Summary of Analysis

The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for Unapproved Alterations was denied by the Landmarks Commission (LC) in January 2022. The applicant appealed the decision to the City Council. The Land Use Hearing Officer (LUHO) reviewed the application and determined that the record lacked substantial evidence to support the conclusions reached by the Landmarks Commission. With that, the LUHO has remanded the case to the LC to either reconsider its decision or to better support its decision with substantial objective evidence.

Of the original Staff report presented at the January 2022 Landmarks Commission, the applicant appealed Conditions #2 related to the Plaza Don Luis murals and Condition #6 where the first-floor guardrails of the Old Town Basket Shop were to be removed.

The request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations has been reviewed against the relevant guidelines for the Old Town Historic Overlay Zone and the criteria for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness in the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO).

Subject to conditions, Staff considers that the request will comply with the applicable guidelines for Old Town HPO-5 and the criteria for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness. This staff report only provides new information and should be read in conjunction with the original.

I. New Information

The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for Unapproved Alterations performed at the Old Town Basket Shop and Plaza Don Luis, located at 301 Romero Street NW, in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone was reviewed by the Landmarks Commission in January 2022. At that time, the LC voted to approve the project with Conditions. For that hearing, the applicant stated that they agreed with most of the Conditions of Approval, except for Condition #2 related to two murals at Plaza Don Luis and Condition #6, requiring the first-floor guardrails of the Old Town Basket Shop to be removed.

The applicant has provided twelve images of similar guardrails found in Old Town which include the Sister Blandina Convent/Gift Shop, San Felipe Del Neri Church, La Hacienda Restaurant, and the La Placita Gallery and Restaurant. The applicant also provided copies of newspaper advertisements dating back to February 5, 1884 that list “fresco” work and establishes a precedent in the area. Although the advertisements list fresco work, the majority of the work was interior work. Furthermore, one of the advertisements lists that two large wall paintings were commissioned on each side of the front entrance of the Learnard and Linedmann music store located on Gold Avenue and Second Street, a property not within the boundaries of Old Town. Finally, an article from January 3, 1908 describes mural decorations that were performed for the County Jail but mostly were interior murals (see attachments).

Remand

The applicant appealed the LC decision to City Council. After a review of the case transcript and relevant IDO statutes, the LUHO made the following determinations:

- The record supporting the LC’s decision regarding the patio fencing guardrails and the murals lack meaningful analysis and substantial evidence to support the conclusions reached by the LC. Said differently, the record is insufficient and must be remanded to the LC to either reconsider its decision or to better support its decision with substantial objective evidence under the applicable provisions of the IDO and the Design Guidelines so that the City Council can appropriately judge the decision if the decision is appealed again.
- The LUHO noted that the remand is not only for the LC. In the remand hearing, Appellant must be mindful that it is the applicant that has the initial burden of proof. Although the burden shift, Appellant must be held accountable to this burden. Appellant cannot sit on his hands; he must also do a better job to support the application with objective evidence under the criteria of the IDO and the Design Guidelines.

History

The subject site, located at 301 Romero Street NW, consists of several buildings that include the Old Town Basket Shop (Charlie Mann Store and now known as the Noisy Water Wine Tasting Room), a contributing brick building dating back to 1898, a small adobe stable from 1908 converted to a shop, two adobe houses, also from 1908, accessed from Rio Grande housing shops, and the newer portion of Plaza Don Luis, a commercial, two-story, non-contributing building built in 1993.
The Charlie Mann Store, 301 Romero Street NW – Railroad era brick. Franz Huning’s mercantile establishment is supposed to have been on this site, though not in this house, before 1880. The present brick building was built between 1893 and 1898, when it appears on the Sanborn Maps as a Post Office and General Store. For years, the building housed the Charlie Mann grocery store, an important Old Town institution.

The Charlie Mann Store is unique to Old Town as it typifies styles more often found along the railroad or in the Huning Highlands. Large segmental arched windows and detailed brick work on the building’s cornice give it 1890’s style.

Dating back to c.1893, the Old Town Basket Shop was originally occupied by Florencio Zamora, who operated a butcher shop in the building until the 1930’s. From 1930 to 1973 the shop operated as a grocery store and Post Office.

The other three historic buildings on the site were first seen on the 1908 Sanborn along with a few other smaller adobe storage buildings. They remained the only buildings on the site until 1993 when Plaza Don Luis was constructed, successfully incorporating the three adobe structures on the site with matching stucco and red metal roofs.

In April 2021, LC staff was called concerning brick repairs and window trim repairs for the brick building, i.e. Old Town Basket Shop, located at 301 Romero. They were informed that [per Subsection 14-16-6-5(B)(1)(b) of the IDO] a certificate of appropriateness would be required as it falls under 1. Ordinary maintenance and repair where the purpose of the work is to correct deterioration to the structure and restore it to its condition prior to deterioration.

Staff was also asked about removing the central staircase, which was not in the original approved design, and the wooden balustrade along the upstairs balconies. They asked if an iron balustrade, similar to that at the church, would be permitted and were informed that it probably could be with a certificate of appropriateness minor. A Certificate of Appropriateness application was sent April 21, 2021.

No further correspondence was exchanged until staff, on a visit to Old Town, saw the railings placed in front of the Basket Shop and the upstairs balustrades. Again, a letter was sent with the application and a request that the owner call the planning office. On October 8, and again on November 2, letters were again sent with the application forms attached (see attachments).

On November 9, 2021, LC staff finally received the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness major which included the murals, additional signage and the railings. On January 12, 2022, the Landmarks Commission heard the request and called for the removal of the murals and the rails in front of the Basket Shop.

The applicant appealed the Landmarks Commission ruling and it was heard by the LUHO on March 17, 2022. The LUHO remanded the application back to the Landmarks Commission for additional justification of the decision.
III. APPLICABLE PLANS, ORDINANCES, DESIGN GUIDELINES & POLICIES

ANALYSIS

Policies are written in regular text and staff analysis and comment in bold italic print.

Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO)

In May 2018, The Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) replaced the City’s Zoning Code and the property was zoned MX-T.

In 2018, the Old Town Historic Zone became the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone and it was expanded to include a primarily residential area to the south-east. The block was developed in the early 20th century and it is bounded by Old Town Road and Lomas Blvd to the north and south, and San Pasquale Ave. and 19th Street to the west and east. The zoning district classification was changed from H-1 to MX-T. Signage, architectural style and permissive uses are controlled through the MX-T Zoning.

Any construction, alteration or demolition, which would affect the exterior appearance of any structure within the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone shall not be undertaken until the Landmarks Commission has approved a Certificate of Appropriateness.


The Integrated Development Ordinance – Part 14-16-6-6(D) establishes procedures and review criteria for a Certificate of Appropriateness – Major in Historic Protection Overlay Zones (HPO) and for City Landmarks.

The decision criteria for a Certificate of Appropriateness in IDO Subsection 14-16-6-6(D)(3) are based on the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties.

6-6(D)(3) Review and Decision Criteria

An application for a Historic Certificate of Appropriateness – Major shall be approved if it complies with all of the following criteria:

6-6(D)(3)(a) The change is consistent with Section 14-16-3-5 (Historic Protection Overlay Zones), the ordinance designating the specific HPO zone where the property is located, and any specific development guidelines for the landmark or the specific HPO zone where the property is located.

As discussed in the analysis below, the aspects of the proposed alterations are not consistent with the development guidelines for the historic protection overlay zone. The addition of the guardrail fencing to the Old Town Basket Shop (Noisy Water Winery) and the murals at Plaza Don Luis are not consistent with the development guidelines or the designation ordinance as the changes proposed do not preserve the significant architectural features of these buildings, specifically the Old Town Basket Shop which is a Contributing building.
However, subject to conditions, Staff considers that the request will comply with the applicable guidelines for Old Town HPO-5 and the criteria for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

6-6(D)(3)(b) The architectural character, historical value, or archaeological value of the structure or site itself or of any HPO zone in which it is located will not be significantly impaired or diminished.

**Old Town Basket Shop**

The Old Town Basket Shop was built between 1893 and 1898 in the Italianate style and listed in 1979 on the State Register of Cultural Properties as part of the Old Albuquerque Historic District. The Old Town Basket Shop reflects the influence of new materials and ideas that arrived with the railroad era. The building is constructed out of low-fired clay bricks known as adobe fired (adobe quemado). The storefront features large, six-paned glass windows that are beneath segmental arches and a recessed entrance with a single door (see attachments). Most likely, the entrance was built recessed, not only to protect customers from inclement weather, but to increase the amount of space in which to display merchandise. Nineteenth century storefronts had thin structural members of cast iron/wood that usually framed the storefront which is visibly present in the Old Town Basket Shop.

The addition of the wrought iron guardrails impedes visibility of the lower portion of the Old Town Basket Shop/Noisy Water Winery storefront and significantly diminishes the architectural character and historical value of this contributing building within the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone. The proposal will cause harm to the original, distinguishing qualities of the contributing building as are seen from the street. The front entrance was and is the building presentation to the street. Any change to such a fundamental element will detract from the original character of the building. The property’s historic function must be evident even if there is a change in use and blocking of the primary elevation should have been avoided.
The U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service Preservation Brief #14, “New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns” is appended to this report. The National Park Service brief states that generally speaking, preservation of historic buildings inherently implies minimal change to primary or “public” elevations. Furthermore, the brief further states that exterior features that distinguish a historic building and which can be seen from a public right of way, such as a street or sidewalk, are most likely to be the most significant and should be preserved. There is no question that the guardrail fencing impedes visibility of the storefront and has diminished its character. The brief further states that significant materials and features should be preserved, not damaged or hidden, and that the first place to consider placing a new addition is in a location where the least amount of historic material and character defining features would be lost.

The City of Albuquerque lowered the grade of Romero Street NW when it was implementing the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. In order to achieve compliance with the guidelines, the grades of the road/sidewalk were lowered thereby necessitating for two extra steps to be added to the Old Town Basket Shop in order to access the building (see above photographs). The implementation of the ADA guidelines caused a 23” elevation change at the entrance of the building which could cause for someone to fall over the edge. The previous owner did not alter the building, but, rather placed colorful planters demarcating the area that prevented someone falling due the elevation change. Although the applicant should have applied for a Certificate of Appropriateness whereby staff could have guided the applicant prior to the installation of the guardrails, staff believes that there was no ill intent on the applicant’s behalf. It is important to note that the initial justification letter provided by the applicant dated November 9, 2021, never listed safety as an issue in installing the guardrails. The letter states that, “guard rail fencing was added to the first-floor east exterior of the Old Post Office building to create a new patio area for controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required by the State of New Mexico. This new patio does not impede the public sidewalk accessibility” (see attachments).
In summary, due to the ADA changes performed by the City of Albuquerque that resulted in a significant elevation change between the sidewalk and the building (see below), Staff believes that although the historic front of the building has been altered, the safety of those visiting Old Town, specifically patrons of the Noisy Water Winery is more important. Staff recommends that in order to achieve safety while allowing for the applicant to use the patio area and for the building to be visible from the street, the gate at the south entrance should remain closed so that more patio tables/chairs may be placed in that location. Staff is further recommending that the entrance to the outdoor patio area along Romero Street have the entrance gates moved to where the stairs begin/terminate and that handrails be added in order to allow for the alteration to be ADA compliant. The recommended conditions will allow for the applicant to keep the guardrails while still allowing for the distinguishing features of the Basket Shop to be visible from the street.

Plaza Don Luis

Plaza Don Luis, a non-contributory building had never had any murals until the applicant commissioned local artists during the 2021 renovations of the plaza. The Old Town Basket Shop was built between 1893 and 1898. Murals were not a design option possible and commonly chosen in Albuquerque at that time. Plaza Don Luis was built in 1993. The muralism movement began at the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920, when the new government of President Alvaro Obregon fostered a cultural renaissance by commission several public murals. American artists and journalists went to Mexico to see the resulting works and at the end of President Obregon’s presidency in 1924, the muralists traveled to American in search of opportunity.
However, the applicant provided documentation where there are murals/hand painted signage throughout Old Town HPO-5 (see attachments). The applicant also provided copies of newspaper advertisements dating back to February 5, 1884 that list “fresco” work. Although the advertisements list fresco work, the majority of the work was interior work. There has been a lack of enforcement in Old Town due to a shortage of staff in the City of Albuquerque Code Enforcement Division which has resulted in murals and code violations throughout Old Town. Furthermore, the 1998 Design Guidelines that were used to review this request are somewhat ambiguous but although not related to this review, there are new Design Guidelines in place that will prohibit murals in Old Town in the future. The applicant also provided results of a petition that was circulated online where the murals have received support. Staff notes that the local feedback received in support of the murals are from residents who live outside of Old Town as evidenced in the list of petition signatures provide by the applicant (see attachments). Comments received from Old Town residents oppose the murals.

In summary, taking into consideration the amount of murals/signage that can be found throughout Old Town HPO-5, the public support received for the murals, and the somewhat ambiguous 1998 Design Guidelines, Staff is reversing its’ original position where it required the applicant to remove the murals from Plaza Don Luis.

6-6(D)(3)(c) The change qualifies as a "certified rehabilitation" pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976, if applicable.

Not applicable.

6-6(D)(3)(d) The structure or site's distinguished original qualities or character will not be altered. For the purposes of Section 14-16-3-5 (Historic Protection Overlay Zones) and this Subsection 14-16-6-6(D). “original” shall mean as it was at the time of initial construction or as it has developed over the course of the history of the structure.

Old Town Basket Shop

The Old Town Basket Shop is a building of the railroad brick era that was built between 1893 and 1998. The storefront windows, door, and brick of the Old Town Basket Shop are significant architectural features. The character of the Old Town Basket Shop has been altered by the changes to the setting (front entrance) created by addition of the guardrail fencing.

Plaza Don Luis

Plaza Don Luis is a non-contributing building in the Old Town HPO-5. However, Staff finds that this is not applicable as staff is reversing its’ original position where it required the applicant to remove the murals from Plaza Don Luis.
6-6(D)(3)(e) Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, to the maximum extent practicable. If replacement is necessary, the new material shall match the original as closely as possible in like material and design.

The applicant added the guardrail fencing to the Old Town Basket Shop in order to facilitate outdoor alcohol sales, not to repair or replace deteriorated architectural features.

The addition of the two murals at Plaza Don Luis although thoughtfully selected, were not commissioned to repair or replace deteriorated architectural features.

6-6(D)(3)(f) Additions to existing structures and new construction may be of contemporary design if such design is compatible with its landmark status (if any) or the HPO zone in which it is to be located.

An addition to an existing structure means any walled and roofed expansion to the perimeter of a building in which the addition is connected by a common load bearing wall other than a fire wall. Any walled and roofed addition which is connected by a fire wall or is separated by an independent perimeter load-bearing wall is considered new construction. The work performed at the Old Town Basket Shop and Plaza Don Luis are considered alterations, not additions.

6-6(D)(3)(g) If the application is for a Historic Certificate of Appropriateness – Major for demolition of a landmark or a contributing structure in an HPO zone, demolition shall only be allowed if it is determined that the property is incapable of producing a reasonable economic return as presently controlled and that no means of preserving the structure has been found. In making a determination regarding reasonable economic return, the LC or City Council may consider the estimated market value of the building, land, and any proposed replacement structures; financial details of the property, including but not limited to income and expense statements, current mortgage balances, and appraisals; the length of time that the property has been on the market for sale or lease; potential return based on projected future market conditions; the building’s structural condition; and other items determined to be relevant to the application.

Not applicable. The application is not for a Historic Certificate of Appropriateness – Major for demolition of a landmark or a contributing structure.

Development Guidelines for the Old Town Historic Zone

Design Guidelines (as amended through April 9, 1998) have been adopted by the Landmarks Commission for building projects in the Old Town History Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5). The guidelines include direction on such issues as building height, massing, proportion and scale, use of materials in new and existing buildings, relationship between buildings, landscaping, roadways, sidewalks, and the overall neighborhood character. Design Standards and Guidelines (amended 2018) also apply to new and replacement signage.

1. Every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for buildings which will require minimum alteration to the building and its environment.
Old Town Basket Shop

The applicant has made a reasonable effort to provide a compatible use for the Old Town Basket Shop and that use is not in question, it is the addition of the guardrails that is in question. The railing around an outdoor alcohol sales area is a requirement from the State based on their liquor license. The license can still be used for alcohol sales inside the building.

The storefront is the most important architectural feature of many historic commercial buildings as it plays a crucial role in a store’s advertising and merchandising strategy to draw customers and increase business. As a result, the storefront has become the feature most commonly altered in many historic buildings. In the process, these alterations may have completely changed or destroyed a building’s distinguishing architectural features that make up its historic character. The guardrail fencing added to the Old Town Basket Shop is no exception.

In the appeal packet, the applicant stated that the rails serve as a safety purpose as well as creating an outdoor environment that will facilitate outdoor alcohol sales. The picture below is from when the Old Town Basket Shop did not have the guardrails and reveals that the steps were delineated by a change in color and colorful planters used to demarcate the area.

The U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service Preservation Brief #11, “Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts” is appended to this report. The National Park Service brief advises when to consider rehabilitation of historic storefronts:

1) Become familiar with the with the style of your building and the role of the storefront in the overall design.
2) Preserve the storefront’s character even though there is a new use on the interior.
3) Avoid use of materials that were unavailable when the storefront was constructed.
4) Choose paint colors based on the building’s historical appearance. In general, do not coat surfaces that have never been painted. For 19th century store fronts,
contrasting colors may be appropriate, but avoid too many different colors on a single façade.

5) Frame: Maintain the historic planar relationship of the storefront to the façade of the building and the streetscape.

The Old Town Basket Shop is a building of the railroad brick era that was built between 1893 and 1998. The storefront windows, door, and brick of the Old Town Basket Shop are significant architectural features. Brick is one of the most common materials used in masonry construction and one of the more lasting building materials that has been used throughout the history of American building construction. However, while bricks are one of the most durable historic building materials, they are very susceptible to damage by exposure and improper maintenance or repair.

In summary, the proposed guardrail fencing of the Old Town Basket Shop, a contributing building is of a material that was not in use at the time of construction, and, historically the building did not have guardrails.

However, as mentioned in the analysis for 6-6(D)(3)(b) Review and Decision Criteria, due to the ADA changes performed by the City of Albuquerque that resulted in a significant elevation change between the sidewalk and the building, Staff believes that although the historic front of the building has been altered, the safety of those visiting Old Town, specifically patrons of the Noisy Water Winery is more important. Staff is recommending conditions that will allow for the applicant to keep the guardrails while still allowing for the distinguishing features of the Basket Shop to be visible from the street.

Plaza Don Luis Murals

The murals added to Plaza Don Luis should have been reviewed by the Landmarks Commission in order to obtain a certificate of appropriateness prior to installation. Murals should not become a reliant historic theme in the Old Town historic protection overlay zone as murals were not found in the area during the period of significance of 1882-1915. Although Plaza Don Luis is a non-contributing building, it is associated and referenced as one of the most important buildings in the area and should be held to the same standards as contributing buildings due to its’ location. The installation of murals changes the historic feel of the city and all of the architecture within the district. Of special concern is who will be responsible for the maintenance of the mural? Will the applicant be responsible for the keeping of the painted mural? Who will be responsible for cleaning and clear potential graffiti? The applicant should be mindful that the city could apply the same policies for neglect of public art and maintenance as it does for landscaping and buildings. However, Staff agrees that the murals have received overwhelming support from residents of Albuquerque and from an online petition that was circulated online. Staff recommends a reversal of the decision regarding the murals, largely because the abundant number of previously installed small painted designs and murals; however, Conditions related to maintenance and upkeep of the murals are recommended.
2. Rehabilitation work should not destroy the distinguishing qualities or character of the property and its environment. The removal or alteration of any historic material or architectural features should be held to the minimum, consistent with the proposed use.

Old Town Basket Shop

The work performed is not rehabilitation work but, rather, is considered an alteration to a contributing building in order to facilitate outdoor alcohol sales. Nevertheless, the work performed diminishes the qualities and character of the property and its environment by not allowing the historic façade of the Old Town Basket Shop to be visible from the street. The U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service Presentation Brief #17, “Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character” is appended to this report. The National Park Service brief advises that the major contributors to a building’s overall character are embodied in the general aspects of the setting; the shape of the building; the openings for windows and entrances, and the various exterior materials that contribute to the building's character.

Plaza Don Luis

Not applicable. The work performed is not rehabilitation work. As per the applicant, “the artists and murals of Plaza Don Luis were thoughtfully selected to represent and celebrate New Mexico’s rich culture and heritage. They were designed by renowned New Mexican artists Reyes Padilla and Jodie Herrera, whose respective family histories date back hundreds of years to the area on their Spanish side, with indigenous roots that date beyond New Mexico and Mexico as territories. Each mural was thoughtfully commissioned with reference to Old Town, New Mexico, and its culture.

3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of the original features, substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs of the availability of different architectural features from other buildings.

Old Town Basket Shop

Not applicable. No deteriorated architectural features were present at the Old Town Basket Shop. The installation of the guardrail fencing was to facilitate outdoor alcohol sales.

Plaza Don Luis

Not applicable. There were no deteriorated architectural features that necessitated the installation of the murals.
4. Many changes to buildings and environments which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the building and the neighborhood. These changes may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected.

**Old Town Basket Shop**

*Not applicable.*

**Plaza Don Luis**

*Not applicable.*

5. The design and general appearance of any development or alteration in the Old Town Historic District should be limited to the range of design options possible and commonly chosen in Albuquerque prior to the opening of the Santa Fe Railroad in April 1880. The design of any alteration to currently existing structures erected between 1880 and 1912 should be limited to the range of design options possible and commonly chosen at the time of the building’s construction.

**Old Town Basket Shop**

*Because the Old Town Basket Shop did not have railings historically, adding rails to the exterior of the building alters the building. Anything added to the building that was not present when the contributing building was constructed changes the historic character of the building itself. The building has been changed by adding the railing to enclose the alcohol sales area. The Old Town Basket Shop was built between 1893 and 1898, when it first appears on the Sanborn Maps as a Post Office and General Store. During that time period, railings were not a design option in Old Town.*

**Plaza Don Luis**

*Plaza Don Luis, a non-contributory building has never had any murals and the murals near Plaza Don Luis/Old Town Basket Shop have been added without a Certificate of Appropriateness. The Old Town Basket Shop was built between 1893 and 1898 and Plaza Don Luis was built in 1993. Murals were not a design option possible and commonly chosen in Albuquerque at that time. The muralism movement began at the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920, when the new government of President Alvaro Obregon fostered a cultural renaissance by commission several public murals. American artists and journalists went to Mexico to see the resulting works and at the end of President Obregon’s presidency in 1924, the muralists traveled to American in search of opportunity.*

*Murals are not to be confused with painted wall signs. The [very] occasional painted wall sign is not the same as a wall mural. Staff is reversing its’ original position where it required the applicant to remove the murals from Plaza Don Luis. The new Guideline*
clearly banning murals moving forward, is not applicable to the murals at Plaza Don Luis.

6. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to buildings should be done in such a manner that if they were removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original building would be unimpaired.

**Old Town Basket Shop**

The installation of the guardrail fencing at the Old Town Basket Shop could be removed in the future and, hopefully, the essential form and integrity of the original building would be unimpaired. Of concern is, that in many cases, it is impossible to remove the railings together without serious damaging the railings or without practically demolishing a whole pier or part of a wall.

**Plaza Don Luis**

Not Applicable

7. Every effort should be made to safeguard the public welfare along vehicular and pedestrian traffic ways. Placement of walls, building projections, fences, planters, shrubs, signs, ramps, steps, etc. should be planned and positioned so that they do not present a potential hazard. Provisions for the handicapped should be planned so that the essential character of the property is not damaged.

As per the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) Section B101- Qualified Historic Buildings and Facilities, does not require the addition of rails at the stairs for historic buildings if no structural changes are made. Compliance with codes other than the HPO zone regulations and associated historic standards is outside the purview of the Landmarks Commission.

However, the City of Albuquerque lowered the grade of Romero Street NW when it was implementing the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. In order to achieve compliance with the guidelines, the grades of the road/sidewalk were lowered thereby necessitating for two extra steps to be added to the Old Town Basket Shop in order to access the building. The implementation of the ADA guidelines caused a 23” elevation change at the entrance of the building and this could possibly cause for someone to fall over the edge. The previous owner did not alter the building, but, rather placed colorful planters demarcating the area that prevented someone falling due the elevation change. Although the applicant should have applied for a Certificate of Appropriateness whereby staff could have guided the applicant prior to the installation of the guardrails, staff believes that there was no ill intent on the applicant’s behalf as the applicant was only trying to avoid someone tripping over the area that the guardrails now demarcate. It is important to note that the initial justification letter provided by the applicant and dated November 9, 2021, never listed safety as an issue in installing the guardrails. The letter states that, “guard rail fencing was added to the first-floor east exterior of the Old Post Office building to create a new patio area for controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required
As noted in the Review and Decision Criteria analysis above, due to the ADA changes performed by the City of Albuquerque that resulted in a significant elevation change between the sidewalk and the building, staff believes that although the historic front of the building has been altered, the safety of those visiting Old Town, specifically the Noisy Water Winery is more important. Staff is recommending Conditions, namely a widening of the opening in the railing for access to the building and the installation of handrails at each edge of the stairs, that will allow for the applicant to keep the guardrails while allowing for the distinguishing features of the Basket Shop to be visible from the street.

8. Any security devices that prevent major features of doors and windows such as ornament, panels, glass panes, and mullions from being seen are prohibited.

   Not applicable.

9. Property owners who are considering installing security devices are urged to contact LUCC staff for advice and a free handout on how to increase security without detracting from the historic character of the building.

   Not applicable.

Conclusions

As discussed in the analysis above, subject to conditions, the request will comply with the applicable guidelines for Old Town HPO-5 and the criteria for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness. There are extenuating circumstances that call for the alterations to remain in place. Staff concludes that the addition of the guardrails at the Old Town Basket Shop is eligible for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Staff considers that the murals at Plaza Don Luis are eligible for a Certificate of Appropriateness.
FINDINGS for APPROVAL of a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness – Major - Case SI-2021-01904/Project #PR-2021-006235 – May 11, 2022

1. The application is a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations at 301 Romero Street NW, described as Lot 186, Block 000, in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5), zoned MX-T.

2. The subject property is approximately 0.71 acres and contains the historic Charlie Mann Store/Old Town Basket Shop, a contributing building and Plaza Don Luis, a non-contributing building.

3. The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness is for changes made to Old Town Basket Shop, a contributing building in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5) without prior approval. The change includes:
   • Guardrail fencing was added to the first-floor area east of the Old Post Office building to create a new patio area for controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required by the State of New Mexico.

4. The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness is for changes made to Plaza Don Luis, a non-contributing building in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5) without prior approval. The changes include:
   • A new mural was added that is visible from Rio Grande Boulevard. A second mural was added that is visible from within Plaza Don Luis.

5. The IDO Section 14-16-6-6(D)(1) requires that all development and modification of structures in any HPO zone and all development or modification of a city landmark site first receive a Certificate of Appropriateness.

6. The IDO Section 14-16-6-6(D)(3)(a) states that a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be approved if “The change is consistent with Section 14-16-3-5 (Historic Protection Overlay Zones), the ordinance designating the specific HPO zone where the property is located, and any specific development guidelines for the landmark or the specific HPO zone where the property is located.”

7. Subject to the Conditions of Approval, the addition of the guardrails will be consistent with the designation ordinance. Subject to Condition of Approval #2, the proposed work will comply with the relevant development guidelines for the historic zone as described in the staff report.

8. Subject to the Conditions of Approval, the addition of the murals at Plaza Don Luis, a non-contributing building, will not be inconsistent with the designation ordinance. Subject to Condition of Approval #3, the proposed work will comply with the relevant development guidelines for the historic zone as described in the Staff report.

9. The architectural character and historical value of Old Town HPO-5 will not be significantly impaired or diminished, once the proposed corrections are made to the buildings.
RECOMMENDATION

Case SI-2021-01904/Project #2021-006235 – May 11, 2022

APPROVAL of a Certificate of Appropriateness – Major for Alterations for the property described as Lot 186, Block 000, in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5), located at 301 Romero Street NW and zoned, MX-T based on the above nine (9) Findings and subject to the following Conditions.

Recommended Conditions of Approval for Case #SI-2021-01904/Project #PR-2021-006235

1. Applicant is responsible to acquire, and approval is contingent upon, all applicable permits and related approvals.
2. Staff recommends that the gate at the south entrance should remain closed so that more patio tables/chairs may be placed in that location. The entrance to the outdoor patio area along Romero Street should have the entrance gates moved where the stairs begin/terminate and that handrails be added in order for the guardrails to be ADA compliant. The relocation of the entrance guardrails will allow for the distinguishing features of the Old Town Basket Shop to be visible from the street.
3. The applicant should inform the Landmarks Commission/City of Albuquerque as to who will be responsible in case of vandalism or deterioration of the murals.

Silvia Bolivar

Silvia Bolivar, PLA, ASLA
Historic Preservation Planner
Urban Design and Development Division
Figures 1 & 2: Plaza Don Luis prior to alterations – picture is from Albuquerque: A Photographic Portrait
Figures 3: Increased visibility of second floor shops

Figures 4: Plaza Don Luis mural

Figure 5: Plaza Don Luis – picture is from Albuquerque: A Photographic Portrait
Figure 6: Old Town Basket Shop

Figure 7: Plaza Don Luis mural by Jodie Herrera
Summary of Analysis

The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness is for alterations made to the property without making application for Historic Preservation Review. At this time, the applicant is also requesting to add hand-painted signage throughout Plaza Don Luis.

The subject site, located at 301 Romero Street NW, consists of several buildings including the Old Town Basket Shop, a building of the railroad brick era and Plaza Don Luis, a commercial two-story, non-contributing building built in 1993.

The request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations has been reviewed against the Old Town Historic Protection Development Guidelines and the criteria for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness in the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO).

Staff considers that the request partially complies with the applicable guidelines for Old Town HPO-5 and the criteria for approval of Certificate of Appropriateness.

PRIMARY REFERENCES: Integrated Development Ordinance; Design Guidelines for Old Town HPO-5.
SUMMARY OF REQUEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request</th>
<th>Certificate of Appropriateness of Unapproved Alterations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historic Location</td>
<td>Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I AREA HISTORY AND CHARACTER

Surrounding architectural styles, historic character and recent (re)development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Stories</th>
<th>Roof Configuration, Architectural Style and Approximate Age of Construction</th>
<th>Historic Classification &amp; Land Use</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>General Area</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>New Mexico Vernacular, Spanish-Pueblo revival and contemporary interpretations; Territorial Revival, Modern Brick Commercial; 1796 – 1990’s</td>
<td>Contributing; Neutral; residential &amp; commercial</td>
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<td>Site to the North</td>
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<td>Stucco Adobe, New Mexico Vernacular, gabled roof, raised entry</td>
<td>Contributing; commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site to the South</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hipped red tile, Box Prairie Style, 1915</td>
<td>Contributing; commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sites to the East</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adobe walls, wood vigas, carved corbels/Pueblo Revival Style with Gothic Revival style elements, 1793</td>
<td>Contributing; Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site to the West</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Mexico Vernacular Revival</td>
<td>Non-contributing; Commercial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II INTRODUCTION

Proposal

The request is for a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations made to the property without making application for Historic Preservation Review.

The applicant proceeded with the following activities:
1. Second floor guardrails/handrails were added to Plaza Don Luis. The guardrails and handrails were changed from wood to wrought iron.
2. A set of stairs were removed that were not part of the original Plaza Don Luis. The stairs in question were installed by the previous owner and removed by the applicant in order to bring the building back to its’ original design.
3. A new mural was added to Plaza Don Luis that is visible from Rio Grande Boulevard. A second mural was added that is visible from within Plaza Don Luis.
4. Guardrail fencing was added to the first-floor area of the Old Town Basket Shop to create a new patio area that will facilitate controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required by the State of New Mexico.

5. The building was re-stuccoed.

At this time, the applicant is requesting approval to add new, hand-painted signage throughout Plaza Don Luis that would include:

- Self-standing Orientation and Tenant Directory;
- Wall affixed Tenant Directory and Happenings Bulletin;
- “Heart of Old Town” plaque on the second level breezeway;
- “Welcome” signs on pillars facing Romero Street;
- “More to See” Wayfinding attached to handrails or pillars;
- Amenities signage (restroom, elevators, etc);
- Possible Pole banners for Rio Grande Boulevard

The site is located in an Area of Consistency as designated by the ABC Comprehensive Plan and is part of the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5). Within the Old Town HPO-5, all changes to the exterior of contributing buildings must first be reviewed by planning staff for appropriateness within the historic district. That review did not take place and work was performed illegally.

The staff report will evaluate the changes made for appropriateness.

**Context**

The Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone encompasses an area roughly between Mountain Road and Central Avenue on the north and south and Rio Grande Boulevard and 19th Street on the west and east. The historic zone was created with the adoption of the City’s first zoning Code in 1959 to preserve and promote the educational, cultural and general welfare of the public through the preservation of protection of the traditional architectural character of historic Old Albuquerque.

The Spanish Colonial, Territorial or Western Victorian architectural styles of buildings and structures erected prior to 1912 in the area now constituted as the State of New Mexico, comprise the traditional architectural character of the Old Town Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (MX-T).

Inside this historic zone is the state registered “Old Albuquerque Historic District”. The Old Albuquerque Historic District is a sub-set of the Old Town Historic Preservation Overlay Zone. The historic district is the core of the Hispanic Village of Albuquerque, founded in 1706, and the main village in the area until the arrival of the railroad in 1880. The church and plaza are at the center of the district, as in most Hispanic villages of New Mexico.

Of the buildings in the district, only San Felipe de Neri church can be shown to date to the Spanish Colonial period. A few other buildings may be in whole or in part from the early nineteenth century, but the majority of the buildings in Old Albuquerque Historic District were built between 1870 and 1900.

Almost every building has seen some degree of remodeling, resulting from the area’s growth as a tourist-oriented commercial center after 1940. Old Albuquerque became “Old Town”, a district of
shops, boutiques, galleries and restaurants. Many buildings acquired Pueblo Revival portals, protruding false vigas and other stylistic elements thought to be conducive to a tourist atmosphere.

The Old Town Historic Zone was designated in 1959 with the adoption of the first Zoning Code for the City of Albuquerque. Old Town was recognized even then as a very special location within Albuquerque, and the H-1 Zone was designated specifically to address the development within Old Town.

History

The subject site, located at 301 Romero Street NW, consists of several buildings that include the Old Town Basket Shop (Charlie Mann Store), a contributing building of the railroad brick era and Plaza Don Luis, a commercial, two-story, non-contributing building built in 1993.

The Charlie Mann Store, 301 Romero Street NW – Railroad era brick. Franz Huning’s mercantile establishment is supposed to have been on this site, though not in this house, before 1880. The present brick building was built between 1893 and 1898, when it appears on the Sanborn Maps as a Post Office and General Store. For years, the building housed the Charlie Mann grocery store, an important Old Town institution.

The Charlie Mann Store is unique to Old Town as it typifies styles more often found along the railroad or in the Huning Highlands. Large segmental arched windows and elaborate brick work on the building’s cornice give it 1890’s style.

Dating back to 1893, the Old Town Basket Shop was originally occupied by Florencio Zamora, who operated a butcher shop in the building until the 1930’s. From 1930 to 1973 the shop operated as a grocery store and Post Office.

III. APPLICABLE PLANS, ORDINANCES, DESIGN GUIDELINES & POLICIES

ANALYSIS

Policies are written in regular text and staff analysis and comment in bold italic print.

Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO)

In May 2018, The Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) replaced the City’s Zoning Code and the property was zoned MX-T.

In 2018, the Old Town Historic Zone became the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone and it was expanded to include a primarily residential area to the south-east. The block was developed in the early 20th century and it is bounded by Old Town Road and Lomas Blvd to the north and south, and San Pasquale Ave. and 19th Street to the west and east. The zoning district classification was changed from H-1 to MX-T. Signage, architectural style and permissive uses are controlled through the MX-T Zoning.
Any construction, alteration or demolition, which would affect the exterior appearance of any structure within the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone shall not be undertaken until the Landmarks Commission has approved a Certificate of Appropriateness.


The Integrated Development Ordinance – Part 14-16-6-6(D) establishes procedures and review criteria for a Certificate of Appropriateness – Major in Historic Protection Overlay Zones (HPO) and for City Landmarks.

**6-6(D)(3) Review and Decision Criteria**

An application for a Historic Certificate of Appropriateness – Major shall be approved if it complies with all of the following criteria:

6-6(D)(3)(a) The change is consistent with Section 14-16-3-5 (Historic Protection Overlay Zones), the ordinance designating the specific HPO zone where the property is located, and any specific development guidelines for the landmark or the specific HPO zone where the property is located.

*The wrought iron guardrails/handrails installed on the second floor of Plaza Don Luis, a non-contributing building are of a simple, traditional architectural style that are appropriate and compatible with the scale of the building. However, the murals and some of the proposed signage proposed for Plaza Don Luis are not in keeping with the character of Old Town HPO-5 and not allowed under the IDO.*

*The guardrail fencing added to the first-floor area of the Old Town Basket Shop, a contributing building in order to create a new patio area are not in keeping with the character of Old Town HPO-5 as they do not maintain the original character of the building.*

6-6(D)(3)(b) The architectural character, historical value, or archaeological value of the structure or site itself or of any HPO zone in which it is located will not be significantly impaired or diminished.

*Plaza Don Luis: The removal of the stairs to Plaza Don Luis have not diminished the architectural character. However, the murals and proposed hand-painted signage throughout Plaza Don Luis will significantly impair and diminish the architectural character of Old Town HPO-5.*

*Old Town Basket Shop: The first floor guardrails impair the architectural character of the contributing building and district and diminish its’ character-defining features.*

6-6(D)(3)(c) The change qualifies as a "certified rehabilitation" pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976, if applicable.

*Not applicable.*
6-6(D)(3)(d) The structure or site's distinguished original qualities or character will not be altered.

For the purposes of Section 14-16-3-5 (Historic Protection Overlay Zones) and this Subsection 14-16-6-6(D), “original” shall mean as it was at the time of initial construction or as it has developed over the course of the history of the structure.

The original qualities and character of the structure have been altered by adding guardrail/handrails to the Old Town Basket Shop, a contributing building to Old Town HPO-5.

6-6(D)(3)(e) Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, to the maximum extent practicable. If replacement is necessary, the new material shall match the original as closely as possible in like material and design.

Deteriorated features such as the handrails and guardrails of Plaza Don Luis were replaced and do not match the original. However, the replacement material of wrought iron was chosen over the original material (wood) so as to not impede visibility of the second floor shops.

6-6(D)(3)(f) Additions to existing structures and new construction may be of contemporary design if such design is compatible with its landmark status (if any) or the HPO zone in which it is to be located.

Not applicable.

6-6(D)(3)(g) If the application is for a Historic Certificate of Appropriateness – Major for demolition of a landmark or a contributing structure in an HPO zone, demolition shall only be allowed if it is determined that the property is incapable of producing a reasonable economic return as presently controlled and that no means of preserving the structure has been found. In making a determination regarding reasonable economic return, the LC or City Council may consider the estimated market value of the building, land, and any proposed replacement structures; financial details of the property, including but not limited to income and expense statements, current mortgage balances, and appraisals; the length of time that the property has been on the market for sale or lease; potential return based on projected future market conditions; the building’s structural condition; and other items determined to be relevant to the application.

Not applicable. The application is not for a Historic Certificate of Appropriateness – Major for demolition of a landmark or a contributing structure.

Development Guidelines for the Old Town Historic Zone

Design Guidelines (as amended through April 9, 1998) have been adopted by the Landmarks Commission for building projects in the Old Town History Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5). The guidelines include direction on such issues as building height, massing, proportion and scale, use of materials in new and existing buildings, relationship between buildings, landscaping, roadways, sidewalks, and the overall neighborhood character. Design Standards and Guidelines (amended 2018) also apply to new and replacement signage.

1. Every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for buildings which will require minimum alteration to the building and its environment.
Guardrail fencing was added to the first-floor area to create a new patio area for controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required by the State of New Mexico. While the enclosure was designed to provide more efficient use of and access to the building, the unapproved alteration conflicts with this design guideline in that every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for buildings which will require minimum alteration to the building and its environment. The building where the alteration was performed is a contributing building and the façade facing Old Town Plaza, is original to the design.

2. Rehabilitation work should not destroy the distinguishing qualities or character of the property and its environment. The removal or alteration of any historic material or architectural features should be held to the minimum, consistent with the proposed use.

The distinctive character of the building is unaffected by the second-floor replacement wrought iron guardrails/handrails. The stairs were not part of the original Plaza Don Luis design and their removal has not distinguished the quality of the building and is consistent with the proposed use.

The first-floor guardrails have altered the distinguishing qualities of the Old Town Basket Shop, a historic building as the railings are inconsistent with the historic character of the building and district.

3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of the original features, substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs of the availability of different architectural features from other buildings.

The guardrails/handrails were replaced rather than repaired but wrought iron was in use before the coming of the railroad and are compatible with other wrought iron work in the area.

4. Many changes to buildings and environments which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the building and the neighborhood. These changes may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected.

Not applicable.

5. The design and general appearance of any development or alteration in the Old Town Historic District should be limited to the range of design options possible and commonly chosen in Albuquerque prior to the opening of the Santa Fe Railroad in April 1880. The design of any alteration to currently existing structures erected between 1880 and 1912 should be limited to the range of design options possible and commonly chosen at the time of the building’s construction.
The use of wrought iron was in use before the coming of the railroad. The second-floor guardrails/handrails were originally made out of wood but the replacement work is typical to that seen in Old Town. The second-floor guardrails/handrails are appropriate and compatible with the scale of the building and the character of the area.

The first-floor guardrails are inconsistent with the character of the Old Town Basket Shop, a historic building and conflict with the Development Guidelines for the Old Town HPO-5.

6. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to buildings should be done in such a manner that if they were removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original building would be unimpaired.

The alteration of the second-floor guardrails/handrails is of a simple, good quality design with durable modern materials. The stucco finish of the walls will match that of the building and surrounding area. If the guardrails/handrails were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original building would be unimpaired.

7. Every effort should be made to safeguard the public welfare along vehicular and pedestrian traffic ways. Placement of walls, building projections, fences, planters, shrubs, signs, ramps, steps, etc. should be planned and positioned so that they do not present a potential hazard. Provisions for the handicapped should be planned so that the essential character of the property is not damaged.

The first-floor, wrought-iron enclosure does not present a potential hazard but the enclosure creates a visual maze and detracts from the building and its’ historic character.

8. Any security devices that prevent major features of doors and windows such as ornament, panels, glass panes, and mullions from being seen are prohibited.

Not applicable.

9. Property owners who are considering installing security devices are urged to contact LUCC staff for advice and a free handout on how to increase security without detracting from the historic character of the building.

Not applicable.

**Integrated Development Ordinance - Old Town Historic Protection Overlay, HPO-5**

3-5(K)(3)(c) Signs

1. **Sign Sub-Area**
   The following map illustrates the Sign Sub-Area, which contains the area within 150 feet in any direction of the Old Town Plaza Park. Where the Sign Sub-area boundary crosses a lot line, sign standards in this Subsection 14-16-3-5(K)(3)(c) that reference the Sign Sub-area apply only to portions of the lot that are within the Sign Sub-area.

2. **Prohibited Signs**
a. Internally lit signs.
b. Signs that flash or blink or signs with visible bulbs, neon tubing, luminous paint, or plastics (with the exception of vinyl lettering), except for neon signs allowed pursuant to Subsection 14-16-3-5(K)(3)(c)4.b below.
c. Signs with wind-activated parts or signs that rotate or move in any manner.
d. Signs or part of any sign that changes its message or picture.
e. Signs displayed on railings.
f. Streamers

3. Maximum Number of Signs
A maximum of 2 signs that meet the type, dimension, and location requirements in Table 3-5-1 are allowed per establishment, with the following exceptions:

a. The following sign types do not count toward the maximum number of signs that are allowed:
   i. Window signs
   ii. temporary signs displayed on the day of an outdoor demonstration of the creation of retail goods

b. Additional signs are allowed as follows:
   i. Restaurants are allowed 1 additional wall sign not to exceed 6 square feet.
   ii. Establishments that face 2 or more streets are allowed 1 additional sign.
   iii. The LC may approve 1 additional sign per establishment where the LC determines that there is not reasonable visibility of the establishment from the public right-of-way or adjacent property without such an additional sign. Such signs shall not exceed the maximum sign area in Table 3-5-1 as relevant to the type and location of the sign.
   iv. Premises with 2 or more establishments, at least 1 of which does not face the public right-of-way, are allowed significant additional signs as follows:
      a. total sign area of any additional sign(s) allowed pursuant to this Subsection iv. shall not exceed 25 square feet, not to exceed 2 square feet per establishment.
      b. Within the Sign Sub-Area, establishments are allowed 1 additional wall sign.
      c. Establishments in other locations are allowed either 1 additional wall sign or 1 additional freestanding sign that shall not exceed a height of 10 feet above finished grade.
   v. An additional wall or freestanding sign that meets the following requirements is allowed no more than 20 feet in any direction from where the edges of two public rights-of-way intersects a parking lot with over 20 parking spaces.
      a. The sign area shall not exceed 2 square feet per establishment or 18 square feet total. Any freestanding sign allowed pursuant to Subsection v. shall not exceed a height of 9 feet above finished grade.
      b. The sign may advertise establishments on- or off-premises, as determined by the property owner where the sign is located, but all establishments advertised must be located within Old Town HPO-5 boundary.
      c. Within the Sign Sub-area, where freestanding signs are not allowed, any sign provided pursuant to this Subsection v. must be a wall sign.
4. On-premises Signs
   a. Sign types are allowed pursuant to Table 3-5-1.
   b. Neon signs are allowed as window signs but shall not flash or blink.
   c. No sign shall exceed the height of the façade, eaves, or fire wall of a building, whichever is lower.

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<tr>
<th>Sign Type</th>
<th>All Zone Districts</th>
<th>All Other Locations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wall Sign</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area, maximum</td>
<td>On a façade facing an arterial or collector street and that is wholly visible from an arterial street: 20 sq. ft. Other locations: 10 sq. ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Window Sign</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area, maximum[1]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canopy Sign</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area, maximum</td>
<td>Ground floor: 4 sq. ft. Other floors: 5 sq. ft.</td>
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<td>Projecting Sign</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area, maximum</td>
<td>Prohibited Ground floor: 4 sq. ft. Other floors: 5 sq. ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freestanding Sign</td>
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<td>Area, maximum</td>
<td>Prohibited 4 sq. ft.</td>
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<td>Temporary Sign on the Day of an Outdoor Demonstration of Retail Goods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area, maximum</td>
<td>3 sq. ft. per sign</td>
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<td>Portable Sign</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area, maximum</td>
<td>Per Subsection 14-16-5-12(F)(4)(b)</td>
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</table>

[1] For window signs, the maximum size in this table is the sign area allowed per establishment and may be achieved through one or multiple signs.

An analysis of the proposal’s conformance with the adopted relevant development guidelines is provided. The unapproved alterations and proposed alterations are broken down into components for analysis purposes.

**POLICY – SITE FEATURES & STREETSCAPES**

Historic site features should be retained. New site features should be compatible with the architectural character of the historic district.
Completed Alterations Without a Certificate of Appropriateness:

1. Second floor guardrails – The second-floor guardrails and handrails were changed from wood to wrought iron.

   *Plaza Don Luis was built in 1993, is two stories in height with a territorial style trim. The building, while in keeping with the character of Old Town, is not historic. The use of wrought iron was in use before the coming of the railroad. The second-floor guardrails/handrails were originally made out of wood but the replacement work is typical to that seen in Old Town. The guardrails/handrails are appropriate and compatible with the scale of the building. This request does not conflict with the Development Guidelines for the Old Town HPO-5.*

2. A set of stairs were removed that were not part of the original Plaza Don Luis plans.

   *The stairs were not part of the original building design and were installed by the previous owner. Removal of the stairs in order to bring the building back to its’ original design has facilitated the use of the space and would not detract from the architectural character of the building or the wider area facing Old Town Plaza.*

3. A new mural was added that is visible from Rio Grande Boulevard. A second mural was added that is visible from within Plaza Don Luis.

   *Plaza Don Luis has experienced a number of changes over the years but murals have not been a part of the changes. The applicant has added murals that are visible from Rio Grande Boulevard and within Plaza Don Luis and are not in keeping with the character of the area. The size and color palette used for the murals are not typical of colors found in the area or colors used in the 1890’s through 1940’s, or even in the 1990’s. The alteration impairs the integrity of the building.*

4. Guardrail fencing was added to the first-floor area east of the Old Post Office building to create a new patio area for controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required by the State of New Mexico.

   *Guardrail fencing was added to the first-floor area to create a new patio area for controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required by the State of New Mexico. While the enclosure was designed to provide more use of, and access to the building, the unapproved alteration conflicts with Design Guideline #1 in that every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for buildings which will require minimum alteration to the building and its environment. The building where the alteration was performed is a contributing building and the façade facing Old Town Plaza, is original to the design. The alteration should be removed in order to allow for the building to be returned to its’ original design.*

5. The building was re-stuccoed.

   *The re-stuccoing of the building does not detract from the architectural character of the building or the wider area facing Old Town Plaza.*
Proposed Alterations:


   The proposed self-standing orientation and tenant directory shall abide by Table 3-5-1: On-premises Signs in Old Town HPO-5. The maximum allowable freestanding sign at this location shall be 4 square feet but cannot be placed within the Sign Sub-area of Old Town HPO-5. The Sign Sub-Area contains the area within 150 feet in any direction of the Old Town Plaza Park.


   The tenant directory/happenings sign shall include colors appropriate to the Old Town HPO-5 and shall adhere to the design standards in Table 3-5-1. The wall affixed sign shall comply IDO subsection 14-16-3-5(K)(3)(c)(3)((b)(v)(a). On a façade facing an arterial or collector street and that is wholly visible from an arterial street: 20 sq. ft. Other locations: 10 sq. ft.


   The proposed plaque on the second floor breezeway will not adversely affect the character of the building or Old Town HPO-5.

4. “Welcome” signs on pillars facing Romero Street.

   As per IDO Subsection 14-16-3-5(K)(3) signs displayed on railings and streamers is prohibited in Old Town HPO-5. As such, the “Welcome” signs proposed for the pillars facing Romero Street are also not allowed.

5. “More to See” Wayfinding attached to handrails or pillars.

   As per IDO Subsection 14-16-3-5(K)(3) signs displayed on railings and streamers is prohibited in Old Town HPO-5. As such, the “More to See” signs proposed for the handrails or pillars facing Romero Street are not allowed.

6. Amenities signage (restroom, elevators, etc.).

   The amenities signage will not detract from the Old Town HPO-5 character. The signage shall comply with IDO standards for signage in Old Town HPO-5.


   The “possible pole banners” for Rio Grande Boulevard are not allowed in HPO-5.
Neighborhood Notification and other Considerations.

Notification requirements are found in 14-16-6-4, in the Procedures Table 6-1-1 and are further explained in 14-16-6-4(K), Public Notice. The affected, registered neighborhood organizations are the Historic Old Town Property Owners Association and the West Old Town Neighborhood Association. Property owners within 100 feet of the subject site were also notified, as required (see attachments). As of this writing, Staff has not received comments in support or opposition to the request.

Conclusions

As discussed in the analysis above, the request partially complies with the applicable guidelines for Old Town HPO-5 and the criteria for approval of Certificate of Appropriateness.

Staff concludes that the project is eligible for a Certificate of Appropriateness, subject to conditions.

1. The application is a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations at 301 Romero Street NW, described as Lot 186, Block 000, in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5), zoned MX-T.

2. The subject property is approximately 0.71 acres and contains the historic Charlie Mann Store, a contributing building and Plaza Don Luis, a non-contributing building.

3. The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness is for changes made to Old Town Basket Shop, a contributing building in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5) without prior approval. The change includes:
   • Guardrail fencing was added to the first-floor area east of the Old Post Office building to create a new patio area for controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required by the State of New Mexico.

4. The application for a Certificate of Appropriateness is for changes made to Plaza Don Luis, a non-contributing building in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5) without prior approval. The changes include:
   • Second floor guardrails – The second-floor guardrails and handrails were changed from wood to wrought iron.
   • A set of stairs were removed that were not part of the original Plaza Don Luis plans.
   • A new mural was added that is visible from Rio Grande Boulevard. A second mural was added that is visible from within Plaza Don Luis.
   • The building was re-stuccoed.

5. The applicant is requesting approval to add new, hand-painted signage throughout Plaza Don Luis to include:
   • Self-standing Orientation and Tenant Directory;
   • Wall affixed Tenant Directory and Happenings Bulletin;
   • “Heart of Old Town” plaque on the second level breezeway;
   • “Welcome” signs on pillars facing Romero Street;
   • “More to See” Wayfinding attached to handrails or pillars;
   • Amenities signage (restroom, elevators, etc).
   • Possible Pole banners for Rio Grande Boulevard

6. The second floor guardrails/handrails located at Plaza Don Luis will be allowed to remain as they are appropriate and compatible with the scale of the building and the character of the area.

7. The removal of the stairs does not detract from the architectural character of the building and has allowed for the building to be brought back to its’ original design.

8. The two murals impair the integrity of the building and are not in keeping with the character of the area. The murals shall be removed.
9. Guardrail fencing was added to the first-floor area of the Old Town Basket Shop, a contributing building in order to create a new patio area for controlled outdoor alcohol sales as required by the State of New Mexico. While the enclosure was designed to provide more use of and access to the building, the unapproved alteration conflicts with Design Guideline #1 in that every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for buildings which will require minimum alteration to the building and its environment. The guardrails must be removed in order to bring the building back to its’ original design.

10. The proposed self-standing orientation and tenant directory shall abide by Table 3-5-1: On premises Signs in Old Town HPO-5. The maximum allowable freestanding sign at this location shall be 4 square feet and shall comply with the Old Town sub-area IDO subsection 3-5(K)(3)(c).

11. The tenant directory/happenings sign shall include colors appropriate to the Old Town HPO-5 and shall adhere to the design standards in Table 3-5-1.

12. The proposed plaque on the second floor breezeway will not adversely affect the character of the building.

13. The “welcome” signs on pillars facing Romero Street are not allowed in Old Town HPO-5 as per IDO 14-16-3-5(K)(3).

14. The “More to See” wayfinding attached to handrails or pillars are not allowed in Old Town HPO-5 as per IDO 14-16-3-5(K)(3).

15. The amenities signage (restrooms, elevators, etc). will not detract from the Old Town HPO-5 character.

16. Possible pole banners for Rio Grande Boulevard are not allowed in Old Town HPO-5 as per IDO subsection 14-16-3-5(K)(3).

17. The LUC Ordinance Section 14-12(8)(B)(2) states that a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be approved if “The architectural character, historical value, or archaeological value of the structure or site itself or any historic zone or urban conservation overlay zone in which it is located will not be significantly impaired or diminished”.

18. The architectural character and historical value of Old Town HPO-5 will not be significantly impaired or diminished, once the proposed corrections are made to the buildings.

RECOMMENDATION

Case SI-2021-01404/Project #2021-006235 – January 12, 2022

APPROVAL of a Certificate of Appropriateness – Major for Alterations for the property described as Lot 186, Block 000, in the Old Town Historic Protection Overlay Zone (HPO-5), located at 301
Romero Street NW and zoned, MX-T based on the above eighteen (18) Findings and subject to the following Conditions.

**Recommended Conditions of Approval for Case #SI-2021-01904/Project #PR-2021-006235**

1. Applicant is responsible to acquire, and approval is contingent upon, all applicable permits and related approvals.
2. The murals visible from Rio Grande Boulevard and within Plaza Don Luis shall be removed as they are not in keeping with the historic integrity and sense of place of Old Town HPO-5.
3. The “self-standing orientation and tenant directory” along with the “wall affixed tenant directory and happenings bulletin” shall adhere to the design standards in Table 3-5-1.
4. No signs shall be displayed on railings/pillars and streamers shall not be installed as they are prohibited in Old Town HPO-5.
5. The proposed pole banners for Rio Grande Boulevard shall not be installed as they are prohibited in Old Town HPO-5.
6. The first-floor guardrails of the Old Town Basket Shop shall be removed.

---

Silvia Bolivar, PLA, ASLA
Historic Preservation Planner
Urban Design and Development Division
Thank you!

On Wed, Apr 21, 2021 at 9:48 AM Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov> wrote:

Hi Rick,

Here are the forms. Everything comes to me but some also go to the neighborhood association. When you are ready, just call if you have any questions.

--

RICK BENNETT
PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT
RBA Architecture, PC

1104 Park Avenue SW
Albuquerque, NM  87102
505-242-1859 Phone
505-242-6630 Fax
505-924-7185 Direct
505-350-9811 Cell
Hi Luke,

We spoke some months ago about work you wanted to do at Don Luis Plaza. I never received any application from you but see a great deal of unapproved work has been performed. Please call my office today to discuss the situation.

Sincerely,

Leslie Naji
Senior Planner, Landmarks Commission
505.924.3927
e:naji@cabq.gov
cabq.gov/planning

From: Luke Schneider <luke@pdlabq.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2021 3:42 PM
To: Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov>
Subject: Re: Plaza Don Luis

External
Thank you, Leslie! It was great meeting you today and we will be in touch.

Best,

Luke

On Thu, Feb 25, 2021 at 11:35 AM Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov> wrote:

Hi Luke,

Thank you for calling this morning. I have attached the required forms for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Most work is handled administratively and has a 15 day appeal period. Repairs do not need a CoA.
Feel free to call with any questions you might have along the way.

Sincerely,

---

From: Luke Schneider <luke@pdlabq.com>  
Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2021 10:27 AM  
To: Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov>  
Subject: Plaza Don Luis

Hi Leslie,

It was nice talking with you today. This is my best email address. Will you please send the forms you mentioned?

Thanks,

Luke

This message has been analyzed by Deep Discovery Email Inspector.
Yes please. I did speak with Rick and send him the forms but I have no record that they were submitted. That conversation was about the stairs and the upstairs railings. Since then a lot of ground floor railing has been installed which has not even been discussed.

Hi Leslie,

Sorry for the confusion. Rick Bennet was retained as our architect and informed us he had submitted everything to the City. I believe he reached out to someone in your office yesterday. Do you still need me to give you a call?

Thanks,

Luke

On Mon, Sep 27, 2021 at 7:37 AM Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov> wrote:

Hi Luke,

We spoke some months ago about work you wanted to do at Don Luis Plaza. I never received any application from you but see a great deal of unapproved work has been performed. Please call my office today to discuss the situation.
Sincerely,

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Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2021 3:42 PM
To: Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov>
Subject: Re: Plaza Don Luis

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Best,

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Feel free to call with any questions you might have along the way.

Sincerely,
Hi Leslie,

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Thanks,

Luke

This message has been analyzed by Deep Discovery Email Inspector.

This message has been analyzed by Deep Discovery Email Inspector.
Do give me a call. Rick (?) came in to request a permit for the metal fence in front of the basket shop at which time I stated I would not approve it. The options are to either remove it or apply to the Landmarks Commission. The application deadline for the November hearing is Wednesday, October 13 at noon.

---

From: Luke Schneider <luke@pdlabq.com>
Sent: Friday, October 8, 2021 2:34 PM
To: Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov>
Subject: Re: Plaza Don Luis

External

Sorry, was catching up and missed this email. Rick let me know the two of you talked. would you like me to give you a call early next week?

---

On Thu, Sep 30, 2021 at 12:24 PM Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov> wrote:

Yes please. I did speak with Rick and send him the forms but I have no record that they were submitted. That conversation was about the stairs and the upstairs railings. Since then a lot of groud floor railing has been installed which has not even been discussed.
Hi Leslie,

Sorry for the confusion. Rick Bennet was retained as our architect and informed us he had submitted everything to the City. I believe he reached out to someone in your office yesterday. Do you still need me to give you a call?

Thanks,

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Sincerely,
External

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Best,

Luke

On Thu, Feb 25, 2021 at 11:35 AM Naji, Leslie <lnaji@cabq.gov> wrote:

Hi Luke,

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Feel free to call with any questions you might have along the way.

Sincerely,

Leslie Nají
Senior Planner,
Landmarks Commission
o 505.924.3927
e lnaji@cabq.gov
cabq.gov/planning

External

Hi Leslie,

It was nice talking with you today. This is my best email address. Will you please send the forms you mentioned?
Thanks,

Luke

=======================================================
This message has been analyzed by Deep Discovery Email Inspector.

=======================================================
This message has been analyzed by Deep Discovery Email Inspector.
Good afternoon,

I know we have talked about the certificate of appropriateness application required for the changes at Plaza Don Luis. Thus far I have not received any applications. There are a number of items that need to be addresses and conversation on the phone does not constitute an application or review. In order to make the deadline for the December hearing of the Landmarks Commission, the application will need to be submitted by next Wednesday, November 10.

I am again attaching the required forms for the application. As I never received the initial application even for the stair relocation, this will no longer be an administrative decision. I will also forward you the list of property owners who need notification via mailed letter.

I look forward to receiving your application.
APPLICANT SUBMITTALS
Figure 1: Albuquerque Museum, 2000 Mountain Rd NW - Public art project – Museum Parking Lot NOT within Old Town HPO-5 – Old Town HPO-5 boundary begins behind the blue line.

Figure 2: San Felipe Del Neri Church 2005 N. Plaza Street NW – not a mural, it is a saint carved into a tree.

Figure 3:
Figure 4:  

Figure 5:  

Figure 6: Hazienda Del Rio Restaurant  
302 San Felipe Street NW
Figure 7:

Figure 8:

Figure 9:
Figure 10: Flying Roadrunner Bakery
Plaza Don Luis, 303 Romero Street
NW, Suite 124

Figure 11: Plaza Primorosa
2004 S. Plaza NW
Figure 12: Goble This (Salvadoran Restaurant), 308 San Felipe Street NW – Approved by the Landmarks Commission 18LUCC50004 OT 1011528

Figure 13: Backstreet Grill Restaurant 1919 Old Town Road NW #6 – closed by the State due to failure to follow public health regulations

Figure 14: Same as Figure 6: Hazienda Del Rio Restaurant 302 San Felipe Street NW –
Figure 15:  [Image of a wall with a small drawing]

Figure 16: [Image of a colorful mural]

Figure 17: [Image of a colorful shop front]

Figure 18: Romero House, 205 Romero Street NW
Figure 19: Albuquerque Museum, 2000 Mountain Rd NW - Museum is not within Old Town HPO-5

Figure 20:

Figure 21:
Figure 26: High Noon Restaurant  
425 San Felipe Street NW.
ABQ Evening Democrat

05 Feb 1884,

08 Jul 1886, ABQ Journal

07 Sep 1886, ABQ Journal

Second Street, op. Trimble's stables.


The N. T. Armijo building is receiving the finishing touches of Master Plasterer Coulodon and his force of experienced artisans. It is strictly three-coat work with hard plaster-oft-paris finishes. It is plain with no attempt at ornamentation, but like the lily of the valley, is beautiful in its simplicity. The main corner room to be occupied by the Bank of Commerce is finished in sand preparatory to fresco painting. Every artisan employed is master of his work, and there is not a piece of "blacksmith" work throughout the building. Among the corps of expert plasterers are Johnny and Tony Coulodon, T. W. Springer, Ed Donnelly, Mike Donleo, Pete Casells, George Emory and Joe Stewart. Their work speaks for itself.

For the further and better conservation of the humankind, the use of chewing tobacco is prohibited.
03 Aug 1907, ABQ Citizen

Many people are daily being attracted by the sight of a lady artist executing two large wall paintings on each side of the front entrance of the Learnard and Linemman music store, near the corner of Second street on Gold avenue. Much admiration is expressed for the painting, which is being done by Miss Nina Lee Barron, a scenic artist from New York. Miss Barron has traveled extensively over this country painting mural decorations of all kinds. The walls of the gallery in the rear of the Learnard and Linemann store have already been beautifully decorated and the proprietors are highly pleased with the result.
COUNTY PRISONERS TO BE EDUCATED IN HIGH ART

MURAL DECORATIONS FOR COUNTY JAIL

Inmate of Institution Who Learned Frescoing in Paris Employed to Trace Weird Designs on Cell Walls.

The county jail has entered upon a new era of usefulness. The judge, wherein sneak-theives, forgers, pursuers of chickens, wife-beaters and criminals of greater and lesser criminality have gazed out through the bars at the hurrying throngs which bustle past in the crowded streets of Old Town: where cattle rustlers have whined away the weary hours playing craps with bad men from the wilds of Los Griegos and Atrisco—the official house of incarceration of the county of Bernalillo, as, is being transformed.

Jailer Silvano Gallegos took a Morning Journal reporter yesterday through the beautiful, pellucid一座—the pellucid seat of the jail and displayed to the newspaper man’s admiring gaze works of art which put Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo and their confessors in the deepest shade.

Jailer Gallegos is particularly fortunate. He has spent eight dollars of the walls of the county jail to date. The county has spent a matter of more than $1000 on the interior walls of the court house across the way. If have done more with eight dollars than they have done on their $100 Thus, it is all we are after—to beat the court house and I think we’ve done it.

The man through whose artistic genius Jailer Gallegos has achieved his triumph is Langlois Bardet. Langlois is in for forgery—that is he is making his home in the county jail until such a time as the grand jury shall convene and take action on his case. Langlois is a Frenchman. He is also an artist of the first magnitude. He learned the rudiments of his art in Paris where rude officers of the law did not disturb the development of his genius with unkind and impolite accusations of forgery.

Langlois has been turned loose in the jail with a paint brush. The effect is little short of marvelous. He works on all the walls of the cell block sacrificing with caulk and mesquites and other materials whose names are held sacred—was wont to go on a paid expansion of wall wherein strange designs were traced in the juice of the succulent tobacco plant, it is ordered a dramatic representation of consummate skill and art. 

Dr. Pier on receipt of this paper, is looking forward to the day when his picture will be finished in gray with no decorations so as not to add to the hallucinations of the inmate. The main office of Jailer Gallegos is being decorated at a chapel.

Beneath a representation of a dove of the arts created by wreaths and traceries is the motto, “Gloria in Excelsis Deo” beneath which an altar is to be placed for the monthly celebration of mass which is to be held hereafter in the jail. An adjoining room is to be the private office of the artist and the decorations in this department are especially unique and bewildering in their effect.

In altogether a serious vein, the jail is to be greatly improved in the decoration it is receiving. The old layers of whitewash and kalsomine are all being removed and scraped and clean
SPECIALIST SECURES OFFICES IN THIS CITY
MORNING JOURNAL
BRINGS ALOIS
FROM TIMBER

ILLUSTRIOUS ARTIST
SURRENDERS HIMSELF

Jay Gould's Private
Decorator Who Painted
County Jail Under Arrest
Once More,

After reading an account in The
Morning Journal of the burning de-
sire of the authorities to see him,
Alois J. Bardet, formerly private ar-
tist for Jay Gould, frescoer extraordin-
ary, and a Frechman of versatility,
arrived in the city from the tall tim-
ber Wednesday night and yesterday
morning surrendered himself to the
chief of police.

Alois was at Bland in the Jemez
mountains, when as is the habit of all
well-informed people, he as usual
perused the columns of the only live-
daily in New Mexico, to discover that
a warrant had been sworn out for
him before Judge Craig by E. E. Da-
vie, on a charge of obtaining money
under false pretenses.

Now Bland is some sixty miles from
Albuquerque and is reached by an
arduous overland trip. Alois, after
reading the newspaper item with a
natural interest, was at once seized
with an unselfish desire to prevent the
city of Albuquerque or the county of
Bernalillo from going to any extra
trouble or expense on his account and
packing his grip he immediately hit
the road for Albuquerque. With the
packing of his grip he immediately
hit the road for Albuquerque. With the
French inclination to perform even
the most trifling acts with proper
ecstacy, Alois secured a good night's rest
and presented himself to the chief
yesterday morning politely asking
that he be arrested. Alois was given
a hearty welcome and was released on
bond. His hearing was set for Mon-
day, January 6, before Judge Craig.
His wife, Anne Bardet, who was ar-
rested December 25, was also released
on bond and will have her hearing at
the same time.

Bardet is charged by Davis
with having buncoed—that is not the
French for it—having shooflammed
him, in fact, out of a large sum of
money by means of a fairy tale of vast
wealth left to Alois in that dear
France. It is alleged that Bar-
det claimed that he was heir to a vast
fortune, a part of which lay awaiting
him in a bank in Denver, but that to
get it it would be necessary for him
to have a trifling loan in order to pay
the exchange and go through other
more formalities. Davis alleges that
he discovered, alas too late, that Alois
had not a samoleon, or more appro-
priately speaking, not a son, in the
Denver bank.

Bardet is a familiar figure in this
city. He has been three times ac-
quitted in the district court on a sim-
ilar charge and has been for ex-
tended periods an inmate of the
county jail.

During one of these periods Alois,
who is a mural decorator of note, was
given some dope and a brush and
turned loose on the walls and ceilings
of the jail. The results were terrify-
ing. Green dragons pursued purple
mermaids with mauve hair through
vermilion jungles and strange and de-
licious terrors, colored lepidoptera
froated lally amid carmine clouds on
the ceiling. Monster insects with an-
tennae a yard long crept up from
under the wainscoting and in short
the things that Alois put on the walls
and ceiling resulted in the speedy
transfer of a number of prisoners to
the insane asylum.

I once had the pleasure of fresco-
ing all the rooms in the private resi-
dence of Jay Gould in New York,"
said Alois with something of an air.
It will be noted in this connection
that Gould is dead and it is possible
in view of Bardet's admission, that
the causes of his death have hitherto
never been correctly understood.
PRESERVATION BRIEFS
Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
H. Ward Jandl

The storefront is the most important architectural feature of many historic commercial buildings. It also plays a crucial role in a store’s advertising and merchandising strategy to draw customers and increase business. Not surprisingly, then, the storefront has become the feature most commonly altered in a historic commercial building. In the process, these alterations may have completely changed or destroyed a building’s distinguishing architectural features that make up its historic character.

As more and more people come to recognize and appreciate the architectural heritage of America’s downtowns, however, a growing interest can be seen in preserving the historic character of commercial buildings. The sensitive rehabilitation of storefronts can result not only in increased business for the owner but can also provide evidence that downtown revitalization efforts are succeeding (see figure 1).

Once a decision is made to rehabilitate a historic commercial building, a series of complex decisions faces the owner, among them:

- if the original storefront has survived largely intact but is in a deteriorated condition, what repairs should be undertaken?
- if the storefront has been modernized at a later date, should the later alterations be kept or the building restored to its original appearance or an entirely new design chosen?
- if the building’s original retail use is to be changed to office or residential, can the commercial appearance of the building be retained while accommodating the new use?

This Preservation Brief is intended to assist owners, architects, and planning officials in answering such questions about how to evaluate and preserve the character of historic storefronts. In so doing, it not only addresses the
basic design issues associated with storefront rehabilitation, but recommends preservation treatments as well. Finally, although the Brief focuses on storefront rehabilitation, it is important to review this specific work in the broader context of preserving and maintaining the overall structure. Money spent on storefront rehabilitation may be completely wasted if repair and maintenance problems on the rest of the building are neglected.

### Historical Overview

Commercial establishments of the 18th and early 19th centuries were frequently located on the ground floor of buildings and, with their residentially scaled windows and doors, were often indistinguishable from surrounding houses. In some cases, however, large bay or oriel windows comprised of small panes of glass set the shops apart from their neighbors. Awnings of wood and canvas and signs over the sidewalk were other design features seen on some early commercial buildings. The ground floors of large commercial establishments, especially in the first decades of the 19th century, were distinguished by regularly spaced, heavy piers of stone or brick, infilled with paneled doors or small paneled window sash. Entrances were an integral component of the facade, typically not given any particular prominence although sometimes wider than other openings.

The ready availability of architectural cast iron after the 1840's helped transform storefront design as architects and builders began to experiment using iron columns and lintels at the ground floor level. Simultaneous advances in the glass industry permitted manufacturing of large panes of glass at a reasonable cost. The combination of these two technical achievements led to the storefront as we know it today—large expanses of glass framed by thin structural elements. The advertisement of the merchant and his products in the building facade and display windows quickly became critical factors in the competitive commercial atmosphere of downtowns. In the grouping of these wide-windowed facades along major commercial streets, the image of America's cities and towns radically changed.

The first cast iron fronts were simple post-and-lintel construction with little decoration. As iron craftsmen became more adept and as more ornate architectural styles became popular, cast iron fronts were given Italianate, Venetian Gothic, and French Second Empire details. Cast iron storefronts could be selected directly from catalogs, which began to appear in the early 1850's. Standardized sills, columns, and lintels could be arranged to create fronts of all sizes, styles and configurations. In the 1870's sheet metal storefronts became popular; they were also sold in standardized sizes and configurations through manufacturers' catalogs (see figure 2).

The typical 19th century storefront consisted of single or double doors flanked by display windows (see figure 3). The entrance was frequently recessed, not only to protect the customer from inclement weather but to increase the amount of space in which to display merchandise. In some cases an additional side door provided access to the upper floors. Thin structural members of cast iron or wood, rather than masonry piers, usually framed the storefront. The windows themselves were raised off the ground by wood, cast iron or pressed metal panels or bulkheads; frequently, a transom or series of transoms (consisting of single or multiple panes of glass) were

---

**Figure 2.** These 19th century galvanized iron storefronts could be purchased from George L. Mesker & Co. in Evansville, Indiana.

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**Figure 3.** Become familiar with the architectural features typical of historic commercial buildings. A close look at a storefront's construction materials, features and relationship to the upper stories will help in determining how much of the original facade remains.

This particular storefront is No. 4016 in the George L. Mesker and Company catalog of 1905. One of Mesker's most popular designs, it featured cast-iron sills, columns and lintels, galvanized iron lintel and main cornice, window caps and pediment.
placed above each window and door. The signboard above the storefront (the fascia covering the structural beam) became a prominent part of the building. Canvas awnings, or in some cases tin or wooden canopies, often shaded storefronts of the late 19th century. Iron fronts were frequently put onto existing buildings as a way of giving them an up-to-date appearance. Except for expanding the display window area to the maximum extent possible and the increasing use of canvas awnings, few major technical innovations in storefront design can be detected from the 1850's through 1900.

The first decades of the 20th century saw the growing use of decorative transom lights (often using small prismatic glass panes) above display windows; in some cases, these transoms could be opened to permit air circulation into the store. Electric incandescent lights enabled storeowners to call attention to their entrance and display windows and permitted nighttime shopping. In the 1920's and 1930's a variety of new materials were introduced into the storefront, including aluminum and stainless steel framing elements, pigmented structural glass (in a wide variety of colors), tinted and mirrored glass, glass block and neon. A bewildering number of proprietary products also appeared during this period, many of which went into storefronts including Aklo, Vitrolux, Vitrolite, and Extrudalite. Highly colored and heavily patterned marble was a popular material for the more expensive storefronts of this period. Many experiments were made with recessed entries, floating display islands, and curved glass. The utilization of neon lighting further transformed store signs into elaborate flashing and blinking creations. During this period design elements were simplified and streamlined; transom and signboard were often combined. Signs utilized typefaces for the period, including such stylized lettering as "Broadway," "Fino" and "Monogram." Larger buildings of this period, such as department stores, sometimes had fixed metal canopies, with lighting and signs as an integral component of the fascia (see figure 4).

Because commercial architecture responds to a variety of factors—environmental, cultural, and economic, distinct regional variations in storefronts can be noted. Fixed metal canopies supported by guy wires, for example, were common in late 19th and early 20th century storefronts in southern states where it was advantageous to have shaded entrances all year long. Such a detail was less common in the northeast where movable canvas awnings predominated. These awnings could be lowered in summer to keep buildings cooler and raised in winter when sunlight helps to heat the building.

Evaluating the Storefront

The important key to a successful rehabilitation of a historic commercial building is planning and selecting treatments that are sensitive to the architectural character of the storefront. As a first step, it is therefore essential to identify and evaluate the existing storefront's construction materials; architectural features; and the relationship of those features to the upper stories (see figure 5). This evaluation will permit a better understanding of the storefront's role in, and significance to, the overall design of the building. A second and equally important step in planning the rehabilitation work is a careful examination of the storefront's physical conditions to determine the extent and nature of rehabilitation work needed (see figure 6). In most cases, this examination is best undertaken by a qualified professional.

Figure 4. This storefront in New York City designed by Raymond Loewy typifies the streamlined look of the 1930's. Added to an earlier building, the front utilizes glass, stainless steel and neon to make a modern statement. This is a good example of a later storefront which has acquired significance and should be retained in any rehabilitation.

Figure 5. In some cases, as in the storefront on the extreme left, it is a simple matter to determine original appearance by looking at neighboring storefronts. Removal of the board and batten fascia, pent roof, and "colonial" style door, all of which could be undertaken at minimal cost, would restore the original proportions and lines of the building. Photo: Day Johnston

Guidelines for Rehabilitating Existing Historic Storefronts

1. Become familiar with the style of your building and the role of the storefront in the overall design. Don't "early up" a front. Avoid stock "lumberyard colonial" detailing such as coach lanterns, mansard overhangings, wood shakes, nonoperable shutters, and small paneled windows except where they existed historically.

2. Preserve the storefront's character even though there is a new use on the interior. If less exposed window area is desirable, consider the use of interior blinds and insulating curtains rather than altering the existing historic fabric.

3. Avoid use of materials that were unavailable when the storefront was constructed; this includes vinyl and aluminum siding, anodized aluminum, mirrored or tinted glass, artificial stone, and brick veneer.

4. Choose paint colors based on the building's historical appearance. In general do not coat surfaces that have never been painted. For 19th century storefronts, contrasting colors may be appropriate, but avoid too many different colors on a single facade.
The following questions should be taken into consideration in this two-part evaluation:

**Construction Materials, Features, and Design Relationships**

*Storefront's Construction Materials:* What are the construction materials? Wood? Metal? Brick or other masonry? A combination?

*Storefront's Architectural Features:* What are the various architectural features comprising the storefront and how are they arranged in relationship to each other?

- Supporting Columns/Piers:
  - What do the columns or piers supporting the storefront look like? Are they heavy or light in appearance? Are they flush with the windows or do they protrude? Are they all structural elements or are some columns decorative?

- Display Windows and Transoms:
  - Are the display windows and transoms single panes of glass or are they subdivided? Are they flush with the facade or are they recessed? What is the proportion of area between the display windows and transom? Are there window openings in the base panels to allow natural light into the basement?

- Entrances:
  - Are the entrances centered? Are they recessed? Is one entrance more prominent than the others? How is the primary retail entrance differentiated from other entrances? Is there evidence that new entrances have been added or have some been relocated? Are the doors original or are they later replacements?

- Decorative Elements:
  - Are there any surviving decorative elements such as molded cornices, column capitals, fascia boards, brackets, signs, awnings or canopies? Is there a belt-course, cornice, or fascia board between the first and second floor? Are some elements older than others indicating changes over time?

*Storefront's Relationship to Upper Stories:* Is there a difference in materials between the storefront and upper stories? Were the storefront and floors above it created as an overall design or were they very different and unrelated to each other?

It is also worthwhile to study the neighboring commercial buildings and their distinctive characteristics to look for similarities (canopies, lighting, signs) as well as differences. This can help determine whether the storefront in question is significant and unique in its own right and/or whether it is significant as part of an overall commercial streetscape.

**Physical Condition**


*Moderate Deterioration:* Can rotted or rusted or broken sections of material be replaced with new material to match the old? Can solid material (such as Carrara glass) from a non-conspicuous location be used on the historic facade to repair damaged elements? Do stone or brick components need repointing? Is the storefront watertight with good flashing connections? Are there leaky gutters or air conditioner units which drip condensation on the storefront? Is caulking needed? Moderate deterioration generally requires patching or splicing of the existing elements with new pieces to match the deteriorated element.

*Severe Deterioration:* Have existing facing materials deteriorated beyond repair through vandalism, settlement, or water penetration? Is there a loss of structural integrity? Is the material rusted through, rotted, buckling, completely missing? Are structural lintels sagging? Are support columns settled or out of alignment? Severe deterioration generally requires replacement of deteriorated elements as part of the overall rehabilitation.

In evaluating whether the existing storefront is worthy of preservation, recognize that good design can exist in any period; a storefront added in 1930 may have greater architectural merit than what is replaced (see figure 4). In commercial historic districts, it is often the diversity of
styles and detailing that contribute to the character; removing a storefront dating from 1910 simply because other buildings in the district have been restored to their 1860’s appearance may not be the best preservation approach. If the storefront design is a good example of its period and if it has gained significance over time, it should be retained as part of the historical evolution of the building (this architectural distinctiveness could also be an economic asset as it may attract attention to the building).

### Deciding a Course of Action

The evaluation of the storefront's architectural features and physical condition will help determine the best course of action in the actual rehabilitation work. The following recommendations, adapted from the Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation” and the accompanying interpretive guidelines, are designed to ensure that the historic commercial character of the building is retained in the rehabilitation process.

If the original or significant storefront exists, repair and retain the historic features using recommended treatments (see following sections on rehabilitating metal, wood and masonry storefronts as well as the guidelines for rehabilitating existing historic storefronts found on page 3).

If the original or significant storefront no longer exists or is too deteriorated to save, undertake a contemporary design which is compatible with the rest of the building in scale, design, materials, color and texture; or undertake an accurate restoration based on historical research and physical evidence (see section on “Replacement Storefronts”). Where an original or significant storefront no longer exists and no evidence exists to document its early appearance, it is generally preferable to undertake a contemporary design that retains the commercial “flavor” of the building. The new storefront design should not draw attention away from the historic building with its detailing but rather should respect the existing historic character of the overall building. A new design that copies traditional details or features from neighboring buildings or other structures of the period may give the building a historical appearance which blends in with its neighbors but which never, in fact, existed. For this reason, use of conjectural designs, even if based on similar buildings elsewhere in the neighborhood or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures, is generally not recommended.

### Rehabilitating Metal Storefronts

Rehabilitating metal storefronts can be a complex and time-consuming task. Before steps are taken to analyze or treat deteriorated storefronts, it is necessary to know which metal is involved, because each has unique properties and distinct preservation treatments. Storefronts were fabricated using a variety of metals, including cast iron, bronze, copper, tin, galvanized sheet iron, cast zinc, and stainless steel. Determining metallic composition can be a difficult process especially if components are encrusted with paint. Original architect’s specifications (sometimes available from permit offices, town halls, or records of the original owner) can be important clues in this regard and should be checked if at all possible.

Iron—a magnetic, gray-white malleable metal, readily susceptible to oxidation. Cast iron, most commonly found in storefronts, is shaped by molds and can withstand great compressive loads. Rolled sheet iron, sometimes galvanized with zinc, also was used in storefront construction. Stainless steel began to appear in storefronts after 1930.

Zinc—a medium-hard, bluish-white metal, widely used as a protective coating for iron and steel. It is softer than iron and is nonmagnetic.

Copper—a nonmagnetic, corrosion-resistant, malleable metal, initially reddish-brown but when exposed to the atmosphere turns brown to black to green.

Bronze and brass—nonmagnetic, abrasive-resistant alloys combining copper with varying amounts of zinc, lead, or tin. These copper alloys, more commonly found in office buildings or large department stores, range in color from lemon yellow to golden brown to green depending on their composition and are well suited for casting (see figure 7).

Aluminum—a lightweight, nonmagnetic metal commonly found on storefronts dating from the 1920’s and 30’s. Its brightness and resistance to corrosion has made it a popular storefront material in the 20th century.

![Figure 7. Part of a large office building constructed in Washington, D.C. in 1928. This finely detailed bronze storefront is typical of many constructed during this period. It should be noted that the original grilles, spandrel panel and window above are all intact. Photo: David W. Look, AIA](image-url)
Repair and Replacement of Metal

Simply because single components of a storefront need repair or replacement should not be justification for replacing an entire storefront. Deteriorated metal architectural elements can be repaired by a variety of means, although the nature of the repair will depend on the extent of the deterioration, the type of metal and its location, and the overall cost of such repairs. Patches can be used to mend, cover or fill a deteriorated area. Such patches should be a close match to the original material to prevent galvanic corrosion. Splicing—replacement of a small section with new material—should be undertaken on structural members only when temporary bracing has been constructed to carry the load. Reinforcing—or bracing the damaged element with additional new metal material—can relieve fatigue or overloading in some situations.

If metal components have deteriorated to a point where they have actually failed (or are missing), replacement is the only reasonable course of action. If the components are significant to the overall design of the storefront, they should be carefully removed and substituted with components that match the original in material, size and detailing (see figure 8).

Figure 8. When the Grand Opera House in Wilmington, Delaware, was rehabilitated, missing cast-iron columns were cast of aluminum to match the original; in this particular case, because these columns do not carry great loads, aluminum proved to be successful substitute. Photo: John G. Waite

Before going to the expense of reproducing the original, it may be useful to check salvage yards for compatible components. Missing parts of cast iron storefronts can be replaced by new cast iron members that are reproductions of the original. New wooden patterns, however, usually need to be made if the members are large. This procedure tends to be expensive (it is usually impossible to use existing iron components as patterns to cast large elements because cast iron shrinks 1/5 inch per foot as it cools). In some situations, less expensive substitute materials such as aluminum, wood, plastics, and fiberglass, painted to match the metal, can be used without compromising the architectural character of the resource.

Cleaning and Painting

Cast iron storefronts are usually encrusted with layers of paint which need to be removed to restore crispness to the details. Where paint build-up and rust are not severe problems, handscraping and wire-brushing are viable cleaning methods. While it is necessary to remove all rust before repainting, it is not necessary to remove all paint. For situations involving extensive paint build-up and corrosion, mechanical methods such as low-pressure gentle dry grit blasting (80-100 psi) can be effective and economical, providing a good surface for paint. Masonry and wood surfaces adjacent to the cleaning area, however, should be protected to avoid inadvertent damage from the blasting. It will be necessary to recaulk and putty the heads of screws and bolts after grit blasting to prevent moisture from entering the joints. Cleaned areas should be painted immediately after cleaning with a rust-inhibiting primer to prevent new corrosion. Before any cleaning is undertaken, local codes should be checked to ensure compliance with environmental safety requirements.

Storefronts utilizing softer metals (lead, tin), sheet metals (sheet copper), and plated metals (tin and terneplate) should not be cleaned mechanically (grit blasting) because their plating or finish can be easily abraded and damaged. It is usually preferable to clean these softer metals with a chemical (acid pickling or phosphate dipping) method. Once the surface of the metal has been cleaned of all corrosion, grease, and dirt, a rust-inhibiting primer coat should be applied. Finish coats especially formulated for metals, consisting of lacquers, varnishes, enamels or special coatings, can be applied once the primer has dried. Primer and finish coats should be selected for chemical compatibility with the particular metal in question.

Bronze storefronts, common to large commercial office buildings and major department stores of the 20th century, can be cleaned by a variety of methods; since all cleaning removes some surface metal and patina, it should be undertaken only with good reason (such as the need to remove encrusted salts, bird droppings or dirt). Excessive cleaning can remove the texture and finish of the metal. Since this patina can protect the bronze from further corrosion, it should be retained if possible. If it is desirable to remove the patina to restore the original surface of the bronze, several cleaning methods can be used: chemical compounds including rottenstone and oil, whitening and ammonia, or precipitated chalk and ammonia, can be rubbed onto bronze surfaces with a soft, clean cloth with little or no damage. A number of commercial cleaning companies successfully use a combination of 5% oxalic acid solution together with finely ground India pumice powder. Fine glass-bead blasting (or peening) and crushed walnut shell blasting also can be acceptable mechanical methods if carried out in controlled circumstances under low (80-100 psi) pressure. Care should be taken to protect any adjacent wood or masonry from the blasting.

The proper cleaning of metal storefronts should not be considered a “do-it-yourself” project. The nature and condition of the material should be assessed by a competent professional, and the work accomplished by a company specializing in such work.

Rehabilitating Wooden Storefronts

The key to the successful rehabilitation of wooden storefronts is a careful evaluation of existing physical conditions. Moisture, vandalism, insect attack, and lack of maintenance can all contribute to the deterioration of wooden storefronts. Paint failure should not be mistaken-
ly interpreted as a sign that the wood is in poor condition and therefore irreparable. Wood is frequently in sound physical condition beneath unsightly paint. An ice pick or awl may be used to test wood for soundness—decayed wood that is jabbed will lift up in short irregular pieces; sound wood will separate in long fibrous splinters.

Repair and Replacement of Wood

Storefronts showing signs of physical deterioration can often be repaired using simple methods. Partially decayed wood can be patched, built up, chemically treated or consolidated and then painted to achieve a sound condition, good appearance, and greatly extended life.

To repair wood showing signs of rot, it is advisable to dry the wood; carefully apply a fungicide such as pentachlorophenol (a highly toxic substance) to all decayed areas; then treat with 2 or 3 applications of boiled linseed oil (24 hours between applications). Afterward, fill cracks and holes with putty; caulk the joints between the various wooden members; and finally prime and paint the surface.

Partially decayed wood may also be strengthened and stabilized by consolidation, using semi-rigid epoxies which saturate porous decayed wood and then harden. The consolidated wood can then be filled with a semi-rigid epoxy patching compound, sanded and painted. More information on epoxies can be found in the publication "Epoxies for Wood Repairs in Historic Buildings," cited in the bibliography.

Where components of wood storefronts are so badly deteriorated that they cannot be stabilized, it is possible to replace the deteriorated parts with new pieces (see figure 9). These techniques all require skill and some expense, but are recommended in cases where decorative elements, such as brackets or pilasters, are involved. In some cases, missing edges can be filled and rebuilt using wood putty or epoxy compounds. When the epoxy cures, it can be sanded smooth and painted to achieve a durable and waterproof repair.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 9.** Rather than replace an entire wooden storefront when there is only localized deterioration, a new wooden component can be pieced in, as seen here in this column base. The new wood will need to be given primer and top coats of a high quality exterior paint—either an oil-base or latex system. Also wood that is flaking and peeling should be scraped and hand-sanded prior to repainting. Photo: H. Ward Jondl

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**Repainting of Wood**

Wooden storefronts were historically painted to deter the harmful effects of weathering (moisture, ultraviolet rays from the sun, wind, etc.) as well as to define and accent architectural features. Repainting exterior woodwork is thus an inexpensive way to provide continued protection from weathering and to give a fresh appearance to the storefront.

Before repainting, however, a careful inspection of all painted wood surfaces needs to be conducted in order to determine the extent of surface preparation necessary, that is, whether the existing layers of paint have deteriorated to the point that they will need to be partially or totally removed prior to applying the new paint.

As a general rule, removing paint from historic exterior woodwork should be avoided unless absolutely essential. Once conditions warranting removal have been identified, however, paint can be removed to the next sound layer using the gentlest method possible, then the woodwork repainted. For example, such conditions as mildewing, excessive chalking, or staining (from the oxidation of rusting nails or metal anchorage devices) generally require only thorough surface cleaning prior to repainting. Intercoat peeling, solvent blistering, and wrinkling require removal of the affected layer using mild abrasive methods such as hand scraping and sanding. In all of these cases of limited paint deterioration, after proper surface preparation the exterior woodwork may be given one or more coats of a high quality exterior oil finish paint.

On the other hand, if painted wood surfaces display continuous patterns of deep cracks or if they are extensively blistering and peeling so that bare wood is visible, the old paint should be completely removed before repainting. (It should be emphasized that because peeling to bare wood—the most common type of paint problem—is most often caused by excess interior or exterior moisture that collects behind the paint film, the first step in treating peeling is to locate and remove the source or sources of moisture. If this is not done, the new paint will simply peel off.)

There are several acceptable methods for total paint removal, depending on the particular wooden element involved. They include such thermal devices as an electric heat plate with scraper for flat surfaces such as siding, window sills, and doors or an electric hot-air gun with profiled scraper for solid decorative elements such as gingerbread or molding. Chemical methods play a more limited, supplemental role in removing paint from historic exterior woodwork; for example, caustic or solvent-base strippers may be used to remove paint from window muntins because thermal devices can easily break the glass. Detachable wooden elements such as exterior shutters, balusters and columns, can probably best be stripped by means of immersion in commercial dip tanks because other methods are too laborious. Care must be taken in rinsing all chemical residue off the wood prior to painting or the new paint will not adhere.

Finally, if the exterior woodwork has been stripped to bare wood, priming should take place within 48 hours (unless the wood is wet, in which case it should be permitted to dry before painting). Application of a high quality oil type exterior primer will provide a surface over which either an oil or latex top coat can be successfully used.
Rehabilitating Masonry Storefronts

Some storefronts are constructed of brick or stone, and like their metal and wooden counterparts, also may have been subjected to physical damage or alterations over time. Although mortar may have disintegrated, inappropriate surface coatings applied, and openings reduced or blocked up, careful rehabilitation will help restore the visual and physical integrity of the masonry storefront.

Repair and Replacement of Masonry

If obvious signs of deterioration—disintegrating mortar, spalling bricks or stone—are present, the causes (ground moisture, leaky downspouts, etc.) should be identified and corrected. Some repointing may be necessary on the masonry surface, but should be limited to areas in which so much mortar is missing that water accumulates in the mortar joints, causing further deterioration. New mortar should duplicate the composition, color, texture, and hardness, as well as the joint size and profile of the original. Badly spalling bricks may have to be replaced. Deteriorated stone may be replaced in kind, or with a matching substitute material; in some cases where not visually prominent, it may be covered with stucco, possibly scored to resemble blocks of stone.

Cleaning Masonry

Inappropriate cleaning techniques can be a major source of damage to historic masonry buildings. Historic masonry should be cleaned only when necessary to halt deterioration or to remove graffiti and stains, and always with the gentlest means possible, such as water and a mild detergent using natural bristle brushes, and/or a non-harmful chemical solution, both followed by a low-pressure water rinse.

It is important to remember that many mid-19th century brick buildings were painted immediately or soon after construction to protect poor quality brick or to imitate stone. Some historic masonry buildings not originally painted were painted at a later date to hide alterations or repairs, or to solve recurring maintenance or moisture problems. Thus, whether for reasons of historical tradition or practicality, it may be preferable to retain existing paint. If it is readily apparent that paint is not historic and is a later, perhaps unsightly or inappropriate treatment, removal may be attempted, but only if this can be carried out without damaging the historic masonry. Generally, paint removal from historic masonry may be accomplished successfully only with the use of specially formulated chemical paint removers. No abrasive techniques, such as wet or dry sandblasting should be considered. If non-historic paint cannot be removed without using abrasive methods, it is best to leave the masonry painted, although repainting in a compatible color may help visually.

Removing unsightly mastic from masonry presents a similarly serious problem. Its removal by mechanical means may result in abrading the masonry, and chemical and heat methods may prove ineffective, although solvents like acetone will aid in softening the hardened mastic. If the mastic has become brittle, a flat chisel may be used to pop it off; but this technique, if not undertaken with care, may result in damaging the masonry. And even if total removal is possible, the mastic may have permanently stained the masonry. Replacement of these masonry sec-

Designing Replacement Storefronts

Where an architecturally or historically significant storefront no longer exists or is too deteriorated to save, a new front should be designed which is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the building. Such a design should be undertaken based on a thorough understanding of the building's architecture and, where appropriate, the surrounding streetscape (see figure 10). For example, just because upper floor windows are arched is not sufficient justification for designing arched openings for the new storefront. The new design should "read" as a storefront; filling in the space with brick or similar solid material is inappropriate for historic buildings. Similarly the creation of an arcade or other new design element, which alters the architectural and historic character of the building and its relationship with the street, should be avoided. The guidelines on page 8 can assist in developing replacement storefront designs that respect the historic character of the building yet meet current economic and code requirements.

Guidelines for Designing Replacement Storefronts

1. Scale: Respect the scale and proportion of the existing building in the new storefront design.
2. Materials: Select construction materials that are appropriate to the storefront: wood, cast iron, and glass are usually more appropriate replacement materials than masonry which tends to give a massive appearance.
3. Cornice: Respect the horizontal separation between the storefront and the upper stories. A cornice or fascia board traditionally helped contain the store's sign.
4. Frame: Maintain the historic planar relationship of the storefront to the facade of the building and the streetscape (if appropriate). Most storefront frames are generally composed of horizontal and vertical elements.
5. Entrances: Differentiate the primary retail entrance from the secondary access to upper floors. In order to meet current code requirements, out-swinging doors generally must be recessed. Entrances should be placed where there were entrances historically, especially when echoed by architectural detailing (a pediment or projecting bay) on the upper stories.
6. Windows: The storefront generally should be as transparent as possible. Use of glass in doors, transoms, and display areas allows for visibility into and out of the store.
7. Secondary Design Elements: Keep the treatment of secondary design elements such as graphics and awnings as simple as possible in order to avoid visual clutter to the building and its streetscape.
A restoration program requires thorough documentation of the historic development of the building prior to initiating work. If a restoration of the original storefront is contemplated, old photographs and prints, as well as physical evidence, should be used in determining the form and details of the original. Because storefronts are particularly susceptible to alteration in response to changing marketing techniques, it is worthwhile to find visual documentation from a variety of periods to have a clear understanding of the evolution of the storefront. Removal of later additions that contribute to the character of the building should not be undertaken.

Other Considerations

Pigmented Structural Glass

The rehabilitation of pigmented structural glass storefronts, common in the 1930’s, is a delicate and often frustrating task, due to the fragility and scarcity of the material. Typically the glass was installed against masonry walls with asphaltic mastic and a system of metal shelf angles bolted to the walls on three-foot centers. Joints between the panels were filled with cork tape or an elastic joint cement to cushion movement and prevent moisture infiltration.

The decision to repair or replace damaged glass panels should be made on a case-by-case basis. In some instances, the damage may be so minor or the likelihood of finding replacement glass so small, that repairing, reanchoring and/or stabilizing the damaged glass panel may be the only prudent choice. If the panel is totally destroyed or missing, it may be possible to replace with glass salvaged from a demolition; or a substitute material, such as “spandrel glass,“ which approximates the appearance of the original. Although pigmented structural glass is no longer readily available, occasionally long-established glass “jobbers” will have a limited supply to repair historic storefronts.

Awnings

Where based on historic precedent, consider the use of canvas awnings on historic storefronts (see figure 11).

Awnings can help shelter passersby, reduce glare, and conserve energy by controlling the amount of sunlight hitting the store window, although buildings with northern exposures will seldom functionally require them. Today’s canvas awnings have an average life expectancy of between 4 and 7 years. In many cases awnings can disguise, in an inexpensive manner, later inappropriate alterations and can provide both additional color and a strong store identification. Fixed aluminum awnings and awnings simulating mansard roofs and umbrellas are generally inappropriate for older commercial buildings. If awnings are added, choose those that are made from soft canvas or vinyl materials rather than wood or metal; be certain that they are installed without damaging the building or visually impairing distinctive architectural features and can be operable for maximum energy conservation effect.
Signs

Signs were an important aspect of 19th and early 20th century storefronts and today play an important role in defining the character of a business district. In examining historic streetscape photographs, one is struck by the number of signs—in windows, over doors, painted on exterior walls, and hanging over (and sometimes across) the street. While this confusion was part of the character of 19th century cities and towns, today’s approach toward signs in historic districts tends to be much more conservative. Removal of some signs can have a dramatic effect in improving the visual appearance of a building; these include modern backlit fluorescent signs, large applied signs with distinctive corporate logos, and those signs attached to a building in such a way as to obscure significant architectural detailing. For this reason, their removal is encouraged in the process of rehabilitation. If new signs are designed, they should be of a size and style compatible with the historic building and should not cover or obscure significant architectural detailing or features. For many 19th century buildings, it was common to mount signs on the lintel above the first story. Another common approach, especially at the turn of the century, was to paint signs directly on the inside of the display windows. Frequently this was done in gold leaf. New hanging signs may be appropriate for historic commercial buildings, if they are of a scale and design compatible with the historic buildings. Retention of signs and advertising painted on historic walls, if of historic or artistic interest (especially where they provide evidence of early or original occupants), is encouraged.

Paint Color

Paint analysis can reveal the storefront’s historic paint colors and may be worth undertaking if a careful restoration is desired. If not, the paint color should be, at a minimum, appropriate to the style and setting of the building. This also means that if the building is in a historic district, the color selection should complement the building in question as well as other buildings in the block. In general, color schemes for wall and major decorative trim or details should be kept simple; in most cases the color or colors chosen for a storefront should be used on other painted exterior detailing (windows, shutter, cornice, etc.) to unify upper and lower portions of the facade.

Windows

Glass windows are generally the most prominent features in historic storefronts, and care should be taken to ensure that they are properly maintained. For smaller paneled windows with wooden frames, deteriorated putty should be removed manually, taking care not to damage wood along the rabbet. To reglaze, a bead of linseed oil-based putty should be laid around the perimeter of the rabbet; the glass pane pressed into place; glazing points inserted to hold the pane; and a final seal of putty beveled around the edge of the glass. For metal framed windows, glazing compound and special glazing clips are used to secure the glass; a final seal of glazing compound then is often applied. If the glass needs replacing, the new glass should match the original in size, color and reflective qualities. Mirrored or tinted glass are generally inappropriate replacements for historic storefronts. The replacement of cracked or missing glass in large windows should be undertaken by professional glaziers.

Code Requirements

Alterations to a storefront called for by public safety, handicapped access, and fire codes can be difficult design problems in historic buildings. Negotiations can be undertaken with appropriate officials to ensure that all applicable codes are being met while maintaining the historic character of the original construction materials and features. If, for instance, doors opening inward must be changed, rather than replace them with new doors, it may be possible to reverse the hinges and stops so that they will swing outward.

Summary

A key to the successful rehabilitation of historic commercial buildings is the sensitive treatment of the first floor itself (see figure 12). Wherever possible, significant storefronts (be they original or later alterations), including windows, sash, doors, transoms, signs and decorative features, should be repaired in order to retain the historic character of the building. Where original or early storefronts no longer exist or are too deteriorated to save, the commercial character of the building should nonetheless be preserved—either through an accurate restoration based on historic research and physical evidence or a contemporary design which is compatible with the scale, design, materials, color and texture of the historic building. The sensitive rehabilitation of historic storefronts will not only enhance the architectural character of the overall building but will contribute to rejuvenating neighborhoods or business districts as well.

Figure 12. This photograph of three late 19th century commercial buildings clearly shows the impact of preserving and rehabilitating storefronts. The one on the right has been totally obscured by a “modern” front added in the 1950’s. Although inappropriate alterations have taken place on the left storefront, it is still possible to determine the original configuration of the doors and display windows. The storefront in the middle has remained intact. Although in need of some minor maintenance work, the appeal of the original design and materials is immediately apparent.
Additional Reading


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This publication has been prepared pursuant to the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 which directs the Secretary of the Interior to certify rehabilitations of historic buildings that are consistent with their historic character: the advice and guidance provided in this brief will assist property owners in complying with the requirements of this law.

Preservation Briefs 11 has been developed under the technical editorial of Lee H. Nelson, AIA, Chief, Preservation Assistance Division, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. Comments on the usefulness of this information are welcomed and can be sent to Mr. Nelson at the above address.

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Cover drawing: This woodcut of the Joy Building, built in 1806 in Boston, shows early storefronts with shutters; note the profusion of signs covering the facade, advertising the services of the tenants.

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New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns

Anne E. Grimmer and Kay D. Weeks

A new exterior addition to a historic building should be considered in a rehabilitation project only after determining that requirements for the new or adaptive use cannot be successfully met by altering non-significant interior spaces. If the new use cannot be accommodated in this way, then an exterior addition may be an acceptable alternative. Rehabilitation as a treatment “is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.”

The topic of new additions, including rooftop additions, to historic buildings comes up frequently, especially as it relates to rehabilitation projects. It is often discussed and it is the subject of concern, consternation, considerable disagreement and confusion. Can, in certain instances, a historic building be enlarged for a new use without destroying its historic character? And, just what is significant about each particular historic building that should be preserved? Finally, what kind of new construction is appropriate to the historic building?

The vast amount of literature on the subject of additions to historic buildings reflects widespread interest as well as divergence of opinion. New additions have been discussed by historians within a social and political framework; by architects and architectural historians in terms of construction technology and style; and by urban planners as successful or unsuccessful contextual design. However, within the historic preservation and rehabilitation programs of the National Park Service, the focus on new additions is to ensure that they preserve the character of historic buildings.

Most historic districts or neighborhoods are listed in the National Register of Historic Places for their significance within a particular time frame. This period of significance of historic districts as well as individually-listed properties may sometimes lead to a misunderstanding that inclusion in the National Register may prohibit any physical change outside of a certain historical period—particularly in the form of exterior additions. National Register listing does not mean that a building or district is frozen in time and that no change can be made without compromising the historical significance. It does mean, however, that a new addition to a historic building should preserve its historic character.
Figure 2. The new section on the right is appropriately scaled and reflects the design of the historic Art Deco-style hotel. The apparent separation created by the recessed connector also enables the addition to be viewed as an individual building.

Guidance on New Additions

To meet Standard 1 of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, which states that “a property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment,” it must be determined whether a historic building can accommodate a new addition. Before expanding the building’s footprint, consideration should first be given to incorporating changes—such as code upgrades or spatial needs for a new use—within secondary areas of the historic building. However, this is not always possible and, after such an evaluation, the conclusion may be that an addition is required, particularly if it is needed to avoid modifications to character-defining interior spaces. An addition should be designed to be compatible with the historic character of the building and, thus, meet the Standards for Rehabilitation. Standards 9 and 10 apply specifically to new additions:

(9) “New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.”

(10) “New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.”

The subject of new additions is important because a new addition to a historic building has the potential to change its historic character as well as to damage and destroy significant historic materials and features. A new addition also has the potential to confuse the public and to make it difficult or impossible to differentiate the old from the new or to recognize what part of the historic building is genuinely historic.

The intent of this Preservation Brief is to provide guidance to owners, architects and developers on how to design a compatible new addition, including a rooftop addition, to a historic building. A new addition to a historic building should preserve the building’s historic character. To accomplish this and meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, a new addition should:

- Preserve significant historic materials, features and form;
- Be compatible; and
- Be differentiated from the historic building.

Every historic building is different and each rehabilitation project is unique. Therefore, the guidance offered here is not specific, but general, so that it can be applied to a wide variety of building types and situations. To assist in interpreting this guidance, illustrations of a variety of new additions are provided. Good examples, as well as some that do not meet the Standards, are included to further help explain and clarify what is a compatible new addition that preserves the character of the historic building.

Figure 3. The red and buff-colored parking addition with a rooftop playground is compatible with the early-20th century school as well as with the neighborhood in which it also serves as infill in the urban setting.
Preserve Significant Historic Materials, Features and Form

Attaching a new exterior addition usually involves some degree of material loss to an external wall of a historic building, but it should be minimized. Damaging or destroying significant materials and craftsmanship should be avoided, as much as possible.

Generally speaking, preservation of historic buildings inherently implies minimal change to primary or “public” elevations and, of course, interior features as well. Exterior features that distinguish one historic building or a row of buildings and which can be seen from a public right of way, such as a street or sidewalk, are most likely to be the most significant. These can include many different elements, such as: window patterns, window hoods or shutters; porticoes, entrances and doorways; roof shapes, cornices and decorative moldings; or commercial storefronts with their special detailing, signs and glazing patterns. Beyond a single building, entire blocks of urban or residential structures are often closely related architecturally by their materials, detailing, form and alignment. Because significant materials and features should be preserved, not damaged or hidden, the first place to consider placing a new addition is in a location where the least amount of historic material and character-defining features will be lost. In most cases, this will be on a secondary side or rear elevation.

One way to reduce overall material loss when constructing a new addition is simply to keep the addition smaller in proportion to the size of the historic building. Limiting the size and number of openings between old and new by utilizing existing doors or enlarging windows also helps to minimize loss. An often successful way to accomplish this is to link the addition to the historic building by means of a hyphen or connector. A connector provides a physical link while visually separating the old and new, and the connecting passageway penetrates and removes only a small portion of the historic wall. A new addition that will abut the historic building along an entire elevation or wrap around a side and rear elevation, will likely integrate the historic and the new interiors, and thus result in a high degree of loss of form and exterior walls, as well as significant alteration of interior spaces and features, and will not meet the Standards.

Compatible but Differentiated Design

In accordance with the Standards, a new addition must preserve the building’s historic character and, in order to do that, it must be differentiated, but compatible, with the historic building. A new addition must retain the essential form and integrity of the historic property. Keeping the addition smaller, limiting the removal of historic materials by linking the addition with a hyphen, and locating the new addition at the rear or on an inconspicuous side elevation of a historic building are techniques discussed previously that can help to accomplish this.

Rather than differentiating between old and new, it might seem more in keeping with the historic character
simply to repeat the historic form, material, features and detailing in a new addition. However, when the new work is highly replicative and indistinguishable from the old in appearance, it may no longer be possible to identify the "real" historic building. Conversely, the treatment of the addition should not be so different that it becomes the primary focus. The difference may be subtle, but it must be clear. A new addition to a historic building should protect those visual qualities that make the building eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Park Service policy concerning new additions to historic buildings, which was adopted in 1967, is not unique. It is an outgrowth and continuation of a general philosophical approach to change first expressed by John Ruskin in England in the 1850s, formalized by William Morris in the founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877, expanded by the Society in 1924 and, finally, reiterated in the 1964 Venice Charter—a document that continues to be followed by the national committees of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The 1967 Administrative Policies for Historical Areas of the National Park System direct that "... a modern addition should be readily distinguishable from the older work; however, the new work should be harmonious with the old in scale, proportion, materials, and color. Such additions should be as inconspicuous as possible from the public view." As a logical evolution from these Policies specifically for National Park Service-owned historic structures, the 1977 Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which may be applied to all historic buildings listed in, or eligible for listing in the National Register, also state that "the new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

Preserve Historic Character

The goal, of course, is a new addition that preserves the building's historic character. The historic character of each building may be different, but the methodology of establishing it remains the same. Knowing the uses and functions a building has served over time will assist in making what is essentially a physical evaluation. But, while written and pictorial documentation can provide a framework for establishing the building’s history, to a large extent the historic character is embodied in the physical aspects of the historic building itself—shape, materials, features, craftsmanship, window arrangements, colors, setting and interiors. Thus, it is important to identify the historic character before making decisions about the extent—or limitations—of change that can be made.

Figure 5. This addition (a) is constructed of matching brick and attached by a recessed connector (b) to the 1914 apartment building (c). The design is compatible and the addition is smaller and subordinate to the historic building (d).
A new addition should always be subordinate to the historic building; it should not compete in size, scale or design with the historic building. An addition that bears no relationship to the proportions and massing of the historic building—in other words, one that overpowers the historic form and changes the scale—will usually compromise the historic character as well. The appropriate size for a new addition varies from building to building; it could never be stated in a square or cubic footage ratio, but the historic building’s existing proportions, site and setting can help set some general parameters for enlargement. Although even a small addition that is poorly designed can have an adverse impact, to some extent, there is a predictable relationship between the size of the historic resource and what is an appropriate size for a compatible new addition.

Generally, constructing the new addition on a secondary side or rear elevation—in addition to material preservation—will also preserve the historic character. Not only will the addition be less visible, but because a secondary elevation is usually simpler and less distinctive, the addition will have less of a physical and visual impact on the historic building. Such placement will help to preserve the building’s historic form and relationship to its site and setting.

Historic landscape features, including distinctive grade variations, also need to be respected. Any new landscape features, including plants and trees, should be kept at a scale and density that will not interfere with understanding of the historic resource itself. A traditionally landscaped property should not be covered with large paved areas for parking which would drastically change the character of the site.

Despite the fact that in most cases it is recommended that the new addition be attached to a secondary elevation, sometimes this is not possible. There simply may not be a secondary elevation—some important freestanding buildings have significant materials and features on all sides. A structure or group of structures together with its setting (for example, a college campus) may be of such significance that any new addition would not only damage materials, but alter the buildings’ relationship to each other and the setting. An addition attached to a highly-visible elevation of a historic building can radically alter the historic form or obscure features such as a decorative cornice or window ornamentation. Similarly, an addition that fills

Figure 6. A new addition (left) is connected to the garage which separates it from the main block of the c. 1910 former florist shop (right). The addition is traditional in style, yet sufficiently restrained in design to distinguish it from the historic building.

Figure 7. A vacant side lot was the only place a new stair tower could be built when this 1903 theater was rehabilitated as a performing arts center. Constructed with matching materials, the stair tower is set back with a recessed connector and, despite its prominent location, it is clearly subordinate and differentiated from the historic theater.
Figure 8. The rehabilitation of this large, early-20th century warehouse (left) into affordable artists' lofts included the addition of a compatible glass and brick elevator/stair tower at the back (right).

Figure 9. A simple, brick stair tower replaced two non-historic additions at the rear of this 1879 school building when it was rehabilitated as a women's and children's shelter. The addition is set back and it is not visible from the front of the school.

Figure 10. The small size and the use of matching materials ensures that the new addition on the left is compatible with the historic Romanesque Revival-style building.

In a planned void on a highly-visible elevation (such as a U-shaped plan or a feature such as a porch) will also alter the historic form and, as a result, change the historic character. Under these circumstances, an addition would have too much of a negative impact on the historic building and it would not meet the Standards. Such situations may best be handled by constructing a separate building in a location where it will not adversely affect the historic structure and its setting.

In other instances, particularly in urban areas, there may be no other place but adjacent to the primary façade to locate an addition needed for the new use. It may be possible to design a lateral addition attached on the side that is compatible with the historic building, even though it is a highly-visible new element. Certain types of historic structures, such as government buildings, metropolitan museums, churches or libraries, may be so massive in size that a relatively large-scale addition may not compromise the historic character, provided, of course, the addition is smaller than the historic building. Occasionally, the visible size of an addition can be reduced by placing some of the spaces or support systems in a part of the structure that is underground. Large new additions may sometimes be successful if they read as a separate volume, rather than as an extension of the historic structure, although the scale, massing and proportions of the addition still need to be compatible with the historic building. However, similar expansion of smaller buildings would be dramatically out of scale. In summary, where any new addition is proposed, correctly assessing the relationship between actual size and relative scale will be a key to preserving the character of the historic building.
Design Guidance for Compatible New Additions to Historic Buildings

There is no formula or prescription for designing a new addition that meets the Standards. A new addition to a historic building that meets the Standards can be any architectural style—traditional, contemporary or a simplified version of the historic building. However, there must be a balance between differentiation and compatibility in order to maintain the historic character and the identity of the building being enlarged. New additions that too closely resemble the historic building or are in extreme contrast to it fall short of this balance. Inherent in all of the guidance is the concept that an addition needs to be subordinate to the historic building.

A new addition must preserve significant historic materials, features and form, and it must be compatible but differentiated from the historic building. To achieve this, it is necessary to carefully consider the placement or location of the new addition, and its size, scale and massing when planning a new addition. To preserve a property's historic character, a new addition must be visually distinguishable from the historic building. This does not mean that the addition and the historic building should be glaringly different in terms of design, materials and other visual qualities. Instead, the new addition should take its design cues from, but not copy, the historic building.

A variety of design techniques can be effective ways to differentiate the new construction from the old, while respecting the architectural qualities and vocabulary of the historic building, including the following:

- Incorporate a simple, recessed, small-scale hyphen to physically separate the old and the new volumes or set the addition back from the wall plane(s) of the historic building.
- Avoid designs that unify the two volumes into a single architectural whole. The new addition may include simplified architectural features that reflect, but do not duplicate, similar features on the historic building. This approach will not impair the existing building's historic character as long as the new structure is subordinate in size and clearly differentiated and distinguishable so that the identity of the historic structure is not lost in a new and larger composition. The historic building must be clearly identifiable and its physical integrity must not be compromised by the new addition.
Figure 12. This 1954 synagogue (left) is accessed through a monumental entrance to the right. The new education wing (far right) added to it features the same vertical elements and color and, even though it is quite large, its smaller scale and height ensure that it is secondary to the historic resource.

Figure 13. A glass and metal structure was constructed in the courtyard as a restaurant when this 1839 building was converted to a hotel. Although such an addition might not be appropriate in a more public location, it is compatible here in the courtyard of this historic building.

Figure 14. This glass addition was erected at the back of an 1895 former brewery during rehabilitation to provide another entrance. The addition is compatible with the plain character of this secondary elevation.

- Use building materials in the same color range or value as those of the historic building. The materials need not be the same as those on the historic building, but they should be harmonious; they should not be so different that they stand out or distract from the historic building. (Even clear glass can be as prominent as a less transparent material. Generally, glass may be most appropriate for small-scale additions, such as an entrance on a secondary elevation or a connector between an addition and the historic building.)

- Base the size, rhythm and alignment of the new addition’s window and door openings on those of the historic building.

- Respect the architectural expression of the historic building type. For example, an addition to an institutional building should maintain the architectural character associated with this building type rather than using details and elements typical of residential or other building types.

These techniques are merely examples of ways to differentiate a new addition from the historic building while ensuring that the addition is compatible with it. Other ways of differentiating a new addition from the historic building may be used as long as they maintain the primacy of the historic building. Working within these basic principles still allows for a broad range of architectural expression that can range from stylistic similarity to contemporary distinction. The recommended design approach for an addition is one that neither copies the historic building exactly nor stands in stark contrast to it.
Revising an Incompatible Design for a New Addition to Meet the Standards

Figure 15. The rehabilitation of a c. 1930 high school auditorium for a clinic and offices proposed two additions: a one-story entrance and reception area on this elevation (a); and a four-story elevator and stair tower on another side (b). The gabled entrance (c) first proposed was not compatible with the flat-roofed auditorium and the design of the proposed stair tower (d) was also incompatible and overwhelmed the historic building. The designs were revised (e-f) resulting in new additions that meet the Standards (g-h).
Incompatible New Additions to Historic Buildings

Figure 16. The proposal to add three row houses to the rear ell of this early-19th century residential property doubles its size and does not meet the Standards.

Figure 17. The small addition on the left is starkly different and it is not compatible with the eclectic, late-19th century house.

Figure 18. The expansion of a one- and one-half story historic bungalow (left) with a large two-story rear addition (right) has greatly altered and obscured its distinctive shape and form.

Figure 19. The upper two floors of this early-20th century office building were part of the original design, but were not built. During rehabilitation, the two stories were finally constructed. This treatment does not meet the Standards because the addition has given the building an appearance it never had historically.

Figure 20. The height, as well as the design, of these two-story rooftop additions overwhelms the two-story and the one-story, low-rise historic buildings.
New Additions in Densely-Built Environments

In built-up urban areas, locating a new addition on a less visible side or rear elevation may not be possible simply because there is no available space. In this instance, there may be alternative ways to help preserve the historic character. One approach when connecting a new addition to a historic building on a primary elevation is to use a hyphen to separate them. A subtle variation in material, detailing and color may also provide the degree of differentiation necessary to avoid changing the essential proportions and character of the historic building.

A densely-built neighborhood such as a downtown commercial core offers a particular opportunity to design an addition that will have a minimal impact on the historic building. Often the site for such an addition is a vacant lot where another building formerly stood. Treating the addition as a separate or infill building may be the best approach when designing an addition that will have the least impact on the historic building and the district. In these instances there may be no need for a direct visual link to the historic building. Height and setback from the street should generally be consistent with those of the historic building and other surrounding buildings in the district. Thus, in most urban commercial areas the addition should not be set back from the façade of the historic building. A tight urban setting may sometimes even accommodate a larger addition if the primary elevation is designed to give the appearance of being several buildings by breaking up the facade into elements that are consistent with the scale of the historic building and adjacent buildings.

Figure 21. Both wings of this historic L-shaped building (top), which fronts on two city streets, adjoined vacant lots. A two-story addition was constructed on one lot (above, left) and a six-story addition was built on the other (above, right). Like the historic building, which has two different facades, the compatible new additions are also different and appear to be separate structures rather than part of the historic building.

Figure 22. The proposed new addition is compatible with the historic buildings that remain on the block. Its design with multiple storefronts helps break up the mass.
Rooftop Additions

The guidance provided on designing a compatible new addition to a historic building applies equally to new rooftop additions. A rooftop addition should preserve the character of a historic building by preserving historic materials, features and form; and it should be compatible but differentiated from the historic building.

However, there are several other design principles that apply specifically to rooftop additions. Generally, a rooftop addition should not be more than one story in height to minimize its visibility and its impact on the proportion and profile of the historic building. A rooftop addition should almost always be set back at least one full bay from the primary elevation of the building, as well as from the other elevations if the building is free-standing or highly visible.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to minimize the impact of adding an entire new floor to relatively low buildings, such as small-scale residential or commercial structures, even if the new addition is set back from the plane of the façade. Constructing another floor on top of a small, one, two or three-story building is seldom appropriate for buildings of this size as it would measurably alter the building's proportions and profile, and negatively impact its historic character. On the other hand, a rooftop addition on an eight-story building, for example, in a historic district consisting primarily of tall buildings might not affect the historic character because the new construction may blend in with the surrounding buildings and be only minimally visible within the district. A rooftop addition in a densely-built urban area is more likely to be compatible on a building that is adjacent to similarly-sized or taller buildings.

A number of methods may be used to help evaluate the effect of a proposed rooftop addition on a historic building and district, including pedestrian sight lines, three-dimensional schematics and computer-generated design. However, drawings generally do not provide a true "picture" of the appearance and visibility of a proposed rooftop addition. For this reason, it is often necessary to construct a rough, temporary, full-size or skeletal mock up of a portion of the proposed addition, which can then be photographed and evaluated from critical vantage points on surrounding streets.

Figure 23. Colored flags marking the location of a proposed penthouse addition (a) were placed on the roof to help evaluate the impact and visibility of an addition planned for this historic furniture store (b). Based on this evaluation, the addition was constructed as proposed. It is minimally visible and compatible with the 1912 structure (c). The tall parapet wall conceals the addition from the street below (d).
Figure 24. How to Evaluate a Proposed Rooftop Addition.
A sight-line study (above) only factors in views from directly across the street, which can be very restrictive and does not illustrate the full effect of an addition from other public rights of way. A mock up (above, right) or a mock up enhanced by a computer-generated rendering (below, right) is essential to evaluate the impact of a proposed rooftop addition on the historic building.

Figure 25. It was possible to add a compatible, three-story, penthouse addition to the roof of this five-story, historic bank building because the addition is set far back, it is surrounded by taller buildings and a deep parapet conceals almost all of the addition from below.

Figure 26. A rooftop addition would have negatively impacted the character of the primary facade (right) of this mid-19th century, four-story structure and the low-rise historic district. However, a third floor was successfully added on the two-story rear portion (below) of the same building with little impact to the building or the district because it blends in with the height of the adjacent building.
Designing a New Exterior Addition to a Historic Building

This guidance should be applied to help in designing a compatible new addition that will meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation:

- A new addition should be simple and unobtrusive in design, and should be distinguished from the historic building—a recessed connector can help to differentiate the new from the old.

- A new addition should not be highly visible from the public right of way; a rear or other secondary elevation is usually the best location for a new addition.

- The construction materials and the color of the new addition should be harmonious with the historic building materials.

- The new addition should be smaller than the historic building—it should be subordinate in both size and design to the historic building.

The same guidance should be applied when designing a compatible rooftop addition, plus the following:

- A rooftop addition is generally not appropriate for a one, two or three-story building—and often is not appropriate for taller buildings.

- A rooftop addition should be minimally visible.

- Generally, a rooftop addition must be set back at least one full bay from the primary elevation of the building, as well as from the other elevations if the building is freestanding or highly visible.

- Generally, a rooftop addition should not be more than one story in height.

- Generally, a rooftop addition is more likely to be compatible on a building that is adjacent to similarly-sized or taller buildings.
Summary

Because a new exterior addition to a historic building can damage or destroy significant materials and can change the building's character, an addition should be considered only after it has been determined that the new use cannot be met by altering non-significant, or secondary, interior spaces. If the new use cannot be met in this way, then an attached addition may be an acceptable alternative if carefully planned and designed. A new addition to a historic building should be constructed in a manner that preserves significant materials, features and form, and preserves the building's historic character. Finally, an addition should be differentiated from the historic building so that the new work is compatible with—and does not detract from—the historic building, and cannot itself be confused as historic.

Additional Reading


Acknowledgements

Anne E. Grimmer, Senior Architectural Historian, Technical Preservation Services Branch, National Park Service, revised Preservation Brief 14, written by Kay D. Weeks and first published in 1986. The revised Brief features all new illustrations and contains expanded and updated design guidance on the subject of new additions that has been developed by the Technical Preservation Services Branch since the original publication of the Brief. Several individuals generously contributed their time and expertise to review the revision of this Preservation Brief, including: Sharon C. Park, FAIA, Chief, Architectural History and Historic Preservation, Smithsonian Institution; Elizabeth Tune and Karen Brandt, Department of Historic Resources, Commonwealth of Virginia; and Phillip Wisley and David Ferro, Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State. The Technical Preservation Services professional staff, in particular Michael J. Auer, Jo Ellen Hensley, Gary Sachau and Rebecca Shiffer, also provided important guidance in the development of this publication. All illustrations are from National Park Service files unless otherwise credited. Front cover image: Detail of new addition shown in Figure 4. Photo: © Maxwell MacKenzie.

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Architectural Character:
Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character

Lee H. Nelson, FAIA

The Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Historic Preservation Projects” embody two important goals: 1) the preservation of historic materials and, 2) the preservation of a building’s distinguishing character. Every old building is unique, with its own identity and its own distinctive character. Character refers to all those visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic building. Character-defining elements include the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment.

The purpose of this Brief is to help the owner or the architect identify those features or elements that give the building its visual character and that should be taken into account in order to preserve them to the maximum extent possible.

There are different ways of understanding old buildings. They can be seen as examples of specific building types, which are usually related to a building’s function, such as schools, courthouses or churches. Buildings can be studied as examples of using specific materials such as concrete, wood, steel, or limestone. They can also be considered as examples of an historical period, which is often related to a specific architectural style, such as Gothic Revival farmhouses, one-story bungalows, or Art Deco apartment buildings.

There are many other facets of an historic building besides its functional type, its materials or construction or style that contribute to its historic qualities or significance. Some of these qualities are feelings conveyed by the sense of time and place or in buildings associated with events or people. A complete understanding of any property may require documentary research about its style, construction, function, its furnishings or contents; knowledge about the original builder, owners, and later occupants; and knowledge about the evolutionary history of the building. Even though buildings may be of historic, rather than architectural significance, it is their tangible elements that embody its significance for association with specific events or persons and it is those tangible elements both on the exterior and interior that should be preserved.

Therefore, the approach taken in this Brief is limited to identifying those visual and tangible aspects of the historic building. While this may aid in the planning process for carrying out any ongoing or new use or restoration of the building, this approach is not a substitute for developing an understanding about the significance of an historic building and the district in which it is located.

If the various materials, features and spaces that give a building its visual character are not recognized and preserved, then essential aspects of its character may be damaged in the process of change.

A building’s character can be irreversibly damaged or changed in many ways, for example, by inappropriate repointing of the brickwork, by removal of a distinctive side porch, by changes to the window sash, by changes to the setting around the building, by changes to the major room arrangements, by the introduction of an atrium, by painting previously unpainted woodwork, etc.

A Three-Step Process to Identify A Building’s Visual Character

This Brief outlines a three-step approach that can be used by anyone to identify those materials, features and spaces that contribute to the visual character of a building. This approach involves first examining the building from afar to understand its overall setting and architectural context; then moving up very close to appreciate its materials and the craftsmanship and surface finishes evident in these materials; and then going into and through the building to perceive those spaces, rooms and details that comprise its interior visual character.

Step 1: Identify the Overall Visual Aspects

Identifying the overall visual character of a building is nothing more than looking at its distinguishing physical aspects without focusing on its details. The major contributors to a building’s overall character are embodied
in the general aspects of its setting; the shape of the building; its roof and roof features, such as chimneys or cupolas; the various projections on the building, such as porches or bay windows; the recesses or voids in a building, such as open galleries, arcades, or recessed balconies; the openings for windows and doorways; and finally the various exterior materials that contribute to the building’s character. Step one involves looking at the building from a distance to understand the character of its site and setting, and it involves walking around the building where that is possible. Some buildings will have one or more sides that are more important than the others because they are more highly visible. This does not mean that the rear of the building is of no value whatever but it simply means that it is less important to the overall character. On the other hand, the rear may have an interesting back porch or offer a private garden space or some other aspect that may contribute to the visual character. Such a general approach to looking at the building and site will provide a better understanding of its overall character without having to resort to an infinitely long checklist of its possible features and details. Regardless of whether a building is complicated or relatively plain, its face qualities of the materials, such as their visual character is the result of the juxtaposition of materials that are contrastingly different in their color and texture. The surface qualities of the materials may be important because they impart the very sense of craftsmanship and age that distinguishes historic buildings from other buildings. Furthermore, many of these close up qualities can be easily damaged or obscured by work that affects those surfaces. Examples of this could include painting previously unpainted masonry, rotary disk sanding of smooth wood siding to remove paint, abrasive cleaning of tooled stonework, or repointing reddish mortar joints with gray portland cement.

There is an almost infinite variety of surface materials, textures and finishes that are part of a building’s character which are fragile and easily lost.

Step 2: Identify the Visual Character at Close Range

Step two involves looking at the building at close range or arm’s length, where it is possible to see all the surface qualities of the materials, such as their color and texture, or surface evidence of craftsmanship or age. In some instances, the visual character is the result of the juxtaposition of materials that are contrastingly different in their color and texture. The surface qualities of the materials may be important because they impart the very sense of craftsmanship and age that distinguishes historic buildings from other buildings. Furthermore, many of these close up qualities can be easily damaged or obscured by work that affects those surfaces. Examples of this could include painting previously unpainted masonry, rotary disk sanding of smooth wood siding to remove paint, abrasive cleaning of tooled stonework, or repointing reddish mortar joints with gray portland cement.

There is an almost infinite variety of surface materials, textures and finishes that are part of a building’s character which are fragile and easily lost.

Step 3: Identify the Visual Character of the Interior Spaces, Features and Finishes

Perceiving the character of interior spaces can be somewhat more difficult than dealing with the exterior. In part, this is because so much of the exterior can be seen at one time and it is possible to grasp its essential character rather quickly. To understand the interior character, it is necessary to move through the spaces one at a time. While it is not difficult to perceive the character of one individual room, it becomes more difficult to deal with spaces that are interconnected and interrelated. Sometimes, as in office buildings, it is the vestibules or lobbies or corridors that are important to the interior character of the building. With other groups of buildings the visual qualities of the interior are related to the plan of the building, as in a church with its axial plan creating a narrow tunnel-like space which obviously has a different character than an open space like a sports pavilion. Thus the shape of the space may be an essential part of its character. With some buildings it is possible to perceive that there is a visual linkage in a sequence of spaces, as in a hotel, from the lobby to the grand staircase to the ballroom. Closing off the openings between those spaces would change the character from visually linked spaces to a series of closed spaces. For example, in a house that has a front porch or offer a private garden space or some other aspect that may contribute to the visual character. Such a general approach to looking at the building and site will provide a better understanding of its overall character without having to resort to an infinitely long checklist of its possible features and details. Regardless of whether a building is complicated or relatively plain, it is these broad categories that contribute to an understanding of the overall character rather than the specifics of architectural features such as moldings and their profiles.

Step 2: Identify the Visual Character at Close Range

Step two involves looking at the building at close range or arm’s length, where it is possible to see all the surface qualities of the materials, such as their color and texture, or surface evidence of craftsmanship or age. In some instances, the visual character is the result of the juxtaposition of materials that are contrastingly different in their color and texture. The surface qualities of the materials may be important because they impart the very sense of craftsmanship and age that distinguishes historic buildings from other buildings. Furthermore, many of these close up qualities can be easily damaged or obscured by work that affects those surfaces. Examples of this could include painting previously unpainted masonry, rotary disk sanding of smooth wood siding to remove paint, abrasive cleaning of tooled stonework, or repointing reddish mortar joints with gray portland cement.

There is an almost infinite variety of surface materials, textures and finishes that are part of a building’s character which are fragile and easily lost.

Step 3: Identify the Visual Character of the Interior Spaces, Features and Finishes

Perceiving the character of interior spaces can be somewhat more difficult than dealing with the exterior.
Overall Visual Character: Shape

The shape of a building can be an important aspect of its overall visual character. The building illustrated here, for example, has a distinctive horizontal box-like shape with the middle portion of the box projecting up an extra story. This building has other visual aspects that help define its overall character, including the pattern of vertical bands of windows, the decorative horizontal bands which separate the base of the building from the upper floors, the dark brown color of the brick, the large arched entranceway, and the castle-like tower behind the building.

Overall Visual Character: Openings

Window and door openings can be important to the overall visual character of historic buildings. This view shows only part of a much larger building, but the windows clearly help define its character, partly because of their shape and rhythm: the upper floor windows are grouped in a 4,3,4,1,4 rhythm, and the lower floor windows are arranged in a regular 1,1,1,... rhythm. The individual windows are tall, narrow and arched, and they are accented by the different colored arched heads, which are connected where there are multiple windows so that the color contrast is a part of its character. If additional windows were inserted in the gap of the upper floors, the character would be much changed, as it would if the window heads were painted to match the color of the brick walls. Photo by Susan I. Dynes

Overall Visual Character: Shape

It should not be assumed that only large or unusual buildings have a shape that is distinctive or identifiable. The front wall of this modest commercial building has a simple three-part shape that is the controlling aspect of its overall visual character. It consists of a large center bay with a two story opening that combines the storefront and the windows above. The upward projecting parapet and the decorative stonework also relate to and emphasize its shape. The flanking narrow bays enframe the side windows and the small iron balconies, and the main entrance doorway into the store. Any changes to the center portion of this three-part shape, could drastically affect the visual character of this building. Photo by Emogene A. Bevitt

Overall Visual Character: Openings

The opening illustrated here dominates the visual character of this building because of its size, shape, location, materials, and craftsmanship. Because of its relation to the generous staircase, this opening places a strong emphasis on the principal entry to the building. Enclosing this arcade-like entry with glass, for example, would materially and visually change the character of the building. Photo by Lee H. Nelson.
Overall Visual Character: Roof and Related Features

This building has a number of character-defining aspects which include the windows and the decorative stonework, but certainly the roof and its related features are visually important to its overall visual character. The roof is not only highly visible, it has elaborate stone dormers, and it also has decorative metalwork and slatwork. The red and black slates of differing sizes and shapes are laid in patterns that extend around the roof of this large and freestanding building. Any changes to this patterned slatwork, or to the other roofing details would damage the visual character of the building. Photo by Laurie R. Hammel

Overall Visual Character: Projections

A projecting porch or balcony can be very important to the overall visual character of almost any building and to the district in which it is located. Despite the size of this building (3 1/2 stories), and its distinctive roofline profile, and despite the importance of the very large window openings, the lacy wrap-around iron balcony is singularly important to the visual character of this building. It would seriously affect the character to remove the balcony, to enclose it, or to replace it with a balcony lacking the same degree of detail of the original material. Photo by Baird M. Smith
Overall Visual Character: Projections

Since these are row houses, any evaluation of their visual exterior character is necessarily limited to the front and rear walls; and while there are a number of things competing for attention in the front, it is the half round projecting bays with their conical roofs that contribute most prominently to the visual character. Their removal would be a devastating loss to the overall character, but even if preserved, the character could be easily damaged by changes to their color (as seen in the left bay which has been painted a dark color), or changes to their windows, or changes to their tile roofs. Though these houses have other fine features that contribute to the visual character and are worthy of preservation, these half-round bays demonstrate the importance of projecting features on an already rich and complex facade. Because of the repetitive nature of these projecting bays on adjacent row houses, along with the buildings’ size, scale, openings, and materials, they also contribute to the overall visual character of the streetscape in the historic district. Any evaluation of the visual character of such a building should take into account the context of this building within the district. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Overall Visual Character: Projections

Many buildings have projecting features such as porches, bay windows, or overhanging roofs, that help define their overall visual character. This projecting porch because of its size and shape, and because it copies the pitch and material of the main roof, is an important contributor to the visual character of this simple farmhouse. The removal or alteration of this porch would drastically alter the character of this building. If the porch were enclosed with wood or glass, or if gingerbread brackets were added to the porch columns, if the tin roof was replaced with asphalt, or if the porch railing was opened to admit a center stairway, the overall visual character could be seriously damaged. Although this projecting porch is an important feature, almost any other change to this house, such as changes to the window pattern, or changes to the main roof, or changes to the setting, would also change its visual character. Photo by Hugh C. Miller

Overall Visual Character: Trim

If one were to analyze the overall shape or form of this building, it would be seen that it is a gable-roofed house with dormers and a wrap-around porch. It is similar to many other houses of the period. It is the wooden trim on the eaves and around the porch that gives this building its own identify and its special visual character. Although such wooden trim is vulnerable to the elements, and must be kept painted to prevent deterioration; the loss of this trim would seriously damage the overall visual character of this building, and its loss would obliterate much of the close-up visual character so dependent upon craftsmanship for the moldings, carvings, and the see-through jigsaw work. Photo by Hugh C. Miller
Overall Visual Character: Setting

In the process of identifying the overall visual character, the aspect of setting should not be overlooked. Obviously, the setting of urban row houses differs from that of a mansion with a designed landscape. However, there are many instances where the relationship between the building and its place on the streetscape, or its place in the rural environment, in other words its setting, may be an important contributor to its overall character.

In this instance, the corner tower and the arched entryway are important contributors to the visual character of the building itself, but there is also a relationship between the building and the two converging streets that is also an important aspect of this historic building. The curb, sidewalk, fence, and the yard interrelate with each other to establish a setting that is essential to the overall visual character of the historic property. Removing these elements or replacing them with a driveway or parking court would destroy an important visual aspect. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Overall Visual Character: Setting

Even architecturally modest buildings frequently will have a setting that contributes to their overall character. In this very urban district, set-backs are the exception, so that the small front yard is something of a luxury, and it is important to the overall character because of its design and materials, which include the iron fence along the sidewalk, the curved walk leading to the porch, and the various plantings. In a district where parking spaces are in great demand, such front yards are sometimes converted to off-street parking, but in this instance, that would essentially destroy its setting and would drastically change the visual character of this historic property. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Overall Visual Character: Setting

Among the various visual aspects relating to the setting of an historic property are such site features as gardens, walks, fences, etc. This can include their design and materials. There is a dramatic difference in the visual character between these two fence constructions—one utilizing found materials with no particular regard to their uniformity of size or placement, and the other being a product of the machine age utilizing cast iron components assembled into a pattern of precision and regularity. If the corral fence were to be repaired or replaced with lumberyard materials its character would be dramatically compromised. The rhythm and regularity of the cast iron fence is so important to its visual character that its character could be altered by accidental damage or vandalism, if some of the fence top spikes were broken off thus interrupting the rhythm or pattern. Photos by Lee H. Nelson
Arm's Length Visual Character: Materials

At arm’s length, the visual character is most often determined by the surface qualities of the materials and craftsmanship; and while these aspects are often inextricably related, the original choice of materials often plays the dominant role in establishing the close-range character because of the color, texture, or shape of the materials.

In this instance, the variety and arrangement of the materials is important in defining the visual character, starting with the large pieces of broken stone which form the projecting base for the building walls, then changing to a wall of roughly rectangular stones which vary in size, color, and texture, all with accentuated, projecting beads of mortar, then there is a rather precise and narrow band of cut and dressed stones with minimal mortar joints, and finally, the main building walls are composed of bricks, rather uniform in color, with fairly generous mortar joints. It is the juxtaposition and variety of these materials (and of course, the craftsmanship) that is very important to the visual character. Changing the raised mortar joints, for example, would drastically alter the character at arm’s length. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Arm’s Length Visual Character: Craft Details

There are many instances where craft details dominate the arm’s length visual character. As seen here, the craft details are especially noticeable because the stones are all of a uniform color, and they are all squared off, but their surfaces were worked with differing tools and techniques to create a great variety of textures, resulting in a tour-de-force of craft details. This texture is very important at close range. It was a deliberately contrived surface that is an important contributor to the visual character of this building. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Arm’s Length Visual Character: Craft Details

The arm’s length visual character of this building is a combination of the materials and the craft details. Most of the exterior walls of this building consist of early 20th century Roman brick, precisely made, unusually long bricks, in varying shades of yellow-brown, with a noticeable surface spotting of dark iron pyrites. While this brick is an important contributor to the visual character, the related craft details are perhaps more important, and they consist of: unusually precise coursing of the bricks, almost as though they were laid up using a surveyor’s level; a row of recessed bricks every ninth course, creating a shadow pattern on the wall; deeply recessed mortar joints, creating a secondary pattern of shadows; and a toothed effect where the bricks overlap each other at the corner of the building. The cumulative effect of this artisanry is important to the arm’s length visual character, and it is evident that it would be difficult to match if it were damaged, and the effect could be easily damaged through insensitive treatments such as painting the brickwork or by careless repointing. Photo by Lee H. Nelson
**Arm's Length Visual Character: Craft Details**

On some buildings, there are subtle aspects of visual character that cannot be perceived from a distance. This is especially true of certain craft details that can be seen only at close range. On this building, it is easily understood that the narrow, unpainted, and weathered clapboards are an important aspect of its overall visual character; but at close range there are a number of subtle but very important craft details that contribute to the handmade quality of this building, and which clearly differentiate it from a building with machine sawn clapboards. The clapboards seen here were split by hand and the bottom edges were not dressed, so that the boards vary in width and thickness, and thus they give a very uneven shadow pattern. Because they were split from oak that is unpainted, there are occasional wavy rays in the wood that stand against the grain. Also noticeable is the fact that the boards are of relatively short lengths, and that they have feather-edged ends that overlap each other, a detail that is very different from butted joints. The occasional large nail heads and the differential silver-gray weathering add to the random quality of the clapboards. All of these qualities contribute to the arm’s length visual character. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

**Arm’s Length Visual Character: Craft Details**

While hand-split clapboards are distinctive visual elements in their own way, machine-sawn and painted wood siding is equally important to the overall visual character in most other instances. At arm’s length, however, the machine sawn siding may not be so distinctive; but there might be other details that add visual character to the wooden building, such as the details of wooden trim and louvered shutters around the windows (as seen here), or similar surface textures on other buildings, such as the saw marks on wall shingles, the joints in ledged glass, decorative tinwork on a rain conductor box, the rough surface of pebble-dash stuccowork, or the pebbly surface of exposed aggregate concrete. Such surfaces can only be seen at arm’s length and they add to the visual character of a historic building. Photo by Hugh C. Miller

**Interior Visual Character: Individually Important Spaces**

In assessing the interior visual character of any historic building, it is necessary to ask whether there are spaces that are important to the character of this particular building, whether the building is architecturally rich or modest, or even if it is a simple or utilitarian structure. The character of the individually important space which is illustrated here is a combination of its size, the twin curving staircases, the massive columns and curving vaulted ceilings, in addition to the quality of the materials in the floor and in the stairs. If the ceiling were to be lowered to provide space for heating ducts, or if the stairways were to be enclosed for code reasons, the shape and character of this space would be damaged, even if there was no permanent physical damage. Such changes can easily destroy the visual character of an individually important interior space. Thus, it is important that the visual aspects of a building’s interior character be recognized before planning any changes or alterations. Photo by National Portrait Gallery
**Interior Visual Character: Related Spaces**

Many buildings have interior spaces that are visually or physically related so that, as you move through them, they are perceived not as separate spaces, but as a sequence of related spaces that are important in defining the interior character of the building. The example which is illustrated here consists of three spaces that are visually linked to each other.

The first of these spaces is the vestibule which is of a generous size and unusual in its own right, but more important, it visually relates to the second space which is the main stairhall.

The hallway is the circulation artery for the building, and leads both horizontally and vertically to other rooms and spaces, but especially to the open and inviting stairway.

The stairway is the third part of this sequence of related spaces, and it provides continuing access to the upper floors.

These related spaces are very important in defining the interior character of this building. Almost any change to these spaces, such as installing doors between the vestibule and the hallway, or enclosing the stair would seriously impact their character and the way that character is perceived. Top photo by Mel Chamowitz, others by John Tennant

**Interior Visual Character: Interior Features**

Interior features are three-dimensional building elements or architectural details that are an integral part of the building as opposed to furniture. Interior features are often important in defining the character of an individual room or space. In some instances, an interior feature, like a large and ornamental open stairway may dominate the visual character of an entire building. In other instances, a modest iron stairway (like the one illustrated here) may be an important interior feature, and its preservation would be crucial to preserving the interior character of the building. Such features can also include the obvious things like fireplace mantles, plaster ceiling medallions, or panelling, but they also extend to features like hardware, lighting fixtures, bank tellers cages, decorative elevator doors, etc. Photo by David W. Look
Interior Visual Character: Interior Features

Modern heating or cooling devices usually add little to the interior character of a building; but historically, radiators, for instance, may have contributed to the interior character by virtue of their size or shape, or because of their specially designed bases, piping, and decorative grillage or enclosures. Sometimes they were painted with several colors to highlight their integral, cast-in details. In more recent times, it has been common to overpaint and conceal such distinctive aspects of earlier heating and plumbing devices, so that we seldom have the opportunity to realize how important they can be in defining the character of interior rooms and spaces. For that reason, it is important to identify their character-defining potential, and consider their preservation, retention, or restoration. Photo by David W. Look

Interior Visual Character: Surface Materials and Finishes

When identifying the visual character of historic interior spaces one should not overlook the importance of those materials and finishes that comprise the surfaces of walls, floors and ceilings. The surfaces may have evidence of either hand-craft or machine-made products that are important contributors to the visual character, including patterned or inlaid designs in the wood flooring, decorative painting practices such as stenciling, imitation marble or wood grain, wallpapering, tinwork, tile floors, etc.

The example illustrated here involves a combination of real marble at the base of the column, imitation marble patterns on the plaster surface of the column (a practice called scagliola), and a tile floor surface that uses small mosaic tiles arranged to form geometric designs in several different colors. While such decorative materials and finishes may be important in defining the interior visual character of this particular building, it should be remembered that in much more modest buildings, the plainness of surface materials and finishes may be an essential aspect of their historic character. Photo by Lee H. Nelson

Fragility of A Building’s Visual Character

Some aspects of a building’s visual character are fragile and are easily lost. This is true of brickwork, for example, which can be irreversibly damaged with inappropriate cleaning techniques or by insensitive repointing practices. At least two factors are important contributors to the visual character of brickwork, namely the brick itself and the craftsmanship. Between these, there are many more aspects worth noting, such as color range of bricks, size and shape variations, texture, bonding patterns, together with the many variable qualities of the mortar joints, such as color, width of joint and tooling. These qualities could be easily damaged by painting the brick, by raking out the joint with power tools, or repointing with a joint that is too wide. As seen here during the process of repointing, the visual character of this front wall is being dramatically changed from a wall where the bricks predominate, to a wall that is visually dominated by the mortar joints. Photo by Lee H. Nelson
The Architectural Character Checklist/Questionnaire

Lee H. Nelson, FAIA
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This checklist can be taken to the building and used to identify those aspects that give the building and setting its essential visual qualities and character. This checklist consists of a series of questions that are designed to help in identifying those things that contribute to a building’s character. The use of this checklist involves the three-step process of looking for: 1) the overall visual aspects, 2) the visual character at close range, and 3) the visual character of interior spaces, features and finishes.

Because this is a process to identify architectural character, it does not address those intangible qualities that give a property or building or its contents its historic significance, instead this checklist is organized on the assumption that historic significance is embodied in those tangible aspects that include the building’s setting, its form and fabric.

Step One

1. Shape
What is there about the form or shape of the building that gives the building its identity? Is the shape distinctive in relation to the neighboring buildings? Is it simply a low, squat box, or is it a tall, narrow building with a corner tower? Is the shape highly consistent with its neighbors? Is the shape so complicated because of wings, or ells, or differences in height, that its complexity is important to its character? Conversely, is the shape so simple or plain that adding a feature like a porch would change that character? Does the shape convey its historic function as in smoke stacks or silos?

Notes on the Shape or Form of the Building:

2. Roof and Roof Features
Does the roof shape or its steep (or shallow) slope contribute to the building’s character? Does the fact that the roof is highly visible (or not visible at all) contribute to the architectural identity of the building? Are certain roof features important to the profile of the building against the sky or its background, such as cupolas, multiple chimneys, dormers, cresting, or weathervanes? Are the roofing materials or their colors or their patterns (such as patterned slates) more noticeable than the shape or slope of the roof?

Notes on the Roof and Roof Features:

3. Openings
Is there a rhythm or pattern to the arrangement of windows or other openings in the walls; like the rhythm of windows in a factory building, or a three-part window in the front bay of a house; or is there a noticeable relationship between the width of the window openings and the wall space between the window openings? Are there distinctive openings, like a large arched entranceway, or decorative window lintels that accentuate the importance of the window openings, or unusually shaped windows, or patterned window sash, like small panes of glass in the windows or doors, that are important to the character? Is the plainness of the window openings such that adding shutters or gingerbread trim would radically change its character? Is there a hierarchy of facades that make the front windows more important than the side windows? What about those walls where the absence of windows establishes its own character?

Notes on the Openings:

4. Projections
Are there parts of the building that are character-defining because they project from the walls of the building like porches, cornices, bay windows, or balconies? Are there turrets, or widely overhanging eaves, projecting pediments or chimneys?

Notes on the Projections:

5. Trim and Secondary Features
Does the trim around the windows or doors contribute to the character of the building? Is there other trim on the walls or around the projections that, because of its decoration or color or patterning contributes to the character of the building? Are there secondary features such as shutters, decorative gables, railings, or exterior wall panels?

Notes on the Trim and Secondary Features:

6. Materials
Do the materials or combination of materials contribute to the overall character of the building as seen from a distance because of their color or patterning, such as broken faced stone, scalloped wall shingling, rounded rock foundation walls, boards and battens, or textured stucco?

Notes on the Materials:

7. Setting
What are the aspects of the setting that are important to the visual character? For example, is the alignment of buildings along a city street and their relationship to the sidewalk the essential aspect of its setting? Or, conversely, is the essential character dependent upon the tree plantings and out buildings which surround the farmhouse? Is the front yard important to the setting of the modest house? Is the specific site important to the setting such as being on a hilltop, along a river, or, is the building placed on the site in such a way to enhance its setting? Is there a special relationship to the adjoining streets and other buildings? Is there a view? Is there fencing, planting, terracing, walkways or any other landscape aspects that contribute to the setting?

Notes on the Setting:
Step Two

8. Materials at Close Range
Are there one or more materials that have an inherent texture that contributes to the close range character, such as stucco, exposed aggregate concrete, or brick textured with vertical grooves? Or materials with inherent colors such as smooth orange-colored brick with dark spots of iron pyrites, or prominently veined stone, or green serpentine stone? Are there combinations of materials, used in juxtaposition, such as several different kinds of stone, combinations of stone and brick, dressed stones for window lintels used in conjunction with rough stones for the wall? Has the choice of materials or the combinations of materials contributed to the character?
Notes on the Materials at Close Range:

9. Craft Details
Is there high quality brickwork with narrow mortar joints? Is there hand-toolied or patterned stonework? Do the walls exhibit carefully struck vertical mortar joints and recessed horizontal joints? Is the wall shinglework laid up in patterns or does it retain evidence of the circular saw marks or can the grain of the wood be seen through the semi-transparent stain? Are there hand split or hand-dressed clapboards, or machine smooth beveled siding, or wood rusticated to look like stone, or Art Deco zigzag designs executed in stucco?
Almost any evidence of craft details, whether handmade or machinemade, will contribute to the character of a building because it is a manifestation of the materials, of the times in which the work was done, and of the tools and processes that were used. It further reflects the effects of time, of maintenance (and/or neglect) that the building has received over the years. All of these aspects are a part of the surface qualities that are seen only at close range.
Notes on the Craft Details:

Step Three

10. Individual Spaces
Are there individual rooms or spaces that are important to this building because of their size, height, proportion, configuration, or function, like the center hallway in a house, or the bank lobby, or the school auditorium, or the ballroom in a hotel, or a courtroom in a county courthouse?
Notes on the Individual Spaces:

11. Related Spaces and Sequences of Spaces
Are there adjoining rooms that are visually and physically related with large doorways or open archways so that they are perceived as related rooms as opposed to separate rooms? Is there an important sequence of spaces that are related to each other, such as the sequence from the entry way to the lobby to the stairway and to the upper balcony as in a theatre; or the sequence in a residence from the entry vestibule to the hallway to the front parlor, and on through the sliding doors to the back parlor; or the sequence in an office building from the entry vestibule to the lobby to the bank of elevators?
Notes on the Related Spaces and Sequences of Spaces:

12. Interior Features
Are there interior features that help define the character of the building, such as fireplace mantels, stairways and balustrades, arched openings, interior shutters, inglenooks, cornices, ceiling medallions, light fixtures, balconies, doors, windows, hardware, wainscoting, paneling, trim, church pews, courtoom bars, teller cages, waiting room benches?
Notes on the Interior Features:

13. Surface Finishes and Materials
Are there surface finishes and materials that can affect the design, the color or the texture of the interior? Are there materials and finishes or craft practices that contribute to the interior character, such as wooden parquet floors, checkerboard marble floors, pressed metal ceilings, fine hardwoods, grained doors or marbledized surfaces, or polychrome painted surfaces, or stencilling, or wallpaper that is important to the historic character? Are there surface finishes and materials that, because of their plainness, are imparting the essential character of the interior such as hard or bright, shiny wall surfaces of plaster or glass or metal?
Notes on the Surface Finishes and Materials:

14. Exposed Structure
Are there spaces where the exposed structural elements define the interior character such as the exposed posts, beams, and trusses in a church or train shed or factory? Are there rooms with decorative ceiling beams (non-structural) in bungalows, or exposed vigas in adobe buildings?
Notes on the Exposed Structure:

This concludes the three-step process of identifying the visual aspects of historic buildings and is intended as an aid in preserving their character and other distinguishing qualities. It is not intended as a means of understanding the significance of historical properties or districts, nor of the events or people associated with them. That can only be done through other kinds of research and investigation.

This publication has been prepared pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Comments on the usefulness of this information are welcomed and can be sent to Mr. Nelson, Preservation Assistance Division, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127. This publication is not copyrighted and can be reproduced without penalty. Normal procedures for credit to the author and the National Park Service are appreciated.