](http://tennesseemainstreet.org).) The City of Brownsville works to reinforce and rekindle the economic vitality and values that Main Street stands for--keeping downtown as the unique commercial and social heart of the city.

The process is designed to improve all aspects of the downtown for tangible - and intangible - benefits. Improving economic management, strengthening public participation and making downtown a fun place to visit and gather are as critical to Brownsville's success as recruiting new business and rehabilitating old buildings, expanding parking, and creating a vibrant downtown identity.

Building on its downtown's inherent assets of rich architecture, personal service and traditional values, the City of Brownsville is working to enhance and re-energize its downtown business district.



FACADE RENDERING BY A2H

## PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

This is an accumulation of recommendations created to aid Brownsville in its endeavor to conserve and enhance the appearance of the central business district, preserve historical and/or architectural assets, and assist property owners. Applying accepted and desirable design practices encourages property owners to effectively work together as new construction and restoration develops.

The following illustrated topics are intended to be a visual tool to guide in making good and appropriate decisions in creating the built environment. It is an ongoing resource and will be regularly updated to reflect the latest recommendations made by the Tennessee Downtowns Steering Committee and endorsed by the city of Brownsville Planning Department. The following illustrations are simply a guide in proposing façade changes that the city is inclined to approve with respect to Historic Design Guidelines and the city's Comprehensive Plan.

The recommendations are not formulas or specific solutions, but are meant to be flexible practices to develop compatibility within the district. They are intentionally flexible, thus avoiding the danger of sameness. Hopefully, the inherent flexibility of the process will allow for creative, imaginative design while preserving our community's historic attributes. The City Planning Department is available to assist with questions.



DOWNTOWN BROWNSVILLE STREETSCAPE

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

Each individual building façade 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. Rehabilitating your building can be mind-boggling:

- What materials should be used?
- What colors are best?
- Is an awning appropriate?
- What kind of sign would look best?

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?

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 the downtown's charm and history. To apply for design assistance, contact the Brownsville Planning Department.



## OVERVIEW OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### Design Principles for Restoration and Rehabilitation

Many buildings in downtown Brownsville 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 from the Tennessee Downtowns Design Project. Contact City Hall.

As much as possible, modification of storefronts and building façade 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 district.



EXISTING BUILDING FACADE – PROPOSED FACADE IMPROVEMENTS – RENDERED FACADE

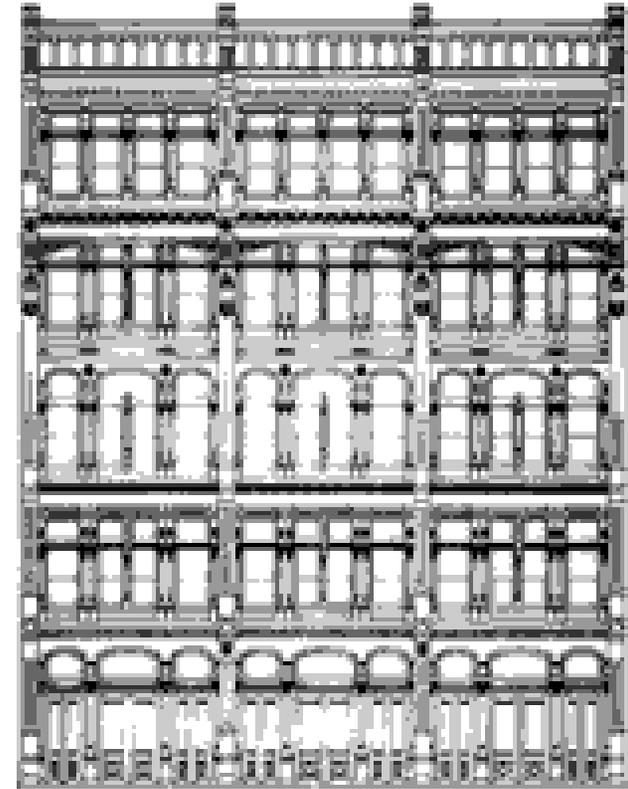
## SECRETARY OF INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

General principles 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 historic downtown Brownsville 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. The reproduction of historic design and details is expensive, artificial in appearance, and is recommended only in some special cases of infill or small-scale construction



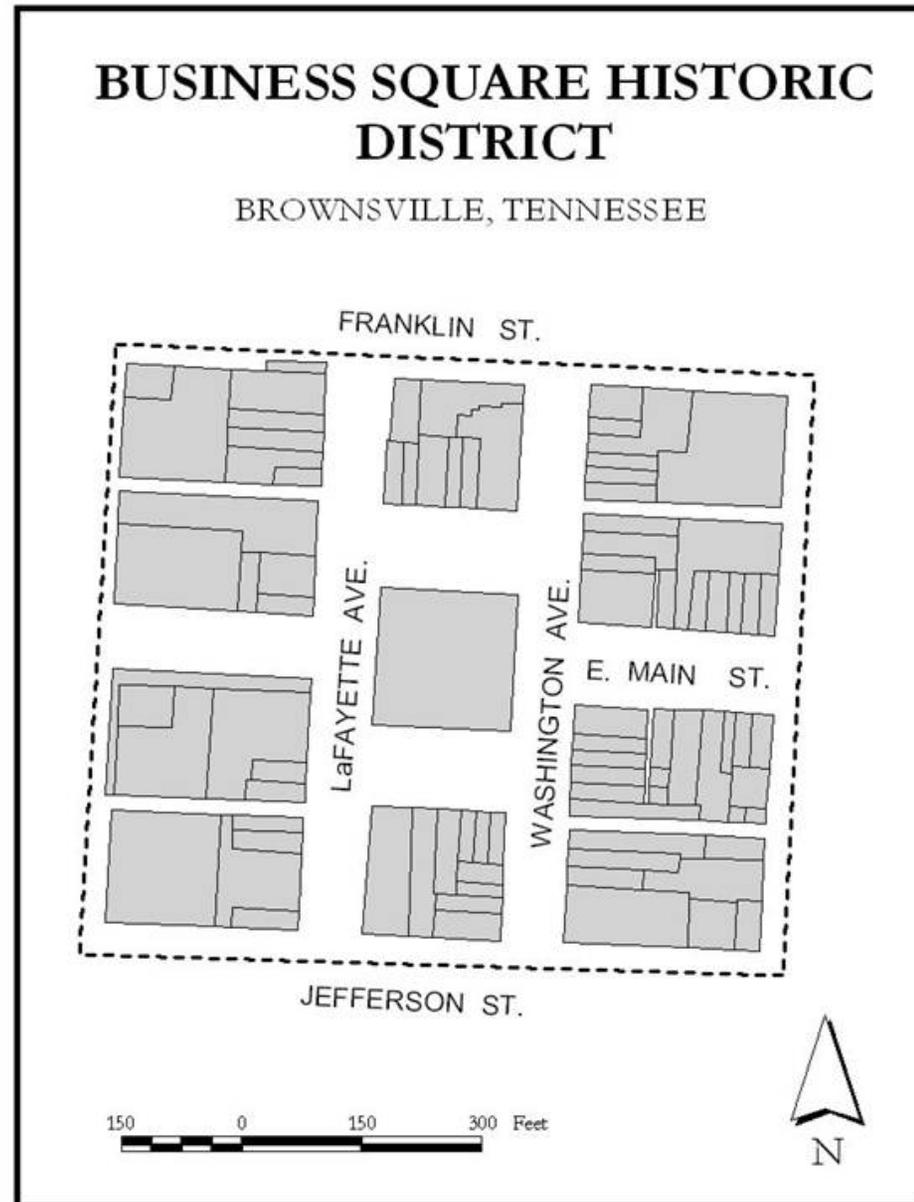
*The Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings were initially developed in 1977 to help property owners, developers, and Federal managers apply the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation during the project planning stage by providing general design and technical recommendations. Unlike the Standards, the Guidelines are not codified as program requirements.*

## REVIEW PROCESS

What is the process for formal design review and approval?

Proposals for new development, renovation, exterior alterations, signage, or demolition projects in the central business district, as shown in the map below, require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) and also a permit from the City Building Inspector. The nine-member Historic Zoning Commission will review the application for a COA with accompanying information on the project site, architecture and landscape plans, in conformance with the Historic Design Guidelines and Chapter 12 of the Brownsville Zoning Ordinance Provisions for Historic Districts. The Historic Zoning Commission will then recommend approval, denial or approval with certain conditions to the Planning Commission.

Proposals should be submitted in accordance with the Historic Zoning Commission Design Guidelines and Chapter 12 Provisions for Historic Districts. Below is information pertinent to the site plan. Contact the City of Brownsville Planning Department at 731-772-1212 for complete application form and instructions.



## TRADITIONAL FACADE

The traditional commercial storefront can be considered the most important element that sets apart and gives historical significance and character to downtown Brownsville. 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 is 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, 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 façade 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 façade. In downtown Brownsville, the typical building facade is a two-story masonry construction.

Key features to consider:

- The storefront should be composed almost entirely of glass. If glass is not appropriate for the business, consider the use of window treatments as a solution.
- 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.
- Transom windows that are covered or blocked should be reopened and restored.
- Storefront bulkheads should be restored or renovated.
- Original elements such as cast iron columns, storefront cornices, entry doors, and lighting fixtures should be restored.
- Signage should be integrated into the storefront design.
- Lighting should be integrated into the storefront design.
- 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.

When planning the renovation of a storefront, it could be very helpful to contact the city of Brownsville Planning Department 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.

## STOREFRONT DESIGN

The traditional Brownsville building façade 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.

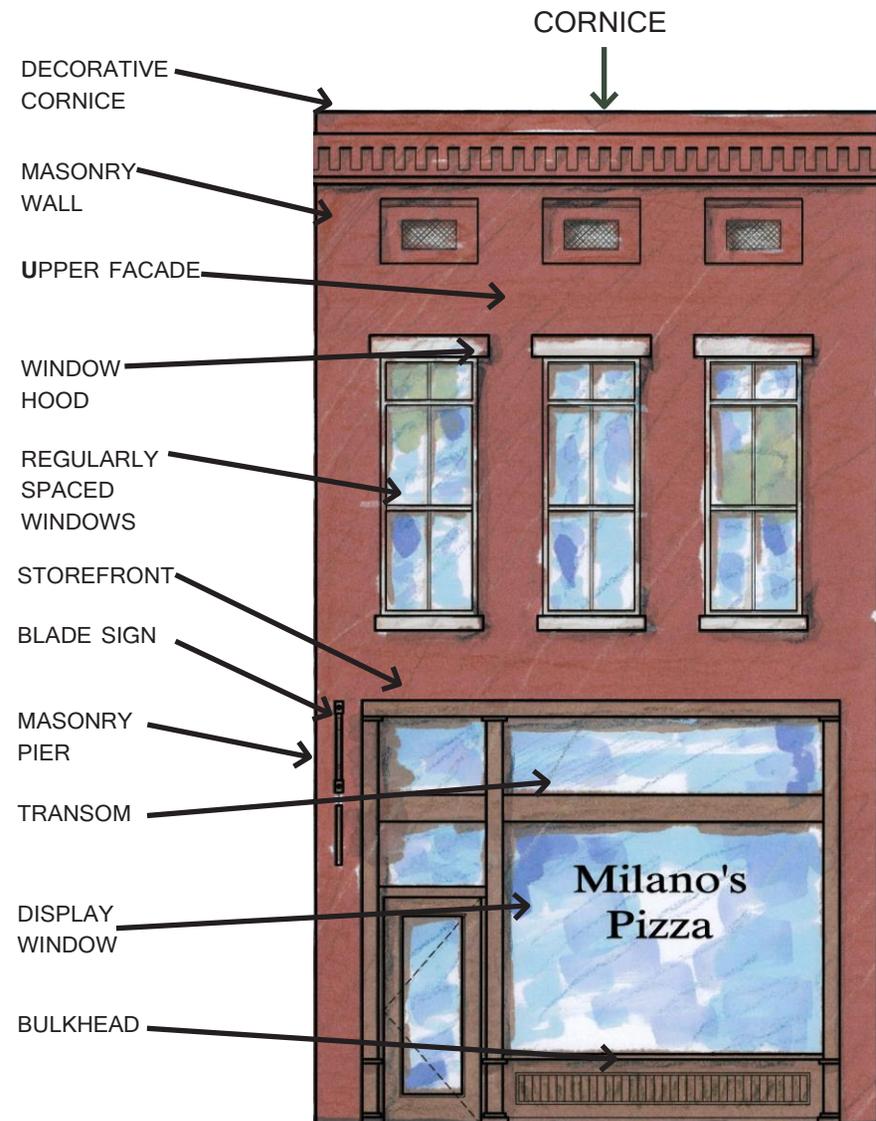
The visual openness of the storefront is also important because it is part of the overall proportion system of the façade. The proportion of window to wall areas in the traditional façade calls for more glass and less wall at the storefront level, balanced by more wall and less glass on the upper façade.

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.

### 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.



TRADITIONAL FACADE COMPONENTS

## Style & Detailing:

Downtown Brownsville has an assortment of masonry structures from the 1860's through the 1990's in Italianate, Classical Revival, and Art 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 Brownsville's Historic Downtown Business District.

**CORNICE**

CAST IRON, WOOD, SHEET METAL,  
BRICK, STONE, OR TERRA COTTA

**TRANSOM WINDOWS**

CLEAR, TINTED, STAINED OR  
ETCHED

**PIERS**

MASONRY TO MATCH UPPER FACADE

**DISPLAY WINDOWS**

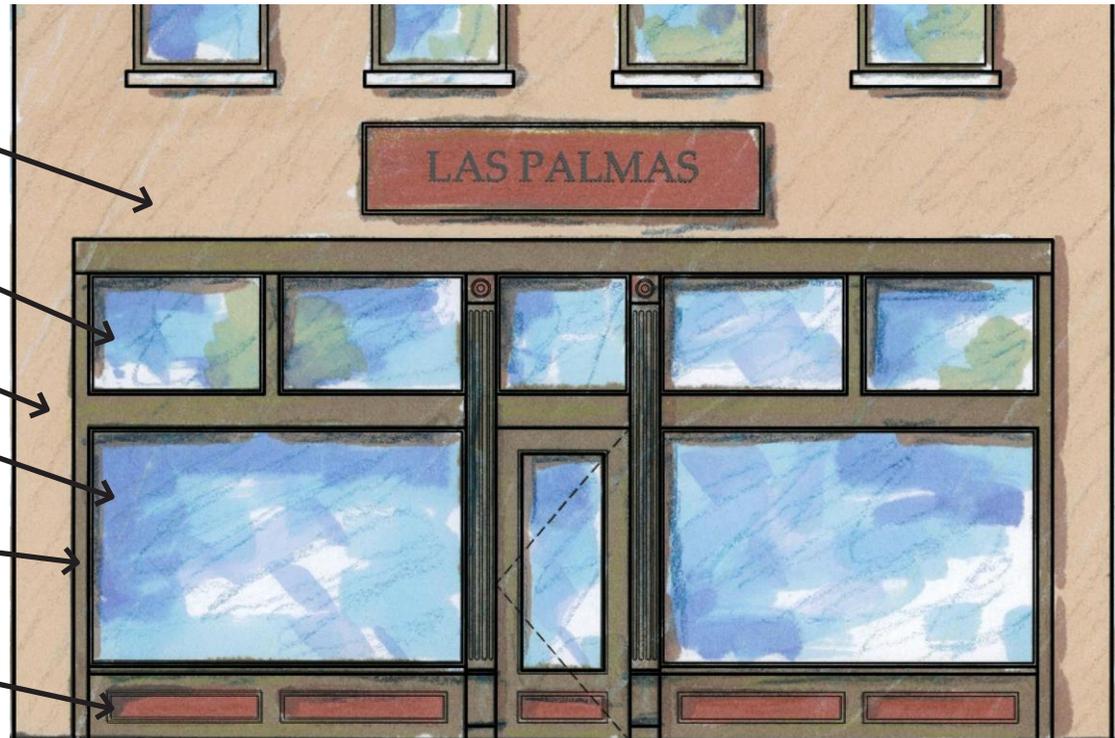
CLEAR GLASS

**STOREFRONT FRAME**

WOOD, CAST IRON, STEEL, OR  
ALUMINUM

**BULKHEAD**

WOOD PANELS, POLISHED STONE,  
GLASS, TILE, OR ALUMINUM



COMMON STOREFRONT MATERIALS

## STOREFRONT MATERIALS

### Style & Detailing

#### Key Points:

- The characteristic architectural features should never be removed or altered unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Building alterations should restore architectural details of cornices, lintels, brick arches, chimneys and ironwork of the original building, as appropriate and feasible.
- Where detailing has already been removed, every effort should be made to replicate them. The use of the extensive historic photographic records of Downtown Brownsville is highly recommended to discover missing detailing.
- Infill architecture should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shape, cornice lines and brick work.

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:

- Storefront Frame - wood, cast iron, anodized aluminum
- Display Windows - clear glass
- Transom Windows - clear, stained, or etched glass
- Entrance Door - wood or aluminum with a large
- Bulkheads - wood panels, polished stone, glass, tile, metal clad plywood parts
- Storefront Cornice - wood, cast iron, sheet metal
- 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 and stucco materials.

## FACADE 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 accompanies double-hung windows.

### Key Points:

- The size and proportion of windows and door openings of an infill building should be similar to those on the adjacent facades.
- Avoid infill panels when providing new windows in existing masonry openings.
- Storefront restoration should return the facade to its original character appropriate.
- Avoid concealing the original facade.
- 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.



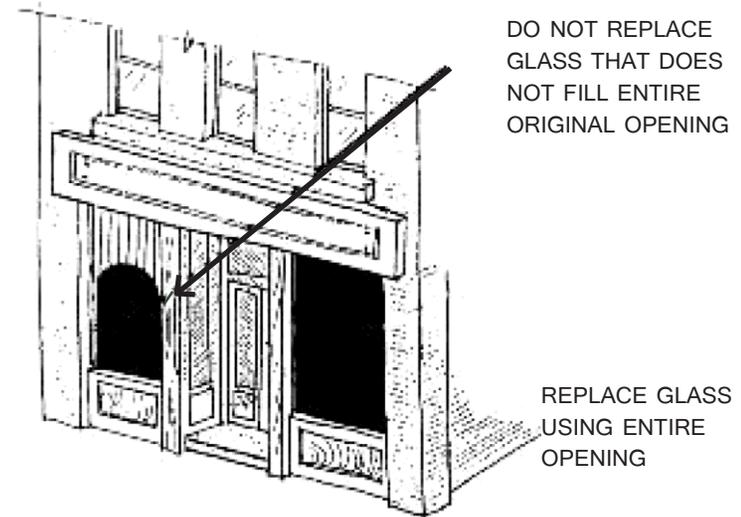
## WINDOWS

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, but worth the cost when replaced with the proper unit. Window openings should not be filled in or covered. Good windows contain several attributes.

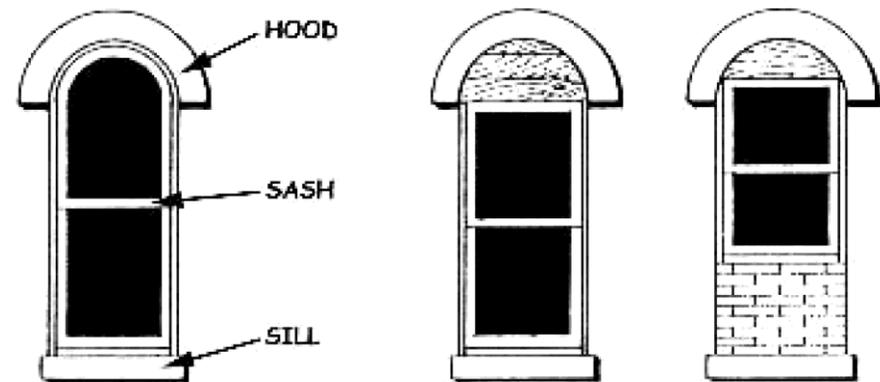
1. **Energy Conservation.** Modern units contain insulated glazing and “thermally broken” frames. Both glazing and frames contain an air space and gasketing to eliminate frost and moisture penetration. If original units are repaired, custom fabricated storm units can be installed to achieve the same result.
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 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 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.

All windows should appear consistent per floor including shutters.



*Image from Nation Mainstreet*



*Image from Nation Mainstreet*

## DISPLAY WINDOWS:

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

### Points:

- A minimum of sixty percent (60%) of the street level facade shall be transparent and thirty percent (30%) on rear facades.
- For remodeling, the original size, division and shape of display windows within the overall storefront frame should be preserved.
- For an infill building, window frames should be wood, or appropriately colored aluminum.
- Reflective glass is prohibited.
- Mirrored or 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.

### Display Window Examples:



## TRANSOM WINDOWS:

Transom windows were 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 an important element in the proportion of the building front.

### Key Points:

- 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.

SIGNAGE APPROPRIATELY PLACED

TRANSOM WINDOWS OPENED

LARGE DISPLAY WINDOWS

SLENDER GLAZING FRAMING MATERIAL

DOOR SET BACK IN

6" SETBACK



TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT DESIGN

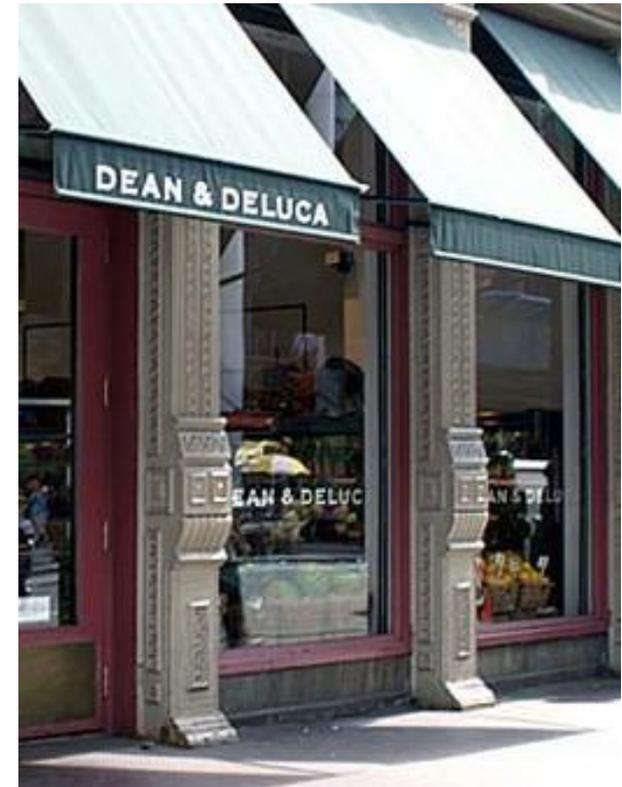
## SIGNAGE

Historically, most vibrant and sustainable downtown streetscapes have included a variety of sign types that not only identified the business, but also the name of the buildings, dates of construction, etc. These signs were simple, bold and well crafted. Lettering/fonts were done with simple, no-nonsense font styles, maximizing the contrast between the background and the lettering. A variety of signage types can be found in most historic downtowns and streetscapes including those that help address both vehicular and pedestrian interest. Below you will find a list of signage types and photo examples. Some of the photos were taken from Brownsville's historic downtown and others were pulled from the Internet, to help illustrate the signage type. One of the most important elements of these signage guidelines will be that every building should select the most appropriate signage type for its architectural style, location and function. Not all signage types will be appropriate for every building and every situation.

Storefront signs are those which are located on the horizontal band dividing the storefront windows from the upper facade of the building. During the peak of commercial activity in Brownsville, 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 Brownsville. All signage is subject to Brownsville building and zoning codes.

### Key Points

- The storefront sign should be used to display the primary name of the business only. Use only one line of lettering if possible, leaving out secondary information.
- Use simple, bold lettering with sufficient contrast between the lettering and the background.
- “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.
- The maximum area of the sign is regulated by the sign ordinance.
- 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.

### Key Points

- The maintenance and restoration of any existing historic signs is encouraged in lieu of replacement.

- Signage for a business not located within the building is not acceptable.
- Preserve existing architectural signs.
- Promote the use of the original building names in new signage.

## Signage Types:

### Plaque/Cornerstone Sign



### Blade Sign - hang perpendicular to the building



Signage Types (Continued):

Sign Band - individual letters mounted on signage bands above the shop fronts.



Window Sign - logos and names on shopfront glass



Awning Sign - signs painted on cloth awnings



### Signage Types (Continued):

Sandwich Board - small moveable temporary sign



Postal Sign / Street numbers - 911 street address numbers on door or over front



## SIGNAGE LOCATION:



**AWNING SIGN**



**SANDWICH BOARD**



**PLAQUE**



**BANNER SIGN**



**POSTAL SIGN**



**SIGN BAND**



**BLADE SIGN**



**WINDOW PAINTING**

## 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.

### Key Point:

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

## 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.

### Key Point:

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

## 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 facades. Only on occasion was the awning used for signage. In these cases, lettering on the awning was primarily located on the valance, making it visible in either in 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.

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.



*Try to locate old photographs or prints to determine what alterations have been made to the storefront and when they were undertaken. Awnings were common elements of storefronts at the turn of the century. Photo: johnsonsdspot.com*



*Photo by City of Brownsville*

### Key Points:

- Retractable or operable awnings are encouraged. Fixed awnings should mimic the profile of operable units (one to one pitch).
- 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.
- The width of awnings should fit the geometry of the building facades. They should not extend across multiple storefronts of different buildings, but should reflect the window or door openings below.
- 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.
- Fixed, round-headed awnings will be considered only over arched windows or doors, and only if placed below or within the arched lintel.
- The awning valance, or skirt, shall be proportioned to the size of the awning, but shall not exceed twelve (12) inches in height.
- Fixed awnings should incorporate a “free” valance that allows movement with the wind.
- 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.
- Back lighting of the awnings is inappropriate.

## SIDEWALLS OF BUILDINGS

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 adds a horizontal or vertical rhythm, and interrupts 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 the building's interior to the pedestrian. Caution should be used when adding doors, windows, and their amenities to avoid competing with the main entrance.

## 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 complement the remainder of the wall.

### Graphics:

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:

- Submit a colored and correctly scaled drawing of the graphic and sidewall for review and approval of the city of Brownsville.
- 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.

## PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED DESIGN

Throughout history there have been places in the city where people could go to see people, and be seen. Downtown Brownsville 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.

### Key Points:

- 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 the direct contact with the people on the sidewalk.
- Avoid blank walls, closed curtains, and neglected storefronts. These are all pedestrian turnoffs. 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.
- Natural light should be allowed to penetrate into the store interior.
- Displays should allow the customer a full view of the store interior.
- Window displays should be attractive when viewed from both the sidewalk and the store interior.
- Window displays should allow people in the store to see out.
- Existing uninteresting street facades can be enhanced with detailing, artwork, landscaping or other visually interesting features.
- Flower boxes and planters add warmth, color, and interest.
- Coordinated seating and benches create inviting gathering spots
- Trash receptacles should be attractive; big green boxes should be removed or screened.
- Wayfinding signage should be attractive and used to signify the historic district.
- Historic markers are encouraged for designation the significance of historic buildings.



## 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.

### Key Points:

- The rear facade’s 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.
- A combination of front entrances with side or rear entrances is called “double fronting.” There are certain advantages to double fronting:
  - Circulation patterns are enhanced
  - Better access to off-street parking
  - Store identity is created on more than one side of the building
- Double fronting can also create disadvantages:
  - Initial cost of remodeling is increased
  - Maintenance costs are increased as additional doors, windows, and sidewalks are created
  - Security problems increase
- 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 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.





## MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

Many of Brownsville’s existing downtown structures contain two favorable qualities. One is that many are structurally sound. Modifications that may have been done were basically superficial, affecting features such as windows, doors, and facades. A second quality is the building’s survival of original design features and materials. It is fortunate that we can easily see what the original structure’s appearance was. Alterations usually consist of materials that are attached to existing walls rather than involving reconstruction and demolition. With a few exceptions, we can transform Brownsville into an accurate semblance of what once was.

Exterior materials can 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:

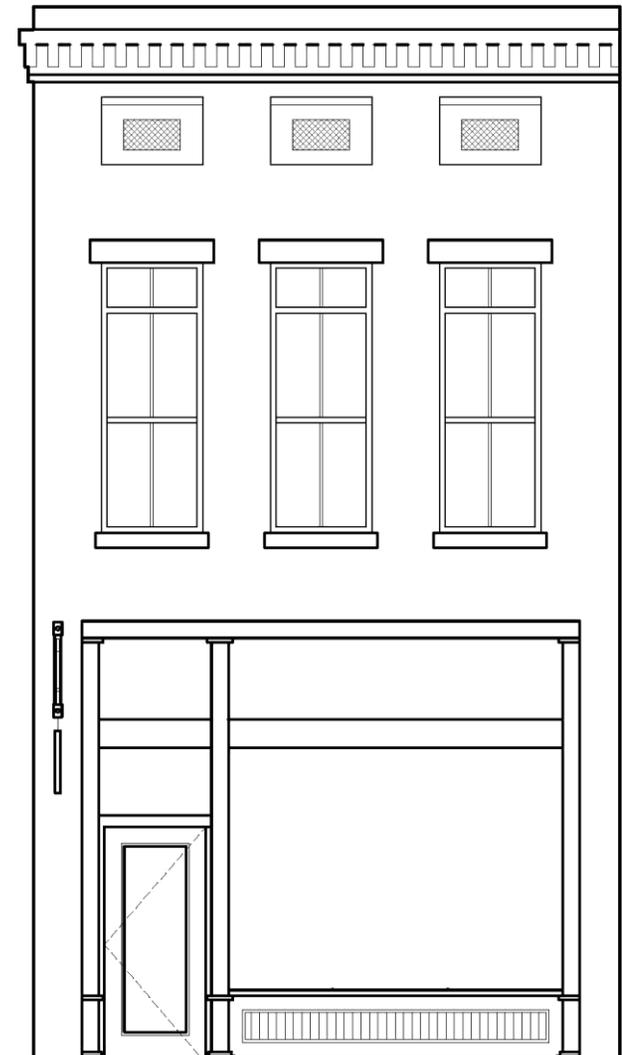
Brownsville’s existing buildings use wood on the exterior primarily for window and door framing, trim, cornices, bracing and brackets. Although masonry dominates storefronts, maintenance and repair of wood is essential in restoring original building design and integrity. Wood accents the masonry and is the material people actually put their hands on. If wood is found to be in need of repair, replace or patch that particular piece of wood. Replacing the wood frame, for example, is not necessary if just one section of the frame is damaged. Replace with the same species of wood if possible for uniform finishing. Conversely, refinishing wood should not be a patch job. Rather, the entire frame, as an example, should be refinished. Paint or stain can be removed by several methods including wet sanding, heat/melting, or dissolving with chemicals. Sandblasting should not be used, as it pits and separates the grain.

**BASE COLOR** Wall surfaces  
Storefront piers  
Cornice—when same material as wall

**MAJOR TRIM COLOR**  
Cornice  
Window hoods  
Window frames  
Storefront cornice  
Storefront columns  
Storefront bulkheads

**MINOR TRIM COLOR**  
Window sash  
Doors

**ACCENT COLORS**  
Small details on window hoods  
cornices, columns & bulkheads



## FACADE COLORS

## MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

### 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), 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 are replaced by wood, fiberglass, epoxy, or other metal. 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 in which 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.

### Key Points:

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

## MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

### Masonry

As in most towns, a large number of Brownsville's buildings consist of brick masonry. There also exist 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:

Is not a recommend method for cleaning historic buildings.

#### 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.



*Water wash use of a detergent and scrub brush is the safest method, but also the most time consuming. Photo from Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*

## MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

### Sandblasting:

Is not an allowable method for cleaning historic buildings.

### 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.



*Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces using dry or wet grit or other abrasives. These methods of cleaning permanently erode the surface of the material and accelerate deterioration. Pictured to the left is Historic brick perminatly damaged by sandblasting. Photo from Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*



*Loss of the historic character due to insensitive repointing is not allowable. The photo above illustrates and example of insensitive repointing. Photo from Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*

## MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

### Roof Protection/Water Damage

Roofs help define buildings as commercial and their historic shape are contributing elements to historic character. Protection from water damage is essential to maintaining the life and value of any structure, in particular historic buildings.

#### Key Point:

- Retain the historic shape of roofs and maintain roof-related features such as parapet walls, cornices, and chimneys.
- If modern roof elements like skylights, solar panels, decks, balconies, and satellite dishes are desired, install them so they are not visible from the street.
- Maintain and preserve historic roof materials like slate and sheet metal.
- Roofs should be maintained and kept dry.
- Roofs and ceilings should be routinely inspected for leaks and water damage and promptly repaired.
- During any renovations, roofs should be inspected to check for integrity issues.
- Well maintained gutters and downspouts help protect building from water damage.

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Historic District Guidelines: Collierville, Tennessee <http://www.collierville.com/planning-development-39/historic-district-commission-development-41?task=view>

Mission Hills Historic District Design Guidelines: San Diego, California <http://www.sohosandiego.org/histdistricts/mhguidelines.pdf>

Design Review Guidelines for the Historic Districts  
Wichita, Kansas

Historic Downtown Design Manual  
Ripon Wisconsin, <http://www.riponmainst.com>

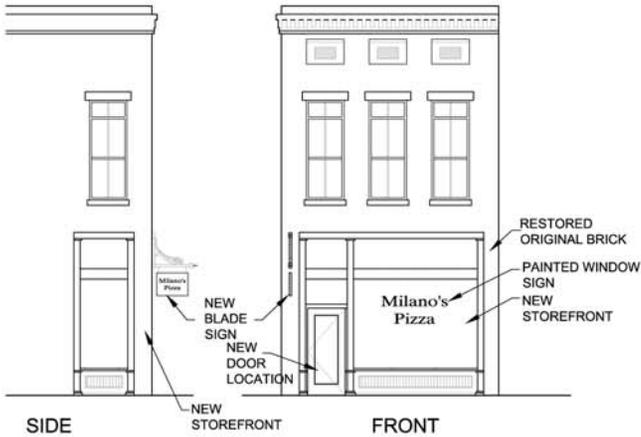




**EXISTING PHOTO**



**EXISTING FACADE**



**PROPOSED FACADE**



**RENDERED FACADE**



**EXISTING PHOTO**



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**PROPOSED FACADE**



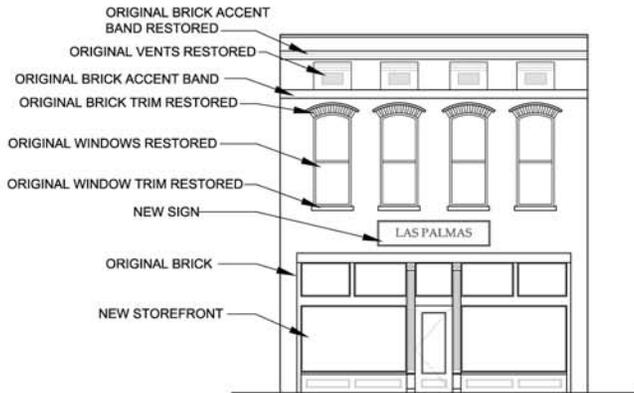
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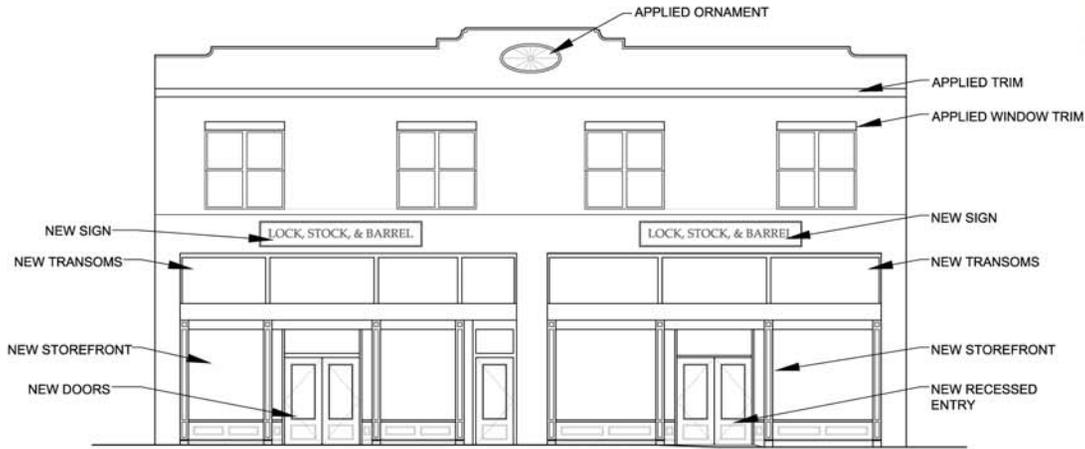
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