



Bessemer Historical Preservation Commission

Design Review Guidelines Handbook

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Introduction

City of Bessemer Historic Design Guidelines

Bessemer Public Library ca. 1907



Workers installing brick pavers on 3rd Avenue



Introduction

The mission of the Bessemer Historical Preservation Commission (BHPC) is to promote the preservation and use of historic sites, places, and properties for a better Bessemer.

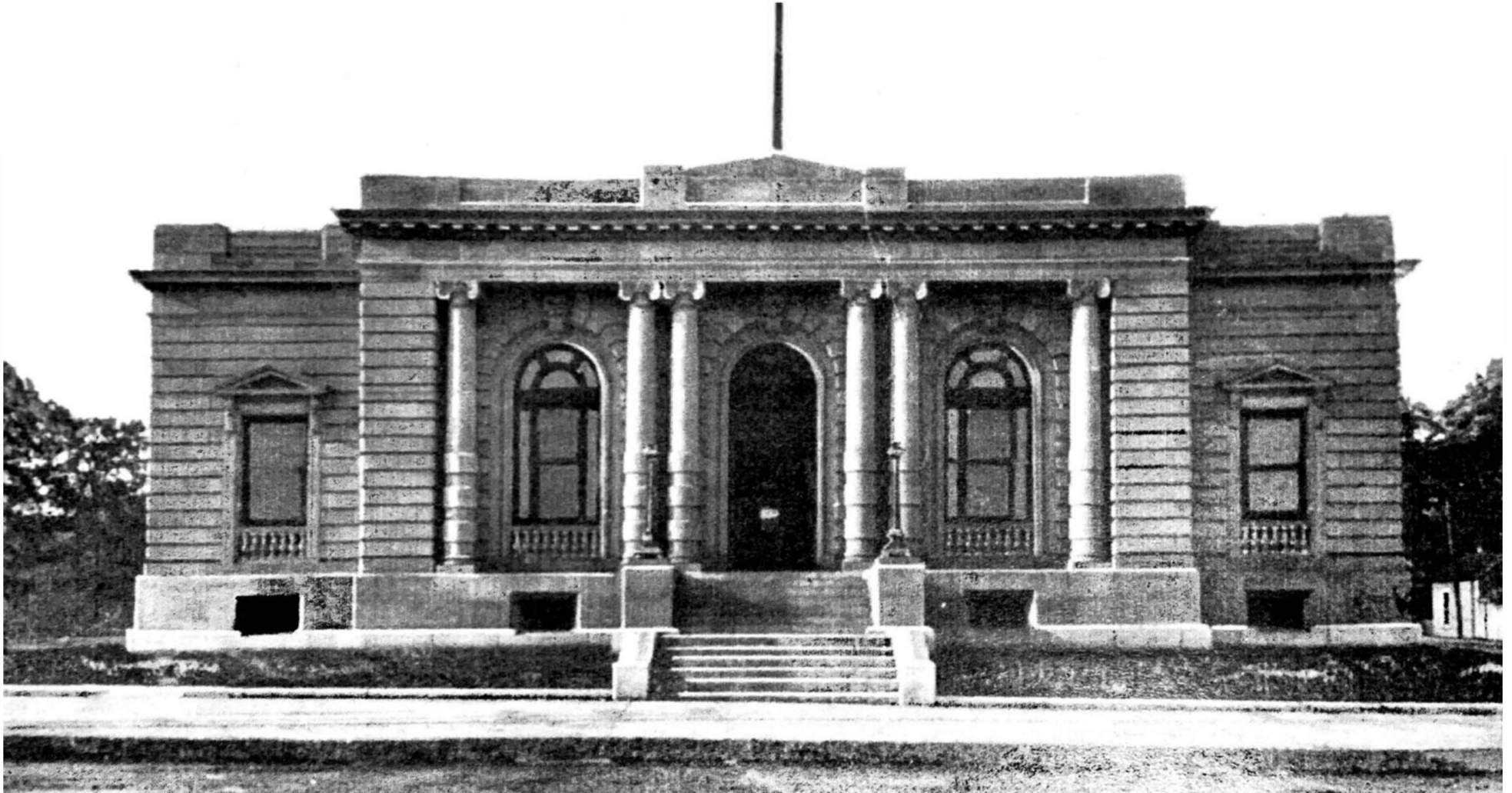
To that end, the City of Bessemer in 1992 adopted Ordinance #2541, thereby creating the Historical Commission of the City of Bessemer. In 2020, the commission was reinstated. The ordinance provides the mayor with the authority to appoint a seven-member commission to recommend designation of local historic districts and landmarks and provides for design review for all building-related activities to the designed structures.

Downtown Bessemer contains some of the most unique late 19th and early 20th century buildings in the State of Alabama. These buildings are a valuable economic asset. The city of Bessemer, founded in 1887, soon earned the nickname "The Marvel City": It earned this moniker by becoming one of the fastest growing towns in Alabama. This growth laid the foundation for the rich architecture which may be found in our city today. Proper renovation and maintenance can stabilize and strengthen property values as well as attract businesses and tourists. By implementing design review standards, the city can greatly enhance its image. This helps not only the population of the city, but also the business owners who provide valuable goods and services to the public. The following design review guidelines are to serve as a balancing mechanism between the days of yesteryear and the reality of tomorrow. Bessemer, like other cities, has its own unique qualities and the guideline seek to preserve these defining characteristics for future generations to enjoy and hopefully preserve.

The guidelines that follow are not intended to be inflexible, rather they are to serve as a guide for you to make improvements to your property. The guidelines are broad and allow for maximum creativity. They give the BHPC a way to determine whether proposed work is appropriate to the historical character of downtown. The end result of adherence to these guidelines is a pattern of growth that maintains the rich heritage of the National Register Historic District.

These guidelines were created by the Bessemer Historical Preservation Commission with assistance from the City of Bessemer's Economic and Community Development Department, the Bessemer Industrial Development Board, the Downtown Revitalization Authority, Alabama Main Street Program, and the State of Alabama Historical Commission.

The Bessemer U.S. Post Office Branch ca. 1908. Now houses the Bessemer Public Library



Definitions

The following words, terms, and phrases, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning

Certificate of Appropriateness

A document evidencing approval by the historic preservation commission of an application to make a material change in the appearance of a designated historic property or of a property located within a designated historic district.

Exterior Architectural Feature

The architectural style, general design and general arrangement of the exterior of a building or other structure, including, but not limited to, the kind or texture of the building material and the type and style of a window, door, sign and other appurtenant architectural fixture, feature, detail or element relative to the foregoing.

Exterior Environmental Feature

An aspect of the landscape or the development of a site which affects the historical character of the property,

Historic District

A geographically definable area designated and recognized as a historic district.

Historic Property

The individual building, structure, site, object or work of art including the adjacent area necessary for the proper appreciation thereof designated and recognized as a historic property.

Material Change in Appearance

A change that will affect either the exterior architectural or environmental features of a historic property or any building, structure, site, object, landscape feature or work of art within a historic district, such as:

- A reconstruction or alteration of the size, shape or facade of a historic property, including relocation of any doors or windows or removal or alteration of any architectural features, details or elements.
- Demolition or relocation of a historic structure.
- Commencement of excavation for construction purposes.
- A change in the location or advertising visible from the public right-of-way; or
- The erection, alteration, restoration, or removal of any building or other structure within a historic property or district, including walls, fences, steps and pavements or other appurtenant features

Criteria for Application of Certificate of Appropriateness

Approval of Alterations, Demolitions or New Construction in Historic Districts or Involving Historic Properties

After the designation by ordinance of a historic property or a historic district, no historic property may be demolished, no building or structure in a historic district may be erected or demolished, and no material change in the exterior appearance of such historic property, or of a structure, site, object or work of art within such historic district, shall be made or be permitted to be made by the owner or occupant thereof, unless or until the application for a certificate of appropriateness has been submitted to and approved by the commission.

Approval of New Construction within Designated Districts

The commission shall issue certificates of appropriateness to new structures constructed within designated historic districts if these structures conform in design, scale, building materials, setback and landscaping to the character of the district specified in the design criteria developed by the commission.

Approval of Signs within Designated Districts

Signs shall be considered as structures, and no sign on a historic property or in a historic district shall be changed, erected, or demolished unless and until a certificate of appropriateness is approved by the commission.

Approval of Alterations, Demolitions of Public Property within Historic Districts or Public Property Designated Historic Property

The requirement of a certificate of appropriateness shall apply to public property which has been designated as a historic property or which is contained in a historic district and shall apply to all actions by public authorities which involve historic properties and properties within historic districts.

Color

Changes in exterior color shall require a certificate of appropriateness.

Approval of Painting Originally Unpainted Surfaces

The painting of originally unpainted surfaces shall require a certificate of appropriateness.

Interior Alterations

In its review of applications for certificates of appropriateness, the commission shall not consider interior arrangement or use if there is no effect on exterior architectural features.

Failure to Maintain a Historic Property

The commission shall adopt rules and regulations setting forth the procedure for submission and consideration of applications for certificates of appropriateness. The commission shall also adopt general design standards which shall apply in considering the granting and denial of certificates of appropriateness. Design standards shall be in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects including the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Guidelines and Criteria for Certificates

Demolition by neglect and the failure to maintain a historic property or a structure in a historic district shall constitute a change for which a certificate of appropriateness is necessary.

Submission of Plans

The following information is required for submission along with the application.

Steps for Completion of Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

1

Fill out application as noted, indicating all work proposed.

2

Each item of proposed work will need to be described and the attached drawing(s) submitted must be to scale and include all detail.

3

Attachments include samples of actual paint color to be used and current and Historic photograph(s) (when applicable),

4

Contact The Economic and Community Development Department to review and sign the application form and attachments prior to submitting the application to the BHPC

5

Submit one (1) original and ten copies of the application and supporting documents (excluding models, material, color samples and photos when one is sufficient) to the Economic and Community Development Department located at City Hall, 1700 Third Avenue North, Second Floor.

Submission of Plans

The following information is required for submission along with the application.

New Construction

- Set of plans, specifications and renderings showing all exterior elevations; overall dimensions; type of material to be used on walls, roof, windows, trim, etc.; color samples and any other helpful information.
- Site plan with dimensions, proposed fences, accessory buildings, exterior lighting, etc.
- Signs with lettering, colors, and lighting to be used.
- Color photographs of adjacent properties.

Extensive Exterior Alterations or Repairs

- Same as new construction

Minor Exterior Alterations or Repairs

- Drawings and/or color photograph of main (front) elevation of building.
- Drawing and/or color photograph of area of building to be altered or repaired if not the front.
- Written detailed explanation of work to be done including materials to be used and paint samples
- Written description or drawing of site plan explaining fencing, accessory building, etc.

Painting Only

(New color or unpainted buildings)

- Color photograph of building
- Paint sample of colors to be used for the: main body of building, trim or decorative features, foundation walls, shutters, etc.

Signage Only

(Signs are considered as structures)

- Scaled drawing of proposed sign
- Total area of sign
- Samples of lettering to use
- Colors to be used
- Type support or standard
- Proposed Lighting (if any)
- Placement of sign on lot and/or building including distance from property lines, etc.

Fencing Only

- Drawing or photograph of type fencing proposed
- Placement on lot
- Materials
- Proposed height
- Paint samples if fence is to be painted

Demolition Permits

- Requisite plan for proposed development

Building Permit Regulations

- Criteria for submission of an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, or the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, does not preclude the requirements of other city ordinances and building codes applicable throughout the city.
- The owner should contact the Building Inspections Office when improvements and new construction involve City Building Codes such as electrical, plumbing, site, setback, etc. for such approvals and permits.

Review Process

Acceptable Reaction to Applications

- (A) The commission shall approve the application and issue a certificate of appropriateness if it finds that the proposed material changes in the appearance would not have a substantial adverse effect on the aesthetic, historic or architectural significance and value of the historic property or the historic district. In making this determination, the commission shall consider, in addition to any other pertinent factors, the historical and architectural value and significance, architectural style, general design arrangement, texture and material of the architectural features involved and the relationship thereof to the exterior architectural style and pertinent features of the other structures in the immediate neighborhood.
- (B) The commission shall deny a certificate of appropriateness if it finds that the proposed material changes in appearance would have substantial adverse effects on the aesthetic, historic or architectural significance and value of the historic property or the historic district. The commission shall not grant certificates of appropriateness for demolition or relocation without reviewing at the same time the post-demolition or post-relocation plans for the site.

Public Meetings and Hearings on Applications; Notices and Right to be Heard

Applications for certificates of appropriateness shall be considered by the commission at public meetings. At least seven days prior to review of a certificate of appropriateness, the commission shall take such action as may reasonably be required to inform the owners of any property likely to be affected by reason of the application and shall give the applicant and such owners an opportunity to be heard. In cases where the commission deems it necessary, it may hold a public hearing concerning the application.

Deadline for Approval or Rejection of Application

- (A) The commission shall approve or reject an application for a certificate of appropriateness within 45 days after the filing thereof by the owner or occupant of a historic property, or of a historic structure, site, object or work of art located within a historic district. Evidence of approval shall be by a certificate of appropriateness issued by the commission. Notice of the issuance or denial of a certificate of appropriateness shall be sent by U.S. mail to the applicant and all other persons who have requested such notice in writing filed with the commission.
- (B) Failure of the commission to act within the 45-day period of consideration shall constitute approval, and no other evidence of approval shall be needed.

Review Process

Necessary Actions to be Taken Upon Rejection of Application

- (A)** If the commission rejects an application, it shall state its reasons for doing so, and shall transmit a record of such actions and reasons, in writing, to the applicant. The commission may suggest alternative courses of action it feels proper if it disapproves of the application submitted. The applicant, if he so desires, may make modifications to the plans, and may resubmit the application at any time after doing so.
- (B)** In cases where the application covers a material change in the appearance of a structure which would require the issuance of a building permit, the rejection of the application for a certificate of appropriateness by the commission shall be binding upon the building inspection officer or other administrative officer charged with issuing building permits and, in such cases, no building permit shall be issued.

Appeals

Any person having a request for a certificate of appropriateness denied by the commission, or architectural review board may appeal such denial to the circuit court.

Recording of Applications

The commission shall keep a public record of all applications for certificates of appropriateness and of all the commission's proceedings in connection with such applications.

Requirements of Conformance with Certificate

- (A)** All work performed pursuant to an issued certificate of appropriateness shall conform to the requirements of such certificate. If work is performed not in accordance with such certificate, the commission shall issue a cease-and-desist order and work shall cease.
- (B)** The city council or the commission shall be authorized to institute any appropriate action or proceeding in a court of competent jurisdiction to prevent any material change in appearance of a designated historic property or historic district, except those changes made in compliance with the provisions of this article or to prevent any illegal act or conduct with respect to such historic property or historic district.

Void if Construction not Commenced

A certificate of appropriateness shall become void unless construction is commenced within six months from the date of issuance. Certificates of appropriateness shall be issued for a period of 18 months and are renewable.

An aerial photograph of the Downtown Bessemer Historic District, overlaid with white line art that highlights the outlines of buildings, streets, and trees. The text "Downtown Bessemer Historic District" is centered in large, bold, white letters.

Downtown Bessemer Historic District

City of Bessemer Historic Design Guidelines

Bessemer City Hall ca. 1889



Downtown Bessemer Historic District

Bessemer is an excellent example of an industrial city of the New South, invented practically overnight by businessmen who had the means and the energy to realize their dreams of vast wealth for themselves and for their state and region.

Bessemer is also a relict (now fortunately diversifying and standing on its own) of a system of incentives and deals, offered by a business-controlled government, that produced immediate gain for the owners and managers but over time enshrined a political culture that pauperized the public sector to promote a virtual recolonization of the Southern states by North-based industry. Exploitation of its assets notwithstanding, Bessemer is significant as a mining, milling, and manufacturing center, at one time second in Alabama only to Birmingham for the abundance of her resources and the production of her industrial facilities.

Architecturally, Bessemer remains the best example of a Victorian boom town in the Birmingham district. Despite losses, refacings and other changes, the downtown commercial district contains a good collection of late 19th century and early-to-mid-20th century commercial buildings, primarily in brick, ranging from the earliest Berney Bank Block with its Richardsonian Romanesque attributes (1887) through the simpler storefronts and more restrained

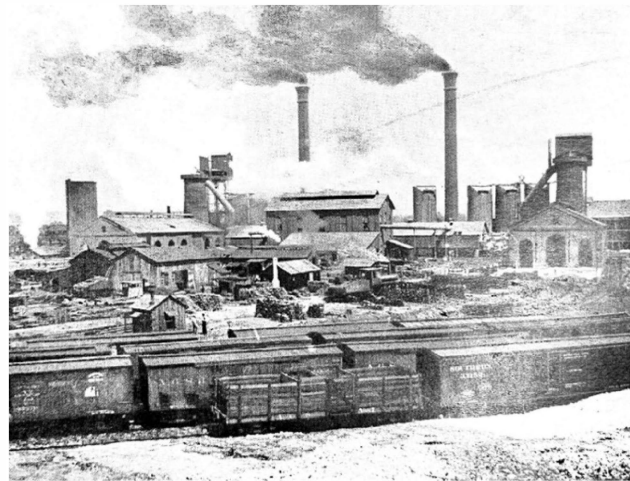
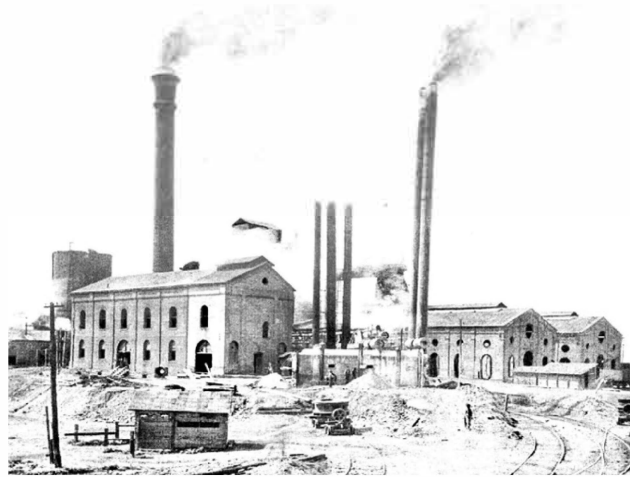
Classical decorative elements of 1910-30 buildings (e.g., Alabama Power Building, 1926), to the functional small commercial structures of the 1920s and into the '30s. Domestic architecture is represented primarily by houses ranging from simple to elaborate versions of the Queen Anne style, dating from the earliest period of residential building. One frequently encountered sub-category of commercial structure is the automotive service building; most of these have been altered, even where they are still in use as automotive buildings, but several retain their original open corner bays and garage doors. Finally, there are a few examples of Modernism, primarily the 1938-41 City Hall.

There developed a predominantly Black commercial district along First Avenue between 18th and 20th Streets, turning the corner of 19th and extending up part of the block. Even after the end of segregation in the 1960s, this area of the downtown has continued to be home to Black-owned businesses and centers of entertainment. Much of the early built environment near the railroad has unfortunately been destroyed;

Steam Engine leaving the Alabama Great Southern Railroad Depot ca. 1916.



DeBardeleben Coal and Iron Company ca. 1888



Bessemer Iron & Steel Company ca. 1890

over time the commercial center expanded to the north and west of the original surveyed blocks, eventually intruding upon areas that until relatively recently had been almost exclusively residential. This transition explains the presence in the inventory of some residential buildings (although most now in commercial use) interspersed among the commercial structures, and also explains the presence of newer commercial and office structures in the midst of otherwise historic streetscapes. Although there are a number of historic facades that are behind screens and therefore on the non-contributing list at this time, it is anticipated that many of the screens will be removed in the course of downtown revitalization. In any case, the many structures that retain much or most of their original style and materials even now constitute a significant collection of late 19th- and early-to-mid-20th-century buildings. As preliminarily drawn, the historic district extends from Carolina Avenue on the southeast to Fifth Avenue on the northwest, with a finger reaching up to include Diana Hall (c.1926) on Sixth Avenue; and from 17th to 20th Streets North southwest to northeast, with Second Avenue extended almost to 21st Street.

An aerial, isometric sketch of a city street grid. The drawing is done in a light blue or white line-art style on a dark background. It shows a dense network of streets with various building footprints, some with multiple stories. There are also clusters of trees and a few small vehicles like cars and trucks scattered throughout the scene. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down on the city layout.

Design Review Guidelines

City of Bessemer Historic Design Guidelines

How to Use the Guidelines

Locate the guideline as it will be stated in the ordinance, An explanation of the guideline and in many cases an illustration that shows the ideal outcome or what is not allowed will follow.

Application of the Guidelines

1

The guidelines shall apply to the exterior portions of the buildings that are either facing a street or are visible from the public right-of-way, for instance along an alley. There will be no intent in these guidelines to monitor interior arrangements, design, or decor.

If any part of the building can be seen from the street, the restrictions, and guidelines of the BHPC are applicable. The BHPC is not concerned with decoration or arrangement in the interior of the building, except in the case of storefront windows which will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

2

A primary concern of these guidelines is good maintenance of properties. Nothing in these guidelines shall be constructed to be counterproductive to maintaining a building according to the City of Bessemer's Building Codes and Ordinances.

This guideline simply states that this ordinance does not conflict with The City of Bessemer's Building Codes and that it does not in any shape, form or fashion prevent anyone from maintaining a building within the district.

3

For ordinary maintenance not involving changes in materials, style or other exterior applications, the applicant may petition the BHPC for an expedited review procedure as described in Ordinance #2541.

If nothing on the building is being changed and only routine maintenance is being requested, i.e., clean the building, then the BHPC can review the application quickly, providing the application has been submitted to the HPC one (1) week prior to its regularly scheduled meeting.

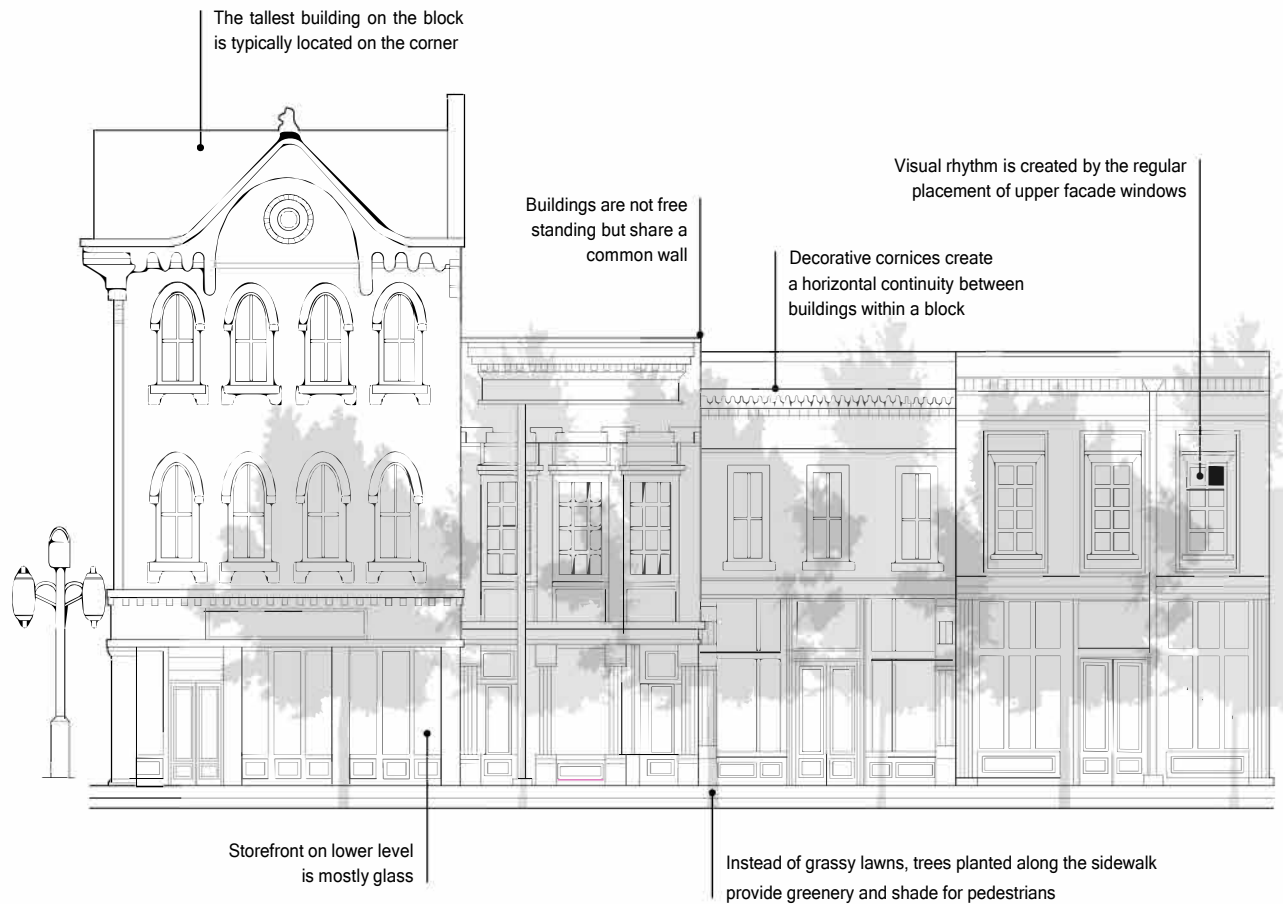
4

Only in cases of demonstrable and irreversible damage to original material will a building's covering or replacement be considered.

Only in extreme cases where a building has been proven to receive such damage to its original facing that it is not safe nor feasible to repair, then, and only with the consent of the BHPC, will a covering or replacement be considered. However, please bear in mind that "feasible," is not the same as not affordable.

Setback

The streetscape is as important to the visual character of the "Main Street" district as are the buildings themselves. The overall appearance of the streetscape is the result of the layout of street and lots, the way buildings were placed on the land, and how buildings relate to each other and open spaces. Alabama commercial buildings typically have zero lot lines; that is, the building covers the whole lot. They front the sidewalk with no setback, no front or side yards, only trees on the curb side of the walk, creating a pattern of street-curb-sidewalk-building.



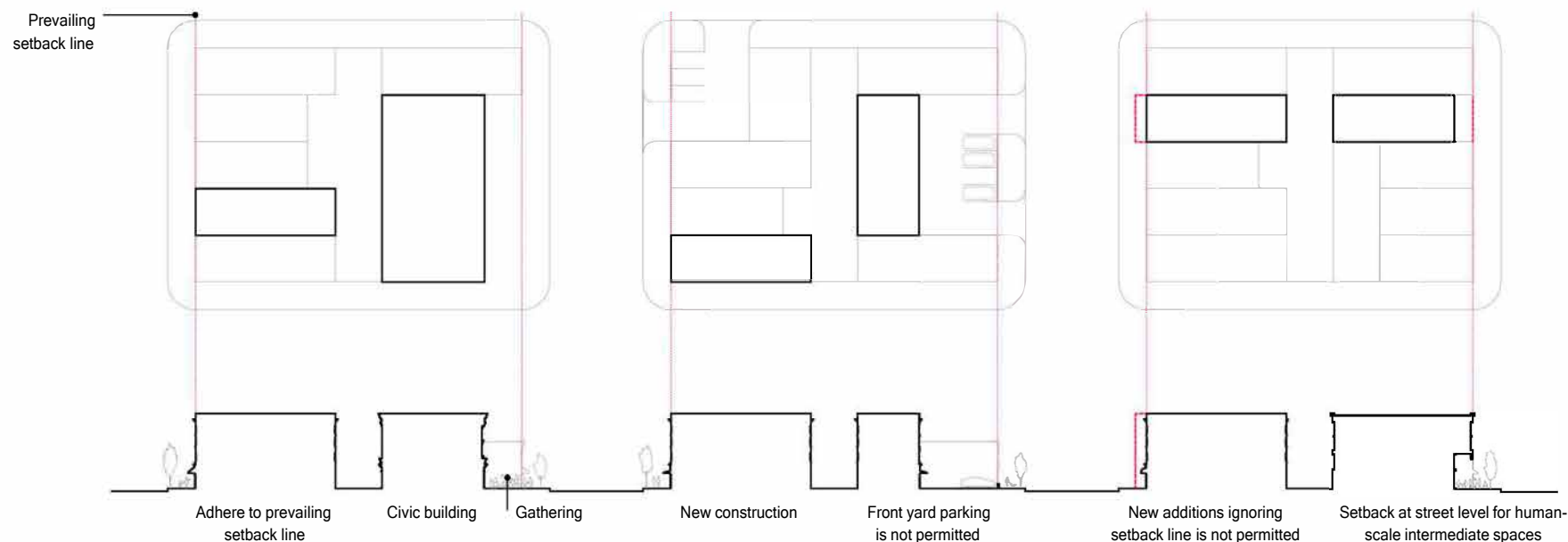
Setback

Buildings should abide by the street's predominant setback which is typically near the back of the sidewalk; however, civic buildings may be set back to highlight their significance and create a gathering space.

New buildings should not be set back to include front yard parking, even if that pattern exists on the block.

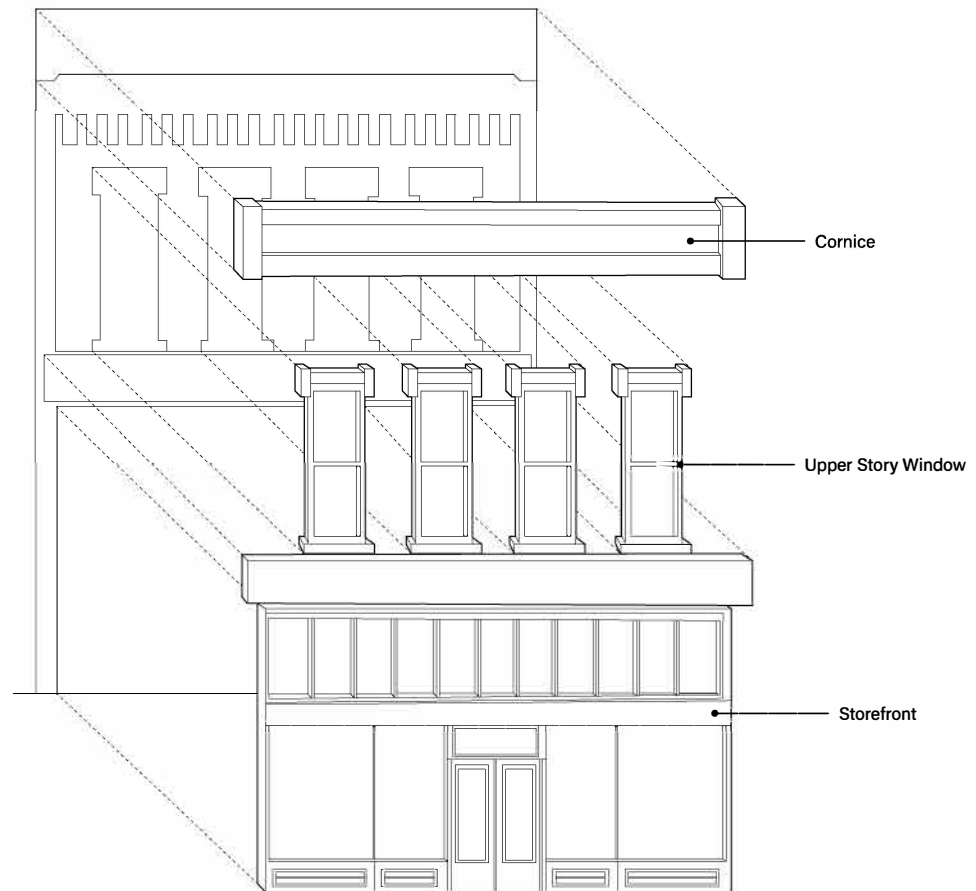
No new construction will be permitted in front of the building line of the existing buildings on the block. *In Alabama, most blocks are constructed along a building line 10–12 feet from the roadway. New construction will not be permitted for buildings that ignore this line and build closer or further to the roadway than existing buildings.*

New construction can have a setback at first floor to accommodate outdoor dining and retail and to activate the street.



Façade

Multi-story commercial buildings can be visually divided into three horizontal sections: the storefront on the street level which is mostly glass; the upper story, which is used for offices, storage, and sometimes as a residence and is defined by the upper story window, a cornice or parapet at the top crowns the whole composition. Although there are several good examples of commercial styles in Alabama, the majority of Main Street buildings are not easily classified by style. Most of the commercial buildings downtown are local interpretations of styles popular in America from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth Century and are best described by the particular "element of style" they display.



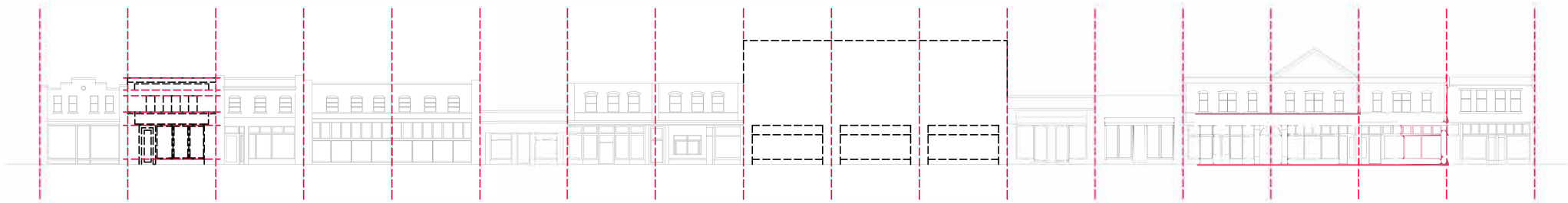
Façade

New construction in the historic district must be compatible and harmonious with the existing scale, materials, and setbacks of the existing historic blocks.

This should not be interpreted as an attempt to inhibit modern building styles or techniques, whether utilitarian or decorative. The intent is to maintain a sense of continuity and wholeness that out-of-scale or jarringly variant structures would compromise or destroy.

The vertical and horizontal patterns of new buildings should relate to those of adjacent historic buildings to ensure continuity. Horizontal elements such as storefront height, sign placement, windows and cornices can be matched in new facades without replicating the style or design of adjacent facades.

New construction within the historic district will be very heavily scrutinized for harmony and architectural features. Before beginning construction, the property owner should consult with the Bessemer Historical Preservation Commission and the Community and Economic Development Department for Design Review.



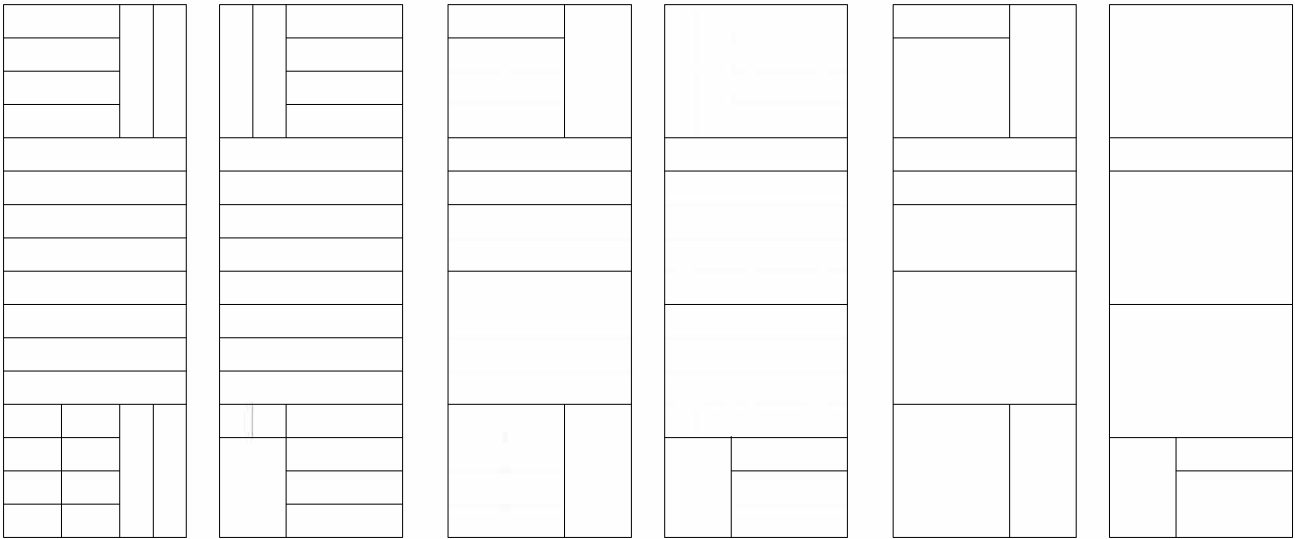
The facade design of infill buildings should be influenced by horizontal and vertical expression lines of adjacent historic buildings,

Structural Grid

Where possible the urban structural grid should not be ignored. Commercial buildings share common "party" walls and are not seen as individual structures but as a series of facades in a block along the street.

Structural divisions, such as the width of column bays, were typically 25 feet in historic buildings to create cohesion along the street. These increments correlated to the typical width of downtown lots and are reflected in the composition of wider facades. New buildings should continue the established rhythm.

Maintaining structural grain supports small businesses. In the process of new development for the historic downtown it is important to not lose the historic character of the urban blocks.



Urban Morphology Through Time

Recommended

Not Recommended

Historic Urban Structural Grid

- Defined Street Character
- Supports Small Business

Uncontrolled Urban Structural Grid ,
Lost Historic Urban Identity

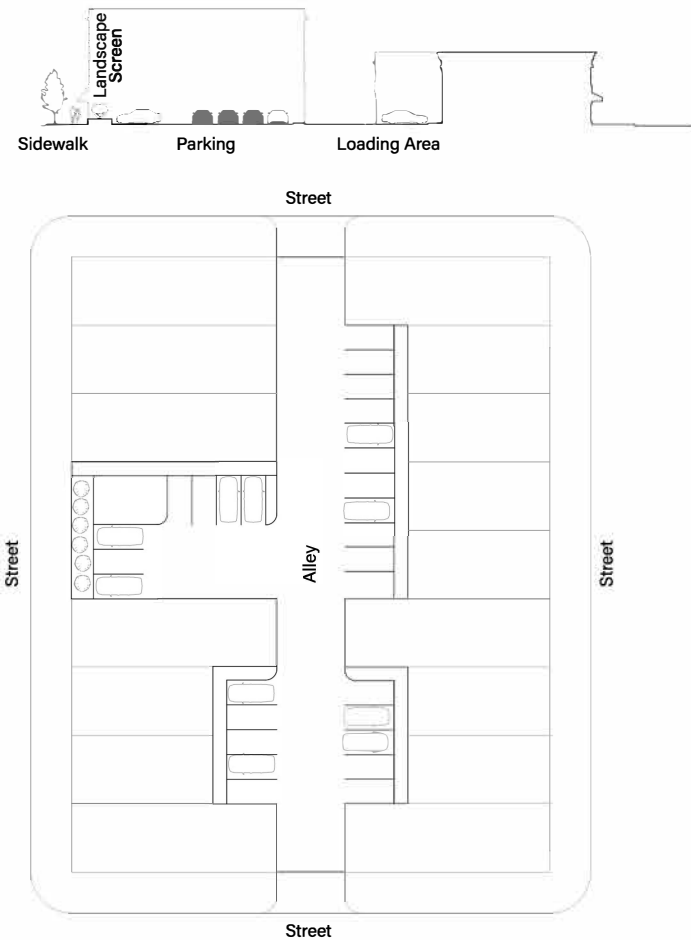
Parking & Service Areas

Vacant lots and parking lots shall be kept clean and in good repair. Any owner of a vacant lot or a parking lot is asked to keep the area free of trash, debris, woods, abandoned vehicles awaiting repair or any other unsightly items. These areas may not be used for storage of any kind.

Rear loading docks and entrances shall be kept in good condition and shall be identified by appropriate signage (see rules regarding signage). If the building has a rear loading area or entrance, then the BHPC asks that these areas be kept clean and free of trash and debris. These rear areas may be identified following the rules set forth in the "Signage" section of this handbook.

Off-street parking and loading areas can be placed at the rear or side of the building to maintain a pedestrian-focused, attractive street environment. Parking to the side of the building cannot face a corner of the urban blocks. It must always be perpendicular to the street and located between buildings.

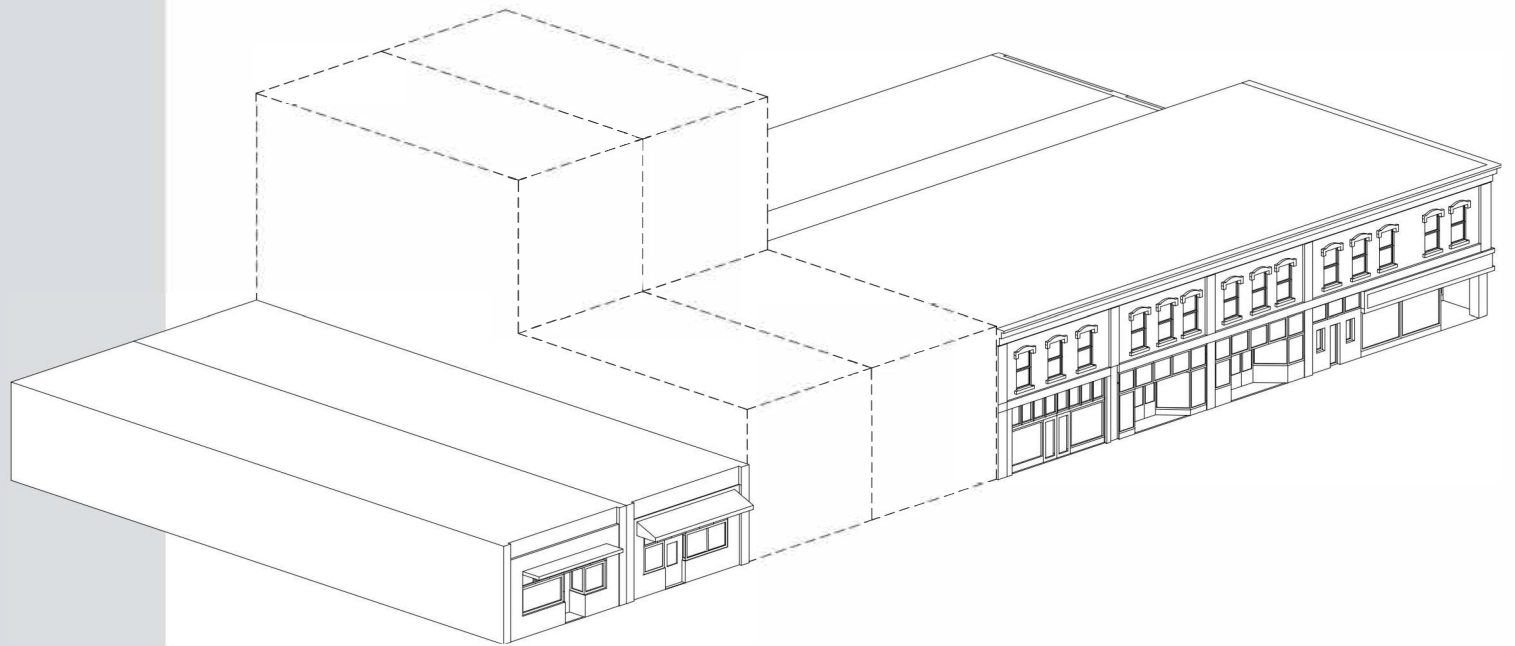
A fence, wall or landscaping should be used to separate side parking or loading areas from the sidewalk.



Building Height

The street buildings in Bessemer range in height from one to four stories, with most buildings being two stories tall.

- If a proposed building will be much taller than those adjacent, the upper levels can be set back to maintain the continuity with existing buildings and minimize the height difference.
- Floor-to-floor heights of new buildings should be similar to those of historic buildings.



Color

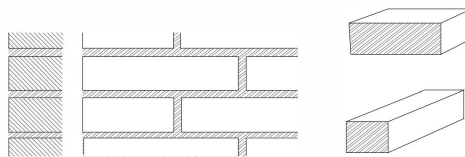
- If the building has not been painted, then in order to preserve its character, please do not paint the building. However, if the building has been painted, the HPC urges that a color matching as closely as possible to the original color of the building to be used. For example, if the building now has a coat of yellow paint, but was originally painted a deep red, then please use a color matching the deep red. This adds to continuity of the streetscape and should also increase the value of the building. The standard not only applies to the brick or masonry actually used in the construction, but also to the mortar or cement used when the facility was first constructed. If a situation develops such as mortar joints fracturing or even turning to sand, then please repair the structure. However, be sure to use care when selecting new mortar. The BHPC requires that any new mortar used must match the original as closely as possible. If a close match cannot be found, the BHPC will assist in the selection of alternative colors. Also, not only does this guideline applies to colors, but to workmanship as well. Please find a constructor who has experience in pointing and tucking joints. This will add to the aesthetics of the building.
- Historically, unpainted masonry surface shall not be painted. Exceptions to this may be side or rear walls that have uneven color or texture due to removal of party-walls, previous patching, or other visually disparate elements. Any paint on masonry shall match the color of the unpainted portion of the building. As previously mentioned, if the building has not been painted, please do not ruin the historic character of the building by adding layers of paint or any other type covering. However, the above guideline does offer relief from this restriction in *some cases*. For example, if the side or rear walls have multiple colors or if existing paint has faded in places while not in others, painting may be allowed. *Also*, due to condemnation and/or demolition, walls may be exposed that were not previously visible from the right of way and these walls may require patching and general repair. If in fact this *is the case*, repairs and painting may be allowed, but will be subject to other guidelines contained within this handbook. The colors of any patchwork or painting must be pre-approved by BHPC.
- Aluminum storefront framing elements in historic buildings must have an enamel coating. Specific colors must be approved by the BHPC. The enamel coating is more durable than paint. All storefronts made of aluminum should be a bronze finish or other dark color. Final approval of colors must be made by BHPC.
- New building color schemes may include a maximum of three colors. The primary color should be the natural dominant building material color. Two additional colors can be featured in the trim materials, architectural details, and awnings. Muted and neutral colors are recommended as they tend to be more compatible with those used on the exteriors of adjacent buildings. Bright and vibrant colors are prohibited. For new construction, in selection of paint colors compatible with neighboring historic buildings, one can make use of paint manufacturer's heritage or historic color palettes. For major projects, it is recommended to get a professional paint color analysis for the color selection. Final approval of colors must be made by BHPC.

Material

Historically in Alabama, first generation wooden commercial buildings were destroyed by fire and then replaced with masonry buildings. Masonry is the most commonly used construction material for Alabama commercial buildings, the root of the word masonry is "Mason;• one who builds with brick or stone. Today, the term also applies to terra cotta, cast concrete, and stucco (a type of exterior plaster). Masonry has several advantages over wood as a building material for commercial districts. It is more resistant to the spread of fire than frame buildings and is considered a low- maintenance material because it generally does not require a coat of paint for protection.

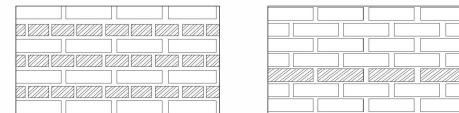
Brick is a molded rectangular block of clay that has been fired to make it durable. The size and shape of a brick is small enough for a single workman to handle. The long part of the brick is called the stretcher, and the end is called the header. Bricks were often made locally and came in various colors and textures. Tapestry brick which had a "combed" texture was popular from about 1920-1940.

Bricks in a wall are held together by mortar. The mortar was typically, a combination of lime and sand which was both water soluble and flexible enough to allow the joints between bricks to expand and contract with the change of temperature. For finishing touch, craftsmen could create concave, flush, beaded, raked, or grapevine type joints. The arrangement or pattern of bricks in a wall is called the brick bond. A bonding pattern is identified by the relationship between headers and stretchers. For example, common or American bond has one row of headers for every five so seven rows of stretchers. English bond has a row of headers followed by a row of stretchers. Flemish bond has alternating headers and stretchers within each course. All stretcher bond is a brick veneer, not a structural wall.



Stone commercial buildings were far less common in Alabama than brick ones. Stone, particularly limestone, granite, and later cast concrete, were often used to accent architectural features of brick buildings. The stone itself could be shaped into rectangular blocks or placed in the wall as irregularly shaped rubble. Stone could also be finished with a chisel or hammer to create a rough (called rusticated) or smooth surface.

The second generation of commercial buildings generally, dates from late nineteenth century; their character-defining features come from the technological advances and tastes popular in the Victorian Era. The cast iron and plate glass storefront, awnings, manufactured bricks, decorative cornice, window hoods, and placement of signs are key visual features of Alabama commercial buildings.

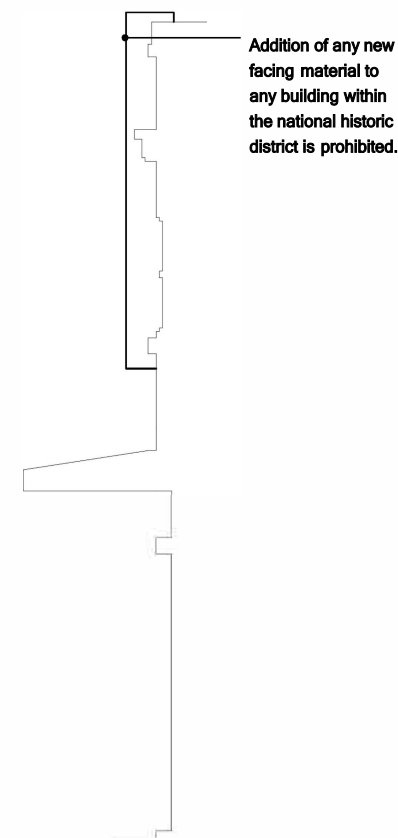


Terra cotta is derived from Latin meaning "crooked earth" As a building material, terra cotta is fine clay cast into hollow blocks and often finished with a glaze. However, unglazed decorative terra cotta tiles were used on Victorian Era commercial buildings in Alabama. Circa 1920, whole structures, such as the Kress building, were veneered with glazed terra cotta.

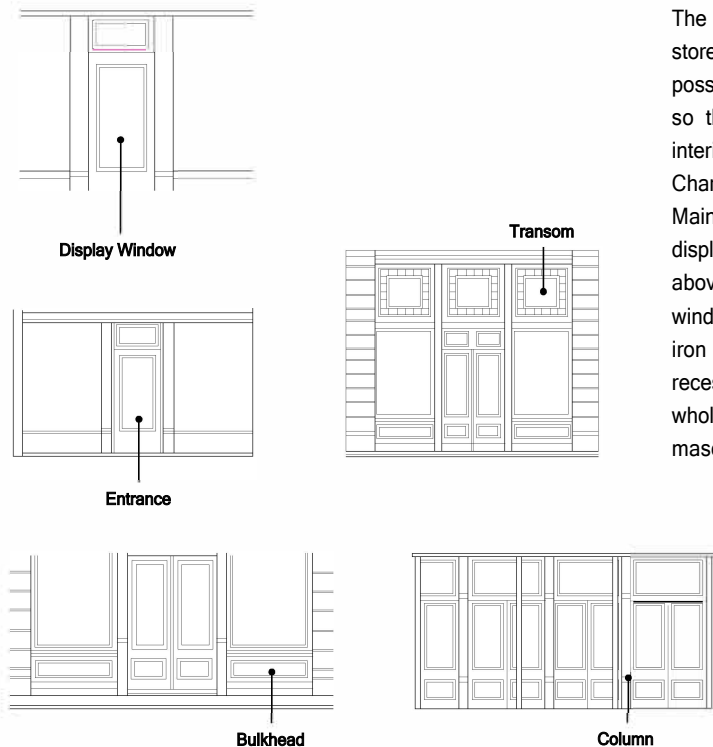


Material

- New structures should respect the material and character of neighboring structures. *Any new structure will be required to match the building material and character of any neighboring building.*
- Masonry that is unpainted shall be kept clean and in good repair, with no loose or extraneous elements adhering. Any patching to a masonry surface must be of the same material and color, resembling the original, and in cases of patches to brickwork, all bonding and pointing must match the original. No blasting, sand or otherwise, nor other harmful cleaning methods will be permitted. *In keeping with the City of Bessemer's attempts to preserve our architectural Heritage, the BHPC has adopted this guideline. The BHPC asks that owner of buildings with masonry fronts keep them in a as good as condition as possible.*
- In order to preserve the delicate features of the buildings downtown Bessemer, the BHPC has strictly forbidden the use of any type of blast cleaning, whether it is done by sand, glass, or other material.
- Decorative masonry such as brackets, cornices, honeycomb brick patters, etc., must be maintained in as close to the original condition as possible. In cases where these have been damaged, replacement must be with the same material as the of that of the original. Exceptions may be made in rare cases, such as the material is no longer in use or has been deemed a health hazard, per the approval of the BHPC. *In many cases, Bessemer buildings have beautiful cornice work or other decorative features. In order to preserve these unique fixtures, the HBPC requires that these items will be maintained in original condition. If the occasion arises that a portion of the feature is broken or damaged in some way, the HPC requires that the feature be repaired using original material.*
- Existing facing materials such as metal screens, masonite panels, fiberboard, plywood panels, or sheet-metal, etc., must be kept in good repair or removed to expose the original material underneath. No new facing material over original material will be approved under these guidelines. In the sixties and seventies it became popular to cover masonry facades with metal facing material. In the mid to late eighties, the movement to preserve historical structures began. With that movement came the discovery that many architecturally significant structures existed underneath layers of metal panels. The BHPC will not allow the addition of any new facing material to any building within the National Historic District. Furthermore, the BHPC encourages building owners to remove any covering known to obscure an original building front.



Storefront



The traditional Alabama Main Street storefront employed as much glass as possible, marking it essentially transparent so that merchandise was visible, and the interior was flooded with natural light. Characteristic elements of the Alabama Main Street storefront include plate glass display windows with transom windows above and bulkheads below. The display window was supported by wood or cast-iron columns, the entrance was typically not recessed and had a glass panel door. The whole storefront was framed structurally by a masonry pier on each side.

Advances in glass-making technology in the late 19th century made it feasible to produce large plates of glass inexpensively. The glass storefront made it possible for merchants to display goods to passing pedestrians. The combination of cast-iron and plate glass created the storefront as we know it today—large expanses of glass and thin structural supports.

Windows were raised off the ground by panels or bulkheads made of wood, cast-iron, or pressed metal. The bulkhead, also referred to as a kickplate, protected the glass and elevated merchandise within the display window for easy "window shopping."

Often transom windows were located above the display window in order to provide more light and ventilation. Around the turn of the century, decorative transoms became increasingly popular. This storefront has an interesting example of Queen Anne (one

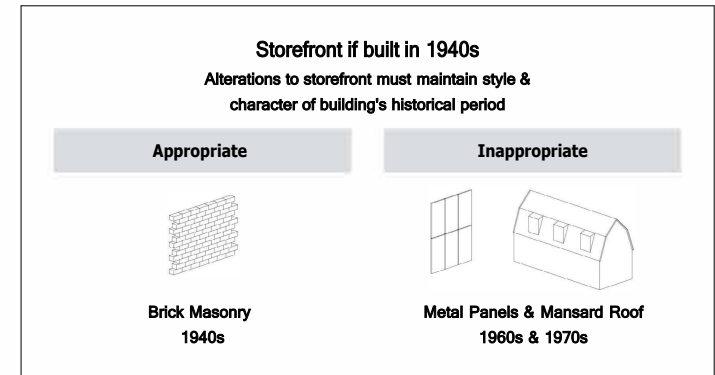
large panel of glass surrounded by smaller panes of stained glass) transom windows.

Architectural cast-iron was available after the 1840s. Use of cast-iron columns and lintels transformed the design of storefronts. Architectural cast-iron storefronts could be either ordered through catalogs or transported by train or made locally. In the 1870s, ornamental stamped sheet-metal storefronts became popular.

The typical storefront had a recessed entrance. This not only protected shoppers from the weather, but also increased the amount of display space for merchandise. In the 1920s and 1930s, new materials, such as structural glass and stainless steel, were introduced. At this time, storefront design became more streamlined. New variations of the recessed entrance appeared in the form of curved glass and free-standing display islands.

Storefront

- The storefront is defined as the entrance, show window, sign panels or transoms, And any other elements of the building up to a height of fourteen feet from grade.
- Glass show windows and transoms, where still intact, shall not be obscured or covered with any other material. Glass show windows and transoms were designed to make the most efficient use of sunlight. Obstructing an intact show window or transom is prohibited. In the instance where deterioration has occurred, the BHPC urges its restoration.
- Transoms shall be uncovered or faced in a manner to reflect their original framing elements and proportions within the historic storefront. Transoms should only be faced with approved glass, such as glazed.
- Inappropriate changes to the original style and character of a storefront will not be permitted. In accordance with preserving the historic character of the downtown area, changes to the original storefront will not be allowed if they are not consistent with the historical period in which the building was placed into service. For example, if a building was constructed in 1940 with a brick masonry façade, it would be inappropriate to add metal panels or mansard roofs, such as were popular in the sixties and seventies, to the storefront.
- Carrara glass and storefront, which is a pigmented structural glass, dating from the 1930s and 1940s, as well as other materials from the twentieth century that have gained significance such as corrugated metal and porcelain enamel panel, etc. are considered historic and shall be retained and restored to the greatest extent possible.



Cornices & Parapets

In Alabama Main Street cities, look to the top of a commercial building for a clue to its style. There are two ornamental features which may make a building distinctive: the parapet and the cornice. A parapet is the uppermost part of the front facade which extends above the flat roof like a short wall. A cornice is a molded projection which is attached to the top of the facade.

The parapet is the part of the wall that projects above the roof; the cornice is attached to the wall and projects out from it.

Brick corbeling was a very popular decorative parapet treatment. A show of craftsmanship, corbeling is a series of projecting brick courses which create depth and texture.

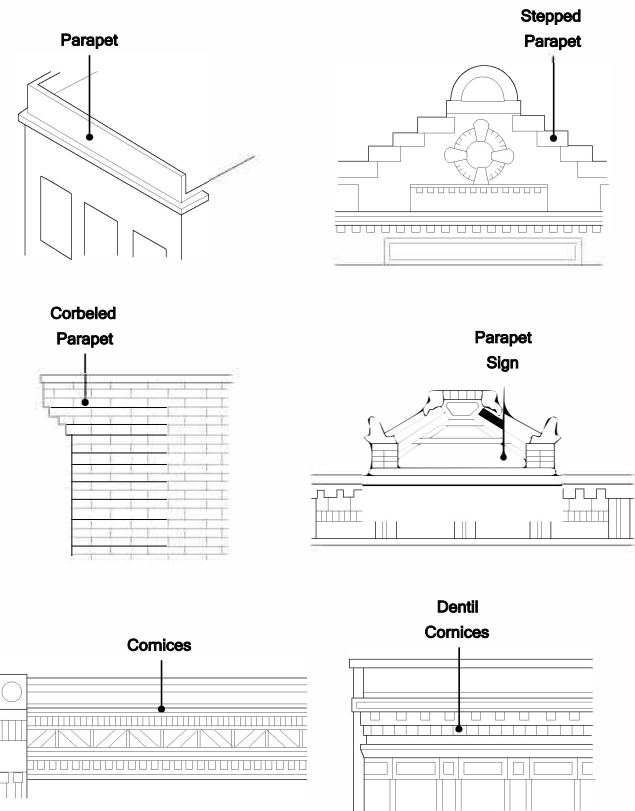
Many parapets create an interesting silhouette and roofing. Italianate and Spanish style buildings often employ arches in the parapet, whereas Art Deco style buildings may have stepped parapets. The stepped parapet creates a common, yet distinctive, roofline.

Often in the past, the name of the company and date of construction were placed in a central arch or pediment in the parapet. Some parapets also feature decorative metal grills for ventilation.

Decorative cornices were readily available in pressed metal or wood. Not only did many local iron works and lumber companies offer various designs, but decorative cornices could also be ordered by mail and

sent by rail. This cornice may be an example of work from a successful local Bessemer cornice and roofing company. Italianate brackets were popular features of Victorian Era Cornices.

Classical style often featured cornices with either modillion molding (large blocks), dentil molding (smaller blocks), or both.



Cornices & Parapets

- The existing cornices and parapets shall not be removed.
- Cornices and parapets must be maintained in good condition and should be repaired if damaged.
- In the case of extreme deterioration, cornices or parapets can be replaced. The replaced must match the original in materials and style.
- If a cornice or parapet needs to be temporarily covered, the original material must remain in place. New material should be installed to allow ventilation to prevent trapped moisture from damaging underlying material.
- Cornices with failed paint should be gently scraped, preferably with wet scraping or sanding methods. Loose, delaminated paint should be disposed of safely.
- An existing cornice can be caulked and repainted using a semi-gloss or gloss finish in the existing color to make it weather-tight.
- The cornice, lintels, sills, and stoop should be painted in a color that matches the original underlying brownstone material of the trim and the color of the cornice to unify the monumental facade of the row.
- If necessary, irreparable or missing elements may be replaced. The new work must align with the material, design, size, shape, and profile of the historic building.
- The cornices and parapets are to be repaired based on site and photographic evidence.
- Replacing missing elements with concrete stucco and spray foam insulation is not permitted.

Upper Story Windows

The windows on the front façade (a French term for face) of Alabama's commercial buildings are important character defining design elements. Often, windows have been described as the "eye" of a building, and, as the wise ancient philosopher Plato said, "the eyes are the pathway to the soul." The type, the shape of the window, the number of panes in each sash, the decorative surrounds including the lintel, sill, or window hood, and the fenestration (arrangement) are important features of upper story windows.

The vast majority of upper façade windows are double-hung sash windows. These windows slide up and down within a frame. The number of panes in each sash can provide a clue to the age of a building. It was in the last decades of the nineteenth century that

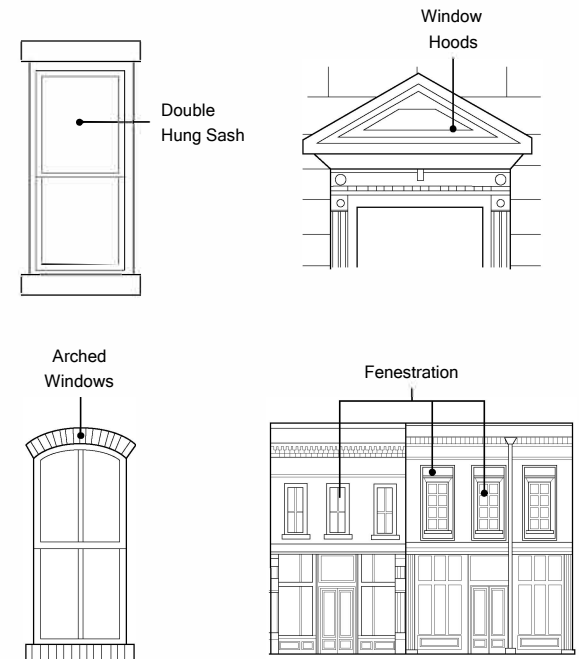
advances in glass-making technology made it possible to create large panes of glass. Many Alabama Main Street commercial building dating from the 1890s or after have one large pane of glass in each sash; these are referred to as one-over-one windows.

The tall rectangle was one standard shape of Alabama's Main Street upper story windows; another was the Arched window. The rounded arch was typical of the Italianate and Romanesque style, while the pointed Arch was typical of the Gothic style.

A variety of window trims and accents made the upper façade of commercial buildings more ornamental. Stone, wood, and other contrasting materials were used to highlight the sill and the lintel over the window. Decorative

window hoods made of wood, cast-iron, and stamped metal were popular window accents. Windows on some commercial buildings had exterior shutters and/or awnings.

Fenestration is the term used to describe the arrangement of windows on the façade. The regular spacing of tall upper story window on commercial buildings creates what has been called a visual "rhythm." This march of the upper story windows along a block is an element that ties the different buildings together. Upper story windows visually define a building. Horizontally, rows of windows divide the building into stories, and vertically, they denote the bays (width) of the building.



Upper Story Windows

- On building faces, all upper windows must be glazed and at least translucent. No windows, street side or otherwise, will be permitted to be painted or otherwise blocked by metal, plywood, masonry, or other material. An exception may be made on a temporary basis; plywood may be used, provided it is painted to match an existing window.

In regard to upper story windows, the HPC has ruled that all windows must be glazed to at least an almost clear finish. Also, the BHPC has ruled that upper story windows,

regardless of facing directions, must not be obscured by paint, or blocked by any type of material. The only permitted exception to this rule is the temporary use of plywood painted to look like the adjacent windows. In maintaining continuous standards, "temporary" shall constitute no more than ninety days.

- Replacements of upper windows shall resemble the original as closely as possible in style and materials. If neglect or damage has occurred to upper story windows, then the BHPC allows for the replacement of such windows; however, the new windows must match the existing windows in material and style.



Awnings & Canopies

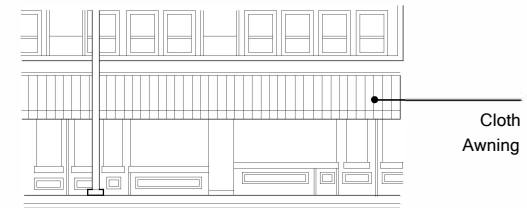
With its obvious benefits of displaying merchandise and admitting natural light into a closed space, the traditional glass storefront also had a few disadvantages. The glass admitted harmful ultraviolet rays which not only faded merchandise, but the glare of the bright sun through the windows also made the store hot in warm weather. The storefront awning and canopy offered a solution to those problems. A practical design feature, the awning or canopy could shelter the merchandise from the damaging ultraviolet rays of the sun, shade the storefront from the heat and provide a sheltered entrance for shoppers.

Retractable cloth awnings were especially helpful with climate control within the building. The awning could be rolled back in the cooler months, it sheltered the sun and reduced heat gain as much as fifty to seventy percent, making the interior from

eight to twenty-five degrees cooler. In addition to sheltering the storefront, the cloth awning could also function as a sign and was a colorful way to soften the harsh appearance of brick commercial buildings.

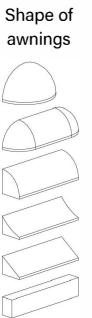
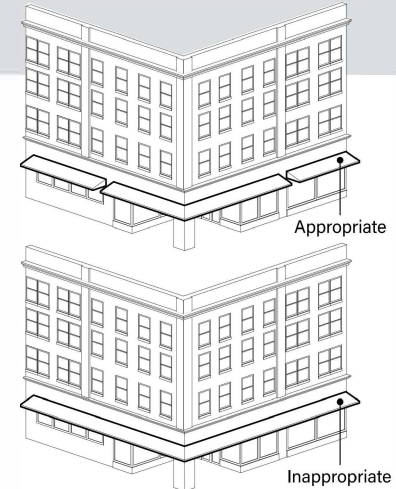
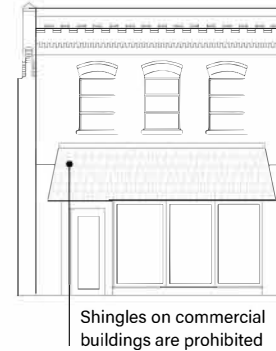
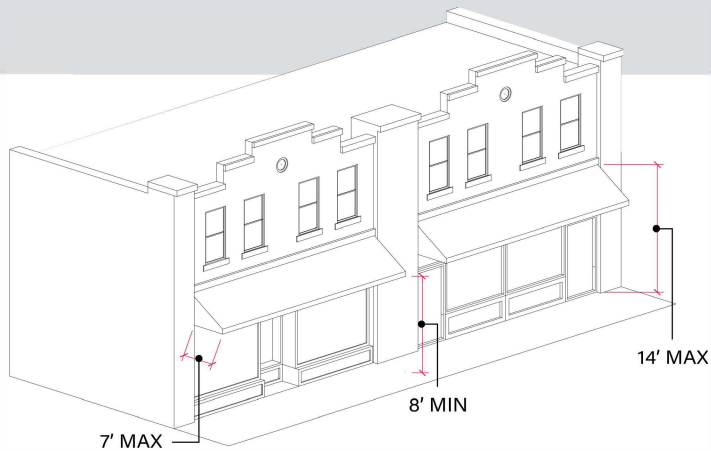
Fixed metal canopies last longer than cloth awnings, whose life span is approximately seven years. Metal canopies are a distinctive historic design feature of only a few buildings in downtown Bessemer, the most notable is the former Long-Lewis Building.

After the turn of the century in Alabama, it was not uncommon to see fixed metal awnings supported by guy wires. Some large commercial buildings combined the fixed metal canopies with signs and lighting to create a marquee.



Awnings & Canopies

- Canvas or vinyl coated canvas awnings are appropriate and desirable to shade storefronts. The BHPC realizes that life in the South can get downright hot on summer days and cooling a building during this time gets expensive. To that end the BHPC has adopted the position that most businesses need some type of shading mechanism. Therefore, the BHPC has allowed for awnings to be laced over storefronts; however, not just any awning can be placed into service. The BHPC requires that awnings be canvas or vinyl coated canvas. Plastic awnings are not permitted. However, the BHPC does realize that many new products are in use that may be substituted. Such materials will be reviewed if so desired by the applicant.
- Storefront awnings cannot be attached to the building any higher than fourteen feet from grade, cannot descend lower than eight feet above the sidewalk, and can project no further than seven feet from the face of the building. Awnings should be proportional to the size of the building and should not obscure more than thirty percent of the building surface.
- Flat canopies were popular in the 1930s and 1940s are acceptable and appropriate if kept in good condition. Not all canopies have to be barrel type or sloping. Many Bessemer buildings originally had flat canopies as they were built during the period when such was popular. These are permitted within the district so long as they are kept in good condition.
- Fixed awnings in a Mansard or Colonial style or those with residential shingles shall be removed, and no new ones shall be allowed as they are no longer permitted within the district-no exceptions. Also, the addition of residential shingles to any building is strictly prohibited.
- Awnings should fit the window opening and align with the overall building design by remaining consistent in color, shape and size. They should not interfere with architectural features or span multiple windows.
- For signs on awnings and canopies, please refer to the 'Signs' section.



Signs

In general, signs consistent with the historic period of the buildings will be encouraged. Bessemer's historic building date between 1889 and 1973, so there is a wide range of choices to be made. The primary criteria for signs, however, are good quality and appropriate size.

Quality

All signs shall be fabricated by a professional sign-maker and be of good quality workmanship and appearance as deemed acceptable by the BHPC under these guidelines. In order to ensure that historic properties retain their value and appearances, the BHPC requires that all signs displayed within the district be crafted by a professional sign maker. Shop Drawings of all signs must be submitted to the BHPC along with the required application.



Allowed Number of Signs

A maximum of three (3) signs shall be permitted for any individual business or storefront. No exceptions.

- A** One sign may be a "belt-sign" to identify the building to car traffic. This is a sign that extends above the transom, and across the front of the building. This sign must meet the square footage requirements set forth by the BHPC.
- B** For pedestrian traffic, a sign may be hung underneath an awning or canopy perpendicular to the sidewalk. The sign may not be more than two (2) feet in length and no more than eight (8") in height. (Other building codes may apply).
- C** Lastly, a window or doorway advertising particular product or a list of services or the business name may be used. The sign must meet other size requirements required by the BHPC.

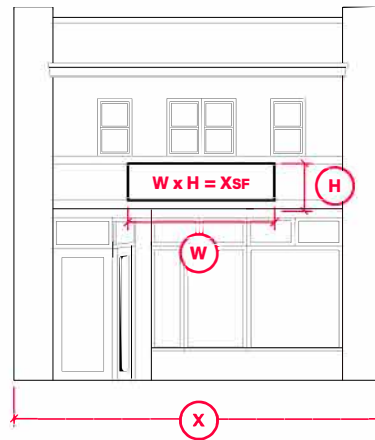
Signs

Size Requirements

All signage shall be reviewed for appropriateness to its space and character. The BHPC reserves the right to review and determine the appropriateness of any signage used within the historic preservation district.

Signs shall be in keeping with the character and proportions of the building to which they are attached; they will not overpower the building or obscure any significant architectural features. requirements seen above.

Size Requirement for Belt-sign



HPC's Area Calculation Method for Non-rectilinear Signs



Window/Door Lettering and/or Logos Area Coverage on Glass Panel



Specific Size Guidelines

Signs mounted flat against the building face shall not exceed in area more than one time the width of the building, e.g., a twenty-five-foot-wide building storefront cannot have more than twenty-five square feet in signage. This means that a sign five feet wide and five feet tall would be allowed. Any combination of height and width may be allowed so long as the total square footage does not exceed the total allowable amount of signage.

In order to compute the square footage of any signage other than a square or rectangular sign, the BHPC will draw a box around the proposed design and essentially figure the diagram as if it were a square and then multiply the length by the height to find the square footage. This applies to any type of signage, lettering or graphic design that is used as identifying or advertising component.

Buildings with fronts on two streets are allowed this computation for each face.

Window and door letters and/or logos should not cover more than twenty-five percent of the glass area. Each glass panel would be an "area." This includes doorways, sidelights, and storefront windows. Note: This sign is counted against the maximum of three signs and is subject to the square footage requirements seen above.

Signs



Signs for Tenants

Ground floor business in multi-story buildings cannot mount signs higher than 14' above grade. As an occupant of a two or more-story building, the tenant on the ground floor may not post a sign more than fourteen feet above grade. This is to prevent signage from obscuring second story windows.

Upper story tenants may be identified through a sign board of appropriate character near the building entrance. Maximum square footage allowable is ten square feet. In order to reduce the total number of signs within the district, the BHPC has adopted the policy of allowing a sign board to identify occupants of multi-story structures.

Signs identifying tenants at the rear or loading areas of a building shall not exceed six square feet in area and should be mounted flat against the building. If deliveries are made in a rear area, then a sign to identify the facility is allowed. It may not exceed six square feet in area and must be mounted flat. This sign shall not count against the maximum number of three signs allowed for a building, provided it may not be seen from the public right-of-way, alleyways excluded.

Signs

Alternative Signs

Projecting signs will be carefully reviewed for their size and appropriateness, but they may be considered acceptable if they do not overpower or obscure their own building or neighboring buildings. They should not be longer than five feet, the overall projection cannot exceed seven feet from the face of the building, and the width may not exceed eight inches. A maximum height of three feet may be permitted. In general, projecting signs shall not hang lower than ten feet above grade. They must be kept in good repair and working order and finished on both sides.

Projecting signs are generally discouraged but may be allowed depending on the location of the building, quality and size of the sign proposed, and possible effect of neighboring buildings. A projecting sign shall not be longer than five feet. Including attachment hardware, the sign may not extend more than seven feet in length.

The maximum allowable height is three feet and could be less depending on neighboring buildings. A maximum width of eight inches is permitted. Also, the projecting sign cannot be positioned where it hangs lower than ten feet above grade. Please note the lighting of the sign is strictly reviewed and the sign must be finished on both sides.

If a projecting sign is used, a belt sign is not permitted.

Business identification sewn or painted on awnings or canopies is permitted under the size guidelines applying to other types of signs. In the past, many businesses have taken advantage of advertising their business on the canopy or awning. The BHPC recognizes the benefit of using this tool and recommends its use to any business. However, to protect the integrity of the district, the BHPC allows for the business name to be sewn or painted on an awning. This will be charged against the maximum of three signs and will take the place of a projecting or belt sign. Size requirements based on size of canopy or awning will be assessed.

Maximum Allowed Dimensions for Projecting Signs



Signs

Prohibited Signs

- **No permanent signs displaying advertising or promotions are permitted.** *Under no circumstance will promotional signs be allowed to be attached to storefront windows, doorway, transoms, or any exterior portion of the building.*
- **Window and door lettering or logos are permitted for identification but not for advertising.** *Lettering or logo, professionally installed, may be used to identify a business. However, lettering or logos advertise sales or promotional offers may not be used.*
- **Advertising of any kind in the public right-of-way is prohibited.** *Temporary advertising in the street or on the sidewalk is permitted under these guidelines but must be reviewed by the BHPC. No attachment of flyers or signs of any type to utility or traffic poles, garbage cans, or any other surface within the public right-of-way is allowed under any circumstance.*
- **Displays in the public right-of-way are prohibited.** *Temporary advertising may be permitted upon review. However, the permit shall be valid for only thirty days after issuance.*
- **Temporary advertising adhering to store windows, brick piers and upper facades is prohibited unless specifically permitted by the BHPC after review of the style and circumstances of the promotion. There shall be a thirty-day limit on such promotional signs.** *In such cases where promotional advertising is requested, the BHPC may, at its discretion, grant a thirty-day temporary sign permit. However, the BHPC retains the right to review the circumstances behind the promotion, the style of the signage and the proposed location of the signs. The BHPC will not grant more than four temporary permits per business, per year. The reason for this is that over the past few years, it has come to the attention of the BHPC that "sales" have been occurring continuously for more than two years. This ensures legitimate sales to be promoted without added interference from bogus "sales," thus ensuring merchants of a fair opportunity for reaching their customer base.*
- **Day-Glow signs of any kind are prohibited.** *No day-glow signs or lettering are to be utilized in the historic district. Patrons are not attracted to the glow of letters, but rather to the product and service a merchant offers.*
- **Free-standing billboards are prohibited.** *No billboards of any kind are allowed within the district.*
- **Signs mounted on the roof of a building or rising above the parapet line shall not be permitted.** *Signs may not be mounted on the roof of the building. Signs placed on the front of the building may not extend past the roof line or the sides of the building.*

Demolition

Any request for demolition of any structure within the National Historic District must be heard and approved by the City of Bessemer Historic Preservation Commission.

If demolition of a particular structure is requested, that request must be presented to the City of Bessemer's BHPC. There are no exceptions to this rule.

In general, demolition of any structure for purpose of surface parking is not permitted. NO demolition of an existing structure within the Historic District for the purposes of creating a parking area will be permitted.

Except in cases of extreme deterioration and potential danger to the public safety as determined by the City Building Inspection Department.

Demolition within the district will be discouraged and requests to demolish will be considered only upon presentation of plans for replacement with another structure acceptable under these guidelines.

An owner must demonstrate extreme economic hardship and inability to redevelop before being allowed to demolish a building for purposes other than redevelopment of the property. The BHPC shall have the option to seek other avenues for rehabilitation of a building in danger of demolition; this option will be in effect for no longer than six months after the date application is made for a demolition permit.

Miscellaneous

Land Use

Uses of new buildings and renovated structures are governed according to the City's Zoning Ordinance and not by any provision of these guidelines. The City of Bessemer passed a new zoning ordinance in 1996. This legislation set forth land use standards. These guidelines do not dictate use of structures within the district, only aesthetic appearances. Please consult the City of Bessemer Building Inspection Department to determine the business uses permissible within the zoning classifications which comprise the downtown district.

Metal Trim and Downspouts

Metal scuppers, downspouts, gutters, copings, etc., should be securely fastened to the building and in good condition. They shall be painted to harmonize with other elements of the building face. Color choices must be approved by the BHPC. Any downspout, copings, gutters, or other exterior features should be attached to the building using appropriate securing devices. These must be

maintained in good working order, not only to meet the BHPC's guidelines, but also to increase the longevity of the building. Furthermore, these elements should be painted in order to match or at least complement the existing color scheme of the building. As with other guidelines, colors must be approved by the BHPC.

Any miscellaneous elements no longer in use, such as conduit, sign brackets, light fixtures, or fasteners, etc., shall be removed from the building. Many buildings in downtown have these features. It is in the best interest of building owners as well as the general public to have these elements removed. This guideline also extends to any signage that is now considered to be out of service.

Roofs and Chimneys

Roofs must be kept in good condition and free of debris, standing water, or other elements which may lead to deterioration.

Chimneys and all flue and vent attachments thereto shall be maintained structurally sound,

free from defects, and so maintained as to capably always perform the functions for which they were designed. Chimneys, flues, gas vents or other draft-producing equipment shall provide sufficient draft to develop the rated output of the connected equipment; and shall be structurally safe, durable, smoke tight, and capable of withstanding the action of the flue gasses.

Exterior Equipment

Electrical equipment such as junction boxes, transformers, ballast switches, etc., shall be hidden from view as much as possible, and shall not in any case be installed on the street face of a building. In any type of renovation to a building in the historic district, the BHPC requires that no electrical or utility-oriented equipment be visible from the right of way. As in the case with rooftop appliances, these elements need to be screened and obscured from view as much as possible, while not destroying any historical element of the building. in. no circumstance will equipment of this sort be allowed on the storefront facade or any building within the district.

Mechanical equipment on the roof shall be positioned to avoid being visible from the public right-of-way. Understanding the differences in time periods means more than one might imagine is historic preservation. In the early 20s and 30s and much into the 40s, air conditioning was not readily available. The BHPC understands and sympathizes with the modern-day building owner who wishes to revitalize his or her building. To that end, the BHPC has made the determination that electrical equipment may be allowable upon rooftops. However, these devices must not be visible from the roadway. This may be accomplished by positioning the unit near of the building or in situations where this is not feasible, the units may be screened in some other fashion deemed appropriate by the BHPC.

Walls and Fences

No fence, wall, planting or structure shall be located to constitute a hazard to pedestrian or vehicular traffic on the public right-of-way. The Bessemer Police Department and city engineer of public safety shall assist in the determination of the existence of a hazard.

Miscellaneous

No wall or fence in a required front yard shall exceed a height of three and one-half feet, except as required for a retaining wall. Fence shall be a decorative fence and approved by the building official.

Screening

Outdoor trash receptacles and storage areas shall be screened by using an opaque fence or a masonry wall, at a minimum of 6 feet in height. The fence or wall shall be combined with evergreen shrubs planted in a 3-foot minimum planting area around the foundation of the fence or wall.

Outdoor fencing. The fence or wall shall be combined with evergreen shrubs planted in a 3-foot minimum planted area around the foundation of the fence or wall.

All fencing and masonry shall be consistent with the proposed structures.

Lighting

Direct or reflected light or glare shall not be produced to adversely affect the visibility or tend to interfere with the safety or welfare of persons located at or beyond any property line.

Lighting fixtures and wiring should be integrated into the architectural elements so that they are not visible.

Exterior surface mounted transformer boxes, raceways, and conduit should be avoided.

Exterior Materials of Historic Residences

The exterior of every historic residential structure or accessory structure (including fences) shall be maintained in good repair. All surfaces shall be maintained free of broken glass, loose shingles, crumbling stone or brick, excessive peeling paint or other condition reflective of deterioration or inadequate maintenance to the end that the

property itself may be preserved, safety and fire hazards eliminated.

Architectural Details

For residential units in historic district, architectural details shall be maintained in good condition.

Damaged, lost, or irreparable historic details shall be repaired or replaced. The new materials must match the original in composition, design, color, and texture. Non-historic details or elements cannot be added to a historic house.

Entrances and Porches

Exterior porches, landings, balconies, stairs, and fire escapes shall be provided with banisters or railings properly designed and maintained to minimize the hazard of fallings, and the same shall be kept structurally sound, in good repair, and free from defects.

If possible, original materials such as balusters, columns, handrails, brackets, and roof detailing should be repaired. If those materials are seriously deteriorated, the new should maintain the design, color, texture and materials of the existing. Documentary and physical evidence should support the replacement of missing features.

Front porches, side porches, and porte cocheres visible from a right-of-way may not be enclosed.

If possible, original doors must be retained. If a door is deteriorated beyond repair, the replacement door should feature the same design and material and should not detract from the character of the residence. Original openings, especially on a facade visible from a right-of-way, should be maintained.

Windows

All windows exposed to public view shall be kept clean and free of marks or foreign substances except, when necessary, while changing displays.

Miscellaneous

No storage of materials, stock or inventory shall be permitted in window display areas or other areas ordinarily exposed to public view unless the areas are first screened from the public view by drapes, venetian blinds, or other permanent rendering of the windows opaque to the public view. All screenings of interiors shall be maintained in a clean and attractive manner and in a good state of repair.

Routine maintenance is recommended for residences with historic windows, including window sash, glass, lintels, sills, frames, molding, shutters and all hardware. The material, design, and hardware of any replacement elements should match the original or existing window. If window replacement is necessary, the replacement should fit the original opening and maintain all proportions and configurations.

For residences, shutters must be made of wood and proportional in size to the window so that, when closed, the shutters cover the window.

For residences, storm windows should be removable and should not damage the original window frames. Interior storm windows should also be considered.

Foundations

Foundation walls shall be kept structurally sound, free from defects and damage, and capable of bearing imposed loads safely.

Covering the original foundation with stucco or other materials is prohibited. The appearance and materials of the original foundation should be maintained.

Original unpainted masonry foundations may not be painted.

Accessory Buildings

For residences, accessory structures shall not be located in any required front yard. Accessory structures may be built in a rear yard, but such accessory structures shall not occupy more than

30 percent of the required rear yard space and shall not be closer than five feet to any side or rear lot line.

Original accessory buildings, garages, and garage apartments are significant site elements that should be preserved.

Handicap Accessibility

Design and placement of handicap accessible ramps should respect the historic character of the building and, if possible, should be located on a rear or side entrance and be as unobtrusive as possible.

Historic Additions and Alterations

Significant historic alterations and additions should be preserved.

Unless there is no other feasible location, residential building additions should not be situated flush with the front facade of the building.

The design of additions should be clearly distinguishable as separate from the original building; however, the materials, mass, color, and relationships of solids to voids should be consistent with the existing structure. If the design of the new addition requires any historic materials and character-defining elements to be obscured, damaged, or removed, it should be kept at a minimum.

An aerial, isometric sketch of a historic city street grid. The drawing is done in a light blue or white line-art style on a dark background. It shows a dense arrangement of buildings of various sizes, some with multiple stories, and a network of streets. There are also clusters of trees, particularly in the upper left and right areas. The overall impression is of a detailed urban plan or a historical map rendered in a modern, artistic style.

Appendix

Glossary

Alteration

An element or group of elements that are changed, often in style, size or material.

Base

The lowest visible part of a building often distinctively treated.

Bulkhead

Portion of storefront facade that extends directly below the display window to the ground, often supporting the weight of and forming the base of the display window.

Cornice

The molding that crowns the roof or the floor level of a building.

Corbel

An architectural member that projects from within a wall and supports a weight.

Double-hung Window

Two vertical operating sashes in one window unit.

Dentils

A series of small, projecting rectangular blocks found under a cornice line.

Elevation

The external or internal faces of a building.

Façade

The front or principal face of a building often distinguished architecturally.

Fenestration

The arrangement of windows in a building.

Friezeband

A sculptured or richly ornamented band around a building. It may depict a scene.

Mullion

A slender vertical member separating lights, sash

Parapet

A low wall or railing on top of a building designed to protect the edge of the roof.

Pediment

A triangular space forming a gable of a two-pitched roof. Found in classic architecture.

Piers

The vertical member that supports the end of an arch, such as a pillar.

Preservation

The maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.

Sash

The basic unit of a window, consisting of frame, glazing, and gasketing; may be stationary or operable.

Storefront

The front of a store, restaurant or other establishment at street level, usually containing display windows.

Streetscape

Area of public way between the street and streetwall, often containing elements focused on the pedestrian experience.

Terra Cotta

An enriched, molded clay brick with a ceramic slip glaze. Case as hollow blocks, it gives the appearance of sculptured stone. It was very popular on buildings in the late 19th Century.

Transom

Linear panel of glass or other solid material directly above the doorway or display window frame.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

General tenets of historic preservation and rehabilitation are at the heart of these guidelines. Changes to historic buildings within the district will be considered with consistent emphasis on appropriate applications of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for rehabilitation as set forth in these guidelines. At the heart of these guidelines is an intent to match as closely as possible the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Who in the world is the Secretary of the Interior? Well, we do have an answer, lengthy as it may be.

The Secretary of the Interior refers to the Presidential Cabinet level executive in charge of the United States Department of the interior. From this Department, rehabilitation standards have been issued that govern the rehabilitation of the historic structures. These are available by request from the Bessemer Economic and Community Development Department. They are rather details and must be followed in order to qualify for Rehabilitation Tax Credits.

- 1 A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
- 2 The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- 3 Each property shall 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 architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
- 4 Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
- 5 Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
- 6 Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
- 7 Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
- 8 Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
- 9 New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- 10 New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Photo source: Jason Burnett on Behalf of the Bessemer Hall of History Museum, *Images of America: Early Bessemer*, Arcadia Publishing: 2011.

"This program receives federal funds from the National Park Service administrated through the Alabama Historical Commission Replacement of the U. S. Department of the Interior design prohibits unlawful discrimination of departmental federally assigned programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated upon at any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write the Director, Equal Opportunity Program. U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Services. P.O. Box 3717 Washington D.C. 20013-7127.



City of Bessemer Historic Design Guidelines