

SECTION 2. COMMERCIAL GUIDELINES

Chapter 6: Introduction and District

Introduction

These design guidelines address the commercial buildings downtown within the Elberton Historic District. These design guidelines are meant to serve the City of Elberton, Main Street Elberton, owners of historic properties, and indeed, all property owners of Elberton. It is the intent of the guidelines to aid the city and property owners in making sensitive and appropriate decisions that affect the preservation and protection of their historic resources.

The intent of these design guidelines is to preserve the resources and integrity of the historic district and to ensure that new construction is in character with Elberton's important historic fabric in both appearance and scale.

Design guidelines provide a common basis for making decisions about design that affect individual properties as well as the overall character of the historic district. The guidelines do not dictate solutions, but rather provide general information to guide owners in making decisions by providing appropriate choices for a variety of specific design issues. Guidelines also identify some design approaches that could potentially damage the building.

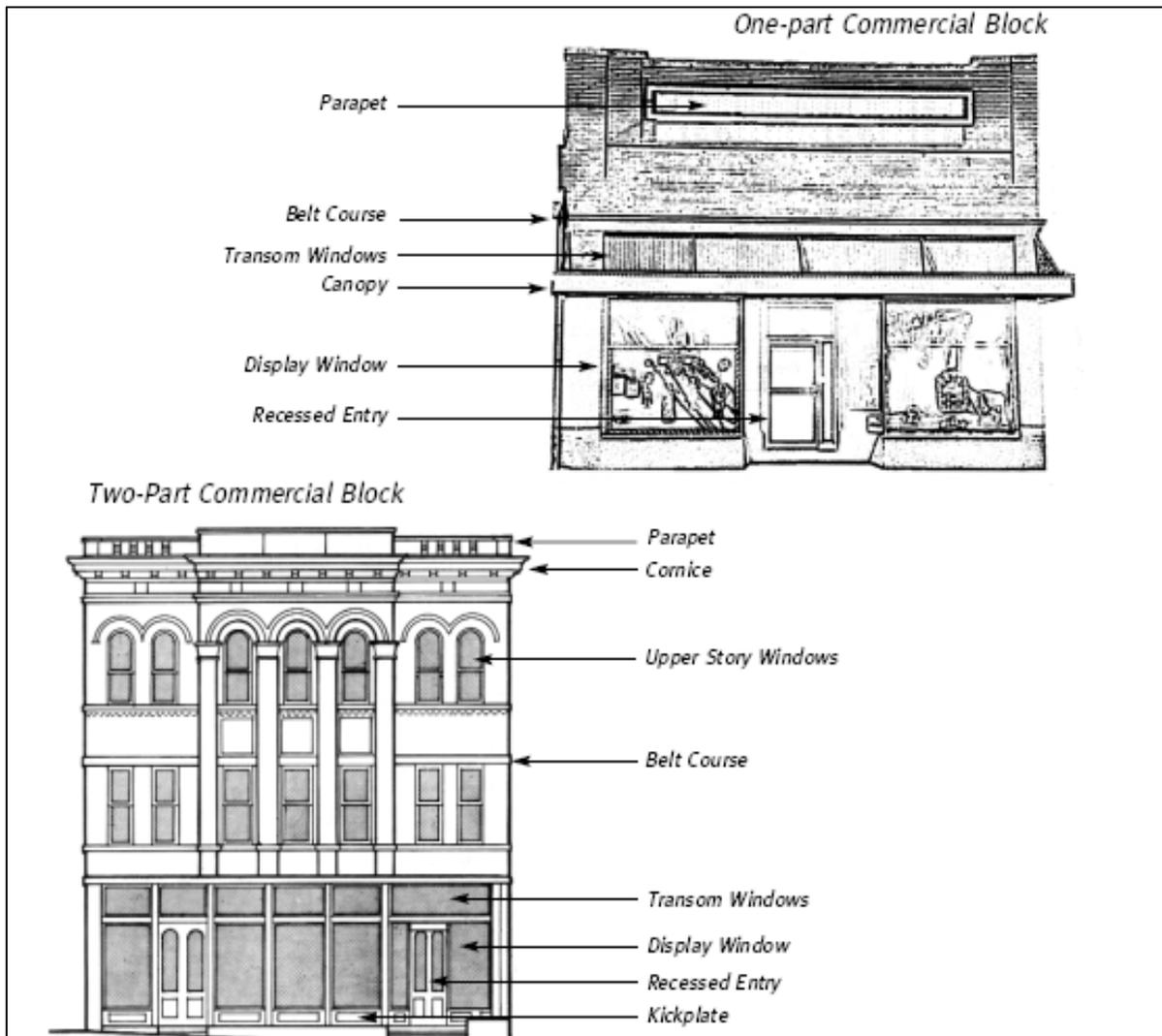
The Main Street Elberton program has been instrumental in the preservation and economic development of the downtown area. Recognized as an important cultural and economic center, the downtown area is an integral component of the city's design character and financial future. In collaboration with the economic tax incentives available, the city's design guidelines are meant to serve as a stimulus for occupancy and rehabilitation of the community's commercial district and residential areas. The city has a large stock of historic resources, and the maintenance and preservation of these assets are integral to the community's design identity and fiscal growth.

District

Elberton's Commercial Historic District is protected by the City of Elberton's Historic Preservation Ordinance. The district includes sections of South Oliver Street, South Oliver, Public Square, North McIntosh Street, South McIntosh Street, and West Church Street. *See Chapter 20, Maps.*

Chapter 7: Architectural and Design Character

The historic district in Elberton contains a wide variety of building types from the late 19th century through the 1940's. While there are several excellent representations of different styles of the period, most of the buildings are of a vernacular type which developed across the United States from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, these vernacular commercial building types are simply described as either "one-part commercial blocks" or "two-part commercial blocks". The majority of commercial properties in Elberton are of the two-part commercial type, which is distinguished by its division of the façade into two distinctive sections, the ground floor and one or more upper floors. The ground floor is very similar to the one-part commercial block containing a storefront or main entrance, while the upper part consists of one or more additional floors with regularly spaced windows often indicating office spaces. The two-part commercial block tends to exhibit more elaborate detailing and ornamentation.



Chapter 8: General Principles for Commercial Design

General Principles



- It is essential to carefully preserve all features, components and details which are original to the building. Do not cover historic features with signs or new material.
- Whenever possible, repair those features that are damaged. Repair is always preferred over replacement.
- When replacement is absolutely necessary, reconstruct the original element as exactly as possible. Replication can be very costly, but if done with care, can salvage the historic integrity of the building.
- If an element is missing, do not replicate it without reference to strong historic evidence of its original form and materials. Similar elements should be considered.
- Remember, any existing alteration to a building that is 50 years of age or older is considered to be historic. Respect the entire history of a building when making decisions.
- Visual clutter should be avoided.

Materials



- The original construction materials of a building should always be preserved. The materials of historic buildings and their craftsmanship give an essential visual continuity and character to the historic district.
- Brick is by far the most common material used in Elberton. It should not be painted if it is the original construction material.
- Do not cover a façade with any material. If the original material has been covered in the recent past, uncover it whenever possible.
- Do not use harsh or abrasive cleaning agents on original materials. Sandblasting is forbidden as it not only destroys the texture of the materials, but it can lead to severe deterioration of the structure itself.



*Photos on right:
Before and After
Rehabilitation*



Storefronts

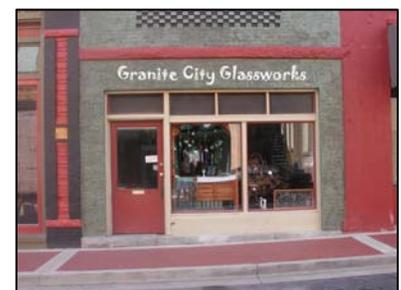
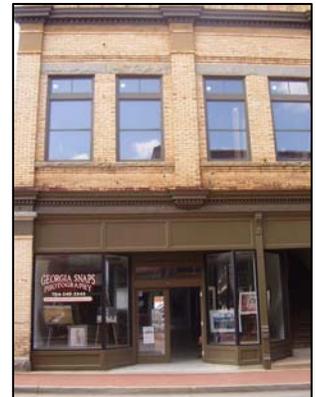


- The original storefront should be carefully preserved when it is intact. Do not alter or obscure the original storefront. This is absolutely essential to maintaining the historic integrity of both the individual building and the historic district as a whole.
- In some cases, an original storefront may have been altered as part of the history of the building. Do not restore such storefront to an earlier period.
- If the glass in a storefront is intact, it should be preserved.
- The original shape of the window openings should be retained.
- If the storefront has been altered in the recent past, the original design should be restored. If documentary evidence of its original form is lacking, a very simplified interpretation of similar storefronts should be used.
- If the original storefront is missing, it is best to consider implementing a new and more appropriate design.
- If there is no evidence of the original design of the storefront, the new design should use the traditional elements of such storefronts.
- Alterations should be avoided whenever possible in buildings that have retained their original, historic features.
- Additions should be avoided whenever possible.
- *Consult Main Street Elberton for guidance.*

Entryways

The entrance of the building is considered the primary focal point of the front façade. The main element of an entryway is the door and display windows.

- Preserve the original orientation of the recessed entryway.
- Maintain the original elements including display windows and doors.
- Recessed entryways offer protection from the elements and help to identify a business.
- Do not alter original elements such as display windows and doors.



Doors

Doors speak to the passerby enticing the casual stroller to enter and experience the building. These doors serve to establish the style and individuality of the buildings in a historic district. The original door structures should always be preserved whenever possible.



- Preserve original doors whenever possible to preserve the building's historic integrity.
- Ensure that any door replacement resembles the original in design, materials, color and alignment. Such replacement should occur only when unavoidable.
- Take care with glass replacement in doors; the glazing should match the original work as closely as possible.
- Do not replace historic door glass with patterned, stained or etched glass, while such glass is attractive, it should be used with caution. Many replacement doors strive for a historic look but instead appear contrived and distracting.

Windows



Some windows in the Elberton business district reflect its historic past while others illustrate the problems that arise when window replacement occurs with no guidelines. Historic windows contain wooden sills and muntins (glazing bars), and are naturally prone to damage from the elements as well as time. Often, the repairs that would have preserved these wooden windows were neglected, leading to their replacement with modern materials, most commonly aluminum framing. Such replacement is one of the most serious compromises to the integrity of a historic building. Also note that it is not necessary to remove existing glass to install thermopane for energy savings. Often reglazing the existing windows and the addition of weather stripping is sufficient. Storm windows are not appropriate for storefront windows, but they may be applied over the second floor window in an unobtrusive manner. There are three main window openings to be considered: display windows, transom windows, and in two-part commercial structures, windows on the upper story.

- Maintain the original configuration of display windows. Typically these storefront windows are large and single paned.
- Maintain original glazing materials and style.
- Restore modified or reduced display windows to original dimensions whenever possible.

- Do not modify the size of the original window openings.
- Do not replace with modern, aluminum framed windows. This will seriously compromise the building's historic integrity.
- Do not install mirror or tinted glass, or black plexiglass. These types of materials will obscure the store display and throw glare on the sidewalk.

Transom Windows

- Repair wooden elements and replace broken glass panes in transom windows.
- Take advantage of the ventilation and ambient light provided by transoms.
- Understand that these windows maintain a balance and linear continuity across storefronts and help unite a block in general appearance.
- Do not paint over transoms or fill in with wood or brick.

Upper Story Windows

- Preserve the vertical design and multi-paned glass typically found in upper story windows.
- Maintain the uniform spacing and proportions of these windows to ensure balance in design.
- Remember that window manufacturers today produce a wide variety of suitable wooden replacements for most historic window openings.
- Do not alter the shape or spacing of upper story windows.
- Do not fill in upper story windows with brick.



Kickplates

Older display windows in Elberton are often supported by kickplates. These decorative panels usually align from building to building lending continuity and color to a block. Often they are accented with ornamental molding or contrasting colors helping a business attract the casual stroller's attention.

- Repair and maintain original kickplates.
- Refer to old photographs of historic buildings when possible as a reference for the proper width and height for the restored kickplates.
- Take care with the choice of colors in any kickplate replacement. Adherence to the original color scheme will compliment the building façade.



Awnings and Canopies

A large number of buildings in downtown Elberton feature wooden or metal canopies suspended below transom windows. In some instances, fabric awnings have been installed over windows and entrances. These elements obviously serve the public's convenience providing shelter from spring showers and summer sun but it is important to note that the linear form of these canopies and awnings lend a strong visual continuity to the commercial district.



- Maintain and repair existing canopies and awnings.
- Ensure that any required repairs or replacements fit the proportions of the storefront.
- Respect the surrounding color scheme and building façade when replacing any awnings as this will compliment the overall continuity of the historic ambiance in the downtown district.
- Do not remove existing canopies; any such removal will seriously compromise the existing façade material and endanger the historic integrity of the building.

Cornices and Parapets



Many of the commercial buildings in downtown Elberton feature patterned trim at the top of the façade known as the cornice. The cornice consists of an ornamental molding that often projects from the façade and runs along the top of the building parallel to the roof line. This molding might be a metal band or lip, a brick pattern or an inset design. A few buildings also are crowned with a type of balustrade referred to as the parapet. The lovely parapet tops the roof line in a variety of styles. It can be succession of urns or railing, a series of rectangular blocks or even a combination of peaks and steps. Often the parapet consists of an arched construction bearing the name of the building and its erection date. Consider the cornice and the

parapet as the crowning elements of a well preserved historic structure.

- Maintain and repair any cornice or parapet that has suffered damage or neglect.
- Refer to historic photographs of the building in order to maintain the original design of the cornice or parapet.
- Incorporate original materials in any repairs whenever possible.

Chapter 9: Porches and Stairs



Porches, staircases, or balconies which are not historically documented should not be added to the side or front facades of buildings in the downtown commercial district.

Staircases and balconies of a simple design constructed of wood with plain balusters set no more than three inches apart may be added to the rear façade if necessary.

Do not replace original step material with brick or concrete, or “imitation historic” handrails and balusters where none had existed in the past. Handrails and balusters may be added when it is necessary to meet safety requirements. In this instance, the replacement materials should be simple and constructed with a compatible building material.

Handicap ramps may be added to the rear façade if this is necessary for handicapped access. The ramp should be constructed of wood and have simple balusters no more than three inches apart.

Chapter 10: Rear Entrances and Side Facades

Preserve, maintain, or restore the original openings (window and door) and architectural features on the rear and side facades of the building.

Side and rear facades may be adapted for more usability through the addition of signs, awnings, and lighting that is similar to that used on the front façade.

Windows and door openings on side and rear elevations follow the same guidelines as those on the front façade. In instances where a new door or window is added to the rear or side façade, it must be in keeping with size, scale, and material of the original openings. If the original design is unknown, a simple opening that is accurate to the period is recommended.

Side and rear elevations should be coordinated among neighboring buildings to create a sense of cohesiveness and design continuity.

Exterior staircases, balconies, elevator shafts, and additions necessary to comply with building and fire codes should be located in the rear of the building. For more information on Americans with Disability Act (ADA) contact the Fire and Building Inspector.



Chapter 11: Site Elements

Landscaping and Streetscapes

Preserve, maintain, and enhance the landscape patterns and features, both natural and man-made, such as vegetation, street furniture, walks, drives, retaining walls, curbs, and paving materials that distinguish the downtown streetscape.

Do not use solid walls or fences (especially chain link fences). Use simple iron fences, painted or stained picket fences, or shrubs to define spaces where separation is needed.

Lighting

Preserve, maintain, or repair historic light fixtures where they currently exist or previously were located.

If repair of a historic light fixture is not possible, the replacement fixture should be a simple design that is compatible with the style and era of the building.

Mechanical Units

Mechanical units such as dumpsters, large trash cans, and storage sheds should be located at the rear of the building or parking area. These units should be hidden from public view, and surrounded by a painted wood fence or shrubbery. The primary objective is to keep these units out of public view, and to surround them with landscape buffers to lessen their impact.

Parking

Parking lots should be screened with materials similar to those used on neighboring buildings with low shrubbery and trees. These landscape features should surround the edges, entrances, and medians of the parking lot. Their purpose is to shield the public from viewing an open lot, and also to provide a defining edge for the lot among the other parcels in the downtown area.

Chapter 12: Additions and New Construction

- New construction should be contemporary and compatible with the surrounding historic environment. The new building should not be reproduction of a historic style but rather a contributing modern addition to the district. In order to be compatible, the new structure must incorporate the scale, height, materials, shape, orientation, rhythm, and proportion of the openings, texture, and placement of the historic buildings.
- Reconstruction of historic buildings is only allowed if the reconstruction will occur on the original building site and be constructed according to accurate documentation of the historic structure. Historic photographs, original line drawings, and other records must be used in the reconstruction process.
- A historic building should be moved from its original site if the only alternative is demolition. The lot that the building will be moved to must not require the loss of another historic building, and the moved building must blend into the architectural environment of the new setting before the move is approved.
- Infill construction in the commercial district should not be obtrusive to the surrounding environment. It must be compatible with the historic context in terms of building scale, mass, height, materials, shape, orientation, rhythm, proportion, and roof shape. Windows, doors, and other openings must be arranged in a manner similar to the other buildings in the area. New buildings should have the same number of stories and be within 10% of the average height of adjacent buildings within the same block.

Openings

- Openings shall be compatible in scale, size, and proportion to establish patterns of openings in adjacent and surrounding buildings. Industrial structures should have glass/metal storefronts with fixed doors, while other commercial buildings use traditional configurations.
- New buildings should have a similar ratio of openings to solids (e.g. windows to walls) as adjacent and surrounding buildings.
- New commercial buildings should maintain the historic relationship of large storefront (first floor) opening to smaller window and door openings on upper floors.
- New storefronts in commercial areas should maintain the front plane of the building, should provide for appropriate recessed entries and should be sensitive to building proportion, scale and emphasis.

Foundations

- New foundations should be of masonry construction. Granite is a traditional material in Elberton and should be utilized if possible.
- Foundation materials should be appropriate to the building on which they are located.
- Foundations should be compatible in scale, materials, and style with adjacent and surrounding buildings of similar style and function.

Roofs

- The roofs of new buildings should relate in shape, pitch, and materials to the roof of adjacent and surrounding buildings.
- Any skylights or technological equipment should be carefully placed to have the least negative impact on the exterior appearance of the site, structure, adjacent and surrounding buildings. Equipment should be hidden from public view.
- Roofing materials should be appropriate to the building on which they are located.

Decorative Details

- Installation of ornaments which gives a building an “imitation historic” appearance is not permitted.
- The decorative details and articulation of new construction should relate in scale, rhythm, proportion and texture of adjacent and surrounding historic buildings.

Building Materials

- Installation of materials which give a building an “imitation historic” appearance will not be permitted.
- Materials must be in scale to the building on which they are located and must be compatible with materials on adjacent and surround buildings.
- In areas where strong continuity of materials and texture is a factor, the continued use of those materials is strongly recommended.

Chapter 13: Building Demolition

- Generally, demolition of historic fabric will not be permitted to allow for new construction.
- Avoid demolition of any building or part thereof which contributes to the historic or architectural character of Elberton, unless it is so seriously structurally unsound or deteriorated (as determined by a structural engineer, historic architect, or other historic preservation expert) that its retention is not feasible.
- Demolition may be allowed if it can be sufficiently proven that a denial of the demolition permit would cause an unbearable financial burden on the property owner. Proof of economic hardship is the burden of the property owner and will be determined by the HPC.
- Demolition may occur if required to ensure the public safety and welfare.

Chapter 14: Signs for Commercial District

Signs should be subordinate to the overall building composition. Scale signs to the façade of the building. Locate signs to emphasize design elements of the façade itself. Do not obscure architectural details or features with signage. Mount signage to fit within existing architectural features using the shape of the sign to help reinforce the horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street.

Appropriate Sign Types

Flush-mounted wall signs.

- Place wall signs to align with others on the block.
- Determine if decorative molding exists that could define a “sign panel”. If so, locate a flush-mounted wall sign to fit within a panel formed by molding or transom panels.
- Do not obstruct character defining features of the building with signage.
- Size should not exceed 1.5 square feet per 1 linear foot of business frontage and should not exceed 2.5 feet in height
- Wall signs should not be painted on the surface of the building and can consist of painted signboard only or painted individual letters affixed to painted signboards.



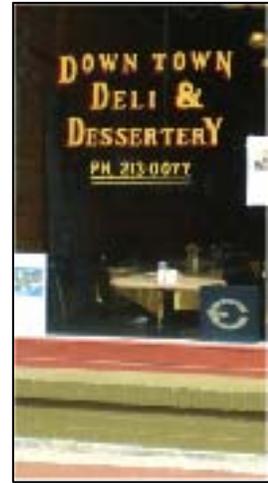
Projected signs.

- Locate small projecting signs near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side of it. They should not be located higher than the second-story window sill level.
- Mount large projected signs higher on the building, centered on the façade or positioned at the corner.
- Review all pertinent regulations when planning signage that will overhang the public right-of-way.
- Signs should be no more than 5 feet from the face of the building and at least 1 foot inside the curb line.
- Size should be a maximum of 12 square feet.



Window Signs.

- Be painted on the display window or door window.
- Cover no more than 25% of the total window area.
- Should be 3-4 feet above the sidewalk at the center point for good pedestrian visibility. Optional locations should include 18 inches from the top or bottom of the display window glass. Window signs are also appropriate on upper-floor windows and the glazing of doors.
- Be painted on the glass or hung inside the window.
- To increase readability, letters should be painted and outlined in black or a dark color.



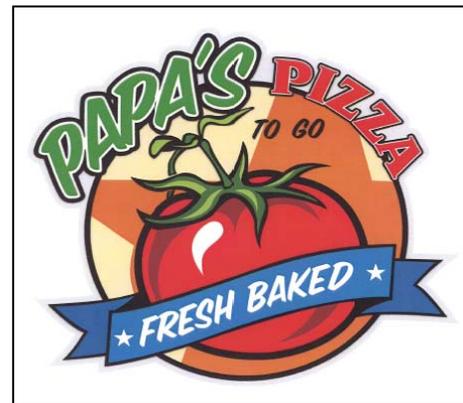
Awning Signs.

- Signs on awnings offer a viable method of identifying a business.
- Color(s) should coordinate with the awning and the rest of the building façade.
- Signs should be painted or sewn onto awning skirt or valance.
- Lettering should not occupy more than 65 % of the surface plane on which it occurs.
- Usually 6-8 inch high letters are sufficient.



Franchise Signs.

- Often, franchise agreements require a business to display a franchise sign or national logo.
- Variances should be considered in cases of franchise agreements, national logos or established business logos. Every attempt to meet the design guidelines should be made to meet the needs of the downtown business owner as well as the overall good design of Elberton's downtown. The applicant must furnish the HPC with a piece of letterhead stationary or a business card for purposes of consideration by the HPC.



The use of permanent free-standing or ground signs is prohibited.

Sign Materials

Use signage materials that are compatible with the building façade.

- Painted wood and metal is highly recommended.
- The use of plastic, foam, plywood, unfinished wood, neon or backlit materials is not permitted because they are out of character with the context of the Downtown Historic District.
- Do not use highly reflective materials that are difficult to read.
- The use of HDU (high density urethane) material will be considered on a case by case basis.



Sign Design

Using a symbol for a sign is encouraged. A symbol sign adds interest to the street, can be read quickly and is remembered better than written words. A simple sign design is preferred. Typefaces that are traditional are encouraged. Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate typeface styles.

Sign Lighting

Use indirect lighting on signage. Direct lighting at signage from an external, shielded lamp. Use lighting that provides a warm light similar to daylight. Do not use internal illumination. A system that backlights sign text only is preferred.

Sign Coloring

Use colors that complement the materials and color scheme of the building, including accent and trim colors. Use of florescent or day-glow colors is not permitted. Three colors (including black and white) per sign are recommended. Signs with darker colored backgrounds are easier to read.

Sign Lettering

No more than 60% of the sign area should be devoted to lettering. Letters that are 8-18 inches in height are large enough to read. Lettering styles should be of good representation of Serif, San Serif and Script.

Number of Signs

The number of signs used should be limited to 2 per building in any combination sign types. Businesses located on corners may use 3 signs in any combination of sign types.

In some instances a building can have more than one business tenant on the street level, upper floors or basements. Signage for building with multiple tenants should be unified in appearance. Consider a directory sign to consolidate small, individual signs onto a single panel as a directory to make them easier to locate.