



*Design Guidelines for
Commercial Buildings in
The Richmond Historic District*



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Design Guidelines for Commercial Buildings in the Richmond Historic District

Introduction

These design guidelines address the commercial buildings within the Richmond Historic District, which is generally bounded by Jane Long Lane on the north, the Brazos River on the east, Houston Street on the South and Seventh Street on the west (see map of district, page 5). Most of the historic commercial properties are concentrated on Morton and Calhoun Streets, between Second and Fifth Streets. It should be noted that the district boundaries also include a number of important historic sites and residences. These design guidelines are meant to serve the city of Richmond, owners of historic properties, and indeed, all property owners in Richmond. It is the intent of the guidelines to aid the city and property owners in making sensitive and appropriate decisions that affect the preservation and protection of their historic resources.

Goals for the Design Guidelines

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

Goals for the Design Guidelines are:

- To protect the integrity of the Richmond Historic District.
- To protect the sense of time and place conveyed by the historic buildings as a collection.
- To promote a sense of identity for the historic district.
- To protect property values and investments.
- To minimize negative impacts on adjacent properties from inappropriate development.
- To encourage pedestrian activity.
- To convey a sense of human scale.
- To promote tourism in the historic district.

What is the Purpose of Design Guidelines?

Design guidelines provide a common basis for making decisions about design that affect individual properties as well as the overall character of the historic district. The guidelines do not dictate solutions, but rather provide general information to guide owners in making decisions by providing appropriate choices for a variety of specific design issues. Guidelines also identify some design approaches that could potentially damage the building. For example, the guidelines advise not to sandblast masonry because it will damage the historic protective finish of the building and would result in severe damage to the structure. These guidelines also assure that new construction within the historic district is compatible with the character of the other buildings. These design guidelines are based on The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (see page 24).

Why Have Design Guidelines?

An important purpose of design guidelines is to inform the community and building owners about the design policies the city of Richmond uses in reviewing applications for the Certificate of Appropriateness process. But more importantly, they help sustain the historic character of the downtown district. The intent is to provide information for property owners to use in making decisions about their buildings. The guidelines also provide the Richmond Historic District Commission with a basis for making consistent and informed decisions about design in the historic district.

The design guidelines take effect only when a project is initiated by a property owner or tenant to alter an existing structure or to construct a new one. The guidelines do not require property owners or tenants to initiate repairs, nor is there any deadline that forces properties into compliance.

Why Do the Design Guidelines Address New Construction?

It is not the intent of the guidelines to freeze the historic district in time or to make new buildings appear as though they are from a historic period. The historic district has witnessed change and can continue to incorporate transition; but new construction or modification to existing buildings should not impede upon one's ability to interpret the historic character of the district. In the most general terms, new construction, restorations or modifications should be compatible with the historic character of the district without imitating it and without harming the historic feel of the downtown historic district.

How to Use the Design Guidelines

Property owners, tenants and architects are encouraged to use these guidelines when beginning projects in the historic district. The guidelines should apply to projects not subject to review, as this can result in more cost-effective designs and yield a more positive image for the property. For projects subject to review, reference to the guidelines in the initial planning stages of projects can avoid designs that may prove inappropriate and unacceptable.

City staff will use the guidelines when advising property owners and in administrative reviews. The Richmond Historic District Commission will use the guidelines when considering the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness. This document will "guide" their decisions, but will not necessarily dictate the final outcome.

Because each project has special circumstances that require consideration, the Commission makes its determination on a case-by-case basis. In making their decisions, the Commission's overall concern is that the integrity of individual historic structures be preserved and that the historic character of the historic district be protected.

What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

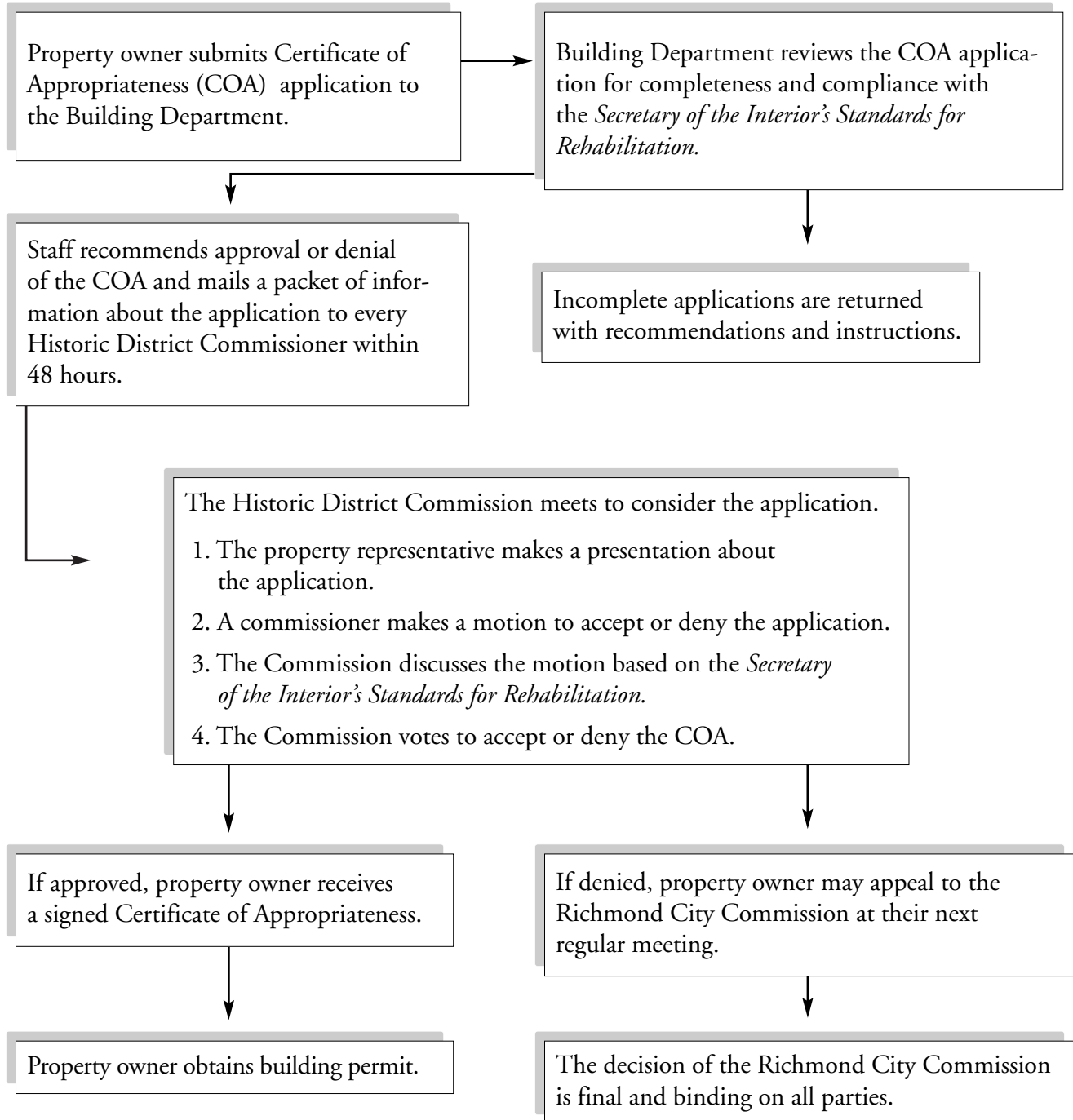
The City implemented the Historic Ordinance in 1998, requiring property owners of historic buildings within the district to apply for a certificate of appropriateness from the Richmond Historic District Commission. An application must be submitted to the Building Department and design review approval obtained from the Richmond Historic District Commission before one can receive a building permit for any exterior alteration, restoration, reconstruction, or new construction. Although the property owner is required to apply for this certificate, the property owner may appeal a decision by the Richmond Historic District Commission to the City Commission at their regularly scheduled meeting. A flow chart illustrating the Certificate of Appropriateness process for the City of Richmond may be found on the following page.

Please note that other city regulations and ordinances also may affect proposed design projects:

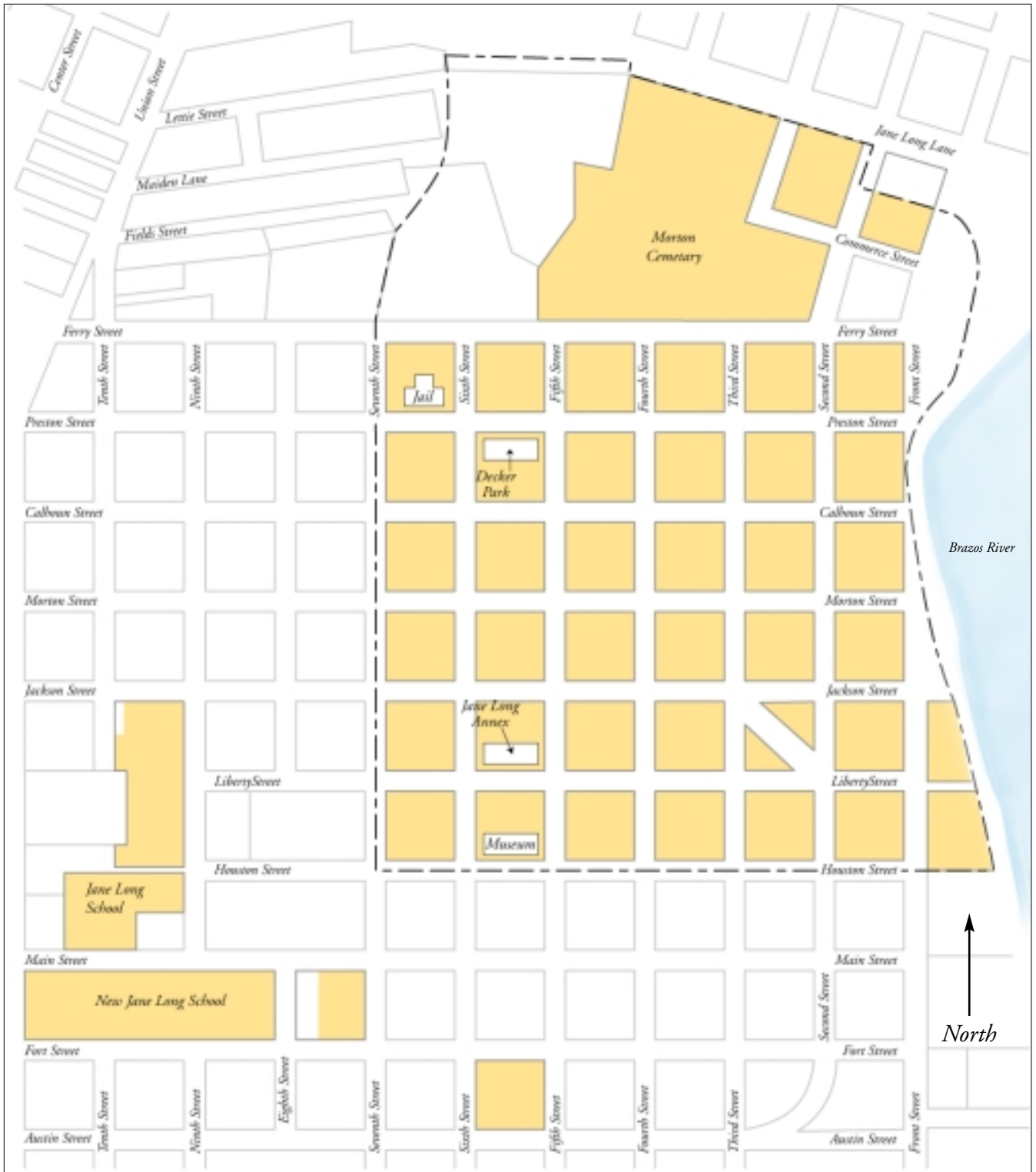
- City building codes
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Federal income tax credits for certified rehabilitation of historic buildings (requiring approval by the Texas Historical Commission)
- Recorded Texas Historic Landmark reviews (requiring approval by the Texas Historical Commission)

If you have any questions about the review process, contact the City of Richmond Building Department at 281-341-3100. Technical information about rehabilitation techniques, including cleaning of masonry, repair of windows, the construction of additions, and the rehabilitation of storefronts can be found in a series of publications by the National Park Service entitled Preservation Briefs. These are available on request from the Texas Historical Commission and online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov>. Additional sources of information are listed in these guidelines, beginning on page 31.

Certificate of Appropriateness Process for the City of Richmond



Richmond Historic District



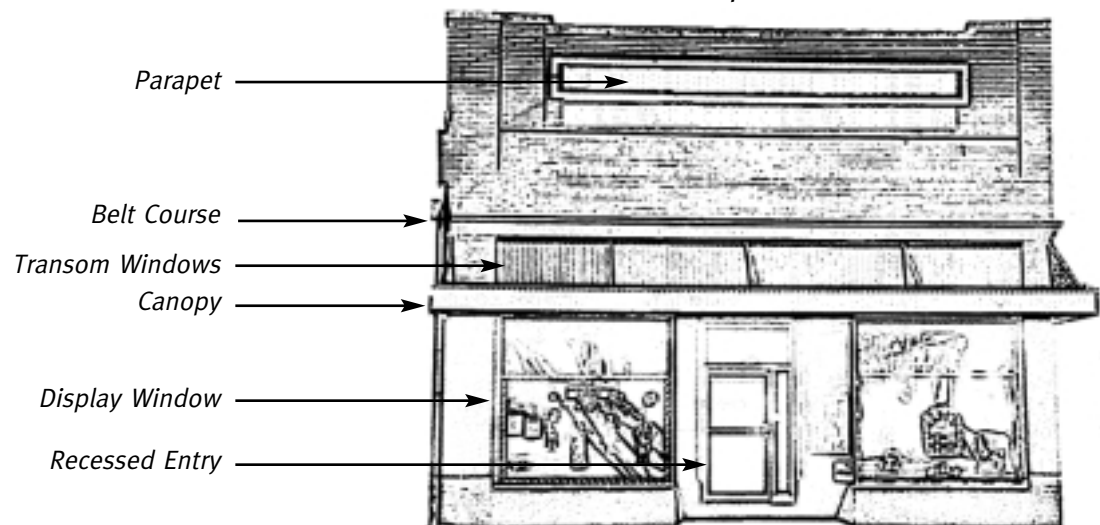
Historic district boundary



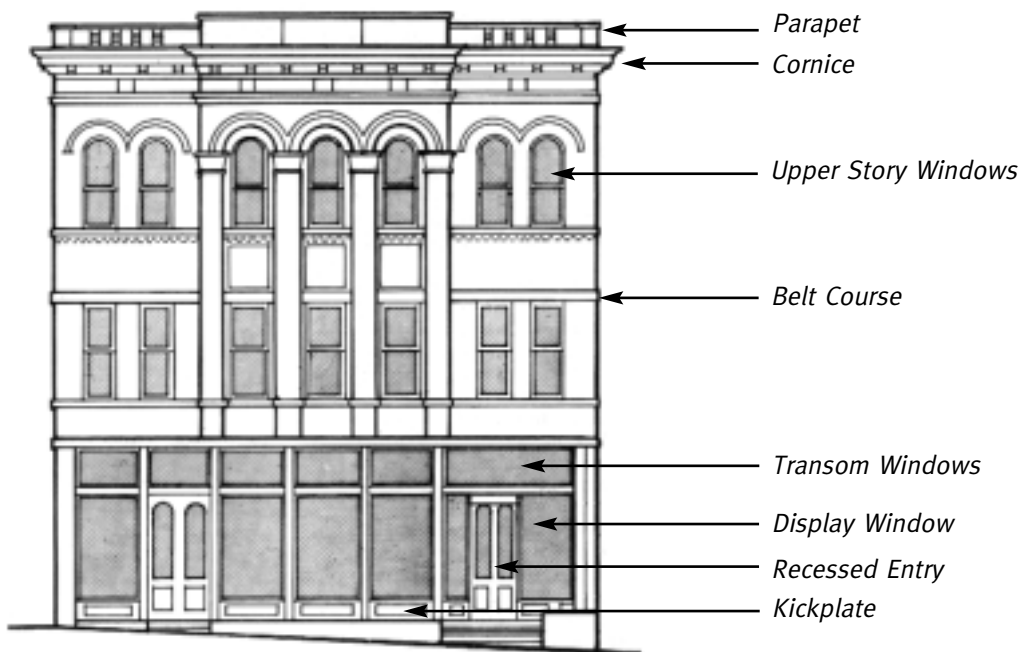
The Evolution of Building Types in The Richmond Historic District

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

One-part Commercial Block



Two-Part Commercial Block



Fort Settlement, later known as Fort Bend, was established on the eastern banks of the Brazos river in 1822. This small settlement became the city of Richmond, being named in early 1837 by realty partners Robert Eden Handy and William Lusk. Early construction in downtown Richmond began along the eastern end of present day Morton street, gradually spreading south and west from the banks of the Brazos river. The majority of these buildings were frame constructions, featuring a large sign painted on the wooden parapet, which hid a gabled roof. The early streetscape lacked any form of paving or surfacing material and wooden sidewalks in front of stores were intermittent. As bountiful as the Brazos river was to Richmond's commerce, it could also be devastating. A severe flood in 1833 destroyed both commercial property and crops, and led to an outbreak of cholera. Still, Richmond thrived and saw the growth of business, social services and a lively population.



An early depiction of ferry commerce on the Brazos River.

The Brazos river played a crucial role in the ongoing development of the Richmond area, serving as the main passage from towns north to the shipping trade of the Gulf of Mexico. Throughout the 1800s, Richmond remained one of the river's major ports, moving goods and people, and supporting the mail route, with deliveries to the county twice a week. By the 1850s, Richmond could boast a Masonic Hall, the county courthouse, several stores and the Richmond Male and Female Academy. Over the next five years, the city gained numerous additional stores, two hotels and a cotton warehouse. All these enterprises were enhanced by the extension into the city of the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway during

these same years. Marketing and shipping contributed to the growth of farming, ranching and a thriving mercantile population.

The earliest masonry commercial buildings in Richmond, known as the Texas Vernacular Arched Front (or Flat Arched Front), consisted of a first floor with a series of narrow openings separated by masonry piers which provided openings for doors and windows and supported the upper floor. Initially, a series of arches at the ground level provided openings for windows and doors, as well as supporting the upper wall. These were spaced evenly across the front, and it was not uncommon to hang double doors in each

archway to allow the shopkeeper to open up the entire façade for maximum ventilation and to provide the greatest amount of direct contact with customers on the sidewalk. Above the doors, fanlights were installed conforming to the shapes of the arches. By the mid-1870s, however, wider flat windows came into use, made possible by the introduction of a steel or heavy timber beam across the entire façade, which supported the upper part of the masonry wall. With this structural advance, a large transparent opening could be achieved to display more goods within a display window. These new storefronts exhibited large expanses of plate glass, allowing the ground floors to become more transparent. Window sills on the second floors were finished with stone sills, brick arches and a simple cornice at the top of the building. A canopy often projected from the front of these buildings to shade the sidewalk and provided a sense of continuity to individual buildings. Signs were also hung along the outer edge of the canopy. The railroad provided inexpensive transportation from large urban areas such as St. Louis for manufactured building components, including windows, cast iron columns, moldings and even entire storefronts.



Fort Bend County's original courthouse.



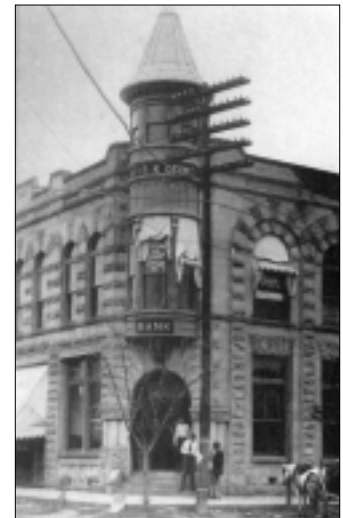
A typical commercial streetfront, found in most Texas towns during the latter half of the 1800s.

Another distinctive feature of the commercial storefront which developed during the late 19th century was the recessed entrance flanked by display windows, all at the street level. The introduction of the commercial storefront contributed both cohesion and variety to the streetscape. The open first floors and the human-scaled ornamentation found on the building improved the streetscape's appeal to pedestrians. The uniform alignment of canopies enhanced the repeated storefront form, although the streetscape continued to project a busy, rhythmic appearance. Early photographs show that most storefronts were sheltered by canopies. Many of these were horizontal, frame structures which were supported on wood posts at the edge of the sidewalk. Others were hung by chains from the façade. Although many canopies had a flat roof, some were shed-shaped, sloping to the edge of the sidewalk. Although popular today, fabric awnings are not visible in historic photographs of downtown Richmond. Such awnings are, however, in keeping with the historic character of downtown, as shopkeepers often hung vertical panels of canvas as valences in archways or at the edge of a canopy to shield the shop from the late afternoon sun, particularly on south-facing facades.

By the 1880s, Richmond's population had grown to approximately 2,000 citizens. The thriving community now supported sugar mills, six schools, four churches and the J.H.P. Davis Bank. This Victorian Romanesque Revival structure graced the corner of Morton and Third Streets, and also served as a site for several county offices, as well as Richmond's first telephone exchange. Sadly, the grand old structure was demolished in the 1950s. Other prosperous business included the J.E. Dyer Store, 206 Morton Street, which offered a variety of general merchandise. Groceries could be bought at the Jones and Hinson Grocery, at 208 Morton Street. The McNabb and Varga Saddlery Shop provided tack and custom gear, and area farmers and ranchers could do wholesale business at the Real F. Ransom Groceries and Grain business.

The introduction of the vernacular storefront type continued throughout Richmond during the 1870s and through the 1920s. It featured a large, plate glass display window on either side of a deeply recessed entryway. The upper part of the building was supported on a steel beam that spanned the glass opening. The display window was frequently framed in moldings that were more ornamental than those found in earlier buildings and was often supported on cast metal columns. A kickplate, supporting the display window from below, typically had an ornamental molding. A smaller band of glass above the storefront, known as a transom, provided additional light into the interior of the store. Ornamental details still existed, but were generally limited to a shallow molding, such as a cornice of masonry or stamped metal. In essence, these buildings lacked the distinctive detail that would associate them with the revival styles popular during this period.

While vernacular building types predominate within the historic district, Richmond contains several good examples of the Romanesque Revival and Late Victorian styles. The Romanesque Revival style was popular in the United States from 1870 through the 1890s and is distinguished by monumental, masonry arches rising from massive piers or springing directly from the wall itself. Simple carved moldings frame these arches. Door and window openings may be trimmed in molded brick. Stone is frequently used around openings, often with a rough-cut ashlar finish.



The J.H.P. Davis Bank, built in 1886, which housed Richmond's first telephone exchange, was torn down during the 1950s.

Historic photographs indicate that many store front signs in Richmond were painted panels, mounted flush with the face of the building, while other signs were hung along the outer edges of the horizontal canopies that sheltered the sidewalks. Sign graphics were simple, although a few signs incorporated symbols, and block letters were typical of most text. Visually, signs were a significant part of the street but they clearly did not dominate it. This was especially true at night. Incandescent lamps were used to illuminate signs externally, with bulbs directed at the surface of the sign. These typically were shielded to minimize the glare. Overall, a relatively small amount of the surface area of a building front was illuminated; its sign, entry, and perhaps display windows, were usually the only items lighted.

Up until the turn of the century, Richmond's economy had been based on the agricultural bounty that nature provided. Its location on the Brazos river assured rich land for farming and ranching, and this prosperity in turn supported the successful mercantile enterprises in town. As the area moved into the early 1900s, Richmond began to share in the wealth to be found in oil and minerals. The city was ringed by eight productive oilfields and sulfur mining operations were established. During this same period, the introduction of the automobile was an important factor in the development of downtown business.

Buildings from this period tended to be less elaborate than those preceding the turn of the century. One of the most important trends was the construction of early twentieth century vernacular buildings, many of which had a brick parapet, occasionally ornamented with geometric patterns in brick. During these years, Richmond began to enjoy the amenities of paved sidewalks and citizens could gather at a newly built public swimming pool. The Richmond Cotton Company, incorporated in 1899, formed the Richmond Electric Company and kept the city's homes and business humming.

The city of Richmond was spared most of the ravages of the Great Depression, relying again on its agricultural base to support the local economy. Surrounding rice fields remained productive and the city's two large cotton gins continued to serve the Fort Bend County area and support badly needed jobs. Following World War II, many streetscapes in the city were altered. During this period, the widespread use of canopies and awnings disappeared; the modernization and alteration of façades began to erode the historic character of many commercial buildings in downtown Richmond. The overall appearance of the streetscape was also affected by the use of on-street angled parking, to accommodate the increasing presence of the automobile.



By World War II, many Morton Street businesses had been substantially altered.



An example of downtown signage common to Texas cities, circa 1885.

With the introduction of shopping centers and malls, a decentralization of downtowns occurred all across the country. As the economic vitality of downtown areas waned, there was an inevitable increase in vacancies and a shift in the use of buildings. Architecturally, our historic downtowns suffered serious degradation, as buildings routinely received complete façade coverings during the 1950s and early 1960s. The city of Richmond was not spared from the effects of this trend towards modernization of commercial districts.

General Principles of Design to Maintain a Building's Historic Character

- It is essential to carefully preserve all features, components and details which are original to the building. Do not cover historic features with signs or new materials.
- Whenever possible, repair those features that are damaged. Repair is always preferred over replacement.
- When replacement is absolutely necessary, reconstruct the original element as exactly as possible. Replication can be very costly, but if done with care, can salvage the historic integrity of the building.
- If an element is missing, do not replicate it without reference to strong historic evidence of its original form and materials. If no such evidence exists, a very simplified interpretation of similar elements should be considered.
- Remember, any existing alteration to a building that is 50 years of age or older is considered to be historic. Respect the entire history of a building when making decisions.
- Signs should not overwhelm a building's proportions or design.
- Visual clutter should be avoided.



The historic integrity of a building is insured by the maintenance and preservation of all its architectural elements. The Fort Bend County Jail, pictured above, is an outstanding example and today serves as Richmond's police administration building.

Materials

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

Storefronts

- The original storefront should be carefully preserved whenever it is intact. Do not alter or obscure the original storefront. This is absolutely essential to maintaining the historic integrity of both the individual building and the historic district as a whole.
- In some cases, an original storefront may have been altered as part of the history of the building. Do not restore such storefronts to an earlier period.
- If the glass in a storefront is intact, it should be preserved.
- The original shape of the window openings should be retained.
- If the storefront has been altered in the recent past, the original design should be restored. If documentary evidence of its original form is lacking, a very simplified interpretation of similar storefronts should be used.

New Designs for Storefronts

- If the original storefront is missing, it is best to consider implementing a new and more appropriate design.
- If there is no evidence of the original design of the storefront, the new design should use the traditional elements of such storefronts, for example:
 - Maintain the transparent character of the display windows.
 - Maintain the traditional design of storefronts.
 - Keep windows the same size and configuration of historic windows.
 - Do not use modern aluminum doors.
 - New storefronts should not project beyond the surface of the façade.

Alterations

- Alterations should be avoided whenever possible in buildings that have retained their original, historic features.
- Alterations should not try to imitate an earlier period or a different style. It is imperative that alterations not hide the design character of the original building.
- Alterations that will damage historic features are forbidden. For example, the removal of a cornice for new signage will damage a building's significance.
- The scale and proportion of the building should be respected when considering changes to the storefront, particularly in a two-part commercial block building where the rhythm of the second floor bays should be considered.
- Rhythm of the façade should be kept in its original configuration, such as keeping the same number of bays across the façade on both the lower and upper floors. Do not build a new storefront consisting of a singular, flat façade if the historic building was originally divided into several bays.
- The separation of the storefront from the upper part of the building should be articulated.
- The relationship of the storefront to the façade should be carefully considered.
- A building's original materials should never be removed or covered up by a new sheathing that will harm it, such as aluminum slipcases.



The original storefront reflects the building's history and maintains the district's historic integrity.

Additions

- Additions should be avoided whenever possible.
- Any additions should be compatible in scale, materials and character with the historic building. Whenever possible, new additions should be made to the rear of the building.
- No additions should try to replicate the historic building. It should be readily distinguishable from its historic portion.
- Any addition should be subordinate to the main, historic building. Its materials and ornamentation should not call attention to it.
- Additions should not be made to the front of a historic building. Due to the minimal setback of buildings from the street, this is highly unlikely in Richmond. Still, such an addition should never be considered.
- Additions should not alter, damage or obscure important historic elements of the original building.
- An addition to a one-story building should be set back a greater distance than that of a two-story building, in order to minimize its visual impact.
- Second story additions to a one-story building are discouraged. If such an addition is appropriate, however, it should be set back a minimum of 25 feet so that the addition is less discernible from street level.

Security Devices

- The use of security devices on windows and doors should be kept to a minimum.
- If use of metal bars is necessary, they should be constructed in a simple design.
- Roll-down metal screens are strongly discouraged and inappropriate to the historic buildings in Richmond. These screens hide a merchant's products and make the street appear unfriendly to pedestrians.
- Shutters are appropriate for upper floor windows only if they were used historically.
- Alarm devices should be hidden.

Street Furniture

- Historically, street furnishings were rarely used in Richmond. Today, however, they can be a necessary aspect of modern life and should be incorporated into the historic streetscape.
- Benches along the sidewalk should be kept simple and compatible with the historic character of the street. Do not place advertising signs on the back of benches.
- Limit the number of trash receptacles and benches. They should be very simple in design and not placed too closely to the edge of the street.
- Newspaper racks should be unobtrusive and painted a muted color. Do not place them in large groups near corners where they can impede pedestrian traffic.
- Avoid trying to make phone booths look historic. Do not allow booths to obscure important building features.
- Do not obscure storefronts with any form of street furniture.

Historic Signage

- Historic signage greatly contributes to the character of a commercial historic district, and should be preserved. The most common issue with retaining historic signage is a change in the business that occupies the building. However, as these signs are part of the community memory and often landmarks in themselves, it is highly recommended to allow them to remain a part of the original building.
- Restoration of historic signage should only occur when the original has lost its visibility due to age, damage or inappropriate cleaning methods, such as sandblasting on brick façades.
- Typical historic signage includes: Painted façades and fascia signs; material inlaid into the building's facade, such as brick or enamel; hanging signs and older neon signs; and goldleaf or gilded lettering in storefront windows. Each type of historic signage requires special restoration techniques and is best served by professionals specializing in the materials originally used.
- New signage on historic buildings can be appropriate if the signage compliments the historic integrity of the original building. New signage must never obscure original signs or disrupt the character of the commercial district, and it must never be applied to the historic building in a manner that would cause physical damage or a loss of historic integrity.

New Construction for Contemporary Buildings

- New buildings should be compatible with the historic character of the Richmond Historic District. For example, ground floors should have a transparent quality while upper floors should maintain the rhythm, form and vertical emphasis of windows found in the historic buildings. A simplified cornice should crown the new building. Maintain the alignment of horizontal building elements, such as window sills, cornices, and stringcourses.
- New construction should appear similar in mass and scale to the existing historic buildings.
- New buildings should not attempt to replicate older historic styles.
- New buildings should be oriented toward the street in the same manner as older buildings so their entrances face onto the street.
- A uniform set-back of the façade should be retained. Align the building with the property line of other buildings within the district. Courtyards or patios should be placed behind a wall and should not extend across the entire front of a building.
- Parking lots should not be placed in front of a new building.
- New buildings should be similar in height and width to the other buildings within the district. New construction should not exceed more than two stories. Large building projects occupying several lots can be broken into several units and reflect the design found throughout the district.
- Floor heights should be similar to other buildings.
- Brick is the preferred material for new construction. Brick should be similar in size to that used historically.
- Simple material finishes are encouraged. Polished stone, for example, would be inappropriate as a material. Materials should be used in a manner similar to that traditionally used.
- Flat roofs are predominant within the Richmond Historic District. Different roof forms should be discouraged, such as tall Mansard roofs or gabled roof lines. Decorative parapets are appropriate.
- The building entrance should appear similar to those of the existing historic buildings. If possible, the primary building entrance should be slightly recessed and similar in scale with the existing historic buildings.

Reconstruction of Historic Buildings

Reconstruction of a historic building is the re-creation of an entire, non-surviving building using new materials. In most cases very little, if any, existing physical evidence of the building survives. Thus, the potential for historical error requires very stringent documentation of all aspects of the original building. A reconstruction requires research and documentation to establish the original building's historic significance, and to determine that the reconstruction is vital to the public understanding of the property. As the reconstruction should look exactly like the original building, this type of "restoration" is the most costly to undertake and requires the skills of a professional architect experienced in such areas. All reconstructed buildings should clearly be identified as contemporary recreations.

- Detailed documentary and physical evidence are necessary to avoid a conjectural interpretation of the original building, and to ensure accurate reconstruction. If such documentation cannot be verified, other interpretive methods should be considered, such as explanatory markers.
- Archeological resources at the original site must be taken into consideration. These archeological findings are essential to determine the original building's size, plan, relationship of rooms and overall layout. Investigation is required to identify those resources that are essential and require reconstruction. Archeological features that are not essential must be left in place and undisturbed for the consideration of future research.
- A reconstruction must never be based on speculation of the original design or on the features of other buildings in the area. The design for the reconstruction must be based on the solid evidence provided by research and documentation of the original building. In the case where existing features of the original building survive, these historic features must be identified and preserved, and incorporated into the reconstruction. The marriage of new and existing material must be carefully documented as a guide to future research and maintenance.
- Exterior and interior features of a reconstruction require a careful duplication of the original building's character. Historic materials and traditional finishes are strongly preferred. Substitute materials may be used if these materials replicate the appearance of the original building's interior and exterior finish. The exception would be non-visible features, such as interior structural or mechanical systems. These features are best served by modern materials and technology.
- A reconstruction of a historic building must consider the original site in its entirety. Archeological research is required to establish the foundation for reconstruction of landscape features, such as fences, fountains, exterior furnishing, sidewalks and roads. Other landscape features might include yards, gardens, and parks. It is vital to a successful reconstruction to preserve the visual relationship of the historic building to its original site.
- The Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Reconstruction can be found on page 25 of these design guidelines, including the Secretary's definition of reconstruction as well as the conditions that allow reconstruction as a recommended treatment of a historic site.

Entryways

The entrance of the building is considered the primary focal point of the front façade. The main elements of an entryway are the door and display windows, discussed more fully in the following sections. Styling of entryways may include a recessed entrance, a truncated corner entryway, or a tiled or mosaic pattern on the entrance walkway.

Recessed Entryways

Do

- Do preserve the original orientation of the recessed entryway.
- Do maintain the original elements, including display windows and doors.
- Do appreciate that recessed entryways offer protection from the elements and help to identify a business.



Recessed entryways are one of the strongest features of a well preserved historic business district.

Don't

- Do not bring recessed entryways flush to the sidewalk, in order to modernize the look of the building. This will destroy the historic integrity of the building.
- Do not clutter recessed entryways with signage and displays.
- Do not alter original elements, such as display windows and doors.



Entryways should never be modified with aluminum doors.

Doors

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

Do

- Do preserve original doors whenever possible to preserve the building's historic integrity.
- Do ensure that any door replacement resembles the original in design, materials, color and alignment. Such replacement should occur only when unavoidable.
- Do take care with glass replacement in doors; the glazing should match the original work as closely as possible.



Original door structures should always be preserved whenever possible.

Don't

- Do not replace doors with metal construction; glass and aluminum frame doors will significantly distract from a historic district's charm.
- Do not replace historic door glass with patterned, stained or etched glass; while such glass is attractive, it should be used with caution. Many replacement doors strive for a historic look, but instead appear contrived and distracting.



Replacement doors should not attempt to appear historic by the use of stained or etched glass.

Windows

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

Display Windows

Do

- Do maintain the original configurations of display windows. Typically, these store front windows are large and single paned.
- Do maintain original glazing materials and style.
- Do restore modified or reduced display windows to original dimensions whenever possible.



Display windows grace the storefront with large, single paned glazing.

Don't

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



Inappropriate alterations to display windows include modification of the original size and replacement with aluminum framed windows.

Do

- Do repair wooden elements and replace broken glass panes in transom windows.
- Do take advantage of the ventilation and ambient light provided by transoms.
- Do understand that these windows maintain a balance and linear continuity across storefronts and help unite a block in general appearance.



Transom windows lend unity across store fronts, providing both ventilation and light.

Don't

- Do not paint over transoms or fill in with wood or brick.
- Do not replace with modern, aluminum sashed glazing.
- Do not cover with awnings or signage. This will disrupt the linear rhythm that transoms establish along a street course.



When transom windows are covered or painted over, the building loses historic integrity and the appearance of the entire streetscape suffers.

Do

- Do preserve the vertical design and multi-paned glass typically found in upper story windows.
- Do maintain the uniform spacing and proportions of these windows to ensure balance in design.
- Do remember that window manufacturers today produce a wide variety of suitable wooden replacements for most historic window openings.



Upper story windows feature a vertical, multi-paned design, providing a visual rhythm across the building and a unity to the streetscape.

Don't

- Do not alter the shape or spacing of upper story windows.
- Do not fill in upper story windows with brick or wood.
- Do not replace existing upper story windows with modern, aluminum windows.



Existing upper story windows should never be replaced with aluminum windows, painted over, or filled in with any material.

Kickplates

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

Do

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



Kickplates supply a sense of balance and create visual interest on a storefront.



Kickplates provide a linear continuity to the block.

Don't

- Do not allow kickplates to become cracked, scuffed or detached.
- Do not replace original kickplates unless they are beyond repair.
- Do not use plastic, shingles or other inappropriate materials when replacing kickplates.
- Do not deviate from the original color scheme, as this will detract from the overall unity of the block.



Kickplates should never be removed or covered over with brick or other material.

Awnings and Canopies

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

Do

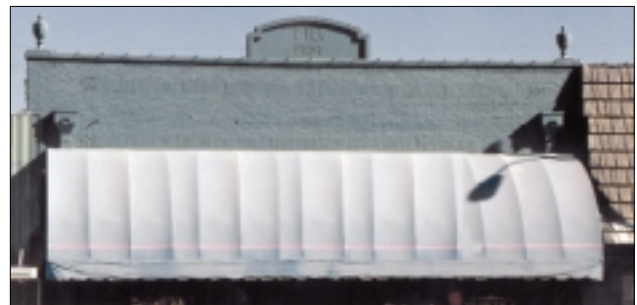
- Do maintain and repair existing canopies and awnings.
- Do ensure that any required repairs or replacements fit the proportions of the storefront.
- Do respect the surrounding color scheme and building facade when replacing any awnings, as this will compliment the overall continuity of the historic ambiance in the downtown district.



Awnings and canopies add linear form and continuity along the block. They also provide shelter from the elements, encouraging foot traffic along the streetscape.

Don't

- Do not remove existing canopies; any such removal will seriously compromise the existing façade material and endanger the historic integrity of the building.
- Do not conceal ornamental detail when replacing canopies or awnings.
- Do not use inappropriate materials, especially shingles, when awning replacements cannot be avoided.
- Do not use inappropriate colors or materials when replacing canopies.



Canopies should never be replaced with modern materials (top). Inappropriate awning materials and color schemes distract from the historic commercial district. (bottom).

Cornices and Parapets

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

Do

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



Many parapets contain architectural details, adding interest to the building.



A well-preserved cornice and parapet add to the building's historic integrity.

Don't

- Do not fail to repair a neglected cornice or parapet, as these building elements can pose a serious danger to pedestrian traffic if allowed to deteriorate.
- Do not cover any cornice or parapet with modern signage or a false facade.
- Do not remove any original cornice or parapet, as this will destroy the historic integrity of the building.
- Do not replace a damaged cornice or parapet with inappropriate materials that distract from the building's historic character.

Covering the cornice and parapet with inappropriate materials (left) will destroy the historic integrity of the building. Allowing the cornice to fall into disrepair (right) creates an eyesore.



Architectural Details

Downtown Richmond contains several buildings that are rich with architectural detailing that conveys their history and gives distinction to the business district. The preservation of these unique features will enhance the quality and beauty of the historic district. The historic Fort Bend County Jail, featuring the Richardsonian Romanesque style of the late 19th century, no doubt influenced the stylistic expression evident in some of the surviving buildings of the period. With their façades accented by decorative brick work featuring insets and projections, these buildings contribute a special character to the historic district. While downtown Richmond is fortunate to have such buildings adorned with special architectural details, later buildings tend to be more functional in nature. But even these modest buildings contain architectural details that must be respected, including decorative parapets, unique window or door treatments and historic signage.

Do

- Do recognize the unique character that architectural details lend a historic building, and maintain these elements in good condition.
- Do repair details when necessary, using appropriate methods and materials.
- Do refer to historic photographs of the building before attempting any replacement or modification of architectural details.



Architectural details provide visual interest and greatly contribute to the building's historic integrity. The historic Fort Bend County Jail is Richmond's most outstanding example of finely pre-

Don't

- Do not allow architectural details to fall into disrepair, as this will detract from the building's appearance and historic integrity.
- Do not attempt to clean architectural details with high-pressure water cleaning, sandblasting, or caustic cleansers. Such cleaning attempts will cause irreversible damage to the building's finest features.
- Do not paint, cover over, or remove architectural details, as this will harm the building's historic integrity.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The Standards (Department of Interior regulations, 36 CFR 67) pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and the interior, related landscape features and the building's site and environment as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction. The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

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 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 archeological 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.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Reconstruction

Reconstruction is defined as the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

1. Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.
2. Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure, or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts which are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
3. Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.
4. Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color, and texture.
5. A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.
6. Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.

Reconstruction as a Treatment, Justification

When a contemporary depiction is required to understand and interpret a property's historic value (including the re-creation of missing components in a historic district or site); when no other property with the same associative value has survived; and when sufficient historical documentation exists to ensure an accurate reproduction, reconstruction may be considered as a treatment.

Glossary of Architectural Terms

Arch

A structure built to support the weight above an opening. A true arch is curved and consists of wedge-shaped stones or bricks called voussoirs that make a curved bridge to span the opening. The center voussoir is called a keystone.

Archivolt

An ornamental molding around an arch.

Art Deco

Architectural style of the 1920s and 1930s, characterized by bold outlines, geometric and zigzag forms and the use of modern materials.

Art Glass

A type of stained glass from the late 19th century popularized by Tiffany and other artists such as LaFarge. It is generally composed of milky or opalescent colors.

Awning

Any structure made of cloth, metal or other material attached to a building to provide shade and protection from the elements.

Baluster

A short upright column or post supporting a railing. Many balusters are commonly urn-shaped.

Balustrade

A row of balusters and the railing connecting them. It is often used as a stair rail, for a balcony, or placed above the cornice on the exterior of a building.

Bracket

A supporting member for a projecting element, sometimes in the shape of an inverted "L" and sometimes as a solid piece or a triangular truss.

Canopy

A roofed structure constructed of metal, wood or other material placed so as to extend outward from a building providing a protective covering for doors, windows and other openings. The canopy can be supported by columns or posts, or cantilevered out from the building and supported by metal ties.

Cap

The top member of a column, pilaster or post.

Clerestory Windows

Windows located relatively high up on a wall, often forming a continuous band.

Coffering

Decorative pattern on the underside of a ceiling, dome or vault consisting of sunken square or polygonal panels.

Column

A vertical shaft or pillar that supports, or appears to support, a load.

Coping

A capping to a wall or parapet.

Corbel

A bracket of stone, wood or metal projecting from the side of a wall and serving to support a cornice, the spring of an arch, a balustrade, or other element.

Cornice

The exterior trim of a structure at the meeting of the roof and wall.

Dentil

One of a series of small rectangular blocks, similar in effect to teeth, which are often found in the lower part of a cornice.

Eaves

The underside of a sloping roof projecting beyond the wall of a building.

Elevation

A head-on drawing, often depicted to scale, without any three-dimensional perspective.

Façade

Any side of a building.

False Front

A front wall which extends beyond the sidewalls of a building to create a more imposing façade. It is generally non-structural.

Fascia

A flat board with a vertical face that forms the trim along the edge of a flat roof, or along the horizontal (eaves) side of a pitched roof. The rain gutter is often mounted on it.

Fenestration

The arrangement and design of windows on a building.

Finial

The decorative, pointed terminus of a roof.

Gable

The portion of a wall where it meets the roof and forms a triangular shape. The term is often used to refer to the whole end wall where this occurs.

Hood Molding

A projecting molding around the top of a doorway or window to shield it from water.

Indirect Lighting

Light from a concealed source which reflects onto a building or object.

Internal Illumination

Light from a source that is concealed or contained and is visible only through a translucent surface.

Joist

One of the horizontal wood beams that support the floors or ceilings of a building. Joists are set parallel to one another, usually from one to two feet apart, and span between the supporting walls or larger wood beams.

Kickplate

A decorative panel supporting the main display window on a storefront.

Molding

A decorative band or strip of material used in cornices and as trim around window and door openings. It is also used to delineate floors in a building.

Muntins

Thin constructions that subdivide one large pane of glass into smaller panes, often called glazing bars.

Oriel Window

A projecting bay with windows, which emerges from the building at a point above ground level. It is often

confused with a bay window which ordinarily begins at ground level.

Parapet

A low protective wall at the edge of a roof.

Pediment

A low-pitched gable over a portico taking the shape of a triangle and formed by the sloping roof and a horizontal cornice at the base of the triangle. If the horizontal cornice is lacking, the space is a gable. This form is found over doors and windows, and is sometimes found atop a building.

Pitch

The angle of slope of a roof (i.e. 30° pitch or low-pitched roof) and is typically expressed as a ratio of units of vertical distance to 12 units of horizontal distance (i.e. 8/12).

Plan

A drawing representing the footprint of the building or the horizontal section through the building. It shows the arrangement of the rooms, walls, and partitions as well as the location of doors and windows. Vernacular buildings are usually classified by their type of floor plan.

Pointing

The outer and visible finish of the mortar between the bricks or stones of a masonry wall.

Porch

A covered entrance to a building which may be open or partly enclosed.

Portico

A porch or covered walk consisting of a roof supported by columns.

Preservation

The act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of a building. It may include initial stabilization work, where necessary, as well as ongoing maintenance of the historic building materials.

Protection

Measures designed to defend or guard the physical condition of a property from deterioration; such steps are usually temporary and followed by preservation.

Reconstruction

The reproduction of a historic building by new construction imitating the exact form and detail of a vanished building as it appeared at a specific point in time.

Rehabilitation

Returning a building to a state of utility through the repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving important historic, character-defining features of a building. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation provide guidelines for this process.

Renovation

Returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration while preserving portions or features which are significant to architectural, historic, and cultural value.

Restoration

To bring back to previous condition. Recreation of an earlier appearance both in form and detail. Exposing of original elements and replacement of missing elements, matching originals.

Sash

The moving units of a window, that move within the fixed frame.

Sill

The lowest horizontal member in a frame or opening for a window or door. It is also the lowest horizontal structural member in a framed wall or partition to which the wall studs are attached.

Storefront

The street level façade of a commercial building, usually with display windows.

Stabilization

Applying measures that re-establish an enclosure secure from the elements and re-establishment of structural stability, maintaining essential elements of form.

Turret

Tower-like forms that cap a roof at its corners.

Sources of Additional Information

History of Commercial Building Types

Liebs, Chester. *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985.

This is an excellent overview of the transformation of commercial development from centralized main streets to strip development and shopping malls. It also includes a discussion of such building types as motels, automobile showrooms, drive-in theaters, gas stations and restaurants.

Longstreth, Richard. *Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1987.

A brief, but scholarly, description of the evolution of small-scale commercial architecture. This was the first work which formulated a typology for describing commercial building types. Its importance is underscored by the adoption of its terms for the National Register of Historic Places. Currently out of print, but there is talk it will be reprinted.

Resources for Historic Preservation

National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Information" Series.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation publishes a series of booklets on a variety of topics related to specific issues in preservation. Each of the booklets is \$6.00 or you may order the entire series of 58 booklets with binders. This series is highly recommended. Topics include:

- Maintaining Community Character: How to Establish a Local Historic District
- Design Review in Historic Districts
- Reviewing New Construction Projects in Historic Districts
- Basic Preservation Procedures

Resources for Historic Preservation, cont.

National Park Service, "Preservation Briefs" Series.

This series of pamphlets offer practical assistance to owners of historic buildings in solving problems associated with common preservation repair problems with an emphasis on preserving a property's historic character. The Briefs are also available online (see Web Sites, following page). Topics include:

- Cleaning of Masonry Buildings
- Roofing for Historic Buildings
- Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings
- Repair of Historic Windows
- Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts

Preservation Yellow Pages: The Complete Information Source for Homeowners, Communities and Professionals. Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1997.

A good guide to preservation sources and includes an overview of the major areas and disciplines in preservation. A good general introduction to historic preservation and its sources and organizations.

Innovative Tools for Historic Preservation. Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Planning Association, 1992.

Covers financial incentives, conservation districts, growth management, and regulatory techniques. A good overview of the major techniques used in historic preservation at the local level.

Weeks, Kay and Anne Grimmer, eds. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Illustrated Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. Washington D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, 1995.

An essential guide in understanding the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The illustrations are most helpful in understanding how to apply the guidelines.

Web Sites

National Park Service

www.cr.nps.gov/buildings.htm

The National Park Service is the federal agency responsible for all aspects of implementing the National Historic Preservation Act, first passed by Congress in 1966. In addition to issuing the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the National Park Service administers the National Register of Historic Places program and gives final approval to all projects requesting federal rehabilitation tax credits. Their web site is of tremendous use and the entire series of "Preservation Briefs" (mentioned above) is available online. In addition, they have information on "Caring for a Historic Building," "Dos and Don'ts for Rehabilitating Buildings," and a "Checklist for Rehabilitating Buildings." The web site even includes a step-by-step guide for applying the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in their "Electronic Rehab" section.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

www.nthp.org

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a national organization, chartered by Congress, to promote the preservation of our built environment. This organization serves as an important clearinghouse of information and publishes numerous books on the subject that may be purchased online. This web site offers a wealth of information on current issues. It also contains information on the National Main Street Program, founded by the Trust. The web site is available for use by both members and non-members alike. They offer additional sources, however, for “Forum” members to the National Trust who receive a password for access to additional information on their web site.

Texas Historical Commission

www.thc.state.tx.us

The Texas Historical Commission is the state agency that provides information on historic preservation and administers all aspects of the federal programs at the state level. The web site contains important information on grants and tourism. In addition, the site contains the “historic sites atlas,” a database of information on historic buildings and sites from across the state. The web site also contains important links to other web sites concerned with historic preservation. The staff of the Texas Historical Commission can be invaluable in helping property owners restore their historic buildings, offering both advice and technical information (512-463-6094).

George Ranch Historical Park

www.georgeranch.org

The George Ranch was one of the most notable of the grand family estates established in the Richmond area in the early 1800s. Its original owners were Henry and Nancy Jones, who arrived with the first settlers in Texas, known as the Old Three Hundred. Today, the George Ranch Historical Park encompasses 480 acres and is a unique site, in that it is both a working ranch and a rich historic resource. The original buildings and structures, most notably the George Ranch House, were restored and maintained by the George Foundation. In 1988, the George Foundation forged an alliance with the Fort Bend Museum Association and a number of history programs were established that flourish today. The George Ranch Historical Park provides a unique blend of education, preservation and living history of the Fort Bend County area. The George Ranch web site provides a wealth of information, including volunteer opportunities and an extensive research library. Visitors can search the artifact and photograph collections of the Fort Bend Museum and the George Ranch Historical Park, as well as links to the Texas History Internet Consortium.

Guidebooks and Dictionaries

Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993.

First published in 1969 by a well-respected scholar, this survey of American architecture focuses on the high styles. It is arranged by style and includes a good discussion of sources and evolution, illustrated with examples by major architects.

Kyvig, David E. and Myron A. Marty. *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982.

An exhaustive guide on how to conduct historic research at the local level.

Lounsbury, Carl R. *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

A scholarly dictionary, heavily illustrated, which traces the origins of terms as well as their meaning from the 1600s through the 1820s. Its focus is on the south but includes Tennessee and Kentucky as well. This volume is not directed to the layman, but is extremely interesting and informative.

Rifkind, Carole. *A Field Guide to American Architecture*. New York: New American Library, 1980.

Not as exhaustive a treatment as many of the other guides; however, it has a greater emphasis on high styles and examples from the East that may interest some readers.

Pevsner, Nicholas, Hugh Honour and John Fleming. *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*. New York: Penguin Books.

First published in 1966, this paperback dictionary has been through numerous editions. Its emphasis is on European and English architecture from ancient times through the present. It is most useful for those interested in a brief synopsis of European sources. The earlier editions are not well illustrated.

Harris, Cyril. *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993.

Heavily illustrated with wonderful graphics, this is a general dictionary which covers the architecture of the world. It is probably more easily understood by the layman than the Penguin dictionary and its illustrations are much better.



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