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Glossary

1.0 introduction

1.1 Central Avenue

Albany's Central Avenue, running from the historic neighborhoods at Lark Street to the suburban shopping developments at the city line, is an older main street that must evolve to meet 21st century needs. The Avenue, lined with sections of wonderful commercial architecture, pleasant public spaces, civic institutions and community landmarks, has maintained the building blocks of a thriving urban corridor.

The character, infrastructure and uses on Central Avenue vary along its three-mile length. Based on the existing fabric, the corridor can be divided into three distinct zones: the Main Street Mile, the Opportunity Mile and the Miracle Mile. The Main Street Mile, characterized by 3- and 4-story commercial blocks and traditional storefronts, runs from Lark Street to Ontario Street. The Opportunity Mile, from Ontario Street to King Avenue, includes a diverse collection of buildings and uses. Older, traditional buildings constructed at the street edge are located next to newer buildings surrounded by parking. Several older residential homes still exist in this district. The Miracle Mile, from King Avenue to the city line, is characterized by strip developments and automobile dealerships. Almost entirely commercial in use, this district is oriented toward large-scale modern retail development.

As the primary connector to the west, the Avenue traditionally functioned as both through corridor and commercial district. Today, Central Avenue reflects the impacts of suburbanization and disinvestment found in many American cities. High vacancy rates, poor maintenance and a real or perceived crime problem are linked to Central Avenue's decline and the existing negative image of the street. The creation of the Central Business Improvement District in 1997 became a significant step in the process of transforming Central Avenue into a vital and vibrant 21st-century commercial street.

1.2 Intent of the Guidelines

The Central Avenue Design and Development Guidelines are intended to direct streetscape and building improvements and new construction, with the aim of creating a high-quality public environment that promotes economic development. As part of this mission, the guidelines have five key objectives:

1. To create a more coherent and unified positive image for Central Avenue;
2. To develop and reinforce the identity of Central Avenue's three major zones: Main Street Mile, Opportunity Mile, and Miracle Mile;
3. To ensure that new development is compatible with surrounding buildings, streets, and open spaces;
4. To preserve and enhance existing historic buildings and structures;

5. To ensure that public areas are safe and inviting.

In many commercial areas across the country, design guidelines have proven to be a critical tool for economic development. Design-coordinated rehabilitation and new construction improve the image and marketability of a district. Guidelines also encourage investment by creating greater certainty about the quality and character of future development. Finally, guidelines provide a framework for the objective evaluation of development proposals. By documenting standards, guidelines allow property owners and developers to design projects that are in accordance with the City's vision for the Avenue.

These guidelines were developed as part of the AveNew 2000 Strategic Revitalization Plan. The Guidelines apply to all properties located within the Central Business Improvement District in the City of Albany. The guidelines are to be followed by all property owners, business owners and developers seeking building permits (new construction or rehabilitation), demolition permits, approvals for changes in use and approvals for new signs.

2.0 CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICTS

2.1 Main Street Mile

The Main Street Mile is comprised primarily of intact two- to five-story historic commercial buildings, with ground-floor retail and upper floor office or residential space. While there are a considerable number of vacant storefronts and upper floors, the architectural fabric along this portion of Central Avenue is one of Albany's great assets and should be preserved for future uses. The continuity of the street wall and the rich texture of facades create a memorable image for Central Avenue and Albany as a whole. Townsend Park on one end and Pauly's Square (the intersection of Central Avenue and Quail Street) at the other anchor this portion of Central Avenue. In addition, mature street trees and wide sidewalks along most of the Main Street Mile contribute to a comfortable and attractive pedestrian environment.

2.2 Opportunity Mile

From Ontario Street to King Avenue, Central Avenue loses its strong spatial and architectural character. A lack of a coherent architectural and streetscape form contributed to the lack of identity for this portion of the Avenue. Older main street buildings have been demolished to make way for modern auto-oriented development and surface parking. Larger floorplate commercial structures add to the mixture of development styles. Poor quality modern construction and isolated historic buildings, many of them in poor condition, characterize this district. Single-family homes are also scattered throughout the area, many of which have been converted to multi-family or commercial use.

2.3 Miracle Mile

The Miracle Mile from King Avenue to the city line is typical of mid- and late 20th century commercial strip development. Deep setbacks, large parking lots, frequent curb cuts, and franchise architecture fail to establish a positive character or an adequate gateway to the city. The street is characterized by large floorplate retail, chain restaurants, and auto-based uses with highway-scale signage and vast parking lots. Several recent commercial developments have contributed to improving the image of the Miracle Mile, using simple forms, bright colors, and neon signage to create a bold and playful appearance.

3.0 Overview of the Guidelines

3.1 How the Guidelines Work

Conformance with these Design and Development Guidelines is required for any property owner, business owner or developer seeking building permits (new construction or rehabilitation), demolition permits, and approvals for changes in use. The activities that require these permits include new construction, substantial rehabilitation, changing a building's use, demolishing a building, requesting a curb cut, changing an existing sign or installing a new one.

In order to receive a permit, the applicant must first file an application with the Central Avenue Design Review Board (see section 5.0 for required submission materials). Upon issuance of a Certificate of Design Approval from the Board, the applicant may proceed with other permit applications.

The Guidelines contain two types of regulations: those that are required by the zoning code, including building height, setback, and parking; and those that are at the discretion of the Design Review Board. The zoning requirements are incorporated into the Guidelines, so that any project receiving design approval should automatically meet the zoning criteria. This does not mean, however, that other permits are guaranteed once design approval has been granted.

3.2 How the Guidelines Are Organized

The Guidelines are organized by zone to facilitate easy reference, with all of the relevant guidelines contained in each section. For each zone, the Guidelines include streetscape, façade improvements, and new construction. The three zones covered by the Guidelines are Main Street Mile, Opportunity Mile, and Miracle Mile. Under each subject, a description of the requirements is followed by a bulleted list highlighting key points.

4.0 GUIDELINES

4.1 Main Street Mile

4.1.1 Façade Improvements

Storefronts

Many of the historic storefronts along the Main Street Mile have been altered, replaced, or covered with later additions, resulting in the loss of significant original features. Consequently, buildings with outstanding architectural character often go unnoticed by most passersby. A number of these storefront renovations were most likely achieved by simply applying a new façade; where this is the case, every effort should be made to remove later additions and reveal the building's original features.

When the building's original features have been destroyed or modified beyond repair, the first step in restoration is to look for documentation of the original design. Historic photographs, postcards, or sketches often contain enough information to reconstruct the basic elements of the façade. If no evidence is available, look for similar buildings in the area that date from the same period to find clues about the building's original design. Since completely accurate restoration is often difficult or impossible, historic storefronts may be reconstructed using a contemporary design that employs the same basic materials, elements and proportions as the original. When reconstructing or rehabilitating a storefront in keeping with historic tradition, the following materials are recommended:

1. The storefront frame should be constructed of wood, cast iron, anodized aluminum, or other metal.
2. Doors should be constructed of wood with large clear glass panels.
3. Bulkheads should be constructed of wood, brick, tile or polished stone.
4. Piers should be constructed of the same material as the upper story façade, except for cast iron piers.

Original materials, particularly masonry and wood, should be treated with care. The use of abrasive materials and cleaning solutions may damage the façade. Cleaning and restoration techniques should be always tested on a less visible section of the façade before commencing work.

Recommendations

5. *Remove later additions to historic storefronts to reveal the building's original features.*
6. *If a storefront's original features have been destroyed or modified beyond repair, look for documentation of the original design. If no documentation is available, use similar buildings in the area that date from the same period as a guide.*
7. *Restore storefronts using the same basic materials, elements and proportions as the original.*
8. *Test cleaning and restoration techniques on a less visible section of the façade before commencing work.*

Windows

The spacing, proportion and treatment of window openings are critical elements of a building façade. In older commercial buildings in the Main Street Mile, most of the ground floor façade is taken up by large windows over a wood or masonry bulkhead. The upper floor façade, in contrast, typically has vertically proportioned windows in a regularly spaced pattern, with a window-to-wall ratio of approximately 1:3. These basic attributes are essential to the overall character of the building, and should be preserved during any façade renovation or rehabilitation.

Repair and replacement work for upper story windows should be designed to match the original window in material, style, glass type, and color. Window openings should not be filled with different sash configurations, smaller windows, or different materials that were not part of the original design. Sash windows should be regularly repaired; if replacement is necessary, new windows should maintain the same proportions as the original. Casement windows are strongly discouraged as a substitute for sash windows. Boarded-up windows should be avoided whenever possible. If a window must be closed in to accommodate changes in the building's interior, the original shape of the window should be maintained. If storm windows are installed, they should match the original window design in order to maintain the scale and proportion of the façade.

Recommendations

9. *Preserve the basic spacing, proportion and treatment of window openings during any façade renovation or rehabilitation.*
10. *Ensure that repair and replacement work for upper story windows matches the original window in material, style, glass type and color.*
11. *Do not fill window openings with different sash configurations, smaller windows, or different materials that were not part of the original design.*
12. *Do not replace older sash windows with casement windows.*
13. *Avoid boarding up windows whenever possible. If a window must be closed in, maintain the original shape of the opening.*
14. *Select storm windows to match the original window design.*

Doors

Entrance doors for commercial buildings are traditionally made of wood, with a large glass panel that makes the door and the business more inviting. Repair of original doors should always be explored before replacement is considered, as original details are often irreplaceable. If replacement is necessary, the same basic design and materials should be used for the new door in order to maintain the harmony of the façade. In general, new doors should have a minimum of fifty percent clear glass, and any new hardware should complement with the architectural style of the building. Manufactured doors with decorative grills should not be used as a replacement for original doors.

Recommendations

15. *Explore repair for original doors before considering replacement.*
16. *If a door must be replaced, use the same basic design and materials for the new door.*
17. *Provide new entrance doors with a minimum of fifty percent clear glass.*
18. *If new hardware is used, ensure that it complements the architectural style of the building.*
19. *Do not use manufactured doors with decorative grilles.*

Roofs

The original roof shape should be preserved in all historic buildings in the Main Street Mile. Chimneys, dormers, and eaves, and other architectural features that give a roof its essential character

should also be preserved. Gutters and downspouts are part of the building's design, and should be painted to match or complement trim colors.

Original roofs, particularly those made of slate, require regular maintenance in order to prevent serious deterioration. Loose, damaged or missing roof tiles should be repaired or replaced using copper nails to prevent rust build-up. If the entire roof must be replaced, every effort should be made to match the original material. If replacement in kind is not possible, a material that resembles the original in color and texture should be used instead. New asphalt shingles in slate gray may be a suitable replacement for slate tiles.

Recommendations

20. *For historic buildings in the Main Street Mile, preserve the original shape of the roof.*
21. *Preserve important architectural features, including chimneys, dormers and eaves.*
22. *Paint gutters and downspouts to match or complement trim colors.*
23. *Repair loose, damaged or missing roof tiles using copper nails.*
24. *Make every effort to replace roofs with materials that match the original. Where this is not possible, use a material that resembles the original in color and texture.*

Color

When painting a historic façade, the colors used should be compatible with the architectural style and details of the building. Remnants of a building's original paint colors are often preserved under layers of new paint, and these may be used as a guide to restoration. Photographic evidence of the original building may also provide clues about the original color scheme.

The re-use of original colors should not, however, be considered requisite for restoration. Colors go in and out of fashion, and what was once considered attractive may now seem out of place. In general, the most important criteria for selecting colors are to ensure that they highlight the building's best features and complement the surrounding buildings. In some instances, masonry that was meant to be unpainted has since been painted over. In this case, paint may be stripped off and masonry restored to its original condition. Before stripping the facade, test a small area to determine if the underlying material is damaged or soft.

One way to highlight a traditional building is to use three basic colors:

- A base color that covers wall surfaces and storefront piers. This may be the original brick, wood siding, or other base material.
 - A secondary color for major trim. On a wood building, the major trim can be the cornice, the storefront cornice, the bulkhead, window lintels, and window frames. On a brick building, the major trim can be the bulkhead, transom, and upper story windows.
25. A tertiary color for minor trim. Minor trim can be window sashes, doors, small details on the cornice or bulkhead, and the storefront frame.

More than three colors may be needed to enhance the façades of older buildings, if the age, structure, and depth of exterior walls and original detailing allow for several types of trim, sills and mullions, recessed entries and elaborate cornices. Each of these layers can potentially be highlighted in its own color within a harmonious range against the base material of the building.

Neutral colors or several shades of the same color are recommended for the base and major trim. This will create a rich overall appearance and highlight the merchandise displayed in the storefront window. Bright or strong colors should generally be reserved for minor trim.

Recommendations

26. *Use colors that are compatible with the architectural style and features of the building.*
27. *Ensure that a building's colors highlight its best features and complement the buildings around it.*
28. *For masonry that was originally unpainted, check the underlying material for stability. If the material is stable, strip the paint and restore masonry to its original condition.*
29. *For traditional buildings, use three basic colors: one for the base, one for the major trim, and one for the minor trim. If a building's façade is sufficiently detailed, more than three colors may be used to highlight all of the various elements.*
30. *Use neutral colors or several shades of the same color for the base and major trim. Bright or strong colors should be reserved for minor trim.*

Awnings

Awnings provide shelter to pedestrians and give three-dimensional relief to a building façade. They also help to identify storefronts and provide an opportunity for additional signage. At the rear of buildings, awnings can provide a cost-effective means of highlighting entrances and improving the character of parking lots. The use of awnings is encouraged along the Main Street Mile and in rear parking areas.

Awnings should be proportioned to suit the building to which they are affixed, and should not obscure its architectural features. The vertical drop of an awning is a critical element in determining the correct proportions. Too short a vertical drop will appear insignificant, while too long a drop will obscure the display window. Retractable awnings are most appropriate in the Main Street Mile, though fixed frame awnings may also be used. Retractable awnings are preferred, since they are more compatible with historic storefronts, can be opened as needed, and are more easily protected at night.

Canvas is the recommended awning material. It is available in a variety of colors and striped patterns, and is highly durable. Glossy or leatherette finished vinyls and fixed in place aluminum or rigid plastic awnings are not compatible with historic storefronts, and should be avoided. Awnings with a solid color are most appropriate for buildings with elaborate architectural detailing, while more decorative striped awnings will enliven buildings with simpler facades. In all cases, awning colors, patterns and heights should be coordinated between adjacent storefronts in the same building.

A variety of retractable awning types are available, including free valence, fixed valence, open-sided, open-sided with a valence drop, or closed with a return. All of these types are appropriate to the Main Street Mile, provided that the design and location of the awning is compatible with the building it serves.

Recommendations

31. *Proportion awnings to suit the building to which they are affixed.*
32. *Ensure that awnings do not obscure a building's architectural features.*
33. *Use retractable canvas awnings for facades along the Main Street Mile wherever possible.*

34. *Avoid glossy or leatherette finished vinyls, fixed in place aluminum or rigid plastic awnings.*
35. *Use a solid colored awning for buildings with elaborate architectural detailing, and a striped or decorative awning for buildings with simpler facades.*
36. *Coordinate the color, pattern and height of awnings for storefronts in the same building.*

Backs of Buildings and Alleys

Backs of buildings that face onto parking areas, public ways, or pedestrian open spaces should be designed as a “second front” and should include entrances, signs and display windows wherever possible. Adding a second entrance to these buildings will substantially improve their appearance and create better pedestrian access from parking areas. Rear service entrances should be clearly marked but not emphasized. For a rear façade used as a second entrance, a minimum of twenty (20) percent of the ground floor should be clear glass doors and windows. Sill heights should not exceed forty (40) inches above the ground surface. Awnings, canopies, window boxes and trellises can also be used to create a welcoming rear entrance and encourage business.

Recommendations

37. *Design backs of buildings that face onto parking areas, public ways, or pedestrian open spaces as a “second front” with entrances, signs and display windows.*
38. *Clearly mark, but do not emphasize, rear service entrances.*
39. *For a rear facade used as a second entrance, provide a minimum of twenty (20) percent clear glass on the ground floor façade. Design sill heights not to exceed forty (40) inches above the ground surface.*
40. *Use awnings, canopies, window boxes and trellises to create a welcoming rear entrance.*
41. *Provide special paving, lighting, landscaping, and directional signage in pedestrian alleys.*

4.1.2 New Construction

Setbacks

Albany is fortunate to have an attractive “Main Street” on Central Avenue with many of its historic buildings still intact. These historic buildings form the fabric of the Main Street Mile, giving Central Avenue a delightful pedestrian scale and character. Buildings are adjacent to each other and built at the sidewalk edge, creating a continuous street wall. These buildings define the Main Street Mile and are essential components of a lively, safe, and inviting urban shopping corridor. In contrast, standard suburban-style franchise development with deep setbacks discourages pedestrian activity and is inappropriate along the Main Street Mile. In order to create a more unified urban character for the Main Street Mile, and to encourage the development of new entertainment, retail, and commercial uses, all new buildings should be built at the sidewalk edge (zero lot line) or within ten feet of the public right-of-way if pedestrian space is provided in front of the building. These spaces must be exclusively designed for pedestrian use, and should in no instance accommodate vehicle traffic or parking. Corner buildings located at the intersection of Central Avenue and a side street should be built to the zero lot line on both sides. In all cases, surface parking should be located to the rear of buildings, with the exception of curbside parking. New buildings should maximize frontage on Central Avenue by filling as much of the lot width as possible.

Recommendations

42. *Build new buildings on Central Avenue at the zero lot line, or within ten feet of the public right-of-way if pedestrian space is provided in front of the building.*
43. *For corner buildings located on Central Avenue and a side street, build at the zero lot line on both street-facing sides.*
44. *Locate surface parking to the rear of buildings, except for curbside parking.*
45. *Develop new buildings to maximize frontage on Central Avenue by filling as much of the lot width as possible.*

Massing

New construction on Central Avenue should reflect the massing of early twentieth century buildings that form the historic core of the Avenue. All buildings fronting on Central Avenue should be a minimum of two stories in height and a maximum of five stories (assuming eight to twelve feet per story) with a flat or low pitched roof. New commercial buildings should have a primarily flat façade at the sidewalk edge, while institutional or office buildings may have a projecting bay or recessed opening to mark the main entrance.

Recommendations

46. *Build new buildings that front on Central Avenue at a minimum height of two stories and a maximum height of five stories, assuming eight to twelve feet per story.*
47. *Build new buildings fronting on Central Avenue with flat or low pitched roofs.*
48. *Build new commercial buildings that front on Central Avenue with a primarily flat façade at the sidewalk edge. New institutional or office buildings may also have a projecting bay or recessed opening to mark the main entrance.*

Building Composition and Fenestration

The location and proportion of doors and windows are essential to a building's design, and should be carefully considered in relation to surrounding buildings. In general, the pattern of door and window openings should be similar to that of historic commercial buildings in the Main Street Mile. To encourage window shopping and create an inviting environment for pedestrians, the ground floor façade of all commercial buildings should be a minimum of fifty (50) percent clear glass. The ground floor window sill should be a maximum of thirty (30) inches above the sidewalk, and the lintel should be a minimum of eight (8) feet above the sidewalk.

Sill heights for upper-story windows should be designed to match sill heights of adjacent buildings. For upper story facades, the window-to-wall ratio should fall between 1:3 and 1:4. Upper story windows should have vertical proportions, and should relate compositionally to ground floor windows. Continuous horizontal strip windows are not recommended for upper floors.

To heighten visual interest, new buildings should employ contrasts in material and texture and should include architectural details such as cornices, brackets, and lintels. The tops of buildings should be articulated with a decorative cornice or parapet to emphasize the roofline and create a more dramatic profile.

For buildings with more than sixty (60) feet of continuous frontage on Central Avenue, vertical elements such as projecting bays, pilasters and structural columns should be used to divide the surface area into smaller "frames" that approximate the width of surrounding historic buildings. The rhythm of window openings may also be used to accentuate frames. If projecting elements such as

bays and pilasters are used, “frame” and “infill” elements should be clearly distinguished through changes in color and/ or materials, by slightly recessing infill elements, or by a combination of these and other methods.

Recommendations

49. *Design door and window openings to relate to the pattern of openings found in historic buildings in the Main Street Mile.*
50. *Design ground floor facades with a minimum of fifty (50) percent clear glass.*
51. *Locate the ground floor window sill at a maximum height of thirty (30) inches above the sidewalk; locate the lintel at a minimum height of eight (8) feet above the sidewalk.*
52. *For upper-story windows, design sill heights to match the sill heights of adjacent buildings.*
53. *For upper story facades, establish a window-to-wall ratio between 1:3 and 1:4.*
54. *Use contrasting materials and textures as well as architectural details such as cornices, brackets, and lintels to create visual interest.*
55. *Articulate the tops of buildings with a decorative cornice or parapet.*
56. *For buildings with more than sixty (60) feet of continuous frontage on Central Avenue, use vertical elements such as bays, pilasters, and columns to divide the surface area into smaller “frames” that approximate the width of surrounding historic buildings. Frames may also be accentuated through the rhythm of window openings.*

Storefronts

Traditional storefronts usually include a variety of architectural details within a consistent frame. The storefront frame is composed of the building’s solid structure, including materials such as wood, masonry, or steel. These frame elements should have the same colors and textures throughout the building, while window displays, signs, and awnings should be used to create variety and distinguish individual storefronts. A storefront with too many contrasting elements will appear cluttered, while a storefront with no variation in detailing will appear monotonous. Variations in the treatment or finishing of the frame within a single building are not recommended.

In a building with multiple storefronts representing different businesses, each business should be clearly represented by an individual storefront design. For larger storefronts representing a single business, frames should be used to divide the façade into smaller sections that more closely match the widths of existing historic buildings.

Doorways should be recessed to enhance the visibility of window displays and provide a sheltered space for pedestrians. This will also ensure that outward-opening doors do not obstruct the sidewalk. Recessed doorway openings also provide the opportunity to include special paving at the entrance to the store.

Storefront windows should not be deeply recessed, as this will reduce the visibility of the storefront from the street. In some cases, however, it may be desirable to recess windows by 6 to 12 inches to establish a sharper distinction between the windows and the frame.

Recommendations

57. *Use a consistent treatment and finish for the storefront frame.*
58. *Use window displays, signs, and awnings to create visual variety and distinguish individual storefronts located in the same building.*
59. *For larger storefronts representing a single business, use frames to divide the storefront into*

smaller sections that more closely match the widths of existing historic buildings.

60. *Recess doorways to enhance visibility and provide shelter for pedestrians.*

61. *If storefront windows are recessed, use a 6 to 12 inch depth.*

Materials

Brick and stone are the predominant building materials in the Main Street Mile. These materials are highly durable, and lend themselves to a variety of architectural detailing. While it may not be feasible to construct new buildings entirely of brick and stone, these materials should be used wherever possible as part of the basic building structure. More contemporary materials such as poured concrete, concrete block, and stucco finishes can also be effective if properly detailed. Artificial materials that resemble older building elements, such as vinyl siding and cultured stone, should not be used. Materials more commonly used in residential construction, such as wood siding and asphalt shingles, are also discouraged.

In new commercial buildings, a clear distinction should be made between the structural elements of the building and the infill elements such as doors, windows and window frames. Infill materials should have a lightweight and non-structural appearance. Traditional wood window frames, sashes and paneled bulkheads are appropriate for new construction, while other materials such as metal or tile may also be used if correctly scaled, detailed and finished.

Storefronts and upper-story windows should be made of clear or lightly tinted glass. Colored glass and glass blocks may be used to accentuate window borders, transoms, and sidelights. Dark, reflective and opaque glass are prohibited in new buildings in the Main Street Mile.

Recommendations

62. *Where possible, use brick and stone for structural elements of new buildings.*

63. *Use poured concrete, concrete block, or stucco finishes if brick and stone are not feasible.*

Ensure that these materials are properly detailed to be compatible with surrounding buildings.

64. *Avoid artificial materials such as vinyl siding and cultured stone.*

65. *Avoid materials commonly used in residential construction, such as wood siding and asphalt shingles.*

66. *For new commercial buildings, clearly distinguish between structural elements of the building and infill elements such as doors, windows and window frames.*

67. *Use traditional wood window frames, sashes and paneled bulkheads for new construction.*

Metal and tile may also be used if correctly scaled, detailed and finished.

68. *Use clear glass or lightly tinted glass for storefronts and upper-story windows. Colored glass or glass blocks may be used to accentuate window borders, transoms and sidelights.*

69. *Dark, reflective and opaque glass are prohibited in the Main Street Mile.*

Color

Color can be effectively used to highlight a building's architectural details and create a unified façade. A good color scheme will increase a business's visibility and help to attract customers. The number of colors selected should be limited, however, as too many colors will appear fussy or confusing. Neutral colors or several shades of the same color are recommended for buildings in the Main Street Mile. This will create a rich overall appearance and highlight the merchandise displayed in the storefront window. Bright or strong colors should be reserved for accents, such as on doors, window frames, signs and graphics.

Major elements such as piers, columns and sign bands should be painted the same color throughout the building. Masonry has its own natural color and should not be painted, except under special circumstances. In a building with more than one storefront, shared elements should be painted in the same color, and individual storefronts should coordinate their colors to complement each other.

Recommendations

70. *Limit the number of colors used in a single building.*
71. *Use bright or strong colors to accent features such as doors, window frames, signs and graphics.*
72. *Use neutral colors or several shades of the same color to create a rich appearance and highlight window displays.*
73. *Paint major elements such as piers, columns, and sign bands the same color throughout the building.*
74. *Do not paint masonry, except under special circumstances.*
75. *For storefronts in the same building, paint shared elements in the same color and coordinate colors to complement each other.*

Lighting

A variety of lighting types and styles can be used to create an inviting night-time environment in the Main Street Mile. In general, lighting should be oriented to illuminate signs, window displays and architectural features of the building. In all cases, lighting should be coordinated between adjacent storefronts in the same building to create a unified appearance.

For window displays, strong incandescent fixtures are most appropriate. These should be located and angled to ensure that they spotlight the merchandise and do not point either towards the window shopper or cause distracting reflections on the storefront window. For signs, spotlights or gooseneck lights are most effective. For special architectural features, such as towers or sculptural elements, up-lights or internal lights should be used to create a dramatic effect that will be visible from a distance.

Recommendations

76. *Orient lighting to illuminate signs, window displays and architectural features of the building.*
77. *Coordinate lighting between adjacent storefronts in the same building to create a unified appearance.*
78. *Use strong incandescent fixtures to highlight window displays.*
79. *For special architectural features such as towers or sculptural elements, use up-lighting or internal lighting to create a dramatic effect.*

4.1.3 Signage

General

Signs should be compatible with their building, neighboring buildings, and the character of the Main Street Mile as a whole. They should be located within the sign band where one exists and avoid obscuring important architectural features. Signs should present a clear message about the business

they serve. They are one of the least expensive and most effective ways to enhance a storefront. With imagination and high quality design, signs can add a new level of visual excitement to the streetscape.

Signs for a row of storefronts in the same building should be of similar size, material, proportion and location on the building. While it is not necessary for them to be all the same color or design, they should look like a family – in this way they reinforce, rather than compete with, each other.

The sign alone should not attempt to convey the entire story a merchant wants to relay. Too many different signs can overwhelm viewers. The end result is that none of the intended messages are conveyed. It is the careful combination of sign, building storefront and window display working together that has the greatest impact.

There are four types of signs to be found in the Main Street Mile: wall, projecting, window, awning or canopy, and banner. Their use depends upon their context.

Recommendations

80. *Choose a sign that is consistent and harmonious with the architectural style of the property and the surrounding district.*
81. *Convey the message of the sign with simplicity.*
82. *Restrict copy to the name, address, function and logo of the establishment.*
83. *Do not post rates and advertising of commodities and ancillary services.*
84. *Install one primary and one secondary sign.*

Sign Bands

It is not necessary to create a sign band when one doesn't exist: back-lit letters on a brick façade, for example, can be very effective in both announcing a business and highlighting its building. However, where multiple storefronts share the same building, it may be desirable to establish uniform location and style for signs. If a sign band does not exist in such cases, one can be created by a change in color, material, or relief. The sign band can be articulated or divided so that each section clearly relates to an individual store.

Recommendations

85. *In multiple storefront buildings, use signs of similar size, proportion and materials for each store.*
86. *Coordinate colors in continuous sign bands or among contiguous signs.*
87. *Vary the color of individual signs within a coordinated range.*

Wall Signs

Among signs attached to buildings, wall signs need to be seen from furthest away, often from across the street, and should be legible from that distance. They should contain simple information such as the name of the store and the type of business. Wall signs should be carefully sized to fit in with the building's façade design and should avoid obscuring important architectural features.

Types of Wall Signs

Board signs use a background board, generally rectangular in shape, which contains the letters, graphic image and logo, where applicable. Individual letters mounted directly on a building can also create appealing signs. Carefully sized and designed micro-tube neon signs can add an element of excitement to the streetscape at night.

Size and Placement

The size of a wall sign, within the allowable maximum, depends on the width of the street as well as the size of the business. Locate the sign within the sign band where one exists. Do not cover up important architectural details such as cornices, piers and pilasters, doorway pediments, and upper-floor window sills.

Lettering

Signs on main facades should generally use letters that range from 10 inches to 18 inches high. Smaller letters for smaller storefronts and larger letters for larger storefronts are possible. Internally illuminated individual letters are not encouraged, but back-lit letters are appropriate.

Recommendations

88. *Locate wall signs in a sign band when one exists, usually above the transom.*
89. *Where a sign band does not exist, locate the wall sign between the first floor transom and the second floor window sill or below the eaves on a one-story building.*
90. *Use the wall sign as the primary business sign.*
91. *Install no more than two signs – one primary, one secondary.*
92. *Use a maximum width of two-thirds of the width of the building front and a maximum height of one-third of the height of the space between the first floor transom and the second floor window sill or eaves on one-story buildings.*
93. *Locate signs so as not to obstruct display areas.*
94. *Locate flush-mounted signs above the storefront display windows or transoms and below the second story window sills.*
95. *Use lettering between 10 inches and 18 inches high and which occupies no more than 65% of the board.*
96. *Do not use internally illuminated box signs.*

Projecting Signs

High quality projecting signs can add a special character to the streetscape. These signs should be small and unique in character. Projecting signs are seen from a closer distance than wall signs, at medium to short range. They can highlight the storefront and attract pedestrians' attention as they walk along the sidewalk.

Types of Projecting Signs

A three-dimensional object or special shape often makes the most effective projecting sign. Merchants can use these signs to express what is unique about their merchandise or their business – for example, a hammer-shaped sign for a hardware store, or an eyeglasses-shaped sign for an optometrist. Projecting signs are not usually considered the predominant sign for any business. Internally illuminated projecting sign boxes tend to look heavy and are strongly discouraged.

Size and Placement

Projecting signs should be small – no larger than six square feet in area – and eye-catching. Signs should be located so that if the underside of the sign projects over the sidewalk, it is at least eight feet above grade. Signs should not project more than four feet from the façade of the building or half the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less. They should not block visibility of neighboring signs.

Lettering

Letters should be 4 to 10 inches high.

Special Concerns

The information on a projecting sign need not duplicate the information on the wall sign – it should augment the primary sign, describing the business in a different, more visual way. The design should be carefully coordinated with the building, the storefront, and the design of the primary wall sign. The bracket from which the sign hangs is part of the overall sign design. If several stores within a building are to have projecting signs, their design and placement should be considered together and in general they should be hung at the same height.

Recommendations

97. *Use a projecting sign to complement or to replace the principal wall sign. In a building with multiple storefronts, coordinate with other business owners for a uniform approach to either one or both types of signs.*
98. *Locate projecting signs above the storefront display windows or transoms and below the second story window sills.*
99. *Space projecting signs along storefronts so that they do not obstruct each other in the pedestrians' line of vision.*
100. *Limit sign projection to within four feet of the façade of the building or half the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less.*
101. *Use an area of 6 square feet and lettering between 8 inches and 10 inches high.*

Window Signs

Window signs are seen from short range – in front of the store.

Types of Window Signs

Lettering may be hand painted directly on glass, etched in glass or applied with vinyl, die-cut letters. White, light colors or gold leaf are most legible for graphics on glass. Paper signs taped to glass never look good. Temporary signs should be hung about one foot behind the glass, fixed to a rigid backing board and highlighted with display spot lights. Neon window signs work best if they occupy a minimum amount of the display window.

Size and Placement

Signs painted on second floor windows are seen from a greater distance than those on first floor windows, and the letter size and amount of information must be adjusted accordingly. Lettering on first floor windows should cover no more than 20% of the glass area. Lettering on second floor windows should cover no more than 25% of the glass area.

Lettering

The size of the lettering may vary from ½ to 8 inches. The amount of information to convey, the importance of the information, the design of the display area and the design of the storefront should all be considered in determining the height of the letters.

Recommendations

- 102. *Use window signs to provide more detailed information and to complement the window display. Signs painted on storefront glass are a traditional and effective way to present this information.*
- 103. *Use small, stenciled letters, addresses or logos for window signs; do not paint large areas of glass.*
- 104. *Use colors and lighting appropriate to the building or neighborhood.*
- 105. *Do not use internally-illuminated signs. Illuminate painted signs with exterior lighting.*
- 106. *Use neon signs for business names and accent borders.*
- 107. *Mount neon signs on a clear backing, such as glass or plexiglass, and hung in a window or door. Neon tubes may also be used on larger signs to accent a letter or logo, and to outline significant building features.*
- 108. *Maintain signs regularly. Broken, faded signage and empty sign supports suggest a vacant or inactive business. Unused sign supports should be removed.*

Awning/Canopy Signs

Signs on awnings or canopies can complement or become the principal wall sign. When a single business occupies several bays of a storefront, a small wall sign at each bay, or a sign on each awning or canopy, can be very effective in discreetly repeating the name of the business. More numerous, smaller signs also contribute to a fine-grain pedestrian experience along the sidewalk.

Recommendations

- 109. *Restrict the size of the sign to 25% of the area of the awning or canopy.*
- 110. *Use lettering 6 inches to 8 inches in height for signs on awnings.*
- 111. *Use the maximum allowable area for signage to create more, smaller signs on each awning, canopy, or bay width.*

Banner

Banners can be a lively way to announce a special event or seasonal theme. They are most effective when using a bold design and brightly colored shapes or letters.

Recommendations

- 112. *Use a banner not larger than 16 square feet in area.*
- 113. *Use a banner as an on-premise temporary sign for a period not to exceed 30 days.*

Materials for Signs

Wood

Wood can be used for backing or lettering. Wood is particularly useful for a sign that has carved, recessed or dimensional lettering or decoration. Use wood that allows the grain to contribute to the design. Large pieces of wood can crack or check as they age; exterior plywood (with protected edges) can help solve this problem.

Metal

Metal can be used for backing or lettering. Copper, bronze, brass and stainless steel offer richness and durability. Gold and silver leaf, properly applied, can last for fifty years or more.

Glass

The transparency of glass allows graphics or lettering painted on its surface to float in place, while also allowing a view beyond. Glass can be etched or sandblasted and lit from the bottom edge for dramatic effects. Glass may also be entirely back-painted with a solid color after lettering has been applied.

Plastic

Plastic is most successful when used for individual letters. In large amounts, plastic can look flimsy and cheap. If used as a backing, it should be made rigid or placed in a frame. Vacuum-formed plastic faces in metal frames are generally inappropriate.

Color for Signs

Coordination

Coordinate sign and building colors so that the entire face of the building works together to look attractive and draw attention. Too many colors used together on a sign (or on adjacent signs) tend to overwhelm the viewer. It is best to limit the number of colors on a sign to three or four. Any additional colors should be used sparingly as accents.

Contrast

Make sure that there is enough contrast between lettering and background colors. In general, lighter letters on a dark background are more legible than dark letters on a light background. This applies to signage on glass or on board backing. If a building contains a number of shops, it is best if all signs have dark backgrounds and light letters, or light backgrounds and dark letters. Lack of this basic uniformity destroys the rhythm of a building's façade.

Sign Lighting

Well-lit signs are particularly important for stores that stay open at night. But well-lit facades, displays and signs, even for businesses closed in the evening, also contribute to the safety, enjoyment and visual interest of the streetscape. Illuminated signs attract attention after-hours and lend a warmth to a commercial district. Exterior lights can be controlled by timers or photo-electric cells. A full understanding of the lighting options for signage can help discourage the use of internally illuminated sign boxes. No sign or other advertising device shall be permitted that has visible moving or movable parts or that has flashing animated or intermittent illumination, with the exception of appropriate lights during holiday seasons.

Incandescent Light

Spots or flood lights attached to the building façade and spaced at intervals can usually illuminate the full area of a sign. There are a variety of exterior fixtures that can be used as decorative elements – from those with neutral, small housings to elaborate, fluted, gooseneck fixtures.

Fluorescent Light

Properly shielded with hoods, a series of fluorescent fixtures can light signs more uniformly than incandescent spots. They are typically cooler in color, but new tube types can closely match the quality and color range of incandescent lights, which many people still prefer. Fluorescent fixtures typically look more utilitarian than incandescent ones and blend less easily with historic building facades; therefore, the provision of a valence to conceal the fixture is appropriate.

Back-lit Signs or Letters

Micro-fluorescent tubes or neon behind solid letters or signs can highlight a building's textured surface as well as provide a pleasant glow around an establishment's name.

Coordination

If a building has multiple storefronts, the lighting for their signs should be coordinated. If all storefronts have signs lit externally with hooded fluorescent lights, for example, all the lamp colors should be the same – all warm white, all cool white, etc.

Up and Down Lighting

Although up-lighting signs from below is dramatic and allows fixtures to be more easily hidden, mounting fixtures above signs and lighting down avoids many weather and water-related problems.

Glare

Glare from unshielded lights makes adjacent signs or displays difficult to see. Bare bulbs are prohibited on all buildings. Overly bright signs, especially at night, can actually cause passers-by to look away rather than read them.

4.2 The Opportunity Mile

4.2.1 Façade Improvements

Storefronts

Many of the traditional storefronts along the Opportunity Mile have been altered, replaced, or covered with later additions, resulting in the loss of significant original features. Consequently, buildings with outstanding architectural character often go unnoticed by most passersby. A number of these storefront renovations were most likely achieved by simply applying a new façade; where this is the case, every effort should be made to remove later additions and reveal the building's original features.

When the building's original features have been destroyed or modified beyond repair, the first step in restoration is to look for documentation of the original design. Historic photographs, postcards, or sketches often contain enough information to reconstruct the basic elements of the façade. If no evidence is available, look for similar buildings in the area that date from the same period to find clues about the building's original design. Since completely accurate restoration is often difficult or impossible, historic storefronts may be reconstructed using a contemporary design that employs the same basic materials, elements and proportions as the original. When reconstructing or rehabilitating a storefront in keeping with historic tradition, the following materials are recommended:

- 114. The storefront frame should be constructed of wood, cast iron, anodized aluminum, or other metal.
- 115. Doors should be constructed of wood with large clear glass panels.
- 116. Bulkheads should be constructed of wood, brick, tile or polished stone.
- 117. Piers should be constructed of the same material as the upper story façade, except for cast iron piers.

Original materials, particularly masonry and wood, should be treated with care. The use of abrasive materials and cleaning solutions may damage the façade. Cleaning and restoration techniques should be always tested on a less visible section of the façade before commencing work.

More recent commercial development in the Opportunity Mile often does not contribute to a positive identity for the district. Façade improvements to these buildings should reinforce the basic components of a traditional commercial building, including transparent ground floor display windows, vertically proportioned upper floor windows, and regular window openings. New façade elements such as window framing, stringcourse detailing, sign bands, and parapets may be introduced to create greater architectural interest.

Recommendations

- 118. *Remove later additions to historic storefronts to reveal the building's original features.*
- 119. *If a storefront's original features have been destroyed or modified beyond repair, look for documentation of the original design. If no documentation is available, use similar buildings in the area that date from the same period as a guide.*

120. *Restore storefronts using the same basic materials, elements and proportions as the original.*
 121. *Test cleaning and restoration techniques on a less visible section of the façade before commencing work.*

Windows

The spacing, proportion and treatment of window openings are critical elements of a building façade. In older buildings in the Opportunity Mile, windows are typically located in a regularly spaced pattern, with vertical proportions and a window-to-wall ratio of approximately 1:3. These basic attributes are essential to the overall character of the building, and should be preserved during façade renovation or rehabilitation. In some instances, window openings have been closed up with wood or other opaque material. In this case, transparent glazing should be restored as part of the building's re-use.

Repair and replacement work for windows should be designed to match the original window in material and style. Window openings should not be filled with different sash configurations, smaller windows, or different materials that were not part of the original design. Sash windows should be regularly repaired; if replacement is necessary, new windows should maintain the same proportions as the original. Boarded-up windows should be avoided whenever possible. If a window must be closed in to accommodate changes in the building's interior, the original shape of the window should be maintained. If storm windows are installed, they should match the original window design in order to maintain the scale and proportion of the façade.

Recommendations

122. *Preserve the basic spacing, proportion and treatment of window openings during any façade renovation or rehabilitation.*
 123. *Restore transparent glazing in windows that have been closed up with wood or other material.*
 124. *Ensure that repair and replacement work for upper story windows matches the original window in material, style, glass type and color.*
 125. *Do not fill window openings with different sash configurations, smaller windows, or different materials that were not part of the original design.*
 126. *Do not replace older sash windows with casement windows.*
 127. *Avoid boarding up windows whenever possible. If a window must be closed in, maintain the original shape of the opening.*
 128. *Select storm windows to match the original window design.*

Doors

Entrance doors for commercial buildings are traditionally made of wood, with a large glass panel that makes the door and the business more inviting. Repair of original doors should always be explored before replacement is considered, as original details are often irreplaceable. If replacement is necessary, the same basic design and materials should be used for the new door in order to maintain the harmony of the façade. In general, new doors should have a minimum of fifty percent clear glass, and any new hardware should complement with the architectural style of the building. Manufactured doors with decorative grills should not be used as a replacement for original doors.

Recommendations

129. *Explore repair for original doors before considering replacement.*
 130. *If a door must be replaced, use the same basic design and materials for the new door.*
 131. *Provide new entrance doors with a minimum of fifty percent clear glass.*

132. *If new hardware is used, ensure that it complements the architectural style of the building.*
 133. *Do not use manufactured doors with decorative grilles.*

Roofs

Most of the industrial buildings in the Opportunity Mile have flat or gable roofs, and these basic forms should be preserved as part of any restoration or redevelopment. Original roofs, particularly those made of slate, require regular maintenance in order to prevent serious deterioration. Loose, damaged or missing roof tiles should be repaired or replaced using copper nails to prevent rust build-up. If the entire roof must be replaced, every effort should be made to match the original material. If replacement in kind is not possible, a material that resembles the original in color and texture should be used instead. New asphalt shingles in slate gray may be a suitable replacement for slate tiles.

Recommendations

134. *For traditional commercial buildings, preserve the original shape of the roof.*
 135. *Make every effort to replace roofs with materials that match the original. Where this is not possible, use a material that resembles the original in color and texture.*

Color

When painting a historic façade, the colors used should be compatible with the architectural style and details of the building. Remnants of a building's original paint colors are often preserved under layers of new paint, and these may be used as a guide to restoration. Photographic evidence of the original building may also provide clues about the original color scheme.

The re-use of original colors should not, however, be considered requisite for restoration. Colors go in and out of fashion, and what was once considered attractive may now seem out of place. In general, the most important criteria for selecting colors are to ensure that they highlight the building's best features and complement the surrounding buildings. In some instances, masonry that was meant to be unpainted has since been painted over. In this case, paint may be stripped off and masonry restored to its original condition. Before stripping the facade, test a small area to determine if the underlying material is damaged or soft.

One way to highlight a traditional building is to use three basic colors:

- A base color that covers wall surfaces and storefront piers. This may be the original brick, wood siding, or other base material.
 - A secondary color for major trim. On a wood building, the major trim can be the cornice, the storefront cornice, the bulkhead, window lintels, and window frames. On a brick building, the major trim can be the bulkhead, transom, and upper story windows.
136. A tertiary color for minor trim. Minor trim can be window sashes, doors, small details on the cornice or bulkhead, and the storefront frame.

More than three colors may be needed to enhance the façades of older buildings, if the age, structure, and depth of exterior walls and original detailing allow for several types of trim, sills and mullions, recessed entries and elaborate cornices. Each of these layers can potentially be highlighted in its own color within a harmonious range against the base material of the building.

Neutral colors or several shades of the same color are recommended for the base and major trim. This will create a rich overall appearance and highlight the merchandise displayed in the storefront window. Bright or strong colors should generally be reserved for minor trim.

Recommendations

- 137. *Use colors that are compatible with the architectural style and features of the building.*
- 138. *Ensure that a building's colors highlight its best features and complement the buildings around it.*
- 139. *For masonry that was originally unpainted, check the underlying material for stability. If the material is stable, strip the paint and restore masonry to its original condition.*
- 140. *For traditional buildings, use three basic colors: one for the base, one for the major trim, and one for the minor trim. If a building's façade is sufficiently detailed, more than three colors may be used to highlight all of the various elements.*
- 141. *Use neutral colors or several shades of the same color for the base and major trim. Bright or strong colors should be reserved for minor trim.*

Backs of Buildings

Backs of buildings that face onto parking areas, public ways, or pedestrian open spaces should be designed as a “second front” and should include entrances, signs and display windows wherever possible. Adding a second entrance to these buildings will substantially improve their appearance and create better pedestrian access from parking areas. Rear service entrances should be clearly marked but not emphasized. For a rear façade used as a second entrance, a minimum of twenty (20) percent of the ground floor should be clear glass doors and windows. Sill heights should not exceed forty (40) inches above the ground surface. Awnings, canopies, window boxes and trellises can also be used to create a welcoming rear entrance and encourage business.

Recommendations

- 142. *Design backs of buildings that face onto parking areas, public ways, or pedestrian open spaces as a “second front” with entrances, signs and display windows.*
- 143. *Clearly mark, but do not emphasize, rear service entrances.*
- 144. *For a rear facade used as a second entrance, provide a minimum of twenty (20) percent clear glass on the ground floor façade. Design sill heights not to exceed forty (40) inches above the ground surface.*
- 145. *Use awnings, canopies, window boxes and trellises to create a welcoming rear entrance.*

4.2.2 New Construction

Setbacks

Building setbacks along Central Avenue in the Opportunity Mile vary widely to accommodate parking lots and fit onto tight sites. The lack of consistent building setbacks means that greater reliance must be placed on walkways, street trees, and parking lot screen walls to establish unity and continuity along the Avenue. To create a more consistent streetscape, zero lot line development is strongly encouraged. In all cases, the maximum allowable front setback for new construction is fifteen (15) feet. If a front setback is used, the space in front of the building must be exclusively designed for pedestrian use. Parking is prohibited in front of new buildings.

Recommendations

146. *Use a maximum front setback of fifteen (15) feet in the Opportunity Mile.*
 147. *If a front setback is used, provide pedestrian space in front of the building.*
 148. *Parking is prohibited in front of new buildings.*

Massing

A variety of commercial buildings ranging from one to three stories in height characterize the Opportunity Mile. To encourage new large floorplate retail and office development in the Opportunity Mile at a scale compatible with surrounding neighborhoods, the maximum allowable height for new construction is five (5) stories. Where possible, property owners are encouraged to consolidate vacant and underused parcels for the development of mid-size commercial buildings, with floorplates ranging from 5,000 to 15,000 square feet.

Recommendations

149. *Build new buildings in the Opportunity Mile at a maximum height of five (5) stories, assuming eight to twelve feet per story.*
 150. *Consolidate vacant and underused parcels for the development of mid-sized commercial buildings.*

Building Composition and Fenestration

The location and proportion of doors and windows are essential to a building's design, and should be carefully considered in relation to surrounding buildings. New buildings may be designed to reflect the fenestration patterns of traditional main street buildings, or they may be more modern in appearance. Large glass openings are encouraged to create a more modern image for the Opportunity Mile. Reflective glass is not permitted.

The street level of buildings holds the greatest potential for pedestrian use and walk-in commercial activity. All new buildings should provide street-level, pedestrian-oriented uses to the greatest extent possible. No more than 25% of any ground floor street frontage should be occupied by non-public uses that discourage walk-in traffic. Drive-through uses are highly discouraged. Building design should encourage multi-tenant occupancy on the ground floor.

Primary building entrances should be accentuated. In office buildings, these entrances should be designed so that they are not easily confused with entrances into ground level retail businesses.

To heighten visual interest, new buildings should employ contrasts in material and texture. For buildings with more than sixty (60) feet of continuous frontage on Central Avenue, vertical elements such as projecting bays, pilasters and structural columns should be used to divide the surface area into smaller "frames." The rhythm of window openings may also be used to accentuate frames. If projecting elements such as bays and pilasters are used, "frame" and "infill" elements should be clearly distinguished through changes in color and/ or materials, by slightly recessing infill elements, or by a combination of these and other methods.

Recommendations

151. *Use large glass openings to create a modern image for the Opportunity Mile.*
 152. *Do not use reflective glass.*

- 153. *Discourage drive-through uses.*
- 154. *Accentuate primary building entrances with recessed openings, awnings and canopies.*
- 155. *Encourage multi-tenant pedestrian-oriented uses on the first floor.*
- 156. *Use contrasting materials and textures to create visual interest.*
- 157. *For buildings with more than sixty (60) feet of continuous frontage on Central Avenue, use vertical elements such as bays, pilasters, and columns to divide the surface area into smaller “frames.” Frames may also be accentuated through the rhythm of window openings.*

Materials

Brick is the predominant building material in older commercial buildings on Central Avenue. In the Opportunity Mile, limestone and granite are also used. These materials are highly durable, and lend themselves to a variety of architectural detailing. While it may not be feasible to construct new buildings entirely from brick or stone, these materials should be used as part of the basic building structure wherever possible. More contemporary materials such as concrete, concrete block, and stucco finishes can also be effective if properly detailed. Artificial materials that resemble older building elements, such as vinyl siding and cultured stone, should not be used. Materials more commonly used in residential construction, such as wood siding and asphalt shingles, are also discouraged. The use of transparent curtain walls is encouraged to create a modern image for the Opportunity Mile.

Recommendations

- 158. *Where possible, use brick or high quality stone for structural elements of new buildings.*
- 159. *Use concrete, concrete block, or stucco finishes if brick or stone are not feasible. Ensure that these materials are properly detailed to be compatible with surrounding buildings.*
- 160. *Avoid artificial materials such as vinyl siding and cultured stone.*
- 161. *Use transparent curtain walls to create a modern image for the Opportunity Mile.*

Color

Color can be effectively used to highlight a building’s architectural details and create a unified façade. A good color scheme will increase a business’s visibility and help to attract customers. The number of colors selected should be limited, however, as too many colors will appear fussy or confusing. Bright colors for architectural accents are recommended for buildings in the Miracle Mile.

Major elements such as piers, columns and sign bands should be painted the same color throughout the building. Masonry has its own natural color and should not be painted, except under special circumstances.

Recommendations

- 162. *Use bright colors to highlight architectural details.*
- 163. *Paint major elements such as piers, columns, and sign bands the same color throughout the building.*
- 164. *Do not paint masonry, except under special circumstances.*

Lighting

A variety of lighting types and styles can be used to create an inviting night-time environment in the Opportunity Mile. In general, lighting should be oriented to illuminate signs and architectural features of the building. For special architectural features such as towers or sculptural elements,

up-lights or internal lights should be used to create a dramatic effect that will be visible from a distance.

Recommendations

165. *Orient lighting to illuminate signs and architectural features of the building.*

166. *For special architectural features such as towers or sculptural elements, use up-lighting or internal lighting to create a dramatic effect.*

4.2.3 Signage

General

Signs should be compatible with their building, neighboring buildings, and the character of the Opportunity Mile as a whole. Signs should avoid obscuring important architectural features. Signs should present a clear message about the business they serve. They are one of the least expensive and most effective ways to enhance a storefront or office building. With imagination and high quality design, signs can add a new level of visual excitement to the streetscape and help create a unified image for the Opportunity Mile.

There are four types of signs that are appropriate the Opportunity Mile: freestanding or ground, wall, awning or canopy, and banner. Their use depends upon their context.

Recommendations

167. *Choose a sign that is consistent and harmonious with the architectural style of the property and the surrounding district.*

168. *Convey the message of the sign with simplicity.*

169. *Restrict copy to the name, address, function and logo of the establishment.*

170. *Do not post rates and advertising of commodities and ancillary services.*

171. *Install one primary and one secondary sign.*

Ground Signs

Freestanding or ground signs are seen from furthest away, often from automobiles. They should be used for businesses occupying residential buildings, which typically have no sign band or display window, and for businesses or spaces, such as rear parking lots, not visible from the street. Larger commercial complexes may also benefit from freestanding signs that form “gateways” to an office complex, for instance. These signs become an architectural element and help to establish the character of the Opportunity Mile as a commercial and office district.

Recommendations

172. *Use ground signs no more than 12 square feet in area and no more than 8 feet in height, in front of residences which have been converted to commercial uses or to identify businesses in buildings not visible from the street.*

173. *Use ground signs of no more than 4 feet in height to mark parking areas.*

174. *Do not install tall pole signs.*

175. *Do not install roof signs.*

176. *Freestanding signs should be incorporated into commercial complexes as part of the distinct architectural elements that help define “gateways” to office and commercial buildings.*

Sign Bands

It is not necessary to create a sign band when one doesn't exist: back-lit letters on a brick façade, for example, can be very effective in both announcing a business and highlighting its building. However, where multiple storefronts share the same building, it may be desirable to establish uniform location and style for signs. If a sign band does not exist in such cases, one can be created by a change in color, material, or relief. The sign band can be articulated or divided so that each section clearly relates to an individual store.

Recommendations

177. *In multiple storefront buildings, use signs of similar size, proportion and materials for each store.*

178. *Coordinate colors in continuous sign bands or among contiguous signs.*

179. *Vary the color of individual signs within a coordinated range.*

Wall Signs

Among signs attached to buildings, wall signs need to be seen from furthest away, often from across the street, and should be legible from that distance. They should contain simple information such as the name of the store and the type of business. Wall signs should be carefully sized to fit in with the building's façade design and should avoid obscuring important architectural features.

Types of Wall Signs

Board signs use a background board, generally rectangular in shape, which contains the letters, graphic image and logo, where applicable. Individual letters mounted directly on a building can also create appealing signs. Carefully sized and designed micro-tube neon signs can add an element of excitement to the streetscape at night.

Size and Placement

The size of a wall sign, within the allowable maximum, depends on the width of the street as well as the size of the business. Locate the sign within the sign band where one exists. Do not cover up important architectural details such as cornices, piers and pilasters, doorway pediments, and upper-floor window sills.

Lettering

Signs on main facades should generally use letters that range from 10 inches to 18 inches high. Smaller letters for smaller storefronts and larger letters for larger storefronts are possible. Internally illuminated individual letters are not encouraged, but back-lit letters are appropriate.

Recommendations

180. *Locate wall signs in a sign band when one exists, usually above the transom.*

181. *Where a sign band does not exist, locate the wall sign between the first floor transom and the second floor window sill or below the eaves on a one-story building.*
182. *Use the wall sign as the primary business sign.*
183. *Install no more than two signs – one primary, one secondary.*
184. *Use a maximum width of two-thirds of the width of the building front and a maximum height of one-third of the height of the space between the first floor transom and the second floor window sill or eaves on one-story buildings.*
185. *Locate signs so as not to obstruct display areas.*
186. *Locate flush-mounted signs above the storefront display windows or transoms and below the second story window sills.*
187. *Use lettering between 10 inches and 18 inches high and which occupies no more than 65% of the board.*
188. *Do not use internally illuminated box signs.*

Awning/Canopy Signs

Signs on awnings or canopies can complement or become the principal wall sign. When a single business occupies several bays of a storefront, a small wall sign at each bay, or a sign on each awning or canopy, can be very effective in discreetly repeating the name of the business. These signs may be particularly effective in highlighting secondary entrances to buildings that have their primary entrance on Central Avenue.

Recommendations

189. *Restrict the size of the sign to 25% of the area of the awning or canopy.*
190. *Use lettering 6 inches to 8 inches in height for signs on awnings.*
191. *Use the maximum allowable area for signage to create more, smaller signs on each awning, canopy, or bay width.*

Banner

Banners can be a lively way to announce a special event or seasonal theme. They are most effective when using a bold design and brightly colored shapes or letters. Banners may be especially effective in the Miracle Mile to highlight its distinctive character.

Recommendations

192. *Use a banner not larger than 16 square feet in area.*
193. *Create a unified theme for banners along the Opportunity Mile.*

Materials for Signs

Wood

Wood can be used for backing or lettering. Wood is particularly useful for a sign that has carved, recessed or dimensional lettering or decoration. Use wood that allows the grain to contribute to the design. Large pieces of wood can crack or check as they age; exterior plywood (with protected edges) can help solve this problem.

Metal

Metal can be used for backing or lettering. Copper, bronze, brass and stainless steel offer richness and durability. Gold and silver leaf, properly applied, can last for fifty years or more.

Glass

The transparency of glass allows graphics or lettering painted on its surface to float in place, while also allowing a view beyond. Glass can be etched or sandblasted and lit from the bottom edge for dramatic effects. Glass may also be entirely back-painted with a solid color after lettering has been applied.

Plastic

Plastic is most successful when used for individual letters. In large amounts, plastic can look flimsy and cheap. If used as a backing, it should be made rigid or placed in a frame. Vacuum-formed plastic faces in metal frames are generally inappropriate.

Color for Signs

Coordination

Coordinate sign and building colors so that the entire face of the building works together to look attractive and draw attention. Too many colors used together on a sign (or on adjacent signs) tend to overwhelm the viewer. It is best to limit the number of colors on a sign to three or four. Any additional colors should be used sparingly as accents.

Contrast

Make sure that there is enough contrast between lettering and background colors. In general, lighter letters on a dark background are more legible than dark letters on a light background. This applies to signage on glass or on board backing. If a building contains a number of shops, it is best if all signs have dark backgrounds and light letters, or light backgrounds and dark letters. Lack of this basic uniformity destroys the rhythm of a building's façade.

Sign Lighting

Well-lit signs are particularly important for stores that stay open at night. But well-lit facades, displays and signs, even for businesses closed in the evening, also contribute to the safety, enjoyment and visual interest of the streetscape. Illuminated signs attract attention after-hours and lend a warmth to a commercial district. Exterior lights can be controlled by timers or photo-electric cells. A full understanding of the lighting options for signage can help discourage the use of internally illuminated sign boxes. No sign or other advertising device shall be permitted that has visible moving or movable parts or that has flashing animated or intermittent illumination, with the exception of appropriate light during holiday seasons.

Incandescent Light

Spots or flood lights attached to the building façade and spaced at intervals can usually illuminate the full area of a sign. There are a variety of exterior fixtures that can be used as decorative elements – from those with neutral, small housings to elaborate, fluted, gooseneck fixtures.

Fluorescent Light

Properly shielded with hoods, a series of fluorescent fixtures can light signs more uniformly than incandescent spots. They are typically cooler in color, but new tube types can closely match the quality and color range of incandescent lights, which many people still prefer. Fluorescent fixtures typically look more utilitarian than incandescent ones and blend less easily with historic building facades; therefore, the provision of a valence to conceal the fixture is appropriate.

Back-lit Signs or Letters

Micro-fluorescent tubes or neon behind solid letters or signs can highlight a building's textured surface as well as provide a pleasant glow around an establishment's name.

Coordination

If a building has multiple storefronts, the lighting for their signs should be coordinated. If all storefronts have signs lit externally with hooded fluorescent lights, for example, all the lamp colors should be the same – all warm white, all cool white, etc.

Up and Down Lighting

Although up-lighting signs from below is dramatic and allows fixtures to be more easily hidden, mounting fixtures above signs and lighting down avoids many weather and water-related problems.

Glare

Glare from unshielded lights makes adjacent signs or displays difficult to see. Bare bulbs are prohibited on all buildings. Overly bright signs, especially at night, can actually cause passers-by to look away rather than read them.

4.3 The Miracle Mile

4.3.1 Façade Improvements

Storefronts

Most of the commercial buildings the Miracle Mile are not historic in character, and new construction may be preferable to rehabilitation of existing buildings. In cases where a historic storefront is to be rehabilitated, however, the following materials are recommended:

- 194. The storefront frame should be constructed of masonry or wood.
- 195. Doors should be constructed of wood or metal and glass.
- 196. Windows should be transparent glass.

Original materials, particularly masonry and wood, should be treated with care. The use of abrasive materials and cleaning solutions may damage the façade, even as restoration efforts are underway. Cleaning and restoration techniques should be always tested on a less visible section of the façade before commencing work.

In cases where newer developments are renovated, facades should be articulated to reduce the massive scale and the uniform, impersonal appearances of large retail buildings, and to provide visual interest that is consistent with the area's identity, character and scale. Facades greater than 100 feet in length, measured horizontally, should incorporate projecting elements or recesses in the wall plane having a depth of at least 3% of the length of the façade and extending at least 20% of the length of the façade. No uninterrupted length of any façade should exceed 100 horizontal feet.

Recommendations

- 197. *Restore historic storefronts using the same basic materials, elements and proportions as the original.*
- 198. *Test cleaning and restoration techniques on a less visible section of the façade before commencing work.*
- 199. *Encourage the articulation of facades to reduce the massive scale and monotonous appearance of large retail buildings.*

Windows

The spacing, proportion and treatment of window openings are critical elements of a building façade. For one-story commercial strip buildings along the Miracle Mile, windows should be floor-to-ceiling transparent plate glass wherever possible. Large window openings will highlight merchandise inside and create a more appealing view from the street.

Recommendations

- 200. *For one-story commercial strip buildings, install floor-to-ceiling transparent plate glass windows along street-facing frontage.*

Roofs

For newer commercial buildings in the Miracle Mile, flat roofs are acceptable. Exceptionally long commercial facades, typically found in large strip malls, may be designed with a gable end or shed roof to create architectural interest. Parapets concealing flat roofs and rooftop equipment (such as HVAC units) from public view should be designed to create additional architectural interest. The average height of parapets should not exceed 15% of the height of the supporting wall and they should not at any point exceed one-third of the height of the supporting wall. Parapets should feature three dimensional cornice treatment.

Recommendations

201. *For newer commercial buildings, use flat, gable end or shed roofs.*
 202. *Parapets should be designed to conceal flat roofs and rooftop equipment.*

Color

Since most people traveling in the Miracle Mile are driving rather than walking, colors need to be bold and eye-catching in order to be effective. The storefront frame may be neutral in color, with bright accents on doors, window frames, signs, and parapets. Storefront frames may also be brightly painted with a single color to create a “signature” for the building.

Recommendations

203. *For commercial buildings in the Miracle Mile, use bright colors to accent building details such as doors, window frames, signs, and parapets.*
 204. *If storefront frames are brightly painted, use a single color to create a signature for the building.*

4.3.2 New Construction

Setbacks

There is no maximum setback requirement for larger commercial buildings on the Miracle Mile. Smaller outparcel structures such as fast-food establishments should be set back no more than 30 feet from the ROW, with a landscaped buffer consisting of a tree-planted lawn or landscaped area in front. Where parking is required in front of the building, limit the parking area to a single parking bay.

Recommendations

205. *Discourage the proliferation of large parking lots fronting on Central Avenue. Locate lots to the side and rear of buildings wherever possible, or break up lots with outparcel buildings.*
 206. *Minimize curb cuts.*
 207. *Where there is insufficient room for parking beside or behind the structure, allow no more than one parking bay between the back of sidewalk and the building entrance.*

Massing

The retail orientation of the Miracle Mile encourages low buildings. To maintain this character, buildings should be no more than three stories in height.

Recommendations

208. *Design buildings to a maximum of three stories, assuming twelve to fifteen feet floor to floor heights.*

Building Composition and Fenestration

Facades should be articulated to reduce the massive scale and the uniform, impersonal appearances of large retail buildings, and to provide visual interest that is consistent with the area's identity, character and scale. Facades greater than 100 feet in length, measured horizontally, should incorporate projecting elements or recesses in the wall plane having a depth of at least 3% of the length of the façade and extending at least 20% of the length of the façade. No uninterrupted length of any façade should exceed 100 horizontal feet.

Recommendation

209. *Encourage the articulation of facades to reduce the massive scale and monotonous appearance of large retail buildings.*

Materials

A variety of materials are appropriate to the Miracle Mile. To create an exuberant “strip” architecture in character with the scale and uses along the street, new buildings should include contemporary materials such as glass and steel frame. More traditional materials such as wood frame, concrete, and stucco finishes are also suitable. Artificial materials that resemble older building elements, such as vinyl siding and cultured stone, should not be used.

Storefronts and upper-story windows should be made of clear glass. Colored glass and glass blocks may be used to accentuate window borders, transoms, and sidelights. Dark, reflective and opaque glass is prohibited in new buildings in the Miracle Mile. The use of materials for dramatic effect, such as a multi-level curtain wall, is strongly encouraged.

Recommendations

210. *Use contemporary materials such as glass and steel frame to create an exuberant “strip” architecture along Central Avenue.*
211. *Avoid artificial materials such as vinyl siding and cultured stone.*
212. *Use clear glass for storefronts and upper-story windows. Colored glass or glass blocks may be used to accentuate window borders, transoms and sidelights. Dark, reflective and opaque glass is prohibited.*

Color

Since most people traveling in the Miracle Mile are driving rather than walking, colors need to be bold and eye-catching in order to be effective. The storefront frame may be neutral in color, with bright accents on doors, window frames, signs, and parapets. Storefront frames may also be brightly painted with a single color to create a “signature” for the building.

Recommendations

213. *For commercial buildings in the Miracle Mile, use bright colors to accent building details such as doors, window frames, signs, and parapets.*
- *If storefront frames are brightly painted, use a single color to create a signature for the building.*

Lighting

A variety of lighting types and styles can be used to create an attractive and inviting night-time

environment along the Miracle Mile. In general, lighting should be oriented to illuminate signs, window displays and architectural features of the building. In all cases, lighting should be coordinated between adjacent storefronts in the same building to create a unified appearance.

For window displays, strong incandescent fixtures are most appropriate. These should be located and angled to ensure that they spotlight the merchandise and do not point either towards the window shopper or cause distracting reflections on the storefront window. For signs, spotlights or gooseneck lights are most effective. For special architectural features, such as towers or sculptural elements, up-lights or internal lights should be used to create a dramatic effect that will be visible from a distance.

Recommendations

214. *Orient lighting to illuminate signs, window displays and architectural features of the building.*

215. *Coordinate lighting between adjacent storefronts in the same building to create a unified appearance.*

216. *Use strong incandescent fixtures to highlight window displays.*

217. *For special architectural features such as towers or sculptural elements, use up-lighting or internal lighting to create a dramatic effect.*

4.3.3 Signage

General

Signs should be compatible with their building, neighboring buildings, and the automobile-oriented character of the Miracle Mile as a whole. Signs should present a clear message about the business they serve. They are one of the least expensive and most effective ways to enhance a storefront or business establishment. With imagination and high quality design, signs can add a new unity to the character of the Miracle Mile and establish an identity for regional retail destination in Albany.

Signs for a row of storefronts in the same building should be of similar size, material, proportion and location of the building. They should be located similarly on the building. While it is not necessary for them to be all the same color or design, they should look like a family – in this way they reinforce, rather than compete with, each other.

The sign alone should not attempt to convey the entire story a merchant wants to relay. Too many different signs can overwhelm viewers. The end result is that none of the intended messages are conveyed. It is the careful combination of sign, building storefront and window display working together that has the greatest impact.

There are three types of signs appropriate for the Miracle Mile: freestanding or ground, wall, and awning or canopy.

Recommendations

218. *Choose a sign that is consistent and harmonious with the architectural style of the property and the surrounding district.*

219. *Convey the message of the sign with simplicity.*

220. *Restrict copy to the name, address, function and logo of the establishment.*
 221. *Do not post rates and advertising of commodities and ancillary services.*
 222. *Install one primary and one secondary sign.*

Ground Signs

Freestanding or ground signs are seen from furthest away, often from automobiles. As such, they will often serve as the primary sign for businesses along the Miracle Mile.

Recommendations

223. *It is suggested that a single property be permitted no more than one freestanding sign per street frontage.*
 224. *No freestanding signs may be erected in the public right-of-way.*
 225. *Freestanding signs may be a maximum height of 12 feet (with a minimum height of 7 feet of clearance from the ground).*
 226. *Maximum area for freestanding signs is 24 square feet.*
 227. *Directional ground signs indicating "Entrance," "Exit," "Parking," or the like shall not exceed 3 square feet per sign and shall be no more than 3 feet in height.*

Sign Bands

It is not necessary to create a sign band when one doesn't exist: back-lit letters on a brick façade, for example, can be very effective in both announcing a business and highlighting its building. However, where multiple storefronts share the same building, it may be desirable to establish uniform location and style for signs. If a sign band does not exist in such cases, one can be created by a change in color, material, or relief. The sign band can be articulated or divided so that each section clearly relates to an individual store.

Recommendations

228. *In multiple storefront buildings, use signs of similar size, proportion and materials for each store.*
 229. *Coordinate colors in continuous sign bands or among contiguous signs.*
 230. *Vary the color of individual signs within a coordinated range.*

Wall Signs

Among signs attached to buildings, wall signs will most likely serve as secondary signs in the Miracle Mile, given the automobile nature of this strip. They should contain simple information such as the name of the store and the type of business. Wall signs should be carefully sized to fit in with the building's façade design and should avoid obscuring important architectural features.

Types of Wall Signs

Board signs use a background board, generally rectangular in shape, which contains the letters, graphic image and logo, where applicable. Individual letters mounted directly on a building can also create appealing signs. Carefully sized and designed micro-tube neon signs can add an element of excitement to the streetscape at night.

Size and Placement

The size of a wall sign, within the allowable maximum, depends on the width of the street as well as the size of the business. Locate the sign within the sign band where one exists. Do not cover up important architectural details such as cornices, piers and pilasters, doorway pediments, and upper-floor window sills.

Lettering

Signs on main facades should generally use letters that range from 12 inches to 24 inches high. Smaller letters for smaller storefronts and larger letters for larger storefronts are possible. Internally illuminated individual letters are not encouraged, but back-lit letters are appropriate.

Recommendations

- 231. *Locate wall signs in a sign band when one exists, usually above the transom.*
- 232. *Where a sign band does not exist, locate the wall sign between the first floor transom and the second floor window sill or below the eaves on a one-story building.*
- 233. *Install no more than two signs – one primary, one secondary.*
- 234. *Use a maximum width of two-thirds of the width of the building front and a maximum height of one-third of the height of the space between the first floor transom and the second floor window sill or eaves on one-story buildings.*
- 235. *Locate signs so as not to obstruct display areas and office windows.*
- 236. *Locate flush-mounted signs above the storefront display windows or transoms and below the second story window sills.*
- 237. *Use lettering between 12 inches and 24 inches high and which occupies no more than 65% of the board.*
- 238. *Do not use internally illuminated box signs.*

Awning/Canopy Signs

Signs on awnings or canopies can complement or become the principal wall sign. When a single business occupies several bays of a storefront, a small wall sign at each bay, or a sign on each awning or canopy, can be very effective in discreetly repeating the name of the business. More numerous, smaller signs also contribute to a finer-grain experience along the Miracle Mile that complements the automobile character of the strip.

Recommendations

- 239. *Restrict the size of the sign to 25% of the area of the awning or canopy.*
- 240. *Use lettering 10 inches in height for signs on awnings.*

Materials for Signs

Wood

Wood can be used for backing or lettering. Wood is particularly useful for a sign that has carved, recessed or dimensional lettering or decoration. Use wood that allows the grain to contribute to the design. Large pieces of wood can crack or check as they age; exterior plywood (with protected edges) can help solve this problem.

Metal

Metal can be used for backing or lettering. Copper, bronze, brass and stainless steel offer richness

and durability. Gold and silver leaf, properly applied, can last for fifty years or more.

Glass

The transparency of glass allows graphics or lettering painted on its surface to float in place, while also allowing a view beyond. Glass can be etched or sandblasted and lit from the bottom edge for dramatic effects. Glass may also be entirely back-painted with a solid color after lettering has been applied.

Plastic

Plastic is most successful when used for individual letters. In large amounts, plastic can look flimsy and cheap. If used as a backing, it should be made rigid or placed in a frame. Vacuum-formed plastic faces in metal frames are generally inappropriate.

Color for Signs

Coordination

Coordinate sign and building colors so that the entire face of the building works together to look attractive and draw attention. Too many colors used together on a sign (or on adjacent signs) tend to overwhelm the viewer. It is best to limit the number of colors on a sign to three or four. Any additional colors should be used sparingly as accents.

Contrast

Make sure that there is enough contrast between lettering and background colors. In general, lighter letters on a dark background are more legible than dark letters on a light background. This applies to signage on glass or on board backing. If a building contains a number of shops, it is best if all signs have dark backgrounds and light letters, or light backgrounds and dark letters. Lack of this basic uniformity destroys the rhythm of a building's façade.

Sign Lighting

Well-lit signs are particularly important for stores that stay open at night. But lit facades, displays and signs, even of businesses closed in the evening, also contribute to the safety, enjoyment and visual interest of the streetscape. Illuminated signs attract attention after-hours and lend a warmth to a commercial district. Exterior lights can be controlled by timers or photo-electric cells. A full understanding of the lighting options for signage can help discourage the use of internally illuminated sign boxes. No illumination shall be permitted which is visible from any portion of a public way so as to create a traffic hazard.

Incandescent Light

Spots or flood lights attached to the building façade and spaced at intervals can usually illuminate the full area of a sign. There are a variety of exterior fixtures that can be used as decorative elements – from those with neutral, small housings to elaborate, fluted, gooseneck fixtures.

Fluorescent Light

Properly shielded with hoods, a series of fluorescent fixtures can light signs more uniformly than incandescent spots. They are typically cooler in color, but new tube types can closely match the quality and color range of incandescent lights, which many people still prefer. Fluorescent fixtures

typically look more utilitarian than incandescent ones and blend less easily with historic building facades; therefore, the provision of a valence to conceal the fixture is appropriate.

Back-lit Signs or Letters

Micro-fluorescent tubes or neon behind solid letters or signs can highlight a building's textured surface as well as provide a pleasant glow around an establishment's name.

Coordination

If a building has multiple storefronts, the lighting for their signs should be coordinated. If all storefronts have signs lit externally with hooded fluorescent lights, for example, all the lamp colors should be the same – all warm white, all cool white, etc.

Up and Down Lighting

Although up-lighting signs from below is dramatic and allows fixtures to be more easily hidden, mounting fixtures above signs and lighting down avoids many weather and water-related problems.

Glare

Glare from unshielded lights makes adjacent signs or displays difficult to see. Bare bulbs are prohibited on all buildings. Overly bright signs, especially at night, can actually cause passers-by to look away rather than read them.

5.0 implementation

5.1 Jurisdiction

These Design and Development Guidelines (henceforth referred to as the Guidelines) shall apply to all new development and property improvements undertaken on Central Avenue (henceforth referred to as the Avenue), as described below. The Guidelines shall be enforced through a mandatory design review process administered by the Central Avenue Design Review Board under the jurisdiction of the City of Albany Department of Development and Planning.

1. **Section 4.1.1 shall apply to all properties sharing a boundary with the public right-of-way on Central Avenue between Lark Street and Quail Street. Section 4.2.1 shall apply to all properties sharing a boundary with the public right-of-way on Central Avenue between Quail Street and King Avenue. Sections 4.3.1 shall apply to all properties sharing a boundary with the public right-of-way on Central Avenue between King Avenue and the city line.** Compliance with the Guidelines is not required for façade improvement projects outside this area; however, the Guidelines should be consulted to ensure compatibility of development.
2. **Section 4.1.2 shall apply to all properties sharing a boundary line with the public right-of-way on Central Avenue between Lark Street and Quail Street. Sections 4.2.2 shall apply to all properties sharing a boundary with the public right-of-way on Central Avenue between Quail Street and King Avenue. Section 4.3.2 shall apply to all properties sharing a boundary with the public right-of-way on Central Avenue between King Avenue and the city line.** Compliance with the Guidelines is not required for new construction outside this area; however, the Guidelines should be consulted to ensure compatibility of development.

5.2 Design Review Process

The following permit applicants are subject to design review: building owners and commercial tenants seeking building permit, zoning change, or other approvals for new signs, lighting, curb cuts, site improvements, change of use, rehabilitation, addition, infill or new construction. The Design Review Board shall issue a Certificate of Design Approval when it has determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the Design and Development Guidelines. Authorization to proceed with demolition or construction shall not be granted by any City agency until a Certificate of Design Approval has been obtained, except for projects that are solely a replacement-in-kind.

5.3 Application Requirements for Design Approval

To submit an application for design approval, the property owner or tenant must provide the following materials to the Design Review Board:

3. **For all projects:**

241. One copy of the existing site plan, including the entire property under consideration, at a scale that permits clear interpretation of the building footprint, landscape, and other site elements.
242. One copy of the proposed site plan, including the entire property under consideration, at a scale that permits clear interpretation of the building footprint, landscape, and other site elements.

4. **For façade improvements:**

243. One scaled elevation drawing showing the existing façade OR a clear photograph of the existing façade.
244. One scaled elevation drawing showing the proposed façade improvements.
245. A complete list of any new materials to be used that are not contained in the original structure, including a reference to their location on the facade.

5. **For new construction:**

246. One scaled elevation drawing of the proposed building, showing the façade that faces Central Avenue. If this elevation does not include the primary pedestrian entrance, provide a second scaled elevation drawing of this facade.
247. One building plan showing the interior configuration of all floors in the building.

6. **For signage:**

248. One scaled drawing clearly depicting the proposed sign, including the logo, mounting materials and fixtures.
249. A scaled elevation drawing or a written description of the sign's location.

5.4 Central Avenue Design Review Board

A. Creation, Members and Term

The Central Avenue Design Review Board consisting of seven (7) members is hereby established. All members of the Board shall be appointed by the Mayor of Albany, and shall serve without compensation. Appointments to the Design Review Board shall include the following:

250. *The Commissioner of the Department of Development and Planning, who shall serve as Chair of the Board.*
251. *One registered architect designated by the American Institute of Architects, with no current conflicting interests in the Business Improvement District.*
252. *One representative from Historic Albany.*
253. *One representative from the Albany Department of Development and Planning.*
254. *Two business owners with commercial property in the Central Business Improvement District.*
255. *One homeowner whose primary residence is in a neighborhood adjacent to the Central Business Improvement District.*

Three (3) members of the Board shall be appointed for an initial term of one (1) year, and three (3)

members shall be appointed for an initial term of two (2) years. The Commissioner of the Department of Development and Planning shall serve as Chair of the Board in perpetuity. In the event that the Commissioner is unable to serve as Chair, s/he shall appoint a temporary replacement. Vacancies for other Board membership positions caused by death, resignation, or other circumstances shall be filled for the same position and unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointments were made.

A. Organization, Rules of Procedure and Meetings

As soon as the members are appointed, the Review Board shall meet and organize by the election of a member as Secretary, the adoption of rules of procedure and the provision for regular and special meetings. The City of Albany Department of Development and Planning shall staff the meetings and maintain and make available for inspection a record of proceedings. Four (4) members shall be required for official action and constitute a quorum. The Review Board shall hold regularly scheduled meetings and may call for special meetings. All meetings shall be open to the public. Public notice of scheduled meetings shall be submitted to the City Clerk for publication in the local newspaper.

A. Duties

The duties of the Design Review Board shall be the following:

- 256. *To preserve, protect and enhance the unique urban environment and neighborhood characteristics of the Central Avenue.*
- 257. *To ensure that new development and property improvements are compatible with the desired vision for Central Avenue.*
- 258. *To hear and decide permit applications for site improvements, construction, and exterior alteration not involving replacement-in-kind along Central Avenue, as described in Section 5.1; and to issue Certificates of Design Approval for projects meeting the Design and Development Guidelines included herein and any subsequently adopted guidelines.*
- 259. *To review applications for variances from any zoning code standards, and to make recommendations thereon.*

glossary

Bay A vertical division of the exterior of a building marked by door and window openings.

Bay Window A projecting window, usually with angled sides, which rests on its own foundation.

Bracket A structural element that visually or structurally supports a cornice or overhang.

Bulkhead A horizontal area below a window on a first level storefront. It is usually made of wood and wood framing.

Coping A capping or covering of the top of a wall.

Cornice A projecting molding along the top of a building or first floor level.

Cultured Stone An artificial material, usually cement based which is colored and cast into molds to resemble a wide variety of stone types; typically installed as a thin veneer.

Curb Cut A break or opening in the sidewalk and curb which allows vehicles to pass through.

Dentils A series of small blocks affixed to a cornice.

Dormer A smaller structure which projects from a sloping roof, usually with a window.

Double-Hung Window A window with two sashes that opens vertically.

Facade The front or "face" of a building.

Fenestration The design and placement of windows and doors in a building.

Gable The triangular part of an end wall under a pitched roof.

Infill The materials or buildings which close off a gap or opening in a building or a row of buildings.

Internally Illuminated Lit from inside. In signage, generally made of formed plastic, and not acceptable in historic districts.

Lintel The horizontal piece at the top of a window or door opening.

Masonry Constructed of stone, cement or brick.

Massing The size, shape and proportion of a building.

Mortar A mixture of lime or cement, sand and water used in masonry construction. Acts as a

cushion to handle expansion and contraction between masonry units.

Parapet A low protective wall at the edge of a roof.

Pier Square masonry porch or storefront support.

Pilaster A flat pier which is attached to the wall surface and has a slight projection.

PSI An abbreviation for pounds per square inch used as a measurement for the pressure of water. The higher the PSI, the stronger and more potentially damaging the water spray.

Proportion The relationship between length and width of like elements. Vertical proportions indicate that an element is taller than it is wide, and horizontal proportions indicate that an element is wider than it is tall.

Rehabilitation Returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are historically and architecturally significant.

Repointing Raking out old mortar joints and filling them with new mortar.

Restoration Meticulously returning a property to its historic appearance and function.

Rhythm Repetition of shapes, accents and proportions.

Right of Way The area dedicated and set aside for a road or street, usually includes elements adjacent to the paved surface, such as curbs, gutters, and sidewalks.

Sash A frame designed to hold window glass, the moving part of a window.

Scale The comparison of size of building elements to human form.

Setback The distance from the exterior wall to a property line. These dimensions are generally governed by the zoning code.

Sidelight A narrow vertical window located immediately adjacent to a door, often made from colored panes of glass.

Sill The base of a window or door.

Storefront The street level windows of a commercial building, generally incorporating large areas of glass for display purposes.

Storefront Cornice A projecting molding above the street level display windows and below the upper story windows.

Storefront Frame The wood or metal edges which hold the glass areas of the storefront in place.

Structure A building, monument, work of art, work of engineering or other object permanently affixed to the land.

Transom A horizontal piece of glass above a window or door opening.