



### 3.9 Storefronts

For many historic commercial buildings the storefront is the most prominent architectural feature. Although a storefront is often stylistically and visually tied to the street facade, it is usually differentiated from the upper facade by large display windows flanking the main entry and by a change in materials. Typical functional and decorative features of a storefront include display windows, doors, transoms, signs, awnings, columns, pilasters, entablatures, and bulkhead panels. Storefronts with recessed entrances also incorporate an exterior ceiling area and an extension of the sidewalk often surfaced by decorative floor tiles.

Most historic commercial buildings in downtown Raleigh are two to four stories in height, and their street facades are vertical in proportion. Typically, storefront display windows rest on low wooden recessed panels or on bulkheads constructed of masonry or faced in ceramic tile. Some storefronts use recessed entries to draw the pedestrian into the store and maximize the display window area. In the Moore Square district, street-level storefronts punctuate the brick facades and create a streetscape rhythm of inset openings and projecting awnings. Glazed transoms provide opportunities to pull diffused daylight deep into the building.



*A unifying facade rhythm is created by the pattern of recessed entries, display windows, and projecting awnings of these sensitively rehabilitated storefronts.*



*The storefront bays with their decorative mid-cornices and bands of glazed transom panels contribute to the architectural character of this Hargett Street commercial building.*



*The cast-iron grille recessed within this storefront bulkhead panel is both decorative and functional.*

#### Things to Consider As You Plan

Storefronts require the same sort of regular inspections and routine maintenance that other window and door components do. Repair or replacement of deteriorated storefront features and materials requires careful attention to retaining or matching the original design in detail, dimension, material, and color. The loss of distinctive storefront features can seriously compromise the architectural integrity of the entire historic building. Similarly, the substitution of inappropriate contemporary materials, such as vinyl or aluminum panels, for traditional storefront materials, such as wood or tile, diminishes the storefront's contribution to the building's architectural character.

Because the storefront is such a prominent feature for most commercial buildings, it was frequently modified or altered by business owners in an effort to make a new or more modern visual statement. When later modifications conceal original storefront features, such as transoms, bulkheads, or display windows, their removal should be considered. For example, the removal of later signage may reveal the original textured glass transom still intact. Any changes that have reduced the size of an original storefront opening in the building facade or filled in the opening completely are inappropriate, and their removal should also be considered.

If an inappropriate storefront has completely replaced the original storefront, a new storefront based on accurate documentation of the original is preferred. If accurate documentation is not available, then a new design compatible with the building in scale, size, material, and color is appropriate. Compatible, contemporary signage can often be successfully incorporated on a new or existing storefront, in traditional signage locations, including the mid-cornice, the awning, the display windows, or the tiles of the recessed entry.



### 3.9 Storefronts: Guidelines

- .1 Retain and preserve storefronts that contribute to the overall historic character of a building, including such functional and decorative features as transoms, display windows, doors, entablatures, pilasters, recessed entries, and signs.
- .2 Protect and maintain historic storefront features and materials through appropriate methods:
  - Inspect regularly for signs of moisture damage, rust, fungal or insect infestation, cracked glass, and structural damage or settlement.
  - Provide adequate drainage to prevent water from standing on flat, horizontal surfaces and collecting on decorative elements.
  - Clean painted surfaces regularly using the gentlest means possible, and repaint only when the paint film is damaged or deteriorated.
  - Retain protective surface coatings, such as paint or stain, to prevent damage to storefront materials from moisture or ultraviolet light.
- .3 Repair historic storefront features using recognized preservation methods for patching, consolidating, splicing, and reinforcing.
- .4 If replacement of a deteriorated detail or element of a storefront feature is necessary, replace only the deteriorated detail or element in kind rather than the entire feature. Match the original detail or element in design, dimension, color, and material. Consider compatible substitute materials only if using the original material is not technically feasible.
- .5 If replacement of an entire storefront feature is necessary, replace it in kind, matching the original feature in design, dimension, detail, texture, color, and material. Consider compatible substitute materials only if using the original material is not technically feasible.
- .6 If a storefront feature or an entire storefront is missing, replace it with a new feature or storefront based on accurate documentation. If accurate documentation is not available, then utilize a new design compatible with the building in scale, size, material, and color.
- .7 Repaint storefront features in colors that are appropriate to the building and the district.
- .8 If desired, introduce new signage that is compatible with the storefront in material, scale, and color. It is not appropriate to install signage that damages, obscures, or diminishes the character-defining features of the storefront. See Section 2.8 for further guidance.
- .9 If desired and historically appropriate, introduce fabric awnings that are compatible with the storefront in scale, form, and color. It is not appropriate to install awnings that damage or compromise the storefront's character-defining features.
- .10 It is not appropriate to clean storefronts with destructive methods such as sandblasting, power washing, and using propane or butane torches. Clean using gentle methods such as low-pressure washing with detergents and natural bristle brushes. Chemical strippers can be used only if gentler methods are ineffective.
- .11 It is appropriate to remove objects and later renovations to reveal original storefront openings obscured by the changes.
- .12 It is not appropriate to strip wooden storefront surfaces that were historically painted down to bare wood and apply clear stains or sealers to create a natural wood appearance.
- .13 It is not appropriate to replace or cover wooden storefront and entry elements with contemporary substitute materials such as aluminum or vinyl.
- .14 It is not appropriate to introduce storefront features or details to a historic building in an attempt to create a false historical appearance.



*This replacement storefront design is compatible with the building in its scale, size, materials, and colors.*



## 3.10 Utilities and Energy Retrofit

Energy conservation, replacement or upgrading of inadequate utility service, and introduction or upgrading of mechanical systems are typical concerns of property owners today. In the historic districts it is important to ensure that such concerns are addressed in ways that do not damage or diminish the historic character of the building, the site, or the district.

In Raleigh Historic Districts a variety of energy-conserving site and building features illustrate the sensibility of an earlier era to climate and energy efficiency. Thoughtfully located shade trees buffer residences and sidewalks from the hot summer sun. Projecting porches provide shaded outdoor space and lessen the impact of harsh sunlight on the building's interior. Operable windows, shutters, and awnings allow occupants to control the introduction of sunlight and breezes within the building. Commercial buildings often capture daylight through storefront transoms, lightwells, and skylights. An understanding of how such historic features enhance energy efficiency is critical to maximizing the energy efficiency of historic buildings.

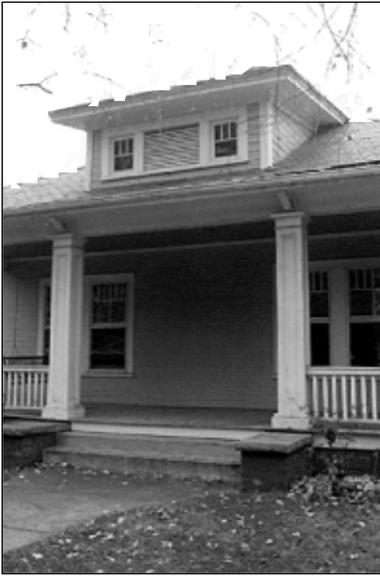
### Things to Consider As You Plan

In considering energy retrofit options, the property owner should be sure that the inherent energy-conserving features of the building are being used and maintained. Consideration should also be given to the replacement of lost shade trees or the introduction of other carefully located new shade trees. Beyond those steps, typical retrofit measures include introduction of storm windows, storm doors, additional weatherstripping, insulation, and more energy-efficient mechanical systems. All retrofit measures must be reviewed with their impact on the historic character of the building and the district in mind.

Following any necessary repair of windows to ensure their weathertightness, additional efficiency may be realized with the introduction of exterior storm windows. Relatively unobtrusive, narrow-profile exterior storm windows that do not obscure the window itself, that are carefully installed to prevent damage to the sill or the frame, and that are finished in a painted or a baked-enamel color compatible with the sash color are fairly common in the historic districts. To retain the opportunity to open the windows, the property owner should remember to select operable storm units that align with the meeting rails of the window. Before bare aluminum storm sash is painted, it should always be primed with a zinc chromate primer to ensure that the finish paint will bond. If a property owner chooses interior storm windows, they should be tension-mounted with airtight gaskets. On both exterior and interior storm windows, the ventilating holes must be kept open to prevent condensation from damaging the window or the sill. Selection and installation of new screen or storm doors should follow the guidelines for exterior storm windows.

New mechanical or communication systems that include outside units or equipment, such as condensers, ventilators, solar collectors, satellite dishes, and large antennas, should be located and installed so that they do not damage or diminish the historic character of the building, site, or district. An inconspicuously located outdoor unit can often be further screened by plantings or fences.

Although utility lines and poles have long been a part of the districts, attention should also be given to consolidating old and new utility and communication lines where possible to avoid overpowering the landscape with additional overhead wires. If a new or upgraded power supply will necessitate an additional pole and overhead wires, the use of underground cables may be preferable to prevent visual intrusion.



*During the summer, attic dormers like this one with operable windows and a louvered vent panel can help cool a house by allowing rising hot air to escape.*



*These solar collector panels are inconspicuously located on the roof of an accessory building at the rear of the property.*



*This mechanical unit was installed on a rear side facade and further screened from view by foundation plantings.*



### 3.10 Utilities and Energy Retrofit: Guidelines

- .1 Retain and preserve the inherent energy-conserving features of historic buildings and their sites, including shade trees, porches, awnings, and operable windows, transoms, shutters, and blinds.
- .2 Increase the thermal efficiency of historic buildings by observing appropriate traditional practices, such as weatherstripping and caulking, and by introducing energy-efficient features, such as awnings, operable shutters, and storm windows and doors, where appropriate.
- .3 If a new mechanical system is needed, install it so that it causes the least amount of alteration to the building's exterior facades, historic building fabric, and site features.
- .4 If desired, introduce narrow-profile exterior or interior storm windows so that they do not obscure or damage the existing sash and frame. Select exterior storm windows with a painted or baked-enamel finish color that is compatible with the sash color. For double-hung windows, operable storm window dividers should align with the existing meeting rails.
- .5 If desired, introduce full-light storm doors constructed of wood or aluminum that do not obscure or damage the existing door and frame. Select storm doors with a painted, stained, or baked-enamel finish color that is compatible with the color of the existing door. Bare aluminum storm doors and storm windows are not appropriate.
- .6 Replace deteriorated or missing wooden blinds and shutters with matching new units sized to fit the opening and mounted so that they can be operated.
- .7 If desired and where historically appropriate, install fabric awnings over window, door, storefront, or porch openings with care to ensure that historic features are not damaged or obscured.
- .8 Locate new mechanical equipment and utilities, including heating and air-conditioning units, meters, exposed pipes, and fuel tanks, in the most inconspicuous area, usually along a building's rear facade. Screen them from view.
- .9 In general, the introduction of underground utility lines to reduce the intrusion of additional overhead lines and poles is encouraged. However, in trenching, take care to avoid archaeological resources and the roots of trees.
- .10 Where possible, locate portable window air-conditioning units on rear facades or inconspicuous side facades.
- .11 It is not appropriate to install ventilators, solar collectors, antennas, satellite dishes, or mechanical equipment in locations that compromise character-defining roofs, or on roof slopes that are prominently visible from the street.
- .12 It is not appropriate to introduce contemporary communication equipment that is inconsistent with the historic character of the districts, including large-scale antennas and satellite dishes, in locations visible from the street.



*Louvered blinds provide a traditional means of shading the sun's heat from the interior of a structure while allowing ventilation.*



### 3.11 Accessibility, Health, and Safety Considerations

A need for public access to, a change in use of, or a substantial rehabilitation of a historic building may necessitate compliance with current standards for life safety and accessibility. Both the North Carolina State Building Code and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 include some flexibility in compliance when a historic building is involved.

#### Things to Consider As You Plan

When changes to a building are necessary, the property owner must give careful consideration to how the changes can be incorporated without compromising the integrity of the historic building, its character-defining features, or its site. The commission staff should be consulted early in the planning stages for assistance on such projects.

Because of the characteristic raised foundation of many early Raleigh buildings, accessibility for persons with disabilities often requires the introduction of a ramp or a lift to the first-floor level. Safety codes may also dictate additional exits and/or a fire stair. The introduction of railings, handrails, or other safety features may be needed as well. Complying with such requirements in ways that are sensitive to the historic character of the building and the site demands creative design solutions developed with input from local code officials, representatives of local disability groups, and historic preservation specialists. Whether the modifications are large or small, however, with respect to the long-term preservation of the historic building, temporary or reversible alternatives are preferable to permanent or irreversible ones.



*A mechanical lift provides access to the entrance of the Executive Mansion from the right side of the front porch. The lift itself is partially screened by the foundation plantings.*



*A universal design residence in the Oakwood district provides access to the front porch both by steps and by ramp.*



*Both the use of traditional materials and details and the addition of landscape screening successfully integrate this ramp with the building and its site.*



### 3.11 Accessibility, Health, and Safety Considerations: Guidelines

- .1 In considering changes to a historic building, review accessibility and life-safety code implications to determine if the proposed change is compatible with the building's historic character and setting or will compromise them.
- .2 Meet accessibility and life-safety building code requirements in such a way that the historic site and its character-defining features are preserved.
- .3 Meet accessibility and life-safety building code requirements in such a way that the historic building's character-defining facades, features, and finishes are preserved.
- .4 Determine appropriate solutions to accessibility with input from historic preservation specialists and local disability groups.
- .5 If needed, introduce new or additional means of access that are reversible and that do not compromise the original design of a historic entrance or porch.
- .6 Work with code officials in exploring alternative methods of equal or superior effectiveness in meeting safety code requirements while preserving significant historic features.
- .7 Locate fire doors, exterior fire stairs, or elevator additions on rear or non-character-defining facades. Design such elements to be compatible in character, materials, scale, proportion, and finish with the historic building.



*This discrete black handrail provides a safe edge for a steep entry stair.*