

CITY OF CUBA CITY
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS
FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



Design Guidelines

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Introduction

The design guidelines are intended to establish sound and distinctive provisions that will be used to retain and promote Cuba City’s small-town atmosphere. The City of Cuba City pays particular attention to proper maintenance, color selection, restoration (where appropriate), building materials, appropriate signage, necessary upgrades, and construction details. The creation of “new looking” storefronts and disguising the original building is not encouraged.

These guidelines are not meant to be specific design solutions, but rather, principles and techniques to consider while arriving at a decision. Those applying for the Façade Improvement Program Grant or Loan are strongly encouraged to utilize these guidelines while designing new or updated façade features for their building.

Purpose

These standards are intended to provide guidance for those seeking to construct new structures or rehabilitate existing structures. They help to encourage retention of architectural styles that serve as the backdrop to a pleasant and safe area that is uniform and unique. This document also functions as a guide to decision makers, including staff, in reviewing and approving improvements along the City of Cuba City’s downtown.

Street & Landscape Elements

The existing grid layout of streets and alleyways and other development patterns such as zero-building setbacks were established early in Cuba City’s development and are important characteristics of the downtown, especially Main Street. Retention of these patterns is important in maintaining the downtown’s visual character, identity and appeal.

- Existing street patterns and layout should be maintained. Closure of existing streets or alleyways should be discouraged.
- Alleyways should be maintained for vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic.
- Accent paving is encouraged at intersections and mid-block crossings.
- Street trees and pedestrian-scale lighting should be an integral part of the streetscape.
- Existing landscaping features such as street trees should be maintained.
- Where possible, a curbed or non-curbed landscape bed should separate the street and the pedestrian sidewalk.
- Landscape strips should be centered around street trees.

New Construction & Additions

Designs (e.g., height, proportion, roof shape (preferably flat), materials, texture, scale, details, massing, and color) for new and infill construction should resemble patterns of nearby or adjacent structures. However, compatible contemporary designs, rather than historic duplications or simulations, are encouraged.

Building Materials

The surface materials of a building are a key factor in its appearance and its relationship to adjacent buildings.

- Original building materials, whether located on primary, secondary, or rear facades, should be retained to every extent possible. If the original material has been overlaid by such coverings as aluminum or stucco, these alterations should be removed and the original material maintained, repaired or replaced with similar materials.
- Building materials should be traditional building materials consistent with the existing traditional building stock. Brick, stone, terra cotta, stucco, etc., should be the primary facade materials for buildings fronting along Main Street.
- Materials should be compatible between storefronts or street-level facades, and upper levels.
- The secondary facades of buildings facing Main Street should be composed of building materials consistent with the existing traditional building stock brick, stone, terra cotta, stucco, etc.
- Masonry walls, except in rare instances, should not be clad with stucco, artificial stone, parging, or EIFS (Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems). This includes publicly visible party-walls constructed of brick or rubble limestone.
- Existing unpainted masonry walls, except in rare instances, should not be painted.

Commercial Storefronts & Street Level Facades

The main character-defining building type in traditional downtowns is the two or three story, mixed-use building with a street level commercial storefront facade. These traditional building types commonly include pedestrian-level storefronts with large display windows, transoms, recessed entryways, etc. Upper stories are related by design, but may be differentiated by ornamentation and materials. Some include cast-iron or terra-cotta details as part of their embellishment. These design characteristics should be maintained and encouraged in Cuba City's downtown.

- Historic storefronts and storefront features such as entryways, display windows, doors, transoms, bulkheads, sign friezes or cornices, pilasters, etc. should be retained to every extent possible.

- Removal of historic materials and/or architectural features should be avoided.
- Removal of non-historic storefront elements and facade treatments, including metal cladding, stuccos, or other non-historic features that have been introduced at later times, is encouraged during renovation.
- Buildings where multiple storefronts span a larger, wider façade should extend design compatibility from storefront to storefront.
- Solid, non-traditional ‘security-style’ doors should not be used in primary storefronts.
- Storefronts should be designed to reflect the traditional pattern of containment. The storefront should be bounded by the enframing storefront cornice and piers on the side and the sidewalk on the bottom.
- Remodeled storefronts should be designed to fit within the original opening.
- Storefronts may be recessed or extended slightly (typically, 3 to 9 inches) to emphasize the feeling of containment and provide architectural variety.
- Storefronts should provide for a recessed entry.
- Storefronts should be pedestrian oriented and consist primarily of transparent glass. Storefront designs should reflect a glass to other building material ratio of 65%-80%.
- Storefront materials typically consist of wood, metal, steel, or brick. Renovations and/or new construction should reflect these materials.

Upper Story Facades

Upper story building elements are typically distinct from, yet visually related to lower levels by pattern and symmetry of design. The preservation of existing upper story materials, ornamentation, windows and design patterns is important to maintaining the character of the building.

- Retain and preserve historic facades and facade details such as corbelled brick, string or belt courses, cornices, windows, terra cotta, and stonework.
- If replacement of a deteriorated facade feature is necessary, replace only the deteriorated element to match the original in size, scale, proportion, material, texture and detail.
- Removal of non-historic storefront elements and facade treatments, including metal cladding, stuccos, or other non-historic features that have been introduced at later times,

is encouraged during renovation.

- Maintain the pattern created by upper-story windows and their vertical-horizontal alignment.
- Existing windows on conforming upper facades should not be eliminated or decreased in size or shape.
- Windows should be repaired if possible. If repair is not possible, window replacement in existing buildings should replicate original window patterns and finishes.
- New window openings that disrupt the existing balance on facades visible from the street should not be introduced.
- Upper-story facade elements should reflect a window to wall surface ratios of 20%-40%.
- Metal screens or bars should not cover upper-story window openings.
- Alteration of existing upper story elements should not significantly alter the proportion and/or balance of the existing building.

Secondary and Rear Facades

- Rear entrances on buildings that face public-parking areas are encouraged.
- Rear facades should provide sufficient architectural features, such as window and door openings, to articulate the building facade.
- Rear facades should not compete with the primary facade of the structure.
- Pedestrian-level window and door openings may be covered with security features such as screens or bars. However, every effort should be made to maintain the visual appearance on rear facades which face surface parking areas.
- Maintain the pattern created by upper-story windows and their alignment on rear facades that face surface-parking areas.
- Existing windows on rear facades should not be eliminated or decreased in size or shape.

Awnings, Canopies, and Marquees

Downtown storefront buildings traditionally had projecting awnings, canopies, or marquees to provide pedestrians with protection from the elements, to enhance aesthetic appeal, and to serve as a place to affix identifying signage. The installation of awnings is encouraged, unless a

structure is physically unsuited to accommodate one. Below are guidelines for the installation of awnings, canopies, or marquees.

- All signs, awnings, and canopies must comply with City of Cuba City Ordinance 17.55: **“Signs, Permits and Regulations.”**
- Awnings should be of the traditional sloped configuration rather than curved, vaulted, or semi-spherical.
- Canopies and awnings should reflect the door and window openings or structural bays of the building. An awning, canopy, or marquee that spans continuously across more than one structural bay or storefront is not appropriate.
- Metal awnings are generally not appropriate, but can be used in some instances if they are compatible with the historic character of the building.
- Vinyl or plastic awnings are not appropriate. Consideration may be given to modern materials that have the appearance of woven fabric.
- Awnings mounted at the storefront level should not extend into the second story of building facade.
- Upper-floor awnings should be mounted within window openings.
- Awnings should be narrow in profile and should not comprise residential design elements such as mansard roof forms or shake shingle cladding.
- Awning fabric or material design should be striped or solid color, using colors appropriate to the period of the storefront.
- Awnings should not obscure character-defining features such as arched transom windows, window hoods, cast-iron ornaments, etc.
- Awning units should be mounted or affixed in such a way as to avoid damage to the building’s distinctive architectural features.

Signs and Signage

Signage is one of the most important features of a commercial facade. Inappropriate signs, more than any other single feature, can detract from even the most attractive storefront. The attractiveness of signage is likely a high contributing factor to whether or not a pedestrian will enter a store; its design should be high-quality and carefully planned. Below are guidelines for the installation of signs and signage.

- All signs, awnings, and canopies must comply with City of Cuba City Ordinance 17.55: **“Signs, Permits and Regulations.”**
- The primary focus of signs in downtown Cuba City should be pedestrian-oriented in size, scale and placement, and should not be designed primarily to attract the notice of vehicular traffic.
- ‘Permanent’ sign types that are encouraged are: awning, hanging, projecting, wall, and window signs. Freestanding signs should not be considered except in cases where a detached building is set back from the street.
- In no case should a temporary sign substitute as a permanent sign.
- Wall signs should be flush-mounted on flat surfaces and done in such a way that does not destroy or conceal architectural features or details.
- Signs identifying the name of a building, the date of construction, or other historical information should be composed of materials similar to the building, or of bronze or brass. These building identification signs should be affixed flat against the building and should not obscure architectural details; they may be incorporated into the overall facade design or mounted below a storefront cornice.
- Signs should be subordinate to the building’s facade. The size and scale of the sign should be in proportion to the size and scale of the street level façade.
- Storefront signs should not extend past the storefront upper cornice line. Storefront signs are typically located in the transom area and should not extend into the storefront opening.
- Signs for multiple storefronts within the same building should align with each other.
- Signs should typically be about 20 square inches for each linear-foot of storefront.
- A hanging sign installed under an awning or canopy should be a maximum of 70% of the awning or canopy’s width and should be perpendicular to the building’s façade.
- Signs should be placed in locations that do not obscure any historic architectural features of the building or obstruct any views of downtown.
- Sign brackets and hardware should be compatible with the building and installed in a manner that will not damage the building structure.
- Typically signs illuminated from within are not appropriate. Lighting for externally illuminated signs should be simple and unobtrusive and should not obscure the content of the sign or the building facade.

Lighting

Lighting design should be carefully integrated into the design of the building. All lighting must be in compliance with existing city codes and regulations.

- New exterior lighting should be compatible with the historic nature of the structure, the property, and the district. Compatibility of exterior lighting and lighting fixtures is assessed in terms of design, material, use, size, scale, color, and brightness.
- Lighting fixtures should be installed to be as unobtrusive as possible; they should be installed such that they will not damage or conceal any historic architectural features.
- Lighting levels should provide adequate safety, but not detract from or overly emphasize the structure or property.
- Landscape lighting should be located and directed such that there is no infringement on adjacent properties.
- Exterior lighting in parking lots should be directed into the parking area itself, and not onto adjacent properties.

Parking

- There should be a clear separation between vehicular parking areas and pedestrian areas. Pedestrian-scale landscaping, fencing, and/or walls should be provided to separate the parking area from the pedestrian sidewalk.
- Surface parking lots are encouraged to include interior landscaping and green space elements.