



Appendix A

City of Rockford Neighborhood Facade Improvement Program

Design Guidelines

Introduction

As part of its commitment to community revitalization, the City of Rockford has established a Rockford Neighborhood Storefront Improvement Program to provide rebate grants to merchants or property owners for rehabilitating commercial storefronts within Rockford's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) area. The goal is not only to help you improve your building's appearance, but also to generate additional business in Rockford's older commercial areas.

The design guidelines outlined in the booklet will serve as the basis for awarding facade rebates under this program. These guidelines are intended to help you develop a plan for improving your building's appearance in a way that the City of Rockford would be willing to help finance. In these guidelines, we emphasize working with a building's existing architectural strengths and its historic fabric to bring out its best features, followed by proper maintenance over time.

We do not encourage creating "new look" storefronts and disguising the original building facade. However, this is not a pure preservation program; it is a program designed to encourage investment in and visual improvement of Rockford's older commercial areas. The ultimate objective is to strengthen the businesses located in these areas by making them more appealing to potential customers.

These guidelines are not meant to provide specific design solutions, but to provide you with principles and techniques to consider while deciding on how best to improve your property. Each building must be considered in light of its own unique characteristics and history. Our job at the City of Rockford is to help you achieve attractive, practical and cost effective results that are long lasting and satisfying to you and your customers.

The Economic Development Division of Rockford's Community & Economic Development Department is here to help you in this undertaking. We will explain the program requirements outlined on the preceding pages, meet with you onsite to evaluate your existing commercial storefront, and help you arrive at a design decision. We encourage you to contact us before you make a final decision on how you want to improve your property to ensure that any proposals made to us meet various City codes and this set of guidelines.

What follows are the design guidelines for Rockford's Neighborhood Storefront Improvement Program (NSIP), and basic information on how the program works. Important factors for you to take into account:

1. Adherence to these guidelines is only required if you intend to participate in the program; if you do not plan to take advantage of the program, following the guidelines is encouraged but is not mandatory.
2. Any projects involving buildings that have been designated by the City of Rockford as landmarks or as part of a historic district must go through the usual design approval process of the Rockford Historic Preservation Commission.
3. Because the program is being paid for out of federal funds, all projects must also be reviewed by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency as part of a standard review process.

Design Guidelines for Rockford Storefronts

General Guidelines

The key to a successful improvement project lies in maintaining the characteristic details and the historic fabric of a structure while at the same time presenting an inviting front to the public. This can be as simple as a new coat of paint or as complicated as removing a false front and restoring the original façade. As you decide how much of a change you want for your building, keep the following general guidelines in mind:

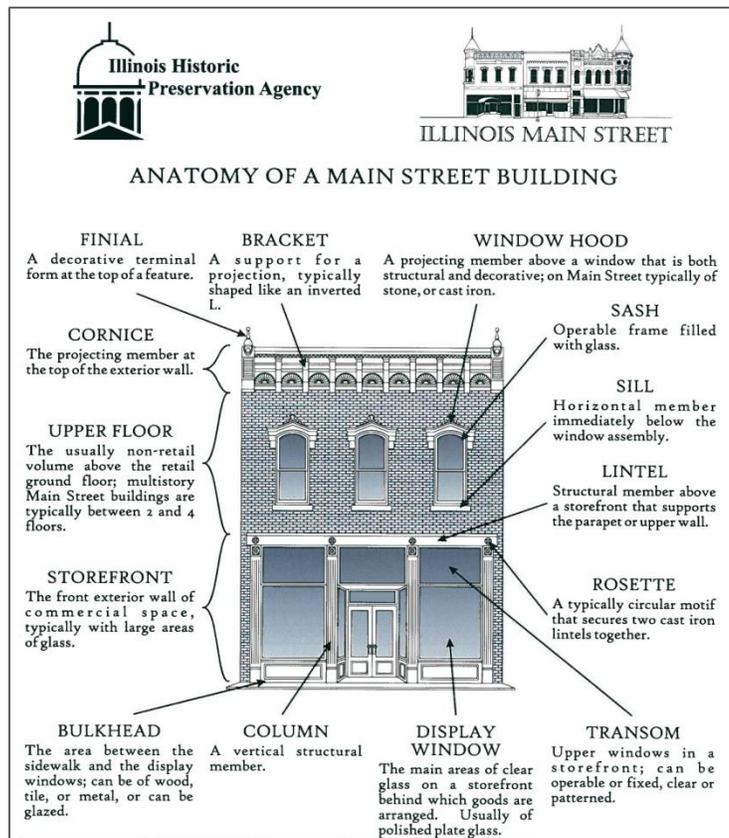
- ◆ When adding new elements to the exterior of your building, use materials equivalent to those originally on the structure.
- ◆ Don't try to make your building look either older or newer than it really is by using details from another style or period. For example, don't try to add Victorian details to an Art Deco building.
- ◆ Original materials or details should not be removed from a building when they can be repaired.
- ◆ Retain the distinctive historical and architectural character of your building through proper regular maintenance and repair.

Storefronts

Historically, commercial storefronts have played a pivotal role in bringing life to the streets of downtowns and similar late 19th and early 20th century commercial districts. Storefronts are the public face of commercial buildings, either drawing new customers in or driving them away. As originally designed, they enticed pedestrians with appealing displays viewed through large windows, sheltered window shoppers from sun or rain with awnings and canopies, and blurred the transition from outside to inside with recessed entryways.

In contrast with the upper stories of older commercial buildings, the glazed storefront is all about interaction with the street where projecting signs, awnings and inset doorways add variety and interest to the rhythm of the streetscape. It is this positive impact on the life of the street as much as preservation of historic characteristics of storefronts that serves as the driving force behind this Program.

Many of Rockford's older commercial buildings follow a pattern typical for buildings constructed in the Midwest in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most ground floor storefronts have been altered over the years, frequently more than once, while the upper facades have remained largely untouched and/or their deteriorated materials have been hidden behind false



fronts. Usually, the best approach to renovating a building's façade is the conservative one. Remodeling that tries to modernize the look of a building frequently looks dated and old-fashioned after a few years, just as "improvements" from the 1950s and '60s now look dated. Simple renovations that respect the original design of a building can be classic in character and never go out of style.

Guidelines for Storefronts on Existing Buildings

The objective of these guidelines is to preserve character-defining elements of commercial storefronts. These elements range from the cornice at the top of the building to the bulkhead or kickplate at the bottom. Another key point to remember is that storefronts should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians. To achieve these results, follow these guidelines:

1. Work with the entire street façade of the building, not with just a part of it. The structure's visual integrity diminishes significantly when the street level storefront is upgraded while the upper story façade is left untreated.
2. If the storefront has been altered, restore it to the original design if at all possible. If evidence of the original design is missing, use a simplified interpretation of similar storefronts.
3. When the original is missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses traditional elements may be considered. However, any new design should continue to convey the character of typical storefronts of buildings similar to yours, including the transparent character of the display window.
4. Design the storefront so it fits within the original façade opening (area between the outside columns in the illustration above) and does not extend beyond it.
5. Make the storefront as transparent as possible with display windows of clear glass.
6. Bulkheads (also called kickplates) can be wood panels, polished stone, glass, tile or aluminum-clad panels and should be located in the lower portion of the storefront (see illustration above). If the original still exists, retain it. If the original material has been covered by another material, consider exposing the original design and material. If the bulkhead is missing, develop a sympathetic replacement design.
7. Avoid historical themes that are not from the same period as the building.

Guidelines for Upper Story Design

1. Retain roofline cornices if they are still present on the building. If cornices are missing, they may be replaced with appropriately scaled, newly constructed ones. Replacement cornices may be made of wood, sheet metal, or other materials that duplicate the appearance of the original. Use historic photos to determine design details of the original cornice. If evidence of the original is missing, a simplified interpretation for a replacement cornice is also appropriate.
2. Retain parapet walls, especially those on primary or highly visible facades. Avoid removing or lowering parapet walls because the flashing for the roof is often tied into the parapet and disturbing it can cause moisture problems. Inspect parapets regularly to check for missing mortar or excessive moisture retention. Also avoid waterproofing treatments as these can interfere with the parapet's natural ability to dry out quickly when it gets wet.
3. For guidelines for upper story windows, see below on page 4 and 5.

Building Elements

Wall Materials Original wall materials such as brick, stone or terra cotta should be repaired and maintained. Dry-vit or other imitation stucco or siding materials should be avoided. Metal siding or panels, mansard canopies and other types of “false fronts” should be removed where brick or stonework is hidden.

Masonry

1. When individual pieces of brick, stone or terra cotta are beyond repair, they should be replaced to match the original in size, color, finish and texture.
2. Tuckpoint masonry surfaces properly to avoid moisture seepage and excessive wear on the masonry. Mortar and grout should match the original in color, texture, consistency and point profile. *Do **not** use Portland cement as mortar since it is harder than the original masonry and can cause serious damage.*
3. Do **not** clean masonry by sandblasting it since this also causes serious damage to the material. Clean masonry using the least aggressive method possible (such as water, steam or chemical cleaning) after conducting tests on inconspicuous areas.

Trim Preserve original sills, lintels, frames, sash, mullions and glass, as well as original doorway elements. If replacements are needed, they should duplicate the original design and materials. Avoid adding non-authentic details.

Decorative Features Original decorative features such as cast-iron piers, terra cotta masonry, ceramic tile, pressed metal ornamentation or cast stone should be repaired and maintained, and should not be obscured by changes to the building. Missing features or those that have deteriorated to the point where they are beyond repair should be replaced to match whenever possible. These features can be important in adding to the uniqueness and attractiveness of your building.

Display Windows Retain original window size and style, using clear glass and covering 75% or more of the storefront. If there are security concerns, you may apply window security film to your windows. These are made of clear film designed to withstand everything from hurricanes to someone trying to break through a window with a hammer. There are several versions available, some of which you can apply yourself and some of which require the firm providing the film to apply it. The manufacturer should be able to show that their film has been approved by the International Code Council as a safety glazing product for it to meet your security needs.

Transom Windows It is strongly recommended that where they have been covered, uncover and restore transom windows to their original size and configuration. You may use clear, tinted, leaded or stained glass in a transom window.

Upper Story Windows

1. If they are original, second story windows should be retained, cleaned and repaired.
2. If upper story windows have deteriorated to the point where they must be replaced, or have been removed already, install replacement windows that match the size, shape and style of the original windows. Do not replace a multi-pane window with a single large pane of glass.
3. Replacement windows should be wood or wood clad with aluminum with a baked enamel finish in a color that blends with the color scheme of the building.

4. Storm windows may be used on upper story windows, but should be painted or color clad to blend with the color scheme of the building.

Doors

1. New doors should be sized to fit within existing openings.
2. The main entrance door(s) should have full-view clear glass panels.
3. Entry doors can be recessed behind the front plane of the storefront.

Awnings

Canvas awnings were a familiar feature of 19th century storefronts. In addition to providing sun and glare protection, they also offer shelter to pedestrians and can be an attractive addition to a storefront. Additionally, the valance of an awning can serve as a sign panel for your business.

Be aware that awnings require both a building permit and a permit from Public Works. Guidelines for awnings are as follows:

1. Made of canvas or a synthetic canvas that can withstand normal variations in local weather;
2. Rigid frame construction; and
3. Not lit internally.

Signs

Commercial signs typically serve two functions – to attract attention and to convey information. All should be consistent with the building’s architecture, and all new signs should be designed with the overall impact on the building and on neighboring buildings in mind. Signage is an eligible cost if part of the total redevelopment project.

Sign types vary widely in Rockford’s older commercial districts. The key factor in designing a new one is to make sure that it does not overwhelm the architecture of the building it’s attached to. A good sign is simple and direct. Don’t be tempted to put too much on one. Choose a letter style or graphic treatment that projects your image and is clear and easy to read. Coordinate sign colors with the colors of your building.

Before installing a sign, you will also need permits for it. The number and type vary depending on the type of sign and its location. These include:

- ◆ All signs must conform to zoning regulations and require a sign permit from the Construction and Development Services Division.
- ◆ Signs hanging over the right-of-way require a permit from the Public Works Department
- ◆ Signs with electrical components may require an electrical permit.

Guidelines for Signs

1. Prepare a plan showing the location, size and type of signs you want to install.
2. Each sign should be sized appropriately and in proportion to the building it is attached to.
3. Coordinate colors and graphics with the overall building colors as well as those of adjacent buildings.

4. Signs should not cover up architectural details. Most older commercial buildings were designed with sign bands in the area above storefront windows; these are the most appropriate locations for wall signs.
5. Informational signs, including those that feature the name of the business or building, historical data, or a daily menu, may be attached flush to the building façade as long as they do not conceal any of the building's ornamental or architectural features.
6. Window signs that identify a business should be permanently painted on the glass, or created by applying decals to the glass. No more than 35% of window surface may be obscured by signage or other obstructions.
7. Signs projecting over any public right-of-way (generally the sidewalk) require approval from the Department of Public Works, except for a business identification sign painted on a canvas awning. Projecting signs, awnings or marquees may be no closer to the right-of-way than 36 inches inside the curb or the edge of pavement of the street. Vertical clearance must be at least 9 feet from grade over any public or private sidewalk; vertical clearance for signs projecting over a public or private street or alley must be at least 15 feet from grade.
8. Sign materials should be consistent with, or at least complement, the original construction materials and architectural style of your building's façade. Permitted sign materials include glass, wood, metal, stone or concrete. Internally lit plastic signs are not permitted under this program.
9. Mounting brackets and hardware for signs should be anchored into mortar, not masonry.
10. Signs which are lit should have concealed lighting – spot or up-lit lighting is recommended.

Other Factors to Consider

This design manual is provided as a guide for working with Rockford's older commercial buildings, many of which are visually appealing and often architecturally or historically important. However, adhering to design guidelines alone does not ensure approval of your project. It must also meet all applicable sign, building, zoning, historic preservation and Public Works engineering codes and regulations. As with any construction project, you need to follow standard building and zoning regulations. Specific ones you need to consider in renovating a storefront include:

- ◆ The International Existing Building Code and the International Building Code, both of which have been adopted by the City of Rockford. The latter includes requirements for safety glazing for fixed panels having a glazed area of more than 9 square feet with the lowest edge less than 18 inches above the finished floor, or glazing in or adjacent to a door.
- ◆ You may need to meet requirements of the Illinois Accessibility Code. Repairs of existing materials do not require compliance, but installation of new items may. For example, if you wanted to install a new entry door, the door hardware and opening force would have to meet this Code, but nothing else would. If you are doing work that would require compliance with the Accessibility Code, be aware that waivers are not available from the Code. You may, however, obtain a written and/or verbal interpretation of the Code from the Illinois Capital Development Board. To do this, email, mail or fax your accessibility questions with an 8½" x 11" plan (if appropriate) and the name and address of your building to Douglas Gamble, Capital Development Board, 3rd Floor, William G. Stratton Building, 401 South Spring Street, Springfield IL 62706. His phone number is 217-782-8530; fax number is 217-524-4208; and email is doug.gamble@illinois.gov.
- ◆ All signs require approval by the City's Construction and Development Services Division. Regulations for signs are included in Article 51 of the Zoning Code, while regulations for locations of awnings and canopies are in Section 92.010 of the Zoning Code

- ◆ You must obtain a permit from the Department of Public Works for any signs, awnings, canopies or planters in or over the right-of-way. Application forms for these can be downloaded from the City of Rockford website (www.rockfordil.gov). If you have questions, contact Kelly Nokes in Public Works at kelly.nokes@rockfordil.gov, or by phone at 779-348-7660.

We encourage you to contact City staff early in the process of planning your storefront improvement project. Here's a short list of contacts to get you started.

Building codes and permits	779-348-7158
Zoning, including signs	779-348-7178
Historic preservation	779-348-7445
Public Works	779-348-7300