THE TOPEKA LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEETING

Holliday Office Building
620 SE Madison Ave., Holliday Conference Room
1st Floor

A G E N D A

Thursday, November 12, 2015
5:30PM

I. **Roll Call**

II. **Approval of Minutes – October 8, 2015 Minutes**

III. **Introduction of Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines by Heritage Strategies, LLC.**

IV. **Presentation of S. Kansas Avenue Streetscape Enhancements – Scott Gales, President, Architect One**

V. **CLGR15-13 by Westar Energy** – Requesting a *Certificate of Appropriateness* for the installation of a permanent, structural awning along the ground-level elevation of 800 S. Kansas Avenue, within the South Kansas Avenue National Historic District.

VI. **CLGR15-14 by Westar Energy** – Requesting a *Certificate of Appropriateness* for the installation of a permanent, structural canopy located over open space located at 818 S. Kansas Avenue, within the South Kansas Avenue National Historic District.

VII. **Administrative and Design Review Committee Reviews and Approvals**

1. **Interior non-structural alterations to 435 S. Kansas Avenue**, listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the German American State Bank.
2. **Section 106 Voluntary Demolition of 1015 NW Central Avenue**

VIII. **SHPO Tax Credit Project Approvals**

1. **1335 SW College Ave. – Interior HVAC ductwork**

IX. **Other Items**

X. **Adjournment**

ADA Notice: For special accommodations for this event, please contact the Planning Department at 785-368-3728 at least three working days in advance.

TOPEKA LANDMARKS COMMISSION

MINUTES

Thursday, October 8, 2015

Holliday Office Building | 620 SE Madison | 1st Floor Holliday Conference Room

I. Roll Call

a. **Members Present:** Murl Riedel, David Heit, Grant Sourk, Paul Post, Bryan Falk, Nelda Gaito, Jeff Carson (7)
Members Absent: Amber Bonnett, Leon Graves (2)
Staff Present: Tim Paris, Dan Warner, Kris Wagers

II. Approval of August 13, 2015 Minutes – Mr. Sourk moved approval of the minutes as typed, seconded by Mr. Post. **APPROVAL (6-0-0; Mr. Carson had not yet arrived)**

III. Senate & Curtis Court Apartments National Register Nomination – – Review and Comment to the Kansas State Historic Sites Board of Review

Mr. Paris reviewed information about the Senate & Curtis Court Apartments, stating that they are listed as a local Topeka Historic Landmark property. He informed Commissioners that this is an opportunity for them to comment or make recommendations or comment on the nomination.

Mr. Sourk stated that the structure represents one of the few apartment-type complexes of this sort that are left from this era.

Mr. Riedel stated that the nomination does a good job of summing up the fact that, though Tudor was prevalent in Topeka, it wasn't necessarily prevalent as apartment buildings and there aren't many that remain. He added that the nomination is well written and highlights nicely the biograph of Nelle Peters and the other two ladies involved in the construction of the building. It also does a good job of talking about some of the interesting people who have lived in the building.

Mr. Sourk moved that the Topeka Landmarks Commission make an official statement of support for the nomination. Second by Mr. Falk. **APPROVAL (7-0-0)**

Mr. Riedel pointed out that the October LC Packets included information about the time/date/location of the state meeting to consider the nomination, and encouraged those who may be interested to attend.

IV. Topeka Worth Saving Nomination – AT&SF Patterns Shop and Laboratory 505 NE Crane Street

Mr. Paris reviewed the nomination and provided the Commissioners with some historical information regarding the building, including the fact that at one time it served as the Payroll Office for AT&SF.

Mr. Riedel reviewed the purpose of the Topeka Worth Saving list, pointing out that it offers no legal protection to a property. Rather, it's an opportunity to highlight a property whose future the

Commission / City may be concerned about. He also reviewed the criteria, specifically the historic nature of the building, the severity of the threat, and the potential for re-use.

Mr. Sourk stated that he sees great potential for re-use, partly because the property remains in such good shape.

Following discussion, Mr. Carson made a motion to include the AT&SF Patterns Shop and Laboratory in the Topeka Worth Saving 2015 list. Second by Mr. Sourk. **APPROVAL (7-0-0)**

V. Update on 2015 Historic Preservation Fund Grant Activities –

Mr. Paris reported that the contract is signed for the College Hill Historic Survey (Phase II). It was awarded to Rosin Preservation, who also did Phase I of the College Hill Survey. The first consultant presentation to the neighborhood is scheduled for October 26, 2015, at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Paris reported that Heritage Strategies will be working on the Downtown Topeka Historic District Design Guidelines. The kickoff is tentatively scheduled for November 12, and representatives will be present at the November Landmarks Commission meeting to give a presentation.

VI. Administrative and Design Review Committee (DRC) Reviews and Approvals

Mr. Falk reported that to date, the DRC has completed 4 Section 106 Reviews. DRC members provided information regarding 106 Reviews and their purpose.

To date, no other reviews have come before the DRC.

VII. SHPO Tax Credit Project Approvals

Mr. Paris reported that tax credit approval was awarded to the owners for working on the flooring, awning, HVAC and entry landing at 820 S. Kansas Avenue. He stated that he doesn't normally report on tax credit project approvals, but is doing so in this instance because the property is located in the Downtown Historic District.

VIII. Other Items–

a. Mr. Falk reported stated that he had attended training last month and, during that, the value of periodic re-surveys of historic districts was discussed. He wondered if that was a possibility for Potwin or possibly Holliday Park. It was agreed that though it is indeed a good idea, the funding is not available. Mr. Riedel pointed that that there are a number of neighborhoods that have never been surveyed at all.

—

b. Mr. Carson reported regarding the Jayhawk Theater, stating that they have a new roof. They are currently remodeling the gallery space with all new drywall and restoring two bathrooms. They anticipate being awarded approximately $680,000 by City Council next week, the funds coming from guest tax funds.

c. Mr. Paris reported that he was invited to discussions regarding the Docking Building. There is a new Secretary of Administration who is perhaps open to doing something other than demolish the building, and there may be a brief window of opportunity to consider options once the new power plant becomes operational.

IX. Adjournment at 6:35PM

Kansas Avenue Project

Chamber of Commerce
September 9, 2011

Vince Frye . Mike Morse . Scott Gales

Kansas Avenue Project

Chamber of Commerce
September 9, 2011

Topeka – The State Capital of Kansas

These are exciting times!

Kansas Avenue Project

Chamber of Commerce
September 9, 2011

2014 - May

City Approves "Mill & Overlay" work for Kansas Avenue – Downtown

Kansas Avenue Project

Chamber of Commerce
September 9, 2011

How we got to today

2002

Work begins on the renovation of the State Capitol Building

2008

City Approves "Mill & Overlay" work for Kansas Avenue – Downtown

Peer Communities

Downtown & Riverfront Economic Redevelopment

2015 – Topeka, KS
2014 – Tulsa, Oklahoma
2013 – Fargo, ND
2012 – Fort Collins, Co
2011 – Greenville, SC
2010 – Oklahoma City, OK
2009 - The Quad Cities, IA & IL
2008 - Des Moines, Iowa
2007 - Sioux City, IA
2006 - Little Rock, Arkansas
2005 - Columbus Ohio
2004 - Lincoln & Omaha Nebraska
2003 – Oklahoma City, OK
2002 Springfield, MO

Peer Communities

Downtown Redevelopment Benefits

Renewed & Revitalized Downtown/Riverfront
Diverse and Growing Arts Community
Entrepreneurship Growth
Dynamic Economic Expansion
Expanding Residential Opportunities
High-Quality Hotel & Extended-stay Accommodations
Historic Renovation Opportunities Expanded
Magnet for Young Professionals
Increased Sporting Venue Options
Skilled-Trade Education & Advancement Opportunities
Industrial & Technology-Based Business Growth
Increased Shared Community Vision

Kansas Avenue Project

Chamber of Commerce
September 9, 2011

Kansas Avenue: A Public/Private Community Partnership

Kansas Avenue Project

Chamber of Commerce
September 9, 2011

2015

(January) – Private Contributions Exceed $2.65 Million
48 Donors

Ameriprise Financial
American Legion
Architect One, PA
BA Designs, LLC
Bartlett & West
BNSF
Briman Leading Jewelers
Capitol Federal Savings
Clayton Financial Services, Inc.
CoreFirst Bank & Trust
Cox Communications
Equity Bank
Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka
Fidelity State Bank & Trust
Fox Builders & Real Estate, LLC.
Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce
GTrust Financial Partners
Heartland Visioning
Hills Pet Nutrition, Inc.
Intrust Bank
State of Kansas
KBS Constructors, Inc.
KS Commercial Real Estate Services, Inc.
Mars Chocolate North America
McPherson Contractors, Inc.
Midwest Health
Mize Houser & Company P.A.
Parrish Management Corporation
Pat & Connie Michaelis
PTMW, Inc.
Quiznos
Rick & Susan Wienckowski
Schwerdt Design Group, Inc.
Security Benefit Group
Sertoma
Sittenauer, Curt & Jill
Sloan Law Firm
Stephen Smith Images
Steve Briman
Stormont Vail HealthCare
Strathman Sales
The Craig Group
US Bank
Vince & Dana Frye
Vision Bank
Washburn University
Westar Energy
WIBW

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September 9, 2011

2014

(May) – Road & Utility Work on the Avenue Begins

(May) City approve 2015 CIP Budget to include another $880,000 for Landscape, Power, & Streetscape Downtown

(November) – Pause East Side Road & Utility work till Spring 2015

2015

(March-April) – Road Utility Work will start on West Side of Avenue – finalize East Side work

(September) – Private Money funded Improvements will start in the 800 Block

(October) – Road & Utility work will be completed

2016

(Spring) – Privately funded work will be completed

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Architect One – 906 S Kansas Avenue

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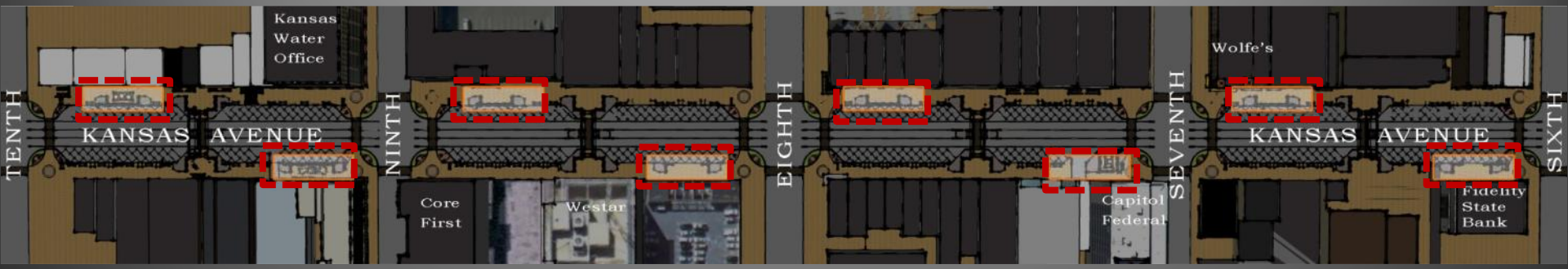
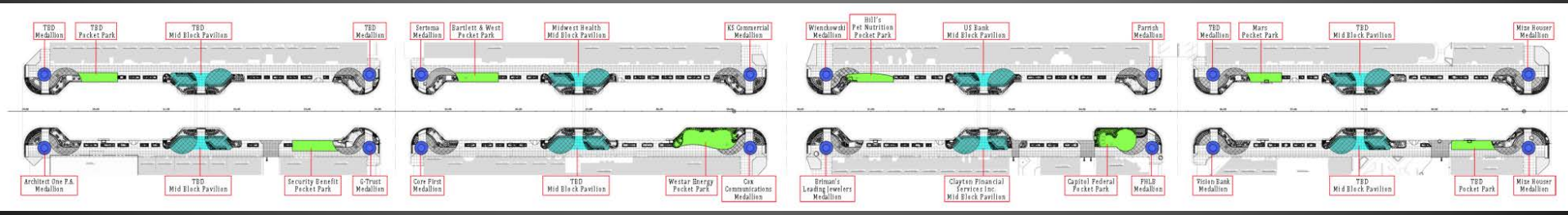
September 9, 2011

- Westar
- Capitol Federal
- MARS
- Security Benefit
- Hills
- BNSF
- Bartlett & West
- Fidelity State Bank





Pocket Parks – Aerial Perspective

- TYPICAL PARK SIZES– 14’ x 40’ (+/-) activity spaces
- Opportunity for Private Sector to underwrite Enhancements and create Cultural/Educational/Historical amenities
- Develop Flexibility based on budget & underwriting by Private Section
- Typical of 8 Locations over four-block section of KS Avenue

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Hill’s Pet Nutrition - Pocket Park

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Capitol Federal - Pocket Park

- Water Feature with Capitol Dome Sculpture
- 1883 Coin Medallion

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Security Benefit – Pocket Park

- Public Art –Bison Sculpture
- Perspective View

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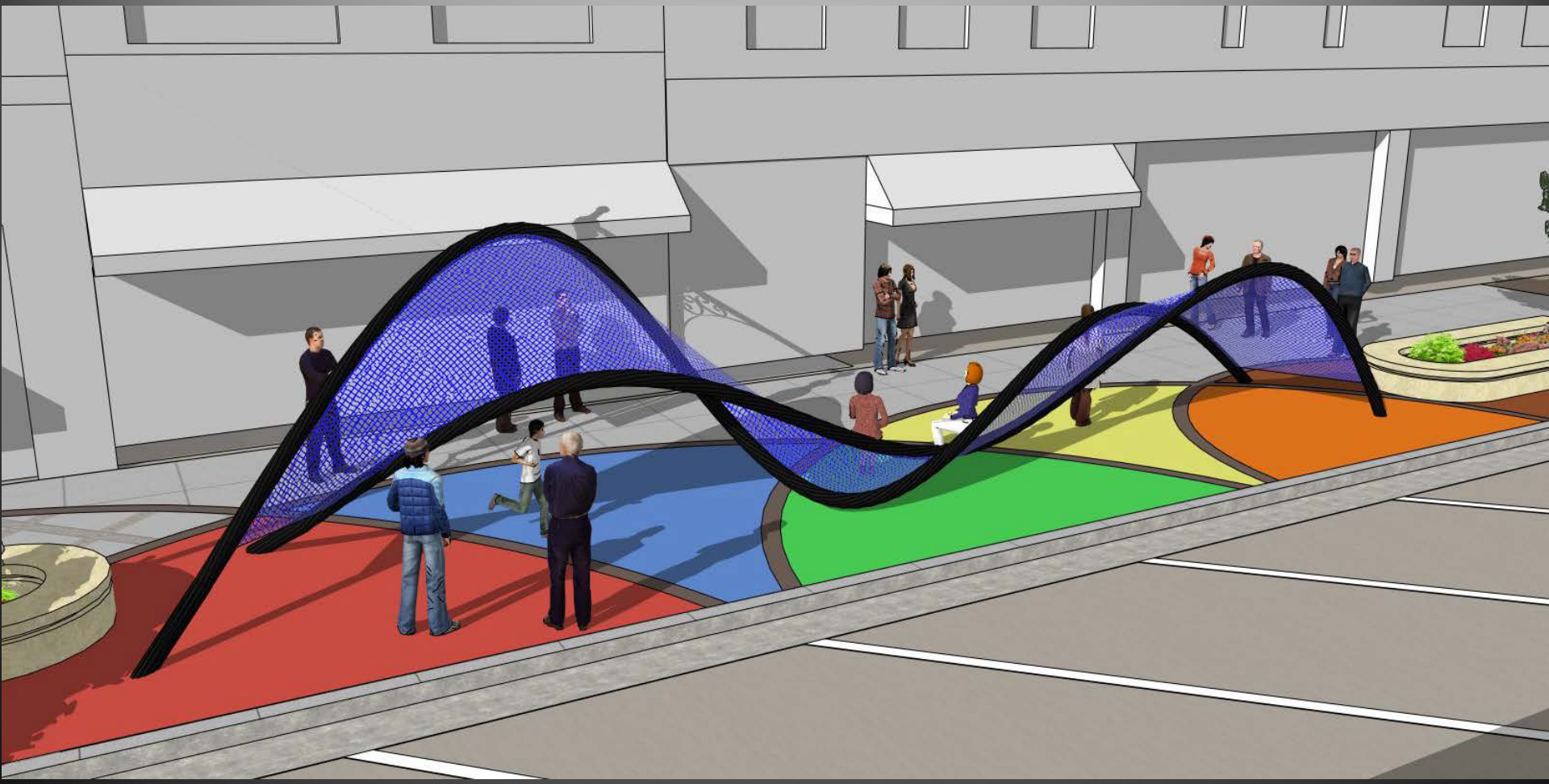
September 9, 2011



MARS North America – Pocket Park

- Public Art – Play Sculpture
- Rubberized Play Surface with Netting
- Perspective View

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Fall 2014 Construction Progress along the avenue – 800 Block @ Westar

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Westar – Pocket Park

- Covered Public Event Space
- Interactive Lighting
- Perspective View

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Westar - Demolition of the curbs and walk begins

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Westar – Pocket Park

- Covered Public Event Space
- Interactive Lighting
- Perspective View

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Fidelity State Bank– Pocket Park

- Covered Public Event Space
- Perspective

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BNSF – Pocket Park

- Train Themed Park with Historical & Educational elements
- Cyrus K Holiday – Notable Topekan Sculpture

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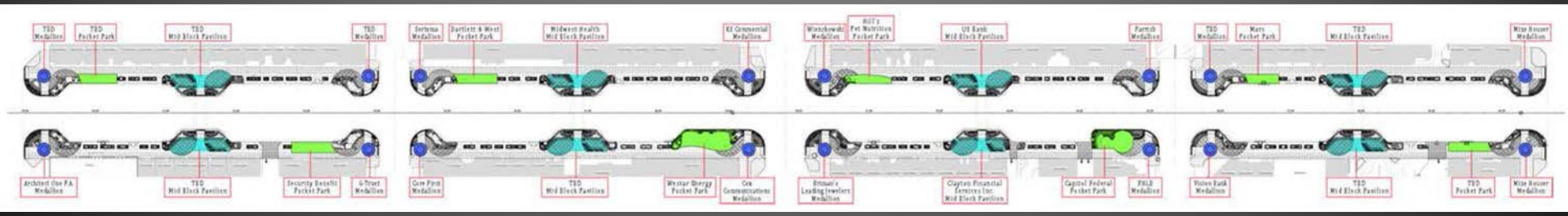

MID BLOCK CROSSINGS

- Four Locations shown
- Structural Frame utilized with multi-purpose functions
- Pedestrian-oriented with side walk space for more functions
- Four Mid-Block Cross walks from 6th to 10th

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Mid-Block Crosswalk Arch – Final Concept Design

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Typical Crosswalk Arch – Street Perspective

- Stage Backdrop for Concerts – Live Music concept shown

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Crosswalk Arch – Medallion

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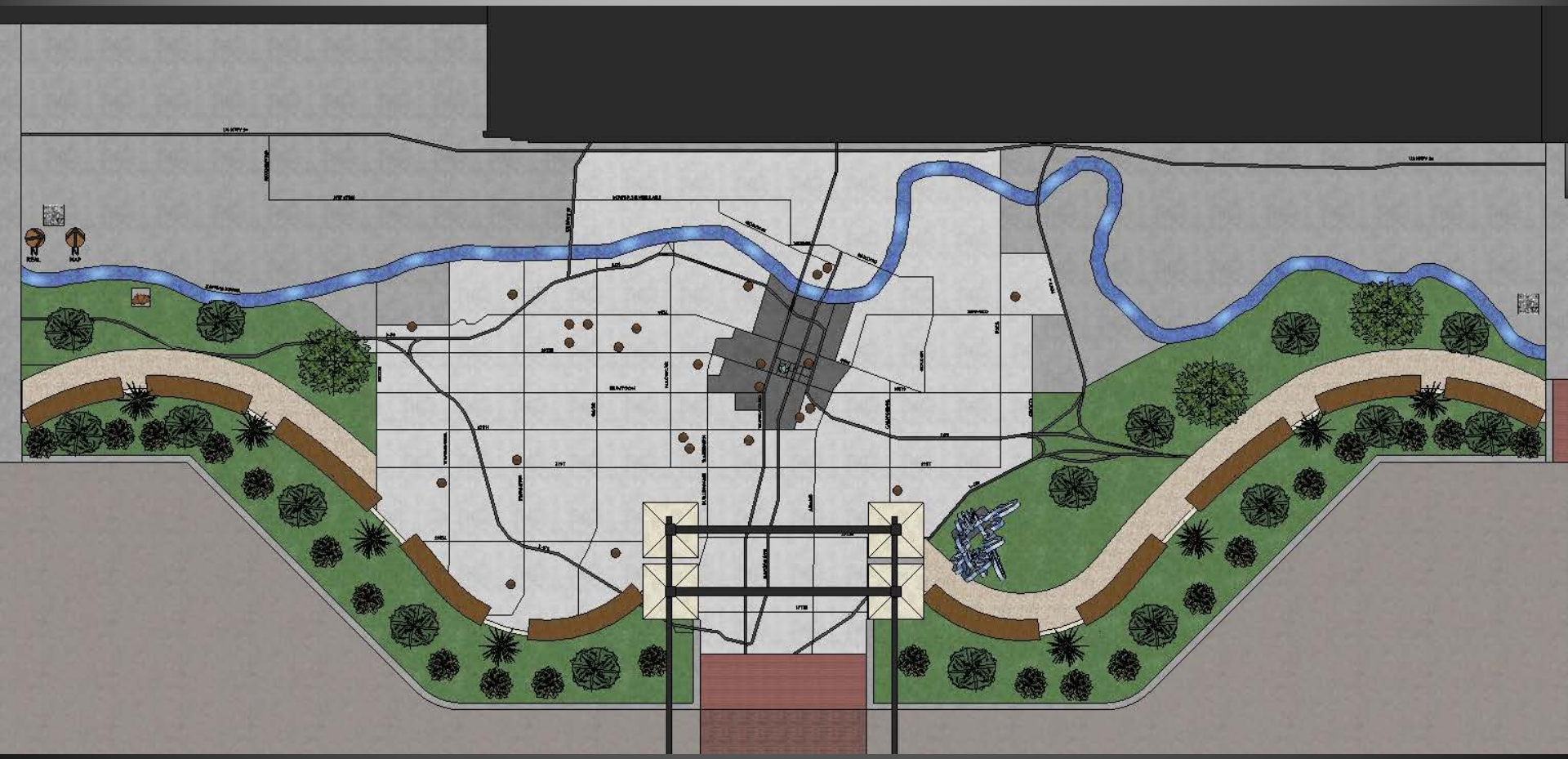

Midwest Health-SDG-McPherson Const. - Pavilion

- Scaled Map of City of Topeka
- Markers locating historical locations and events thru ought community

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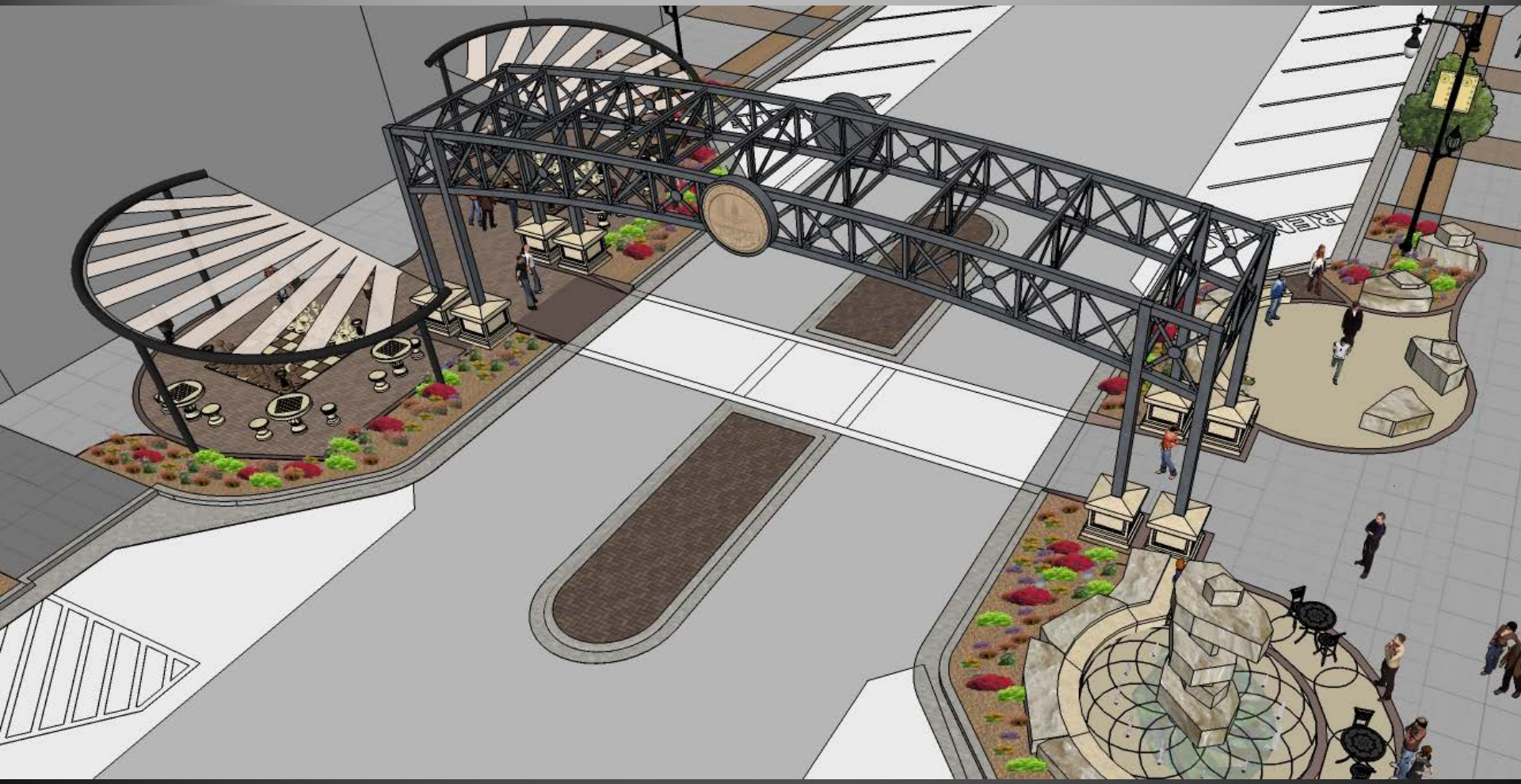

Crosswalk Arch – Clayton Financial & US BANK Pavilions

- Each End of the cross walk would be a public pavilion space

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American Legion of Kansas – Mid-Block Pavilion
Harry Colmery & GI Bill Memorial Park with Sculpture

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American Legion of Kansas – Mid-Block Pavilion
Harry Colmery & GI Bill Memorial Park with Sculpture

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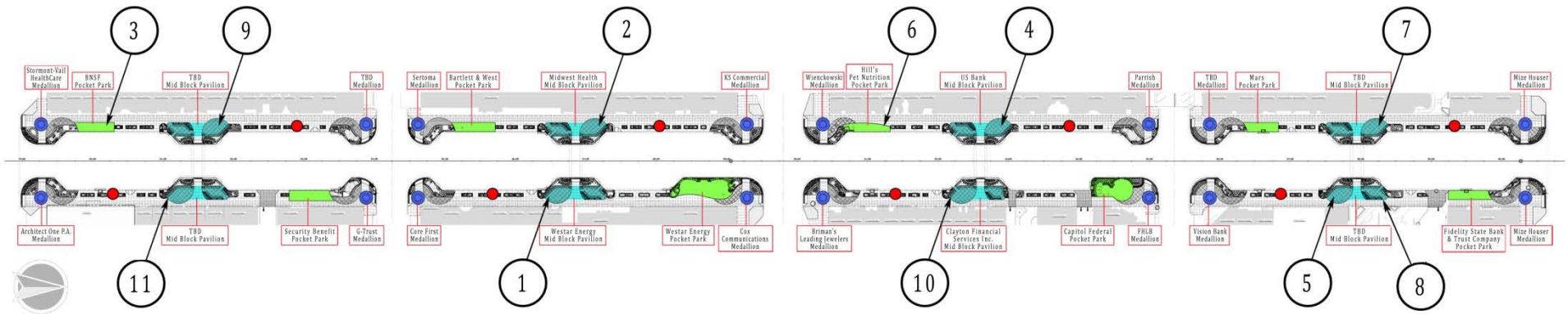
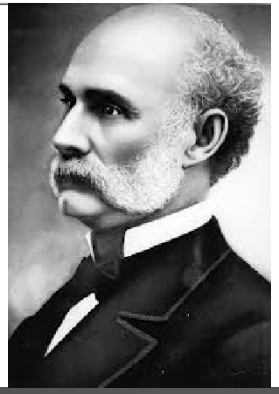
RFP - NOTABLE TOPEKANS & PUBLIC ART



LEGEND

- INTERCHANGEABLE/ROTATING ART (TOTAL OF 8)
- CORNER MEDALIONS
- POCKET PARK
- MID-BLOCK CROSSING PARK



NOTABLE TOPEKANS

1. CHARLES CURTIS
2. ARTHUR CAPPER
3. CYRUS HOLLIDAY
4. BROWN VS BOARD STORY
5. ICHABOD WASHBURN
6. MENNIGER BROTHERS
7. GRANT CUSHINBERRY
8. PEDRO LOPEZ
9. NANCY KASSEBAUM BAKER
10. GEORGIA NEESE CLARK GRAY
11 HARRY COLMERY

Public Art – Permanent & Interchangeable Options

- Life-size Bronze Statues & Public Art
- Mid-block crossing Pavilions, Pocket Parks & 16 Corners - multiple locations for statues to be displayed
- Notable Topekans will Include Historical Narrative placard that explains ties to Topeka and significance
- 8 locations for Interchangeable/rotating Public Art

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Arthur Capper by John Forsythe

Notable Topekan - Public Art

Kansas Avenue Project

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Arthur Capper by John Forsythe

Notable Topekan - Public Art

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Charles Curtis by Elizabeth Zeller
Notable Topekan - Public Art

Kansas Avenue Project

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Cyrus K Holiday by Joe Skeeba

Notable Topekan - Public Art

Kansas Avenue Project

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Cyrus K Holiday by Joe Skeeba

Notable Topekan - Public Art

Kansas Avenue Project

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Harry Colmery Family – Scale Model unveiling
Janet Zoble – Artist & Sculpture

Kansas Avenue Project

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Ichabod Washburn – Scale Model unveiling
Janet Zoble – Artist & Sculpture

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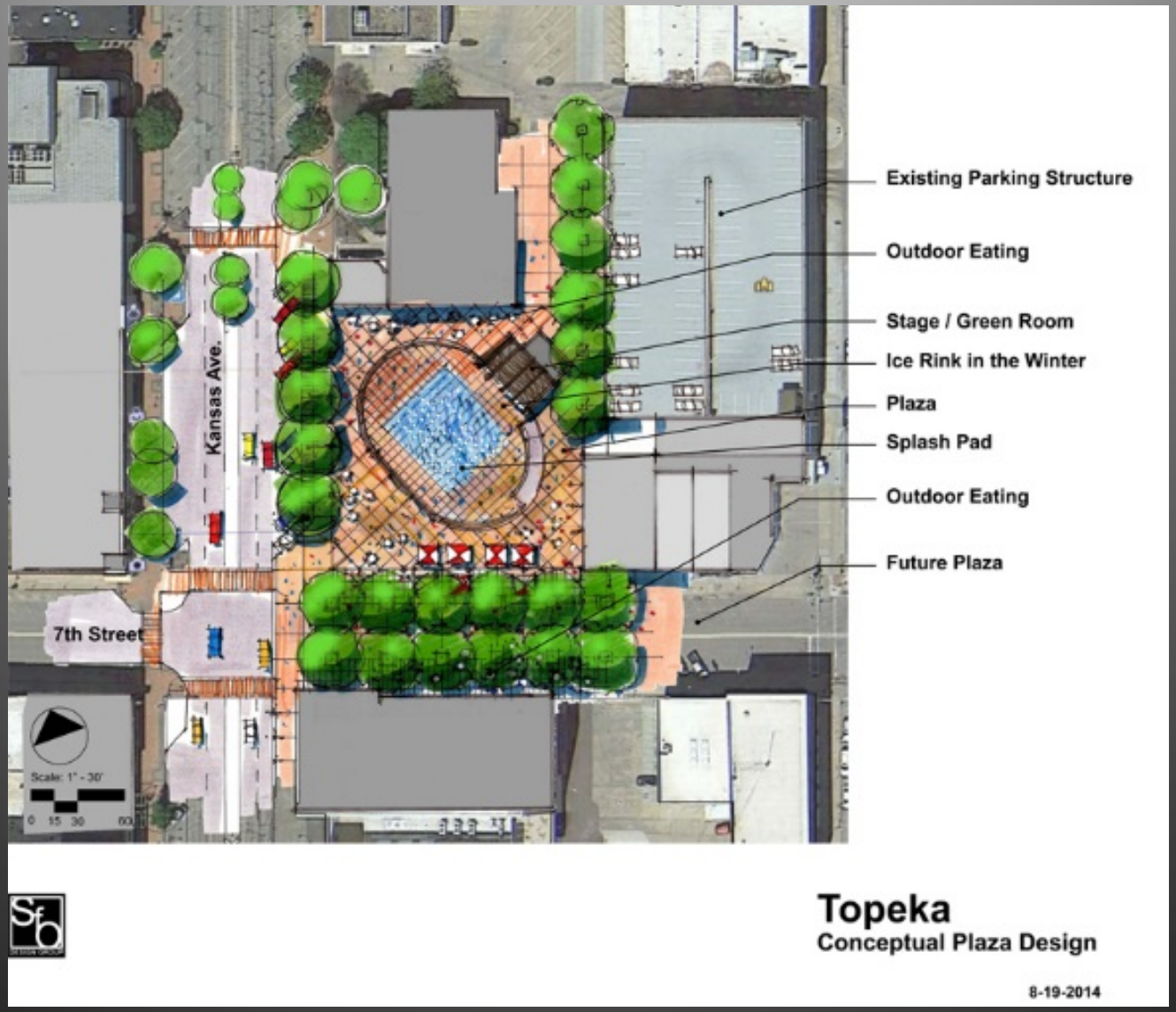

2015 - Downtown Event Plaza Concept

Kansas Avenue Project

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2015 - Downtown Event Plaza Concept

Kansas Avenue Project

Chamber of Commerce
September 9, 2011

Project Updates can be found at the City of Topeka Website:

- www.topeka.org/Kansas Avenue Project

Follow Project Updates on Twitter:

- @kansasavenue

Topeka Landmarks Commission
Certified Local Government
State and National Historic District Project Review

Case Number: CLGR15-13
Project Address: 800 S. Kansas Avenue
Historic District: South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District
Standards: Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation
Type of work: Exterior additions of structural awnings above the ground-floor elevation widows; **818 S. Kansas Ave.** – Placement of an elevated structural canopy over an existing open space, extending to the public right-of-way
Square Footage: 1,157 sq. ft.
Height: 1-Story
Property Classification: Non-Contributing

Attachments: Site Plan [X] **Elevations** [X] **Arch./Const. Plans** [X] **Pictures** [X]

Analysis Note: This project is proposed for a Non-Contributing building within the South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District. As such, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation will be evaluated on the proposed project's effect on the architectural compatibility with the subject building, and the project's effect on the historic integrity of the surrounding district.

Attached with this report and recommendation is the US National Park Service Technical Preservation Briefs No. 14 and No. 44, published to assist in the interpretation of the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. This subject of this Preservation Briefs is (14) New Exterior additions to Historic Buildings, and (44) the Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement, and New Design.

Applicable Standards:

- **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.**

  Analysis – The proposed modification addition of structural awnings to this structure will not alter its architectural style or historic integrity. The structural awnings are designed to be architecturally compatible with the late 20th Century modern architectural style of the non-contributing property, and additionally to be compatible with, and contribute to the streetscape enhancements that are presently being constructed within the public right-of-way of South Kansas Avenue. The proposed awnings are consistent with the proper and recommended placement of awnings on structures representative of the period of significance of the surrounding historic district. Furthermore, the awnings will not impose any structural modifications to the subject property, and if removed in the future, would leave the adjacent facade of the building in its current state. The design and materials used for the construction of these awnings is consistent with the architectural integrity of the property. Therefore, it is deemed that the character of this property will be preserved as an example of late 20th-Century American architecture.

- **Standard # 5 - Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.**

  Analysis – The addition of the structural awnings to this structure will not compromise the visible features, finishes, construction techniques, or craftsmanship of the subject building. The proposed awnings are consistent with the proper and recommended placement of awnings on structures representative of the period of significance of the surrounding historic district. The awnings will structurally contribute to, and

integrate with the subject property, and to the streetscape improvements presently under construction within the S. Kansas Avenue public right-of-way.

- **<u>Standard # 9</u> - 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.**

  Analysis – The addition of a structural awning will not remove or alter any historic fabric or materials on the building's exterior. The awnings are designed to be compatible with the modern style of architecture of the building, and will also function as an integral feature of the streetscape adjacent to the building.

- **<u>Standard #10</u> – New Additions and adjacent or related new construction will 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.**

  Analysis – The design of the awnings, and their attachment to the building, will not impose any structural modifications to the exterior façade of the building. If the awnings are removed, the existing exterior façade of the building will remain essentially unchanged from its appearance and structural integrity today.

<u>Design Review Committee Recommendation:</u> The Topeka Landmarks Commission's Design Review Committee met on Tuesday, October 27, 2015, to consider the compliance of this project with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. By a vote of **2-0-1**, with Commission Member Bryan Falk abstaining, the Design Review Committee recommended that the placement of structural awnings above the ground-floor windows onto the property located at 800 S. Kansas Avenue was **IN ACCORDANCE** with the applicable Standards for Review.

<u>Planning Staff Recommendation</u>: Based upon an evaluation based upon the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the proposed projects will **NOT** damage or destroy the historical integrity of the South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District.

Timothy Paris, Planner II

11-12-15
Date

CLGR15-13 by Westar Energy, 800 S. Kansas Avenue

Topeka Landmarks Commission
Certified Local Government
State and National Historic District Project Review

Case Number: CLGR15-14
Project Address: 818 S. Kansas Avenue
Historic District: South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District
Standards: Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation
Type of work:; Placement of an structural canopy over an existing open space, extending to the public right-of-way
Square Footage: 456 sq. ft.
Height: 1-Story
Property Classification: Contributing

Attachments: Site Plan [X] **Elevations** [X] **Arch./Const. Plans** [X] **Pictures** [X]

Analysis Note: The property located at **818 S. Kansas Avenue** is listed as a *Contributor* to the surrounding historic district. The proposed placement of a structural canopy above an existing open space will therefore be evaluated based on its effect to the listed property, and its visual impact on the surrounding district.

Attached with this report and recommendation is the US National Park Service Technical Preservation Briefs No. 14 and No. 44, published to assist in the interpretation of the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. This subject of this Preservation Briefs is (14) New Exterior additions to Historic Buildings, and (44) the Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement, and New Design. Special attention is referred to Preservation Brief No. 14, Figures 13 and 14, both of which depict compliant additions to historic properties utilizing modern materials for additions to historic buildings, similar to the proposed project at 818 S. Kansas Avenue.

Applicable Standards:

- **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.**

  Analysis – The proposed modification will not alter the architectural style or historic integrity of the property. The canopy is designed to be architecturally compatible, yet distinct from the timeframe of the building's original construction. Additionally, the proposed canopy will be compatible with, and contribute to the streetscape enhancements that are presently being constructed within the public right-of-way of South Kansas Avenue. The design of the canopy is reflective in both materials and design to an existing structure extending from the top of the Westar Energy tower. The existing extension is constructed of an exposed steel frame facing the north, west, and south sides of the façade of the tower. Similarly, the proposed canopy is designed with exposed steel "T" beams that are visible from the right-of-way of South Kansas Avenue. This design incorporates a similar architectural feature already present on the existing building. Additionally, the proposed canopy will not impose any structural modifications to the subject property. Therefore, it is deemed that the historic character of this property will be preserved as an example of mid-20th Century American architecture.

- **Standard #5 - Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.**

  Analysis – The addition of the structural canopy will not compromise the visible features, finishes, construction techniques, or craftsmanship of the building. This feature will be consistent with the craftsmanship used in the building's original construction.

- **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.**

  Analysis - The addition of the canopy over the open space below the principle structure will not remove or alter any historic fabric or materials on the building's exterior. The canopy is designed to be compatible with the modern style of architecture of the building, and is also designed to be consistent with a structural awning that surrounds the top of the Westar Energy tower. Materials used within the structure of the canopy are consistent with the materials, massing, and scale of the architectural features located adjacent to the canopy at the entrance to the structure. The placement of the canopy is intended to convert this portion of the property to a publicly useable space, and diminish the effects of excessive wind within this particular location.

- **Standard #10 - New Additions and adjacent or related new construction will 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.**

  Analysis – The canopy proposed to be placed over an open space adjacent to the sidewalk will not remove or destroy any historic materials, and if removed, will leave the existing face of the structure intact. The canopy is designed to be consistent with the Mid-20th Century architecture of the structure, yet will be distinct as an addition to the structure, and will not appear as an original, historical feature of the property.

Design Review Committee Recommendation: The Topeka Landmarks Commission's Design Review Committee met on Tuesday, October 27, 2015, and again on Monday, November 2, 2015, to consider the compliance of this project with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. By a vote of **1-1-1**, with Commission Member Bryan Falk abstaining, the Design Review Committee arrived at a **split recommendation** that the placement of the canopy, in its current design and placement onto the property located at 818 S. Kansas Avenue, would be in accordance with the applicable Standards for Review.

Planning Staff Recommendation: Based upon an evaluation of the project using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the proposed project will **not** damage or destroy the historical integrity of the South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District, and **will meet** all applicable Standards for Review for Contributing structures.

Timothy Paris, Planner II

11-12-15
Date

CLGR15-14 by Westar Energy, 818 S. Kansas Avenue

14 PRESERVATION BRIEFS

New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns

Anne E. Grimmer and Kay D. Weeks

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Technical Preservation Services

A new exterior addition to a historic building should be considered in a rehabilitation project only after determining that requirements for the new or adaptive use cannot be successfully met by altering non-significant interior spaces. If the new use cannot be accommodated in this way, then an exterior addition may be an acceptable alternative. Rehabilitation as a treatment "is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and *additions* while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values."

The topic of new additions, including rooftop additions, to historic buildings comes up frequently, especially as it relates to rehabilitation projects. It is often discussed and it is the subject of concern, consternation, considerable disagreement and confusion. Can, in certain instances, a historic building be enlarged for a new use without destroying its historic character? And, just what is significant about each particular historic building that should be preserved? Finally, what kind of new construction is appropriate to the historic building?

The vast amount of literature on the subject of additions to historic buildings reflects widespread interest as well as divergence of opinion. New additions have been discussed by historians within a social and political framework; by architects and architectural historians in terms of construction technology and style; and by urban planners as successful or unsuccessful contextual design. However, within the historic preservation and rehabilitation programs of the National Park Service, the focus on new additions is to ensure that they preserve the character of historic buildings.

Figure 1. The addition to the right with its connecting hyphen is compatible with the Collegiate Gothic-style library. The addition is set back from the front of the library and uses the same materials and a simplified design that references, but does not copy, the historic building. Photo: David Wakely Photography.

Most historic districts or neighborhoods are listed in the National Register of Historic Places for their significance within a particular time frame. This period of significance of historic districts as well as individually-listed properties may sometimes lead to a misunderstanding that inclusion in the National Register may prohibit any physical change outside of a certain historical period—particularly in the form of exterior additions. National Register listing does not mean that a building or district is frozen in time and that no change can be made without compromising the historical significance. It does mean, however, that a new addition to a historic building should preserve its historic character.

Figure 2. The new section on the right is appropriately scaled and reflects the design of the historic Art Deco-style hotel. The apparent separation created by the recessed connector also enables the addition to be viewed as an individual building.

Guidance on New Additions

To meet Standard 1 of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, which states that "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," it must be determined whether a historic building can accommodate a new addition. Before expanding the building's footprint, consideration should first be given to incorporating changes—such as code upgrades or spatial needs for a new use—within secondary areas of the historic building. However, this is not always possible and, after such an evaluation, the conclusion may be that an addition is required, particularly if it is needed to avoid modifications to character-defining interior spaces. An addition should be designed to be compatible with the historic character of the building and, thus, meet the *Standards for Rehabilitation*. Standards 9 and 10 apply specifically to new additions:

> (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."
>
> (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."

The subject of new additions is important because a new addition to a historic building has the potential to change its historic character as well as to damage and destroy significant historic materials and features. A new addition also has the potential to confuse the public and to make it difficult or impossible to differentiate the old from the new or to recognize what part of the historic building is genuinely historic.

The intent of this Preservation Brief is to provide guidance to owners, architects and developers on how to design a compatible new addition, including a rooftop addition, to a historic building. A new addition to a historic building should preserve the building's *historic character*. To accomplish this and meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, a new addition should:

- Preserve significant historic materials, features and form;
- Be compatible; and
- Be differentiated from the historic building.

Every historic building is different and each rehabilitation project is unique. Therefore, the guidance offered here is not specific, but general, so that it can be applied to a wide variety of building types and situations. To assist in interpreting this guidance, illustrations of a variety of new additions are provided. Good examples, as well as some that do not meet the Standards, are included to further help explain and clarify what is a compatible new addition that preserves the character of the historic building.

Figure 3. The red and buff-colored parking addition with a rooftop playground is compatible with the early-20th century school as well as with the neighborhood in which it also serves as infill in the urban setting.

Preserve Significant Historic Materials, Features and Form

Attaching a new exterior addition usually involves some degree of material loss to an external wall of a historic building, but it should be minimized. Damaging or destroying significant materials and craftsmanship should be avoided, as much as possible.

Generally speaking, preservation of historic buildings inherently implies minimal change to primary or "public" elevations and, of course, interior features as well. Exterior features that distinguish one historic building or a row of buildings and which can be seen from a public right of way, such as a street or sidewalk, are most likely to be the most significant. These can include many different elements, such as: window patterns, window hoods or shutters; porticoes, entrances and doorways; roof shapes, cornices and decorative moldings; or commercial storefronts with their special detailing, signs and glazing patterns. Beyond a single building, entire blocks of urban or residential structures are often closely related architecturally by their materials, detailing, form and alignment. Because significant materials and features should be preserved, not damaged or hidden, the first place to consider placing a new addition is in a location where the least amount of historic material and character-defining features will be lost. In most cases, this will be on a secondary side or rear elevation.

Figure 4. This glass and brick structure is a harmonious addition set back and connected to the rear of the Colonial Revival-style brick house. Cunningham/Quill Architects. Photos: © Maxwell MacKenzie.

One way to reduce overall material loss when constructing a new addition is simply to keep the addition smaller in proportion to the size of the historic building. Limiting the size and number of openings between old and new by utilizing existing doors or enlarging windows also helps to minimize loss. An often successful way to accomplish this is to link the addition to the historic building by means of a hyphen or connector. A connector provides a physical link while visually separating the old and new, and the connecting passageway penetrates and removes only a small portion of the historic wall. A new addition that will abut the historic building along an entire elevation or wrap around a side and rear elevation, will likely integrate the historic and the new interiors, and thus result in a high degree of loss of form and exterior walls, as well as significant alteration of interior spaces and features, and will not meet the Standards.

Compatible but Differentiated Design

In accordance with the Standards, a new addition must preserve the building's historic character and, in order to do that, it must be differentiated, but compatible, with the historic building. A new addition must retain the essential form and integrity of the historic property. Keeping the addition smaller, limiting the removal of historic materials by linking the addition with a hyphen, and locating the new addition at the rear or on an inconspicuous side elevation of a historic building are techniques discussed previously that can help to accomplish this.

Rather than differentiating between old and new, it might seem more in keeping with the historic character

simply to repeat the historic form, material, features and detailing in a new addition. However, when the new work is highly replicative and indistinguishable from the old in appearance, it may no longer be possible to identify the "real" historic building. Conversely, the treatment of the addition should not be so different that it becomes the primary focus. The difference may be subtle, but it must be clear. A new addition to a historic building should protect those visual qualities that make the building eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Park Service policy concerning new additions to historic buildings, which was adopted in 1967, is not unique. It is an outgrowth and continuation of a general philosophical approach to change first expressed by John Ruskin in England in the 1850s, formalized by William Morris in the founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877, expanded by the Society in 1924 and, finally, reiterated in the 1964 Venice Charter—a document that continues to be followed by the national committees of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The 1967 *Administrative Policies for Historical Areas of the National Park System* direct that "...a modern addition should be readily distinguishable from the older work; however, the new work should be harmonious with the old in scale, proportion, materials, and color. Such additions should be as inconspicuous as possible from the public view." As a logical evolution from these Policies specifically for National Park Service-owned historic structures, the 1977 *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, which may be applied to **all** historic buildings listed in, or eligible for listing in the National Register, also state that "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."

Preserve Historic Character

The goal, of course, is a new addition that preserves the building's historic character. The historic character of each building may be different, but the methodology of establishing it remains the same. Knowing the uses and functions a building has served over time will assist in making what is essentially a physical evaluation. But, while written and pictorial documentation can provide a framework for establishing the building's history, to a large extent the historic character is embodied in the physical aspects of the historic building itself—shape, materials, features, craftsmanship, window arrangements, colors, setting and interiors. Thus, it is important to identify the historic character before making decisions about the extent—or limitations—of change that can be made.

Figure 5. This addition (a) is constructed of matching brick and attached by a recessed connector (b) to the 1914 apartment building (c). The design is compatible and the addition is smaller and subordinate to the historic building (d).

Figure 6. A new addition (left) is connected to the garage which separates it from the main block of the c. 1910 former florist shop (right). The addition is traditional in style, yet sufficiently restrained in design to distinguish it from the historic building.

A new addition should always be subordinate to the historic building; it should not compete in size, scale or design with the historic building. An addition that bears no relationship to the proportions and massing of the historic building—in other words, one that overpowers the historic form and changes the scale—will usually compromise the historic character as well. The appropriate size for a new addition varies from building to building; it could never be stated in a square or cubic footage ratio, but the historic building's existing proportions, site and setting can help set some general parameters for enlargement. Although even a small addition that is poorly designed can have an adverse impact, to some extent, there is a predictable relationship between the size of the historic resource and what is an appropriate size for a compatible new addition.

Generally, constructing the new addition on a secondary side or rear elevation—in addition to material preservation—will also preserve the historic character. Not only will the addition be less visible, but because a secondary elevation is usually simpler and less distinctive, the addition will have less of a physical and visual impact on the historic building. Such placement will help to preserve the building's historic form and relationship to its site and setting.

Historic landscape features, including distinctive grade variations, also need to be respected. Any new landscape features, including plants and trees, should be kept at a scale and density that will not interfere with understanding of the historic resource itself. A traditionally landscaped property should not be covered with large paved areas for parking which would drastically change the character of the site.

Despite the fact that in most cases it is recommended that the new addition be attached to a secondary elevation, sometimes this is not possible. There simply may not be a secondary elevation—some important freestanding buildings have significant materials and features on all sides. A structure or group of structures together with its setting (for example, a college campus) may be of such significance that any new addition would not only damage materials, but alter the buildings' relationship to each other and the setting. An addition attached to a highly-visible elevation of a historic building can radically alter the historic form or obscure features such as a decorative cornice or window ornamentation. Similarly, an addition that fills

Figure 7. A vacant side lot was the only place a new stair tower could be built when this 1903 theater was rehabilitated as a performing arts center. Constructed with matching materials, the stair tower is set back with a recessed connector and, despite its prominent location, it is clearly subordinate and differentiated from the historic theater.

Figure 8. The rehabilitation of this large, early-20th century warehouse (left) into affordable artists' lofts included the addition of a compatible glass and brick elevator/stair tower at the back (right).

Figure 9. A simple, brick stair tower replaced two non-historic additions at the rear of this 1879 school building when it was rehabilitated as a women's and children's shelter. The addition is set back and it is not visible from the front of the school.

Figure 10. The small size and the use of matching materials ensures that the new addition on the left is compatible with the historic Romanesque Revival-style building.

in a planned void on a highly-visible elevation (such as a U-shaped plan or a feature such as a porch) will also alter the historic form and, as a result, change the historic character. Under these circumstances, an addition would have too much of a negative impact on the historic building and it would not meet the Standards. Such situations may best be handled by constructing a separate building in a location where it will not adversely affect the historic structure and its setting.

In other instances, particularly in urban areas, there may be no other place but adjacent to the primary façade to locate an addition needed for the new use. It may be possible to design a lateral addition attached on the side that is compatible with the historic building, even though it is a highly-visible new element. Certain types of historic structures, such as government buildings, metropolitan museums, churches or libraries, may be so massive in size that a relatively large-scale addition may not compromise the historic character, provided, of course, the addition is smaller than the historic building. Occasionally, the visible size of an addition can be reduced by placing some of the spaces or support systems in a part of the structure that is underground. Large new additions may sometimes be successful if they read as a separate volume, rather than as an extension of the historic structure, although the scale, massing and proportions of the addition still need to be compatible with the historic building. However, similar expansion of smaller buildings would be dramatically out of scale. In summary, where any new addition is proposed, correctly assessing the relationship between actual size and relative scale will be a key to preserving the character of the historic building.

Figure 11. The addition to this early-20th century Gothic Revival-style church provides space for offices, a great hall for gatherings and an accessible entrance (left). The stucco finish, metal roof, narrow gables and the Gothic-arched entrance complement the architecture of the historic church. Placing the addition in back where the ground slopes away ensures that it is subordinate and minimizes its impact on the church (below).

Design Guidance for Compatible New Additions to Historic Buildings

There is no formula or prescription for designing a new addition that meets the Standards. A new addition to a historic building that meets the Standards can be any architectural style—traditional, contemporary or a simplified version of the historic building. However, there must be a balance between differentiation and compatibility in order to maintain the historic character and the identity of the building being enlarged. New additions that too closely resemble the historic building or are in extreme contrast to it fall short of this balance. *Inherent in all of the guidance is the concept that an addition needs to be subordinate to the historic building.*

A new addition **must preserve significant historic materials, features and form**, and **it must be compatible but differentiated from the historic building**. To achieve this, it is necessary to carefully consider the **placement or location** of the new addition, and its **size, scale and massing** when planning a new addition. To preserve a property's historic character, a new addition must be visually distinguishable from the historic building. This does not mean that the addition and the historic building should be glaringly different in terms of design, materials and other visual qualities. Instead, the new addition should take its design cues from, but not copy, the historic building.

A variety of design techniques can be effective ways to differentiate the new construction from the old, while respecting the architectural qualities and vocabulary of the historic building, including the following:

- Incorporate a simple, recessed, small-scale hyphen to physically separate the old and the new volumes or set the addition back from the wall plane(s) of the historic building.
- Avoid designs that unify the two volumes into a single architectural whole. The new addition may include simplified architectural features that reflect, but do not duplicate, similar features on the historic building. This approach will not impair the existing building's historic character as long as the new structure is subordinate in size and clearly differentiated and distinguishable so that the identity of the historic structure is not lost in a new and larger composition. The historic building must be clearly identifiable and its physical integrity must not be compromised by the new addition.

Figure 12. This 1954 synagogue (left) is accessed through a monumental entrance to the right. The new education wing (far right) added to it features the same vertical elements and color and, even though it is quite large, its smaller scale and height ensure that it is secondary to the historic resource.

Figure 13. A glass and metal structure was constructed in the courtyard as a restaurant when this 1839 building was converted to a hotel. Although such an addition might not be appropriate in a more public location, it is compatible here in the courtyard of this historic building.

Figure 14. This glass addition was erected at the back of an 1895 former brewery during rehabilitation to provide another entrance. The addition is compatible with the plain character of this secondary elevation.

- Use building materials in the same color range or value as those of the historic building. The materials need not be the same as those on the historic building, but they should be harmonious; they should not be so different that they stand out or distract from the historic building. (Even clear glass can be as prominent as a less transparent material. Generally, glass may be most appropriate for small-scale additions, such as an entrance on a secondary elevation or a connector between an addition and the historic building.)

- Base the size, rhythm and alignment of the new addition's window and door openings on those of the historic building.

- Respect the architectural expression of the historic building type. For example, an addition to an institutional building should maintain the architectural character associated with this building type rather than using details and elements typical of residential or other building types.

These techniques are merely examples of ways to differentiate a new addition from the historic building while ensuring that the addition is compatible with it. Other ways of differentiating a new addition from the historic building may be used as long as they maintain the primacy of the historic building. Working within these basic principles still allows for a broad range of architectural expression that can range from stylistic similarity to contemporary distinction. The recommended design approach for an addition is one that neither copies the historic building exactly nor stands in stark contrast to it.

Revising an Incompatible Design for a New Addition to Meet the Standards

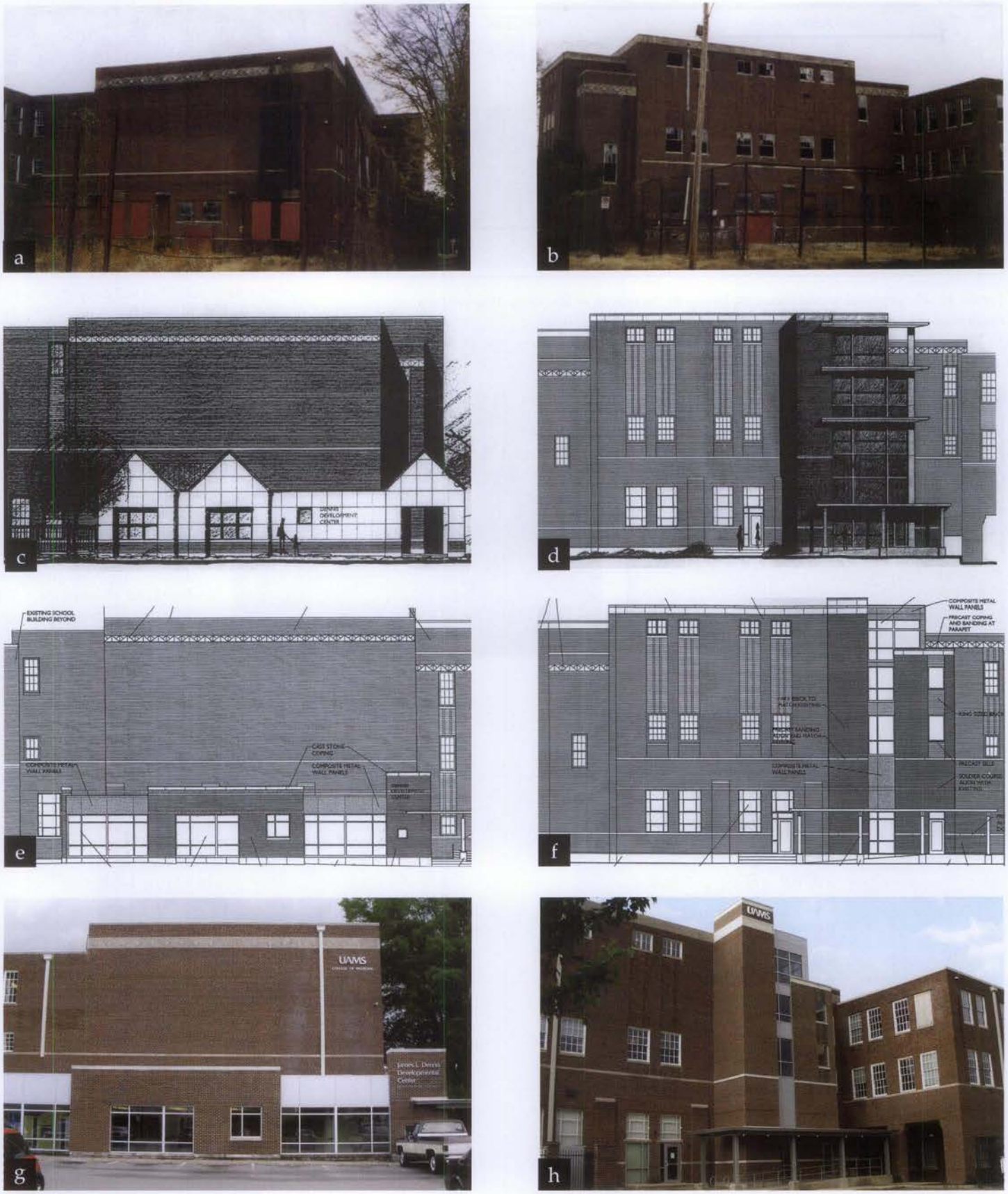

Figure 15. The rehabilitation of a c. 1930 high school auditorium for a clinic and offices proposed two additions: a one-story entrance and reception area on this elevation (a); and a four-story elevator and stair tower on another side (b). The gabled entrance (c) first proposed was not compatible with the flat-roofed auditorium and the design of the proposed stair tower (d) was also incompatible and overwhelmed the historic building. The designs were revised (e-f) resulting in new additions that meet the Standards (g-h).

Incompatible New Additions to Historic Buildings

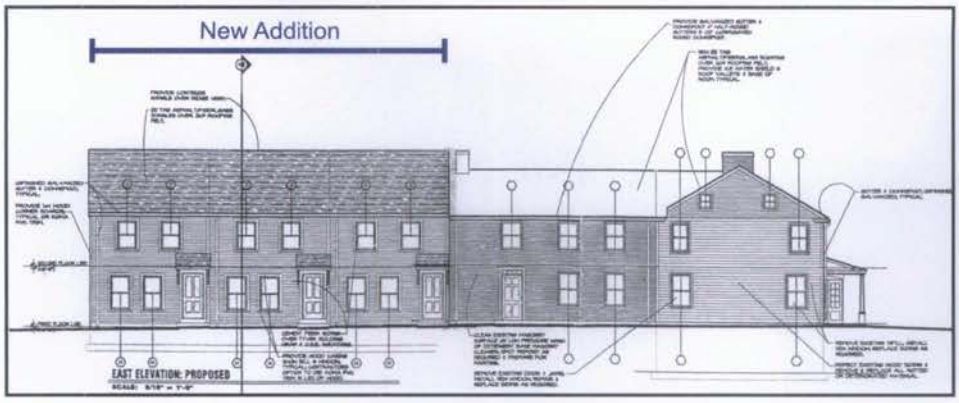

Figure 16. The proposal to add three row houses to the rear ell of this early-19th century residential property doubles its size and does not meet the Standards..

Figure 17. The small addition on the left is starkly different and it is not compatible with the eclectic, late-19th century house.

Figure 18. The expansion of a one- and one-half story historic bungalow (left) with a large two-story rear addition (right) has greatly altered and obscured its distinctive shape and form.

Figure 19. The upper two floors of this early-20th century office building were part of the original design, but were not built. During rehabilitation, the two stories were finally constructed. This treatment does not meet the Standards because the addition has given the building an appearance it never had historically.

Figure 20. The height, as well as the design, of these two-story rooftop additions overwhelms the two-story and the one-story, low-rise historic buildings.

New Additions in Densely-Built Environments

In built-up urban areas, locating a new addition on a less visible side or rear elevation may not be possible simply because there is no available space. In this instance, there may be alternative ways to help preserve the historic character. One approach when connecting a new addition to a historic building on a primary elevation is to use a hyphen to separate them. A subtle variation in material, detailing and color may also provide the degree of differentiation necessary to avoid changing the essential proportions and character of the historic building.

A densely-built neighborhood such as a downtown commercial core offers a particular opportunity to design an addition that will have a minimal impact on the historic building. Often the site for such an addition is a vacant lot where another building formerly stood. Treating the addition as a separate or infill building may be the best approach when designing an addition that will have the least impact on the historic building and the district. In these instances there may be no need for a direct visual link to the historic building. Height and setback from the street should generally be consistent with those of the historic building and other surrounding buildings in the district. Thus, in most urban commercial areas the addition should not be set back from the façade of the historic building. A tight urban setting may sometimes even accommodate a larger addition if the primary elevation is designed to give the appearance of being several buildings by breaking up the facade into elements that are consistent with the scale of the historic building and adjacent buildings.

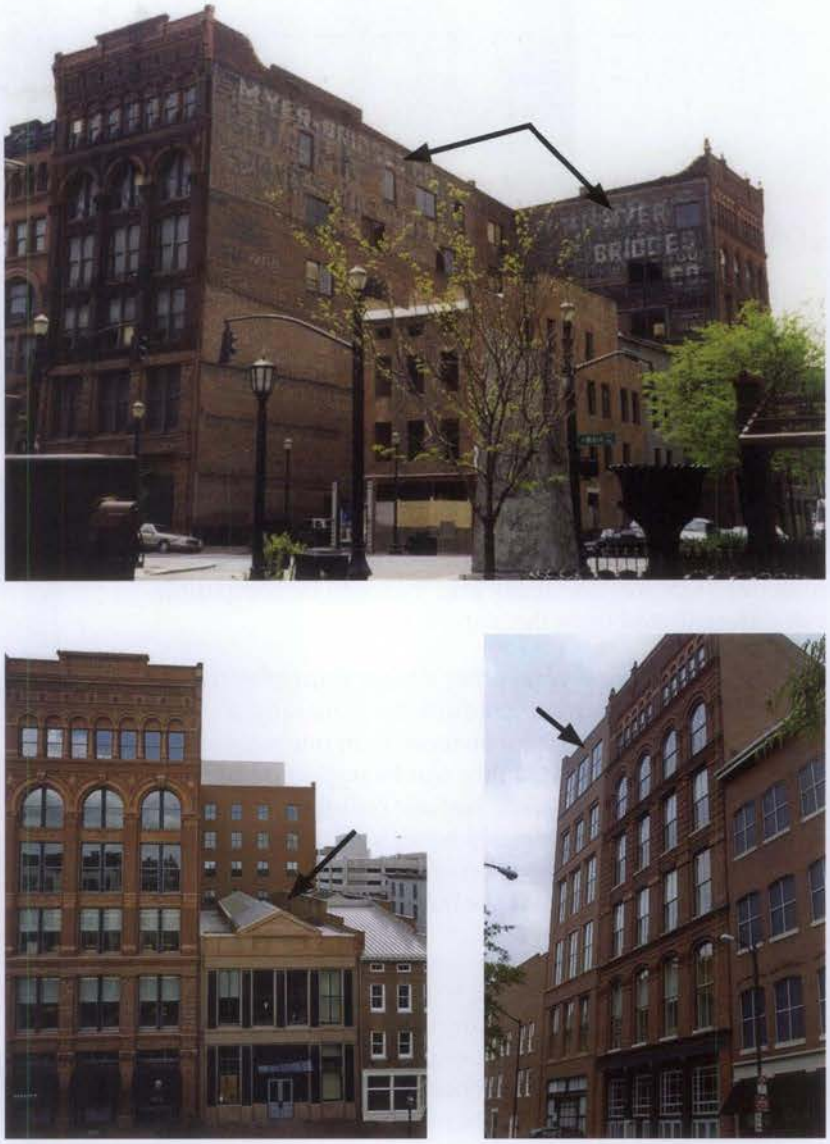

Figure 21. Both wings of this historic L-shaped building (top), which fronts on two city streets, adjoined vacant lots. A two-story addition was constructed on one lot (above, left) and a six-story addition was built on the other (above, right). Like the historic building, which has two different facades, the compatible new additions are also different and appear to be separate structures rather than part of the historic building.

Figure 22. The proposed new addition is compatible with the historic buildings that remain on the block. Its design with multiple storefronts helps break up the mass.

Figure 23. Colored flags marking the location of a proposed penthouse addition (a) were placed on the roof to help evaluate the impact and visibility of an addition planned for this historic furniture store (b). Based on this evaluation, the addition was constructed as proposed. It is minimally visible and compatible with the 1912 structure (c). The tall parapet wall conceals the addition from the street below (d).

Rooftop Additions

The guidance provided on designing a compatible new addition to a historic building applies equally to new rooftop additions. A rooftop addition should preserve the character of a historic building by preserving historic materials, features and form; and it should be compatible but differentiated from the historic building.

However, there are several other design principles that apply specifically to rooftop additions. Generally, a rooftop addition should not be more than one story in height to minimize its visibility and its impact on the proportion and profile of the historic building. A rooftop addition should almost always be set back at least one full bay from the primary elevation of the building, as well as from the other elevations if the building is free-standing or highly visible.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to minimize the impact of adding an entire new floor to relatively low buildings, such as small-scale residential or commercial structures, even if the new addition is set back from the plane of the façade. Constructing another floor on top of a small, one, two or three-story building is seldom appropriate for buildings of this size as it would measurably alter the building's proportions and profile, and negatively impact its historic character. On the other hand, a rooftop addition on an eight-story building, for example, in a historic district consisting primarily of tall buildings might not affect the historic character because the new construction may blend in with the surrounding buildings and be only minimally visible within the district. A rooftop addition in a densely-built urban area is more likely to be compatible on a building that is adjacent to similarly-sized or taller buildings.

A number of methods may be used to help evaluate the effect of a proposed rooftop addition on a historic building and district, including pedestrian sight lines, three-dimensional schematics and computer-generated design. However, drawings generally do not provide a true "picture" of the appearance and visibility of a proposed rooftop addition. For this reason, it is often necessary to construct a rough, temporary, full-size or skeletal mock up of a portion of the proposed addition, which can then be photographed and evaluated from critical vantage points on surrounding streets.

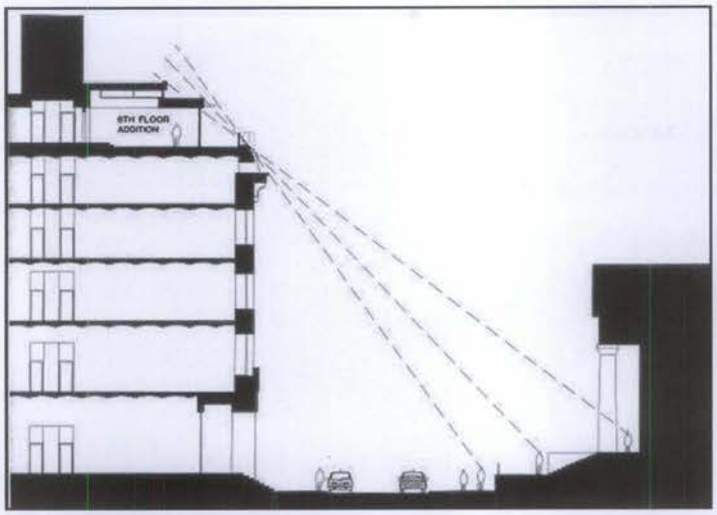

Figure 24. ***How to Evaluate a Proposed Rooftop Addition.*** *A sight-line study (above) only factors in views from directly across the street, which can be very restrictive and does not illustrate the full effect of an addition from other public rights of way. A mock up (above, right) or a mock up enhanced by a computer-generated rendering (below, right) is essential to evaluate the impact of a proposed rooftop addition on the historic building.*

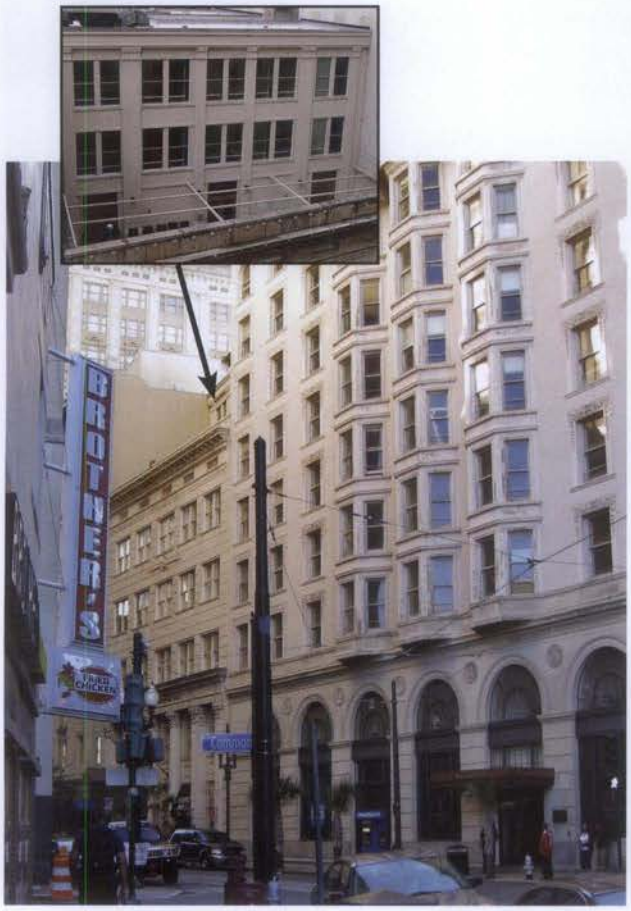

Figure 25. It was possible to add a compatible, three-story, penthouse addition to the roof of this five-story, historic bank building because the addition is set far back, it is surrounded by taller buildings and a deep parapet conceals almost all of the addition from below.

Figure 26. A rooftop addition would have negatively impacted the character of the primary facade (right) of this mid-19th century, four-story structure and the low-rise historic district. However, a third floor was successfully added on the two-story rear portion (below) of the same building with little impact to the building or the district because it blends in with the height of the adjacent building.

Figure 27. Although the new brick stair/elevator tower (left) is not visible from the front (right), it is on a prominent side elevation of this 1890 stone bank. The compatible addition is set back and does not compete with the historic building. Photos: Chadd Gossmann, Aurora Photography, LLC.

Designing a New Exterior Addition to a Historic Building

This guidance should be applied to help in designing a compatible new addition that that will meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*:

- A new addition should be simple and unobtrusive in design, and should be distinguished from the historic building—a recessed connector can help to differentiate the new from the old.
- A new addition should not be highly visible from the public right of way; a rear or other secondary elevation is usually the best location for a new addition.
- The construction materials and the color of the new addition should be harmonious with the historic building materials.
- The new addition should be smaller than the historic building—it should be subordinate in both size and design to the historic building.

The same guidance should be applied when designing a compatible **rooftop** addition, plus the following:

- A rooftop addition is generally not appropriate for a one, two or three-story building—and often is not appropriate for taller buildings.
- A rooftop addition should be minimally visible.
- Generally, a rooftop addition must be set back at least one full bay from the primary elevation of the building, as well as from the other elevations if the building is freestanding or highly visible.
- Generally, a rooftop addition should not be more than one story in height.
- Generally, a rooftop addition is more likely to be compatible on a building that is adjacent to similarly-sized or taller buildings.

Figure 28. A small addition (left) was constructed when this 1880s train station was converted for office use. The paired doors with transoms and arched windows on the compatible addition reflect, but do not replicate, the historic building (right).

Figure 29. This simple glass and brick entrance (left) added to a secondary elevation of a 1920s school building (right) is compatible with the original structure.

Summary

Because a new exterior addition to a historic building can damage or destroy significant materials and can change the building's character, an addition should be considered only after it has been determined that the new use cannot be met by altering non-significant, or secondary, interior spaces. If the new use cannot be met in this way, then an attached addition may be an acceptable alternative if carefully planned and designed. A new addition to a historic building should be constructed in a manner that preserves significant materials, features and form, and preserves the building's historic character. Finally, an addition should be differentiated from the historic building so that the new work is compatible with—and does not detract from—the historic building, and cannot itself be confused as historic.

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Figure 30. The small addition on the right of this late-19th century commercial structure is clearly secondary and compatible in size, materials and design with the historic building.

Figure 31. An elevator/stair tower was added at the back of this Richardsonian Romanesque-style theater when it was rehabilitated. Rough-cut stone and simple cut-out openings ensure that the addition is compatible and subordinate to the historic building. Photo: Chuck Liddy, AIA.

Acknowledgements

Anne E. Grimmer, Senior Architectural Historian, Technical Preservation Services Branch, National Park Service, revised *Preservation Brief 14*, written by Kay D. Weeks and first published in 1986. The revised Brief features all new illustrations and contains expanded and updated design guidance on the subject of new additions that has been developed by the Technical Preservation Services Branch since the original publication of the Brief. Several individuals generously contributed their time and expertise to review the revision of this *Preservation Brief*, including: Sharon C. Park, FAIA, Chief, Architectural History and Historic Preservation, Smithsonian Institution; Elizabeth Tune and Karen Brandt, Department of Historic Resources, Commonwealth of Virginia; and Phillip Wisley and David Ferro, Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State. The Technical Preservation Services professional staff, in particular Michael J. Auer, Jo Ellen Hensley, Gary Sachau and Rebecca Shiffer, also provided important guidance in the development of this publication. All illustrations are from National Park Service files unless otherwise credited. Front cover image: Detail of new addition shown in Figure 4. Photo: © Maxwell MacKenzie.

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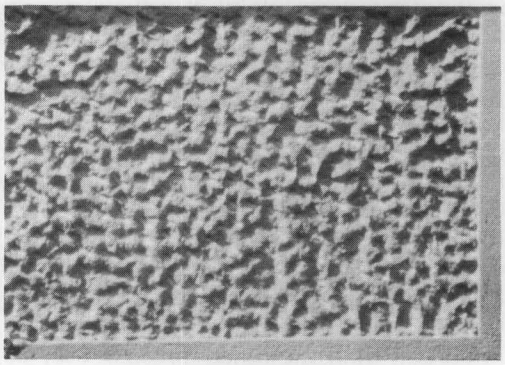
17 PRESERVATION BRIEFS



Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character

Lee H. Nelson, FAIA

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources

Heritage Preservation Services

The Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Historic Preservation Projects" embody two important goals: 1) the preservation of historic materials and, 2) the preservation of a building's distinguishing character. Every old building is unique, with its own identity and its own distinctive character. Character refers to all those visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic building. Character-defining elements include the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment.

The purpose of this Brief is to help the owner or the architect identify those features or elements that give the building its *visual character* and that should be taken into account in order to preserve them to the maximum extent possible.

There are different ways of understanding old buildings. They can be seen as examples of specific building types, which are usually related to a building's function, such as schools, courthouses or churches. Buildings can be studied as examples of using specific materials such as concrete, wood, steel, or limestone. They can also be considered as examples of an historical period, which is often related to a specific architectural style, such as Gothic Revival farmhouses, one-story bungalows, or Art Deco apartment buildings.

There are many other facets of an historic building besides its functional type, its materials or construction or style that contribute to its historic qualities or significance. Some of these qualities are feelings conveyed by the sense of time and place or in buildings associated with events or people. A complete understanding of any property may require documentary research about its style, construction, function, its furnishings or contents; knowledge about the original builder, owners, and later occupants; and knowledge about the evolutionary history of the building. Even though buildings may be of historic, rather than architectural significance, it is their tangible elements that embody its significance for association with specific events or persons and it is those *tangible elements* both on the exterior and interior that should be preserved.

Therefore, the approach taken in this Brief is limited to identifying those visual and tangible aspects of the historic building. While this may aid in the planning process for carrying out any ongoing or new use or restoration of the building, this approach is not a substitute for developing an understanding about the significance of an historic building and the district in which it is located.

If the various materials, features and spaces that give a building its visual character are not recognized and preserved, then essential aspects of its character may be damaged in the process of change.

A building's character can be irreversibly damaged or changed in many ways, for example, by inappropriate repointing of the brickwork, by removal of a distinctive side porch, by changes to the window sash, by changes to the setting around the building, by changes to the major room arrangements, by the introduction of an atrium, by painting previously unpainted woodwork, etc.

A Three-Step Process to Identify A Building's Visual Character

This Brief outlines a three-step approach that can be used by anyone to identify those materials, features and spaces that contribute to the visual character of a building. This approach involves first examining the building from afar to understand its overall setting and architectural context; then moving up very close to appreciate its materials and the craftsmanship and surface finishes evident in these materials; and then going into and through the building to perceive those spaces, rooms and details that comprise its interior visual character.

Step 1: Identify the Overall Visual Aspects

Identifying the overall visual character of a building is nothing more than looking at its distinguishing physical aspects without focusing on its details. The major contributors to a building's overall character are embodied

in the general aspects of its *setting;* the *shape* of the building; its *roof* and roof features, such as chimneys or cupolas; the various *projections* on the building, such as porches or bay windows; the *recesses* or voids in a building, such as open galleries, arcades, or recessed balconies; the *openings* for windows and doorways; and finally the various exterior *materials* that contribute to the building's character. Step one involves looking at the building from a distance to understand the character of its site and setting, and it involves walking around the building where that is possible. Some buildings will have one or more sides that are more important than the others because they are more highly visible. This does not mean that the rear of the building is of no value whatever but it simply means that it is less important to the overall character. On the other hand, the rear may have an interesting back porch or offer a private garden space or some other aspect that may contribute to the visual character. Such a general approach to looking at the building and site will provide a better understanding of its overall character without having to resort to an infinitely long checklist of its possible features and details. Regardless of whether a building is complicated or relatively plain, it is these broad categories that contribute to an understanding of the overall character rather than the specifics of architectural features such as moldings and their profiles.

Step 2: Identify the Visual Character at Close Range

Step two involves looking at the building at close range or arm's length, where it is possible to see all the surface qualities of the materials, such as their *color* and *texture,* or surface evidence of craftsmanship or age. In some instances, the visual character is the result of the juxtaposition of materials that are contrastingly different in their color and texture. The surface qualities of the materials may be important because they impart the very sense of craftsmanship and age that distinguishes historic buildings from other buildings. Furthermore, many of these close up qualities can be easily damaged or obscured by work that affects those surfaces. Examples of this could include painting previously unpainted masonry, rotary disk sanding of smooth wood siding to remove paint, abrasive cleaning of tooled stonework, or repointing reddish mortar joints with gray portland cement.

There is an almost infinite variety of surface materials, textures and finishes that are part of a building's character which are fragile and easily lost.

Step 3: Identify the Visual Character of the Interior Spaces, Features and Finishes

Perceiving the character of interior spaces can be somewhat more difficult than dealing with the exterior. In part, this is because so much of the exterior can be seen at one time and it is possible to grasp its essential character rather quickly. To understand the interior character, it is necessary to move through the spaces one at a time. While it is not difficult to perceive the character of one individual room, it becomes more difficult to deal with spaces that are interconnected and interrelated. Sometimes, as in office buildings, it is the vestibules or lobbies or corridors that are important to the interior character of the building. With other groups of buildings the visual qualities of the interior are related to the plan of the building, as in a church with its axial plan creating a narrow tunnel-like space which obviously has a different character than an open space like a sports pavilion. Thus the shape of the space may be an essential part of its character. With some buildings it is possible to perceive that there is a visual linkage in a sequence of spaces, as in a hotel, from the lobby to the grand staircase to the ballroom. Closing off the openings between those spaces would change the character from visually linked spaces to a series of closed spaces. For example, in a house that has a front and back parlor linked with an open archway, the two rooms are perceived together, and this visual relationship is part of the character of the building. To close off the open archway would change the character of such a residence.

The importance of interior features and finishes to the character of the building should not be overlooked. In relatively simple rooms, the primary visual aspects may be in features such as fireplace mantels, lighting fixtures or wooden floors. In some rooms, the absolute plainness is the character-defining aspect of the interior. So-called secondary spaces also may be important in their own way, from the standpoint of history or because of the family activities that occurred in those rooms. Such secondary spaces, while perhaps historically significant, are not usually perceived as important to the *visual* character of the building. Thus we do not take them into account in the visual understanding of the building.

Conclusion

Using this three-step approach, it is possible to conduct a walk through and identify all those elements and features that help define the visual character of the building. In most cases, there are a number of aspects about the exterior and interior that are important to the character of an historic building. The visual emphasis of this brief will make it possible to ascertain those things that should be preserved because their loss or alteration would diminish or destroy aspects of the historic character whether on the outside, or on the inside of the building.

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Overall Visual Character: Shape

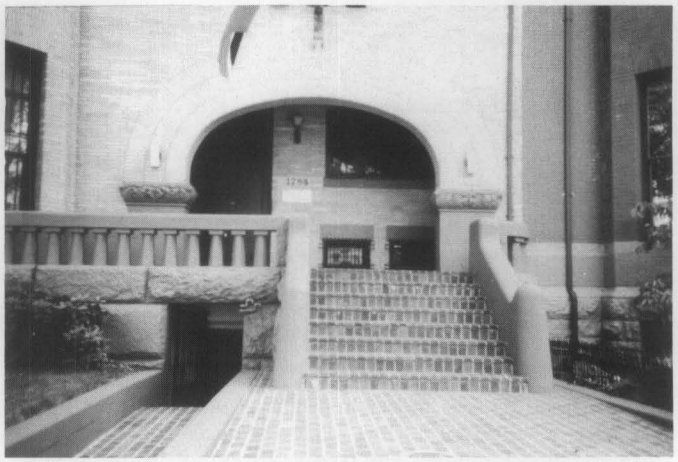
The shape of a building can be an important aspect of its overall visual character. The building illustrated here, for example, has a distinctive horizontal box-like shape with the middle portion of the box projecting up an extra story. This building has other visual aspects that help define its overall character, including the pattern of vertical bands of windows, the decorative horizontal bands which separate the base of the building from the upper floors, the dark brown color of the brick, the large arched entranceway, and the castle-like tower behind the building.

Overall Visual Character: Openings

Window and door openings can be important to the overall visual character of historic buildings. This view shows only part of a much larger building, but the windows clearly help define its character, partly because of their shape and rhythm: the upper floor windows are grouped in a 4,3,4,1,4 rhythm, and the lower floor windows are arranged in a regular 1,1,1,... rhythm. The individual windows are tall, narrow and arched, and they are accented by the different colored arched heads, which are connected where there are multiple windows so that the color contrast is a part of its character. If additional windows were inserted in the gap of the upper floors, the character would be much changed, as it would if the window heads were painted to match the color of the brick walls. Photo by Susan I. Dynes

Overall Visual Character: Shape

It should not be assumed that only large or unusual buildings have a shape that is distinctive or identifiable. The front wall of this modest commercial building has a simple three-part shape that is the controlling aspect of its overall visual character. It consists of a large center bay with a two story opening that combines the storefront and the windows above. The upward projecting parapet and the decorative stonework also relate to and emphasize its shape. The flanking narrow bays enframe the side windows and the small iron balconies, and the main entrance doorway into the store. Any changes to the center portion of this three-part shape, could drastically affect the visual character of this building. Photo by Emogene A. Bevitt



Overall Visual Character: Openings

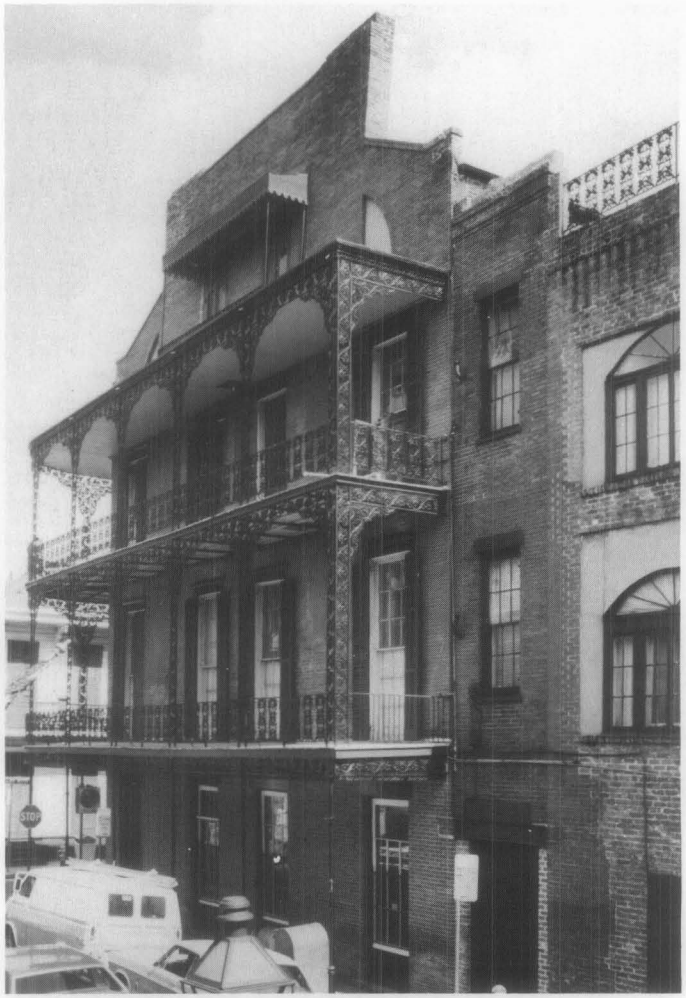
The opening illustrated here dominates the visual character of this building because of its size, shape, location, materials, and craftsmanship. Because of its relation to the generous staircase, this opening places a strong emphasis on the principal entry to the building. Enclosing this arcade-like entry with glass, for example, would materially and visually change the character of the building. Photo by Lee H. Nelson.

Overall Visual Character: Roof and Related Features

This building has a number of character-defining aspects which include the windows and the decorative stonework, but certainly the roof and its related features are visually important to its overall visual character. The roof is not only highly visible, it has elaborate stone dormers, and it also has decorative metalwork and slatework. The red and black slates of differing sizes and shapes are laid in patterns that extend around the roof of this large and freestanding building. Any changes to this patterned slatework, or to the other roofing details would damage the visual character of the building. Photo by Laurie R. Hammel

Overall Visual Character: Roof and Related Features

On this building, the most important visual aspects of its character are the roof and its related features such as the dormers and chimneys. The roof is important to the visual character because its steepness makes it highly visible, and its prominence is reinforced by the patterned tinwork, the six dormers and the two chimneys. Changes to the roof or its features, such as removal or alterations to the dormers, for example, would certainly change the character of this building. This does not discount the importance of its other aspects, such as the porch, the windows, the brickwork, or its setting; but the roof is clearly crucial to understanding the overall visual character of this building as seen from a distance. Photo by Lee H. Nelson



Overall Visual Character: Projections

A projecting porch or balcony can be very important to the overall visual character of almost any building and to the district in which it is located. Despite the size of this building (3 1/2 stories), and its distinctive roofline profile, and despite the importance of the very large window openings, the lacy wrap-around iron balcony is singularly important to the visual character of this building. It would seriously affect the character to remove the balcony, to enclose it, or to replace it with a balcony lacking the same degree of detail of the original material. Photo by Baird M. Smith

Overall Visual Character: Projections

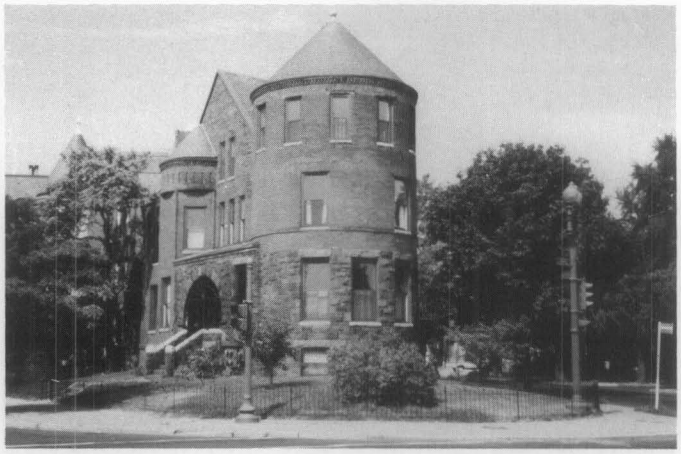
Since these are row houses, any evaluation of their visual exterior character is necessarily limited to the front and rear walls; and while there are a number of things competing for attention in the front, it is the half round projecting bays with their conical roofs that contribute most prominently to the visual character. Their removal would be a devastating loss to the overall character, but even if preserved, the character could be easily damaged by changes to their color (as seen in the left bay which has been painted a dark color), or changes to their windows, or changes to their tile roofs. Though these houses have other fine features that contribute to the visual character and are worthy of preservation, these half-round bays demonstrate the importance of projecting features on an already rich and complex facade. Because of the repetitive nature of these projecting bays on adjacent row houses, along with the buildings' size, scale, openings, and materials, they also contribute to the overall visual character of the streetscape in the historic district. Any evaluation of the visual character of such a building should take into account the context of this building within the district. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Overall Visual Character: Projections

Many buildings have projecting features such as porches, bay windows, or overhanging roofs, that help define their overall visual character. This projecting porch because of its size and shape, and because it copies the pitch and material of the main roof, is an important contributor to the visual character of this simple farmhouse. The removal or alteration of this porch would drastically alter the character of this building. If the porch were enclosed with wood or glass, or if gingerbread brackets were added to the porch columns, if the tin roof was replaced with asphalt, or if the porch railing was opened to admit a center stairway, the overall visual character could be seriously damaged. Although this projecting porch is an important feature, almost any other change to this house, such as changes to the window pattern, or changes to the main roof, or changes to the setting, would also change its visual character. Photo by Hugh C. Miller

Overall Visual Character: Trim

If one were to analyze the overall shape or form of this building, it would be seen that it is a gable-roofed house with dormers and a wrap-around porch. It is similar to many other houses of the period. It is the wooden trim on the eaves and around the porch that gives this building its own identify and its special visual character. Although such wooden trim is vulnerable to the elements, and must be kept painted to prevent deterioration; the loss of this trim would seriously damage the overall visual character of this building, and its loss would obliterate much of the close-up visual character so dependent upon craftsmanship for the moldings, carvings, and the see-through jigsaw work. Photo by Hugh C. Miller



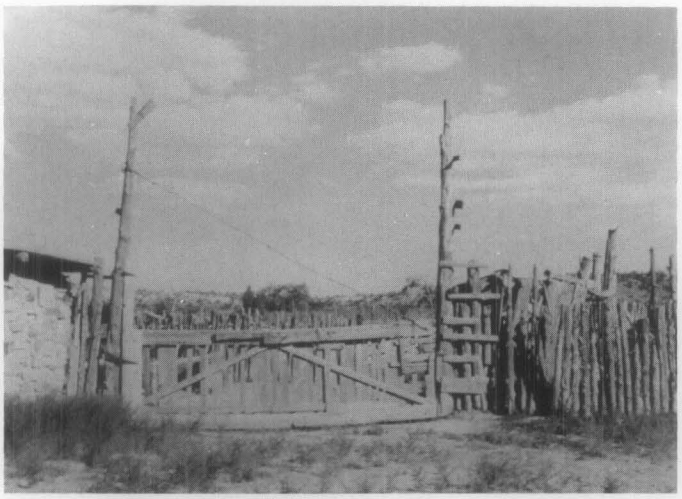
Overall Visual Character: Setting

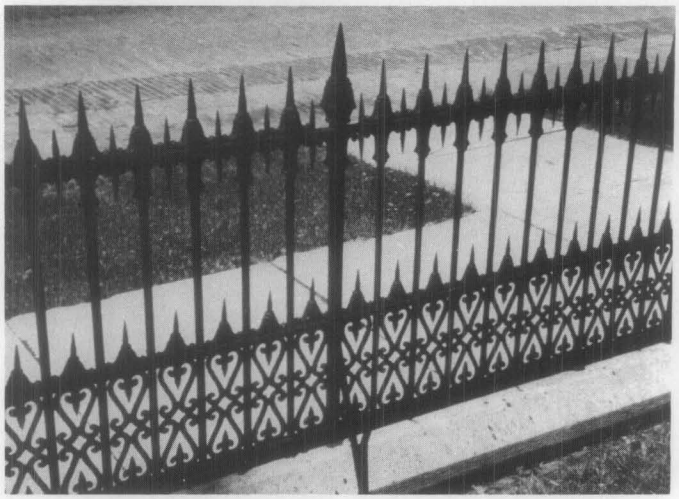
In the process of identifying the overall visual character, the aspect of setting should not be overlooked. Obviously, the setting of urban row houses differs from that of a mansion with a designed landscape. However, there are many instances where the relationship between the building and its place on the streetscape, or its place in the rural environment, in other words its setting, may be an important contributor to its overall character.

In this instance, the corner tower and the arched entryway are important contributors to the visual character of the building itself, but there is also a relationship between the building and the two converging streets that is also an important aspect of this historic building. The curb, sidewalk, fence, and the yard interrelate with each other to establish a setting that is essential to the overall visual character of the historic property. Removing these elements or replacing them with a driveway or parking court would destroy an important visual aspect. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Overall Visual Character: Setting

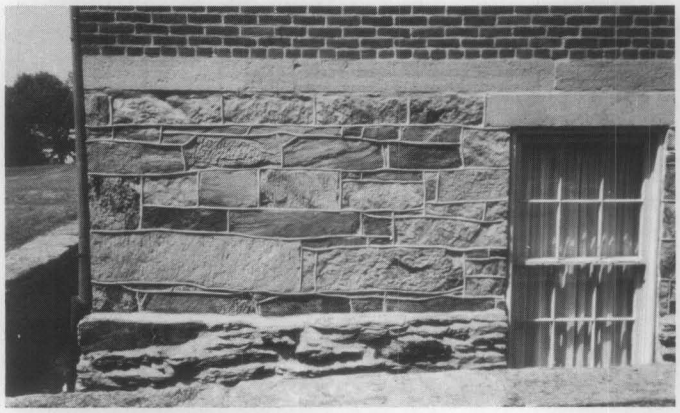
Even architecturally modest buildings frequently will have a setting that contributes to their overall character. In this very urban district, set-backs are the exception, so that the small front yard is something of a luxury, and it is important to the overall character because of its design and materials, which include the iron fence along the sidewalk, the curved walk leading to the porch, and the various plantings. In a district where parking spaces are in great demand, such front yards are sometimes converted to off-street parking, but in this instance, that would essentially destroy its setting and would drastically change the visual character of this historic property. Photo by Lee H. Nelson





Overall Visual Character: Setting

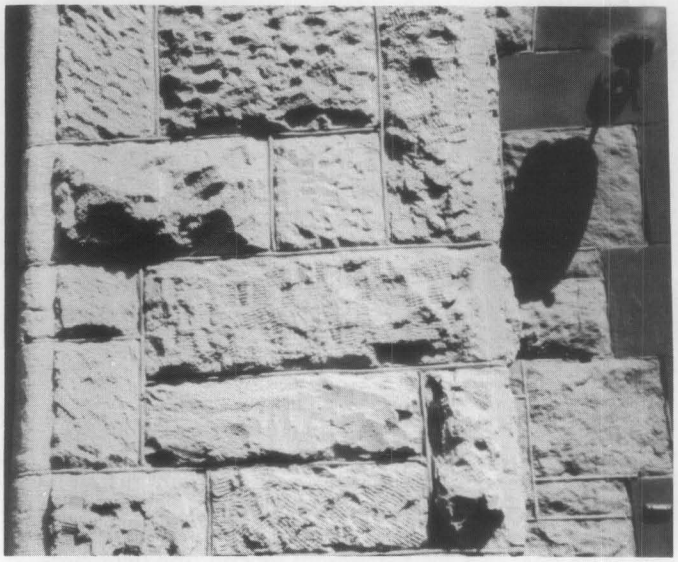
Among the various visual aspects relating to the setting of an historic property are such site features as gardens, walks, fences, etc. This can include their design and materials. There is a dramatic difference in the visual character between these two fence constructions—one utilizing found materials with no particular regard to their uniformity of size or placement, and the other being a product of the machine age utilizing cast iron components assembled into a pattern of precision and regularity. If the corral fence were to be repaired or replaced with lumberyard materials its character would be dramatically compromised. The rhythm and regularity of the cast iron fence is so important to its visual character that its character could be altered by accidental damage or vandalism, if some of the fence top spikes were broken off thus interrupting the rhythm or pattern. Photos by Lee H. Nelson



Arm's Length Visual Character: Materials

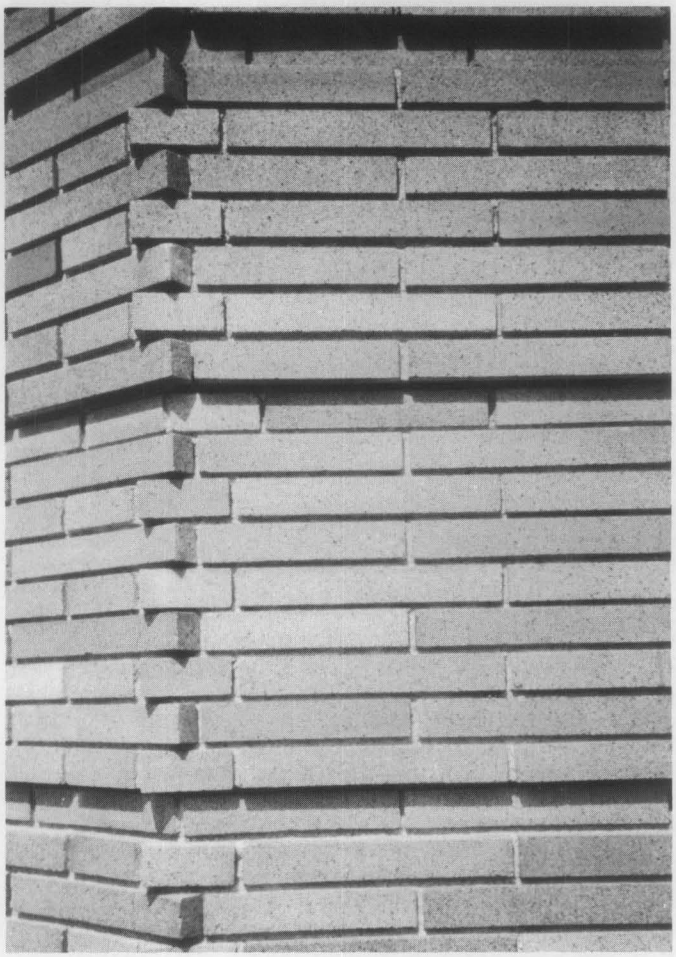
At arm's length, the visual character is most often determined by the surface qualities of the materials and craftsmanship; and while these aspects are often inextricably related, the original choice of materials often plays the dominant role in establishing the close-range character because of the color, texture, or shape of the materials.

In this instance, the variety and arrangement of the materials is important in defining the visual character, starting with the large pieces of broken stone which form the projecting base for the building walls, then changing to a wall of roughly rectangular stones which vary in size, color, and texture, all with accentuated, projecting beads of mortar, then there is a rather precise and narrow band of cut and dressed stones with minimal mortar joints, and finally, the main building walls are composed of bricks, rather uniform in color, with fairly generous mortar joints. It is the juxtaposition and variety of these materials (and of course, the craftsmanship) that is very important to the visual character. Changing the raised mortar joints, for example, would drastically alter the character at arm's length. Photo by Lee H. Nelson



Arm's Length Visual Character: Craft Details

There are many instances where craft details dominate the arm's length visual character. As seen here, the craft details are especially noticeable because the stones are all of a uniform color, and they are all squared off, but their surfaces were worked with differing tools and techniques to create a great variety of textures, resulting in a tour-de-force of craft details. This texture is very important at close range. It was a deliberately contrived surface that is an important contributor to the visual character of this building. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

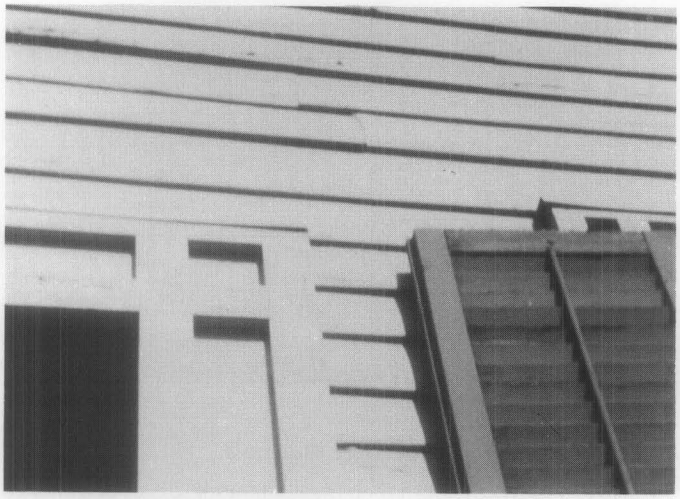


Arm's Length Visual Character: Craft Details

The arm's length visual character of this building is a combination of the materials and the craft details. Most of the exterior walls of this building consist of early 20th century Roman brick, precisely made, unusually long bricks, in varying shades of yellow-brown, with a noticeable surface spotting of dark iron pyrites. While this brick is an important contributor to the visual character, the related craft details are perhaps more important, and they consist of: unusually precise coursing of the bricks, almost as though they were laid up using a surveyor's level; a row of recessed bricks every ninth course, creating a shadow pattern on the wall; deeply recessed mortar joints, creating a secondary pattern of shadows; and a toothed effect where the bricks overlap each other at the corner of the building. The cumulative effect of this artisanry is important to the arm's length visual character, and it is evident that it would be difficult to match if it were damaged, and the effect could be easily damaged through insensitive treatments such as painting the brickwork or by careless repointing. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Arm's Length Visual Character: Craft Details

On some buildings, there are subtle aspects of visual character that cannot be perceived from a distance. This is especially true of certain craft details that can be seen only at close range. On this building, it is easily understood that the narrow, unpainted, and weathered clapboards are an important aspect of its overall visual character; but at close range there are a number of subtle but very important craft details that contribute to the handmade quality of this building, and which clearly differentiate it from a building with machine sawn clapboards. The clapboards seen here were split by hand and the bottom edges were not dressed, so that the boards vary in width and thickness, and thus they give a very uneven shadow pattern. Because they were split from oak that is unpainted, there are occasional wavy rays in the wood that stand against the grain. Also noticeable is the fact that the boards are of relatively short lengths, and that they have feather-edged ends that overlap each other, a detail that is very different from butted joints. The occasional large nail heads and the differential silver-gray weathering add to the random quality of the clapboards. All of these qualities contribute to the arm's length visual character. Photo by Lee H. Nelson



Arm's Length Visual Character: Craft Details

While hand-split clapboards are distinctive visual elements in their own way, machine-sawn and painted wood siding is equally important to the overall visual character in most other instances. At arm's length, however, the machine sawn siding may not be so distinctive; but there might be other details that add visual character to the wooden building, such as the details of wooden trim and louvered shutters around the windows (as seen here), or similar surface textures on other buildings, such as the saw marks on wall shingles, the joints in leaded glass, decorative tinwork on a rain conductor box, the rough surface of pebble-dash stuccowork, or the pebbly surface of exposed aggregate concrete. Such surfaces can only be seen at arm's length and they add to the visual character of a historic building. Photo by Hugh C. Miller

Interior Visual Character: Individually Important Spaces

In assessing the interior visual character of any historic building, it is necessary to ask whether there are spaces that are important to the character of this particular building, whether the building is architecturally rich or modest, or even if it is a simple or utilitarian structure.

The character of the individually important space which is illustrated here is a combination of its size, the twin curving staircases, the massive columns and curving vaulted ceilings, in addition to the quality of the materials in the floor and in the stairs. If the ceiling were to be lowered to provide space for heating ducts, or if the stairways were to be enclosed for code reasons, the shape and character of this space would be damaged, even if there was no permanent physical damage. Such changes can easily destroy the visual character of an individually important interior space. Thus, it is important that the visual aspects of a building's interior character be recognized before planning any changes or alterations. Photo by National Portrait Gallery

Interior Visual Character: Related Spaces

Many buildings have interior spaces that are visually or physically related so that, as you move through them, they are perceived not as separate spaces, but as a sequence of related spaces that are important in defining the interior character of the building. The example which is illustrated here consists of three spaces that are visually linked to each other.

The first of these spaces is the vestibule which is of a generous size and unusual in its own right, but more important, it visually relates to the second space which is the main stairhall.

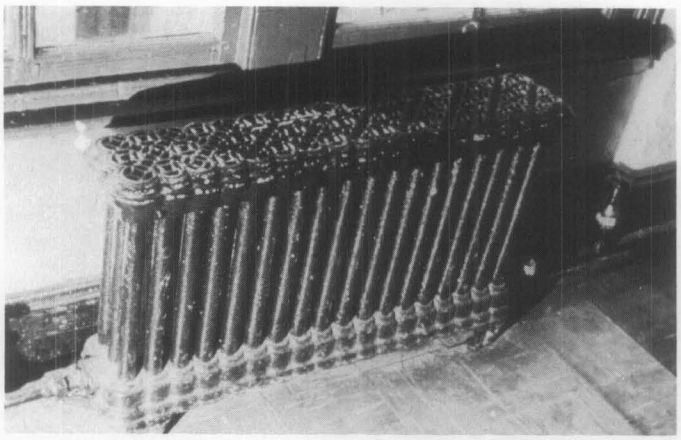
The hallway is the circulation artery for the building, and leads both horizontally and vertically to other rooms and spaces, but especially to the open and inviting stairway.

The stairway is the third part of this sequence of related spaces, and it provides continuing access to the upper floors.

These related spaces are very important in defining the interior character of this building. Almost any change to these spaces, such as installing doors between the vestibule and the hallway, or enclosing the stair would seriously impact their character and the way that character is perceived. Top photo by Mel Chamowitz, others by John Tennant

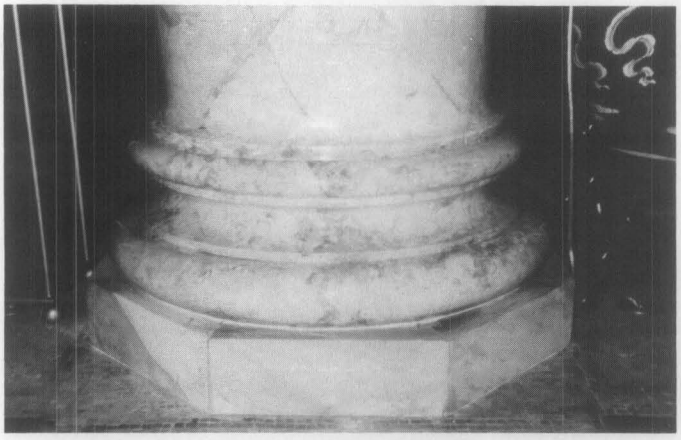
Interior Visual Character: Interior Features

Interior features are three-dimensional building elements or architectural details that are an integral part of the building as opposed to furniture. Interior features are often important in defining the character of an individual room or space. In some instances, an interior feature, like a large and ornamental open stairway may dominate the visual character of an entire building. In other instances, a modest iron stairway (like the one illustrated here) may be an important interior feature, and its preservation would be crucial to preserving the interior character of the building. Such features can also include the obvious things like fireplace mantles, plaster ceiling medallions, or panelling, but they also extend to features like hardware, lighting fixtures, bank tellers cages, decorative elevator doors, etc. Photo by David W. Look



Interior Visual Character: Interior Features

Modern heating or cooling devices usually add little to the interior character of a building; but historically, radiators, for instance, may have contributed to the interior character by virtue of their size or shape, or because of their specially designed bases, piping, and decorative grillage or enclosures. Sometimes they were painted with several colors to highlight their integral, cast-in details. In more recent times, it has been common to overpaint and conceal such distinctive aspects of earlier heating and plumbing devices, so that we seldom have the opportunity to realize how important they can be in defining the character of interior rooms and spaces. For that reason, it is important to identify their character-defining potential, and consider their preservation, retention, or restoration. Photo by David W. Look



Interior Visual Character: Surface Materials and Finishes

When identifying the visual character of historic interior spaces one should not overlook the importance of those materials and finishes that comprise the surfaces of walls, floors and ceilings. The surfaces may have evidence of either hand-craft or machine-made products that are important contributors to the visual character, including patterned or inlaid designs in the wood flooring, decorative painting practices such as stenciling, imitation marble or wood grain, wallpapering, tinwork, tile floors, etc.

The example illustrated here involves a combination of real marble at the base of the column, imitation marble patterns on the plaster surface of the column (a practice called scagliola), and a tile floor surface that uses small mosaic tiles arranged to form geometric designs in several different colors. While such decorative materials and finishes may be important in defining the interior visual character of this particular building, it should be remembered that in much more modest buildings, the plainness of surface materials and finishes may be an essential aspect of their historic character. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Fragility of A Building's Visual Character

Some aspects of a building's visual character are fragile and are easily lost. This is true of brickwork, for example, which can be irreversibly damaged with inappropriate cleaning techniques or by insensitive repointing practices. At least two factors are important contributors to the visual character of brickwork, namely the brick itself and the craftsmanship. Between these, there are many more aspects worth noting, such as color range of bricks, size and shape variations, texture, bonding patterns, together with the many variable qualities of the mortar joints, such as color, width of joint and tooling. These qualities could be easily damaged by painting the brick, by raking out the joint with power tools, or repointing with a joint that is too wide. As seen here during the process of repointing, the visual character of this front wall is being dramatically changed from a wall where the bricks predominate, to a wall that is visually dominated by the mortar joints. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

The Architectural Character Checklist/Questionnaire

Lee H. Nelson, FAIA
National Park Service

This checklist can be taken to the building and used to identify those aspects that give the building and setting its essential visual qualities and character. This checklist consists of a series of questions that are designed to help in identifying those things that contribute to a building's character. The use of this checklist involves the three-step process of looking for: 1) the overall visual aspects, 2) the visual character at close range, and 3) the visual character of interior spaces, features and finishes.

Because this is a process to identify *architectural character,* it does not address those intangible qualities that give a property or building or its contents its historic significance, instead this checklist is organized on the assumption that historic significance is embodied in those *tangible* aspects that include the building's setting, its form and fabric.

Step One

1. Shape

What is there about the form or shape of the building that gives the building its identity? Is the shape distinctive in relation to the neighboring buildings? Is it simply a low, squat box, or is it a tall, narrow building with a corner tower? Is the shape highly consistent with its neighbors? Is the shape so complicated because of wings, or ells, or differences in height, that its complexity is important to its character? Conversely, is the shape so simple or plain that adding a feature like a porch would change that character? Does the shape convey its historic function as in smoke stacks or silos?

Notes on the Shape or Form of the Building:

_____

_____

2. Roof and Roof Features

Does the roof shape or its steep (or shallow) slope contribute to the building's character? Does the fact that the roof is highly visible (or not visible at all) contribute to the architectural identity of the building? Are certain roof features important to the profile of the building against the sky or its background, such as cupolas, multiple chimneys, dormers, cresting, or weathervanes? Are the roofing materials or their colors or their patterns (such as patterned slates) more noticeable than the shape or slope of the roof?

Notes on the Roof and Roof Features:

_____

_____

3. Openings

Is there a rhythm or pattern to the arrangement of windows or other openings in the walls; like the rhythm of windows in a factory building, or a three-part window in the front bay of a house; or is there a noticeable relationship between the width of the window openings and the wall space between the window openings? Are there distinctive openings, like a large arched entranceway, or decorative window lintels that accentuate the importance of the window openings, or unusually shaped windows, or patterned window sash, like small panes of glass in the windows or doors, that are important to the character? Is the plainness of the window openings such that adding shutters or gingerbread trim would radically change its character? Is there a hierarchy of facades that make the front windows more important than the side windows? What about those walls where the absence of windows establishes its own character?

Notes on the Openings:

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4. Projections

Are there parts of the building that are character-defining because they project from the walls of the building like porches, cornices, bay windows, or balconies? Are there turrets, or widely overhanging eaves, projecting pediments or chimneys?

Notes on the Projections:

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_____

5. Trim and Secondary Features

Does the trim around the windows or doors contribute to the character of the building? Is there other trim on the walls or around the projections that, because of its decoration or color or patterning contributes to the character of the building? Are there secondary features such as shutters, decorative gables, railings, or exterior wall panels?

Notes on the Trim and Secondary Features:

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_____

6. Materials

Do the materials or combination of materials contribute to the overall character of the building as seen from a distance because of their color or patterning, such as broken faced stone, scalloped wall shingling, rounded rock foundation walls, boards and battens, or textured stucco?

Notes on the Materials:

_____

_____

7. Setting

What are the aspects of the setting that are important to the visual character? For example, is the alignment of buildings along a city street and their relationship to the sidewalk the essential aspect of its setting? Or, conversely, is the essential character dependent upon the tree plantings and out buildings which surround the farmhouse? Is the front yard important to the setting of the modest house? Is the specific site important to the setting such as being on a hilltop, along a river, or, is the building placed on the site in such a way to enhance its setting? Is there a special relationship to the adjoining streets and other buildings? Is there a view? Is there fencing, planting, terracing, walkways or any other landscape aspects that contribute to the setting?

Notes on the Setting:

_____

_____

Step Two

8. Materials at Close Range

Are there one or more materials that have an inherent texture that contributes to the close range character, such as stucco, exposed aggregate concrete, or brick textured with vertical grooves? Or materials with inherent colors such as smooth orange-colored brick with dark spots of iron pyrites, or prominently veined stone, or green serpentine stone? Are there combinations of materials, used in juxtaposition, such as several different kinds of stone, combinations of stone and brick, dressed stones for window lintels used in conjunction with rough stones for the wall? Has the choice of materials or the combinations of materials contributed to the character?

Notes on the Materials at Close Range:

9. Craft Details

Is there high quality brickwork with narrow mortar joints? Is there hand-tooled or patterned stonework? Do the walls exhibit carefully struck vertical mortar joints and recessed horizontal joints? Is the wall shinglework laid up in patterns or does it retain evidence of the circular saw marks or can the grain of the wood be seen through the semi-transparent stain? Are there hand split or hand-dressed clapboards, or machine smooth beveled siding, or wood rusticated to look like stone, or Art Deco zigzag designs executed in stucco?

Almost any evidence of craft details, whether handmade or machinemade, will contribute to the character of a building because it is a manifestation of the materials, of the times in which the work was done, and of the tools and processes that were used. It further reflects the effects of time, of maintenance (and/or neglect) that the building has received over the years. All of these aspects are a part of the surface qualities that are seen only at close range.

Notes on the Craft Details:

Step Three

10. Individual Spaces

Are there individual rooms or spaces that are important to this building because of their size, height, proportion, configuration, or function, like the center hallway in a house, or the bank lobby, or the school auditorium, or the ballroom in a hotel, or a courtroom in a county courthouse?

Notes on the Individual Spaces:

11. Related Spaces and Sequences of Spaces

Are there adjoining rooms that are visually and physically related with large doorways or open archways so that they are perceived as related rooms as opposed to separate rooms? Is there an important sequence of spaces that are related to each other, such as the sequence from the entry way to the lobby to the stairway and to the upper balcony as in a theatre; or the sequence in a residence from the entry vestibule to the hallway to the front parlor, and on through the sliding doors to the back parlor; or the sequence in an office building from the entry vestibule to the lobby to the bank of elevators?

Notes on the Related Spaces and Sequences of Spaces:

12. Interior Features

Are there interior features that help define the character of the building, such as fireplace mantels, stairways and balustrades, arched openings, interior shutters, inglenooks, cornices, ceiling medallions, light fixtures, balconies, doors, windows, hardware, wainscotting, panelling, trim, church pews, courtroom bars, teller cages, waiting room benches?

Notes on the Interior Features:

13. Surface Finishes and Materials

Are there surface finishes and materials that can affect the design, the color or the texture of the interior? Are there materials and finishes or craft practices that contribute to the interior character, such as wooden parquet floors, checkerboard marble floors, pressed metal ceilings, fine hardwoods, grained doors or marblized surfaces, or polychrome painted surfaces, or stencilling, or wallpaper that is important to the historic character? Are there surface finishes and materials that, because of their plainness, are imparting the essential character of the interior such as hard or bright, shiny wall surfaces of plaster or glass or metal?

Notes on the Surface Finishes and Materials:

14. Exposed Structure

Are there spaces where the exposed structural elements define the interior character such as the exposed posts, beams, and trusses in a church or train shed or factory? Are there rooms with decorative ceiling beams (non-structural) in bungalows, or exposed vigas in adobe buildings?

Notes on the Exposed Structure:

This concludes the three-step process of identifying the visual aspects of historic buildings and is intended as an aid in preserving their character and other distinguishing qualities. It is not intended as a means of understanding the significance of historical properties or districts, nor of the events or people associated with them. That can only be done through other kinds of research and investigation.

This Preservation Brief was originally developed as a slide talk/methodology in 1982 to discuss the use of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation in relation to preserving historic character; and it was amplified and modified in succeeding years to help guide preservation decisionmaking, initially for maintenance personnel in the National Park Service. A number of people contributed to the evolution of the ideas presented here. Special thanks go to Emogene Bevitt and Gary Hume, primarily for the many and frequent discussions relating to this approach in its evolutionary stages; to Mark Fram, Ontario Heritage Foundation, Toronto, for suggesting several additions to the Checklist; and more recently, to my co-workers, both in Washington and in our regional offices, especially Ward Jandl, Sara Blumenthal, Charles Fisher, Sharon Park, AIA, Jean Travers, Camille Martone, Susan Dynes, Michael Auer, Anne Grimmer, Kay Weeks, Betsy Chittenden, Patrick Andrus, Carol Shull, Hugh Miller, FAIA, Jerry Rogers, Paul Alley, David Look, AIA, Margaret Pepin-Donat, Bonnie Halda, Keith Everett, Thomas Keohan, the Preservation Services Division, Mid-Atlantic Region, and several reviewers in state preservation offices, especially Ann Haaker, Illinois; and Stan Graves, AIA, Texas; for providing very critical and constructive review of the manuscript.

This publication has been prepared pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Comments on the usefulness of this information are welcomed and can be sent to Mr. Nelson, Preservation Assistance Division, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127. This publication is not copyrighted and can be reproduced without penalty. Normal procedures for credit to the author and the National Park Service are appreciated.

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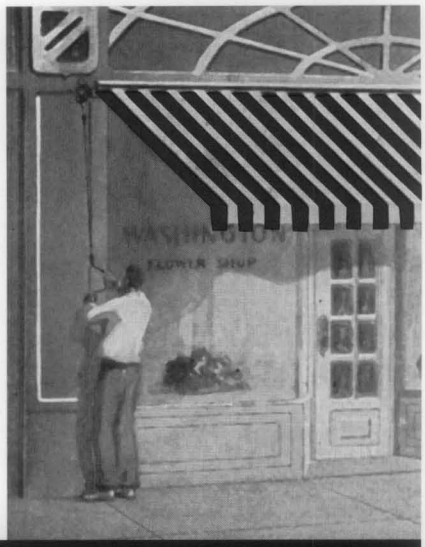

The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement, and New Design

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Heritage Preservation Services

A shopkeeper rolls out an awning at the beginning of the workday; a family gathers under a porch awning on a late summer afternoon. These are familiar and compelling images of earlier urban and residential life in America. For two centuries, awnings not only played an important functional role, they helped define the visual character of our streetscapes. Yet, compared to historic photographs of downtowns and neighborhoods with myriad awnings, today's streets often seem plain and colorless.

Throughout their history, awnings have had great appeal. Along with drapes, curtains, shutters, and blinds they provided natural climate control in an age before air conditioning and tinted glass. By blocking out the sun's rays while admitting daylight and allowing air to circulate between interior and exterior, they were remarkably efficient and cost effective. Awnings permitted window-shopping on rainy days; they protected show window displays from fading due to sunlight. On the primary facade and near eye level, they were central to a building's appearance. Manufacturers came up with attractive, attention-getting awnings featuring distinctive stripes, ornate valances and painted lettering and logos. With a wide range of color and pattern choices, owners could select an awning that complemented the building and get both style and function in a relatively affordable package (Figs. 1 and 2).

In recent years, building owners and others interested in historic buildings have rediscovered awnings. Local

Figure 1. Storefront awnings over sidewalks and entrances were typical features of American streetscapes for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Photo of Larimer Street, Denver, Colorado, c. 1870, Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, x-22058.

Figure 2. Awnings were an easy way to dress up and distinguish homes of virtually any style. Image: Otis Awning Fabrics Company brochure, c. 1920s.

"main street" preservation programs encouraging—and in some cases funding—rehabilitation work have helped spur the awning's return. Continued concerns over energy efficiency have also persuaded building owners and developers to use awnings to reduce heat gain, glare, and cooling costs. Because awnings were so common until the mid-twentieth century, they are visually appropriate for many historic buildings, unlike some other means of energy conservation.

This Preservation Brief provides historical background information about diverse awning applications in the United States; suggests ways that historic awnings can best be maintained, repaired, and preserved; and recommends the varying circumstances in which replacement in kind, or new awning design may be appropriate for historic buildings.

Historical Background

Awnings are remarkable building features that have changed little over the course of history. Records dating back to ancient Egypt and Syria make note of woven mats that shaded market stalls and homes. In the Roman Empire, large retractable fabric awnings sheltered the seating areas of amphitheatres and stadiums, including the Coliseum. The Roman poet Lucretius, in 50 B.C., likened thunder to the sound that "linen-awning, stretched, o'er mighty theatres, gives forth at times, a cracking roar, when much 'tis beaten about, betwixt the poles and cross-beams." Over the next two millennia awnings appeared throughout the world, while the technology used in their construction changed little.

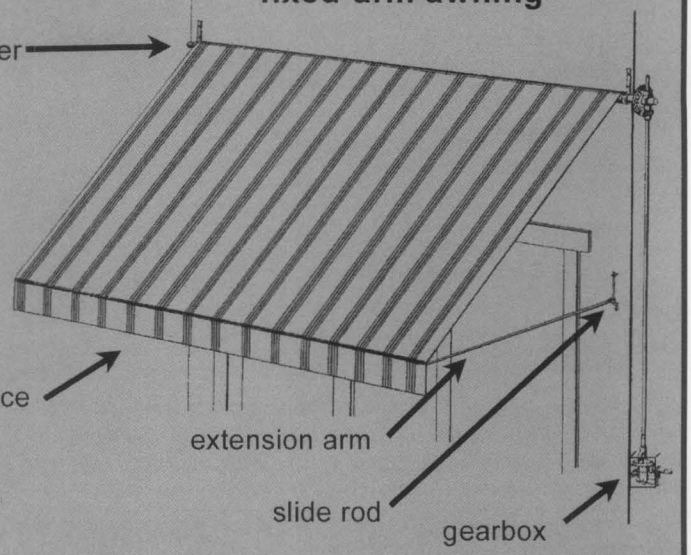
Awnings in the 19th Century

When awnings began to commonly appear on American storefronts—during the first half of the 19th century—they were simple, often improvised, and strictly utilitarian assemblies. The basic hardware consisted of timber or cast-iron posts set along the sidewalk edge and linked by a front cross bar (Fig. 3). To lend support to larger installations, angled rafters linked the front cross bar to the building facade. The upper end of the canvas was connected to the facade with nails, with grommets and hooks, or by lacing the canvas to a head-rod bolted to the facade. The other (projecting) end of the canvas was draped over, or laced to, a front bar with the edge often hanging down to form a valance. On ornate examples, metal posts were adorned with filigree and the tops decorated with spear ends, balls or other embellishments. On overcast days or when rain did not threaten, the covering was often rolled up against the building facade; during the winter months proper maintenance called for the removal and storage of

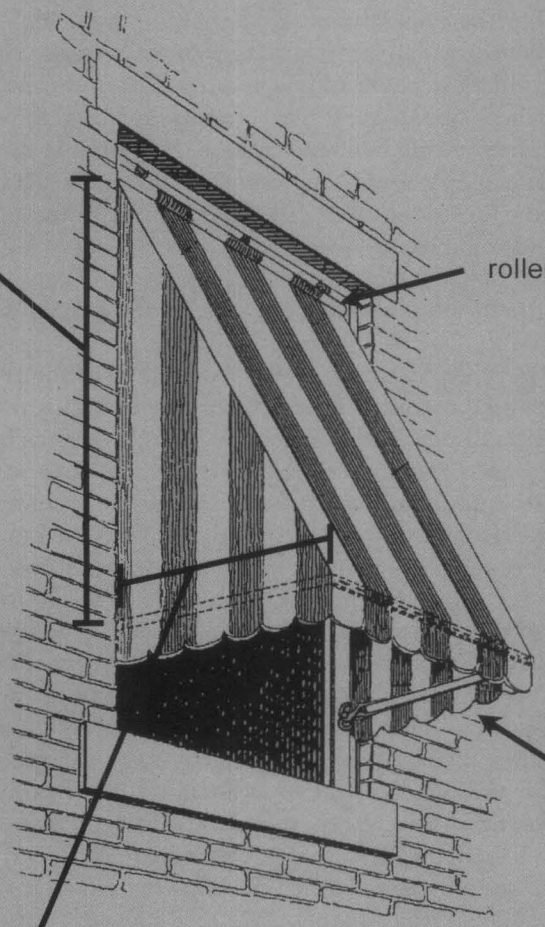
Figure 3. Early 19th century awnings featured canvas coverings stretched between the building facade and post-supported front bars. Projecting frameworks of extension bars were not common until later in the century. Photo: Second Street, Philadelphia, c. 1841, Print and Photo Collection, The Free Library of Philadelphia.

Awning Vocabulary

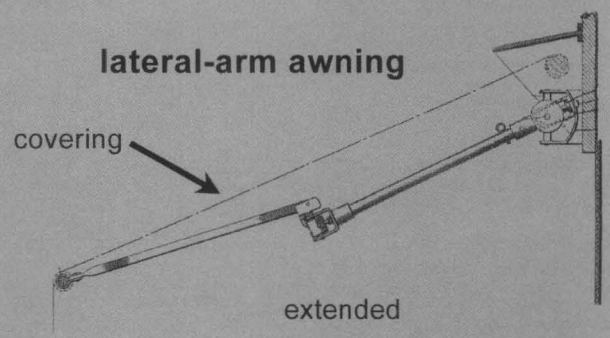
fixed-arm awning



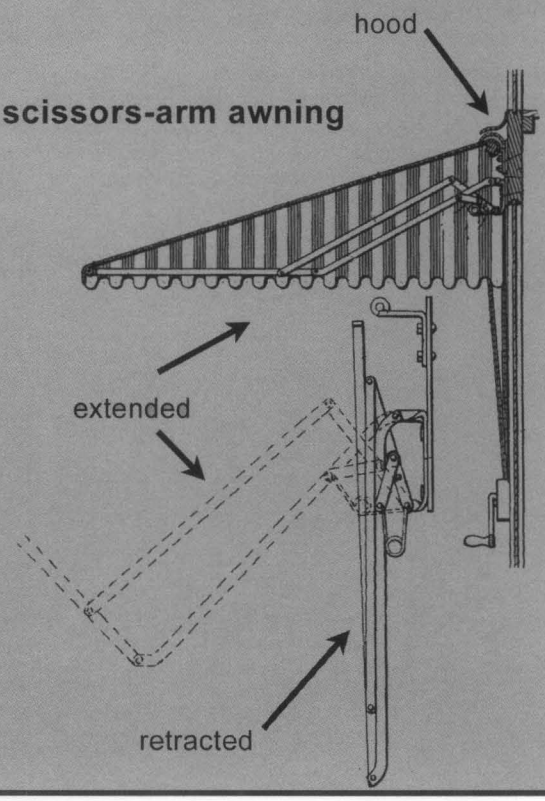
roller window awning



lateral-arm awning



scissors-arm awning



fixed pipe frame

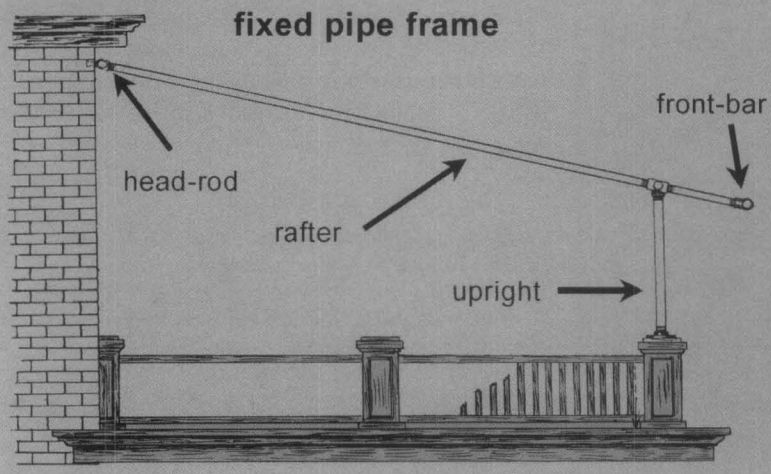


Figure 4. This 1892 photo shows the canvas sewing room of a large awning manufacturer. The wide variety of custom sizes and shapes, and the natural shrinkage of canvas demanded considerable skill in measuring, cutting and sewing. Photo: The Astrup Company.

Figure 5. During the second half of the 19th century, iron plumbing pipe became a popular material for fixed awning frames. Here, a pipe frame without its canvas cover extends around the corner of a building in Washington, D.C. Photo: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographic Division, LC-USZ62-121160.

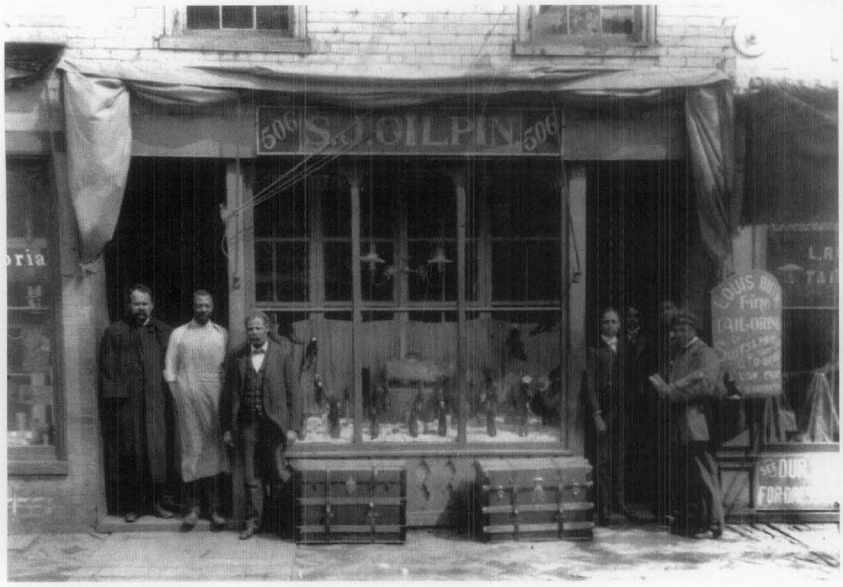


Figure 6. A 19th century shoe store in Richmond, Virginia, had an operable awning retracted against the building facade. Hinged extension arms were raised and lowered allowing for an awning configuration easily changed in response to weather conditions. This photo shows how the fabric gathered and was exposed to the elements when retracted—part of the reason roller awnings later became prevalent. Photo: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographic Division, LC-USZ62-99053.

awnings. Photographs from the mid-1800s often show the bare framework, suggesting that the covering was extended only when necessary. Canvas duck was the predominant awning fabric (Fig. 4). A strong, closely woven cotton cloth used for centuries to make tents and sails, canvas is a versatile material with a relatively short lifespan compensated for by its low cost.

Awnings became a common feature in the years after the Civil War. Iron plumbing pipe, which was quickly adapted for awning frames, became widely available and affordable as a result of mid-century industrialization. It was a natural material for awning frames, easily bent and threaded together to make a range of different shapes and sizes (Fig. 5). At the same time the advent of the steamship forced canvas mills and sail makers to search for new markets. An awning industry developed offering an array of frame and fabric options adaptable to both storefronts and windows.

Operable Awnings. In the second half of the 19th century, manufactured operable awnings grew in popularity (Fig. 6). Previously, most awnings had fixed frames—the primary way to retract the covering was to roll it up the rafters by hand. Operable systems for both storefront and window awnings had extension arms that were hinged where they joined the facade. The arms were lowered to project the awning or raised to retract the awning using simple rope and pulley arrangements. Because the canvas remained attached to the framework, retractable awnings allowed a more flexible approach to shading—shopkeepers and owners could incrementally adjust the amount of awning coverage depending upon the weather conditions. When the sun came out from behind clouds, the awning could be deployed with ease. In case of sudden storms, owners could quickly retract the awning against the building wall where it was protected from wind gusts.

But the early operable awnings had their own drawbacks. When retracted, the covering on early operable awnings bunched up against the building facade where it was still partially exposed to inclement weather. (In fact, deterioration was often accelerated as moisture pooled in the fabric folds.) Also, the retracted fabric often obscured a portion of the window or door opening and unless it was folded carefully, presented an unkempt appearance.

Roller Awnings. Addressing the drawbacks of the original hinged awning, new roller awnings featured a wood or metal cylinder around which the canvas was stored when the awning was retracted. When fully retracted, only the valance was visible (Fig. 7). The roller was usually bolted to a backboard set against the building and protected beneath a wood or galvanized metal hood. In some cases it was installed in a recessed box built into the facade. A long detachable handle (called a "winding brace"), or a gearbox and crankshaft attached to the building, was used to turn the roller. Some later models were operated by electric motor. Rollers, especially those on window awnings, often contained a spring that helped retract the awning and kept the canvas from sagging excessively.

Most 19th century roller awnings had fixed arms that were similar to those found on the earlier operable awnings. The arms hinged flush to the building when the awning was retracted and, with the help of gravity, straightened out over the sidewalk when extended. When a storefront awning's projection exceeded its drop by more than a foot, its long arms were connected to an adjustable slide rod rather than hinged directly to the building facade—increasing head room along the sidewalk (Fig. 8).

Shapes and Stripes. An expanded variety of available canvas colors, patterns, and valance shapes also appeared during this period. Some coverings were dyed a solid color; shades of slate, tan, and green were especially popular. Others had painted stripes on the upper surface of the canvas. Awning companies developed a colorful vocabulary of awning stripes that

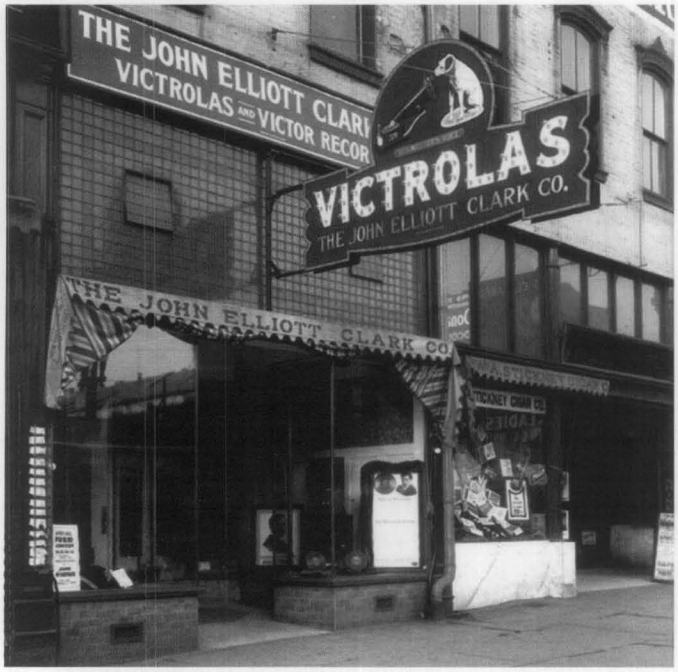


Figure 7. Early 20th century photo showing two operable awnings, an early version on the left and a next-generation roller awning on the right. The roller awning, with no side panels and just the valance showing, presented a clean storefront appearance. Photo: Utah State Historical Society, used by permission, all rights reserved.

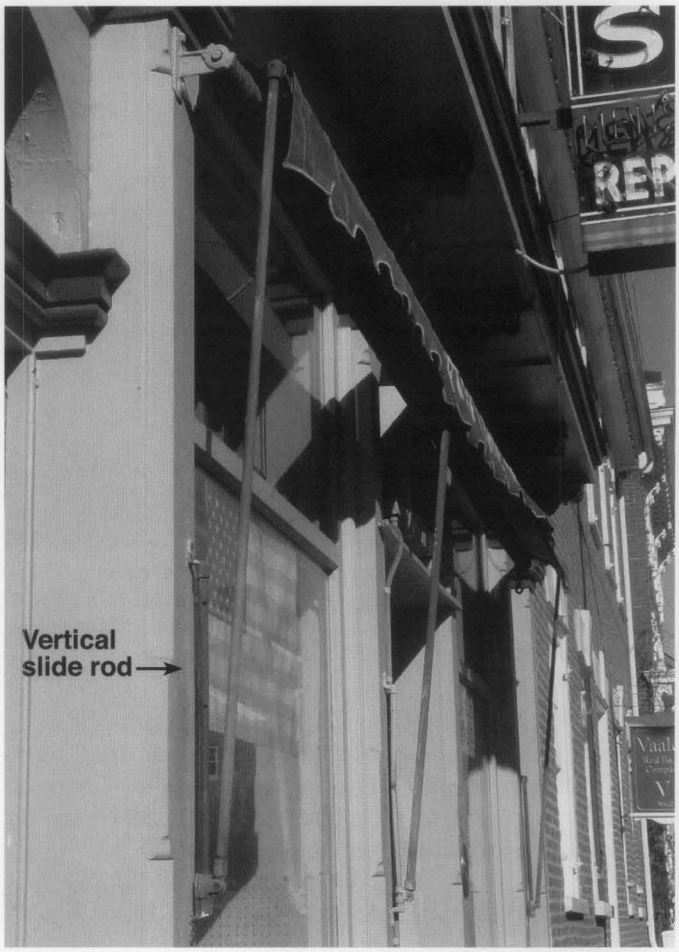


Figure 8. The roller bar at the top of a fixed-arm awning is cranked to release the fabric. As the canvas unfurls the vertical arms swing downward from their lower point. Because the pictured awning had a large projection, extending far from the building wall, the lower hinges were mounted on vertical slide rods affixed to the facade. When the awning is lowered, the bottom hinges of the arms travel up the slide rod to increase headroom beneath the fully extended awning.

enhanced the decorative schemes of buildings, and in some cases, served as a building's primary decorative feature (Fig. 9).

The broader choice of frame and canvas options encouraged the reassessment of awnings simply as a means to provide shelter from rain and sun. Homeowners found that the new generation of awnings could enhance exterior paint schemes and increase the visual appeal of their homes. Manufacturers developed new awning shapes, colors, patterns, and hardware to fit different house, door, window and porch styles (Fig. 10). They were an affordable, quick and simple improvement. They also proved to be an easy means of capturing outside space. Homeowners could use awning-covered balconies, porches and patios at any time of day; grocery stores were able to convert sidewalks to outdoor display areas protected from sunlight and quick changes in the weather. On Main Street, businesses used the expanded repertoire of awnings to draw attention to their buildings with bright colors, whimsical stripe patterns and exotic scallops.

Figure 9. A wide selection of striped patterns took the awning beyond its original, utilitarian function to serve as a decorative and appealing building feature. Photo: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographic Division, LC-D4-62072.

Awnings increasingly functioned as signs identifying the proprietor's name, goods on offer, or year of establishment. It was a trend that would culminate over a century later with awning installations in which shelter was secondary to advertisement (Fig. 11).

Awnings in the 20th Century

Awning development during the early twentieth century focused on improving operability. Variations in roller awnings addressed the need to provide an increasingly customized product that accomodated a wide range of storefront configurations and styles.

New folding-arm awnings appeared that operated either vertically or horizontally supplementing the fixed-arm awnings developed in the latter 19th century. Vertical folding arms were made up of smaller hinged arms that crossed like scissors. Operated by gravity the arms extended outward pulling the covering off the roller. Like a fixed-arm awning, the pitch of this scissors-type awning varied depending on whether it was fully or only partially extended (Fig. 12). Somewhat different was the "lateral arm awning" a horizontally operating awning that worked like a human elbow with the spring action in the arms pushing outward toward the street,

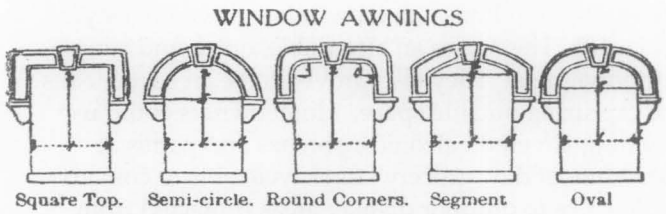


Figure 10. The expanding awning industry manufacturered frames and cut fabric for every type of window and door opening. This 19th century catalog illustration provides measuring instructions to assure a custom fit. Awnings were typically set within the window opening.

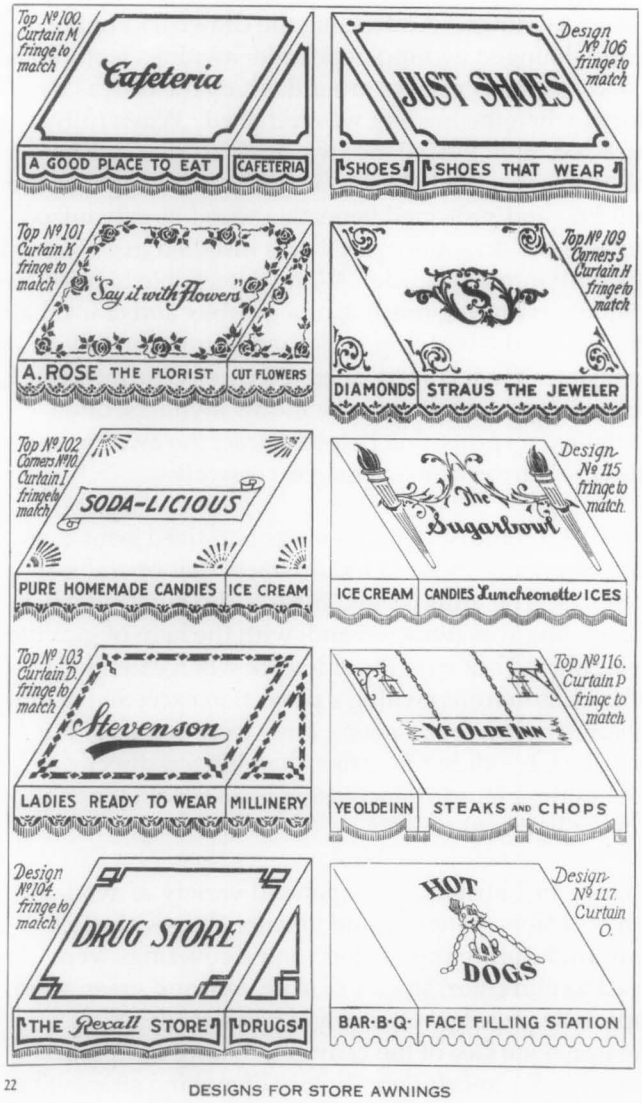


Figure 11. A page from an early 20th century catalog shows lettering and signage that could be applied to commercial awnings. Image: Anchor Industries, Inc.

unfurling the cover from the roller and maintaining tension. Lateral-arm awnings featured a shallow drop that remained relatively constant regardless of how far the arms were extended (Fig. 13). Operable awnings, whether fixed arm, scissors arm, or lateral arm, rapidly gained popularity as customers came to appreciate the flexibility, concealed appearance, and longer lifespan made possible by roller units.

New Coverings. Slower to change was the fabric used to cover awnings. Canvas duck remained the common awning fabric during the first half of the 20th century. However, its tendency to stretch and fade, and its susceptability to mildew, and flammable materials like cigarettes and matches motivated the awning industry to search for alternatives. Shortly after World War II, a vinyl plastic coating that increased fade and water resistance was first applied to the canvas. By the 1960s, vinyl resins, acrylic fibers and polyester materials were all being used to provide a longer-lasting awning cover. Ironically, just when these innovations promised more

Figure 12. Scissors-arm awnings have a pair of vertical, hinged arms on either side of the assembly supporting the front bar. To unfurl the awning, the roller is cranked and the arms extend outward pulling the cover away from the roller.

Figure 13. Lateral-arm awnings were preferred on long elevations, especially those with sheet glass (where vertical arms could not be fastened to the building facade). When lateral arm awnings were installed across a broad storefront or porch, manufacturers recommended spacing the arms at approximately eight foot intervals.

durable awnings, the fabric awning industry felt the impact of changing architectural fashion, the widespread adoption of air conditioning, and the increasing availability of aluminum awnings.

Modernism dominated commercial architecture during the postwar era. The style's signature form—austere steel, glass and concrete boxes—had little use for fabric awnings. Colorful awnings seemed old-fashioned, an unwanted distraction from the smooth lines of the machine aesthetic. The preference, instead, was for perforated structural screens or brises-soleil (French: "breaks the sun") that integrated shading functions with new building forms. It was assumed that new buildings had no need for awnings. Widely available for the first time, mechanical air conditioning threatened to make the awning an unnecessary vestige of an earlier era. Awning companies fought back with arguments that traditional shading systems could reduce the required size and investment in air conditioning systems. Though canvas awnings continued to be used on contemporary buildings, new types were often selected to do the job, aluminum and fiberglass awnings.

Widely available by the 1950s, aluminum awnings were touted as longer-lasting and lower-maintenance than traditional awnings. Though used on small-scale commercial structures, they were especially popular with homeowners. Aluminum awnings were made with slats called "pans" arranged horizontally or vertically. For variety and to match the building to which they were applied, different colored slats could be arranged to create stripes or other decorative patterns. While aluminum awnings were usually fixed, in the 1960s several operable roller awnings were developed, including one with the trade name Flexalum Roll-Up (Fig. 14).

Also during this period, manufactured flat-metal canopies were an increasingly popular feature, used in new commercial construction and when remodeling existing storefronts. They were particularly common in the South where shading was critical to the comfort of both window shoppers and store interiors. Often made of aluminum, the canopies could stretch across a single facade, or be connected to extend along an entire block.

New Shapes. An increasing reliance upon fixed aluminum frames and plastic coverings spurred the development of new awning shapes during the 1970s and 1980s. Often, the awning served as a business's primary sign. Mansard awnings, concave awnings, quarter-round awnings, and quarter-rounds with rounded dome ends appeared with increasing frequency. Most had vinyl or other plastic coverings that were touted as being more resilient than traditional materials. Featuring bold lettering and colors that were often emphasized by illuminating the awnings from within, these awnings were common on new commercial strips and were even popular inside enclosed shopping

Figure 14. The years after World War II saw the widespread adoption of aluminum awnings on both storefronts and residences. Operable aluminum awnings incorporated a spring-loaded roller into the frontbar.

centers and food courts. They were also applied, less successfully, to older or historic buildings where their shape, size, and material bore little resemblance to traditional awnings.

Although the 1950s and 1960s saw the end of the canvas awning's ubiquity on Main Street, it remained a moderately popular feature of residential architecture. New materials and technologies such as lateral arm operators, acrylic fabric, and aluminum kept the awning relevant to the postwar ranch house and afforded an economical way to update older structures. Colorful awnings helped suburban dwellers distinguish their homes from other, similar, models in the neighborhood.

Awnings Today

Today, awnings come in a variety of shapes, sizes, frames and fabrics. Fixed, quarter-round, back-lit awnings with broad faces featuring company names, logos, phone numbers, and street addresses function more as signs than sunshades. Restaurants and other commercial chains use illuminated awnings with nationally recognized brand graphics and stripe and color patterns to attract customers along suburban strips. The triangular shed frame shape has enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in recent years, in many cases playing off nostalgia for the traditional awning. Relatively new "staple-in" awnings with a shed shape are commonly used on new commercial construction. This system has a welded frame of extruded aluminum with a slot on the outer edge. The fabric covering is pulled taut, and the ends are secured in the groove with galvanized steel staples. A vinyl trim bead covers the groove, protecting the fabric edges and providing a flush appearance.

Apart from the strip mall, awnings are also reappearing in historic business districts and residential neighborhoods. In these locations, new awnings typically feature fixed frames or operating lateral arms—both differing little from the awnings of one hundred years before. Fixed-frame awnings have frames made of either aluminum or light-gauge galvanized or zinc-coated steel pipes welded together. Frames are secured to building facades with clamps, z-shaped clips, and other hardware. Until recently, operable awnings found in historic commercial districts were primarily those with historic frames and hardware that had survived to the present. But new lateral-arm awnings with powder-coated aluminum frames are an increasingly common choice for building owners who want the convenience of an operable system.

Solution-dyed acrylics and acrylic-coated polyester-cotton blended fabrics are often used to replicate historic awning coverings. These relatively new materials resemble canvas in appearance and texture, yet offer greater strength and durability. Because acrylics are woven (with the stripes and colors woven directly into the fabric rather than painted on the surface), they are durable and allow light to filter through while keeping heat out. They dry quickly, thereby reducing damage caused by mildew, and contain a UV inhibitor that further reduces sunlight damage. Poly-cotton fabrics coated with a thin acrylic layer that repels dirt and resists abrasion are also used. Both acrylic and poly-cotton fabrics do not stretch or shrink like traditional canvas so they are generally easier to measure, cut, and install.

Preserving Existing Historic Awnings

If awnings already exist on a historic building, they should be evaluated to determine whether they are appropriate to the age, style, and scale of the building, using the criteria identified below. Backlit awnings and dome awnings are usually inappropriate for 19th century and other historic buildings, while aluminum awnings may be perfectly compatible with buildings from the 1950 or 60s (Fig. 15). The time is approaching when some aluminum awnings may even be considered appropriate to older buildings, if the awnings formed part of an updated storefront, or are central features of an intact postwar refashioning of the building's exterior (Fig. 16).

When an existing awning is determined to be appropriate to the building, a program of repair and regular maintenance should be developed. The condition of its covering, hardware, connections between the hardware and the building, and the awning's operability should be evaluated. Hardware such as arms, rollers, and gearboxes may only need cleaning and lubrication. In other cases more substantial repairs by an awning company familiar with historic hardware may also be needed.

Awning Repair and Maintenance. The best preservation practice is to maintain and repair historic features. The proper care and maintenance of existing awnings and canopies will extend the life of both hardware and covering while ensuring the safety of those passing beneath them. Parts for historic hardware can still be obtained from some suppliers, either from existing stock or as newly manufactured pieces. In some cases, new marine and boating hardware can substitute for missing historic awning hardware. Damaged pieces of the still popular galvanized pipe frames can easily be bent back into shape or, if necessary, replaced with virtually identical material.

Ongoing maintenance consists of keeping all pivot points and gears lubricated and clean of debris. Regular inspections should also include checking for rust on the frame and hardware. Such areas should be promptly scraped and painted, as rust may discolor and deteriorate fabric coverings. When awning hardware is properly repaired and maintained, its lifespan can be significantly extended.

Exposure to the elements and the limited lifespan of even new acrylic fabrics mean the repair and replacement of the covering will probably occur more frequently than work on the frame or hardware. The longevity of any fabric covering is largely dependent upon where it is installed and how it is cared for. Awnings beneath overhanging trees, for example, are vulnerable to sap, fruit, and animal droppings that contain acids, which can deteriorate and discolor fabrics. Branches, flags, banners or other objects brushing against an awning can abrade the awning fabric. With proper care acrylic fabrics on fixed awnings have a service life of eight to fifteen years of year-round exposure.

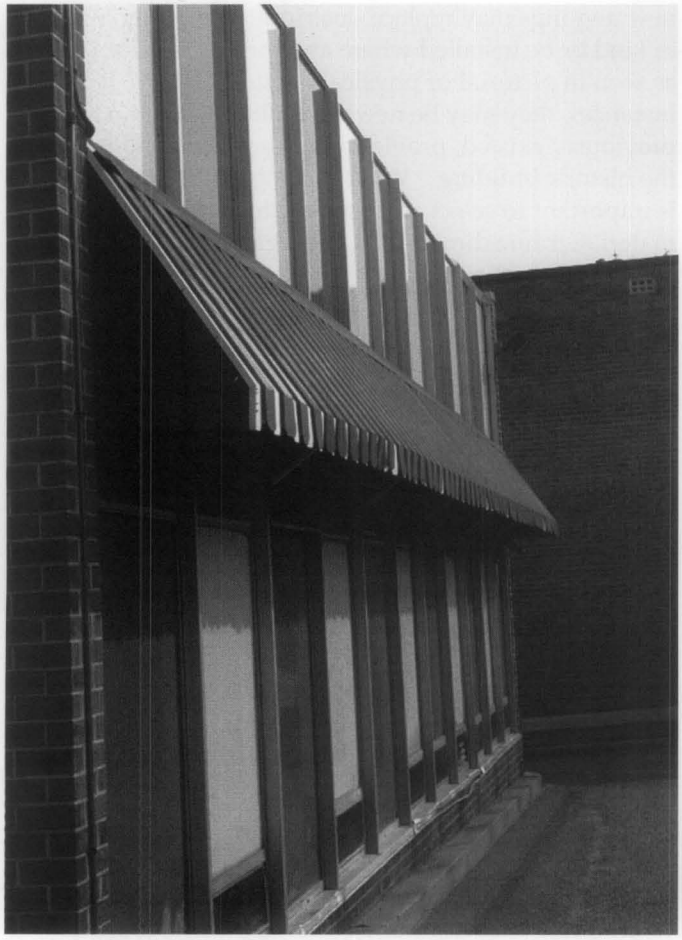


Figure 15. This 1950s-era dry cleaner has an aluminum awning that, with its vertical pattern and alternating stripes, complements the facade's porcelain enamel panes and aluminum mullions. The awning forms an essential element of the building's historic character.

Figure 16. These fiberglass "clamshell" awnings, although not as old as the 1930s building to which they were affixed, are important features that have acquired significance. They were retained when the building was recently rehabilitated.

Regular cleaning will lengthen the lifespan of any awning. About once a month the covering should be hosed down with clean water. Choose a sunny day so that the fabric dries quickly and thoroughly. Keep retractable awnings extended until they dry completely. The awning underside can be kept clean by brushing it with a household broom. Regular cleaning helps prevent dirt from becoming embedded in the fabric. At least twice a year the awning should be gently scrubbed using a soft brush and a mild, natural soap (not a detergent) and rinsed with a garden hose. Every two or three years, professional cleaning is recommended. During this process, the covering is usually removed from the building, washed, and treated with an appropriate water repellant solution. Local awning companies may offer this service or the building owner can ship the covering to a specialty awning cleaning firm. Depending on the frame style and fabric, some awnings may be cleaned without being removed.

While most fixed awnings remain in place year round, they last longer if taken down at the end of the warm weather season. Preferably, coverings should be removed by an awning service that can clean them, restitch seams if necessary, and store them for the winter. Property owners removing awning coverings themselves need to store them in a dry place with good air circulation.

If a covering begins to sag between cleanings, the cause (an object on top stretching the material, loose laces, a damaged seam) must be addressed as soon as possible. When other maintenance or repair work is undertaken on the building, it is advisable to remove fixed awnings temporarily, as they are easily damaged or stained by materials dropped from above.

Funding Awning and Canopy Work

In some commercial districts, local "main street" associations, chambers of commerce, or business improvement district offices offer assistance for awning rehabilitation projects. Such organizations may sponsor grant programs or low-interest loan programs with funds that can be used for awning work. These initiatives, often bundled with facade improvement and signage programs, enhance the visual character of a street or neighborhood, encourage conformance with guidelines and offset what is in some cases the higher cost of a historically appropriate installation. When a building is located within a historic district, additional grants, loans and tax incentives may exist. The availability of funding assistance, in these cases, is usually contingent upon completing rehabilitation work in keeping with established preservation practices.

Although more durable than in times past, awning covers can still develop tears and holes caused by ladders, falling trees, and vandalism. Fabric nearing the end of its service life is most vulnerable to tearing along the seams. Though awning companies are usually called to do repairs, enterprising owners can undertake some work themselves. If the damage is minor, repair work may be done while the awning remains in place. Small holes or tears in acrylic coverings can be immediately treated with a hot needle or awl that will melt the frayed edges and prevent the damage from spreading. Patch kits are available that function like band-aids, keeping the torn edges together. These patches, glued or sewn to the fabric, let the awning color show through but do have a semi-gloss sheen to them. Significant damage requires removing the covering and, usually, sending it to a sewing shop. There, work may include inserting a fabric patch, restitching seams, or replacing an entire fabric panel. If the awning is relatively new it is possible to obtain a good match between replacement and original material.

Installing New Awnings

Since fabrics are subject to weathering and deterioration and hardware is exposed to the elements, some awnings may be beyond repair. Depending on the circumstances, new awnings may replace deteriorated existing awnings in kind or be installed where awnings were once in place as seen in pictorial or physical documentation. In other instances, they may be newly installed where no awning previously existed, provided they are compatible with the historic building. Whatever the circumstances, it is important to select an appropriate awning shape, material, frame dimensions, signage (if any), and placement on the facade.

If the condition of a historically appropriate existing awning is beyond repair, it should be used as the basis for selecting a replacement. When a historic awning is missing, owners should first look for evidence of a previous awning installation. Evidence can be either physical or documentary. The existence of surviving hardware—rollers and arms, gearboxes, clamps and other fasteners—or signs that hardware was once in place, such as bolt holes or recessed roller boxes—are the most likely forms of physical evidence (Fig. 17). Storefront remodeling projects often uncover concealed and disused awning hardware that can either be repaired or at least suggest what type of awning was formerly in place. This is especially true for awnings that had an operating rod, gearboxes, and perhaps motors concealed in recesses within the building wall. Protected from the elements, these items are likely to survive in repairable condition. Sometimes physical evidence of earlier awnings can be found in the basement or upper floors where hardware and even old coverings may have been stored after being removed from the facade.
Clamps, fasteners, and bolt holes in an exterior wall can reveal the position, type and dimensions of a missing

Figure 17. A gearbox, slide rod, roller, front bar, and extension arm reveal that this 19th century building once featured a retractable awning. It is likely that with minor repairs the surviving hardware could again be made operable, recovered with a canvas or acrylic fabric, and reused to service the storefront.

awning installation. Fittings or other marks on the side of the entrance or windows, for example, suggest that a fixed-arm awning was present rather than a lateral-arm awning. Gearboxes point to a retractable rather than a fixed awning.

Historic photographs and drawings are a primary documentary resource used to determine an earlier awning configuration. Photographs have the added benefit of providing information about the covering, such as stripe pattern, valance type, and lettering. When old photographs indicate that the historic character of a building was defined in part by distinctive awnings, it is appropriate to install new awnings that replicate their appearance (Fig. 18). If there is evidence that awnings were once present but no information about their color or signage is available, a color should be selected that is in keeping with the historic character of the building and district.

Where no awning currently exists, and there is no evidence of a past one, it may still be possible to add an awning to a historic building without altering distinctive features, damaging historic fabric or changing the building's historic character. A new awning should be compatible with the features and characteristics of a historic building, as well as with neighboring buildings, or the historic district, if applicable. Historic photographs of similar neighboring buildings with awnings, can also be helpful in choosing an appropriate installation. When selecting and installing a new awning, a number of other factors should be considered: shape, scale, massing, placement, signage, and color.

Shape. Traditionally, both residential and commercial awnings were triangular in section, usually with a valance hanging down the outside edge (Fig. 19). Early examples of these "shed" awnings had simple

Figure 18. (Above) When the county clerk in Morgan County, West Virginia, was looking to reduce glare in the courthouse offices she located a 1940s photo showing sets of awnings on the first floor. (Below) Using the historic photos as a guide, new awnings with a similar shape and stripe pattern were installed increasing the comfort of employees and protecting county records from direct sunlight. Above photo: Frances Widmeyer and Debra Kesecker.

frameworks consisting of pipes or planks angling out from the building facade and supported on posts. Early retractable versions continued this triangular form. New awning shapes appeared in the later 19th century to accommodate the expanding variety of door and window configurations. Casement window awnings were box-like in shape to accommodate the outward swing of the vertical sash. Window openings with arched tops, such as those found on Italianate houses and commercial buildings, were often shaded by awnings with matching tops.

Generally, traditional shed awnings are appropriate for most historic window, door, and storefronts installations. It is preferable (and in some historic districts, required) that these awnings have free-hanging valances, the flapping bottom pieces so characteristic of historic awnings. Quarter-round awnings, modern mansard awnings, and other contemporary commercial designs with distended, fixed valances have no precedent in traditional awning design and are usually inappropriate for historic buildings (Fig. 20).

Likewise, staple-in systems are not recommended for historic buildings. One of the distinctive features of a staple-in system is an exceptionally taut and wrinkle-free appearance; indeed, this is a chief appeal of the system when applied to new construction. Historic awnings, however, were either retractable or built with a covering laced onto a frame. Both forms had a fair amount of give in the fabric. Staple systems, especially those with long valances, usually present an appearance more suited to newer construction. While not recommended for installation on most historic buildings, they may be suitable for infill construction within a historic district.

Scale, Massing, and Placement. Because their primary purpose was functional rather than decorative, awnings were traditionally installed only where necessary. Window awnings were most commonly found on building elevations with southern exposures in the northern areas of the United States and on elevations with both northern and southern exposures in the southern United States. They were also found on east and west elevations, and sometimes just on selective windows. Retractable awnings were originally more common in northern climates where awnings required additional protection from extreme weather conditions.

The design of a particular commercial building influenced the placement of its awnings. Some storefronts with traditional glass transoms had the awning placed below the transom, others, had the awning installed above the transom. On both commercial and residential buildings, awnings were only wide enough to cover the window openings that they sheltered; a single awning rarely covered two or more bays (Fig. 21). On storefronts, they were not higher up on the building facade than was necessary to shade the entrance and display window. Thus, it is important

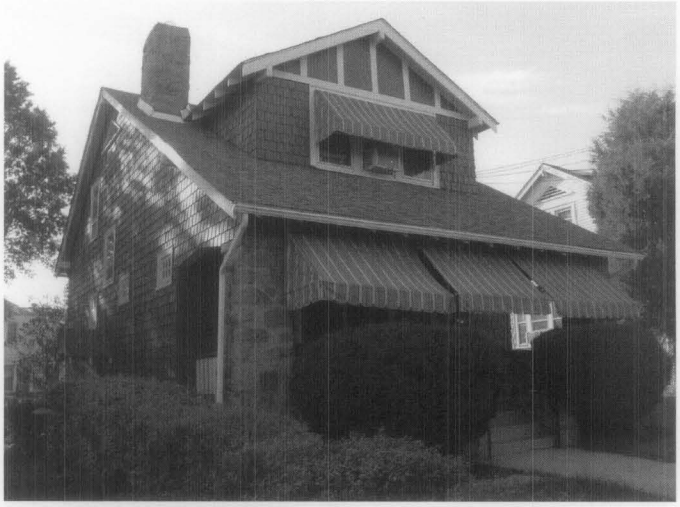


Figure 19. Simple shed-type awnings with acrylic or canvas coverings and free-hanging valances are appropriate for most historic residences featuring rectilinear openings.

Figure 20. A dome awning was an inappropriate addition to this circa 1890s building. In order to qualify for historic tax credits the new vinyl awning was replaced with a shed awning with a canvas-like woven acrylic covering.

Figure 21. Single awnings should not be set over more than one door or window bay. A separate shed awning with a canvas or acrylic covering would be more appropriate over each of these openings.

when installing new awnings on historic buildings to ensure that the covering not obscure the building's distinctive architectural features (Fig. 22). Also, new awning hardware should not be installed in a way that damages historic materials. Clamps and fasteners used to attach awning frames should penetrate mortar joints rather than brick or other masonry surfaces. If new backboards and rollers are installed, care needs to be taken not to damage cornices or transoms. Finally, awning placement, size, and shape must be compatible with the historic character of the building (Figs. 23 and 24).

Material. Historically, awnings were covered with canvas that was either solid in color or painted with stripes. During the second half of the twentieth century canvas fell out of favor and was superceded by vinyl and other synthetic textiles. For various reasons —particularly its reflectivity and texture—vinyl is generally an unsuitable material for awnings on historic buildings. Many historic review commissions note the inappropriateness of vinyl in their guidelines and call for the use of canvas, canvas blends, or acrylics that resemble canvas.

Weather-resistant acrylic fabrics such as solution-dyed acrylic and acrylic-coated polyester-cotton approximate the historic look of canvas coverings, yet afford a new level of durability, color-fastness, and ease of use. Quality poly-cotton coverings may be more appropriate in some cases because, like traditional awnings, the colors and stripes are painted directly on the upper surface, while the underside remains a pearl gray color.

Signage. In addition to sheltering shoppers and merchandise, and reducing glare and temperatures, awnings on commercial buildings offer valuable advertising space. Photographs from the mid-19th century show a wide range of lettering and logos– business names, types of trade (hosiery shop, telegraph house), street numbers—on the sloped coverings and side flaps of awnings. The most common placement of a shop proprietor's business name or service was on the valance hanging down from the awning edge. The front valance provided a flat surface visible whether the awning was retracted against the building wall or fully extended (Fig. 25). Many establishments, however, left their awnings unadorned without any lettering.

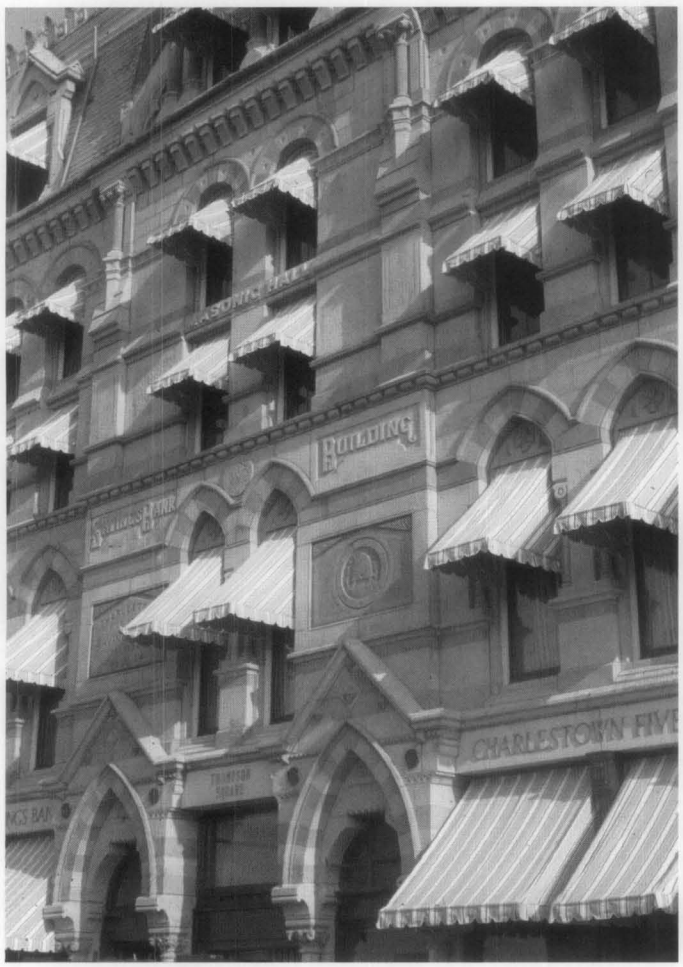


Figure 22. These window awnings today match what would have appeared in the 19th century. The fabric is slightly loose on the frames, the valances hang freely, each window bay has its own awning, and the awning frames are set within the openings. Photo: Mike Jackson.

Figure 23. This postwar aluminum awning does not contribute to the character of this 19th century residence and could be replaced during a rehabilitation project with a fabric shed awning more in keeping with the building's age and appearance.

Figure 24. This awning, extending across much of the building, is incompatible in shape. Of greater concern, however, is that its size wholly overshadows the modest historic building behind.

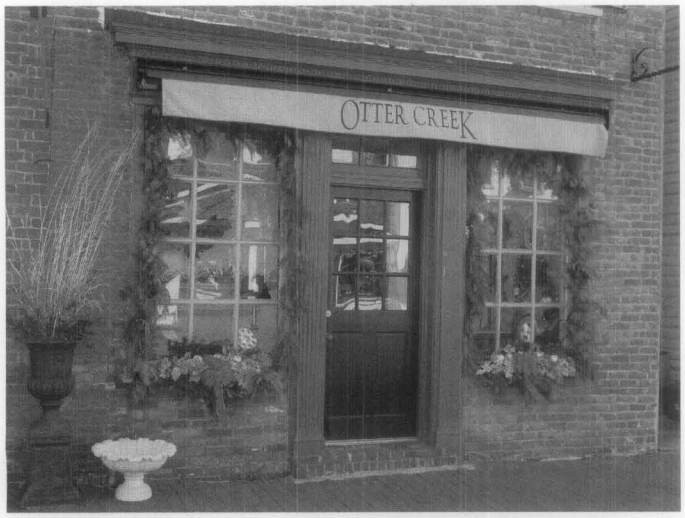


Figure 25. Appropriate lettering, as on this roller awning valance, can function as distictive signage without detracting from the historic character of the building.

Today creating large lettered signs on a new awning as part of a rehabilitation project requires special care and is not appropriate in all cases. Used long before any local signage control, historic examples of such lettering often reflected the character of a district, with more upscale retail areas, for example, being more reserved than wholesale districts. Contemporary awning lettering can add visual interest and commercial identity but should be designed in keeping with the historic character of a building and its historic district.

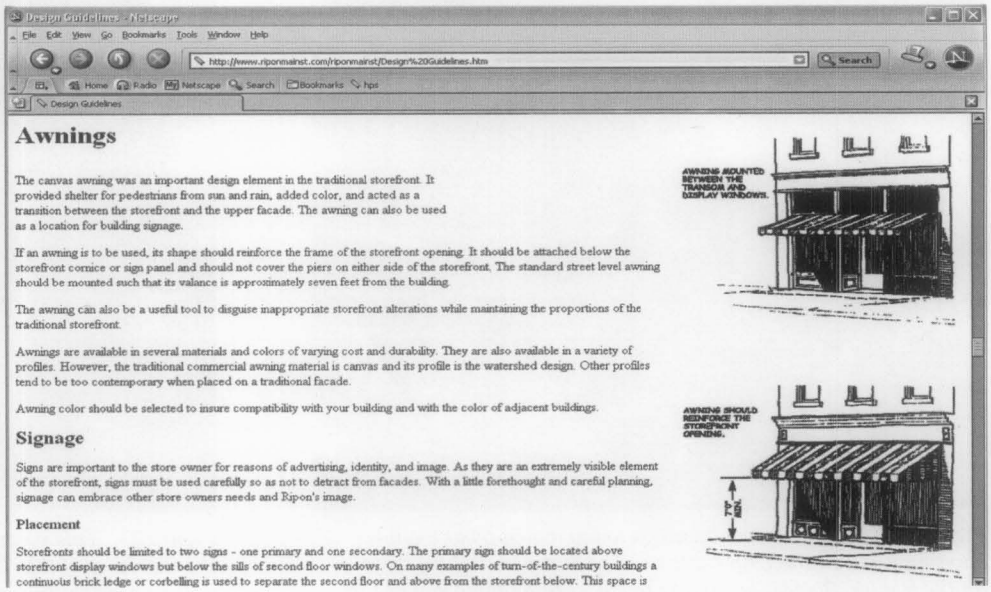
Color. As in the past, variety in awning color is an appropriate characteristic when reintroducing awnings in historic districts. Since the 19th century, awnings have featured a range of different stripe patterns and an extensive color palette (Fig. 26). These lively, even whimsical,

Figure 26. The green and burgundy stripes that decorate these porch awnings complement the matching shutters and brick facade.

designs embellished building facades like a necktie or scarf does a suit. The vibrancy they lent to city streets and neighborhoods is part of the history of these environments and similar results can be achieved today as well.

Awning and Canopy Regulation

Because commercial awnings often extend into the public right-of-way, municipal building departments usually regulate their use. Regulations specify construction type (materials and dimensions of framing members, the use of flame-retardant fabrics), minimum height above the sidewalk (usually between seven and ten feet), minimum distance between the projecting edge and the curb (usually between one and two feet), and maximum projection from the building wall. Such regulations are meant to ensure that awnings are securely built, do not pose a threat to pedestrians, and



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Design Guidelines

Awnings

The canvas awning was an important design element in the traditional storefront. It provided shelter for pedestrians from sun and rain, added color, and acted as a transition between the storefront and the upper facade. The awning can also be used as a location for building signage.

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.

Signage

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 other store owners needs and Ripon's image.

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

Figure 27. Local historic district commissions and neighborhood improvement associations often publish awning guidance on their websites. Image: Ripon Main Street, Inc.

are not at risk from widely-loaded trucks. Lettering, color, and the relationship to adjacent awning designs may also be subject to building department review and approval.

Awning work on buildings located in historic districts will likely be reviewed by a historic district commission (HDC). HDCs may also review grant applications and recommend approvals for facade improvement programs, where such programs are in place. Though commissions look at projects on a case-by-case basis, many have established guidelines that address general issues and local concerns relating to awnings and canopies (Fig. 27). Often, local design guidelines are modeled upon The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. These standards set forth principles meant to ensure that new elements are added sensitively, do not damage historic fabric, and are compatible with the historic character of the building.

Summary

Like all exterior building features that are subjected to snow, rain, sunlight, wind, and pollution—awnings need regular attention. Covered even with modern materials, they require maintenance, repair, and eventually replacement. Awnings are often the first feature to be altered when historic buildings change owners or uses. They often have a significant role in contributing to the historic character of a building. It is important that owners, architects, engineers, historians, and others consider this when planning work on a historic building.

Awnings and the Sun

Although their effectiveness can be affected by many factors including location, climate, window size, and glass type, the energy efficiency advantages of awnings are clear. According to the Department of Energy, awnings can reduce heat gain up to 65% in south facing windows and up to 77% on windows facing east. Awnings reduce stress on existing air conditioning systems, and make it possible to install new HVAC systems with smaller capacity, thus saving purchasing and operating costs. Air conditioners need to work less hard, less often. When used with air conditioners, awnings can lower the cost of cooling a building by up to 25%.[1]

Awnings offer a number of benefits to owners of historic buildings. Awnings can make unnecessary a host of other alterations made to buildings in the name of energy efficiency. Awnings provide nearly comparable glare reduction and reduced heat-gain as tinted windows or window films, yet are in keeping with the historic appearance of a building facade. They help protect historic windows and storefronts, and allow windows to remain open, and cool air to circulate, even during inclement weather. In warm climates, they reduce the need to replace existing windows with new insulating glass units for the purpose of energy conservation.

Awnings were reinstalled on the east, west, and south windows of the Florida State Capitol in the 1980s. With a design based on those seen in historic photographs of the building, the new awnings allowed a downsizing of the HVAC system by 25 tons. After installation, the exposed glass surface in a typical first floor office accounted for only 46% of the required cooling load, down from 72%. Photo: Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State.

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