



# STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES

## INTRODUCTION

Commercial spaces in the 18th and early 19th Century were typically located on the ground floor of a building. They had residential scaled opening that made them almost indistinguishable from residential structures. During the early part of the 19th Century commercial structures began distinguishing themselves from residential building by incorporating storefronts at the ground level. The storefronts typically had a recessed entry or an awning to protect costumers from the weather. The entrance was flanked by large display windows. As time progressed signs, lighting became regular components of the storefronts and commercial properties. This chapter will explore the different aspects of commercial structures.

## TYPES OF COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES

### STOREFRONT COMPONENTS

### SIGNS AND AWNINGS

### LIGHTING

### BUILDING EQUIPMENT

### PARKING

**REMINDER:** All exterior work requiring a building permit requires a Certificate of Appropriateness and must conform with all of City of Fort Worth ordinances. It is helpful when using these guidelines to be familiar with your architectural style.

## TYPES OF COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES

**RETAIL/ OFFICE SPACE:**  
*Can be multiple stories with storefront on the ground floor and residential or office space above.*



**INSTITUTIONAL:**  
*These buildings provide public services. Typically they are schools, churches, banks and government buildings.*



**LARGE SCALE RESIDENTIAL:**  
*Condominiums and apartments constructed to house multiple families. These building are similar to commercial structures in terms of signage, lighting and building code.*



# Components of a Storefront

## TOP OR CORNICE:

*A decorative feature, typically projecting, that provides a visual cap to the building.*

## MIDDLE OR UPPER FLOORS:

*Usually non-retail space above the ground floor. Can be multiple stories. This section will have operable windows. The windows do not have to align with the storefront.*

## BOTTOM OR STOREFRONT:

*This is typically commercial space with large spans of glass. Comprised of an entrance, typically recessed, and display windows capped by transoms and a cornice.*



## SIGNS

Signs are an important component of commercial structures. They identify and advertise for the business and decorate the commercial structure. They provide a continuity to the streetscape and reflect the architecture and technology of their time. They typically are comprised of letters and logos that express the nature of the building's use to the public. The intent of standards for signs are not to dictate the design but to ensure that type, size and location are sympathetic to the historic fabric and character of the streetscape. **The size of signs shall conform with the base zoning and should be proportional to the structure. Signs should be located in a manner that they do not cover, destroy or detract from any architectural features on the structure.** There are various types of signs most are appropriate for historic structures.

### INAPPROPRIATE SIGNS



*Internally illuminated  
box cabinet wall signs*



Projecting internally  
illuminated box cabinet  
signs



*Pole Signs*

### APPROPRIATE SIGNS



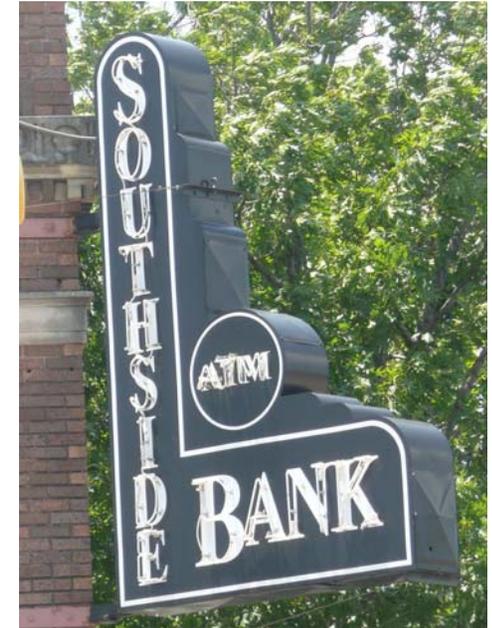
*Wall painted signs*



Flush mounted wall sign



*Wall mounted channel letters*



*Blade sign with individual  
illuminated channel letters*



*Window decal*

## AWNINGS

Awnings like signs are an important component of commercial structures. They help to protect the customer from the weather, provide shade to the window displays, decorate the structure and can act as signage. Awnings for commercial structures can be made out various materials. Metal and fabric awnings are the most typical.



*The slate fabric awnings provide protection as well as advertise.*



*This metal decorative awning protects patrons from the elements.*

## LIGHTING

Lighting for historic structures should be placed in a location that does not distract or conceal architectural features. Lighting should be appropriate for the architectural type of structure or should not suggest a period or style. In addition, lighting should be and moderate in placement. On commercial structures lighting is often used to help identify the entrance.



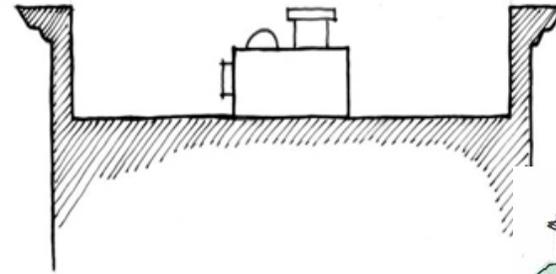
*The simple Art Deco light fixtures flanking the door identify the entrance and match the architectural style of the structure.*



*Non-decorative down lighting fixtures are used to light the entrance. The fixtures are moderate in placement and do not suggest a period or time.*

## BUILDING EQUIPMENT

Screening of mechanical, electronic, and communication equipment including HVAC, restaurant exhaust fans, generators on the roof should be organized, proportioned, detailed, and colored to be an integral element of the building as seen from the points of high elevation, streets and adjacent residences.

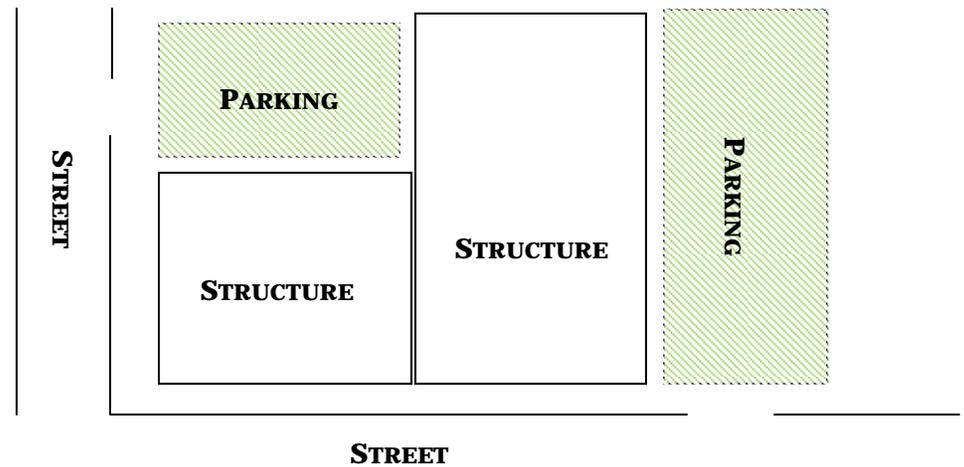


*Screening of rooftop equipment with roof form is preferable.*



## PARKING

When possible parking should be located at the rear of the structure. When necessary it can be located to the side of the structure, but should be screened from the public right of way by either fencing or landscaping.



## STOREFRONT STANDARDS

1. Historic storefronts shall be maintained and repaired. Wood storefronts including bulkhead shall be repaired.
2. Recessed entries shall be maintained.
3. Upper story windows shall be maintained and repaired.
4. Decorative cornices shall be maintained and repaired.
5. Historic unpainted brick and masonry shall not be painted.

## BUILDING EQUIPMENT STANDARDS

6. Screening of mechanical, electronic, and communication equipment including HVAC, restaurant exhaust fans, generators on the roof should be organized, proportioned, detailed, and colored to be an integral element of the building as seen from the points of high elevation, streets and adjacent residences and should be concealed from the public right of way.

## PARKING STANDARDS

7. The paving of driveways and parking lots shall be of natural concrete, brick, cut stone, pavers, natural rock or asphalt, or green grass pavers.
8. All parking lots for more than five vehicles having frontage on a residential property shall be screened from the street. A four foot hedge can be used.
9. Vacant lots used as parking lots shall be screened.
10. Parking lots shall be located to the rear and shall not front the street.

\*\*See Standards and Guidelines for New Construction for parking structures.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- NPS Preservation Brief #11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
- NPS Preservation Brief #25: The Preservation of Historic Signs
- NPS Preservation Brief #44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Building: Repair, Replacement and New Design

## SIGN STANDARDS

11. Historic signs shall be maintained and repaired.
12. Signs shall use materials that are consistent with the character of the building.
13. Signage shall complement the style of the building and shall be appropriately scaled/ sized for its location.
14. Signs shall not conceal, destroy or distract from character defining features.
15. Internally illuminated cabinet/ box signs and pole signs shall be prohibited.
16. Exposed wiring, conduit, junction boxes and raceways for channel letters or sign lighting shall be prohibited.
17. Flashing, flickering or moving signs shall not be permitted.

## AWNING STANDARDS

18. Awning shapes shall correspond to the openings they protect.
19. Awning material shall be fabric or a material compatible with the style of the structure and shall be located between storefront bays or at entrances. The primary colors of awnings should be slate, green, tan or stripe.
20. Lettering and logos shall be limited to the valances of awnings.
21. Vinyl, plastic and internally illuminated awnings shall be prohibited.

## LIGHTING STANDARDS

22. Placement of outdoor security lights and their mounting shall not damage, detract from, or conceal character defining features of the structure.
23. Flood/ security lights are prohibited at primary street elevations.
24. Lighting shall be compatible in age, style and scale to the building or unobtrusive and not suggestive of a style or age. Their mounting shall not damage, detract from, or conceal significant features of the structure.