

New Castle Preservation Commission Guidelines

Introduction

The following design guidelines are put forth in an effort to aid in future development of the New Castle Downtown area by identifying desirable aesthetic qualities. Guidelines provide consistency and avoid arbitrary design, thereby giving the tools and advice needed to integrate new constructions and remodeling into the surrounding community.

The intent is to establish guidelines which will enhance the environment for trade, entertainment, and leisure through basic principles of design, such as building texture, color, rhythm, and pattern.

These guidelines will introduce the Downtown community to the future, while maintaining its rich heritage.

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I. Intent and Purpose

The design review process is established to encourage the pursuit of the historical community significance, along with the best professional design for individual identity. The ultimate goal is to enhance property values within the city and develop a distinct historical personality that is visually harmonious with surrounding sites and structures.

II. Applicability

Architectural and design guidelines shall be applicable throughout the Downtown New Castle Historic Preservation District. All new and existing buildings, structures, and physical site improvements shall be subject to design review, whether or not a building or other type of permit is required. Physical improvements and site developments include, but are not limited to, parking and loading area, driveways, retaining walls, signs, fences, garbage and trash enclosures, sidewalks, and utilities.

III. Definitions (See Figure 1)

Architectural Element — a permanently affixed or integral part of the building structure which may be decorative and contributes to the composition of the facade. For example: Cornices, trim boards, brackets, lintels, dentils, columns, capitols, etc.

Cornice — a projecting horizontal feature that crowns an architectural facade or composition.

Dentil — a small block used in rows, resembling a row of teeth.

Facade — the face or (principle) front of a building.

Glazing — translucent glass material.

Lintel — a horizontal architectural member spanning and usually carrying the load above an opening.

Pilaster — a flat column against the face of a wall

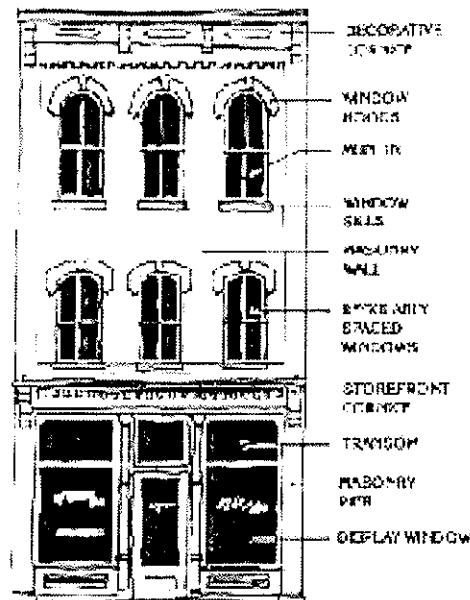
Setback — distance at which the building is placed from the street curb or property line.

Sheathing — any durable material covering the original facade of the building.

Sill — a horizontal piece that forms one of the lowest members of a framework or supporting structure; for example: The horizontal member at the base of a window.

Spandrel Glass — colored or reflective opaque glass material.

Vision Glass — translucent glass material.



(Figure 1)

IV. Architectural Requirements

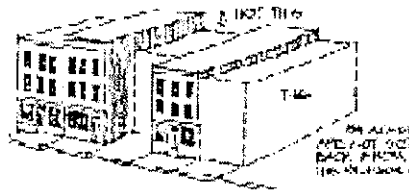
A. General

Comply with all codes and ordinances adopted by the City of New Castle.

B. Siting

Maintain existing predominant building setbacks. (See Figure-2)

Place parking areas so as not to be the focal point of the building.



(Figure 2)

C. Materials and Construction

Appropriate materials and combination of materials on a building facade have a substantial impact on the aesthetic quality, value, durability and maintenance of a building. Material used for building facades should be sympathetic to the historic context and enhance the overall character of the area. With particular emphasis on the original materials and the building's original appearance The following limits are intended to achieve meeting these goals.

These limits may be waived in part or whole for (1) restoration projects as deemed necessary by the NCHPC to preserve the valuable historical character of the building, or (2) to accommodate a unique design of outstanding merit which clearly enhances the aesthetic value of the surrounding buildings.

Unlimited Usage - The following materials may be used in unlimited quantities on building facades.

Brick Stone Terra cotta

Limited Usage -

Wood-finish stock or dimension lumber, plywood or solid wood panels — Wood may be used on the first story (store-front level) in unlimited quantity for architectural elements (i.e. pilasters, cornices, decorative raised panels, etc.) Wood used above the first story is limited to architectural elements such as cornices, trim boards, bracket, lintels, etc. Wood should not be used as general siding material.

Stucco, Plaster, EIFS — Any material similar in texture and perception, either synthetic or natural. These materials should not be used as the only other finish material besides glass on a façade nor should they replace historic materials. The amount, proportion and location should be carefully considered.

Concrete block, glazed block, ceramic tile — Manufactured concrete masonry units varying in color and texture. Concrete blocks may be used in combination with other materials such as brick or stone. Facades constructed of only concrete block besides the window materials must use more than one texture and color of block. Glazed block or ceramic tile to be used only as accent material.

Concrete, pre-cast concrete — Site poured or pre-formed concrete items. Use is limited to architectural elements such as window hoods, cornices, column, capitals, etc.

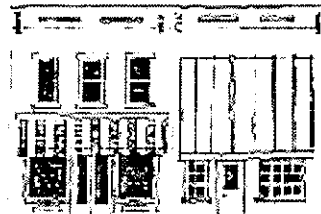
Metal flashing, architectural elements — Shall be limited to metal flashing and other architectural metal formed elements such as cornices and moldings.

Structural steel — Standard structural pre-formed steel may be exposed for aesthetic purposes at lintels and columns etc. in a manner similar to existing historic structures.

Color — All paint color is subject to approval by the NCHPC. All exterior color changes must have commission approval.

Glazing, glass block — Glazing includes all window, doors, spandrel and vision panels made of glass. Glazing and/or glass block shall comprise a minimum of 50% of the area of the storefront when original to the building, but no more than 50% of upper stories. Window openings should have similarities to surrounding buildings. (See Figure-5).

Fabric Awnings, Canopies — Natural or synthetic fabric material constructed over a framework for sun or moisture protection. Awnings and canopies to be used only at window areas, except at the storefront level where extended use may be appropriate. (See Figure-3 for recommendations on canopy design).



(Figure 3)

Prohibited — The following materials are prohibited from use where they may be visible to the public on building facades, fences, etc.: metal, aluminum, or vinyl siding and pre-formed panels; porcelain or baked enamel metal panels; asphalt or wood shingles or siding.

Exceptions — Building elevations that don't face main streets; delete glazing requirements. NOTE: Material restrictions are intended to create and support building sizes and proportions and described in the following section.

D. Building Sizes and Proportions

New building height should be comparable to adjacent structures (e.g. a one story building would not be appropriate in a block of two, three and four story buildings). See Figure-4.



(Figure 4)

Define a distinct cornice (top of building) by use of a minimum of one of the following elements; a horizontal projection or series of projections from the plane of the wall surface, a contrasting change in color, and a change in pattern or texture from the wall surface.

(See Figure-1).

Establish a storefront cornice comparable to adjacent structures.

(See Figure-1).

The size and proportion of window and door openings of a building shall be the original sizes.

E. Mechanical and Electrical Items

Locate all mechanical and electrical items out of view as is possible. Any items required to be exposed should be painted to match existing materials or screened with an enclosure architecturally integrated with the building.

V. Signage

Signs are a secondary design element to the building they are placed on and/or the surroundings they are placed within. When designing signs for this district, the signs must fit within the environment.

Signs have the ability to enhance, or detract from the qualities of designed architecture and environment. (See Figures 5 & 6).

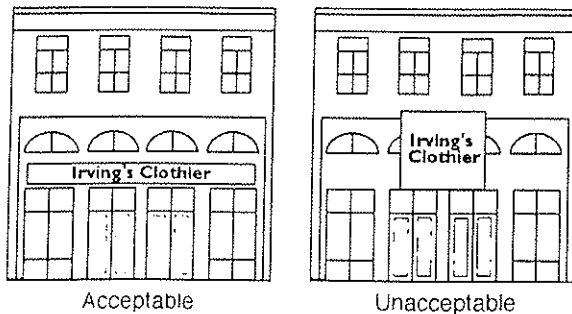


Figure-5



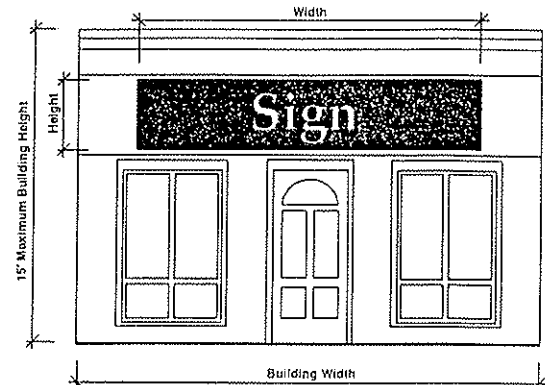
Figure-6

A. Requirements

Therefore, signs within this district should meet the following criteria.

1. Signs must meet all city codes

2. Sign types should fit within the architecture details of the building they are placed on. The building should frame the sign. The size of any sign should not destroy the continuity of the building. (See Figure-7).



Wall Signs

Sign width to be less than 2/3 x Building width
Sign Area less than or equal to 10 x Building width x Building height up to 15 feet Building height

Figure-7

3. Signs should relate to the architecture in a least one or more of the following categories; material shape, and color.

Ex: A sign placed on the first story of a building might be repeated in the arched tops of the second story windows.

Ex: A dark green awning placed above a window could have trim to match stone lintels of the building.

4. Use only one projecting sign per building.

B. Location and Size

Sign location and size are important aspects of good sign design. When selecting a design, the most important thing to remember is that bigger is not necessarily better.

Although a sign must be clearly visible, should never dominate the building facade nor obscure its architectural details.

Regardless of the sign location you choose, it is important to keep the following design guidelines in mind:

1. Avoid overly large signs. Remember that unlike modern highway strip development, Downtown New Castle buildings and streets were built at a human scale, oriented to pedestrians, not cars. Consequently it is not necessary to depend on overly large signs to attract customers.
2. Do not obscure or destroy architectural details. Arches, glass transom panels, and decorative brickwork are just a few of the features found on many downtown buildings which reflect a quality of workmanship difficult to duplicate today. This detailing greatly enhances our downtown atmosphere.
3. Coordinate the placement of signage on adjacent storefronts, especially those on the same building. Placing higher or lower than adjacent signs may not increase readability, but instead create visual confusion. However, if the adjoining signs are over scaled or badly positioned, the only solution is to do what is best for your storefront and wait for neighboring merchants to follow your example.

On corner buildings the signage area allowed on each street facade is calculated separately. The total allowed signage may be split between several signs. The area of each sign is calculated as the largest rectangle or the other geometric shape necessary to surround all lettering, wording, and accompanying design and symbols, together with the background sign-board.

1. **Roof Signs** — Roof Signs shall not be allowed.

2. **Billboards** — Prohibited.

3. Banner Signs — The use of exterior banner type signage shall be allowed on a temporary basis not to exceed 60 cumulative days within one year. A calendar year shall be defined as being from January 1 - December 31.

4. Murals — Signs painted directly onto a building are prohibited. Murals intended to serve an artistic and/or historical function rather than advertising function are not considered signs and are determined to be appropriate by the NCHPC, provided they stay two dimensional. Mural advertising is not allowed. Historic advertisement painted directly onto the building should be preserved. Examples of past work are required from the artist and the building owner is responsible for the long term maintenance of the mural.

5. **Projecting Signs**

- a. Projecting signs may not project over public property more than 1/2 the distance from the building to the curb, and may not project into a public alley or public parking lot. A sign may not project over the street line. Projecting signs must be a minimum of eight (8) feet above the ground and must be no larger in size than 1 square foot for each linear foot of the side of the building to which the sign is attached, not to exceed 40 square feet per face. (See Figure-8)
- b. Corner projecting signs are those that are visible from two or more intersecting streets, and shall be allowed as long as they do not exceed 40 square feet per face. The use of corner projecting signs shall preclude the use of any other signs. (See Figure-9)

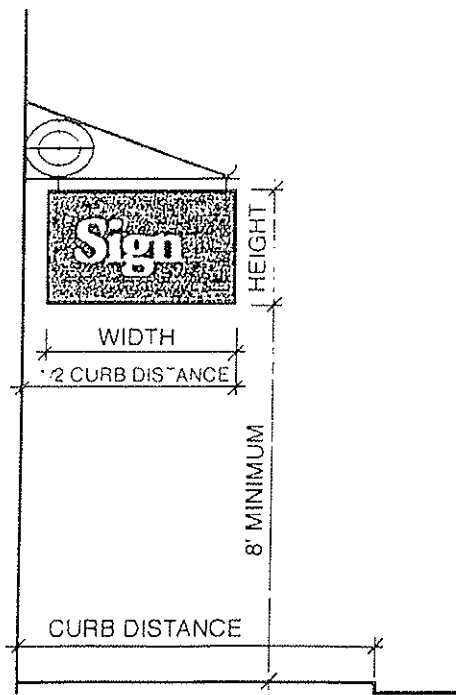


Figure-8

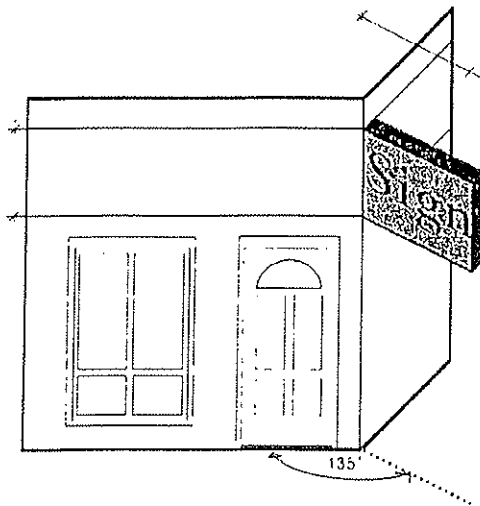


Figure-9

6. Pole Signs — One pole sign shall be allowed as long as the following condition can be met:

- a. Pole and sign to be located entirely on private property.

7. Abandoned Signs — When a business ceases operation, the on-premise signage shall be removed by

the owner according to the following schedule:

- a. Sign and/or cabinet - within 30 days.
- b. Supporting structure - within 180 days.

When off-premise advertising is bare or in disrepair for a period of 90 days it shall be removed. If it is bare or in disrepair for a period of 180 days, the structure shall be removed.

8. Maintenance — All signs together with all of their supports, braces, guys, and anchors, shall be kept in good repair and in proper state of preservation and working order. The display surfaces of all signs shall be kept painted or posted at all times.

9. Non-conforming Signs — If a sign is enlarged or relocated, it must comply with the code. If it is repaired or changed in any other way and the costs to do this exceed 35% of replacing the sign, it must be replaced and all code requirements must be followed.

10. Color — Color selection is one of the most crucial aspects of successful sign design, for it is the contrast in color between lettering and background which make a sign easy to read. Because a sign should complement, rather than clash with its surroundings, sign colors must also be compatible with the building facade and adjacent signs.

11. Illumination — Illuminated signs are permitted, with restrictions, under the sign code. External illumination must be provided by a continuous light source that is installed to prevent direct light from shining onto the street or adjacent properties. Flashing or moving lights are not permitted. Backlit signs are prohibited.

The light source selected may be incandescent or fluorescent, but should emit white light. Spot, track, overhang, or wall lamps are all acceptable light sources. Avoid high intensity light sources, as they often produce excessive glare.

VI. Landscaping & Site Work Requirements

A. Comply with all adopted city codes and ordinances.

B. Provide screening enclosures compatible with the architectural character of the building for any trash storage, mechanical/electrical units, and general exterior storage.

VII. NCHPC and Procedures

A. Application Procedures

The design review process is initiated by filing the following documents with the New Castle Building Inspector.

1. a completed application form,
2. drawings, renderings, or sketches describing work.