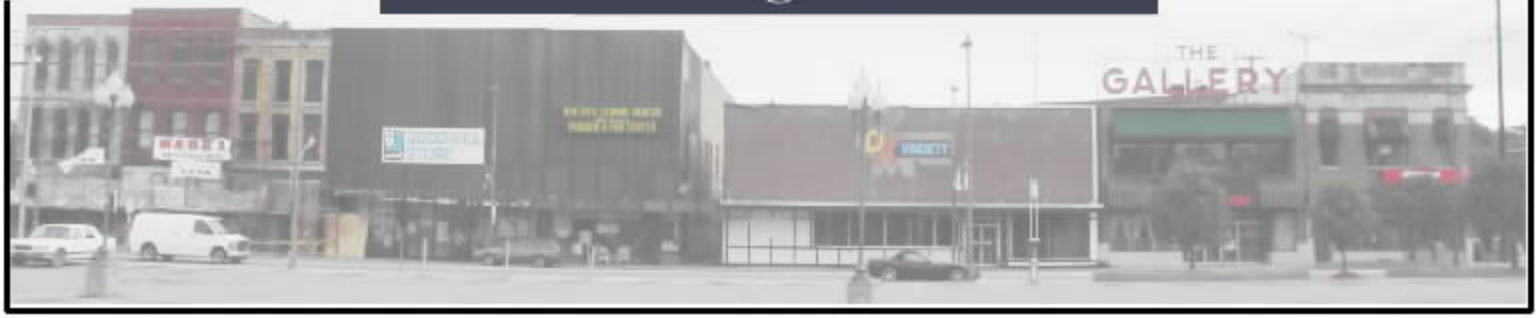




**CELEBRATE  
DESIGN**

**GUIDELINES**

NILES MAIN STREET INITIATIVE  
*Celebrating Renewal.*



# CITY OF NILES DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Revised July 21, 2009

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **BRIEF HISTORY OF NILES**

For more than three centuries, Niles has been a crossroads of life and livelihoods.

For the Potawatomi Indians, it was known as Pawating, a shallow crossing over the St. Joseph River. For many Native Americans, it was a gathering place to visit and share and live.

Its history was an Indian village, a Jesuit mission and Fort St. Joseph before becoming Niles, named for Baltimore publisher Hezekiah Niles in 1829. Known as the City of Four Flags, its heritage remains emblazoned by the four countries — France, England, Spain and the United States, that have all flown their colors over this land.

Michigan's first permanent community and Berrien County's first city, Niles was a prime stop on the 1830s Detroit-to-Chicago stagecoach route, which brought people and industry and commerce. The nation has benefited from contributions of Niles natives department store founder Aaron Montgomery Ward, automotive-building brothers John and Horace Dodge and sports writer Ring Lardner.

That tradition of community, contributions and commerce continues today for Niles, a crossroads which truly embraces its past, celebrates its present and welcomes its future.

## FORWARD

The appearance of individual buildings, storefronts, signs, alleys, window displays, parking lots and sidewalks establishes the visual character of the downtown and plays a major part in the marketing success of the business district. Presenting an attractive image is simply good business.

**Improvement and maintenance is not only essential to strengthen the appeal of individual properties, it is also necessary to improve the image of the entire downtown area – an important public purpose.**

Please consider that one building is part of the street. New designs and changes should be compatible with existing buildings. This does not mean limited architectural variety, but rather that designs should respect existing buildings and strive for visual harmony with the character of the street.

Downtown Niles has evolved over many decades, one building at a time. A building does not necessarily have to be old to be a valued addition to downtown. Good design, which can exist in any period, will only serve to improve the image of the area.



The following guidelines deal mainly with design issues. However, since maintenance of improvements is vital to their lasting effect, these guidelines will also include some recommendations on that subject. The guidelines and their interpretations have been developed to enhance the individual

character of each building, strengthening the overall image of downtown. They do not, as with some towns, advocate a “theme” approach to improvements, such as “colonial” or “Bavarian”. A long-term, pleasing treatment, that is likely to survive passing fashions, can be gained by examining each building individually and taking advantage of historic integrity.

This does not necessarily mean that it is essential to reproduce the appearance of a building exactly as it looked when it was constructed. Rather, a building can be improved by using what exists, minimizing its less attractive features while adding simply, and many times inexpensive, elements to emphasize positive features. Removal of inappropriate tacked on “modernizations,” simple maintenance, the addition of a well-designed sign or awning and care in the selection of colors and materials can give surprisingly good visual results. Such improvements are good, lasting investments in terms of cost and customer relations. **By coordinating improvements, merchants are able to retain their individual identities while strengthening the image of downtown as a whole.**

The ultimate responsibility for the application of guidelines and their interpretation rests with the people who stand to receive the most substantial benefits from a revitalized downtown – the individual property owners and merchants.



## HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

This document offers some basic, straightforward advice to merchants, property owners and others involved in improving the downtown. It contains a brief discussion of the importance of the design elements being examined. Those wishing to take advantage of special financial incentives, such as the Downtown Development Authority's Revolving Loan Fund Program, must comply with the City of Niles Downtown Design Guidelines.

By obtaining these guidelines, you have taken the first step in properly rehabilitating your building in downtown Niles. The next step is to consult with either the DDA/Main Street Program Manager or the City of Niles Community Development Director. They will provide you with an **Intent to Perform Building Rehabilitation** form, which must be completed in order to begin the design review process.

Please refer to the design review process chart on the next page. After the Intent to Perform Building Rehabilitation form has been submitted, the City's **Design Review Board (DRB)** will schedule a meeting with you. Please be advised that the meeting is not intended to be a formal affair. It merely provides you with an opportunity to more fully explain your building improvement plans, and provides the DRB with an opportunity to ask you questions. Meetings are held at 210 East Main Street in the DDA/Main Street offices.

Once the DRB has had an opportunity to meet with you and review the plans, it will prepare a written response—called a **DRB Determination**. The determination will

provide you with suggestions and recommendations. A recommendation may be as simple as changing the color of a sign, or it could be as significant as considering a different architectural style. **In any case, the determination's suggestions are only guidelines at this point.**

As guidelines, you may choose to accept or reject any or all of the recommendations provided by the DRB.

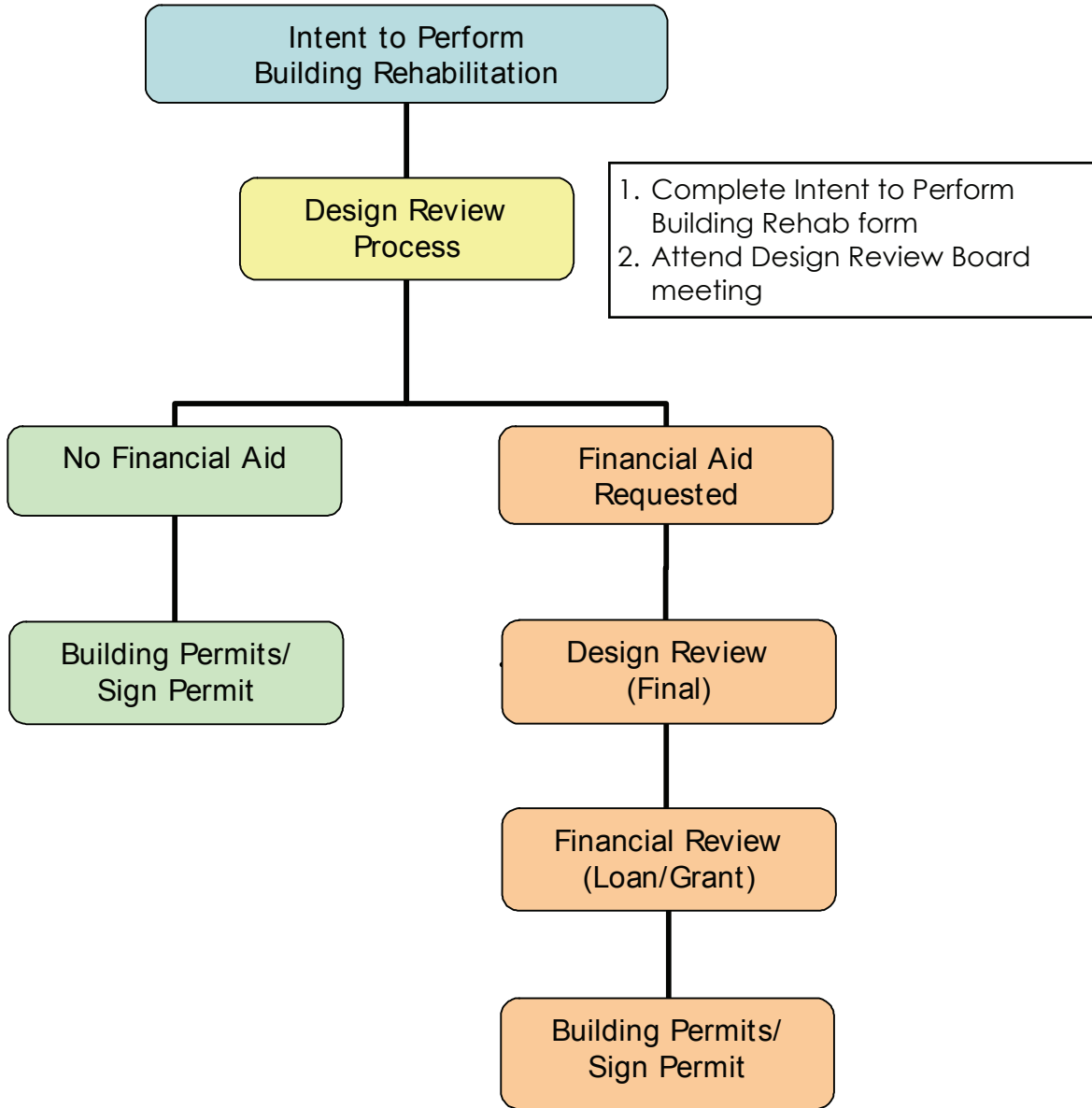
If you pursue funding through the Downtown Development Authority's Revolving Loan Fund, or are provided with an opportunity for other public funds, the recommendations become regulations, rather than guidelines. In this case, you must follow the DRB's list of suggestions in order to receive funding.

For more information on the design review process & financial incentives, please contact:

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# Design Review Process



**Please note: The Downtown Design Guidelines apply to all properties located within the Downtown Development Authority's TIF District**

## II. FRONT FACADES

The front façades of buildings are one of the most important physical components of downtown—economically, functionally and aesthetically. Their physical condition plays a substantial role in the well being of any business community. Unfortunately, the façades often project a negative image when they consist of inappropriate siding, peeling paint, out-of-character signs and garish color schemes. With proper design and maintenance, however, building façades in a downtown will provide property owners and merchants with exceptional opportunities.

Many of these buildings, dating predominantly from the late 1800's and early 1900's, have visually interesting and historically important architecture. As a group, these buildings create a distinctive ambience that projects the City's heritage.

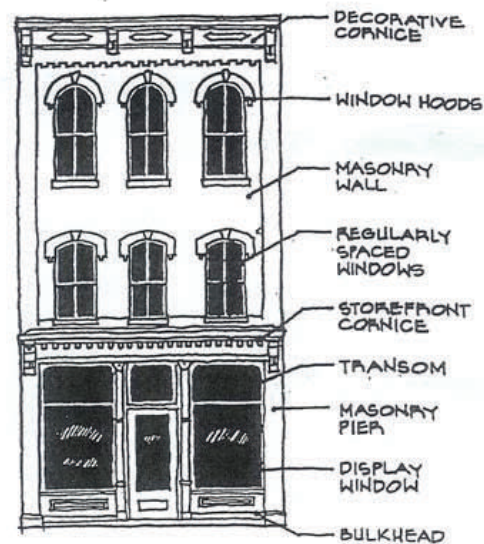
Individual buildings form the basic component of Main Street. They have been built in many sizes, shapes and styles, but generally with a similar façade. Façades of this type lined Main Street on both sides. One next to another, they formed strong and solid blocks, marked by the rhythm of repeating parts.

Because it was composed of similar façades, the block had a consistent, organized, and coordinated appearance. Any given façade was visually related to its neighbors.

Most downtown façades are three stories high, with commercial space located at ground level and offices, storage, or residential space above. **Visually, this arrangement divides the façade into two basic parts: the upper façade, which is**

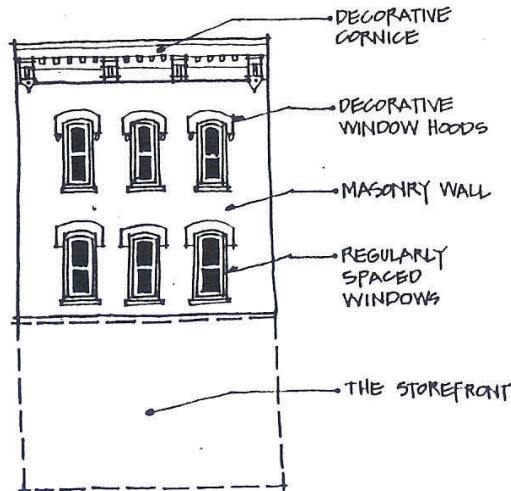
usually a flat masonry wall with regularly spaced window openings and applied decoration; and the storefront, or lower façade, which is composed primarily of large display windows and the entry.

Typical Front Façade



## THE UPPER FACADE

From a distance, the image of the front façade is heavily influenced by its upper story appearance. Typically, windows in the upper facades are positioned at regular intervals and act to establish a visual rhythm to the exterior design of the building. Their shape, size, placement and decorative trim constitute and contribute to important aesthetic principles. The window openings, along with the material, color and texture of the wall surface contribute to the overall visual character of the street.



## Recommendations

1. Screens, boards and other inappropriate materials covering facades and windows should be removed.
2. If the original window openings have been altered, restore them to their original configuration and detail. Avoid blocking window openings.
3. If possible, save and restore the original windows and frames. Replace missing, rotting or broken sashes, frames, mullions, etc. with a similar material. If replacement is necessary, new windows should reflect the original design and material.
4. Where aluminum frames have previously replaced the traditional frames, they should be painted.
5. If a new interior ceiling must be dropped below the height of existing window openings, a recessed setback, or similar device, should be used to allow the full window opening to be retained.
6. If storm windows are used to improve thermal performance, they should resemble the existing window as closely as possible in shape, appearance and color. Storm windows fit the entire window opening.
7. Avoid storm windows that allow moisture to accumulate and damage the window frame.
8. Avoid through-wall or through-window heating/air conditioning units.
9. Avoid mirrored or tinted glass. Replacement glass should be similar to the original.
10. Avoid the use of shutters except where clear evidence indicates their historic presence.
11. Avoid substituting one type of operable sash for another; i.e. do not replace double hung windows with casement windows, etc.
12. Avoid the installation of antennas, cable dishes, or similar devices.
13. Avoid storing material directly in front of windows.



## TYPICAL UPPER FACADES



*Early to Mid 1800s*

- Simple cornice
- Lintels over windows
- Small window panes



*Mid to Late 1800s*

- Boldly decorated cornice
- Window hoods
- 2 over 2 windows



*Late 1800s to Early 1900s*

- Corbelled brick cornice
- Large arched windows



*Early 1900's to 1930's*

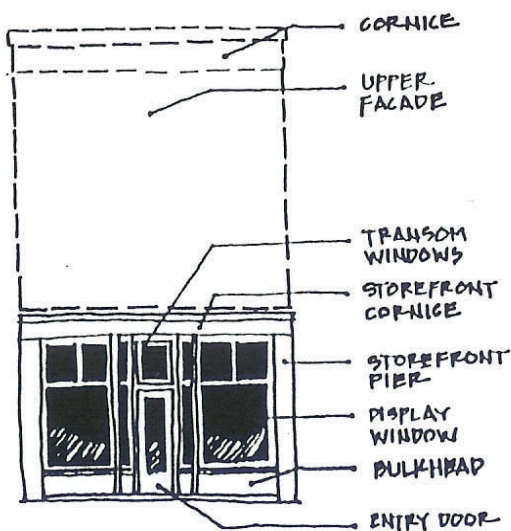
- Simple brick cornice
- Large window openings with multiple units

## THE STOREFRONT

The lower façade of the building, the storefront, is generally subjected to numerous alterations in the years following its original construction. The net result of these changes is normally an erosion of the storefront's original character.

Storefronts are the adjustable area of a building with their facades, windows, doors and signage. Great storefronts are designed to fit within and inside the original frame and architecture, and not extend beyond it. Storefronts offer the opportunity to modernize or recreate new images for as commerce and business evolves.

A storefront frame is defined by a building's structure. Construction respecting the building's framework can create clear and clean results. Alterations that do not fit a building's character, scale, size, material or color create an incompatibility of style, and can detract from the fabric and fiber of a downtown.



Most of Niles' storefronts are not original to the buildings to which they are attached, but many of them are historic due to changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right. Where this is the case, these altered storefronts shall be retained and preserved. Non-historic storefronts, which may include many from the 1970's to the present, may be replaced with materials and designs that are compatible with traditionally historic storefronts.

Traditional storefronts often have a recessed entry at the front door, keeping display windows next to the sidewalk and emphasizing the door to invite intimacy and interest to get people inside and to provide shelter.

Transom windows are the band of small windows above display windows and entryways and doors. Transom windows historically were created to provide ventilation and allow daylight to filter through to a store's interior. As a design feature, then contribute an important element in a storefront's proportions. But often during alterations the windows have been covered by dropped ceilings or covered on the exterior. To accommodate lower ceiling heights, soffits can be placed over display areas to step up to the storefront and meet the transom window height. Also, opaque panels could be placed within transom windows' frames to let a window pattern carry through.

Kickplates, or bulkheads, function as display window protectors or window bases by raising glass areas to a safer and/or more-easily viewed height. Historically, they have been made of materials including wood panels, ceramic tile and marble. Whenever

possible, try to retain, maintain and uncover, if possible, kickplates' original material. Newer constructions can simplify kickplates with smooth and similar materials, or can even go to an all-glass storefront retaining a kickplate line and its proportion by using a painted line or framing bar.

To embrace a storefront's feeling of containment and continuity, a storefront may be set back slightly, perhaps six inches to a foot, from a building's front.

Every traditional commercial building façade has a well-defined opening. The storefront usually had a recessed entry for the front door, flanked by display windows at the property line. This configuration:

1. Located the display windows next to the sidewalk in full view of pedestrians and motorists, allowing potential customers a view of the merchandise on display as well as the store's interior.
2. Emphasized the door and entryway, creating an enclosed and sheltered doorway while inviting the customer inside.

### **Recommendations**

1. Storefronts should be designed to fit inside the original opening and not extend beyond it.
2. Storefronts should be designed with the largest possible window area, which is in keeping with the original opening. Emphasis should be placed on the display windows and doors that do not alter the original architectural character of the storefront.
3. Storefronts should respect the integrity of the building as a whole and relate to the building's original character.

Storefronts should be compatible with the scale, materials and texture of the original building.

4. Where storefronts have been covered up with incompatible material, they should be renovated by removing the covering material. Avoid use of unpainted or anodized aluminum, imitation masonry, fake shutters and other incompatible materials in renovating storefronts.
5. Clear-anodized aluminum is appropriate when reinstalling display windows on 1930—1960s storefronts.
6. Use simple and unobtrusive materials when renovating storefronts. Avoid garish patterns, textures or colors that are not appropriate to the character and functionality of the storefront.
7. Where the original storefront remains, it should be preserved and repaired with as little alteration as possible.
8. If restoration of the original storefront is undertaken, it should be based on accurate duplication of features substantiated by historical, physical or pictorial evidence.

## TYPICAL STOREFRONTS



*Early to Mid 1800's*

- Post and beam frame
- Divided display windows
- Simple decoration



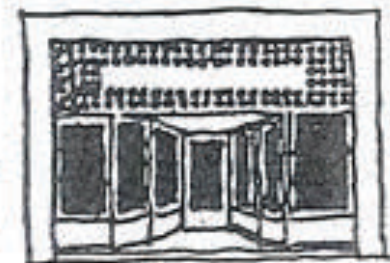
*Mid to Late 1800's*

- Boldly decorated cornice
- Divided display windows
- Simple decoration



*Late 1800's to Early 1900s*

- Simple cornice
- Transom windows
- Recessed entrance



*Early 1900s to 1940's*

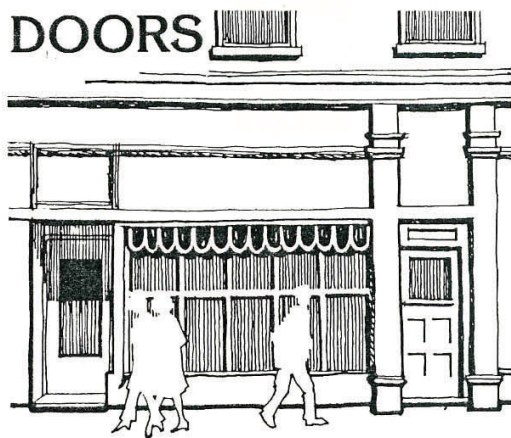
- Metal window frames
- Structural glass
- Recessed entrance



## DOORS AND ENTRYWAYS

### THE FRONT DOOR

Historically, the storefront entry was more than just a door. Its design and appearance reflected its commercial importance. Tall and stately in proportion, and built of wood with a large glass panel, the traditional storefront door looked substantial, yet inviting to the customer.



The idea of making the front door special is one that you should remember today. Entering your store should be a pleasant experience. You want your customers to feel a special invitation as they approach and open the door.

Original storefront doors along Main Street have become scarce. They have been replaced by the standard aluminum and glass commercial door. Although lacking in historical character, this modern door cannot be considered inappropriate. Its simple appearance makes it unobtrusive. However, if you want to enhance the personality of your storefront, you should consider other options open to you.

### Recommendations

1. Your front door should look compatible with the rest of your storefront. It should be significant, but not outspoken.
2. If your storefront retains its original character, a traditional wood door with a glass panel (as tall as possible) will reinforce this appearance. Try to find a salvaged older door to fix up or use a new door of the same design.
3. If traditional appearance is not a concern, make a careful choice of a door based on the total design of your storefront. Many door sizes and designs are available in both wood and metal. If you choose the standard aluminum and glass door, consider a dark, anodized finish rather than the metallic color. These are some new door designs which may be appropriate.
4. Avoid over decorating your door. Most fake "historic" doors are decorated with designs, moldings, and window grilles that look out of place on Main Street. The same holds true for many contemporary door designs. The door should reinforce the character of your building, as well as beckon shoppers inside.
5. Consider subtle decorations on the door. A handsome doorknob or pull, a brass kick plate, or an attractive painted sign on the window is enough to make your door something special.



## **SECONDARY DOORS**

The typical Main Street building often had two additional doors: a second door on the front permitting access to the upper floors and a back door.

Compared to the main entrance, they were modest in design. If you are selecting new doors for these locations, you may find the following ideas helpful:

### **Recommendations**

1. If you choose to maintain a traditional appearance, an old wood panel door is most appropriate.
2. Whatever your choice, these doors should be visually understated. The second front door should fit with the overall façade without drawing attention to itself. The back door should be practical in style to reflect the unadorned character of the rear façade. A fancy door would look out of place in these surroundings.
3. If you want to develop your back door as a customer entrance, think again about its appearance. No longer merely a service access, its design should reflect the change in function. The addition of a glass window will lend a new look for shoppers and passers-by. A cast iron grille can provide security and pleasing design.

## REAR ENTRANCES

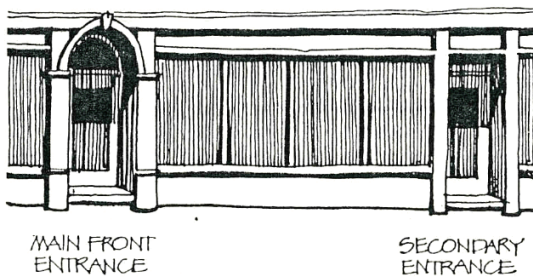
Spaces behind buildings are often forgotten. People tend to avoid them because they are usually unkempt and unattractive. Too often, these spaces have been strictly thought of as service areas, where deliveries are made or the garbage is picked up.

However, more and more parking areas are being developed behind the stores, in the middle of the block. The backs of the buildings are coming into full and open view.

This suggests two things:

1. The appearance of the back areas is important to the commercial district.
2. Rear entrances can potentially benefit all businesses. They allow direct access from the parking lot to the stores. A customer does not need to walk all the way around the block to reach the store.

If you don't have an attractive rear entrance to your store, but are considering



improvements, think about these issues.

1. Would added walk-through traffic help or hinder your business? Would a rear entrance be an added convenience to your customers?

2. What changes would you have to make to your store to get an attractive rear entry? How would you handle the circulation, displays, and security through the building?

3. Although the two are similar, the rear entry should not compete with the storefront in importance. In most cases, the entrance should occupy a relatively small part of the rear

## A NOTE ON MAINTENANCE

If any of the doors in your building are old, but workable, you should certainly consider keeping them. If they are wood, maintenance is very important. Keep them clean and in good working order. Since wood doors share many problems common to wood windows, see the guidelines sheet, UPPER STORY WINDOWS, for maintenance suggestions.

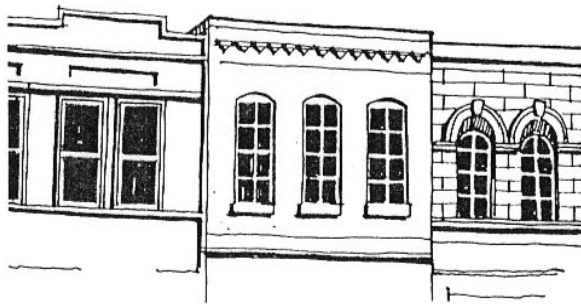
## WINDOWS

### UPPER STORY WINDOWS

The visual importance of upper story windows is evident in their steady march down Main Street. They create a repeated pattern that helps to tie together the facades.

Often, however, they have deteriorated, been replaced inappropriately or boarded up. This treatment changes not only the character of the building but of the streetscape as well. Proper treatment and maintenance of the existing windows can prevent this.

Before discussing any specific window problems, a note of caution is in order. Various maintenance and repair materials (putty, caulk, primer, paint, etc.) are mentioned in the following paragraphs. Be aware that there are many specific types of products. Consult a local expert to determine which will best solve your particular problems.



### WINDOW MAINTENANCE

Set up a maintenance schedule for upper story windows. Many problems can be solved and others prevented through regular care. Make a checklist of window

maintenance problems.

1. Check the wood parts of the window. Are there portions that are soft, cracked, or split? Pay particular attention to the window sills and the bottom of the window sashes where water has collected over the years.

Minor problems can be easily solved. Proper treatment and a fresh coat of paint can repair wood and prevent further deterioration.

Proper treatment requires first scraping off the old paint from the wood. Fill the cracks with caulk or wood putty. Then sand, prime, and paint.

2. Loose or broken window panes are easily fixed. First, remove all broken glass and old glazing putty. Find new glass to match existing panes. Install the window using the appropriate glazier's points and putty.
3. Check the joints between the window and its masonry opening. If these joints are loose or open, they should be caulked to prevent air and water infiltration. Be sure to use the proper caulking material.

### WINDOW REPAIR

If simple maintenance is not sufficient to solve your window problems, more extensive repair may be required.

1. A wood part may be badly deteriorated. Most likely, it is the sill or bottom of the sash. These parts can be replaced without replacing the whole window. Check with your local lumber supply store or mill shop for pieces to match the

original window.

2. If your window doesn't operate like it used to, it may be that the window is just painted shut. Tapping the sash with a hammer wrapped in cloth may be sufficient to get it working again.
3. Another common malfunction is a broken window mechanism. If the sash locks, cords, or weights are broken, consult a window dealer or builder. He or she can show you the simplest way to fix the mechanism without changing the window.

### **WINDOW REPLACEMENT**

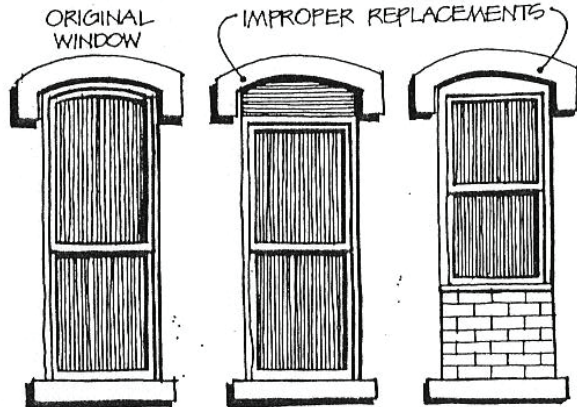
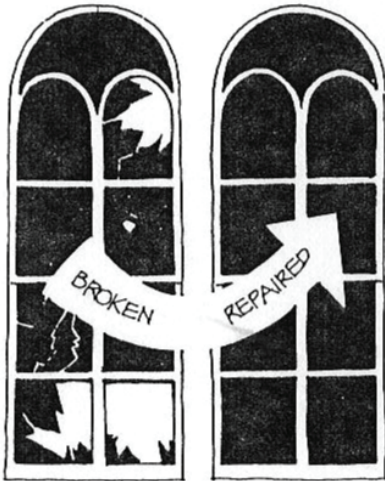
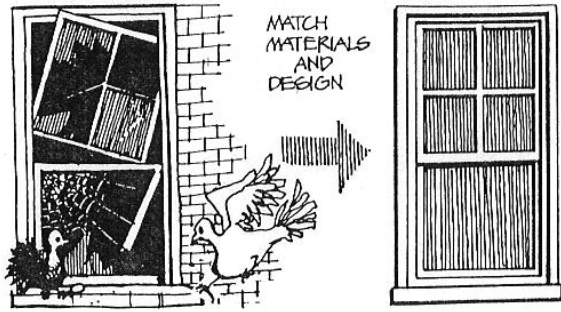
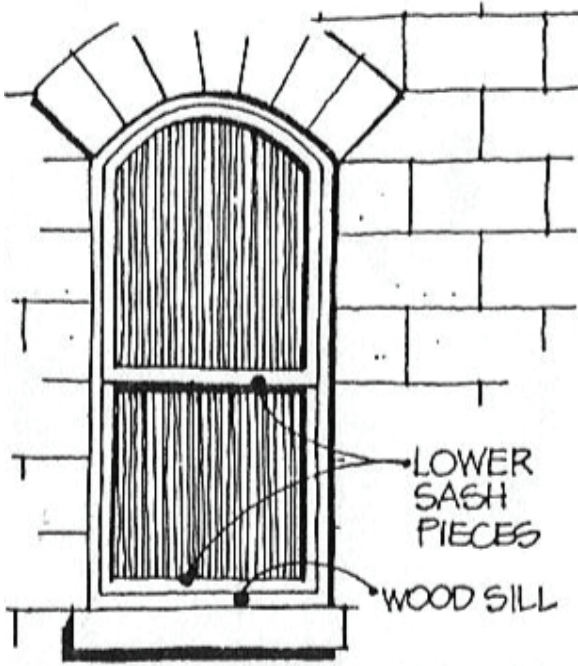
If all other efforts at maintaining and repairing your windows have failed, consider replacing the entire window unit. In the long run, this may be the best, most economical alternative.

1. If replacement is necessary utilize DDA/ Main Street resources to obtain window designs.
2. If you're not changing every window, find replacements that match the existing units. Standard wood windows are relatively easy to buy or have made. More unusual styles are generally custom-made, but not as expensive as you might think.
3. Do not alter the existing opening to fit the new windows.
4. Consider also material and color. If you must use aluminum, a dark anodized aluminum is preferable to a light metallic color.
5. Avoid fake "historic" windows not in keeping with the style of your building.

### **STORM WINDOWS**

Insulating storm windows are a good idea for conserving heat and energy. However, they often look inappropriate on an older façade. For this reason, consider installing them on the inside of the windows where they will not be seen.

If storm windows must be installed outside, choose them on the same basis as any window. Think about shape, color, and overall design. Wood or powder coated metal storms are acceptable if they are installed within the historic brick mold and do not pan over the sill.





## FAÇADE CHANGE AS EVOLUTION

The existing Main Street environment is the product of an evolution which began with construction of the first building and has continued ever since. Facades change; this is natural, inevitable, and often desirable.

The goal of these guidelines is not to prevent or control change, nor is it to return a façade to its original appearance. Rather, the goal is to encourage sensitive and appropriate change.

## THE QUALITY OF CHANGE

When it was first constructed, the typical Main Street façade exhibited some basic inherent qualities. It had an architectural style characterized by its decoration. It was built of certain materials. It was a unified visual composition. Its parts looked related. These qualities came together to form a visual resource. Sensitive change accepts these façade qualities and builds upon them. The result is a harmonious blending of new changes with the existing façade. Insensitive change, on the other hand, ignores and often negates the qualities of the original resource. The result is an unnecessary clash between



new and old.

The quality of change, whether sensitive or

insensitive, depends on the individual. There needs to be an awareness of what is being changed and a willingness to see existing values.

## An Example of Sensitive Change:

- Note the façade drawing below. Here, change had complemented the qualities of the old façade.
- Upper façade retains its traditional character.
- Signs are subtle and well placed.
- New storefront fits inside the original storefront opening. It is also similar in design to original storefront.



### III. SIGNAGE

Signs are a vital part of any Main Street. With a sign, you call attention to your business and create an individual image. But it's often forgotten that signs contribute to an overall image as well. Merchants try to out-shout each other with large, flashy signs.

If Main Street is to work together as a whole, its signs must serve both of these images. Consider the following **guidelines** in selecting your sign:

1. Stand back and question the purpose of your sign. Is it merely an identification? Do you want to let the personality of your store or office shine through? Is it necessary to provide information about your products on a sign? What kind of public are you trying to attract?
2. Consider the type of sign you want.
  - Word sign
  - Symbol sign
  - Object sign
3. Consider all the possibilities for using different materials. Each has unique qualities which can be exploited for the type of sign most appropriate to your needs.
4. Look at pictures of how your building appeared in the past. This will give you ideas about how signs were related to historic architectural details.
5. Visualize how your sign will appear in relation to the entire façade. The sign should not dominate; its shape and proportions should fit your building just as a window or a door fits.
6. Decide where you want to put your sign.

There are several options in deciding placement:

- Under the lower cornice
- Painted on the glass
- On the side of the building
- Hanging from the building
- On the awning flap

Some types of signs are not appropriate, including large hanging plastic signs and oversized signs placed on top of the building or applied over the upper façade.

7. Decide just how much you want to say on your sign. It is important to keep your message simple and to the point. Remember, your sign will be viewed as part of a very complex environment filled with written and visual messages
8. Now step back and take a look at the color of your building and the colors you see on the surrounding structures. Take hints from these in selecting a color for your sign.

You will usually get the best results if you opt for a simple color scheme — a range of three colors. Avoid flashy, Day-Glo colors; they belong on the highway!
9. Along with colors, lighting is important. If you illuminate your sign at night, the light source should be as inconspicuous as possible. Avoid flashy or gaudy lighting techniques which are merely a distraction.
10. Express the personality of your establishment in the lettering style you select. To get an idea about various styles, look at other signs around town. Think about what each style expresses about the business or product it advertises. Then you can define the

image you want your sign to project.

11. Quality of workmanship and construction is as vital as any of these basic considerations. A simple, well-made sign speaks far better of your establishment than an extravagant sign that is sloppy in appearance. Choose a sign maker carefully. Ask to see samples of previous work.

12. Signs provided by national distributors are not appropriate. They don't reflect the individuality of your store and usually appear as add-ons to your storefront advertising. The signs you display should advertise your personal business messages.

13. Consider this idea. Your entire building presents an image that acts as a sign. The appearance of your building is more subtle than a word sign, but it can be more effective.

Now that you have reviewed some sound guidelines regarding signage, please review the following.

**Style:**

1. Building style and era appropriate.

**Size:**

1. Maximum 10% of building façade, per exposed side.
2. The percentage of one side is not to be added to the percentage of another.
3. The percentage excludes non-signage painted building surfaces.
4. Sign areas are calculated to include dead space within and between letters and logos.

5. Window signage such as vinyl lettering, sign boxes, etc., will count against the allowable percentage.

6. Buildings that include multiple tenants should divide the allowable percentage among the tenants based on the square footage of the tenant's façade.

**Placement:**

1. Board and not building mounted, so that signs may be change without altering the façade.
2. Protruding signs encouraged.
3. Three dimensional signs acceptable.
4. Locate in a band between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Floors (transom).
5. Do not locate too high or too low on the building. Optimize location for ease of view for drivers and pedestrians.
6. Upper floor rental apartments and businesses may be identified by signage on the floor they occupy.
7. Signs located above the roof or parapets are not allowed.

**Lighting:**

1. Discourage use of Plexiglas faced aluminum box signs.
2. Encourage indirect lighting, external lighting, backlit signage, translucent awning signage, and building style appropriate stand off lights, such as goose neck lamps.
3. Backlit awning signage strips are easily changeable.
4. No flashing signs.
5. No moving signs.
6. Neon signage is acceptable.

**Material:**

1. Building style and era appropriate.

**Colors:**

1. Building style and era appropriate.
2. Suggest period palettes.
3. Painted sides of buildings acceptable.  
May exceed the 10% rule, if a mural.
4. No fluorescent signage or letters.

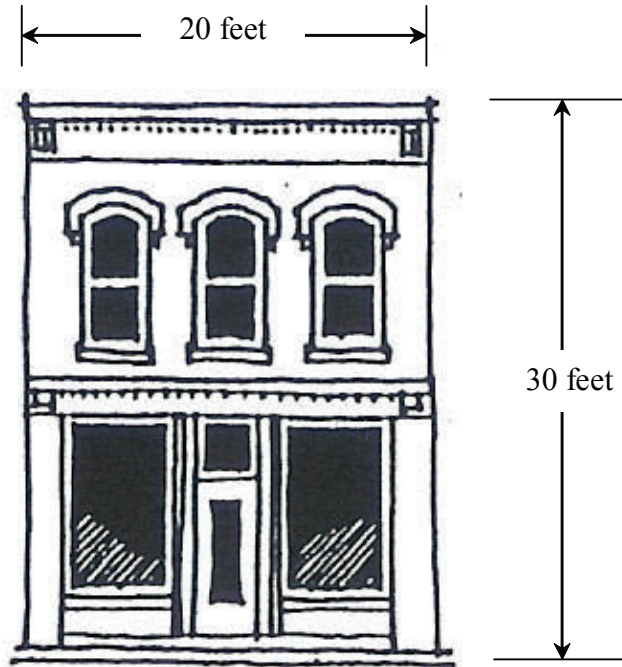
**Temporary Signage:**

1. Sandwich boards acceptable.
  - These may be displayed during business hours only.
  - 4' high x 2'-6" wide max.
  - Sandwich boards areas are not counted against the 10% total.
  - Maximum (1) sandwich board sign per business.
2. No window soaping, or white shoe polish.

**Miscellaneous:**

1. Consider in-sidewalk signage and logos.
2. Consider use of 3D sculpture, painted benches, fireplugs, banners, and other street art for district signage.
3. Suggest consistent placement and location for historical district designation signs.
4. Coordinate street signage.
5. Private banners encouraged.
6. 'For Rent' signs advertising upper level residential units allowed.
7. Wall mounted flags and standards allowed.

## How to Determine the Size of Your Sign Example



1. Measure the height and width of your building face
2. Multiply the two figures to determine the size of your building façade 30  
feet x 20 feet = 600 square feet
3. Calculate 10% of the building façade  
 $600 \text{ square feet} \times .1 = 60 \text{ square feet}$
4. The maximum size of the sign is 60 square feet or:





#### IV. AWNINGS

An awning can be both a decorative and functional addition to your storefront. Colorful and bright, it also serves as an energy savor by regulating the amount of sunlight that enters your window. Under an awning, shoppers are enticed to stop, look and step inside.

1. An awning creates a pleasant space in front of your building, like a city tree. It provides shade and shelter for busy shoppers, a resting place where pedestrians can stop away from the flow of traffic.
2. Awnings regulate the amount of sunshine which penetrates your windows. Based on your building's orientation to the sun — north, south, east or west — you can determine awning needs.
  - With a northern exposure your building will probably not require an awning. For a southern window, however, an awning can be an excellent climate control device. A combination of insulating glass plus an awning will make a significant difference in your energy savings.
3. The installation design will determine in large part how energy effective the fixture will be. Do you want an operable awning which can be opened and closed? Or do you want a fixed awning which remains permanently open?
  - An operable fixture allows the sun to shine into your store on cold days. It shades your window when it is sunny outside. An inoperable, fixed awning is primarily decorative. Although less expensive to install, it does not always fulfill the major function of an awning.
4. As a visual element, an awning can add character and interest to your storefront. You should think about how it will appear in relation to the scale of your building. How will it relate to existing architectural features? Will it overpower the proportions of your windows and façade? Look at your neighbors' buildings and imagine how the addition of an awning will affect the character of the streetscape.
5. Awnings can be constructed from several materials. Canvas is traditional popular. It is flexible, but must be weather treated prior to installation. Although initial installation costs are lower, they may require more maintenance than plastic and aluminum.
6. Woven acrylic is an appropriate alternative to canvas; vinyl is not.
7. Flat metal canopies are appropriate if the storefront is from the mid 20th century and it historically had one.
8. To decide on a color for your awning, take a look at the entire building. One with minimal architectural detailing can be enhanced with a bright accent color. A more decorated façade should be complemented with a subtle shade. Choose the color so that your awning enhances existing features.
9. Pattern is important too. Plain and simple, striped, or a bold solid — what image do you want to create? Again, choice of a pattern (or no pattern at all) should depend on the character of the façade.
10. Awnings have long been used to display advertising signs. If you choose to

incorporate a sign onto your awning, keep the message simple and directed towards identification.

11. Make sure the awning you choose is guaranteed to be weather-resistant. Most fabric-type awnings are chemically treated to retard deterioration by rain or snow. Sun bleaching is another problem to consider—particularly in choosing a color that will not fade significantly.
12. An awning is not the solution to every storefront design. But a well designed and appropriately placed awning can save you money, spruce up your storefront, and create pleasant sidewalk space for shoppers

The following guidelines should be considered:

**Style:**

1. Building style and era appropriate.
2. Permanently fixed awnings are acceptable.
3. Retractable awnings are acceptable, provided the structure retracts also, and does not remain exposed after covering retraction.

**Geometry:**

1. Flat awnings, (those not having a sloping or arched roof surface) are discouraged.
2. Awnings that are shallow, only intended to provide a sign or cover up non-historic materials are unacceptable.
3. Sloped, arched, and combination form awnings are acceptable.
4. Simple geometric forms are encouraged.

**Size**

1. Full width awnings acceptable.
2. Smaller, individual awnings over windows acceptable.
3. No restriction, provided an individual awning is not more than one story tall.

**Placement:**

1. Should fit within the storefront.
2. Should not extend above the lintel and beyond the side piers of a storefront.
3. Frames should be bolted through mortar joints, not through the masonry units themselves.

**Lighting:**

1. Should not be internally lit.
2. May be externally lit.
3. Backlit awning signage strips are acceptable.
4. No flashing or moving lights.

**Material:**

1. Avoid aluminum

**Colors and Patterns:**

1. Building style and era appropriate.
2. Subdued hue, natural period colors are preferable.
3. Stripes and patterns are acceptable, subject to review by Design Review Board.

**Letters & Signage:**

1. No restrictions on placement.

**Miscellaneous:**

1. Valence may be removable.
2. Scalloped edges acceptable.

## TERMINOLOGY & ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

The City does not expect you to be an expert in architecture. Please use the following to help you interpret your building's architectural features.

**Preserve:** to take the necessary steps to stop the deterioration of a structure

**Reconstruct:** to recreate a structure with all new materials, no original materials are in existence

**Rehabilitate:** to return a structure to a useful upgraded state through repair, replacement or conservation of its material elements

**Replicate:** to duplicate missing or deteriorated elements of a structure using new materials

**Restore:** to return the appearance of a structure to a specific time period

**Awning:** sloped projection over exterior windows, door or entries which provides protection from the weather

**Bay:** the number of symmetrical openings (door and windows) across the façade of a building

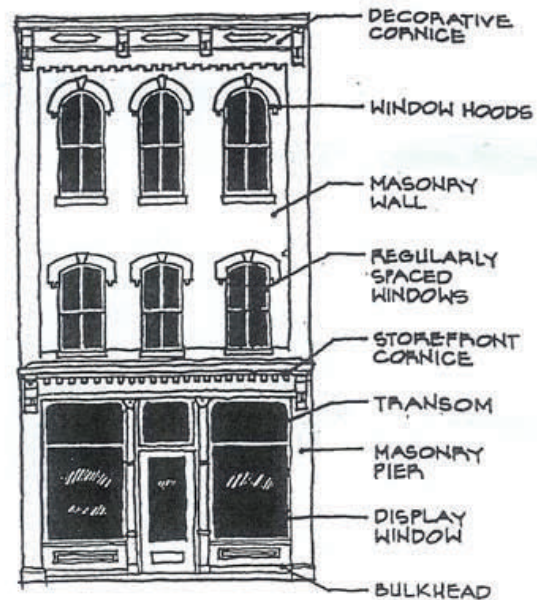
**Bay Window:** a window that projects out from the surface of an exterior wall and extends to the ground

**Belt Course:** a flat, horizontal band that projects outward, marking a division in the wall plane—carrying across the building

**Bracket:** a small carved or saw cut wooden decoration projecting from a wall which supports or pretends to support an overhanging element

**Capital:** the top or crown of a column

**Dentils:** closely spaced small square blocks that run in a row along the underside of a projecting cornice that resemble teeth



**Dormer:** a structure projecting from a sloping roof which houses a window. Styles include: gable, shed, hipped, flat, segmental and arched

**Ell:** an addition on the rear of a building giving the overall structure an L-shape

**Façade:** the front of a building

**Fenestration:** the arrangement of windows in a façade

**Hood Mold:** the projecting molding of the arch over a door or window

**Keystone:** the wedge shaped top member of an arch

**Lintel:** a strong piece of wood or stone that spans the top of a window and supports the weight above it

**Rusticated:** beveled stone

**Sill:** the horizontal lower timber of a window or door frame

**Transom:** a window opening above a door

**Downtown Niles  
Intent to Perform Building Rehabilitation**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Building address where proposed work will be performed: \_\_\_\_\_

Building owner's name (if different than you): \_\_\_\_\_

Building owner's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Will this be a self-funded project?                      Yes                       No

Are you considering the use of public funds?                      Yes                       No

1. What do you intend to do to the exterior of your building?

Please check all that apply

- Replace windows
- Paint
- Install new sign
- Install new awning
- Install new doorway
- Repair/Improve exterior materials
- Exterior decorative objects (attached to building or on sidewalk)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Next page please...

