

## **Bridgeport Main Street Façade Grant Guidelines**

### **Why do we need guidelines?**

There comes a time in every town's history where its residents and citizens either commit to preserving its historic core or willingly give it up as retail centers take commerce to other areas of town.

Design or property appearance guidelines exist to assist building owners in downtown Bridgeport preserve the architectural and cultural integrity of the district. The guidelines identify character-giving architectural elements so historic architectural features can be replicated in new construction or the rehabilitation of older buildings. In addition, specific attention is given to period-appropriate restoration and a pedestrian-friendly environment so that residents and visitors alike can enjoy and appreciate a vital, well-preserved community.

The guidelines are just that – guidelines. Except for the demolition waiting period, they are not mandatory, and they only address exterior alterations. However, there are multiple economic advantages – not to mention aesthetic incentives - to following the appearance guidelines. In addition, if a historically accurate restoration is your goal, a design committee can review your plans and offer suggestions and assistance.

**Think long-term:** If you cannot do a complete rehabilitation project from start to finish, formulate an incremental game plan, so you have a restoration blueprint.

### **Where do you start?**

#### **Historical Period of Renovation or Period of Significance**

Each historic district or landmark is significant during a period in its history. The period usually begins when the district was first constructed to when it reached its peak activity. Research can uncover various building configurations through history and when changes were made. In addition, this research can identify the structure's most important architectural period.

The district, in general, should conform to the turn of the 20th-century architectural styles. However, the period of significance should be considered for buildings built after this period or have been extensively remodeled.

For example, the building at 1001 Halsell, the bank building was built in 1906 by the First National Bank. The entryway to the building was modified later, perhaps to provide more inside lobby space. This building could be restored to the original facade design OR repaired and restored to the modified design. Either would be reflective of significant historical periods.

#### **Compatible Use**

Well-designed buildings generally have compatible uses beyond their original function. Property owners are encouraged to be creative in selecting occupants for buildings as long as care is taken to choose a new service which the building can accommodate. Incompatible uses for existing buildings usually require extensive external modification and are discouraged.

## **Structural Guides**

### **Orientation**

Most existing buildings in the downtown core area are oriented toward the adjacent or nearest street. Construction on sites that adjoin two or more roads should acknowledge or address all adjacent streets. New construction that is oriented toward the interior of a site or a secondary street is discouraged.

### **Setbacks**

It is usually little or no setback from the front of the property line in the downtown area. This is also true of side setbacks, with buildings generally touching or almost touching. The rear setbacks vary according to the lot and building depth. New structures built to the front and side property lines are preferred and consistent with adjacent buildings. New building development should continue the existing building spacing. Buildings that break the wall of facades or create voids or spaces are discouraged.

### **Parking**

New construction is encouraged to provide parking behind buildings, out of view from the street. Breaking up parking into different areas between and around buildings and screening existing or new parking lots with landscaping allow the visual impact of a parking lot to be minimized.

### **Lighting**

When selecting exterior lighting for new construction or renovating a historic property, a balance between aesthetics and functionality is optimum. The type of fixtures chosen should be as compatible as possible with the period when electrical lighting was originally installed. For example, carriage lamps and gaslights would be inappropriate because they predate electricity.

## **Building Design Guidelines**

### **Masonry / Exterior Materials**

Brick, cut stone, and sandstone are the predominant building materials in the downtown core area and should not be painted. New construction should use materials similar to the dominant materials of neighboring buildings. Masonry construction is recommended. Materials that imitate other materials or appear to be something they are not being discouraged.

Slipcovers should be removed when possible, and original masonry should be preserved and maintained. Preserve the original mortar joints and masonry sizes, tooling, and bonding patterns. Repointing of mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration is encouraged. New repointing should match the existing materials, color, size, and hardness.

Clean historic masonry walls carefully. **Do not use abrasive cleaning methods for historic masonries, such as sandblasting and high-pressure wash, as they can damage the surface of stone or brick.**

Original wood finishes should be maintained and painted or replaced in kind. Modern synthetic siding materials such as vinyl or metal bear little resemblance to historic siding materials.

## Color

Color is one of the most potent visual effects of all the elements discussed in any set of guidelines. Traditionally, paint protected underlying building materials, usually wood, from deterioration. The paint was also used for wood, metal, and brick masonry decorative purposes.

Painting should be carefully planned. Good preparation is key to a successful painting project. The substrate should always be free of dirt and residue and washed down using the most straightforward means possible.

**Power washing is strongly discouraged.** It can permanently damage the original material. Preservationists also recommend avoiding painting unpainted brick to promote brick deterioration.

Paint colors should complement each other and the overall character of the structure. When possible, research the original paint color and finishes of the building's historical period; the right colors respect the historic building. Benjamin Moore, Sherwin Williams, and Laura Ashley have historic paint palette collections.

New development should not try to match or copy the color schemes of adjacent buildings because it could lead to an overly-uniform appearance. Traditional, light, or muted colors with pastel or earth tone hue are generally preferred. Very bright, fluorescent, or day-glow colors are discouraged. Paint selection is an area where assistance from the design committee could benefit.

## Windows and Doors

Windows and doors are possibly the essential characters defining features of buildings. Therefore, historic windows and doors contribute to the architectural character of buildings and should be preserved and maintained whenever possible.

Wood windows and doors should be preserved or replicated. However, energy efficiency, operability, and the security of an existing window may all be improved by many historically and aesthetically acceptable means.

When replacement is necessary, do so within the existing historic opening size and match the original design. Use the same size to avoid filling in or enlarging the original opening. Likewise, any new windows and doors should be designed, located, and sized to complement existing historic windows and doors.

Clear or very slightly tinted glass may be used; no reflective or heavily tinted glass shall be used.

Transom windows should be uncovered and restored when possible. Uncovered transom windows painted black is an acceptable choice until the interior refurbishment is complete.



## **Storefronts**

Primary entrances should be located in the principal façade of the building and open to the sidewalk.

New structures should maintain the established character by continuing to use glass storefronts. In addition, materials used to construct the storefronts, window frames, and door frames should be consistent throughout the building using complementary materials.

Vacant storefronts should not be left empty but should be used to display building rental information, building renovation plans, community events, or other similar information. The display should screen from view the vacant space behind the window.

## **Embellishments**

### **Canopies and Awnings**

Canopies are very history friendly and provide pedestrians with welcome shade during blistering Texas summers. The incorporation of continuous canopies for all new structures in the commercial area is encouraged. New canopies should be constructed of materials consistent with the period and should not attempt to cover more of the façade than the original.

The use of awnings is encouraged whenever appropriate. Awnings also serve a functional purpose as well as provide an architectural embellishment. They should not be used to replace original canopies on commercial structures.

### **Building and Ground Signs**

Signs are critical to the success of the commercial property. They set the tone for the district and direct customers to your location. However, studies show that signs don't have to be large, elevated, or flashy to be effective. These types of signage can be detrimental as businesses strive to be the biggest on the block. Additionally, poorly placed signs may cover up architectural details, which help give a building interest and character.

In general, the best area for signs will be those places containing continuous flat surfaces void of windows, doors, or other architectural details. The most appropriate signs for many older structures will be on the lintel strips above storefronts or transom panels above display windows.

Windows and doors may also be available for appropriate signage. Signs may be placed on the interior side by painting, silk screening, or applying vinyl letters. Window signs should cover no more than 40 percent of the total glass area.

"Shingle" signs may also be hung separately underneath canopies or awnings in front of the building. This type of signage is the most effective for encouraging pedestrian traffic. The building signs show a customer where the building is the first time. Hanging signage lets the pedestrian customer know when he's reached his destination.



Good examples in Bridgeport include Edge Crew Construction and Cool Creek Art Gallery.

The use of internally illuminated signs (backlit plastic) is discouraged. These signs are often stock designs incompatible with the character of commercial buildings in the downtown core area.

Sign lettering should be consistent with the architectural style of the building. Generally, serif styles may be used for commercial and retail uses within the late 19th and early 20th century buildings. In addition, San serif styles may be used for commercial and retail services within buildings dating from the 1930-the 50s.

### **Architectural Details**

Careful research of old photographs and physical evidence from buildings is the best way to determine original details' design and placement. On historical buildings, original details should be retained or, if missing, replaced with more information matching the original design. Details not original to the building should not be added. The addition of inappropriate details tends to confuse the public and diminish the authenticity of historic structures.

### **New Construction Infill**

**Demolition Waiting Period** – There is a mandatory 30-day waiting period between filing and being granted a demolition permit. **During that time property owner must consult with city staff to discuss the future use of the property.**

New buildings are considered additions to historic buildings or new, stand-alone construction. New building materials should be visually compatible with the predominant building materials of the surrounding property, usually brick, wood, or stone. Metal siding is not recommended. The design committee should pre-approve other faux materials, such as fake wood, brick, or stone.

However, there are a variety of new materials available that are especially useful for architectural embellishments in both function and affordability.

## **Main Street Tips for a Successful Downtown Building Rehabilitation**

1. Before beginning any rehabilitation work, inspect the building for water damage and locate leaks. Roof, gutter, parapet and flashing repairs should be made before other rehabilitation work is begun.
2. Never sandblast brick, stone or wood. Abrasive cleaning causes permanent damage and speeds up deterioration of masonry walls. Instead, clean walls with controlled water pressure. If paint stripping is required, use chemicals specially formulated for masonry walls.
3. Make every attempt to locate historic photos of the building to use as your guide for rehabilitation design.
4. Remove slipcovers and fake fronts to expose the original design of the building.
5. Remove plywood and other coverings from transom and second story windows.
6. Do not remove wood windows. These are usually one of the nicest architectural details remaining on the buildings. Most wood windows can be repaired to top condition for considerably less than replacing them with aluminum windows. Wooden windows are more energy efficient than aluminum ones. Repaired wooden windows usually have another 50 years of life.
7. Remove dropped ceilings to expose the original ceilings, which often still have the original pressed metal, beaded board, or tongue and groove covering. Install ceiling fans to improve circulation and energy efficiency.
8. Do not add architectural elements such as shingled mansard awnings, fake wooden moldings over doorways or windows, small paned windows or residential style doors that never belonged on the building.
9. When adding signs and awnings, make sure they “fit” the building. Awnings should be sized and shaped to align with masonry openings. Do not use round awnings on rectangular windows. Be sure to place the awning at the edge of the window and follow the shape of the opening. Almost every building has a natural spot for a sign. Size the sign accordingly. The legibility of a sign is determined by clarity of the lettering style and color contrast between the letters and the background, not the size of the letters.
10. If you can't do a complete rehabilitation all at once, have a long-term plan so it can be completed incrementally.

## Highlight's from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpair

For complete information and tax credit guidelines please visit:

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation.htm>

<https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/buildings-and-property/standards-and-guidelines>