

## ZONING

### *272 Attachment 2*

## City of Watervliet

### APPENDIX A

## BUILDING IMPROVEMENT GUIDELINES

Design guidelines are typically created to guide physical change. They seek to preserve and reinforce a commercial or residential area's positive physical elements and unique character, while eliminating or improving negative ones. Guidelines also help to ensure that public investments made in physical improvements in commercial and residential areas are coordinated and cohesive. Well-crafted design guidelines provide guidance to those undertaking a project and aid the decisionmaking process for determining the appropriateness of proposed changes. Guidelines are not intended to prevent change or stifle creative design but to ensure that when change does occur, it enhances the character of the City's physical character.

The overall purpose of these building improvement guidelines is to:

- Help safeguard a community's historic, aesthetic, and cultural heritage;
- Help stabilize and improve property values;
- Encourage civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past;
- Protect and enhance a community's attractions for tourists, thereby benefiting business and industry;
- Provide an information base and instructions for continuing to improve, enhance and capitalize on a community's unique assets;
- Strengthen the local economy by encouraging private investment in building rehabilitation and business development; and
- Promote the use of landmarks for the education, pleasure, and welfare of local residents as well as visitors and investors.

The intent of the building improvement guidelines is not to "freeze" buildings in a particular time or architectural style but to assist property owners and others to make changes that are in keeping with the building's character in order to protect and enhance the building's economic value. Furthermore, the intent is not to require complete restoration but to ensure that as a building is repaired and updated, the original character is not obscured by unsympathetic alterations.

### APPROACH

Exterior and interior residential and commercial building rehabilitation of older and historic residential and commercial buildings should include the following steps:

- Researching the property before undertaking any work, locating old photographs or other views to guide improvement work.

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- Analyzing and evaluating your building's historic character and significant remaining architectural details.
- Assessing architectural integrity, including physical condition.
- Planning the rehabilitation work.
- Reviewing building codes and other legal requirements.
- Determining if you are eligible for grant funding, technical assistance or tax incentives.
- Investigating project planning options.

### ARCHITECTURAL METALS

Architectural metal features such as cast iron facades, porches and steps, sheet metal cornices, roofs, roof cresting and storefronts, and cast or rolled metal doors, window sash, entablatures and hardware are often highly decorative and may be important in defining the overall historic character of the building. Their retention, protection and repair should be a prime consideration in rehabilitation projects.

#### Typical Problems

- Lack of maintenance.
- Paint failure.
- Corrosion.
- Missing elements such as finials and roof crestings.



#### Improvement Goals

- Identify, retain and preserve architectural metal features such as columns, capitals, window hoods or stairways that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building and their finishes and colors.
- Avoid removing any major portions of the historic architectural metal from a facade. Repair or replace the deteriorated metal.
- Do not reconstruct the facade of a building with new material in order to create a uniform or "improved" appearance.

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- Do not radically change the type of metal finish or its historic color or accent scheme.
- Protect and maintain architectural metals from corrosion by providing drainage so that water does not stand on flat, horizontal surfaces or accumulate in curved, decorative features.

### ARCHITECTURAL MOLDINGS AND TRIM

See section on cornices also.

Architectural moldings and trim are essential in defining and expressing the architectural style of a building. These elements also give a building scale and value. They include cornices decorated with dentils, frieze bands and/or brackets, corner boards, finials, pendants, bargeboards, and window and door casings. Every effort should be made to retain and preserve the special character-defining details that make each building unique and attractive.

#### Typical Problems

- Decorative architectural moldings or trim have been removed or significantly damaged during installation of synthetic siding materials.
- Architectural moldings and trim have often been removed or seriously damaged during installation of modern siding materials or as part of a “modernization” effort by the property owner.
- Architectural moldings and trim have deteriorated or been damaged over time and are in need of maintenance and repair. Examples of deterioration include rusting, missing pieces, damaged pieces, etc.
- Architectural moldings and trim have been covered by synthetic siding materials, obscuring the building’s architectural style.



#### Improvement Goals

- Strong preference is given to retaining, repairing or restoring original or historic architectural moldings and trim because these details are important expressions of a building’s architectural style. Restoration of these elements should be based on existing physical or photographic evidence.

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- Whenever possible, architectural moldings and trim that have been covered over by synthetic siding or other modern materials should be carefully uncovered to allow evaluation of their condition followed by repair, maintenance or restoration.



### BUILDING DEMOLITION

As communities continue to change and grapple with continuing projected growth, there will be corresponding changes in their physical, or built, environments. The purpose of these building improvement guidelines is to help manage this change, ensuring that historically and architecturally distinctive and significant buildings are protected, preserved, and adaptively reused, with new buildings that enable new uses while maintaining the character of the surrounding neighborhood. These guidelines will also help property owners make informed decisions about changes to their buildings, helping stabilize and improve property values by encouraging good design and facilitating building improvements that enhance, rather than detract from, existing buildings and neighborhoods.

#### **Typical Problems**

- Building damage or deterioration resulting from vandalism or neglect, deferred maintenance, fire, flood, or other natural causes.
- Loss of important historic and architectural building elements because of later additions and alterations.
- Extended building vacancy or neglect causes increased repair and rehabilitation costs and imposes direct expenses on the municipality.
- New development or related investment pressures threaten one or more historic buildings.
- Perceived or real building obsolescence discourages potential investors.

#### **Improvement Goals**

- Strong preference is given to building rehabilitation, with demolition strongly discouraged. When demolition is approved, efforts should be made to ensure that a formally adopted or approved plan has been developed for the property and that committed financing is in place for proposed redevelopment. Avoid demolition situations where the result is a poorly maintained vacant lot or minimally used parcel that contributes little to the unique character of the community.

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- Work with code enforcement, property owners, and interested others to proactively identify buildings threatened with demolition, to stabilize and maintain these buildings, and to develop appropriate plans for redevelopment (rehabilitation and reuse or compatible new development).
- Replacement of demolished buildings with incompatible infill is strongly discouraged. New construction that conforms to these design guidelines, as well as to community character (in building height, width, setbacks, and similar characteristics) is encouraged.

## CORNICES

A cornice is any continuous molded projection that crowns or finishes the part to which it is affixed, such as a wall or door opening; most notably the exterior trim of a structure at the meeting of the roof and wall; in classical terms, the upper projecting part of the entablature.

Cornices are an important part of a building's architectural style and overall design, providing important decorative characteristics. They can be made of brick, stone, wood, metal, terra cotta, or other material.

### Typical Problems

- Modern materials cover original cornice elements.
- Original cornice elements are missing or severely altered.
- Metal cornice elements are rusting or paint is failing (peeling, crazing, etc.) on wood cornice elements.
- "Modern" or replacement cornices installed in place of original cornice or added to a building without a cornice.
- Cornice elements have been removed as part of building "modernization."



### Improvement Goals

- Strong preference is given to retaining, repairing or restoring original or historic cornices because they are important expressions of a building's architectural style and character. Restoration of these elements should be based on existing physical or photographic evidence.

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- Whenever possible, cornices that have been covered over by synthetic siding or other modern materials should be carefully uncovered to allow evaluation of their condition followed by repair, maintenance or restoration.
- Include decorative cornice elements when determining new paint schemes.



### DOORS

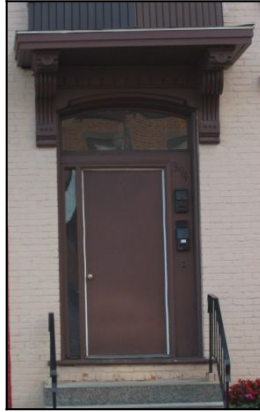
Doors are important functional and decorative elements of a building. They express a building's architectural style and include the door itself, hardware such as hinges, knobs, and locks, and the door frame that holds it in place. A building's front or principal entrance is often reinforced as the main focal point of the front facade by the elaborate treatment of the door and its surrounding features. Doors often display fine craftsmanship in their detailing and choice of materials. Sidelights, fanlights and transom windows are often incorporated into the entrance assembly and are framed by decorative surrounds consisting of hoods, brackets and columns. Doors are often part of the expression of a particular architectural style and contribute to the overall recognition of that style on a particular building. Before any project that might affect the building's doors or entrances is undertaken, their contribution to the overall historic character of the building must therefore be carefully assessed.

Like windows, doors are among the most frequently replaced items of a building. Door replacement includes replacement of original doors with doors from later historical periods as well as replacement of historic (original) doors with modern stock doors commonly available at home improvement stores.

#### Typical Problems

- Original and historic doors have been replaced by modern doors or have been obscured by modern storm or screen doors. Like windows, doors are among the most frequently replaced elements of a building. Typical door alterations include replacement of original doors with doors from later historical periods as well as replacement of historic doors with modern stock doors that are more common in, and appropriate for, new commercial or residential construction.
- Door or entrance elements have been removed or obscured through building "modernization." Fanlights, transom windows and sidelights are closed up, painted over, or covered up with modern materials.
- Door openings are reduced in size or "blocked down" to accommodate modern, suburban style wood or steel doors.
- Storm doors have been installed at many entrances.

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### Improvement Goals

- Strong preference is given to retaining, repairing or restoring original or historic doors and entrances. Restoration should always be based on existing physical or photographic evidence.
- Whenever possible, doors and entrances that have been covered over or blocked down to accommodate modern doors should be restored based on existing physical or photographic evidence.
- Whenever possible, modern doors and storm doors should be removed and replaced with other doors and storm doors that are consistent with the building's architectural style. These include historic doors salvaged from other buildings or replicas made by historic millwork shops.
- Whenever possible, storm doors should be restricted to full view combination models that do not obstruct view of the historic door and its details.



## ENTRANCES AND PORCHES

Many of the original porches and entrance features of buildings are often removed or altered in some way. Some buildings retain portions of their original entrance features or porches, while in other cases original porches have been replaced with modern versions in brick, metal, or wood framing. These include brick enclosures, enclosed front porch additions, and decorative wrought iron supports and metal canopies. In fewer cases, original porches have been retained or restored.

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Entrances and porches are generally major focal points of historic buildings, particularly when they occur on the front (street) or principal elevation(s). Together with their functional and decorative elements such as doors, steps, balustrades, pilasters and entablatures, they can be extremely important in defining the overall historic character of a building. Their retention, protection and repair should always be carefully considered when planning rehabilitation work. At the same time, their alteration or replacement with modern porch or deck materials, can obscure the historic character of residential and commercial buildings.



### Typical Problems

- Original and historic entrances and porches have been removed, partially removed, or replaced with incompatible materials and elements.
- Suburban deck-style porches or entrances have been added to some residential buildings.
- Porches and entrances have been enclosed or covered over by modern materials or new additions, many of which conflict with or detract from the building's original architectural character and style.

### Improvement Goals

- Strong preference is given to retaining, repairing or restoring original or historic porches and entrances because they are important expressions of a building's architectural style. Restoration of these elements should be based on existing physical or photographic evidence.
- Whenever possible, incompatible modern porches, entrances, or similar elements should be removed and replaced with a more compatible porch or entrance.

## MASONRY

Brick and stone are the prevalent masonry materials used. Masonry is used to form walls, wall surfaces, and effects (such as modeling, tooling, bonding patterns, joint size, and color) as well as decorative building elements (such as brick cornices and pediments; stone window architraves, lintels, and sills; terra cotta brackets and railings). It is important to maintain and preserve masonry materials and details because they provide important clues that enable property owners and others to define the historic character of a building.

Masonry consists of the unit itself (brick, stone, concrete block, terra cotta tile, etc.), the mortar used to fill joints between masonry units, and the pattern (or bond) the masonry is laid up in. Masonry bonds and mortar joints add visual interest to buildings and help establish the date of construction.

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Although masonry is among the most durable of building materials, it is also the most susceptible to damage by improper maintenance or repair techniques and by harsh, abrasive cleaning methods. Because of this, most preservation guidance on masonry focuses on concerns such as nondestructive cleaning and the process of repointing or tuckpointing.

The maintenance of masonry surfaces and materials includes surface cleaning, surface painting, repointing of masonry joints, and repair and replacement of damaged or missing masonry units.

### Typical Problems

- Open mortar joints and crumbling mortar.
- Original masonry covered with modern synthetic siding.
- Biological growth such as ivy or moss on brick or mortar joints.
- Deteriorated or discolored brick surfaces.
- Missing or loose masonry units.
- Cracks.

### Improvement Goals

- Protect and maintain masonry by providing proper drainage so that water does not stand on flat, horizontal surfaces or accumulate in curved decorative features.
- Always use the least destructive treatment possible to accomplish project goals. Unpainted masonry should be left unpainted. Water, steam and abrasive cleaning should involve the lowest pressure and least surface scrubbing possible.
- Avoid sandblasting masonry, as this high-pressure abrasion often causes permanent damage, generally changes the physical and visual character of the masonry, and results in additional continuing maintenance challenges.
- Avoid covering masonry with metal, vinyl, or other substitute siding materials. Siding may hide existing or future problems and will not lower maintenance costs.

For additional information on cleaning, painting, repointing, repair and replacement, see the section on additional resources at the end of this document.

## SIDING

Siding refers to the exterior (or surface) wall materials, sheathing or covering of a building or structure. Wall cladding materials are also called clapboards, shingles, and sheathing. Siding was traditionally applied primarily to wood frame buildings, although in more recent years, modern siding materials have also been applied to masonry buildings to cover various cosmetic and structural problems and update a building's appearance. Original siding on older and historic buildings generally consisted of wood clapboards or shingles. From the 1930s onward, these traditional siding materials have frequently been replaced or covered over by substitute synthetic or artificial siding materials made of asbestos, asphalt, steel, aluminum and vinyl.

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The application of substitute or replacement artificial siding materials over traditional wood clapboards or shingles is one of the most noticeable alterations of older buildings in the region. Much of the substitute siding is several decades old and is exhibiting signs of age and deterioration. While restoration of original facade and siding materials is strongly preferred, these guidelines also allow improvement or replacement of existing artificial siding as long as existing historic building components are protected and maintained. All siding modifications and colors should reflect historic facade materials as closely as possible based on photographic or physical evidence.

### Typical Problems

- Among the most noticeable alterations of older and historic buildings is the application of synthetic siding materials, such as faux stone, asbestos and asphalt shingles, and aluminum and vinyl siding, over or in place of original masonry or wood. Although sensitively applied in some cases, the application of replacement siding typically results in the removal and alteration of original building elements (such as cornices, window and door trim, and other character-defining decorative elements) and obscures the building's original architectural character.
- Much of this replacement siding has reached, or is nearing, the end of its useful life.
- Typical problems include:
  - Paint failure in the form of peeling, cracking and bubbling, or lack of any paint or other protective finish on wood siding.
  - Cracking, denting, warping, fading, dirt accumulation and breakage of artificial siding materials such as asbestos, asphalt, aluminum and vinyl.
  - Missing or mismatched siding materials where repairs or other alterations have been made to artificial siding materials.
  - Concealment of a building's original architectural character and character-defining features, as well as concealment of potential problems, in a manner similar to the way fabric slipcovers hide wear on an aging sofa. Hidden problems may include such things as moisture penetration, rotting, cracks and pest infestation.
  - Loss of original character-defining materials such as cornices, decorative moldings, corner boards and other building elements that are often removed when artificial replacement siding is installed on an older or historic building.



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### Improvement Goals

- To improve overall appearance, the principal goal of these design guidelines is to restore deteriorated wood and brick facades and upgrade facades covered with artificial siding that has become faded, damaged, and deteriorated.
- Strong preference is given to retaining, repairing or restoring original or historic siding materials because they are important expressions of a building's architectural style. Restoration of original historic wood siding, clapboards, sheathing and shingles should be based on existing physical or photographic evidence.
- Whenever possible, wood siding that has been covered over by artificial siding materials such as asbestos, asphalt, aluminum or vinyl should be carefully uncovered to allow evaluation of their condition followed by repair, maintenance or restoration.
- Artificial siding should be installed or replaced only as a last resort. When it has already been installed on a building, the preferred improvement will always be repairing and restoring historic wood siding materials. However, in situations where this is not feasible because the architectural character of a building has already been compromised or because of costs, the preferred treatment will be installation of new siding in a way that is as sympathetic to the architectural character of the building as possible. See below for additional guidance.



As research by the Connecticut Historic Trust has shown, there are many good reasons not to install artificial or synthetic siding materials. Although materials such as aluminum and vinyl are often advertised as cost-saving measures, the hidden costs from possible deterioration often make it less cost effective. It also offers little or no long-term gain over the cost of painting. Normally vinyl or aluminum will cost from two to three times as much as a good paint job on the same building (more if the application is sensitive to trim and historical detail), while paint should last from 8-10 years. For vinyl or aluminum to save money over the long haul, it must last for 16 to 30 years and not require any painting. By themselves, vinyl and aluminum offer no increase in insulation, and the insulation backing applied to them is too thin to add appreciable savings. Finally, application of such siding results in a loss of the unique qualities of a building, and this reduces its property value.

Ideally, the use of artificial siding materials would be restricted to new construction or used only on a building addition or secondary facade (side or rear) that is not readily visible to the public.

### ROOFS

The roof shape and features such as cresting, dormers, cupolas, and chimneys, along with size, color, and patterning of the roofing material can be extremely important in defining the building's overall character. Protecting and maintaining the roof as a "cover" is a critical aspect of every rehabilitation project. It is

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equally important to ensure that gutters, downspouts, flashing and other roof elements are properly installed, regularly cleaned out and periodically inspected and maintained.

A watertight or weatherproof roof is absolutely essential to prevent moisture penetration and deterioration of other building elements. A leaky roof can cause problems with, or failure of, walls, ceilings, electrical systems, and masonry.

### Typical Problems

- Lack of maintenance, indicated by missing or damaged shingles, gutters, flashing, and other roof elements and causing roof leaks and moisture penetration.
- Missing or damaged decorative roof elements such as finials, crestings, and balustrades.
- Deteriorated and poorly maintained chimneys (see Masonry section also).
- Roof sagging, indicating possible structural problems.

### Improvement Goals

- Strong preference is given to retaining, repairing or restoring original or historic roofing materials and decorative elements because they are important expressions of a building's architectural style. Restoration of original historic roof materials such as wood shingles, slate, and metal should be based on existing physical or photographic evidence.
- Whenever possible, missing decorative elements such as balustrades and finials should be replaced based on existing physical or graphical evidence. Poorly maintained decorative elements should be repaired in accordance with these building improvement guidelines.

## WINDOWS

Windows are among the most important functional and decorative elements of a building. They allow light and fresh air to enter the building, enable building occupants to view the world outside and express a building's architectural style. The size, type, arrangement, location, material and color of windows affect the appearance of every building.

Windows can be fixed in place (unmovable) or operable. The most common types of operable windows are double- and triple-hung sash, pivot sash, casement windows. Window parts include the frame a window is set into, a lintel made of wood, brick, or stone; a sill at the bottom of the window; and one or more window sash made up of structural elements (traditionally wood) and glass (called lights or panes). Windows often include interior or exterior shutters constructed of wood in solid panels or louvers.

Because of the quality and durability of wood used for window sash in older and historic buildings, they are still in use in many buildings. If well-maintained and kept in good working order, it is likely that these window sash will last for many more years. At the same time, replacing window sash with new wood sash or modern aluminum, vinyl or wood sash has always been fairly expensive. Because of this, property owners have often replaced windows only when they are thought to be beyond repair or on a piecemeal basis to "modernize" their building. For example, a property owner might only have replaced window sash in a front facade to give their property a more up to date appearance. Or front facade windows might have been repaired using sash from side or rear facade windows, with the corresponding rear or side facade windows replaced with new wood, aluminum or vinyl units.

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While sometimes necessary, replacement of original wood sash with aluminum or vinyl units detracts from the historic appearance of a building and limits the opportunities for decorative paint schemes. Repairing wood windows is often less expensive than replacing them with aluminum or vinyl windows. However, repair of replacement windows is generally difficult. If an aluminum or vinyl window frame breaks, the entire window must often be replaced. If the window unit is more than a few years old, it will be difficult to find matching units, resulting in a building with mismatched windows.

It is important to consider all of these issues when thinking about window improvements.

### Typical Problems

- Closing up or “blocking down” window openings to hide unwanted windows or enable installation of smaller modern replacement aluminum or vinyl windows that come in stock sizes that are smaller than original window openings.
- Replacement of original or later historic wood sash with modern aluminum or vinyl sash.
- Installation of modern aluminum or vinyl storm windows.
- Poorly maintained wood, aluminum or vinyl windows and storm sash, with conditions including peeling paint, broken glass, warped sash, and missing aluminum or vinyl parts.
- Covering of window lintels, sills and frames with aluminum or vinyl (in some cases, with loss of decorative historic building elements).



### Improvement Goals

- Strong preference is given to retaining, repairing, or restoring original or historic wood sash and replacing modern aluminum and vinyl sash and storm windows with traditional wood window sash based on existing physical or photographic evidence.
- When retention, repair, restoration or wood replacement is not possible or practical because of substantial window modification at some point in the past, preference is given to repair or upgrading of existing modern window units. Replacement units should be designed to replicate original wood sash as closely as possible, based on existing physical or photographic evidence.
- Window elements should be included in decorative paint schemes.

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### COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND STOREFRONTS

A community's commercial buildings and districts reflect the overall well-being of the area and can help to attract or discourage new business. Buildings and storefronts that are well maintained, that retain original architectural detail and character, and that exhibit creative use of paint colors and signage, communicate volumes about neighborhood, business, and community pride and well-being. Vacant space signals a lack of concern or interest, as well as disinvestment. As many Hudson Valley commercial districts are discovering, well-maintained spaces and districts that emphasize good design, high quality materials, and good retail mix actually attract visitors and customers and can serve as destinations.

#### **Traditional Storefront Design and Function**

The storefront is the most important architectural feature of most historic commercial buildings. Storefronts have always been designed to bring customers into the business, and have always been a key aspect of the store's advertising, merchandising and sales strategy. As architectural styles changed and business sales strategies evolved, storefront designs also changed, and storefronts built in earlier years were often updated to reflect these changes. In many cases, storefront modifications retained the building's original architectural materials and scale. In other cases, however, important architectural elements were removed in favor of modern elements, or covered over in an attempt to modernize.

Before beginning any commercial facade improvement project, it is important to understand that historic commercial buildings generally consist of three major parts:

- Ground floor storefront for retail and commercial uses.
- Upper floor spaces used for professional offices, storage or living quarters.
- Decorative cornice at the roofline.

Storefronts were, and are, an important functional element of a commercial building. They are designed to accomplish two major goals: providing the maximum possible area for the display of merchandise, and providing the maximum amount of light into the display area and sales floor behind it.

To accomplish these goals, traditional storefronts are vertically divided into four major parts:

- Solid lower window panel or bulkhead (sometimes also called a "kickplate").
- Large display windows for exhibiting merchandise.

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- Transom windows to bring additional light into the building
- Visual or physical separation of the storefront from the upper floors by means of a decorative cornice or signboard.

Traditional storefronts usually have two entrances. The principal or commercial entrance was usually given a central location in the facade, although in some cases it was located to the side. It was often recessed to provide a physical transition between the sidewalk and the sales area that also provided additional display space. A secondary entrance, providing access to upper floors, was usually located at either side of the facade.

Although storefront designs changed as architectural and commercial styles changed, this traditional three-part design was generally maintained until the mid-twentieth century.

### Typical Problems

- Missing or damaged historic building elements such as cornices or balustrades.
- Deterioration of painted surfaces shown by dirty surfaces and/or paint that is peeling, cracking, or stained.
- Clear vertical division between storefront and upper floors caused by use of different materials, paint colors, or design elements.
- Storefront signage that is too large, too small, garish or clutters up window display areas, presenting an excessively “busy” appearance.
- Use of materials that do not relate well to the historic facade in terms of type, color, texture and style.
- Door and window openings that have been reduced in size or “blocked down” to accommodate modern window or door units.
- Replacement windows and doors that detract from a building’s historic and architectural character.
- Residential conversions of former storefronts.
- Vacant storefronts that are dirty and untidy.



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### Improvement Goals

- Work with property owners to maintain and/or repair all existing traditional storefronts.
- Restore altered storefronts with traditional materials and design elements as described above, based on photographic or physical evidence.
- Use creative signage to highlight the traditional character of the storefront as well as the related business.
- Maintain or reestablish a clear division between ground floor commercial space and upper floor residential or office space.
- Avoid modifying or “modernizing” traditional storefronts.

### WOOD

Wood is among the most commonly used materials for making architectural features and decorative elements, because it can be easily shaped by sawing, planing, carving, and gouging with hand and mechanical tools. Wood features, including clapboards, cornices, brackets, shutters, entablatures, columns, finials, and balustrades, are both functional and decorative.

These features are extremely important in defining the architectural character of a building, and their retention, protection, and repair are of particular importance in rehabilitation projects. They also add value to the properties they adorn because they are integral parts of the original architectural design, they are important expressions of a building’s style, and they have been handcrafted and have historic value.

### Typical Problems

- Original wood building elements are missing or damaged.
- Wood elements show signs of rot or insect infestation.
- Portions of wood decorative elements are covered with other materials (such as synthetic siding) or have been modified, altered, or obscured by paint buildup.

### Improvement Goals

To improve the overall appearance of buildings in the principal goal of these building improvement guidelines is to restore deteriorated wood and brick facades, upgrade facades covered with artificial siding that has become faded, damaged, or deteriorated, and restore, protect, and maintain historic decorative elements.

- Strong preference is given to retaining, repairing or restoring original wood siding materials and decorative elements. Restoration of deteriorated or missing elements should be based on existing physical evidence or photographic evidence.
- Whenever possible, wood siding and decorative elements that have been covered over by artificial siding materials such as asbestos, asphalt, aluminum or vinyl should be carefully uncovered to allow evaluation of their condition followed by repair, maintenance or restoration.

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- Artificial siding should be installed or replaced only as a last resort. When it has already been installed on a building, the preferred improvement will be always be repairing and restoring original siding materials. However, in situations where this is not feasible because the architectural character of a building has already been compromised or because of costs, the preferred treatment will be installation of new siding in such a way that is as sympathetic to the architectural character of the building as possible.
- Stock decorative building elements, such as those commonly available at large retail hardware and home improvement stores, should be avoided as they are usually inappropriate in terms of scale, size, material, and finish.



### NEW CONSTRUCTION/INFILL

These building improvement guidelines are not intended to prevent change or new construction. Their purpose is to help ensure that changes to existing buildings are compatible with the original architectural character of those buildings and that new/infill construction is compatible with existing architectural styles and development patterns in the City. “Infill” is a word applied to newly constructed buildings that are erected in an already developed area, for example, on a vacant lot between two historic buildings.

#### **Typical Problems**

- New infill buildings are constructed of inexpensive materials and fail to reflect existing surrounding buildings in size, materials, style or character.
- New/infill buildings are set back from the front street property line or “edge,” leaving a “gap” in the facade wall.
- New/infill buildings lack detail, are vehicle-oriented or fail to respond to surrounding neighborhood character in any way.

#### **Improvement Goals**

- New/infill buildings should reflect surrounding buildings in height, width, depth, siting, setbacks and materials.
- New/infill buildings should be constructed using the highest quality materials possible.
- New/infill buildings should reflect the fenestration patterns (patterns of window openings within walls) of surrounding buildings.
- New/infill buildings should blend in with the colors of the surrounding buildings.

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- Copying of historic buildings should be avoided. New designs are encouraged, but should reflect characteristics of existing buildings while expressing modern styles and materials.

### PAINT AND PAINT COLORS

See the Siding and Masonry sections of this document as well.

Painting a building's facade is one of the most cost-effective ways to improve a building and enhance its property value. And, although paint color is a personal choice and people's preferences vary considerably, paint colors play an important role in expressing historic building styles, and because repainting a building is one of the most visible building changes that can be made, this section is provided as guidance for owners of older and historic houses and commercial buildings. Paint is also a critical part of building maintenance. Since it is a coating that protects building elements from weather extremes and sunlight, maintaining painted surfaces is an important part of building ownership.

Like decorative building elements such as cornices, columns, balustrades, doors, windows, roofs, chimneys, and porches, paint colors have historically been an expression of a building's architectural style as well as an owner's personal taste. Paint schemes, or the use of multiple colors on a building, were designed to highlight and contrast different building components and decorative elements. In most cases, no more than three colors are used in a paint scheme.

A house of one period rarely looks its best when painted with colors from another period. For example, a late nineteenth century wood frame building with clapboards, shingles, and decorative elements looks rather anemic when painted white. However, when color distinctions are made between various decorative elements and materials, the building's true architectural character becomes readily evident. Similarly, a brick or stone house requires a dark window sash so that the windows will appear to recede into the facade. A white or light-colored sash, as might be seen on a Colonial Revival style house, makes the windows appear to project, changing the relationship between the walls and the window openings.

### Typical Problems

- Deterioration of paint through natural weathering processes such as the effects of wind, sun, rain, snow, etc. Common problems include bare wood exposure, blistering, cracking, chalking or powdering, crazing, peeling, and fading.
- Accumulated dirt, soot, pollution, cobwebs, insect cocoons, and similar conditions.
- Mildewing caused by excessive surface moisture
- Staining from metallic fasteners and building elements or from chemical reactions between moisture and natural extractives from certain types of wood such as red cedar or redwood.



## ZONING

### Improvement Goals

- Whenever possible, restore and repaint historic wood surfaces using historically appropriate colors.
- Evaluate and maintain painted surfaces on an as needed basis to ensure the stability and longevity of historic building materials. Periodic touch-ups will prolong the life of a paint job and save money over the years.
- Painting a historic building a single color, particularly white, is discouraged. Also avoid covering buildings in a single color of synthetic siding. Color should be used to highlight key components of buildings - foundation, body, window and door trim, etc.



### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- John J.G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Co., 1981).
- Gordon Bock. "Colorful Issues in Choosing Exterior Paint." *The Old House Journal Online*. [http://www.oldhousejournal.com/magazine/2001/march\\_april/exterior\\_paint/default.shtml](http://www.oldhousejournal.com/magazine/2001/march_april/exterior_paint/default.shtml).
- Jan Cunningham, "Vinyl Siding: The Real Issues, A Preservation Guide for Property Owners, Historic District Commissions, Historic Property Commissions," Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, 2001, <http://www.cttrust.org>.
- "Electronic Rehab" (National Park Service) - A brief, electronic interactive web class on the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (<http://www2.cr.nps.gov/e-rehab/>), including sections on getting to know the standards, things to keep in mind or do before you begin building rehabilitation, applying the Secretary of Interior's ten standards for rehabilitation, and testing your knowledge.
- Edward F. Gala, "Avoiding Mistakes in Exterior Painting." *The Old House Journal* (Vol. 4, No. 6, June 1976, pp. 1, 45).
- The "Good Guides" (National Park Service) <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/care/sitemap.htm>.
- Paul J. Jakubovich. *As Good As New: A Guide for Rehabilitating the Exterior of Your Old Milwaukee Home* (Milwaukee, WI: Dept. of City Development, 1993).

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- Paul J. Jakubovich and Les Vollmert. Good for Business: A Guide to Rehabilitating the Exteriors of Older Commercial Buildings (Milwaukee, WI: Dept. of City Development, 1995).
- Paul J. Jakubovich, et al. Living With History: A Guide to the Preservation Standards for Historically Designated Houses in Milwaukee (Milwaukee, WI: Dept. of City Development, 1997).
- Steve Jordan, “Colors for a New Century - Picking Exterior Paint Colors for Post-Victorian Houses.” Old House Journal. <http://www.oldhousejournal.com/magazine/2003/june/colors.shtml>.
- Steve Jordan, “The Vary Best Colors.” Old House Journal (Vol. 4, No. 7, July 1976, pp. 1, 101).
- Sally Light, House Histories - A Guide to Tracing the Genealogy of Your Home (Spencertown, NY: Golden Hill Press, 1989).
- Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).
- Harley McKee. Introduction to Early American Masonry: Stone, Brick, Mortar and Plaster (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1973).
- Norman Mintz. A Practical Guide to Storefront Rehabilitation (Albany, NY: Preservation League of New York State, Technical Series, No. 2, 1979).
- James Morgan, If These Walls Had Ears: The Biography of a House (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1996).
- Roger Moss, Century of Color: Exterior Decoration for American Buildings, 1820-1920 (New York: Amer Life Foundation, 1981).
- Roger Moss and Gail Caskey Winter, Victorian Exterior Decoration: How to Paint Your Nineteenth Century House Historically (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992).
- Roger Moss, ed. Paint in America: The Colors of Historic Buildings (New York: Wiley, 1994).
- National Park Service, Preservation Briefs, <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>.
- Old House Journal - <http://www.oldhousejournal.com/index.shtml>.
- “Special Issue: Exterior Painting.” The Old House Journal (Vol. 4, No. 4, April 1981, pp. 7194).
- George Stephen. Remodeling Old Houses Without Destroying Their Character (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).
- Traditional Building - <http://www.traditional-building.com>.
- Historic photographs.

## ZONING

- Historic building components can often be found at architectural salvage stores. There is at least one in the Capital District - Historic Albany's Parts Warehouse. They carry historic window sash, doors, hardware, glass, and a wide range of other historic building materials that can be purchased and reused on other buildings.