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A note on using these guidelines

The opening statement in each section, in plain text, introduces the topic's importance and the goals for the guidelines in this area. *Text in italics states the objective of the guidelines under that topic or the condition under which it applies.*

- **Individual guidelines, in bold bullet form, are listed for each objective.**

Sometimes more specific advice is included. Sketch drawings illustrate many of the guidelines, while photographs give examples of positive applications of the guideline or, in some cases, illustrate what should be avoided under the guidelines.

1 Site Planning

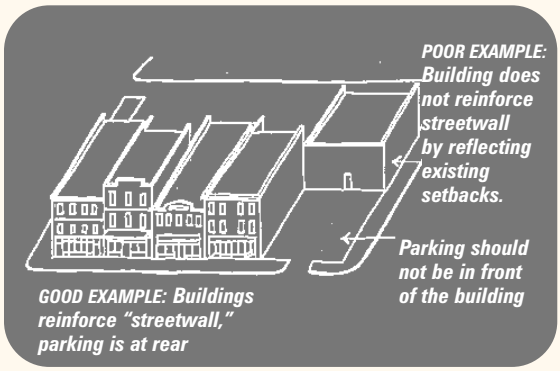
The appropriate location of buildings on their site and in relation to their neighbors is one of the most effective ways to reinforce the valued character of older commercial districts, provide easily accessible and convenient parking and to allow safe pedestrian movement to and from businesses.

Unless otherwise noted, the following guidelines apply to portions of buildings facing High Street and the side avenues.

Buildings set far back from the sidewalk (top photo) erode the streetwall. Some offer blank walls and unused spaces to the pedestrian. Others (bottom photo) designed for car access, clutter the visual landscape with signs competing for drivers' attention. Both types of sites represent very appropriate redevelopment opportunities.

Commercial Streetwalls and Setbacks

Most of the structures in the University/High Street corridor are older commercial buildings built at the sidewalk edge. Buildings are adjacent to each other, creating a continuous streetwall. The streetwall is important to preserve because it borders and encloses the pedestrian space, makes walking along the street safer and more comfortable, and ensures that the streetscape is visually interesting. These qualities are lost when buildings are set behind parking lots or when circulation between businesses occurs within the building.



Suburban type development with deep setbacks behind large parking areas erodes the traditional streetwall and interrupts the shopping experience, resulting in decreased sales. Most franchises can be designed to fit into an urban setting while still providing adequate parking and drive-in use. It is important to re-establish the tradition of building at the sidewalk edge and gradually restore the streetwall.

To maintain or restore the continuity of the streetwall:

- **Build at the sidewalk edge. On High Street in Zones 3, 4, and 5 (9th to Frambes Avenues), build at a setback sufficient to bring the width of the sidewalk to 15′, except where**

this would interrupt an existing continuous streetwall of 60′ or more. In Zones 6, 7, 8, and 10, follow the established setback and reinforce the streetwall where necessary. (See "Urban Commercial Overlay Code.")

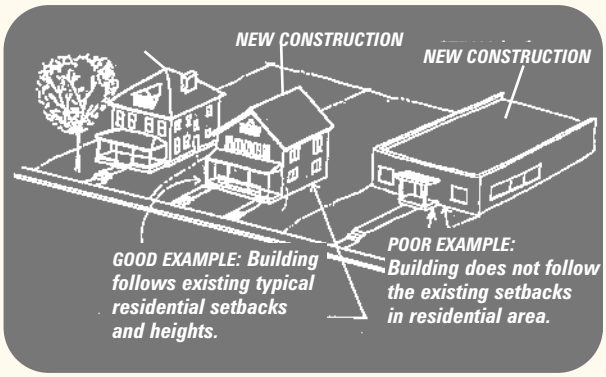
- **Fill the entire width of the individual lot (typically 40′ to 60′), excepting when a pedestrian passageway to the rear of the property is provided.**
- **For High Street frontages greater than 60′ wide, articulate the building facade to convey the character of multiple buildings on multiple lots, none wider than 60′.**
- **Locate parking behind buildings—not between buildings and High Street or side avenues.** (See "Urban Commercial Overlay Code.")

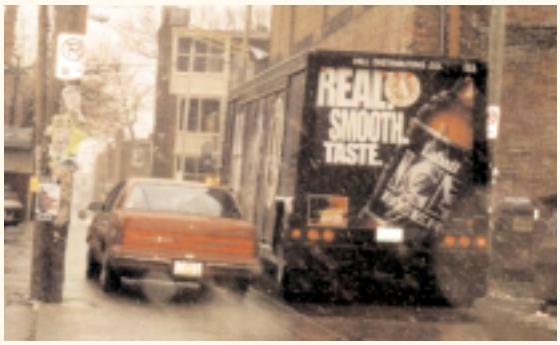
When adjoining buildings meet the sidewalk at an angle:

- **Build with a setback that replicates the angle of at least one of the adjacent buildings.**

When buildings have uneven setbacks:

- **Match the setback of the building located closer to the prevailing sidewalk line of the block in which the building will be located.**





New buildings backing onto Pearl Street should have sufficient rear setbacks (top) so that service vehicles will not impede circulation. Residential setbacks (above) combined with a rising topography east of High Street create a uniform residential character along several blocks north of Lane Avenue.

Along rear frontages:

- **Allow sufficient room for business deliveries and public services, such as trash collection, without obstructing vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation.**
- **Within the Campus Sub-Area, provide a 5′ setback to accommodate pedestrian circulation and improve visibility of vehicular traffic.**
- **Floors above three stories should be setback at least 20′ from the right-of-way.**

To animate a pedestrian-oriented space along High Street and to extend the public realm of the sidewalk:

- **Buildings with less than 60′ frontage may setback to accommodate pedestrian amenities, such as seating, outdoor eating, art, or vest pocket park, as deemed appropriate by the Review Board.**

- **Provide seating and other pedestrian amenities in front of existing commercial buildings with large setbacks.**
- **Extend toward the sidewalk the interior space of a fast-food restaurant (additional seating), convenience store, or other retail or service building.**

Residential Setbacks

Zone 7, Northwood to Maynard Avenues, contains blocks of residential buildings. Although some properties have been converted to commercial uses, the zone retains its residential character. This intact residential character contributes to the mixed-use quality of the corridor, provides a visual and functional connection with the adjoining residential neighborhoods, and should be preserved and enhanced by new construction that replicates its scale and defining architectural elements.

To maintain the residential character of Zone 7:

- **New buildings should reflect the predominant residential character.**
- **Build new residential buildings with the existing residential front setback requirements, which range from 15′ to 30′ from the street.**
- **Conform to the minimum side yard setbacks allowed by the zoning code.**
- **Cover no more than one third of the lot depth, excluding porches, minor projections and detached outbuildings (outbuildings include garages or other non-commercial and/or residential structures).**
- **Locate parking behind buildings—not between buildings and High Street or side avenues.**

Traditional commercial buildings provided varying street mass using different story heights and cornice treatments.

Building Heights

A generally consistent building height within a neighborhood commercial district contributes to a cohesive visual environment, the quality of new design, and the potential for new investment. When combined with a requirement to build to the sidewalk edge, building height forms the streetwall, encloses the urban space, and improves the pedestrian environment. A minimum building height helps protect the urban character of older districts and enhances the visual quality of the street environment.

Each zone identified along the corridor has its own height parameters in recognition of their character and redevelopment potential. The number of stories indicated is considered optimum for that zone. However, at certain locations an evaluation of the various parameters affecting a project's feasibility might suggest that taller building heights may be appropriate, particularly when the proposed development is consistent with the recommendations of *A Plan for High Street: Creating a 21st Century Main Street*. Applicants are encouraged to meet with the Review Board

early in the project planning process to determine the appropriateness of a greater building height at a specific location. As an incentive to encourage redevelopment of negative character-giving sites, increased heights may be considered for developments having at least two floors of housing.

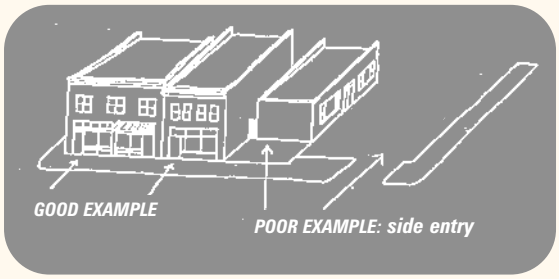
Note that the height of a story will vary depending on its intended use and buildings of equal stories may have different building heights.

To maintain the urban character of older sections of High Street, enhance the pedestrian environment, and encourage redevelopment on sites where the traditional fabric has been eroded:

- **Build within the height parameters described for each zone on pages 20-27.**
- **Heights along Pearl and Wall Streets should be no taller than 3 stories.**
- **Maintain a minimum building height of 16′ on all sites.**

Entrances

The orientation of building entrances on a main street concentrates pedestrian circulation along the street and reinforces one of the most valued characteristics of a neighborhood commercial district. It also allows for a continuous visual relationship between sidewalk and storefronts which animates street life and improves the shopping experience.



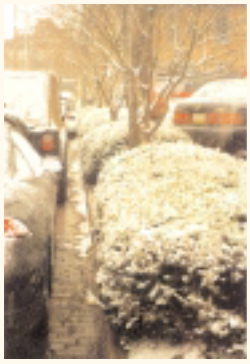
To maintain the pedestrian orientation and visual interest of High Street:

- **Locate the main entrance of all commercial buildings on High Street, when the only or principal facade of the building is on High Street.**
- **On corner properties, locate the main entrance of a building on High Street or, with the approval of the Review Board, on a side avenue.**
- **Locate service and employee entrances at the rear of the buildings.**
- **Provide a secondary public entrance from the rear parking area when sufficient pedestrian traffic is expected to come from that direction.**
- **Treat the backs of buildings having public entrances as a secondary facade. Provide appropriate architectural treatment, including transparent glass doors and/or windows and signage, to enhance security and the increasingly important role Pearl and Wall Streets will have as gateways for those who access parking via these streets.**

Landscaping and Screening

Private landscaping of a property at the right-of-way, particularly for screening parking lots and service areas, enhances the pedestrian environment and increases the attractiveness and economic viability of the district. Large areas of unscreened asphalt adjacent to the High Street sidewalk

Deep setbacks (upper photo) in front of existing commercial properties—whether paved or landscaped but not meant to be used—are dead spaces on the street. They should be converted to usable spaces (lower photo) that invite and engage pedestrian activity and animate the street edge.



A buffer zone of 4' is sufficient to screen parking areas from streets, provided it is well-landscaped with evergreens and/or compact shrubs and hedges. Wrought-iron fences, in combination with landscaping, are particularly effective and attractive in urban environments.

create an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians and break the continuity created by the original buildings at the sidewalk edge. This space should be used for elements that help screen the parking lot, re-establish the street edge, and enhance the pedestrian experience of the street.

Low fences and walls are preferred to hedges as a screen in front parking and service areas. Hedges or other landscaping are encouraged, but must be supported by a maintenance commitment.

To minimize the visual impact of barren parking and service areas, redefine the street edge, and improve the pedestrian experience:

- **Along High Street and side avenues, screen parking lots and service areas with a low fence or wall, landscaping, and narrow canopied trees.**
- **Along Pearl and Wall Streets, screen parking lots and service areas with a low fence or wall.**
- **For properties that back onto Pearl or Wall Streets and that are being redeveloped or are sites of new construction, provide a low fence or wall.**
- **Landscape the edges of vacant lots and interim surface parking lots as per the landscaping and screening requirements for parking lots.**
- **Screen trash receptacles and dumpster areas from public view, with an accessible side for refuse collection.**
- **Screen ground-mounted and roof-mounted mechanical building equipment.**

2 Parking Lots and Garages

While High Street will remain a pedestrian-oriented environment, providing sufficient parking will be critical to the feasibility of many revitalization projects. In fact, parking within a short distance of most destinations increases the pedestrian use of a neighborhood commercial district and enhances the economic viability of its businesses.

Parking requirements should reflect the urban and pedestrian nature of High Street and recognize the overlapping use of parking or the multiple destinations of each user of a parking space. Small sites are particularly hampered in terms of expansion, change of use, or redevelopment by current off-street parking requirements. The preferred current locations for parking are on the street and behind buildings, along Pearl and Wall Streets. Off-street parking requirements may also be met off-site as well as on-site. If the nature of a use is unlikely to attract significant drive-in traffic and the space that use occupies is not suitable for it to become a "destination" establishment, a substantial parking variance should be granted. The parking needs for staff should be accommodated on or off-site as a minimum.

To accommodate High Street's development potential, more parking is needed to supplement curbside parking. Therefore, a variety of parking facilities will be essential to support the long-term viability of desirable new retail, entertainment, and residential uses. These parking facilities will be strategically placed and shared by multiple businesses to encourage people to walk between destinations along High Street. A parking authority will oversee parking agreements between property owners as well as build, maintain, and manage public parking facilities.

To reinforce the pedestrian orientation of High Street, recognize and protect its urban character, and support development on small sites:

- **Recognizing the uniqueness and value a character-giving building adds to the urban fabric, no additional on-site parking is needed when rehabilitating an existing primary character-giving building to a more intense use.**
- **In general, a project making a substantial architectural contribution and one that is consistent with both the *Plan* and the *Guidelines* should receive favorable consideration regarding a parking variance.**

To promote efficient vehicular circulation:

- **Provide a servicing plan that describes the operations of the project for deliveries, employee parking, access and egress, vehicle and equipment storage, waste storage and removal, and other operational needs.**

To optimize the use of the parking supply, minimize curb cuts, and improve circulation:

- **Enter into written agreements with adjoining property owners to share parking spaces, by alternating day and evening use or by other means. Shared parking spaces count toward**

the off-street parking requirements of all sharing parties.

- **Share points of access and egress when possible.**
- **Access for new parking lots and garages should be from side avenues or Pearl and Wall Streets.**

To enhance the urban character, improve pedestrian experience, and protect adjacent residential neighborhoods:

- **Do not locate parking lots or garages directly on High Street. All parking facilities should be screened from High Street by other buildings and uses (a landscaped buffer is not sufficient when creating new parking).**
- **Improvements to existing parking lots should include a hard or hard-and-soft screening treatment.**
- **Treat the main facades of parking garages on the side avenues and Pearl and Wall Streets as building facades, with the same requirements—articulated bays within expressed structural piers, main entrances on the street, and glass openings at the street level—as apply to new buildings.**
- **Do not build parking garages with blank walls at the street level. Provide 60% of the street-level facade with transparent openings.**
- **Provide a landscaped buffer zone of at least 15′ between parking garages and adjacent residential properties. Plant trees, vines, shrubs or hedges of 3′ minimum height (vertical landscape elements) in the buffer zone and maintain them in good health in all seasons.**
- **Provide continuous street-level lighting of all parking garage facades and openings.**

3 Building and Façade Design

The renovation and restoration of properties along High Street is a great opportunity to enhance the unique character of the district as well as to infuse it with creative and imaginative design. Whether restoring the architectural integrity of a historically significant building, or bringing new life to an aging storefront, simplicity and use of widely accepted standards, such as the Secretary of Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*, are key ingredients of a successful project.

Some of the most visually and functionally effective renovations involve removing layers of inappropriate materials. Revealing original structures and keeping architectural lines simple can be relatively inexpensive, visually appealing, and easier to maintain over time. Old photographs and historical data may provide the context for the original design and the role of its architectural features. This might guide the owner's efforts to preserve or reconstruct significant original features of the building while providing functional and attractive building improvements.

French windows and other types of openable walls enliven the street edge for both pedestrians and patrons.

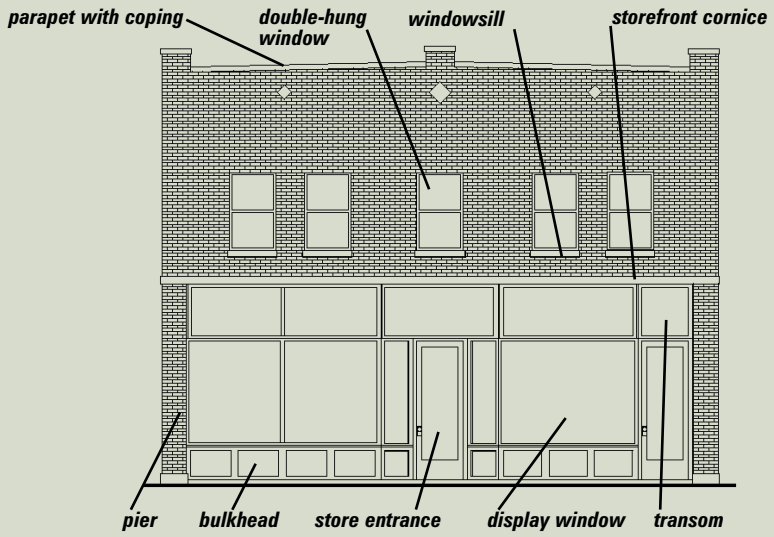
New buildings should not present blank walls or nearly blank facades to High Street.

The goal of rehabilitation is also to infuse new life into older buildings. Imaginative new designs and displays can contribute vitality and character to High Street while prolonging the life of valued structures and increasing the economic viability of the district. New storefronts of contemporary design can enrich the experience of street life and further the goal of creating a diverse and vibrant corridor.

To reveal original building lines, openings, facing materials, architectural features and trim:

- **Remove inappropriate additions such as false mansard roofs, false dormers, boxed-over parapets and cornices, boxed entrances and covered windows.**
- **Restore historic and contributing buildings to as much of their original condition as possible; refer to Appendix B, "The Case for Rehabilitation and Preservation."**

Glossary for Typical University-Area Commercial Structures



- **Remove layers of inappropriate materials, such as imitation brick and stone, cedar shingles, metal and vinyl siding, and other covering materials.**

To create new facades that will enhance the character of the corridor and add vitality to its street life:

- **Take cues from the best elements of High Street buildings and echo their qualities with new materials, composition and colors while keeping to similar scale and proportions.**
- **Contrast old and new; offset the changeable storefront facade against the permanent building structure.**
- **Communicate the nature of the business with design elements of material, shape and color.**
- **Provide ways of increasing the use of both the sidewalk and the business establishment, such as by installing French doors, continuous openable doors, or garage-door rolling windows to open up the business to the sidewalk during warm-weather months.**

Storefronts and Other Street-level Facades

The storefront is the public face of a business—its appearance reflects the quality of goods and services provided. Storefronts in a sequence give identity to a commercial district and its surrounding neighborhoods. The storefront is a contained entity, framed by piers on the sides, a storefront cornice at the top and the sidewalk at the base. The storefront typically consists of a bulkhead, display windows, and a transom. In historic or contributing buildings, original details and features should be retained whenever possible. New storefront designs should retain the scale and proportions of surrounding buildings and add inventive details, distinctive materials and new ways of engaging the pedestrian. The overall goal of storefront rehabilitation and new design is to enhance the diversity, urban character and distinctive personality of the University/High Street corridor with quality architecture.

To create a lively, pedestrian-scaled environment at the street level:

- **Contain the storefront or other street-level facade within the frame of the building, expressed by piers, and subdivide into smaller bays in keeping with typical bay widths of High Street.**
- **Accentuate vertical elements.**
- **Provide large display windows along the first floor to establish visual connection between interior and exterior.**
- **Maintain 60% of the storefront or other street-level facade visually open by using clear glass windows and doors.**
- **Use clear glass for display windows; opaque, smoked or reflective glass may be used for accent elements such as borders.**
- **Locate storefront windowsills, or the top of bulkheads, no higher than 30" above the sidewalk; for non-retail street-level facades, locate windowsills no higher than 42" above the sidewalk.**

Important Parts of Individual Storefronts

Frame *is the basic structure of the building within which the storefront should be set. In multiple-storefront buildings the frame should have a consistent finish throughout.*

- *The frame usually includes a band within which signs should be located.*
- *Use changes in materials, colors and design to distinguish between frame and storefront.*

Display area *establishes the individual identity of the store.*

- *Keep store window flush with frame, or slightly recessed (6"–12").*
- *Recess doorway.*
- *Keep window sill or bulkhead no higher than 30" and top of window no lower than 9' from sidewalk level.*

Signage *includes the use of different signs for different purposes. Do not obscure the frame or window display.*

- ***Wall sign*** *must fit within sign band if one exists.*
- ***Projecting sign*** *should be small; usually best mounted at end of sign band.*
- ***Window sign****—letters on glass, letters on board, or neon behind glass.*

Awnings *shade the sidewalk and the display area.*

- ***Retractable awnings work best with*** *traditional storefronts.*
- ***Fixed awnings*** *can work with newer buildings.*

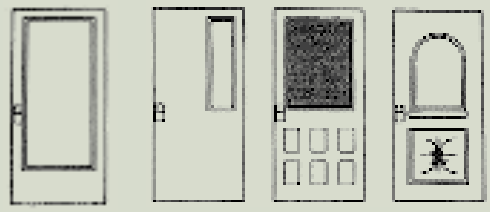
- **Locate all first-floor window tops no lower than 9′ above the sidewalk.**
- **Use durable, smooth exterior-grade woods such as oak, redwood, poplar, and medium density overlay (MDO) board for finish surfaces of wood storefronts. Do not use rough cedar, pine, or pressure-treated lumber as finish surfaces. Avoid artificial materials, such as vinyl siding, on all street-level facades.**

When restoring or rehabilitating an historic storefront the following materials are recommended:

- **Use the same material for the piers as the upper story facade, except for cast iron piers.**
- **Build the storefront frame of wood, cast iron, bronze or black anodized aluminum, or enameled metal.**
- **Use wood doors with large glass panels.**
- **Use wood, brick, tile or polished stone for bulkheads.**

Doors

Entrance doors welcome visitors to a building. They prepare the customer for the commercial space beyond. Traditionally, entrance doors are made of wood and contain a large panel of glass that makes the entry experience and the business more inviting. Recessed doorways add a three-dimensional quality to the facade, enhance the visibility of the window display by increasing angled views, and provide the opportunity for special paving in the entryway.



Appropriate ***Inappropriate***

To create a visible and inviting environment at the street level, attract customers, and add to the safety of the pedestrian experience:

- **Provide entrance doors with a minimum of 70% of their area in clear glass.**
- **Recess doorways whenever possible.**
- **When installing new doors, use proportions and materials compatible with those of the building.**
- **Do not use doors with decorative grills.**

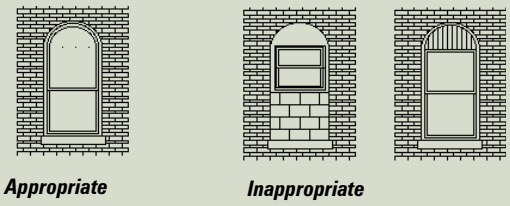
In historic buildings or contributing facades:

- **Refer to the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation* in Appendix B.**
- **Explore repairing original doors before considering replacement.**
- **If replacement is necessary, use the original design and material to maintain the original scale, proportion and architectural style of the building.**

Upper-Story Windows

Regularly spaced upper story windows create a repeated pattern for unity and are an integral part of the building design. Upper story windows are generally smaller than storefront windows at street level, are spaced at regular intervals and give scale and texture to the street edge formed by building facades.

Windows



To maintain a transparency of building facades, give scale and texture to the street edge, and preserve the architectural character, in new construction:

- **Provide upper story windows in new buildings, opening a minimum of 30% of the area of the upper story facade.**
- **Distinguish between street level and upper story windows.**
- **Accentuate vertical proportions in the design, spacing and dimensions of upper story windows.**

in historic buildings or contributing facades:

- **When performing repair or replacement work to upper story windows, match the original window in material, dimensions, and style.**
- **Do not fill in window openings with different sash configurations, smaller windows or different materials than were originally used.**
- **Do not block or board up windows; but if it is necessary to close an original window to accommodate interior changes for the building's adaptive reuse, maintain the original shape and details of the window opening.**
- **When installing storm windows, match the original window design to maintain the existing scale and proportion of the building.**

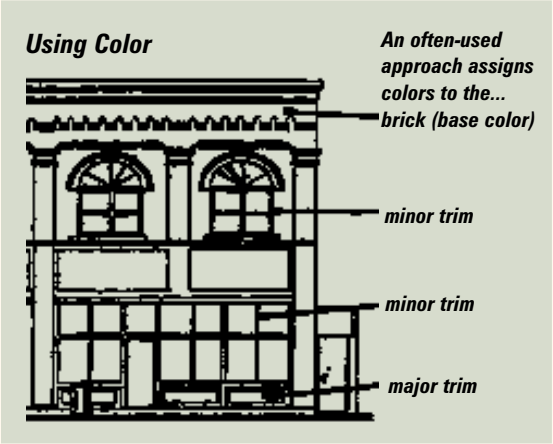
Color

Unifying a building and highlighting its storefront can be done effectively with color. Material and paint colors unite building elements and relate the building to others on the street. A good color scheme can make customers take notice of a business, while a poor color scheme does little to help the business or the neighborhood. Traditional and contemporary color schemes further the goal of increasing the corridor's visual diversity and vitality.

Many paint companies have developed color palettes specifically for historic properties; such as Benjamin Moore's Historic Colors, Glidden's American Color Legacy, Sherwin Williams Historic Colors, and Pratt & Lambert's Color Guide for Historic Homes.

In highlighting a contributing building:

- **In most cases, use up to three basic colors:**
  1. **A base color that covers wall surfaces and storefront piers. This may be the original brick, wood siding, or other base material.**
  2. **A second color for the major trim. On a wood building, the major trim can be the cornice, the storefront cornice, storefront columns, the bulkhead, window lintels, and window frames. On a brick building, the major trim can be the bulkhead, transom, and upper story windows.**
  3. **A third color for the minor trim. Minor trim can be window sashes, doors, small details on the cornice or bulkhead, and the storefront frame.**



- **Use more than three colors when the depth of exterior walls and complexity of detailing allow for several types of trim, sills and mullions, recessed entries and elaborate cornices. Each of these layers can be highlighted in its own color, within a harmonious range, against the base material of the building.**

In highlighting a new or substantially rehabilitated building or storefront:

- **Use neutral and subtle colors for wall surfaces, except where it can be demonstrated that a dominant color is appropriate.**
- **Use bold, contrasting or subtle colors for trim and accents.**
- **Use the color of building materials, including different types of glass and metal, as part of the color scheme.**

Awnings

Awnings add texture to the streetscape, provide shelter for pedestrians and protect storefront displays from sun exposure. They convey merchants' concern for their building, their customers and their business district. Canvas awnings in a variety of colors, both solid and striped, can add interest and variety to a building facade and call attention to a business. Awnings can provide a location for a graphic and add warmth to the appearance of a business.

To frame the storefront display windows, provide a transition between the storefront and upper facade and enhance the pedestrian experience along the street:

- **Install awnings and canopies above storefronts, in designs, proportions and colors that fit the building.**
- **Mount awnings above the display window and below the cornice for one-story buildings or second-story windowsills for taller buildings.**
- **Design awnings to accentuate the structural module of the facade.**
- **Project the awning 2′ to 5′ from the face of the building.**
- **Do not use vinyl or internally-lit awnings.**
- **Traditional awnings without side panels are preferred over bullnosed or suburban type awnings.**

Lighting

Exterior lighting is important to the success of storefront design and furthers the goal of enhancing the pedestrian experience. Lighting

Awnings protect storefronts, enhance the pedestrian experience on the sidewalk, and add visual interest to commercial buildings.

At night, well-lit stores create a welcoming atmosphere for passersby and are more likely to be visited by customers.

Lighting the display areas of stores, even when they're not open during the evening, increases pedestrian safety, enlivens the street, and effectively promotes the business.

that highlights the sign and display area is often more effective than general lighting of the entire storefront. The tradition of using neon lights for signs, displays, streetscape elements and building ornamentation should be recalled and reused in new designs.

Use night lighting to animate the streetscape, prolong street life after business hours, and increase pedestrian safety:

- **Light storefront facades, recessed doorways, outdoor spaces, parking areas, and passage ways between parking areas and storefront entrances.**
- **Use up or down flood lighting to light primary building facades.**
- **Orient lights to highlight the main sign, window displays and architectural features of the building.**
- **Use strong incandescent light fixtures to light window displays.**
- **Locate and angle light fixtures to ensure that they spotlight the merchandise and do not point toward the window shopper or cause distracting reflections on the storefront window.**
- **Use micro-fluorescent or neon tubes to highlight signs, displays, roof lines and architectural details.**
- **Avoid "light spill" onto adjacent noncommercial properties.**

4 Backs of Buildings

Backs of buildings can become attractive and functional second fronts facing rear parking lots.

All sides of a commercial building have the potential to contribute to the success of the business within. To enhance the pedestrian experience, the backs of High Street buildings that face parking areas off of Pearl and Wall Streets should provide second fronts or more attractive facades in recognition of the frequent use of these streets. Second fronts, including entrances, signs, and display windows, increase the attractiveness and safety of the streets that service commercial buildings and improve the connection to adjacent neighborhoods. Second fronts can also draw additional customers, especially from shared parking areas.

Designing a "second front" for the back of a building—for example, to face parking located off of Pearl Street—can be accomplished in several steps.

When designing the backs of buildings:

- **If possible, provide transparent windows and glass doors to open the store to customers arriving from the back; a minimum of 25% transparent glass at street level is recommended.**
- **Locate rear signs above a specific door or window.**
- **Rear signs should be no larger than 9 square feet.**
- **Use vivid colors and striking signage to highlight store entrances from parking lots. Clearly mark, but do not emphasize, service entrances.**
- **Locate windowsills no higher than 40″ above the rear sidewalk level.**
- **When rear facades include an important business entry, use awnings and canopies at the back entrances of buildings.**
- **When possible, provide plants in boxes or on trellises to enliven rear entrances.**
- **Avoid indiscriminate, nondirectional area lighting, such as wall packs and high-intensity floods.**

5 Additions and Infill Construction

Interventions in a built-up urban area often take the form of additions and infill into available space. Reflecting the design and materials of their own time, additions often seem foreign to the original building. A successful addition or infill responds to its context—either through contemporary or traditional design.

Sometimes additions and infill construction accommodates a new use. As an adaptive reuse measure, several one-story commercial buildings have been built in front of former residences—responding to the changing nature of High Street, particularly in the Campus Area section. As High Street evolves, however, these too may be subject to change.

When building a new addition to a contributing building or an infill between contributing buildings:

- **Use a scale and proportions compatible with those of contributing building(s).**
- **Take cues from distinctive architectural elements of the contributing building(s) to articulate the new facade.**
- **Accentuate the contrast between old and new with contemporary design and materials.**
- **Build new additions so as not to obscure or destroy existing significant building features or materials.**

When renovating or rebuilding a commercial extension in front of a residence:

- **Enhance the appearance of both structures by removing unnecessary masking elements.**
- **Reinforce the respective commercial and residential details of each building.**
- **Consider removing commercial-front buildings when:**
  1. **the commercial-front building is beyond feasible rehabilitation;**
  2. **its facade or use is not contributing to the architectural character, pedestrian experience or retail activity of the street;**
  3. **its removal would create the opportunity for an animated pedestrian space in the new setback; or**
  4. **the residential building can be rehabilitated into a contributing facade and desired use.**

Illustrative example of a setback for a new infill building to provide outdoor dining along High Street.

6 New Construction

The siting, massing, facade composition, materials and details of a new building, and its relationship to the street and surrounding buildings, should be consistent with the goals of protecting the urban character, enhancing a pedestrian orientation and mix of uses, and promoting imaginative, creative design of high quality.

Following the Urban Commercial Overlay standards, this new franchise restaurant is built at the street edge on both sides of its corner property, while parking is provided to the side and rear of the lot.

Massing

Commercial Buildings

See "Site Planning" and "Building and Facade Design."

Residential Buildings

Residential areas, such as Zone 7, are to be preserved and enhanced by replicating their massing in new construction. New residential buildings should be compatible with nearby traditional residential buildings, often allowing more variety in their shapes (pitched roof lines, for example) than commercial buildings.

- **Build residential roofs with a moderate to steep pitch, in a variety of shapes including gables and hips.**
- **Vary the shape of residential buildings by using a series of smaller pieces such as roofs, dormers, bay windows, porches, ells, and other projections.**
- **Wherever possible, orient residential buildings toward High Street.**

New construction on High Street should reflect the massing of early 20th-century buildings.

Façades

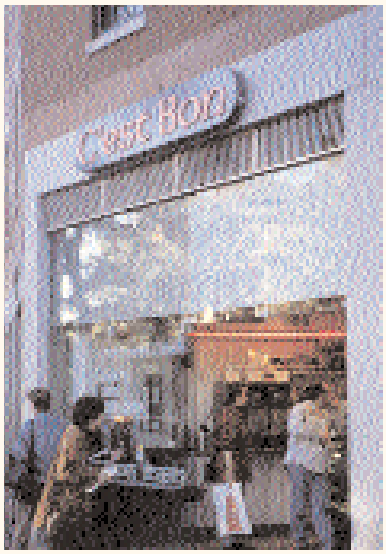
Commercial Buildings

New commercial buildings should be composed with proportions, window and door patterns, and facade articulation that echo and complement those of contributing buildings.

When designing a new commercial facade:

- **Express traditional lot widths in the facade, including when the building is wider than one lot, and maintain a rhythm of narrow bays.**
- **Articulate the building with such means as: expressed structure, piers and columns, recessed and projecting bays, building setback above cornice line, and three-dimensional elements of architectural details, signs, and awnings.**
- **Recess entryways from the facade line.**
- **Do not present to the street horizontal bands of unrelieved wall.**
- **Do not group upper story windows into continuous horizontal bands.**
- **Maintain a predominance of vertical elements on the upper floors through the spacing and proportions of window openings and articulations of the wall.**
- **The floor-to-ceiling height of the street-level story should be at least 12′.**

Narrow bays, multiple entrances and vertical elements expressed on the facade break down the scale of large buildings into a rhythm of parts understandable to the pedestrian.



Storefronts are light, non-bearing facades inserted within the heavier permanent frame of the building.

Residential Buildings

Porches and other traditional elements found on residential buildings along the corridor should be replicated.

When designing a new residential facade:

- **Use smaller openings, with more solid wall area, in residential than in commercial buildings.**
- **Use larger windows or groups of windows sparingly, as accents to identify formal or public rooms.**
- **Use a variety of window types (i.e., bay windows, oriels, different window groupings), to articulate the facade and contribute visual interest, scale and texture to the streetscape.**
- **Use horizontal and vertical proportions in residential doors and windows which replicate the proportions of the building.**
- **Celebrate the front entrance with a porch or porch-like element with the scale and proportions of traditional porches in the district.**

Residential facades along High Street typically include large porches, bay windows, dormers and varied roof lines, creating a three-dimensional texture that should be recalled in new residential construction.

Mixed Commercial and Residential

Distinction between the various uses may be expressed in the facade design; but the overall design should be complementary.

When designing a facade for a mixed use building:

- **Wherever possible, locate retail uses at street level.**
- **Express the mixed-use nature of a building. Follow the commercial guidelines for retail facades and residential guidelines for residential facades.**
- **Do not face large expanses of solid walls directly onto High Street or adjacent side avenues. Provide clearly visible street level entries for upper floor residential.**

Materials

Commercial Buildings

There should be a clear distinction between the structural elements of a building, which support and span the storefront openings, and the elements that infill the openings. Traditionally, the structural columns and bearing walls, were constructed of wood, stone, brick and cast iron. Masonry is always appropriate for the structural elements of a new building. More contemporary materials, such as steel, concrete and concrete block, with finishes of masonry, stucco, and metals can be equally effective if properly detailed.

Elements such as windows, doors, and storefronts should have a lightweight and non-structural appearance. Traditional wood window frames and paneled bulkheads are appropriate, but other materials, such as metal or tile, may also be appropriate if correctly scaled, detailed, and finished.

When designing a new commercial building:

- **Distinguish between structural and infill materials.**
- **Use clear or lightly tinted glass for windows and doors. Very dark, reflective, or opaque glass should not be used. Glass block can be used as a building material to allow accents of light; but it is not an appropriate substitute for a traditional window opening.**
- **Do not use artificial materials that resemble older building elements, such as vinyl siding.**
- **A variety of color palettes can be used for different materials. Colors should be compatible with each other and with those of adjoining buildings.**

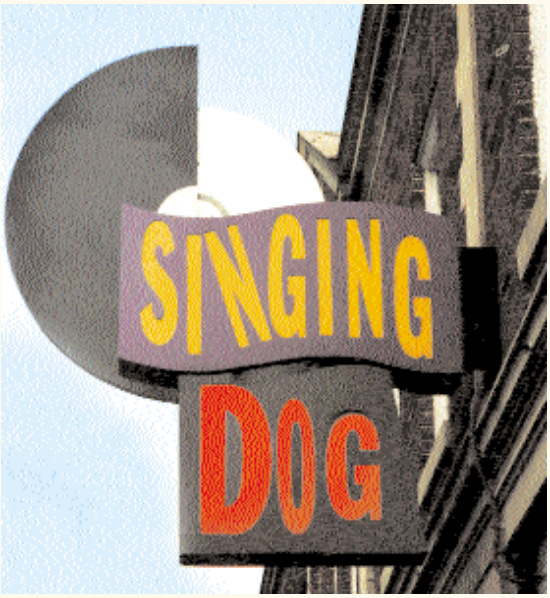
Residential Buildings

The palette of materials for residential buildings is more varied than for commercial buildings. When combining materials, the visual effect of each material should be considered. For instance, masonry has a heavier, stronger appearance than does wood siding and shingles.

When designing a new residential building:

- **Use a masonry foundation with an exposure of 1′6″ to 3′ above grade.**
- **Face exterior walls with brick, stone, wood siding, wood shingles, or a combination of these materials. Avoid imitation finish materials such as vinyl siding.**
- **Use heavier facing materials of brick, stone, and other masonry for the first floor and major structural elements.**
- **Use lighter facing materials of wood siding and shingles in higher sections of the structure and for elements such as dormers and bay windows.**

7 Graphics



Signage is an integral and very noticeable part of a commercial use. Collectively, signage influences a street's character. Signs should be compatible with their building, neighboring buildings and the character of High Street as a whole. 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 should present a clear message about the business they identify. The sign alone should not attempt to convey the entire story a merchant wants to relay. Too many different signs overwhelm viewers and consequently none of the messages are conveyed. It is the careful combination of sign, building storefront, and window display working together that has the greatest impact.

- **Choose a sign that is consistent and harmonious with the architectural style of the property and the surrounding district.**
- **Convey the message of the sign with simplicity.**
- **Restrict copy to the name, address, function and logo of the establishment. Do not post rates and advertising of commodities and ancillary services.**
- **Install one primary and, if necessary, one secondary sign.**
- **The size and style of the graphic, its scale, proportion, design, material and texture, as well as the size and style of the lettering, must relate to the building to which it is attached, with the property, and with the district that surrounds it.**
- **The graphic must be attached to the building or otherwise supported on the premises in a manner that respects the spirit as well as the letter of these guidelines.**
- **The graphic must be located appropriately on the building or premises and avoid obscuring significant architectural features.**
- **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—reinforcing rather than competing with each other.**
- **Maintain signs regularly and remove unused sign supports. Broken, faded signage and empty sign supports suggest a vacant or inactive business.**

Ground and Roof 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.

- **Use ground signs no more than 12 square feet in area and no more than 12′ in height, in front of residences that have been converted to commercial uses or to identify businesses in buildings not visible from the street.**
- **Use ground signs of no more than 4′ in height to mark parking areas.**
- **Do not install roof signs.**

Free-standing signs at a pedestrian scale are most appropriate where commercial uses are housed in formerly residential buildings.

Sign Bands

It is not necessary to create a sign band when one doesn't exist. Back-lit letters on a brick facade, for example, can be very effective in both announcing a business and highlighting its building. But where multiple storefronts share the same building, it may be desirable to establish uniform location and style. 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.

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

Wall Signs

Often viewed from across the street, wall signs 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 facade design and should avoid obscuring important architectural features.

- **Locate wall signs within a sign band when one exists, usually above the transom.**
- **Where a sign band doesn't exist, locate the wall sign between the first floor transom and the second floor windowsill or below the eaves/cornice on a one-story building.**

- **Use the wall sign as the primary business sign.**
- **Install no more than two signs, one primary, one secondary.**
- **Limit the size to 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 windowsill or eaves/ cornice on one-story buildings.**
- **Rear signs should be no larger than 9 square feet.**
- **Locate signs so as not to obstruct display areas.**
- **Locate flush-mounted signs above the store-front display windows or transoms and below the second-story windowsills.**
- **Use lettering 8″ to 16″ high and which occupies no more than 65% of the board.**
- **Do not use internally illuminated box signs.**

Types

Board signs use a background board, generally rectangular in shape, that 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.

The message is best remembered when simple and direct: the apostrophe tells what's sold inside.

Wall signs range from the classical to the bold.

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 windowsills.

Lettering

Signs on main facades should generally use letters within the guideline; however, smaller letters for smaller stores and larger letters for larger stores are possible. Internally illuminated individual letters are not encouraged, but back-lit letters are.

Projecting Signs

High quality projecting signs can add a special character to the streetscape. These signs should be small and unique in character. Viewed from medium to short range, projecting signs can highlight the storefront and attract pedestrians' attention as they walk along the sidewalk.

Projecting signs are most distinctive when their shape reflects the nature of the business.

- **A projecting sign may complement or 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.**
- **Locate projecting signs above the storefront display windows or transoms and below the second-story windowsills.**
- **Space projecting signs along storefronts so that they do not obstruct each other in the pedestrian's line of vision.**
- **Use an area of 6 square feet and lettering 4″ to 10″ high.**

Types

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 discourage

Projecting signs should be spaced far enough apart so as to not obscure each other.

Size and Placement

Projecting signs should be small and eye-catching; but should not block visibility of neighboring signs. Signs should not project more than six feet from the facade of the building, or half the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less. The underside of a projecting sign over the sidewalk should be at least eight feet above grade.

Other Considerations

The information on a projecting sign need not duplicate the information on the wall sign; it should augment the primary sign by 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.

Oversize, internally-lit box signs are inappropriate on High Street.

The use of multiple simple logos can be more effective than a single, larger sign.

Window Signs

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

- **Use window signs to provide information that is more detailed and to complement the window display. Signs painted on storefront glass are a traditional and effective way to present this information.**
- **Use small stenciled letters, addresses or logos for window signs; do not paint large areas of glass.**
- **Use colors and lighting appropriate to the building and neighborhood.**
- **Do not use internally-illuminated signs. Illuminate painted signs with exterior lighting.**
- **Use neon signs for business names and accent borders. Mount neon signs on a clear backing, such as glass or plexiglass. Neon tubes may also be used on larger signs to accent a letter or logo, and to outline significant building features.**
- **Use lettering 1/2″ to 8″ high.**

Types

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. Signs taped to the glass or painting a temporary sign on the glass in neon colors is not desirable. Temporary signs should be hung a foot or more behind the glass, fixed to a rigid backing board and highlighted with display spotlights. 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

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. 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.

Awning/Canopy Signs

Signs on awnings or canopies can complement or become the primary 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.

Awning signs can be as visible and attractive as wall or projecting signs.

- **Restrict the size of the sign to 25% of the area of the awning or canopy. In many cases the sign should be limited to the skirt panel.**
- **Use lettering 6″ to 8″ high.**
- **Use the maximum allowable area for signage to create more, smaller signs on each awning, canopy or bay width.**

Banners

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.

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

Materials

Wood

Wood can be used for backing or lettering and is highly 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 50 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 sand-blasted and lit from the bottom edge for dramatic effects. The area of glass used for the sign 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. Large areas of plastic can look flimsy and cheap. If used as a backing, it should be made rigid or placed in a frame. Avoid vacuum-formed plastic faces in metal frames.

Metal can give signs a striking texture.

Color

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 vice versa. Lack of this basic uniformity destroys the rhythm of a building's facade.

Lighting

Well-lit signs are particularly important for stores that stay open at night. Even after hours, lighted signs, displays, and facades contribute to the safety, enjoyment and visual interest of the streetscape. Illuminated signs attract attention after-hours and lend warmth to a commercial district. Exterior lights can be controlled by timers or photoelectric cells.

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 (i.e., all warm white, all cool white, and so on).

- **Attached to the building and spaced at intervals, use incandescent spot or flood lights to illuminate the full area of a sign.**
- **Use fluorescent lights, properly shielded with hoods, to light signs more uniformly than incandescent spots.**
- **Provide a valence to conceal fluorescent light fixtures used on historic building facades.**
- **Use microfluorescent tubes or neon to backlight solid letters or signs.**

Incandescent Light

Spots or floodlights attached to the building facade 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 simple housings to elaborate, fluted, gooseneck fixtures.

Micro neon tubes can form the entire sign (left) or outline letters on a sign (Long's Bookstore, right) and enliven the street at night.

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.

Backlit Signs/Letters and Neon Light

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 establishments name. Neon signs and accent lighting are appropriate to the University/High Street corridor, particularly to enliven and advertise evening entertainment uses that give it its unique identity.

Up/Down-Lighting

Although 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 toward the sign and storefront.