



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - 200 ROSS STREET – 11<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR – PITTSBURGH, PA 15219 – 412-255-6547

# DOWNTOWN FACADE RESTORATION PROGRAM

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

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## A. INTRODUCTION

The following "Guidelines for Rehabilitation" shall be used by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA), when determining the appropriateness of applications for exterior alterations in the Downtown Facade Restoration Program area.

The Design Guidelines substantially incorporate the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (revised 1983) as used to determine if rehabilitation projects qualify as "certified rehabilitations" pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976 (Section 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 67) and subsequent legislation.

The guidelines are designed to help individual property owners formulate plans for the preservation, rehabilitation and continued use of buildings in the Downtown Facade Restoration Program area. The guidelines pertain to buildings of all occupancy and construction types. They apply to permanent and temporary construction on the exterior of buildings as well as to new construction in the district.

## B. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
2. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
3. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.
4. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.
5. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historical, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.
6. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.

7. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.
8. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

C. MASONRY: BRICK, STONE, TERRA COTTA, CONCRETE, STUCCO AND MORTAR

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Identify, retain and preserve masonry features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as walls, brackets, railings, cornices, window architraves, door pediments, steps and columns; joint and unit size, tooling and bonding patterns, coatings and colors also should be preserved.
2. Repair masonry features by patching, piecing-in or consolidating the masonry using recognized preservation methods. Repair also may include the limited replacement in kind -- or with compatible substitute material -- of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of masonry features when there are surviving prototypes or sufficient historical documentation for an accurate reconstruction of the original.
3. Design and install a new masonry feature such as a cornice or door surround when the historic feature is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material and color of the historic building.
4. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration or remove heavy soiling. Cleaning of masonry should be done with the gentlest means possible, using low pressure water wash (not to exceed 600 psi), sometimes in conjunction with mild detergents, chemical agents and/or natural bristle brushes. Prior to cleaning, tests of the proposed method of cleaning should be performed to insure that the cleaning will not harm the masonry. Tests should be performed over a sufficient period of time to evaluate both the immediate and long range effects of the cleaning.
5. Patchpoint or repoint masonry only when necessary by carefully removing the existing mortar to a depth  $2 \frac{1}{4}$  times the width of the joint so as not to cause damage to adjacent masonry surfaces; then, repoint with a mortar that matches the appropriate historical mortar in strength, color and texture. If the original mortar was substandard, care should be taken in its reformulation to insure that the new mixture will not cause damage, through excessive bonding or compressive strength, to the historic masonry units. The original mortar joints should be duplicated in width and tooling.
6. Repaint masonry only when historically appropriate by carefully removing damaged or deteriorated paint only to the next sound layer using the gentlest means

possible; and, then repainting using a compatible paint coating in a color that is historically appropriate to the building and the district.

7. Repair stucco by removing the damaged material and patching with new stucco that duplicates the old in strength, composition, color, and texture.
8. Apply new or non-historic surface treatments such as water-repellent coatings to masonry only if masonry have failed to arrest water penetration problems.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Remove or radically change masonry features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building; or that remove or rebuild a major portion of a masonry wall that can be repaired.
2. Use substitute materials for masonry that do not convey the visual appearance of the surviving parts of the masonry feature or that are physically or chemically incompatible.
3. Create a false historic appearance because the replaced masonry feature is based on insufficient historical, pictorial and physical documentation; introduce a masonry feature that is incompatible in size, scale, material and color.
4. Clean masonry surfaces when they are not heavily soiled; clean without sufficient testing; use abrasive cleaning methods such as sandblasting or grinding; clean using corrosive chemicals such as acidic products on marbles and limestones; use high pressure water cleaning or steam cleaning; use water or liquid chemical solutions when there is a possibility of freezing temperatures.
5. Remove nondeteriorated mortar from sound joints, then repoint the entire building to achieve a uniform appearance; use power tools to remove existing mortar when it is likely that such action will damage adjacent masonry surfaces; repoint with high portland cement content mortars that could cause damage to historic masonry; replace mortars with synthetic caulking compounds; change the width or joint profile when repointing.
6. Remove historically appropriate paint from masonry; use methods of paint removal that damage masonry surfaces; use paint colors that are historically inappropriate to the building or the district.
7. Paint existing unpainted masonry surfaces (except in certain cases of advanced deterioration).
8. Remove sound historic stucco or repair with stucco that is stronger than the historic material or does not convey the same visual appearance.
9. Apply waterproofing, water-repellants or non-historic coatings such as stucco to masonry as a substitute for repointing and masonry repairs. Coatings are

frequently unnecessary, expensive and may change the appearance of the historic masonry as well as accelerate its deterioration.

#### D. WOOD: TRIM AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Identify, retain and preserve wood features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as cornices, brackets, window and doorway trim.
2. Repair wood features by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the wood using recognized preservation methods. Repair may also include the limited replacement in kind -- or with compatible substitute material -- of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes or sufficient documentation for an accurate reconstruction of the original.
3. Replace in kind an entire wood feature that is too deteriorated to repair -- if the overall form and detailing are still evident -- using the physical evidence to guide the new work. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.
4. Design and install a new wood feature such as a cornice or doorway when the historic feature is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material and color of the historic building.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Remove or radically change wood features which are important in defining the overall character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished.
2. Replace an entire wood feature such as a cornice when repair of the wood and limited replacement of the deteriorated or missing parts are appropriate.
3. Replace an entire wood feature that is unrepairable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new feature that does not convey the same visual appearance.
4. Create a false historic appearance because the replaced wood feature is based on insufficient historical, pictorial and physical documentation; introduces a wood feature that is incompatible in size, scale, material and color.

#### E. ARCHITECTURAL METALS: CAST IRON, STEEL, PRESSED METALS, BRONZE, COPPER AND ALUMINUM

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Identify, retain and preserve metal features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as columns, capitals, or window hoods.
2. Repair metal features by patching, splicing or otherwise reinforcing the metal using recognized preservation methods. Repair may also include the limited replacement in kind -- or with compatible substitute material -- of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes or sufficient documentation for an accurate reconstruction of the original.
3. Replace in kind an entire metal feature that is too deteriorated to repair -- if the overall form and detailing are still evident -- using the physical evidence to guide the new work. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.
4. Design and install a new metal feature such as a sheet metal cornice or cast iron capital when the historic feature is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material and color of the historic building.
5. Clean soft metals such as bronze, lead, tin, copper, terneplate and zinc with appropriate chemical methods because their finish can easily be damaged with abrasive methods; use the gentlest cleaning methods for cast iron, wrought iron and steel hard metals -- in order to remove paint buildup and corrosion. If handscraping and wire brushing have proven ineffective, low pressure dry grit blasting may be used as long as it does not abrade or damage the surface.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Remove or radically change metal features which are important in defining the overall character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished.
2. Replace an entire metal feature such as a column when repair of the metal and limited replacement of the deteriorated or missing parts are appropriate.
3. Remove an entire metal feature that is unrepairable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new feature that does not convey the same visual appearance.
4. Create a false historic appearance because the replaced architectural metal feature is based on insufficient historical, pictorial and physical documentation; introduces a metal feature that is incompatible in size, scale, material and color.
5. Use cleaning methods which alter or damage the historic color, texture and finish of the metal, or clean when it is inappropriate for the metal; remove the patina of historic metal; clean soft metals using abrasive methods that damage the surface.

## F. COLOR AND EXTERIOR FINISHES

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Repaint with colors that are appropriate to the period of historic significance of the building and district. Color selection should be based on historic paint analysis of the original layers of paint or appropriate historic research.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Strip paint or other coatings to reveal bare wood, thus exposing historically coated surfaces to the effects of accelerated weathering.
2. Use destructive paint removal methods such as propane or butane torches, sandblasting or waterblasting. These methods can irreversibly damage historic materials.

## G. WINDOWS AND DOORS

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Retain historic window and door openings and infill, including window sash, glass, lintels, sills, architraves, shutters, doors, pediments, hoods, steps and all hardware. Owners of buildings whose windows and doors have been altered in the past are encouraged to restore these elements to their original appearance based on site evidence and appropriate historic research.
2. Repair window and door elements by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the historic materials. Such repair also can include the limited replacement in kind -- or with compatible substitute material -- of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes or sufficient documentation for an accurate reconstruction of the original.
3. Replace in kind an entire window or door that is too deteriorated to repair -- if the overall form and detailing are still evident -- using the physical evidence to guide the new work. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.
4. Design and construct a new door or window when the historic feature is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material and color of the historic building.
5. Design and install additional windows or doors on elevations of limited historic interest. New openings also may be cut into an exposed party wall. Their design should be compatible with the overall design of the building but not duplicate the arrangement and detailing of the historic openings.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Remove or alter windows and doors that are important in defining the historic character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished; this includes the use of inappropriate glazing, reconfiguration of mullions and covering historic trim with metal or other material. Exterior storm windows are permitted if they do not alter the basic shape of the opening. All meeting rails and mullions must align with the original sash and they should be painted to match the historic window color.
2. Replace entire windows or doors when repair of materials and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts is appropriate.
3. Remove a character-defining window or door that is unrepairable and block it in; or replacing it with a new window or door that does not convey the same appearance as the historic window or door.
4. Create a false historic appearance because the replaced window or door is based on insufficient historical, pictorial and physical documentation; introduce a window or door that is incompatible in size, scale, material and color.
5. Introduce a new window or door design that is incompatible with the historic character of the building, including the use of a solid, non-commercial door in storefronts or other commercial spaces.
6. Insert new floors or furred-down ceilings which cut across the glazed areas of windows so that the exterior form and appearance of the windows are changed.

## H. STOREFRONTS

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Retain historic storefronts including window trim, glass, lintels, sills, architraves, shutters, cornices, pediments, hoods, steps and all hardware. Owners of buildings whose storefronts have been altered in the past are encouraged to restore these elements to their original appearance based on site evidence and appropriate historic research.
2. Repair storefront elements by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the historic materials. Such repair also can include the limited replacement in kind -- or with compatible substitute material -- of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes or sufficient documentation for an accurate reconstruction of the original.
3. Replace in kind an entire shopfront element that is too deteriorated to repair --if the overall form and detailing are still evident -- using the physical evidence to guide the new work. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.
4. Design and construct a new shopfront when the historic feature is completely missing. It may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical

documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material and color of the historic building.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Remove or radically change shopfront features which are important in defining the overall character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished.
2. Replace shopfront elements when repair and limited replacement of the deteriorated or missing parts are appropriate.
3. Remove an entire shopfront element that is unrepairable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new element that does not convey the same visual appearance.
4. Create a false historic appearance because the replaced shopfront is based on insufficient historical, pictorial and physical documentation, or uses false historic elements such as half-timbering, pent roofs, or shingles.
5. Introduce a storefront that is incompatible in size, scale (including one that does not fill the structural frame at the first floor), color, and material (including one that uses reflective glass, flat metal panels, aluminum siding, vinyl siding, synthetic stucco, plywood siding, or structural concrete block).
6. Alter the commercial character of the shopfront by substantially reducing the area of glass in the shopfront.

## I. SIGNAGE

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Employ signage that does not obscure architectural features or that does not compete visually with the historic character of the building.
2. Design signage that attaches to historic materials in a manner that causes no irreversible damage to that material.
3. Allow for wall signs with a maximum area of one hundred (100) square feet. Wall signs should be installed below the sills of the second-story windows. Wall signs should be painted on wood, metal, or opaque plastic backboards; be composed of individually-applied letters or individually-illuminated channel letters; or be neon signs, back-lit (silhouetted) signs, or signs illuminated by small shielded spotlights.
4. Allow for signs that move, flash, or are intermittently illuminated. All such proposals shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, in order to determine the appropriateness of such signs to the individual building and to the district.

5. Allow for one window sign per floor that is a maximum of 20% of the glazed area of the storefront windows in area, or a maximum of 50% of the glazed area of the upper-floor windows in area.
6. Allow for one awning sign, with lettering a maximum of eight (8) inches in height.
7. Allow for one wall sign on a blank side wall of a building, with a maximum area of one hundred (100) square feet, and a maximum height of thirty (30) feet above grade.
8. In the case of corner properties with two street frontages, allow the frontage on each street to be computed and employed separately for the determination of the sign area.
9. Allow for the suspension of the above guidelines on a case by case basis for the use of properly documented historic sign types that can be shown to have been used in the district during its period of historical significance.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Incorporate signage that obscures architectural detail or visually competes with the architectural character of the building. Internally illuminated box signs are not permitted, except in instances where the face of the sign is opaque and only the individual letters and logos that "push" through the face are illuminated. Signs are not permitted to be located on the roof of the building; nor should the supports for any sign extend above the cornice of the building. Computer-generated message boards are not permitted.
2. Signage whose attachment to the building requires irreversible anchorage into historic materials.

## J. AWNINGS

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Design awnings that are made of canvas or canvas-like material and whose attachments cause no irreversible damage to historic materials. Awnings should be located so as not to obscure historic detail.
2. Incorporate signage into the awning that measures no greater than eight inches in height.
3. Incorporate awnings on the upper stories; however, they must be applied over all of the upper floor windows.
4. Allow for the suspension of the above guidelines on a case-by-case basis for the use of properly documented historic awning types that can be shown to have been used in the district during its period of historic significance.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Specify metal awnings, arched awnings (unless the window or door opening has an arched head), awnings that are curved in section, or awnings that have soffits or internal illumination.
2. Incorporate signage in the sloping surface of the awning.
3. Specify the installation of canopies across the sidewalks.

#### K. SECURITY SCREENS

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Use security gates inside the storefront windows.
2. Paint security gates to be as inconspicuous as possible.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Locate security gates on the exterior of the storefront.

#### L. ILLUMINATION

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Mount exterior illumination in an inconspicuous and non-destructive manner.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Design lighting that requires destructive methods of anchorage in historical materials or lighting that obscures historic detailing.

#### M. MECHANICAL SERVICES: HEATING, AIR CONDITIONING, ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING, AND FIRE PROTECTION

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Install mechanical equipment in areas and spaces that require the least amount of alteration to the historic materials, plan and elevations of the building.
2. Install roof-mounted mechanical equipment, such as air conditioners, that are inconspicuous as not to be visible from the public right-of-way.
3. Install vertical runs of ducts, pipes and cables in closets, service rooms and wall cavities where they will not be visible on the exterior elevations.

4. Avoid cutting holes in important architectural features, such as cornices, decorative ceilings and paneling.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Install mechanical equipment which radically changes the appearance of the historic building or destroys windows by installing heating/air conditioning units in historic window frames.
2. Install roof mounted mechanical equipment which is conspicuous from the public right-of-way.
3. Install vertical runs of ducts, pipes and cables on the exterior of the building.
4. Install mechanical equipment which requires the destruction of historical fabric.

#### N. SAFETY AND CODE REQUIREMENTS

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Comply with code requirements in such a manner that the historic character of the building is preserved intact.
2. Install adequate fire prevention equipment in a manner that does minimal damage to the appearance and fabric of the property.
3. Provide access for the handicapped without damaging the historical character of the property.
4. Add required stairways and elevators that do not alter important architectural features and spaces of the building.

#### O. BUILDING SITE: NEW CONSTRUCTION IN THE DISTRICT

The URA will review favorably proposals that:

1. Incorporate new onsite parking, loading docks or ramps when required that are as unobtrusive as possible and assure the preservation of the character-defining features of the site.
2. Design an exterior addition to an historic building or adjacent infill construction that is compatible with the historic character of the site, and which takes into account the size, proportions, facade composition, rhythm and proportion of openings, materials, and colors of neighboring buildings.
3. Remove nonsignificant buildings, additions or site features that detract from the historic character of the district.

4. Provide for the survey, identification and evaluation of archaeological resources which may be present on the site of the proposed new construction, and, in the case of identified significant resources, preserves or provide for the investigation of the resources by professional archaeologists using modern archaeological methods when preservation is not feasible.

The URA will not review favorably proposals that:

1. Place parking and loading facilities in a location that could result in damage to historic sites, buildings, or landscape features.
2. Introduce new construction into the district that is visually incompatible in terms of size, scale, design, materials, color and texture or that destroys historic relationships on the site.
3. Removes an historic building in a complex, a significant historic addition, a site feature or an archaeological resource (unless adequate data recovery has been undertaken) that is important in defining the historic character of the site.