DESIGN GUIDELINES

FOR BUILDING FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE DOWNTOWN CONCORD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

INTOWN CONCORD
COMMUNITY + EVENTS

Discover the charm of Downtown Concord

Adopted January 1, 2004
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Revised October 18, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Intown Concord, Inc. is a non-profit organization established in 2002 to revitalize the downtown business district of Concord shown on the map included in Appendix A ("Downtown Concord"). Intown Concord uses the downtown revitalization program developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the early 1980s as a guideline.

This booklet focuses on design, and how the visual impacts of buildings and streetscapes influence the image of our downtown. These design guidelines have been established to assist downtown building and business owners with the renovation and restoration of their properties.

Intown Concord's approach builds on a downtown's inherent assets, its rich history, architecture, independent specialty retailers, personal service, and partnership with the public sector. It is an incremental approach based on local resources and conditions. It is a practical approach to achieve positive change in downtown business districts.

The design guidelines set forth in this booklet are based on the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation."

The Secretary's "Standards" govern projects where federal investment tax credits are sought. Any building that is listed on the National Historic Register or is included within a National Register District, as the majority of those in Downtown Concord are, is eligible for a 20% tax credit if an historic rehabilitation is undertaken. Anyone wishing to use the historic tax credit program must coordinate the review and approval of their program through the State Historical Preservation Office (603-271-3558).

Intown Concord offers matching grants to qualified applicants who are selected by Intown Concord's Design Committee to participate in its *Façade Improvement Grant Program*. A full description of this program is available from Intown Concord. In short, however, proposed sign and façade improvements must be approved by the Intown Concord Design Committee and the Concord Planning Board. The *Façade Improvement Grant Program* is designed to create a positive visual impact for Downtown Concord and to foster a more attractive climate for investment in the downtown commercial district.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In order to understand these design guidelines, it is helpful to be familiar with the history of Concord and how that history influenced the city's development patterns, streetscapes and building design.

The buildings and streets of downtown Concord reflect a community steeped in tradition, yet well adapted to change. Concord's first settlers laid out Main Street in 1726 when the city was first chartered as "Penacook' (The town was renamed "Concord" in 1765.) Farmhouses and small shops lined the street, while field lots lay in the Merrimack River floodplain below. In 1803 the First New Hampshire Turnpike opened, linking Concord with Portsmouth and thereby assuring the town's position as an important trading and transportation center. Its central location within the state led to its designation as state capital in 1808 and secured the community's role as the heart of political and social life in New Hampshire. After the State House was completed in 1819, the center of community activity began to shift from the North End to present-day downtown. In 1842 the railroad arrived in Concord, and the city entered an era of major growth and prosperity. Concord was also characterized by a number of other industries, some of the major ones being the manufacture of stagecoaches, furniture making and granite quarrying. It had a diverse economic base, and over the next half century, the downtown took on its form we know today.

Most of the buildings in downtown Concord were erected as three and four story structures, with commercial storefronts (often protected by canvas awnings) on the first floor and a combination of offices, apartments and meeting halls on the upper floors. During the 1960s, a few of the older buildings were reduced in height, either due to fire damage or a desire to modernize. Red brick construction dominated the streetscape, but many of the buildings have granite, sandstone or terra cotta trimmings, and there is rich panorama of decorative detailing. There is a cross section of architectural styles from the early 19th through the mid-20th century, and regionally prominent architects designed many of the buildings. Examples of wood-frame construction in the core of the downtown are limited to a handful of buildings on the side streets, which were initially residential in use and were later adapted for commercial purposes. Interestingly, a picture of Main Street shown in "Capital Views, A Photographic History of Concord, New Hampshire, 1850-1930" shows no trees on Main Street even though it seems that many of the neighborhood streets were indeed lined with shade trees.

Just west of the commercial core is Concord's civic district, containing historic and architecturally distinctive city, county, state and federal government buildings. With the exception of the library, all of the buildings were constructed of granite. These public buildings are all on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

Concord's wealth of historic buildings is a significant community asset. Our downtown ranks among the best preserved in the state, and many of the buildings have been well cared for. However, we need to continue to be thoughtful stewards of this asset and manage how downtown evolves in the coming years. The Façade Improvement Program and the following guidelines and are intended to provide direction toward that end.

Sources:

Hengen, Elizabeth Durfee and R. Stuart Wallace, *Concord on Foot. A Walking Tour of Downtown*. Published by the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, 1996.

Hengen, Elizabeth Durfee and Samson, Gary, *Capital views. A Photographic History of Concord, New Hampshire, 1850-1930*. Published by the New Hampshire Historical Society, 1994.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REHABILITATION

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property that requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose.

2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.

3. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.

4. Changes that may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.

5. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.

6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.

7. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.

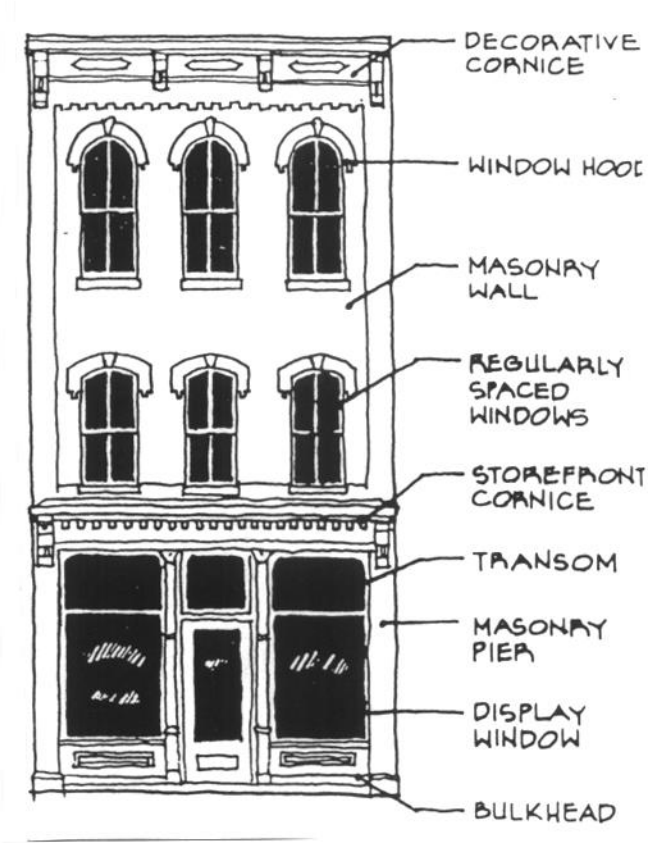
8. Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archeological resources affected by or adjacent to any project.

9. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, materials, and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.

10. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

TRADITIONAL FAÇADE

The traditional storefronts found in the Main Street commercial district in Concord, New Hampshire date from the 1870's through the 1940's. Although styles and appearances evolved over the years, the traditional facades remained unchanged in their basic form and proportions. This similarity and consistency of form creates a strong, coordinated, visual image.



Over the years, technological developments and changing trends led to frequent storefront changes, while many upper façades remained unaltered. The basic commercial façade consists of three parts: the storefront, with an entrance and display windows; the upper façade, usually with regularly spaced windows; and the cornice, which caps the building. Although these components appear in many shapes and styles, the result is essentially the same traditional façade.

MAINTENANCE

Proper maintenance is indispensable, prolonging the life of the building while preserving its original materials and character. Proper maintenance is better than any quick fix that leads to insensitive change, further deterioration, and a breakdown of the historic character of the district. Each building is composed of several materials and components that have individual maintenance requirements and considerations.

ARCHITECTURAL METALS

Architectural metals include cast iron, steel, pressed tin, zinc, copper and aluminum. They are extremely valuable vestiges of the late 19th century architecture, and the preservation and maintenance of architectural metal elements is of utmost concern.

Cleaning Architectural Metals

Architectural metals should be cleaned when necessary to remove corrosion prior to repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings.

Cleaning shall be done with the gentlest methods possible. Particular care must be taken when cleaning soft metals such as lead, tin, copper and zinc. Sandblasting is acceptable only for cast iron, and then great care should be taken to protect all surrounding materials.

Painting Architectural Metals

Paint should not be applied to metals such as copper, bronze or stainless steel that were meant to be exposed. Aluminum window and doorframes may be painted in order to blend with other materials.

Any ferrous metal surface should be kept painted to protect from rust.

Replacing Missing Pieces

Missing pieces or parts damaged beyond repair can often be fabricated; however, they may also be recast in aluminum or fiberglass from existing pieces or, when necessary, substituted by wooden pieces.

Dissimilar metals should be buffered from each other to avoid the potential problem of electrolysis.

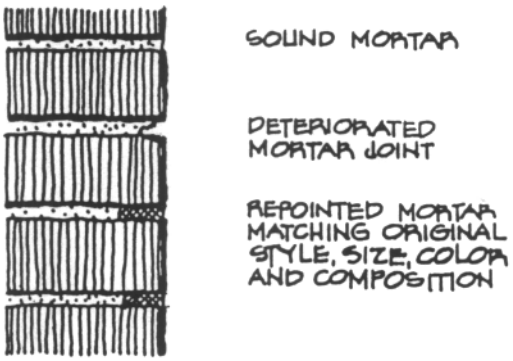
MASONRY

Masonry includes brick, stone, concrete, terracotta, stucco and mortar. Masonry surfaces and architectural elements are the most common types found in the district and are vital to their historic character. Masonry features such as brick cornices and piers, store window hoods and terracotta brackets must be preserved and maintained properly. Although masonry is one of the most durable historic building materials, it is also very susceptible to damage by improper maintenance or repair techniques and by harsh or abrasive cleaning methods.

Repointing Masonry

Masonry walls and other surfaces should be repaired by repointing the mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration such as disintegrating mortar, cracks in mortar joints, loose bricks, damp walls or damaged plasterwork. Old mortar should be duplicated in strength, composition, color and texture.

Old mortar joints should be duplicated in width and joint profile.



Cleaning Masonry

Cleaning masonry should only be done when necessary to halt deterioration or remove heavy soiling.

Masonry surfaces should be cleaned with the gentlest means possible, such as low-pressure water and masonry detergents, using natural bristle brushes.

When it is determined that cleaning is necessary, a test should be carried out on a small area of the masonry surface to observe the effects of the cleaning method in order to select the gentlest method possible.

Do not sandblast masonry surfaces using dry or wet grit or other abrasives. Sandblasting destroys the head, protective outer layer of the bricks and accelerates deterioration. The damage caused by sandblasting is irreversible.

Painting Masonry

Masonry that has historically been unpainted should not be painted, nor should paint be removed from historically painted masonry. Masonry that has been painted after original construction can either be repainted or the paint can be removed with appropriate chemical removers.

WOOD

Wood is a common material for architectural features such as cornices, brackets, bulkheads, storefronts, and window framing. These features are important in defining the overall historic character of the building and the district. Wood requires proper maintenance and the preservation of wooden architectural elements is of particular importance in rehabilitation projects.

Protecting Wood

Retain coatings such as paint that help protect wood from moisture and harmful light rays. Paint removal should be considered only where there is paint surface deterioration and as a part of an overall maintenance program that involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings.

Paint should be removed with the gentlest of methods possible when it is necessary to do so. Wood surfaces should never be sandblasted. Under certain circumstances a gently wash may be appropriate, but pressurized water can raise the grain and allow water to enter the building.

Repair and Replacement

Deteriorated or damaged wood architectural elements should be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible.

Replacement of deteriorated wood features should be limited to patching or piecing-in only the portions that cannot be repaired whenever possible, rather than removing the entire features and replacing it with new material to create a uniform or "improved" appearance.

WINDOWS

Windows carry great visual and functional importance, yet they are the most frequent victims of neglect and insensitive alterations that are visually and physically destructive. Careful consideration is required when windows are repaired or replaced. The functional and decorative components of windows that should be preserved, maintained, or duplicated include frames, sash, muntins, mullions, glass, sills, heads, hoodmolds, jambs and moldings.

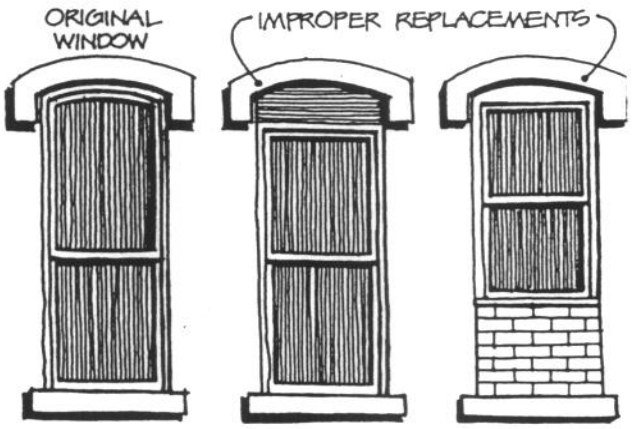
Upper Story Windows

Upper story windows that are blocked in should be opened up and restored to their original appearance. Do not alter the shape of the original openings.

Replacing Windows

If windows must be replaced entirely, the new windows should convey the same visual appearance of the original windows. Mirrored or tinted glass should not be used. Replicating exterior muntin patterns is important in order to retain the historic appearance.

The use of storm windows is not discouraged. If they are used, they must match the form and style of the original windows and should not obscure the pattern of the original window.



Residential features should not be used, nor should materials, which create a false historical appearance.

STOREFRONTS

Most traditional facades in the district have a well-defined opening that contained the original storefront. This storefront opening is bounded on either side by piers or pilasters, on top by the lower edge of the upper façade, and on the bottom by the sidewalk. Most original storefronts have been altered or replaced and, although some replacements are done properly, many ignore the building's traditional storefront boundaries, proportions, and materials. These storefronts look pasted-on or conflict with the original overall design. As a result, the building appears disjointed, unattractive, and without historic character. Buildings with inappropriately altered storefronts clash with each other visually, damaging the overall historic character of the district; therefore, the proper design of the storefront is a high priority concern.

STOREFRONT DESIGN

The storefront must fit within its original opening and not extend past its traditional boundaries, maintaining a clear distinction between the first floor and upper floors.

The storefront should be composed almost entirely of clear glass, creating a visual openness and vertical proportions.

Inappropriate historical themes should be avoided. Colonial design elements, for example, are not acceptable.

Transom windows that are blocked in or covered should be opened up and restored to their original appearance.

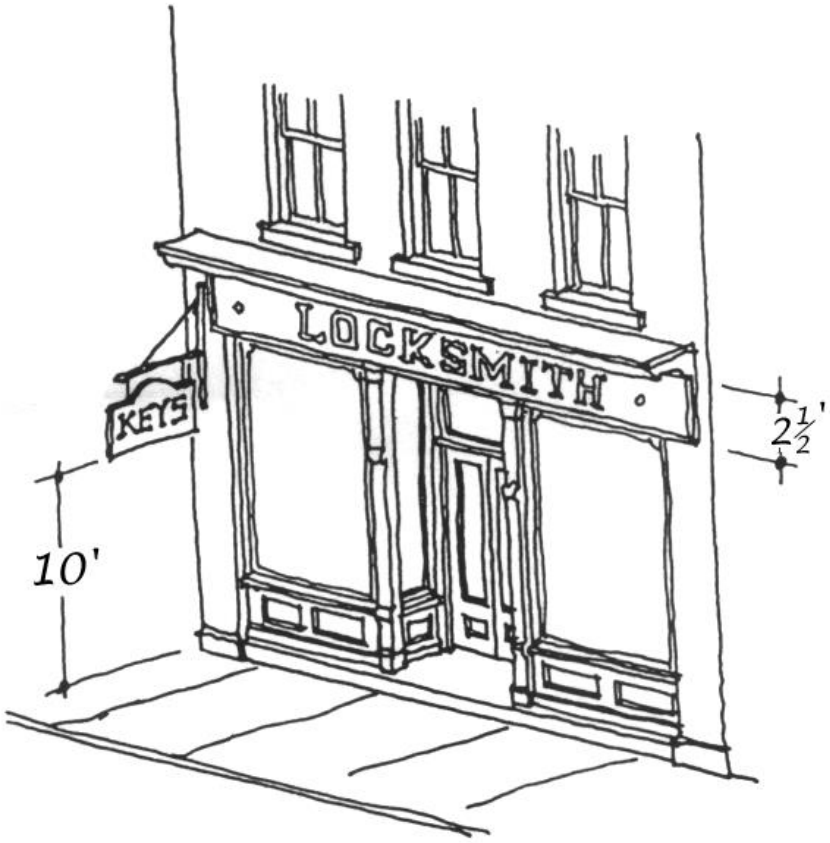
Contemporary design is acceptable. However, it must use traditional proportions and ratio of window to wall area.

STOREFRONT MATERIALS

Storefront materials should be simple and unobtrusive and when at all possible employ traditional materials that would typically have been found in the subject building, which would include wood, cast iron, brick carrara glass, etc.

Materials that give a false historic appearance should never be used in the storefront. A mansard roof with wood shingles, rough textured wood siding, fake bricks or stone, and gravel aggregate materials are not acceptable.

Whether traditional contemporary materials are used, the storefront should be based on the traditional storefront design and must have the traditional proportions.



Carrara Glass and Vitrolite

Pigmented structural glass enjoyed widespread popularity from the beginning of the Great Depression to the outbreak of World War II. As the 20th century progressed, architects began to substitute pigmented structural glass for traditional building materials in new construction. By 1940, pigmented structural glass veneers had become synonymous with the "modern look." The numerous pigmented structural glass storefronts surviving today are testimony to the popularity of these remodels and should be preserved if possible. In downtown Concord, pigmented structural glass can be seen on the two storefronts of the Endicott Hotel.

SIGNS

Signs are a vital part of a coherent business district. Often storeowners try to out-shout each other with over-sized, flash signs that disrupt the visual continuity of the district and obscure architectural features. Because the district is primarily pedestrian with slow moving traffic, small signs can serve the needs of businesses, while contributing to both the image of individual buildings and to the overall character of the district.

DESIGN AND PLACEMENT

Keep signs subordinate to buildings. Signs should be simple and have a direct message.

Signs should fit within the existing features of the façade and should not cover architectural elements such as windows, transoms or cornices.

Signs should be mounted somewhere above the display windows and below the second floor windowsills.

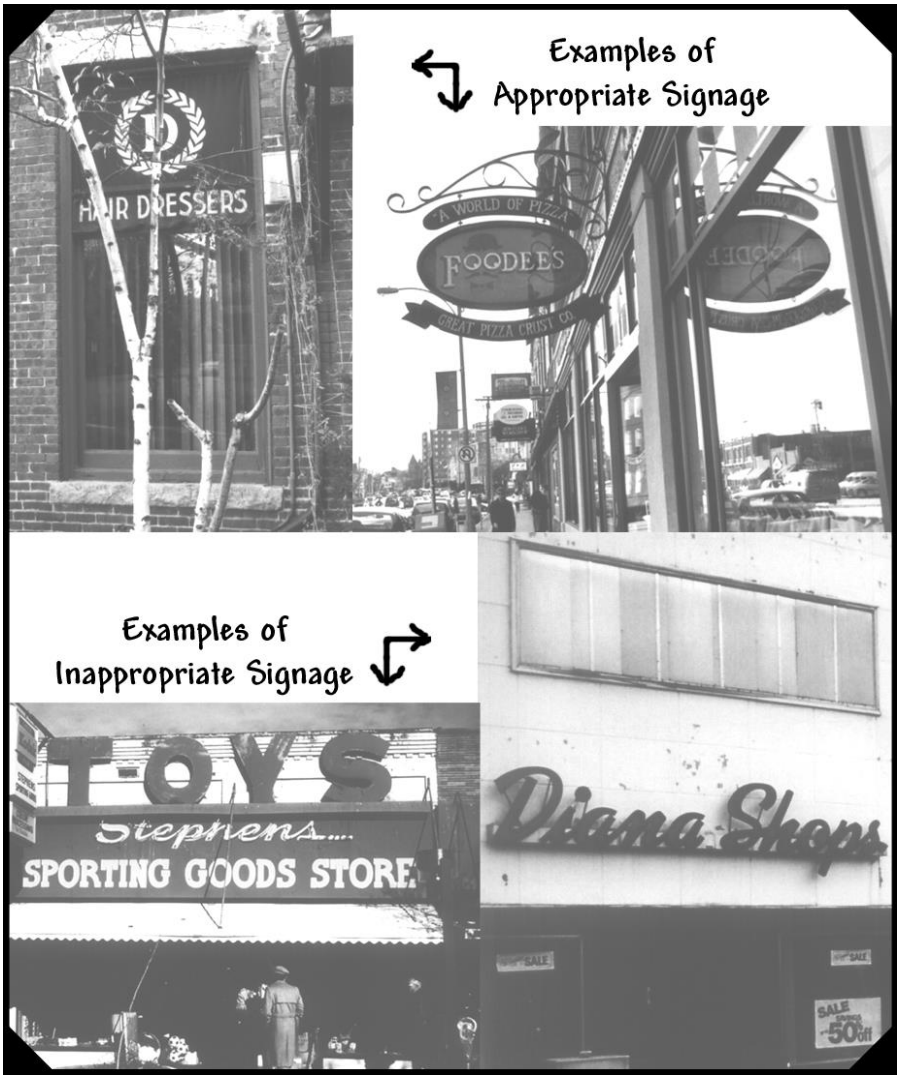
Signs should identify a location and type of business; they should not serve to advertise. Many buildings have sign boards intended for this purpose – Use them!

MATERIALS

Sign colors, shapes, materials and sizes should reinforce the overall composition of the façade.

Internally lit signs are not allowed. Backlit bubble awnings are also not allowed.

Signs should be made of high quality materials.



SYNOPSIS OF CITY OF CONCORD SIGN REGULATIONS

I. Purpose:

- Encourage the effective use of signs as a means of communication in the City of Concord.
- Maintain and enhance the appearance an aesthetic environment of the City, particularly in downtown Concord, and along the highway corridors leading into the City.
- Retain the City's ability to attract and encourage economic growth.
- Improve pedestrian and traffic safety.
- Minimize potential adverse effects of signs on nearby public and private property.
- Enable fair and consistent enforcement of these sign regulations.
- Complement the historic architecture

II. Permit Required:

- Except as noted in the ordinance, no sign may be erected, placed, replaced, moved, enlarged or substantially altered in the City of Concord without a permit in accordance with the provisions of the ordinance. In some cases, a Master Signage Plan will be required.
- A permit application and fees shall be submitted to the Code Administration Office with a set of plans, together with architectural elevations or photographs, at an appropriate scale showing the location, size, colors, copy. Method of illumination, and materials proposed for the sign should also accompany the application.
- Typical fees are $15.50 for the application, $15.50 for the Design Review Committee and Planning Board, and $1.40 per square foot of sign area per computation in section 28-6-6 in the ordinance. Please verify with the City for current fees.
- All signs in the Main Street area require a visit to the Design Review Committee and subsequent approval by the Planning Board.
- The primary zoning district for the Main Street area is CBP, or Central Business Performance District.

III. Permitted Building Signs:

- Refer to section 28-6-9 Signs Permitted In Non Residential Districts. For each building frontage, a maximum of three building signs of any type are permitted provided the total area of all signs does not exceed the lesser of:

    a. An area equal to one square foot of a sign per lineal foot of building frontage, or

    b. The maximum are specified in Section 28-6-9(a) of the ordinance, which equals 150 square feet.

For example: if you have 20 linear feet of store frontage, your total sign allowance is 20 square feet. This would be divided up between window lettering, hanging sign, affixed sign or any lettering applied to the valance on an awning to equal a total of 20 square feet.

- For principal uses located on upper or lower floors with no building frontage, window signs are permitted as well as four square feet of building signs at the ground floor entry door providing access to said principal use.

- All signs over a public right of way, such as the sidewalk, require a certificate of insurance indemnifying the City of Concord against any formal liability. Failure to provide a certificate will result in denial of permit.

- No sign over a public right of way shall be lower than nine feet above the sidewalk or surface right of way.

The entire sign code can be found on the City's website at www.concordnh.gov under the Community Development heading. Click on the Code Administration site. From here you can get permit applications, view the ordinance, look at zoning maps and find the schedules and deadlines for all the required meetings.

Applications can be submitted at the Code Administration offices, at the City Hall Annex, next to the Police Station on Green Street.

The City of Concord requires all fees for permits be paid in full when the application is submitted.

DOORS

Every storefront has a door or pair of doors that enter into the place of business. Traditionally, the entrance door was made of wood with a large glass panel. Every effort should be made to maintain and repair an original door.

Many original doors have been replaced by standard aluminum and glass commercial doors. Although lacking in historical character, they are generally unobtrusive. Aluminum doors and storefronts can be made more compatible by painting them a dark color. An exposed aluminum surface must be cleaned and prepared for a zinc chromate primer or metal primer, followed by appropriate finish coats. New aluminum should be exposed to weather for at least two months before painting.

DOOR REPLACEMENT

If a door is to be replaced there are three basic options:
-Have a new door built with the same design and proportions of the original.
-Find a manufactured wooden or steel door that resembles the traditional door.
-Use a standard aluminum commercial door with wide stiles and a dark anodized or baked enamel finish.

Do not use doors decorated with moldings or grills. These doors are more residential in character.

COLOR SCHEME

The Color scheme used on a building must be appropriate to the building's time period, architectural style, material of construction, and relationship to surrounding buildings. Colors should accentuate the architectural details of the building.

If masonry must be painted, the colors used should be within the natural color range of the material to be painted.

AWNINGS

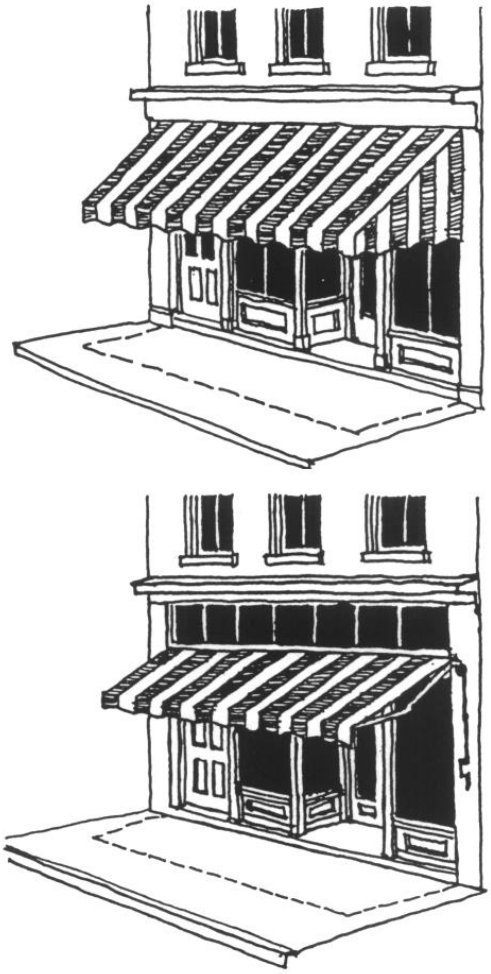
The canvas awning is an important design element in the traditional storefront. It provides protection from sun and weather and adds color to the streetscape. A standard street-level awning should be mounted so that the valance is about 7 feet above the sidewalk and projects out between 4 and 7 feet above the sidewalk. A 12-inch valance flap is usually attached at the awning bar and can serve as a sign panel.

DESIGN

An awning can be attached above the display windows and below the cornice or sign panel. Sometimes it is mounted between the transom and the display windows, allowing light into the store while shading the merchandise and pedestrians from the sun.

Awnings should not obscure the architectural features of the buildings and should reinforce the frame of the storefront.

Awnings should remain within a proper scale with the building to achieve visual balance.



MATERIALS

Canvas awnings are generally suitable for late 1800s and early 1900s buildings. They are also a suitable contemporary addition for many older buildings.

Metal awnings and flat metal canopies are suitable for some early to mid-1900s buildings and may have been used on such storefronts inserted into an older building. Their appropriate use depends on a balance of factors including the existing styles of the storefronts and upper stories.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

The construction of a new building on vacant lots in downtown should be encouraged. The design of a new infill building, particularly its front façade, is a special problem. The new façade should be designed to look appropriate and compatible in the midst of the surrounding buildings.

What is good infill design? There is no absolute answer; a good design will vary according to its setting. Because an infill building is new, it should look new. However, its appearance must always be sensitive to the character of its neighbors without mimicking them.

There are several ideas that should govern the visual relationship between an infill building and its neighbors.

PROPORTIONS OF THE FACADE

The average height and width of the surrounding buildings determines a general set of proportions for an infill structure or the bays of a larger structure.

The in fill building should fill in the entire space and reflect the characteristic rhythm of facades along the streets.

If the site is large, the mass of the façade can be broken into a number of smaller bays, to maintain a rhythm similar to the surrounding buildings.

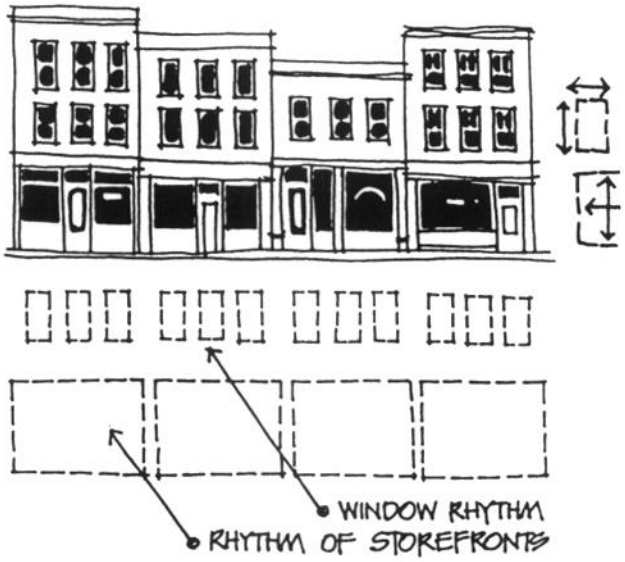
COMPOSITION

The composition of the infill façade (that is, the organization of its parts) should be similar to that of the surrounding facades. Rhythms that carry throughout the block (such as window spacing) should be incorporated into the new façade.

Proportions of the Openings

The size and proportion of window and door openings of an infill building should be similar to those on surroundings facades.

The same applies to the ratio of window area to solid wall for the façade as a whole.



Detailing

Infill architecture should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shapes, cornice lines and brick work.

Materials

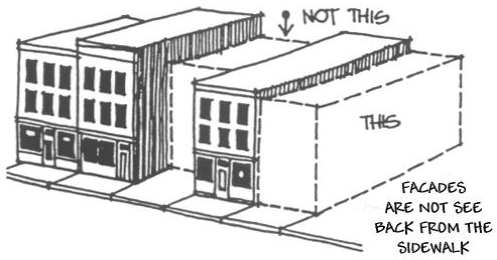
An infill façade should be composed of materials similar to the adjacent facades. The new building should not stand out against the others.

Color

The colors chosen for an infill façade should be related to the buildings neighbors.

Building Setback

The new façade should be contiguous to its neighbors.



APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources are available at the Concord Room in the Concord Public Library and the History of Concord at the New Hampshire Historical Library on Park Street, Concord.

Books

- Amsden, Grace Page. *A capital for New Hampshire*, 2 volumes, unpublished manuscript.
- Bouton, Nathaniel. *The history of Concord, New Hampshire from the original grant in 1725 to the organization of the city government in 1853*, 1856.
- City of Concord, New Hampshire, *City Report*, 1854-1940.
- Town of Concord, New Hampshire, *Town Report*, 1835-1853.
- Lyford, James O. *History of Concord, New Hampshire from the original grant in 1725 to the opening of the twentieth century*, 2 volumes, 1903.
- [Concord City Directories], 1830-Present.
- Hengen, Elizabeth Durfee. *Concord architectural survey*, 1988.
- Hengen, Elizabeth Durfee and R. Stuart Wallace, *Concord on Foot. A Walking Tour of Downtown*. Published by the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, 1996.
- Hengen, Elizabeth Durfee and Samson, Gary, *Capital views. A Photographic History of Concord, New Hampshire, 1850-1930*. Published by the New Hampshire Historical Society, 1994.
- Mausolf, Lisa, *Downtown Concord Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1999

Maps

- Sanford, E.F. *Map of the City of Concord*, 1868.
- *"City of Concord" In Town and city atlas of the state of New Hampshire*, 1892.
- Walling, Henry Francis. *Map of the Village of Concord, Merrimack County*, N.H., 1851.
- *"City of Concord."Map of Merrimack County, N.H*., 1858

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:

1869, 1 sheet.	1874, 3 sheets.	1879, 5 sheets.	1884, 11 sheets.
1889, 22 sheets.	1893, 26 sheets.	1899, 34 sheets.	1906, 41 sheets.
1914, 41 sheets.	1928, 40 sheets.	1928-1949, 43 sheets.	

Local Ordinances

These are ordinances relevant to façade, signage, and construction, etc.

- *Zoning Ordinances for the City of Concord, NH*
- *International Building Codes*
- *Life Safety Code NFPA 101*
- *Americans with Disabilities Act, Accessibility Guidelines*

Photographs

The New Hampshire Historical Society library holds thousands of photos, post cards and stereo views of Concord. A list of file folder titles for more information is available at Main Street Concord, Inc. The Concord Room at the City of Concord Public Library has a smaller but equally useful collection.