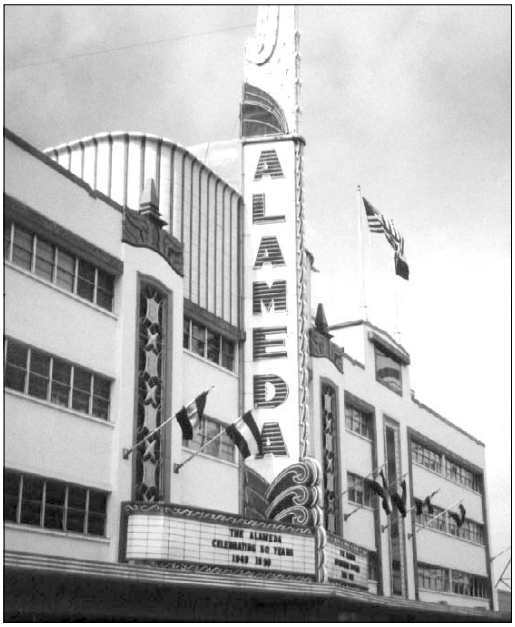
Design Guidelines
for
Houston Street



San Antonio, Texas

December 2000

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Houston Street
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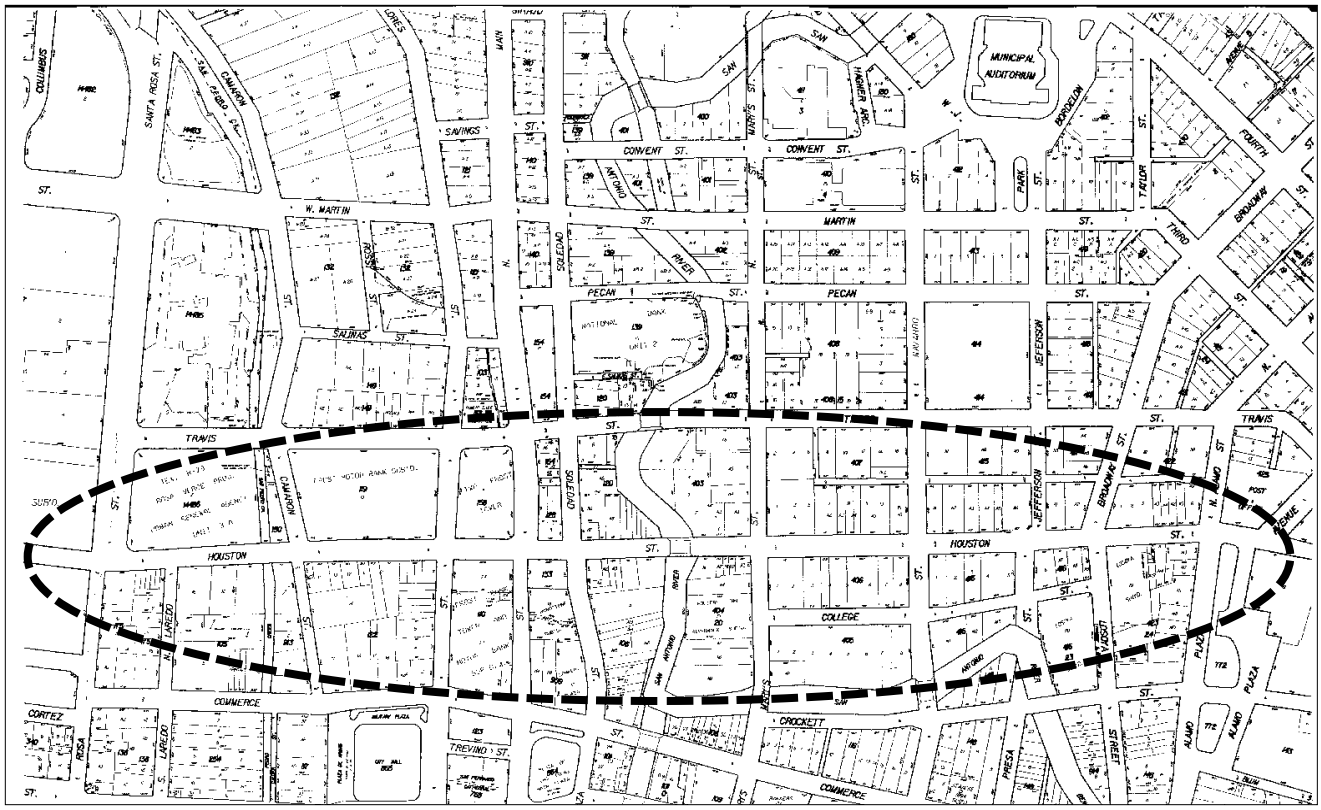


Houston Street Historic Area
San Antonio, Texas

North

Introduction

This document presents design guidelines for the Houston Street historic area in downtown San Antonio. The area has been an important focus of commercial and cultural activity for two centuries. The buildings that stand reflect the efforts of citizens who worked, lived and prospered in the area. Now, entering the twenty-first century, San Antonio anticipates substantial improvements to Houston Street. These guidelines provide a means of preserving Houston Street's heritage while accommodating compatible development and redevelopment.

Policies Underlying the Guidelines

These guidelines seek to help manage change such that the traditional character of the area is respected while accommodating compatible improvements. They reflect the City's goals to promote economic development, enhance the image of the area and reuse its historic resources. The goals outlined in three major planning and preservation documents form the foundation for the design policies that should guide the redevelopment of Houston Street. The goals contained in these documents are discussed below:

Entering the twenty-first century, San Antonio anticipates substantial improvements to Houston Street such as this rehabilitation project to the historic Hotel Savoy building.

Provide design standards for streetscape improvements including appropriate landscaping, furnishings, signage/graphics and pedestrian paths, along with gateways, landmarks and markers at strategic access/ transition points.

The Historic Preservation and Urban Design Ordinance #80910, City of San Antonio

This ordinance implements several of the following goals:

- *To preserve, protect and enhance historically, culturally, architecturally and archaeologically significant sites and structures which impart a distinct aspect to the City and serve as visible reminders of the City's culture and heritage;*
- *To recognize, protect and strengthen the unique design character of individual historic districts and individual areas of the City;*
- *To provide a review process for the appropriate preservation and development of important historical, archaeological and cultural resources;*
- *To maintain a generally compatible outward appearance of both historic and modern structures through complimentary scale, form, color, proportion, texture and material;*

Downtown San Antonio, A Strategic Plan for Entering the 21st Century

This plan also provides a clear vision for the downtown area that relates to Houston Street:

"San Antonians acknowledge downtown as the heart of the City and are concerned with its continued enhancement as the center of cultural, historic and civic activity along with government and business. For the most part, they like downtown now, and want to build on its positive elements for the future, so that it grows vibrant, colorful and vital sector of the City."

The following goals apply to the Houston Street historic area revitalization:

- *Create a vibrant mix of activities that promote commercial and cultural development along Houston Street and surrounding area. In addition, to provide additional development activities that relieve pedestrian traffic on the River Walk.*
- *Put residents on the streets and create activity by placing residences in the central area, e.g., adaptive reuse of buildings on Houston Street.*

San Antonio Master Plan Policies

The Master Plan, adopted May 29, 1997, contains a number of goals and policies that apply to Houston Street:

- ***Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the City's urban design.***
  Policy 1b: *Develop urban design policies and standards which integrate and coordinate planning for historic resources.*
  - *Preserve and enhance the City's important historic and cultural characteristics, including architectural styles and historic districts, as well as existing residential and commercial districts and neighborhood centers.*
  - *Encourage public art in all public and private projects.*
  - *Provide design standards for streetscape improvements including appropriate landscaping, furnishings, signage/graphics and pedestrian paths, along with gateways, landmarks and markers at strategic access/transition points.*
  - *Develop unique and specific design standards for areas throughout the City, including neighborhoods and the downtown.*

- ***Goal 2: Preserve and enhance the City's historic resources.***
  Policy 2b: *Actively encourage preservation and renovation as a first priority whenever possible.*
  Policy 2f: *Promote partnerships between public agencies and conservation and neighborhood organizations to achieve preservation objectives.*

- ***Goal 5: Develop policies for various transportation modes that will increase access to employment centers...commercial facilities; and decrease the reliance on single occupancy vehicles.***
  Policy 5g: *Provide additional parking where needed, but ensure that it is integrated into the surrounding environment.*

The Chinese Balcony, an important historic resource, overlooks the San Antonio River at the Houston Street bridge crossing.

Overview of the Design Guidelines

Design guidelines define those important features of an established architectural and historical context that should be respected when improvements occur. It is important to note that the guidelines neither dictate taste nor assure good design. Rather, they are intended to be a means for balancing the traditional qualities of the Houston Street historic area with the demands of contemporary use.

The design guidelines provide a basis for making decisions about the appropriate treatment of existing buildings, including historic resources, and the design of compatible new construction. They also serve as educational and planning tools for property owners and their design professionals who seek to make improvements that may affect the character of the Houston Street historic area.

Design guidelines are constructed of the following four components:

1. Design topic

Within each chapter, design guidelines are grouped into pertinent design topics. For example, in the chapter addressing the *Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*, the subtopic, "Design of Additions," is among those discussed. Organizing design guidelines into design topic areas allows the user to quickly select the specific design topics within a chapter that are relevant.

A sample design guideline

A typical design guideline in this document contains four components:

First, a **design topic** heading allows the user to quickly select relevant categories of design issues.

Second, the **design guideline** itself is presented as a numbered statement in bold type. This sets forth a basic principle for treatment of a selected design topic.

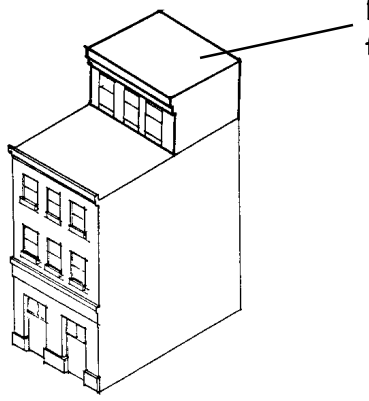
Third, **supplementary requirements and/or information** are listed under the guideline. Preceded by bullets (•), these clarify the primary design guideline statement and may suggest specific methods for complying with it.

Fourth, an **illustration**, in the form of a sketch or photograph, depicts a method of complying with the guideline.

Design of Additions

55. An addition may be made to the roof of a building if it does the following:

- An addition should be set back from a primary, character-defining facade, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building.



2. Design guideline

A specific design guideline is presented as a **bold face** statements under each design topic. They are numbered to indicate their relative position within the chapter and to aid in specific reference in the review process.

3. Supplementary requirements and/or information

Also provided with a design guideline are supplementary requirements, which clarify the primary design guideline statement and may suggest specific methods for complying with it. This may include additional design requirements or may provide an expanded explanation. These statements are listed as bullets (•).

4. Illustrations

Photographs and sketches may also be provided to clarify the intent of a design guideline or its supplementary information.

Basic Principles of Design in the Houston Street Historic Area

There are a number of basic principles of design that are fundamental to the character of the Houston Street historic area and provide the foundation for the design guidelines. Following are these principles:

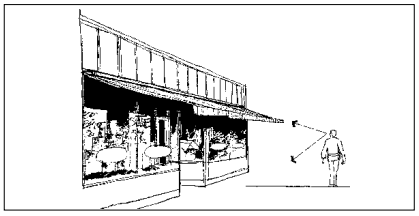
Principle 1. Maintain a clear definition of the street edge.

Traditionally, the edge of the sidewalk was clearly defined as a "street wall," which helped define the street as an urban space. This feature should be maintained.

Maintain a clear definition of the street edge.

Principle 2. Enhance the street level as an inviting place for pedestrians.

Providing features that are visually interesting and that are in human scale is essential. These may include storefront windows, display cases, art and landscaping.



Enhance the street level as an inviting place for pedestrians.

Principle 3. Relate to traditional buildings in the area.

Traditional buildings combine to establish a sense of continuity in the area, while also accommodating variety in design and detail. As properties are improved, they should enhance the overall image of the area as a place to do business. Each building can help contribute to this visual continuity while also meeting an individual owner's needs.

Relate to traditional buildings in the area.

If the building is a historic structure, then respect its earlier character.

Principle 4. If the building is a historic structure, then respect its earlier character.

Preservation of Houston Street's heritage is important to its sense of community and its economic development. Many of the structures on Houston Street have historic value, even some that have experienced alterations. It is important to consider the significance of their character-defining features, including basic forms, materials and details when planning improvements.

Application of the Design Guidelines

Several properties that these design guidelines apply to are also under the jurisdiction of the San Antonio Riverwalk Design Guidelines. These properties will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, in order to determine which specific guidelines apply.

1. Design Character of Houston Street

Houston Street is at the core of downtown San Antonio and is the most important, commercial street in downtown. It has occupied this position since all but the earliest days of the settlement of this area. This chapter summarizes the key features that defined its character historically and that are found today.

Key Themes Exhibited by the Historic Development of Houston Street

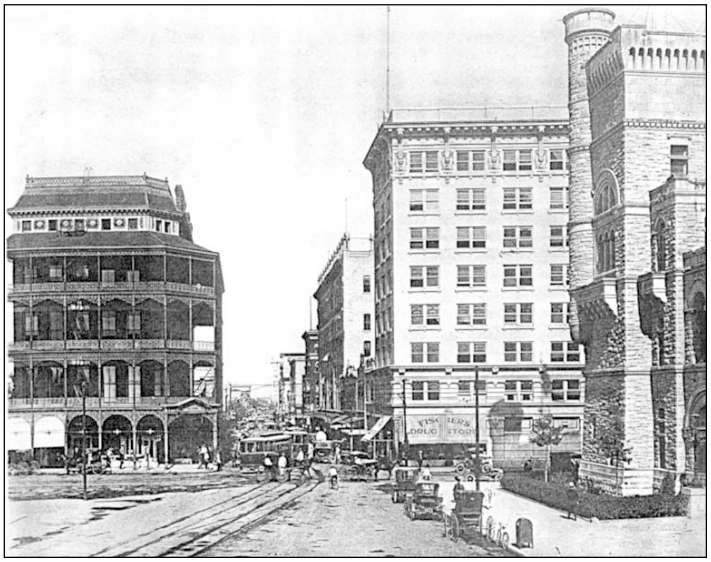
In order to understand the character of Houston Street, it is useful to review how the street developed. Houston Street had two periods of major development: the late 1800s (i.e., from 1880 to 1890) and the 1910s and 1920s. Additionally, in the 1950s some business and building owners along Houston Street "modernized" by remodeling many of the structures, covering up earlier features with false fronts, and changing windows and entries.

The Gunter Hotel, ca. 1909: The tripartite composition of the skyscraper was exhibited, with a base composed of the first two floors, a middle shaft, and a cap of the top floor and cornice.

When reviewing historical information about the development of the street, a number of themes emerge regarding design elements, character and commercial uses. These themes cover the following issues:

- Character of the streetscape
- Street-level character of buildings
- Building materials used
- Composition of the block wall
- Use and treatment of signs
- Historic styles of buildings

These themes are discussed on the following pages.



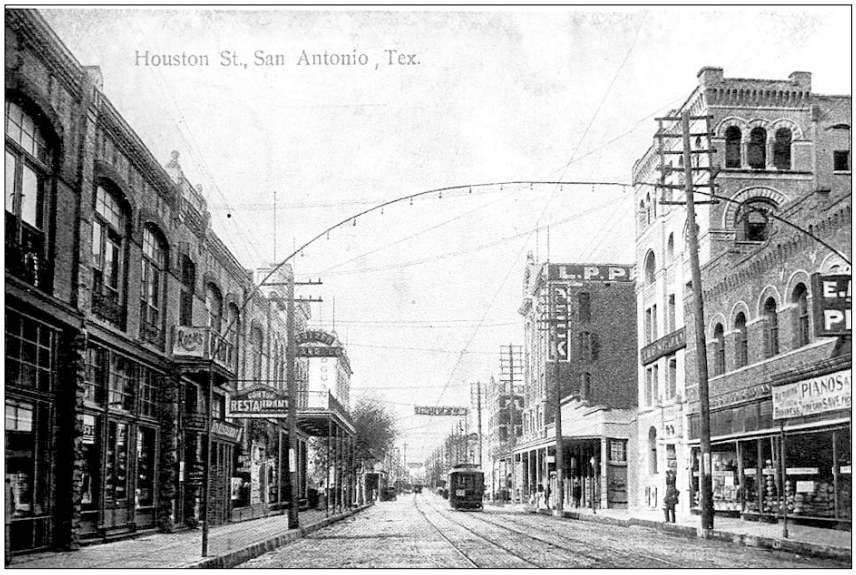
Looking west on Houston Street, from the intersection with Alamo Street, 1910: Street cars animate the street and high-rise buildings are mixed in with shorter structures. The Maverick Bank Building on the left, and the early courts building, on the right, have been replaced.

Since its early days, Houston Street was pedestrian-oriented and had features that encouraged pedestrian traffic and commercial trade.

Character of the Streetscape

Since its early days, Houston Street was pedestrian-oriented and had features that encouraged pedestrian traffic and commercial trade:

- Stone curbs between the street and the sidewalk (even when both were still just dirt/mud) delineating the sidewalk and helping protect pedestrians from traffic
- Paving that varied from gravel, to hexagon-shaped mesquite blocks, to vitrified brick, asphalt and concrete
- Sidewalks made of gravel, smoothly cut limestone and sandstone slabs, and finally concrete
- A street width greater than other streets in downtown
- A transit system serving the street, from the mule-drawn trolley system built in 1878 to the electric trolleys that replaced their mule-drawn predecessors and operated until 1934
- Fixed canopies and awnings (important design elements of the street) sheltering the sidewalks



A transit system served the street from the mule-drawn trolley system built in 1878 to the electric trolleys that replaced their mule-drawn predecessors and operated until 1934.

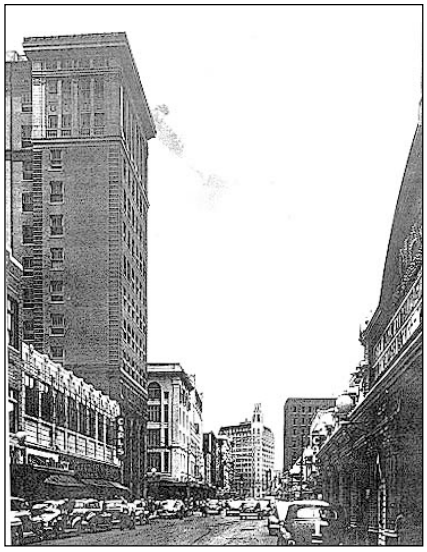
Street-level Character of Buildings

Houston Street has always been pedestrian-oriented. It was a commercial area with retail activity dominating the street level of buildings, with offices and service businesses located on upper floors. The character of the buildings reflects the following design features in their first floors:

- Storefront windows along the front wall (and side wall if the building was on the corner of two streets) with traditional transoms above the display windows
- Recessed entries into the building
- Awnings or canopies extending from the building to the sidewalk's edge providing shade and protection from the weather for pedestrians

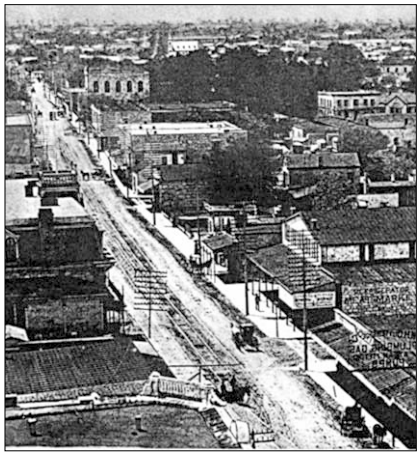
Traditional commercial buildings contained the following design features, storefront windows along the front wall with traditional transoms above the display windows.

Awnings or canopies extending from the building to the sidewalk's edge provided shade and protection from the weather for pedestrians.



Houston Street, looking east to the Medical Arts Building, 1930s: Although a greater variety of building styles had now been introduced, masonry materials unified the scene. The horizontal emphasis of canopies and moldings had also contributed to the sense of visual continuity.

Houston Street at Soledad, looking east, 1890: Masonry building fronts were prominent and cornices and moldings aligned along the block. The first floors were primarily transparent, with large display windows.



In the late nineteenth century, sidewalks were clearly defined and many buildings had canopies that sheltered the street. Utility line poles were positioned along the curb. (Photo: 1884)

Building Materials Used

The larger buildings on Houston Street were constructed during the second major period of development and several were designed by the same architect, Alfred Giles. Because of this, many of the buildings were built of the same or similar materials. During this time the materials most commonly used were:

- For building walls, stone (often Texas limestone, from north of San Antonio) and lumber in the late 1800s and stone and brick during the 1900s
- Cast iron, stamped metal, wood and terra cotta for cornices, moldings, and decorative work
- Large plate glass display windows

Composition of the Block Wall

When viewing Houston Street on a block-by-block basis, a pattern emerges that is quite consistent. Building styles and heights varied a bit from block to block and even within a block, however the texture of the buildings and the rhythm of the buildings on the block were quite consistent. Some key features were:

- Buildings built in the late 1880s period were generally one- and two-stories tall, with an occasional three-story building; buildings built in the early 1900s period were often taller (e.g., six, nine, and fifteen stories)
- Building fronts aligned at the sidewalk edge
- Buildings were separated from the street by a wide sidewalk
- Buildings were closely spaced together, with side walls touching (not so much during the 1880s construction, but clearly so during the early 1900s construction)
- Each individual building was generally balanced horizontally and vertically; this changed somewhat with the taller buildings of the 1900s
- Each block of buildings along Houston Street generally had a strong horizontal feel, with windows, cornices, horizontal moldings, and awnings or canopies generally aligning, loosely tying to those on the next building and so on down the block; even when the heights and/or styles of buildings were different, the tripartite design of each continued to create a horizontal feel
- Exceptions to the horizontal continuum occurred when an Art Deco style building was interjected, where the building had a strong vertical orientation of design

Use and Treatment of Signs

Commercial areas need signs, and signs have played an important role on Houston Street since it began to develop as San Antonio's major downtown commercial street. Traditionally there were four types of signs used along the street:

- Medium-sized square or rectangularly-shaped signs that projected from the building above the awnings or canopies; printed on both sides
- Small, horizontally-oriented rectangular signs that protruded from the building below the awnings or canopies but above pedestrians' heads; printed on both sides
- Medium- to large-sized horizontally-oriented rectangular signs attached flat against the building, above and/or below the awnings or canopies; printed on one side only
- Large "blade" signs (i.e., vertically-oriented, tall signs) that projected from the second or third/fourth floors of a building, above awnings or canopies; printed on both sides

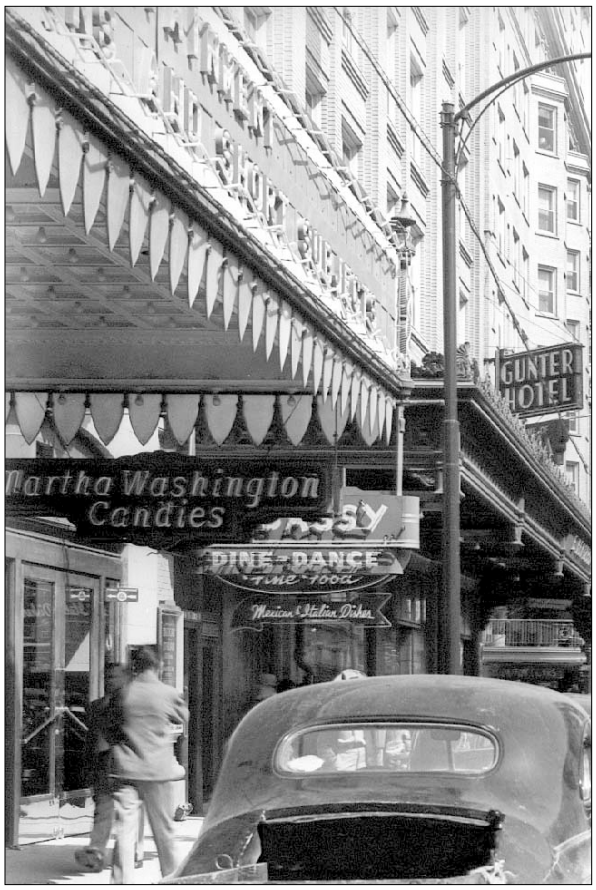
By the 1930s, some large blade signs had been added to the street.

Each block of buildings along Houston Street generally had a strong horizontal feel, with windows, cornices, horizontal moldings, and awnings or canopies generally aligning, loosely tying to those on the next building and so on down the block; even when the heights and/or styles of buildings were different, the tripartite design of each continued to create a horizontal feel.

Use and Treatment of Canopies and Awnings

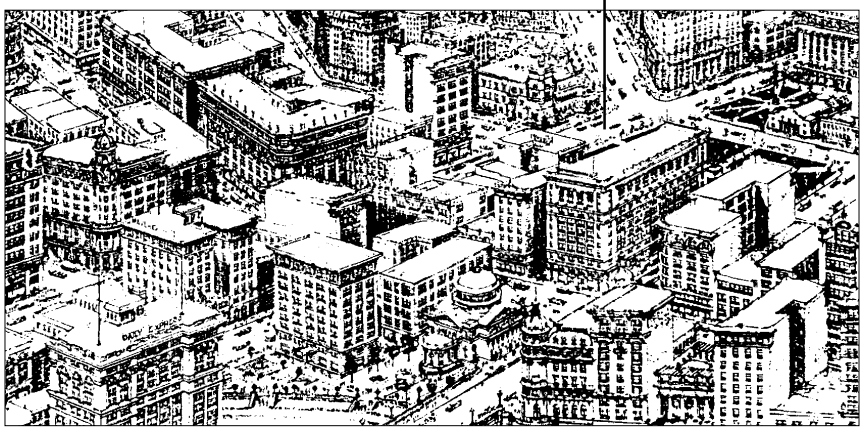
Due to the intense heat and sun in San Antonio during the summer months, Houston Street commercial buildings had canopies or awnings installed that would provide shade on the sidewalk. Traditionally there were several types that could be found:

- Flat canopies, shed form canopy (sloping), sloped fabric awnings, vertical fabric valance; at the edge of a canopy, upper story fabric awing



Some canopies were illuminated such as this one for the Texas Theater.

East Houston Street



Alfred Giles an architect who influenced much of Houston Street, developed a series of renderings that illustrated the potential character of downtown. This vision combines buildings of varied heights and styles throughout the core. Even so, he envisioned buildings that continued key traditions: storefronts of similar heights at the street level, building fronts aligned at the sidewalk edge, horizontal moldings aligning and cornices capping buildings.

Building Types and Styles

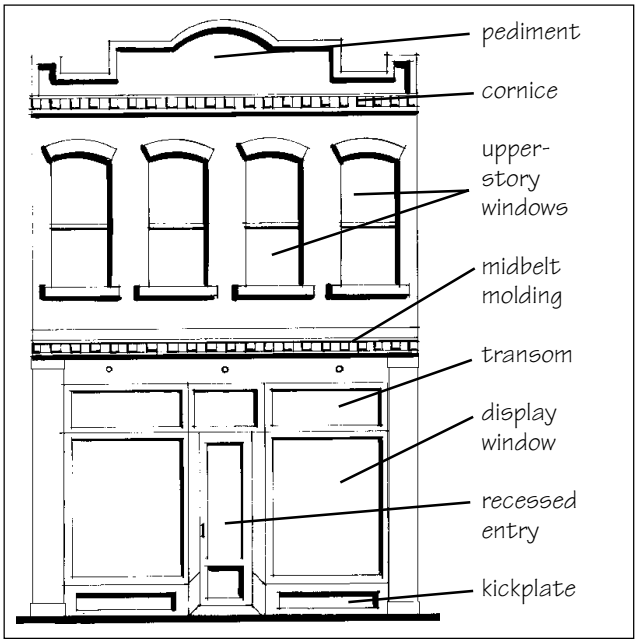
This section provides a brief overview of various architectural styles and building types found in the Houston Street area. However, the list is not exhaustive. Certain architectural styles, or combinations thereof, may exist that are not included.

There are clear examples in the neighborhood of Italianate, Art Deco and Neoclassical Revival structures. A common practice, however, was building in the "vernacular." These simple structures closely reflect traditions of building in their respective periods of construction and were sometimes decorated with features that come from a variety of styles.

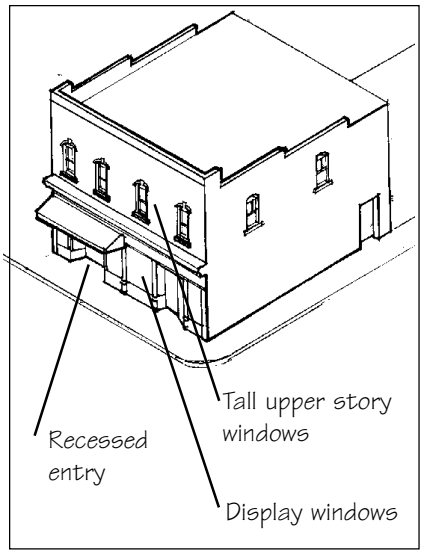
In this early commercial building the transom is divided into smaller panes of glass and the upper story windows are ganged in pairs topped with the same smaller panes of glass. The building has a central door with a small balcony overhead.

Commercial Building Types

Most buildings in the Houston Street Area are variations on the traditional American commercial storefront. These buildings were designed for retail-related functions on the ground level, and therefore relatively large openings were used to maximize visibility and access to goods and services offered inside. Early structures were built to one, two or three stories. Later, this building type adapted to a taller, skyscraper structure. The front wall is typically masonry construction and built to the sidewalk edge. Upper- story windows are smaller, with vertically oriented openings. The upper floor appears more solid than transparent.



Typical commercial storefront components.



Vernacular commercial storefront.

Vernacular Commercial Storefront

• circa 1860-1920

The vernacular commercial storefront of the late 19th and early 20th centuries appears in commercial districts throughout the country, including downtown San Antonio. This building type is divided into two distinct bands. The first floor is more commonly transparent, so goods can be displayed; while the upper floor(s) are usually reserved for offices, residential and warehousing functions. At the storefront, a kickplate is found below the display window; while above, a smaller band of glass, a transom, is seen. Also, the main door is frequently recessed.

These buildings have brick or stone facades, often with stone detailing. Ornamental detail exists but is simple, and is limited to a shallow molding as a cornice. Some cornices were made of wood or masonry, while others were made of metal. Although construction of these buildings began as early as 1860 and continued until 1920, the majority were constructed at the turn-of-the century. Many carry Italianate detailing.

Characteristics

- Larger display windows
- Transom lights
- Kickplate
- Recessed entry
- Double doors
- Tall second-story windows
- Cornice

Early commercial storefronts with Italianate design influences were found on the 300 block of East Houston Street.

Italianate Style
•circa 1850-1885

Originally inspired by Renaissance buildings of Italy, this blending of classical and romantic features became one of the most popular styles in the United States. Because of its ornate details, such as bracketed cornices, this style was easily adapted to storefronts. Details and features were interpreted in wood, masonry and metal.

Characteristics
- Double-hung, narrow windows, often with rounded arch heads
- Window panes are either one-over-one or two-over-two
- Protruding window sills
- Ornate treatment of the cornice, including the use of brackets, medallions and dentil courses
- Quoins (ornamental blocks) at building corners
- Brackets, modillions and dentil courses
- Flat concealed roof

A restored vernacular commercial storefront with Italianate detailing.

A deep cornice, supported on brackets, is a typical Italianate feature. (See page 44 for an historic photo of this building as the Hotel Savoy.)

Greek Revival Style
•circa 1820-1860, and later revivals

The Greek Revival style became quite popular during the middle of the nineteenth century. By 1850, it was seen in almost all settled areas in the nation. The style continued to appear in later revivals into the early twentieth century. Based on classical detailing that originated in ancient Greece, these buildings are known primarily for columns of Doric, Ionic or Corinthian orders. Other Greek Revival detailing includes classical entablatures and simple window and door surrounds consisting of transom and sidelights.

Characteristics
- Rounded columns
- Pediment roof
- Tall first-floor windows
- Entablature
- Doors with transom, side and corner lights

Greek Revival style building on Broadway.

Neoclassical Style

•circa 1890-1920

The Neoclassical style was originally based upon interpretations of Roman models particularly in terms of order, symmetry and detail. Usually composition for formal and symmetrical features enriched by elaborative details and often emphasized by a pedimented or projecting pavilion, this style was adaptable to wood, brick and stone construction. Partially due to this, the style was popular in many regions of the country, particularly for governmental structures.

Characteristics

- Flat roof with parapet and metal or cast stone cornice
- Attic windows
- Elaborate entrance
- Keystone lintels
- Sash windows with heavy dividers or muntins
- Ornate moldings, such as dentils and modillions
- Round column with complex capitals
- Prominent center window on second story, often arched or curved

Neoclassical style building.

Art Moderne

• circa 1930-1950

Often closely related to the International Style in appearance, the Art Moderne style was devised as a way of incorporating the machine aesthetic into architecture, in the sense that buildings could emulate motion and efficiency. It is also referred to as the **Streamlined Moderne**, and always carried the aura of the futuristic. Whatever the term, in this case architecture followed industrial design, as "the slick look" was used for everything from irons to baby carriages.

Characteristics

- An asymmetrical facade, with a combination of rounded corners and angular shapes
- Use of glass block
- Use of metal sash windows with small panes, often placed at corners
- Horizontal bands, referred to as "speed bands"
- References to ocean lines, as in the use of "porthole" windows and metal railings
- Curved canopy

Alameda Theater on West Houston Street.

The Frost Building ca. 1930.

The Frost Building is mostly unchanged today.

Art Deco details of the Frost Building.

Art Deco

•circa 1930-1950

This style is related to Art Moderne in its decoration of surfaces, but in the case of Art Deco, the lines are angular rather than curvilinear. The style is most easily identified by its architectural ornament, which includes stylized floral patterns and repetitive geometric forms incorporating sharp angles and segments of circles. Zigzags, chevrons and diamond patterns are typical and often are applied as decorative moldings or are integral to masonry patterns themselves. Glass brick and rounded or angular corner windows were often used. Building entrances were embellished with decoration that extended to hardware and light fixtures.

Characteristics

- Variety of colors and textures
- Stucco and tile combined
- Projecting sunshades
- Rounded corner windows
- Colored brick or tile
- Zigzag or chevron moldings
- Molded metal panels or grills
- Stylized floral patterns
- Repetitive geometric forms

The Kress building sign enhances the cornice with a glazed terra-cotta Art Deco design.

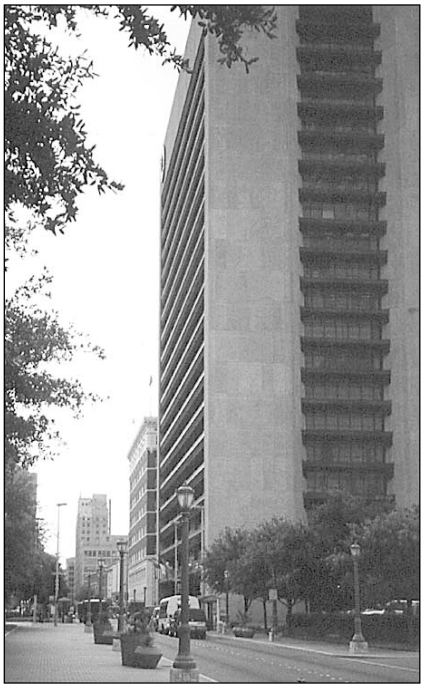
International Style

• circa 1935 - 1945, and later interpretations

Schools of architectural design in the modern age required new approaches to basic design. The elevator and the skyscraper went hand in hand. In the years after World War I, architects saw a chance to contribute to a new and better world. For architecture, this meant rejecting most conventional design standards. Structural systems were emphasized and curtain walls were designed to reflect modular compositions.

Characteristics

- Smooth wall surfaces
- Flat roof line
- Horizontal emphasis
- Horizontal bands of glass
- Minimal ornament and detail
- Glass, steel and other manufactured materials



An International Style building on West Houston Street.

High-rise with Neoclassical details.

High-rise with Italianate details.

Skyscrapers / High-rise Buildings

• circa 1890-current

While early two- and three-story buildings were supported on exterior load-bearing walls, with the advent of the skyscraper, the support system became a skeleton of iron and steel columns that permitted the load of the floors to be distributed to the columns, not the walls. The evolution of the skyscraper is realized on Houston Street. The buildings are often designed with tripartite division of a base, shaft and cap. The overall building may emphasize a vertical momentum or may resemble a series of buildings stacked upon one another. Since these structures were designed for commercial functions, the base has relatively large openings used to maximize visibility and access to goods and services offered inside. The upper floors appear more solid than transparent, often housing offices. Most are built from six to twelve stories high, although some of the later buildings rise higher. These structures often were adorned with stylistic elements such as Gothic, Italianate and Art Deco.

Characteristics

- Smooth wall surfaces
- Flat roof line
- Horizontal emphasis
- Horizontal bands of glass
- Minimal ornament and detail
- Glass, steel and other manufactured materials

The Medical Arts Building is heavily detailed with Gothic Revival ornamentation. This is realized in the upward momentum of the building, crowned by a tower with battlements, lancet windows and ornate window surrounds.

Current Character of Houston Street

The current character of Houston Street reflects many of the features seen during its early history, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, although there are a few elements that have changed. Several buildings have been altered and some new structures have appeared.

In the 1950s and 1960s, several building owners reinvested in their properties. altering storefronts in response to commercial trends in outlying shopping centers. The storefront remodels can be seen today in paneled and stuccoed facades; in some cases these remodels break up the horizontal emphasis of the building facades, undermining the architectural fabric of the street. Later, in the 1980 and 1990, a few new buildings appeared. Some of those also departed from the design traditions of the area.

While altered structures exist, many historic buildings remain intact. The key character defining elements that define Houston Street today are still those features that established it as a thriving commercial center in the past.

This historic clock adorned early Houston Street, today it continues to enhance the character of the streetscape.

The current character of Houston Street reflects many of the features seen during its early history, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, although there are a few elements that have changed. Several buildings have been altered and some new structures have appeared.

The following character defining features identified by the community are found on Houston Street today:

- **Streetscape features**
  - Variety of paving materials
  - Canopies extend to the sidewalk edge
  - Streetscape elements: trees, benches, planters & shelters
  - Human scale of the street
  - Two-way street

- **Basic building features**
  - Building fronts align at the sidewalk edge
  - Horizontal emphasis of building parts down the street; tripartite division of the skyscraper
  - Few unbuilt lots
  - Rhythm of the upper-story windows
  - Variety of building mass: both horizontal and vertical emphasis
  - Mix of building styles
  - Variety of building textures / materials
  - Variety of building heights

- **Design details**
  - Ground-floor retail storefronts: recessed entries, glass panels, transoms
  - Decorative building accents
  - Signage: projecting, blade, window and building panels

- **Design issues**
  - Covered facades
  - Vacant buildings
  - Treatment of storefronts
  - Parking lots
  - Building mass

2. General Design Guidelines

These design guidelines apply to improvement projects in the Houston Street area, including new buildings and alterations to existing structures. (Note that Chapter Three provides additional, supplemental guidelines for historic buildings.) It is important to note that, while emphasis is placed on respecting historic resources, change is anticipated in the area; it is not to be "frozen." However, alterations and new construction should respect the traditional design context. These guidelines are based on that policy.

The fundamental approach to design is that the Houston Street area should convey a sense of a time and place, which is expressed through its numerous historic and traditional buildings. This character should be maintained. When new building occurs, or an existing structure is altered, it should be in a manner that reinforces the basic character-defining features of the area. Such features include the way in which a building is located on its site, the manner in which it faces the street, its materials and the general alignment of architectural elements and details along a block. In a new building when these design variables are arranged in a way so as to be similar to those seen traditionally in the area, visual compatibility results. Even so, new design approaches can, and should, be accommodated when they respect these basic historic features that are valued by the community.

It is important to note that, while emphasis is placed on respecting historic resources, change is anticipated in the area; it is not to be "frozen." However, alterations and new construction should respect the traditional design context.

This chapter presents design guidelines for the following issues:

- Site plan
- Architectural character
- Mass, scale and form
- Exterior building materials
- Upper-story windows
- Entries
- Pedestrian interest
- Awnings and canopies
- Building lighting
- Mechanical equipment and service utilities

Locate the front building wall at the sidewalk line when feasible.

Site Plan

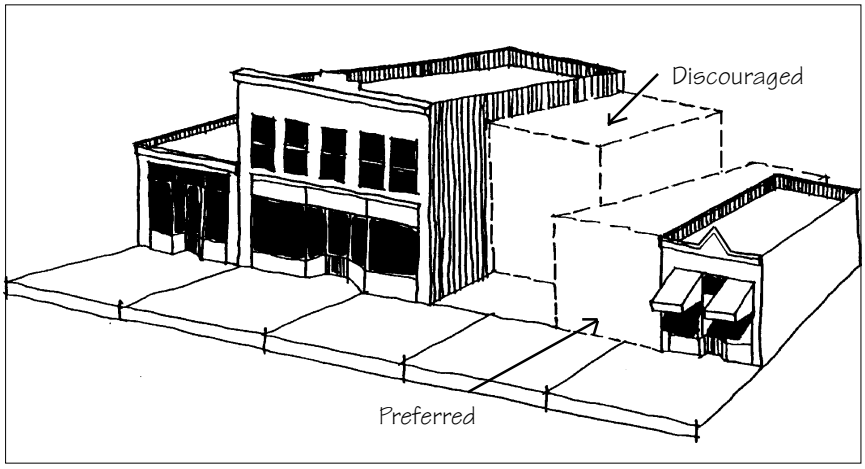
Most structures in the Houston Street historic area contribute to a strong "building wall" along the street because they align at the front lot line and are usually built out the full width of the parcel, to the side lot lines. Although some gaps do occur, these are exceptions. This site plan characteristics of building to the sidewalk edges should be preserved.

2.1 Maintain the alignment of buildings at the sidewalk edge.

- Locate the front building wall at the sidewalk line when feasible.

2.2 Orient the primary entrance of a building toward the street.

- A building should have a clearly defined primary entrance. For most commercial buildings, this should be a recessed entryway.
- A secondary public entrance to commercial spaces is also encouraged on a larger building.



Align the building front at the sidewalk edge.

Photo left, before: The street wall is broken with a vacant lot. Photo right, after: A new building maintains alignment at the sidewalk edge.

Architectural Character

While it is important that new buildings and alterations be compatible with the historic context, it is not necessary that they imitate older building styles. In fact, stylistically distinguishing new buildings from their older neighbors on Houston Street is preferred, when the overall design of the new infill reinforces traditional development patterns.

2.3 New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged.

- A new design that draws upon the fundamental similarities among older buildings in the area without copying them is preferred. This will allow it to be seen as a product of its own time and yet still compatible with its historic neighbors.
- The literal imitation of older historic styles is discouraged.
- In essence, the design of infill structures should be a balance of new and old in design.

This contemporary interpretation of a storefront includes a recessed entry and transom element.

New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged.

Traditional storefront features—such as a kickplate, display window, transom and recessed entry—are reinterpreted in this new storefront design.

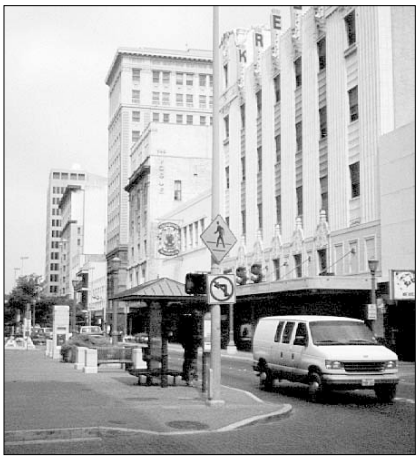
2.4 A new building should incorporate a base, a middle and a cap.

- Traditionally, buildings were composed of these three basic elements. Interpreting this tradition in new buildings will help reinforce the visual continuity of the area.

These three building models all incorporate the basic building blocks: (1) base, (2) middle and (3) cap.

Mass, Scale and Form

Building heights vary substantially on Houston Street and yet there is a strong sense of similarity in scale. This is in part because the first two stories of most buildings are similar in height. In addition, most buildings have features at the lower levels that are similar in scale. First floors, for example, are similar in height. Other lower floors are also defined by moldings that align along the block, which contributes to a perceived uniformity in height to pedestrians. A variety in building heights in new construction is, therefore, appropriate. However, the dominant scale of two to four stories should be maintained. This may be accomplished by literally constructing a building within this traditional height range; in other cases, design elements that reflect this traditional height may be incorporated into larger structures.



New construction should appear similar in mass and scale to structures found historically in the Houston Street area. See the early photo of how buildings aligned historically on page 11.

2.5 A new building should maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block.

- Window sills, moldings and midbelt cornices are among those elements that may align.

2.6 Floor-to-floor heights should appear to be similar to those seen historically.

- In particular, the windows in new construction should appear similar in height to those seen traditionally.

A new building should maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block. Window sills, moldings and midbelt cornices are among those elements that may be seen to align.

Consider dividing larger buildings into modules as this one is, to reflect the traditional building widths seen in the area.

2.7 Consider dividing a larger building into "modules" that are similar in scale to buildings seen historically.

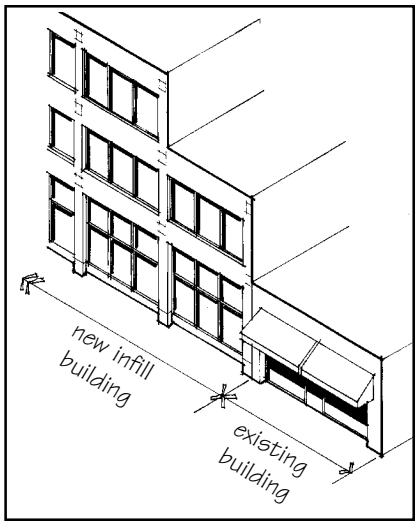
- If a larger building is divided into "modules," these should be expressed three-dimensionally throughout the entire building.
- When considering a tall structure, the alignment of building elements is particularly important. Although a new building may tower above the surrounding buildings, the first several stories should visually relate to the surrounding historic context.

This single infill building is divided into four smaller building modules that reflect the traditional building widths of its context. Upper floors step back from the front, thus maintaining the traditional two-story scale of the street.

A part of this contemporary infill building (above) is a parking structure which is set back from the front and sides of a "retail wrap." The openings in the parking section of the development also have window proportions similar to those seen historically.

2.8 Maintain the established building scale.

- Develop a primary facade that is in scale and aligns with surrounding historic buildings.
- If a building must be taller than those found traditionally on Houston Street, consider stepping upper stories back from the main facade, and design the lower levels to express the alignment of elements seen traditionally in the block.
- Also consider stepping the mass of a tall building down to a lower height as it approaches surrounding historic buildings.



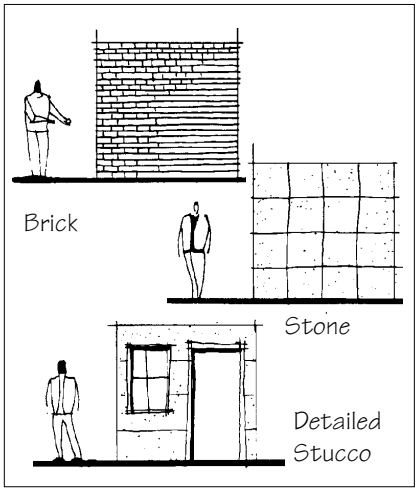
If a structure should be markedly taller than adjacent buildings, step down the height to establish a transition in scale.

Develop a primary facade that is in scale and aligns with surrounding historic buildings.

In this context, a new high-rise building on the right includes a two-story element that aligns with older structures to the left. A central entry is clearly identified. The taller portion of the building is set behind the lower element. This maintains the traditional scale of the street.

Materials should appear similar to those used historically, primarily stone or brick.

Stucco that is detailed to convey a sense of scale and provide visual interest is an appropriate material treatment.



Use building materials that are similar in their dimensions and that can be repeated as traditional modules. This will help to convey a human scale.

Exterior Building Materials

Traditionally, a limited palette of building materials was used on Houston Street—primarily brick, stone and terra cotta. This same selection of materials should continue to be predominant. New materials also may be considered, however, when they relate to those used historically in scale, texture, matte finish and detailing. They should help to convey a human scale as well.

2.9 Materials should appear similar to those used historically.

- Masonry was the traditional material and is preferred for new construction. This includes stone and brick.
- Wood and metal were used for window, door and storefront surrounds and should be continued in new construction.
- New materials also may be considered. If used, they should appear similar in character to those used historically. For example, stucco, cast stone and concrete should be detailed to provide a human scale.
- New materials also should have a demonstrated durability in the San Antonio climate.
- Large expanses of featureless materials are inappropriate.

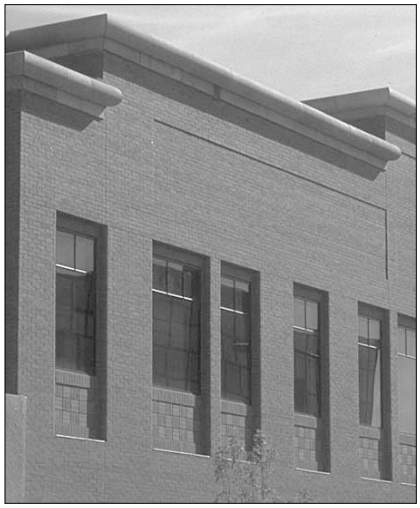
2.10 A simple material finish is encouraged for a large expanse of wall plane.

- A matte, or non-reflective, finish is preferred. Polished stone and mirrored glass, for example, should be avoided as primary materials over large surfaces.

These cast concrete elements convey the scale of traditional masonry facade components, which reinforces the traditional scale of buildings on this street.

Upper-Story Windows

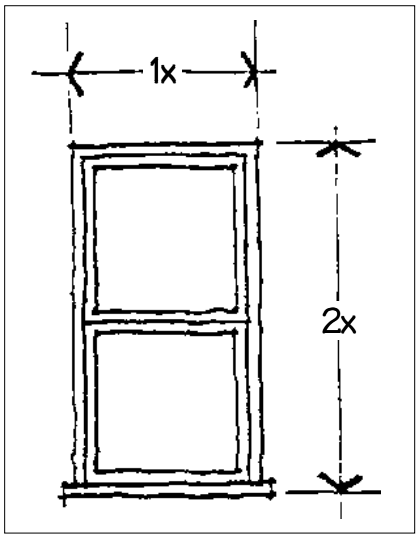
A pattern exists along the street with the repetition of evenly spaced, similarly-sized, upper-story windows in many buildings on Houston Street. This also gives a building a sense of human scale—even for high-rise towers. The alignment and similar scale of these upper story windows are parts features that should be continued.



Upper-story windows with vertical emphasis are encouraged.

2.11 Upper-story windows with vertical emphasis are encouraged.

- A typical upper-story window is twice as tall as it is wide. These proportions are within a limited range; therefore, upper story windows in new construction should relate to the window proportions seen historically.



Typically, upper-story windows are twice as tall as they are wide. This tradition should be continued. This may be expressed in a variety of ways. See the example to the left.

2.12 Windows should align with others in a block.

- Windows, lintels and trim elements should align with those on adjacent historic buildings.

Masonry was the traditional material and is preferred for new construction. This includes stone and brick.

Simplified interpretations of vernacular commercial storefronts are also appropriate.

Entries

The repetition of recessed building entries that occur along the street in the Houston Street historic area provide a rhythm of shadows along the street, that helps establish a sense of scale and invites pedestrians to enter the buildings. This trend should be continued in new construction.

2.13 Building entrances should appear similar to those used historically.

- Clearly define the primary entrance to a building with a canopy or other architectural feature.
- A contemporary interpretation of a traditional building entry, which is similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically, is encouraged.

2.14 Locate the primary building entrance to face the street.

- The building entrance should be recessed.
- A primary building entrance also should be at or near street level. A sunken terrace entrance is not appropriate as the primary access from the street.
- Likewise, constructing a stair in the public sidewalk on Houston Street that leads down to a basement level is also inappropriate.

Clearly define the primary entrance facing the street.

Pedestrian Interest

The Houston Street area should continue to develop as a pedestrian-oriented environment. Streets, sidewalks and pathways should encourage walking, sitting and other outdoor activities; buildings also should be visually interesting and invite exploration by pedestrians. Existing pedestrian routes should be enhanced.

When providing a storefront at the street level is not feasible, consider using display cases that illustrate goods and services available inside or nearby.

2.15 A building should express human scale through materials and forms that were seen traditionally.

- This is important because buildings are experienced at close proximity by the pedestrian.

2.16 Develop the ground floor level of a building to encourage pedestrian activity.

- Provide at least one of the following elements along primary pedestrian ways:
  - A storefront
  - Display cases
  - Public art
  - Landscaping
- Include traditional elements such as display windows, kickplates and transoms on commercial storefronts.
- Avoid a blank wall or vacant lot appearance.

2.17 Maintain clear, continuous walkway along the front of a building.

- Locate street furniture, outdoor tables and other outdoor accessories so that they will not block the pedestrian route.
- Railings and other permanent barriers should not be used in the public sidewalk.

Include traditional elements such as display windows, kickplates and transoms on commercial storefronts.

Canopies may be used to define entries.

Traditionally, awnings and especially canopies were noteworthy features of the Houston Street historic area and their continued use is encouraged. Although, enclosing the floor above the canopy is inappropriate, as seen in this photo.

Awnings and Canopies

The tradition of sheltering the sidewalk with awnings and canopies is well-established on Houston Street. Early photographs demonstrate that some of the first commercial buildings offered shade from the hot summer sun and shelter from rain storms with wooden canopies over the "sidewalk" area. These first canopies were simple in detail, reflecting the character of the buildings to which they were attached. Some had a shed form while others were flat; most of the early canopies were as wide as the sidewalk area and were supported on posts along their outer edges. Later, as more decorative architectural styles of buildings emerged, the detailing of the canopies also became more refined and typically included stylistic references to the parent building. Also, they no longer were supported on posts but hung from buildings on poles, chains or cables or were supported by wall-mounted brackets.

Awnings were simple, and fit into the building opening which they were covering. Some were operable (i.e., could be raised and lowered), while others were on a rigid frame. Awnings were generally on just first floors and some buildings had them on upper stories as well.

Canopies and awnings are noteworthy features of Houston Street and have a strong history of use. Their inclusion in the design of new construction is strongly encouraged.

2.18 The use of canopies and awnings is encouraged.

- They should be integrated into the design of the new building.
- They can incorporate new, compatible, contemporary designs.
- They should respect historical placement patterns (e.g., align with the edge of the sidewalk, follow the length of the building or window, contain accent features to show the building's entrance).

2.19 A fixed metal canopy is appropriate for many building styles.

- Appropriate supporting mechanisms are wall-mounted brackets, chains and posts.

2.20 A fabric awning may also be considered.

- Use colors that are compatible with the overall color scheme of the facade. Solid colors or simple, muted-stripe patterns are appropriate.
- The awning should fit the opening of the building.
- Simple shed shapes are appropriate for rectangular openings.
- Odd shapes, bullnose awnings and bubble awnings are inappropriate on most structures.
- Internal illumination in an awning is inappropriate.

2.21 On a historic building, mount an awning or canopy to accentuate character-defining features of window openings.

- It should be mounted to highlight moldings that may be found above the storefront and should match the shape of the opening.

A fixed metal canopy is appropriate for many building styles.

2.22 Incorporating lighting into the design of a canopy is encouraged.

- Lights can increase the safety of the street by illuminating the pedestrian walkway.
- Lights can provide interest along the street and add sparkle to the downtown.
- Lighting should complement the canopy and should not be a primary design feature.

2.23 Incorporating lighting into the design of an awning should be used with care.

- Recessed can lighting under an awning to provide lighting to the sidewalk is acceptable.
- Lighting fixtures that shine through an awning and make it “glow” are not appropriate.

A canopy should be integrated into the design of the new building.

Use lighting to accent building entrances.

Building Lighting

The character and level of lighting that is used on a building is a special concern. Traditionally, these exterior lights were simple in character and were used to highlight signs, entrances and first floor details. Most fixtures had incandescent lamps that cast a color similar to daylight, were relatively low in intensity, and were shielded with simple shade devices. This overall effect of modest, focused building lighting should be continued.

2.24 Use lighting for the following:

- To accent architectural details.
- To accent building entrances.
- To accent signs.
- To illuminate sidewalks.

2.25 Minimize the visual impacts of site and architectural lighting.

- All exterior light sources should have a low level of luminescence.
- White lights, such as incandescent, that cast a color similar to daylight are preferred.
- Do not wash an entire building facade in light.
- Lighting fixtures should be appropriate to the building and its surroundings in terms of style, scale and intensity of illumination.

2.26 Prevent glare by using shielded and focused light sources.

- Provide shielded and focused light sources that direct light downward.
- Unshielded, high intensity light sources and those that direct light upward should not be permitted.
- Shield lighting associated with service areas, parking lots and parking structures.

Mechanical Equipment and Service Utilities

Utility service boxes, telecommunication devices, cables and conduits are among the variety of equipment that may be attached to a building that can affect the character of the area. Trash and recycling storage areas also are concerns. Mechanical equipment and service areas should be located to the rear of a building or on a secondary street side.

2.27 Minimize the visual impact of mechanical equipment on the public way.

- Screen equipment from view.
- Do not locate window air conditioning units on the building's primary facade.
- Use low-profile mechanical units on rooftops that are not visible from public ways.
- Locate a satellite dish out of public view to the extent feasible and in compliance with other regulations.

2.28 Minimize the visual impacts of utility connections and service boxes.

- Locate them on secondary walls when feasible.

2.29 Locate standpipes and other service equipment such that they will not damage historic facade materials.

- Cutting channels into historic facade materials damages the historic building fabric and is inappropriate.
- Avoid locating such equipment on the front facade.

2.30 Locate trash storage and service areas at the rear of the building.

- Dumpsters should be screened from view.
- These areas shall be accessed from the alley side, new curb cuts are not allowed on Houston Street.

3. Guidelines for Historic Properties

This chapter presents design guidelines that apply to all properties which are considered to be historic resources in the Houston Street area. Some properties have been identified in historic surveys, while many others that may not be officially designated may also have significance. In general, a building must be at least fifty years old before it may be evaluated for potential historic significance.

A basic tenet of preservation is to minimize intervention with the historic building fabric and, therefore, in the treatment of an historic building, it is best to preserve those features that remain in good condition. For those features that are deteriorated, repair is preferred, rather that replacement; but when replacement is necessary, it should be in a manner similar to that seen historically.

The guidelines contained in this chapter are organized into the following design topics:

- Character-defining features
- Design of alterations
- Storefronts
- Storefront glass
- Windows and doors
- Entries
- Awnings and canopies
- Kickplates
- Cornices
- Facade materials
- Design of additions

Why Preserve Historic Resources?

Historic resources make up a key part of the area's character and represent tangible links to the past. They are assets that attract visitors, shoppers, businesses and residents. If the character of the historic resources is strong enough, their attraction can foster the rehabilitation of buildings and support renewed economic activity.

Reusing historic buildings offers a number of advantages over the alternative: constructing new buildings. These advantages include the following:

- Providing a link with the past
- Establishing a distinct market image
- Quickly making a building available for occupancy
- Providing an attractive image for the area
- Supporting heritage tourism strategies
- Reinforcing Houston Street ambiance

Across the nation, thousands of communities promote historic preservation because doing so contributes to livability, enhances quality of life, minimizes negative impacts on the environment and yields economic rewards. Many property and business owners are also drawn to historic resources because the quality of construction is typically quite high and the buildings usually are readily adaptable to contemporary uses.

Construction Quality

Many of the historic resources in the Houston Street area are of high quality construction. Although some are deteriorated, most retain sound building systems and high quality materials. By comparison, in today's construction, materials of such quality are rarely available today and comparable detailing is very expensive. The high quality of construction in historic buildings is therefore a "value" for many people.

Environmental Benefits

Preserving an historic structure is also a sound environmental conservation policy because "recycling" the structure saves energy and reduces the need for producing new construction materials. Three types of energy savings occur:

- First, energy is not consumed to demolish the existing building and dispose of the resulting debris.
- Second, energy is not used to create new building materials, transport them and assemble them on site.
- Finally, the "embodied" energy, that which was used to create the original building and its components, is preserved.

A preservation project typically has a higher percentage of its total costs devoted to labor and to the purchase of locally-available materials.

Economic Benefits

Preservation projects also contribute more to the local economy than do new building programs because each dollar spent on a preservation project has a higher percentage devoted to labor and to the purchase of locally-available materials. By contrast, new construction typically has a higher percentage of each dollar spent devoted to materials that are produced outside of the local economy and to special construction skills that may need to be imported as well. Therefore, when money is spent on rehabilitating a building, it has a higher "multiplier effect," keeping more money circulating in the local economy.

Basic Criteria For Replacing Historic Features

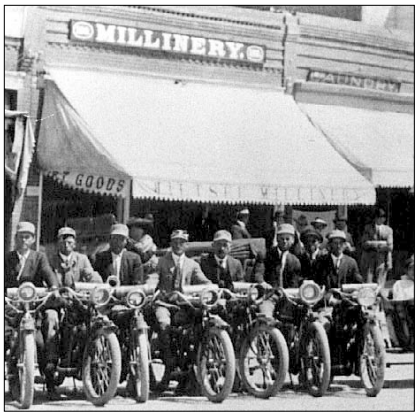
A major tenet of the preservation of historic resources is to minimize intervention with the historic building fabric and to retain its integrity; therefore, in the treatment of an historic building, it is best to preserve those features that remain in good condition. For those features that are deteriorated, repair is preferred, rather than replacement; but when replacement is necessary, it should be in a manner similar to that seen historically.

In order to apply this tenet, it is necessary to understand the concepts of what makes an historic resource "significant" and what is meant by its "integrity."

The Concept of Historic Significance

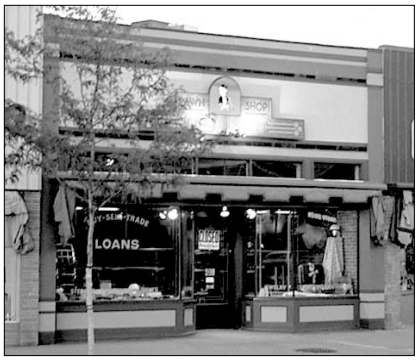
What makes a property historically significant? In general, properties must be at least 50 years old before they can be evaluated for potential historic significance, although exceptions do exist when a more recent property clearly is significant. Historic properties must have qualities that give them significance. A property may be significant for one or more of the following reasons:

- Association with events that contributed to the broad patterns of history, the lives of significant people or the understanding of San Antonio's prehistory or history.
- Construction and design associated with distinctive characteristics of a building type, period or construction method.
- An example of an architect or master craftsman or an expression of particularly high artistic values.
- Integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association that form a district as defined by the *National Register of Historic Places Standards,* administered by the National Park Service.



A modest building can also be renovated to be compatible with the context. In this photograph the original millinery shop front had simple moldings at the top. (Compare with the photos below.)

Years later, all original detail had been stripped from the building. (Compare with the photos above and below.)



The same building (above) after renovation exhibits the more classical features of commercial storefronts, including a painted cornice, kickplate and recessed entry.

In most cases, a building is significant because it represents, or is associated with, a particular period in its history. Frequently, this begins with the founding of the community and continues through the peak of its historic activity. Buildings and sites that date from the period of significance typically contribute to the character of an historic district.

The Concept of Integrity

A historically significant structure or site must have integrity, in that a sufficient percentage of the structure must date from the period of significance. The majority of the building's structural system and materials should date from the period of significance and its character defining features also should remain intact. These may include architectural details, such as storefronts, cornices, awnings or canopies, ornamental brackets, window patterns, moldings and materials, as well as the overall mass and form of the building. It is these elements that allow a building to be recognized as a product of its own time.

Criteria To Use

If an historically significant building has an important, character defining feature that is deteriorated, altered or missing, it is clear that the feature should be repaired or, if repair is impossible, it should be replaced with materials that are similar to that which existed historically, to maintain the integrity of the building. Sometimes, under certain circumstances, replacing the missing feature or alteration with contemporary but compatible new features might be appropriate. (This approach would use a modern interpretation of the building element found traditionally on this building type. Historic details would not be copied literally yet the design should not impede one's ability to interpret the historic character of the structure.)

Thus there are two treatments which could be appropriate for repairing or replacing missing or altered features:

- **Option A:** Reconstruct the historic design
- **Option B:** Replace the missing or altered feature with a contemporary but compatible new feature

The Commission must determine which option (A or B) is appropriate when evaluating proposals for the replacement of deteriorated, non-historic alterations or missing historic features on historic buildings on Houston Street. There are three main criteria that the Commission will use to provide guidance in handling these types of situations:

- **First, what is the significance of the building?** If the building is a landmarked building or is of landmark quality and significance, then reconstruction is preferred. If the building is contributing to the historic sense of the street but is not landmark quality, then more flexibility may be allowed. Either replacing the feature using Option A or B may be appropriate.

- **Second, to what degree has the building retained its historic integrity and how important is the missing or altered feature to conveying the historic character of the building?** If the building has retained a high degree of its historic integrity and the missing feature is important to the building's character, then it should be reconstructed. If the building has been substantially altered, then both Options A and B can be considered.

This row of buildings had lost some details over time and a monochromatic color scheme obscures the original design character. Overhead garage doors that had replaced original storefronts were later alterations without historic significance. (Compare with the "after" photograph below.)

After rehabilitation, the row of buildings shown in the photograph above conveys a stronger sense of its historic character. Note that some old uses were retained, while other new uses were also introduced. Some non-contributing alterations were removed and storefronts reconstructed. One was retained, but was painted to minimize impacts.

This sequence of three photographs of the Hotel Savoy demonstrates how a consideration of integrity of features and significance of a property may affect a restoration strategy.

***B**. In the second photograph, taken in 1999, a portion of the cornice is missing, half the upper facade is covered and remaining upper story windows are blocked. Street level storefronts also area altered and he canopy is missing.*

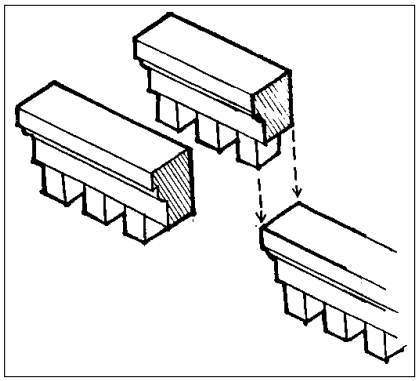
- **Third, what is the quality of information about the historic features of the building?** This criterion addresses the practical issue of whether or not the historic features literally can be replaced or replicated. There may not be sufficient information available about the historic feature to be confident that it can be replaced accurately. Generally, there are three types of information that might be available about the historic feature: pictures or architectural plans of the actual features, existing remnants of the historic features (including, marks on the building showing the outline of a feature), or examples of comparable features on existing buildings that were built at the same time and of the same general design. If pictures, plans, or remnants exist, then Option A should be followed. If they don't, Option B may be considered.

***A**. In the first image, taken ca. 1910, documents the historic character of the building and provides clear information about the design of key details, including the cornice and canopies.*

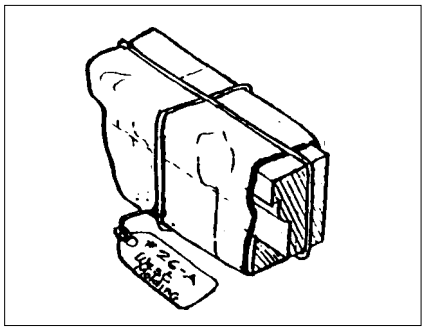
***C**. In the third image, taken in 2000, the metal covering has been removed, revealing the existing conditions. Many windows remain intact, although some are damaged. Although the building has lost some key features a sufficient amount remains and the building retains its historic significance and reconstruction of the missing features is merited. Adequate information also is available on which to base the reconstruction: The historic photograph and surviving details can be used to develop accurate replacements.*

Character-Defining Features

Character-defining features of historic buildings collectively establish a sense of place, provide human scale and add rich detail to the street and should be preserved (see discussion presented earlier in this chapter about the criteria the Commission should consider when replacing missing features.) Typical features include: the historic facade materials, decorative cornices, vertically-oriented upper-story windows, larger first-floor openings and trim around openings.



Replace features that are missing or beyond repair.



When disassembly of historic elements is necessary for its repair, carefully identify all pieces that will be stored during the rehabilitation project.

3.1 Preserve character-defining features that are intact.

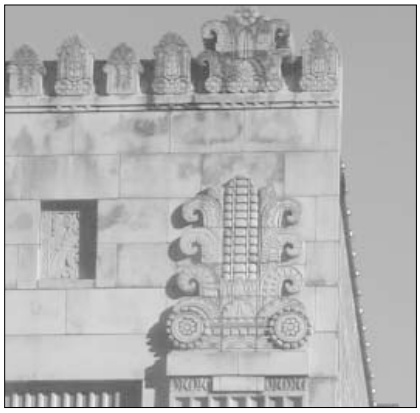
- Don't remove or damage character-defining features.
- Preserve intact features with appropriate maintenance techniques.

3.2 Repair those features that are damaged.

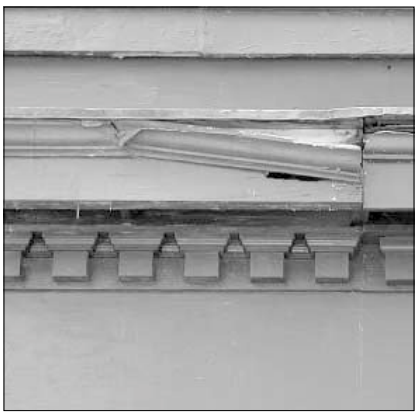
- Use methods that will not harm the historic materials. For example, repair work is preferred over replacement.
- When disassembly of an historic element is necessary for its repair, carefully identify how it will be stored during the rehabilitation project. Store it in a safe place until it is to be reinstalled.

3.3 Replace features that are missing or beyond repair.

- Reconstruct only those portions that are beyond repair.
- Reconstruct the original element based on adequate evidence, if possible. This is the preferred option.
- If evidence is missing, a simplified interpretation of similar elements may be considered.



Preserve character-defining features that are intact.



Repair those features that are damaged.

Using historic photographs can help in determining the original character. (Compare with below.)

If a storefront is altered, consider restoring it to the original design. (Compare with the two photos of the same building below.)

This rehabilitation preserves surviving details and reconstructs missing ones.

Design of Alterations

Buildings may undergo alterations over time. New alterations often occur when original material is missing and new interpretations of traditional elements become necessary. These new alterations should be planned to preserve the building's integrity.

3.4 Design an alteration to be compatible with the historic character of the property.

- Avoid alterations that would hinder the ability to interpret the historic significance of the original building.
- Alterations that seek to imply an earlier period than that of the building are inappropriate. For example, don't apply "Colonial" details to an 1890s building.

3.5 Avoid alterations that damage historic features.

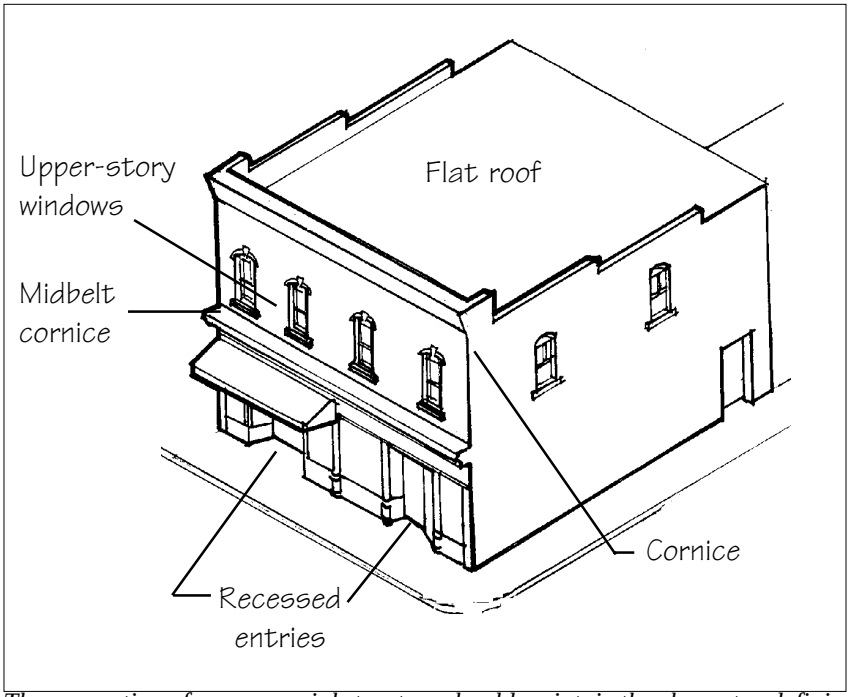
- For example, mounting a sign panel in a manner that causes decorative moldings to be damaged would be inappropriate.

Where original details are missing, an alternative design that is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional storefront, as this one is, may be considered. The storefront still should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians.

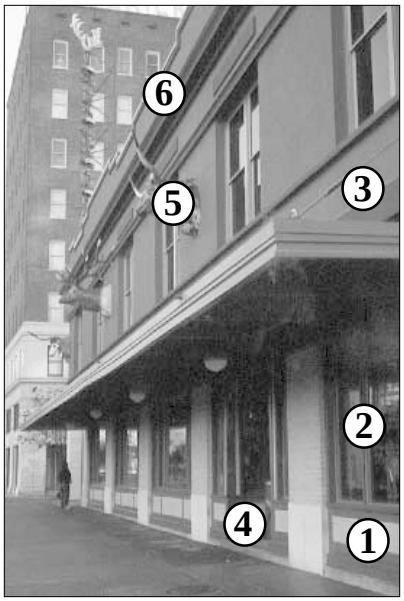
Storefronts

There are a number of basic storefront elements that appear in most styles of historic buildings on Houston Street. These character-defining elements are:

- **Kickplate:** Found beneath the display window. Sometimes called a bulkhead panel.
- **Display windows:** The main portion of glass on the storefront, where goods and services are displayed.
- **Transom:** The upper portion of the display, separated from the main display window by a frame.
- **Entry:** Usually set back from the sidewalk in a protected recess.
- **Upper-story windows:** Windows located above the street level. These usually have a vertical orientation, and appear to be less transparent than the large expanse of glass in the storefront below.
- **Cornice molding:** A decorative band at the top of the building. A **midbelt cornice** may sometimes be found separating some floors.



The renovation of a commercial structure should maintain the character-defining elements of the building type.



Typical storefront components include: 1) kickplate, 2) display windows, 3) sign band, 4) recessed entry, 5) upper story windows, and 6) cornice.

If an historically significant storefront opening has been altered, consider restoring it if the original condition can be determined. In this case, openings have been blocked down for smaller replacement windows. Returning to the original proportions is preferred.

Although these elements are common among buildings, many of the elements relate to the period of construction and style of architecture of the building and are thus presented differently. (See the discussion of building styles in Chapter 1.) If the storefront element(s) are defining of their architectural style or period of construction, they should be preserved.

However, on some buildings the specific design of individual storefront elements was not integral to the architectural style of the building. For example, in some styles, the position of the entryway is important to the design of the building, whereas in others it is not and its location moved around due to function. When this is the case and a feature (e.g., the location of the door) is not integral to the style of the building, it can be altered (e.g., the entryway can be moved or stairs to upstairs can be added.)

The windows in this structure were boarded and architectural details needed repair. (Compare with the photo below.)

Storefront windows were reopened and upper-story windows were repaired.

The repetition of the standard storefront elements creates a visual unity on the street that should be preserved. When planning for the rehabilitation of a storefront, an evaluation of the building's historic integrity should be made. Researching archival materials such as historic photos and building plans can be helpful in understanding the role of the storefront and its relationship to the building style and the street wall. An analysis of the existing building for any clues to the location of glass, window supports and transoms can also provide clues to a missing or altered storefront feature. Preserving significant historic storefronts or restoring an altered or missing storefront element are important preservation goals.

3.6 Preserve the historic character of a storefront when it is intact.

- This will help maintain the interest of the street to pedestrians.
- If the storefront glass is intact, it should be preserved.

3.7 If a storefront is altered, consider restoring it to the original design.

- If evidence of the original design is missing, use a simplified interpretation of similar storefronts. The storefront still should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians.

3.8 An alternative design that is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional storefront is appropriate.

- Where an original storefront or its elements are missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses the traditional elements may be considered.
- However, the design must continue to convey the characteristics elements of typical storefronts, including the transparent character of the display windows, recessed entries and cornices, to name a few. Also, the design should not impede one's ability to interpret the historic character of the structure.
- Altering the size of an historic window opening or blocking it with opaque materials is inappropriate.
- Note that in some cases an original storefront may have been altered early in the history of the building and the alterations have taken on significance. Such changes should be preserved.

Windows & Doors

Original windows and doors are important features that help convey the early character of a building. These elements should be preserved, when feasible.

3.9 Maintain an historically significant storefront opening.

- The size and shape of the storefront are important characteristics that contribute to the integrity of an historic commercial building. Avoid altering the shapes of these features.
- If these elements have already been altered, consider restoring them if their original condition can be determined.

Maintain an historically significant storefront opening. Altering the windows such as in this case is inappropriate.

3.10 Retain the original shape of the transom glass in an historic storefront.

- The upper glass band of a traditional storefront introduced light into the depths of a building. These bands are found on many historic storefronts, and they often align at the same height. The shape of the transom is important to the proportion of the storefront, and it should be preserved in its historic configuration, whenever possible.
- If the original glass is missing, install new glass. However, if the transom must be blocked, use it as a sign panel or a decorative band, but be certain to retain the original proportions.

Preserve historic upper-story windows. Repair the sash, rather than replace it, when feasible.

3.11 Preserve historic upper-story windows.

- Historically, upper-story windows had a vertical emphasis. The proportions of these windows contribute to the character of each commercial storefront. Don't block them down or alter their size.
- Consider reopening windows that are currently blocked.
- Maintain the historic sash as well. Repair the sash, rather than replace it, when feasible.

When the sash is deteriorated beyond repair, it should be replaced with materials that are similar to that which existed historically, to maintain the integrity of the building.

Retain the original shape of the transom glass in an historic storefront. Removing or covering up the transom opening is inappropriate.

Maintain the original decorative paving within a recessed entry.

Maintain a recessed entry.

Entries

The repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of shadows along the street that helps establish a sense of scale and identifies business entrances. This pattern should be maintained.

3.12 Maintain recessed entries where they are found.

- Restore the historic recessed entry if it has been altered.
- Avoid positioning an entry flush with the sidewalk.

3.13 Where an entry is not recessed, maintain it in its original position, when feasible.

- However, it may be necessary to comply with other code requirements, including door width, swing and construction. If so, an alteration may be considered.
- In some cases, entries must comply with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Note, however, that some flexibility in application of these regulations is provided for historic properties.
- If the original storefront is missing and the location of the entry is not integral to the architectural style or period of construction of the building, it may be repositioned in keeping with the building style.

Maintain the original position and hierarchy of an entryway. Occasionally, the entry may be accented with a horizontal canopy

Awnings & Canopies

Historically awnings and especially canopies were noteworthy features on Houston Street and their continued use is encouraged. There were several types of canopies seen historically, most were pole mounted with a few wall-mounted types. (See discussion of awnings and canopies in Chapter Two.)

Historically awnings and especially canopies were noteworthy features on Houston Street and their continued use is encouraged, as shown in this early photo detail of the Moore Building.

3.14 Preserve the canopy when it is intact.

- A metal canopy is appropriate on many historic building styles in San Antonio.

3.15 If a canopy is altered, consider restoring it to the original design.

- Restore the historic canopy if it has been altered.

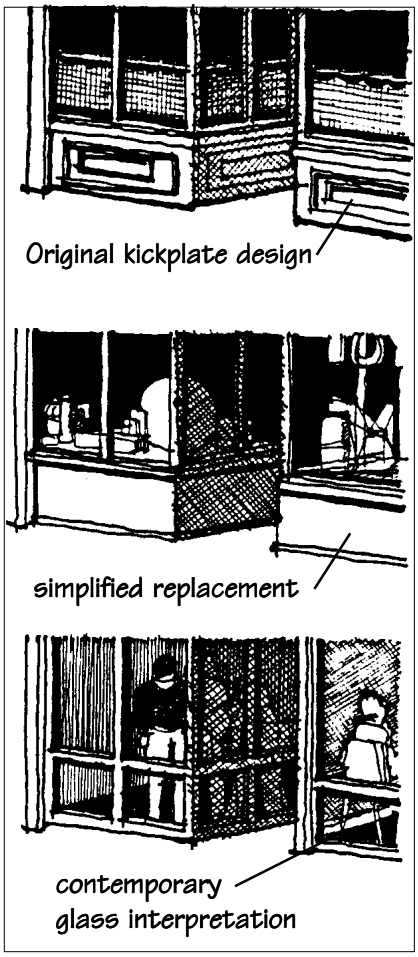
3.16 An alternative design that is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional canopy is appropriate.

- Where the original canopy is missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses the traditional elements may be considered.
- However it must continue to convey the character of typical canopies of the buildings era.

Where the original canopy is missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses the traditional elements may be considered. The canopy in this photo is inappropriate since it does not match the shape of the window opening.

Preserve the original canopy when it is intact.

A metal canopy is appropriate on many historic building styles in San Antonio.



Retain the kickplate as a decorative panel. If the original is missing, develop a compatible replacement design.

Repair the original kickplate when feasible.

Kickplates

A kickplate, or bulkhead, was a popular feature of most commercial buildings. This feature should be preserved.

3.17 Retain an original kickplate as a decorative panel.

- The kickplate, located below the display window, adds interesting detail to the streetscape and should be preserved.

3.18 If the original kickplate is missing, develop a sympathetic replacement design.

- Wood, metal and masonry are appropriate materials for replacements.
- Coordinate the color of the kickplate with other trim elements on the building.

If the original kickplate is missing, develop a sympathetic replacement design. Here a transparent glass kickplate is used where a solid panel may have existed. However, the original proportions are still conveyed, which is appropriate.

Cornices

Most historic commercial buildings have cornices to cap their facades. Their repetition and general alignment along a street contribute to the visual continuity on a block and should be preserved.

3.19 Preserve the character of the cornice line of an historic building.

- This may be a straight or stepped parapet.

3.20 Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.

- Use early photographs to determine design details of an original cornice.
- The substitution of another old cornice for the original may be considered, provided that the substitute is similar in appearance to the original.

3.21 A simplified interpretation also is appropriate if evidence of the original is missing.

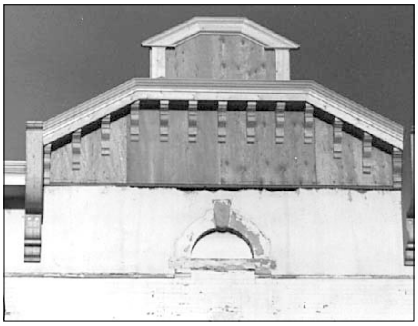
- Appropriate materials include stone, brick and stamped metal.

If the cornice is missing from a building, consider reconstructing it.

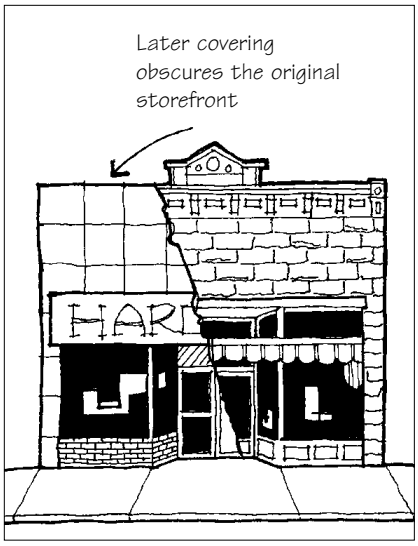
Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.

A simplified interpretation also is appropriate if evidence of the original is missing.

Preserve the character of the cornice line with a replacement design.



Reconstructing missing details, when sufficient information is available, is encouraged. In this case, the original cornice is missing in the photo at upper left. The central portion of the pediment is under construction, above. When completed, in the photo at lower left, the shadow lines from the cornice once again add interest to the building front.



Don't cover or obscure original facade materials.

If the original material has been covered, uncover it if feasible.

Facade Materials

Original exterior building materials provide a sense of scale and texture and often convey the work of skilled craftsmen. These original building materials should not be covered, damaged or removed.

3.22 Historic building materials and craftsmanship add textural qualities, as well as visual continuity and character to the streetscape, and should be preserved.

- Brick and stone have been the dominant building materials and their character and finish should be preserved.

3.23 Protect historic material surfaces.

- Don't use harsh cleaning methods, such as sandblasting, that could damage the finish of historic materials.
- If chemical cleaners are used, a test patch should be reviewed.

3.24 Protect masonry from water deterioration.

- Provide proper drainage so water does not stand on flat surfaces or accumulate in decorative features.
- Provide a means to drain water away from foundations to minimize rising damp. Do not permit downspouts to direct water to the foundation.
- DO NOT use a sealant, or clear coat, to protect masonry. A sealant will prevent proper breathing and cause moisture to be trapped inside the masonry.
- However, if masonry was painted historically, then it may be appropriate to repaint.

3.25 Don't cover or obscure original facade materials.

- Covering of original facades not only conceals interesting detail, but also interrupts the visual continuity along the street.
- If the original material has been covered, expose it if feasible.

3.26 If material replacement is necessary, use materials similar to those employed historically.

- Brick and stone were primary wall materials for most buildings. Wood and metal were used for window, door and storefront surrounds.
- Substitute materials may be used if they match the original in appearance, finish and profile.

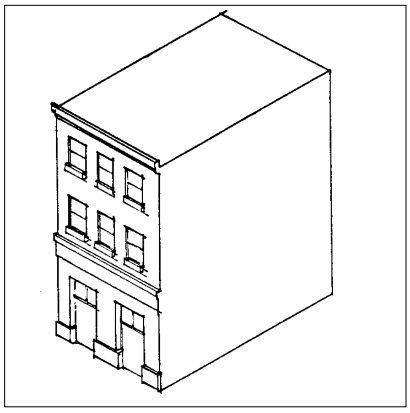
Design of Additions

Many buildings have experienced additions over time, as the need for more space occurred. An addition should be designed such that the historic character of the building can still be perceived. When planning a new addition to an historic structure, the negative effects that may occur should be minimized. While some destruction of original materials is almost always a part of constructing an addition, such loss should be minimized.

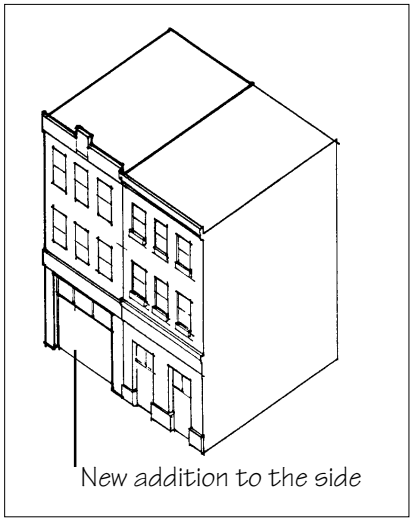
Three distinct types of additions should be considered. First, a ground- level addition that involves expanding the footprint of a structure may be considered. Such an addition should be to the rear or side of a building. This will have the least impact on the historic character of the structure, but there may only be limited opportunities to do this.

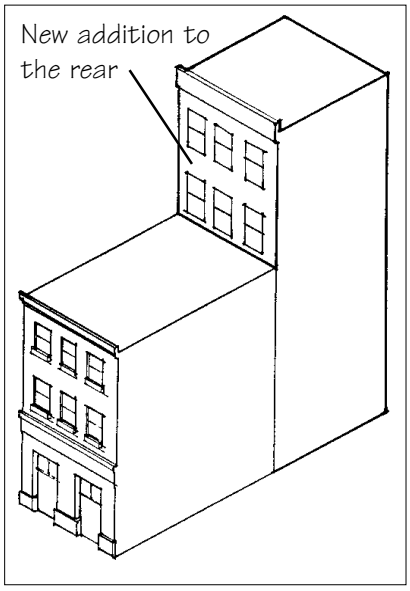
Second, an addition to the roof may be designed that is simple in character and set back substantially from the front of a building. In addition, the materials, window sizes and alignment of trim elements on the addition should compatible to those of the existing structure.

A third option, is to design an addition within the wall plane of the existing building. This option is the most difficult and requires great care to respect the historic relationship of the building to the street. Such an addition should provide a visual distinction between the existing structure and its addition. This may be accomplished through the use of a midbelt cornice element or a subtle change in building materials.

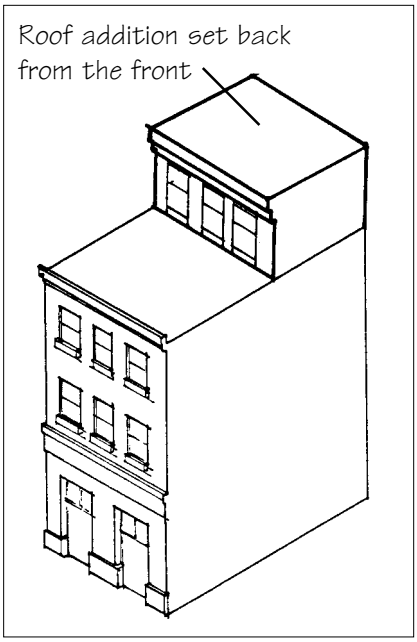


An original three-story building, before an addition. (Compare with sketches below and on the following page.)





An addition may be set back to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building. In the image on the left, the original three floors of this building are visible. In the angle view at the right, two newer floors are visible. Note how the addition cannot be seen when looking at the building straight-on because it is setback.



Appropriate alternative approaches to additions.

3.27 An addition should be compatible in scale, materials and character with the main building.

3.28 An addition should not damage or obscure historically or architecturally important features.

- For example, loss or alteration of a cornice line should be avoided.

3.29 Design an addition such that the historic character of the original building can still be interpreted.

- A new addition that creates an appearance inconsistent with the historic character of the building is inappropriate. For example, an addition that is more ornate than the original building would be out of character.
- An addition that seeks to imply an earlier period than that of the building also is inappropriate because it would confuse the history of the building.

3.30 An addition should be subtly distinguishable from the historic building.

- An addition should be made distinguishable from the historic building, even in subtle ways, so that the character of the original can be interpreted.

3.31 An addition may be made to the rear or side of a building if it does the following:

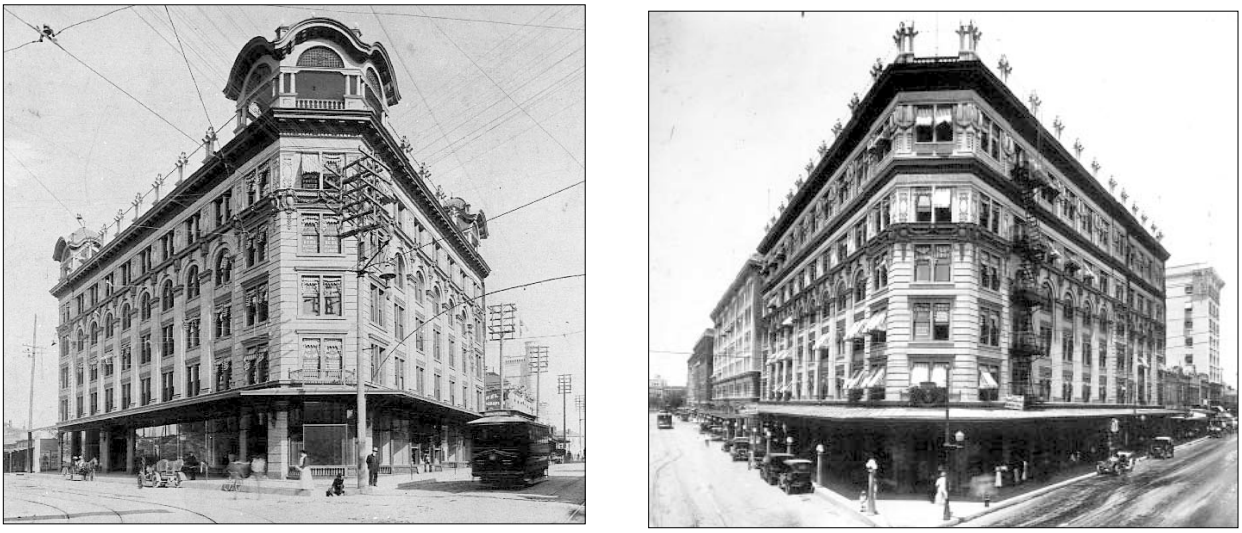
- An addition should maintain the alignment of storefront elements, moldings, cornices and upper-story windows that exist on the main part of the building and its surrounding context.

3.32 An addition may be made to the roof of a building if it does the following:

- An addition should be set back from the primary, character-defining facade, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building.
- Its design should be modest in character, so it will not attract attention from the historic facade.
- The addition should be distinguishable as new, albeit in a subtle way.

3.33 In limited circumstances, an addition may be made to the roof of a building and not be set back from character-defining facades, if it does the following:

- An addition should be distinguished from the existing building. A change in material or a decorative band can be considered to accomplish this.
- An addition should maintain the alignment of storefront elements, moldings, cornices and upper-story windows that exist on the main part of the building and its surrounding context.
- The addition should also be compatible in scale, texture and materials with the original.



These early photos of the Moore building illustrate historic precedence for a rooftop addition. This addition can be distinguished from the original building on the left by providing a simple decorative band. Although the towers were removed, the original cornice was replaced at the top of the building.

4. Parking Facilities

The Houston Street historic area first developed without the automobile and its streets were designed for pedestrians and horse-drawn conveyance, later followed by a trolley line. However, the automobile appeared early in the twentieth century and continues to be a major influence on the street. Even so, its visual impacts should be minimized.

New parking facilities should be designed to be attractive, compatible additions to the Houston Street historic area. Using high quality materials, providing a sense of scale in architectural details and providing active uses at the sidewalk edge are methods that can mitigate the potentially negative impacts of new parking facilities. In general, a new parking facility should remain subordinate to the street scene.

This chapter presents design guidelines for the following parking-related design issues:

- Location of parking facilities
- Visual impacts of surface parking
- Visual impacts of parking structures
- Security and pedestrian circulation

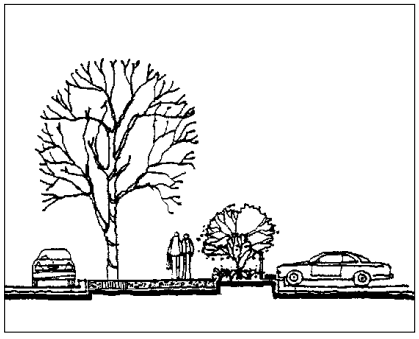
Location of Parking Facilities

4.1 Locate a parking facility, particularly a surface lot, in the interior of a block whenever possible.

- This acknowledges the special function of corner properties, as they are generally more visible than interior lots, serve as landmarks and provide a sense of enclosure to an intersection.

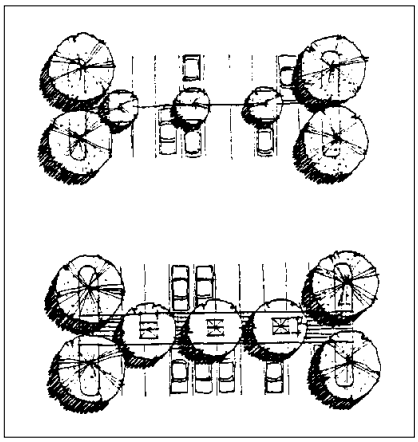
4.2 Site a parking lot so it will minimize gaps in the continuous building wall of a block.

- Where a parking lot shares a site with a building, place the parking at the rear of the site or beside the building. In this way, the architectural continuity of the street can be preserved.



Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a buffer.

Use a combination of trees and shrubs to create a landscape buffer.



Minimize the negative visual impact of cars parked on site. Divide parking lots into smaller areas with planted buffers between them.

Design a parking structure so that it creates a visually attractive and active street edge.

Visual Impacts of Surface Parking

4.3 Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a visual buffer.

- This may be a landscaped strip or planter that is a minimum of eight feet in depth.
- Consider the use of a wall as screen for the edge of the lot. Materials should be compatible with those of nearby buildings.
- Use a combination of trees and shrubs to create a landscape buffer.

4.4 To reduce the visual impacts of a large parking lot area, divide it into a number of smaller parking parcels and separate them with landscaping.

- Plant shrubs and small trees to define circulation routes for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Divide parking lots into smaller areas with planted buffers between them to minimize the perceived scale of the total field of stalls.

Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

Parking structures should be designed to enhance the activity of the streetscape on Houston Street. At a minimum, a parking structure should help to animate the street and be compatible with the surrounding historic context. The visual impact of the cars themselves should be minimized. *(Note that these guidelines apply in addition to the General Design Guidelines presented in Chapter Two for the design of an infill building.)*

4.5 Design a parking structure so that it creates a visually attractive and active street edge.

- When feasible, a parking structure in the area should be wrapped with retail, commercial or an other active use along the street edge to shield the facility from the street and to add activity to the street.
- Other methods of accomplishing this include, but are not limited to:
  - Retail/commercial wrap
  - Murals or public art
  - Landscaping
  - Product display cases

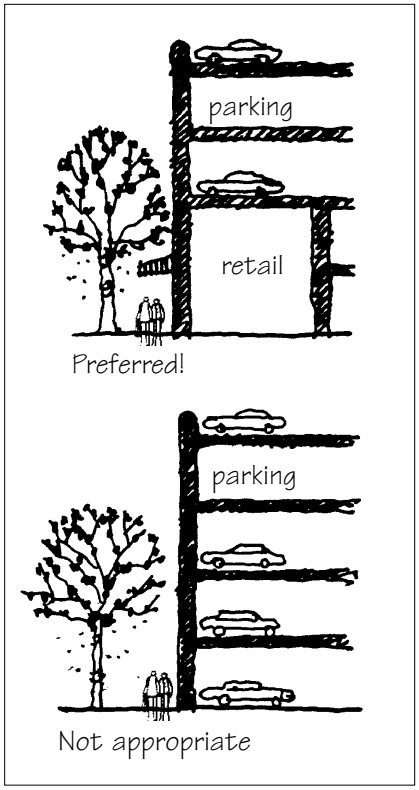
4.6 A parking structure should be compatible with traditional buildings in the surrounding area.

- Respect the regular window pattern and other architectural elements of adjacent historic buildings.
- Maintain the alignments and rhythms of architectural elements, as seen along the street.
- Continue the use of similar building materials.
- Avoid multiple curb cuts. These complicate turning movements and disrupt the sidewalk.
- Express the traditional widths of buildings in the area.

This parking structure incorporates a wrap of retail stores along the street edge. The storefronts are contemporary interpretations of the historic downtown context.

The context for this parking structure in downtown Boulder, CO, is two- to four-story brick commercial buildings.

A part of this infill building is a parking structure that is set back from the front and sides of a retail wrap. The openings in the parking section reflect window proportions similar to those seen historically in the area.



The ground level of a parking structure should be wrapped by retail, office or some other active use along the street edge.

Security and Pedestrian Circulation

4.7 Design a parking facility so that pedestrian access is easy and clearly defined.

- Walkways should be clearly defined with graphics, lighting or landscaping.
- Direct connections between a parking structure and its supporting businesses are desirable.
- Interior and exterior lighting should be planned to assure user safety.

New parking facilities should be designed to be attractive, compatible additions to the Houston Street historic area. Using high quality materials, providing a sense of scale in architectural details and providing active uses at the sidewalk edge are methods that can mitigate the potentially negative impacts of new parking facilities.

5. Public Streetscapes

San Antonio has the opportunity to reinforce Houston Street as a distinct shopping and entertainment environment: a pedestrian precinct, one where people walking share the downtown with automobiles and public transportation. This mix of traffic can provide a sense of excitement and can actually enhance the pedestrians experience if these other elements are kept in balance. Paramount, however, should be providing a sense of comfort for pedestrians. This includes ensuring that the sidewalks are designed to facilitate walking and that public spaces are created which are lively and inviting.

Many of these principles are set forth in the San Antonio Downtown Triparty Transportation Improvements Plan. This plan forms the foundation for streetscape improvements and all improvements should be compatible with this plan. This chapter includes guidelines for Houston Street streetscape elements.

San Antonio has the opportunity to reinforce Houston Street as a distinct shopping and entertainment environment: a pedestrian precinct, one where people walking share the downtown with automobiles and public transportation.

Design Objectives Underlying the Streetscape Design Guidelines

The basic objectives are outlined in the Triparty Plan and form the basis for streetscape design on Houston Street. This plan contains a number of objectives that apply to Houston Street:

- *To develop a network of attractive "front-door" streets that supports a lively street environment.*
- *To integrate, at appropriate locations, the Riverwalk with the street environment.*
- *The design for street elements and streetscape should respect the character and traditional use of downtown San Antonio, they should also be seen as setting the stage for revitalization of activity and future change.*
- *To create a streetscape theme that promotes diverse urban, pedestrian activities during the daytime and evenings.*
- *To provide areas of softer texture as a contrast to the predominantly hard surface and high glare of the area.*
- *To provide a sense of security which encourages pedestrian use into the evening hours.*
- *To provide a sense of direction for pedestrians on Houston Street to the Riverwalk and other important linkages to areas downtown.*

Appropriate. Design public spaces that are lively and inviting.

Sidewalk Design

Sidewalks should help to establish a sense of visual continuity for the area and to enhance the walking experience.

Decorative Paving

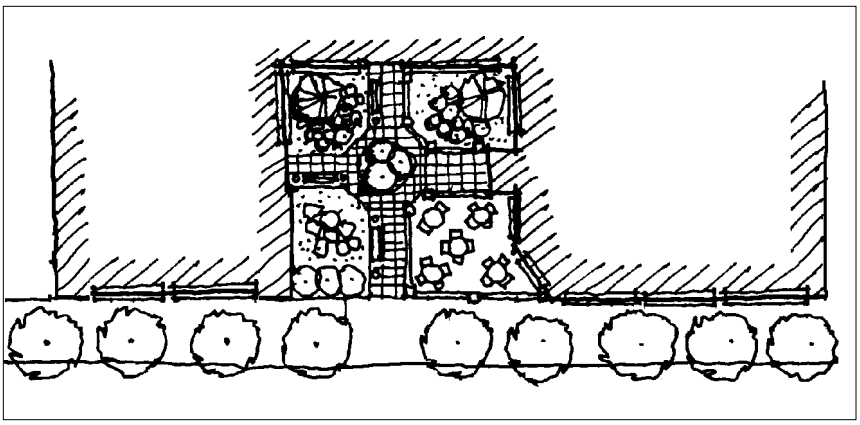
5.1 Use a consistent decorative paving design to convey a sense of visual continuity.

- Decorative paving should be used to denote distinct activity zones, such as intersections, pedestrian crossings and building entrances, and to define places for sitting and other outdoor activities.

Sidewalk Plazas

5.2 Coordinate private open space development with that of the streetscape design of public sidewalks, when conditions permit.

- For example, combine a private courtyard with an expanded sidewalk plaza to maximize the visual impacts of these spaces.



Coordinate private open space development with that of the streetscape design of public sidewalks, when conditions permit.

Public Open Space

Opportunities exist to create outdoor places for people within properties, in addition to “plazas” that may be developed in expanded areas of the sidewalks. These spaces may include gardens and courtyards as part of building entries and they may also include more formal, public open spaces. In all cases, these should be designed to maximize the potential for their active use and to enhance the traditional character of the area.

5.3 Open spaces should read as “accents” in the street wall of building fronts.

- In general, the majority of the edge of a block should consist of building walls. Gaps in the street wall that occur as open space should be planned to be subordinate to the definition of the street edge with buildings.

5.4 Define the edges of the open space along the sidewalk.

- Use changes in paving, hedges and walls to define the street edge.

5.5 Frame public open space activities that will be in use year round.

- To help to animate public open space, locate it such that pedestrian circulation routes to major buildings cross it.
- Orient major building entrances onto the open space and design circulation routes to facilitate movement through it.

5.6 Site open space to maximize opportunities for sun and shade.

- Provide shade for summer months and sun in the winter, when feasible.

Street Furniture

Several areas of the downtown already have amenities in place that enhance the pedestrian experience. Additional furnishings should be considered to enhance the area, but should work with the existing features and the hierarchy of streetscape improvements proposed in the *San Antonio Downtown Triparty Transportation Improvement Plan*.

Street furniture should be compatible with the existing furnishings.

5.7 All street furniture in the public right-of-way should have similar materials and colors.

- Street furniture should be compatible with the existing furnishings.
- Individual furnishings should be of designs that may be combined with other street furniture in a coherent components.
- Furnishings outside of the public right-of-way (e.g.) within a private courtyard, may be different from existing street furniture.

Street Furniture Arrangement

5.8 Street furniture should be located in areas of high pedestrian activity.

- Locate furniture at pedestrian route intersections and major building entrances and near outdoor gathering places.

5.9 Street furnishings should be clustered in "groupings," when feasible.

- Use planters and waste receptacles to frame spaces for benches, for example.

Seating

5.10 Public seating should be provided to enhance the pedestrian experience.

- Install benches in high pedestrian traffic areas and/or areas of interest.
- The design of the benches should be consistent with other furnishings.

5.11 Position a bench to provide a sense of comfort.

- Locate a bench perpendicular to the street edge, when feasible.
- Avoid locating a bench close to the curb.
- Buffer the bench from traffic; for example, position a planter between the bench and the curb.

Outdoor Dining Seating

5.12 Outdoor dining areas should not hinder vehicular or pedestrian circulation.

- The width of a sidewalk path shall remain unobstructed for a minimum of 6 feet.
- Dining areas shall be set back from the street curb a minimum of 3 feet.
- These areas should not impede pedestrian traffic to adjoining merchants.

5.13 Outdoor dining area furnishings should complement the existing streetscape furnishings.

- The design of the furnishings should be consistent with other streetscape furnishings.

5.14 Barriers may be considered to separate pedestrian and dining activities.

- Planters, rails, and chains with bollards are appropriate elements to be considered.
- These barriers should be moveable.

Outdoor dining areas should not hinder vehicular or pedestrian circulation.

Waste receptacles

5.15 Cluster waste receptacles with other furnishings.

- The design of the receptacles should be compatible with other existing furnishings.

Planters

5.16 When feasible, cluster planters with other furnishings.

- The design of planters should be compatible with other furnishings.
- Install freestanding planters at seating areas, along edges of parking lots, in pedestrian plazas and in clustered furnishing areas.
- Private planters may be used to help define primary building entrances and should also be compatible with the building materials.

The design of planters should be compatible with other furnishings.

Landscaping and Planting

5.17 Use indigenous plant materials, when feasible.

- Locate street trees along edges of sidewalks, maintaining a clearly-defined pedestrian travel zone.
- Locate street trees in larger planting areas, such as buffer strips adjacent to parking lots and/or pocket parks.
- Provide underground irrigation systems.
- Use flowers to provide seasonal colors.

Street Lights

5.18 Light pole designs should complement other street furniture.

- The color of the pole should match that of other key street furnishings, including benches and waste receptacles.

5.19 The light pole, or standard, should be designed to accommodate special decorative accessories.

- Mounts for hanging planter baskets and banners, for example, should be included.
- Mounts for seasonal lighting schemes also should be considered.

Public Art

Public art should enhance the pedestrian experience along Houston Street. Public art should be installed in strategic locations along Houston Street; for example, public art at gateways, bridge crossings, small plazas and view termini is appropriate. Installations may be designed as integral components of the existing streetscape.

5.20 The use of public art is encouraged.

- Consider locations such as gateways, bridge crossings, small plazas and view termini.
- Art that is developed as an integral part of the architecture or streetscape is also encouraged.

The use of public art is encouraged.

6. Signs

Traditionally, commercial signs have been a part of the character of downtown San Antonio. Early photographs include a variety of signs, which occurred in seven types.

The following types of signs have traditionally been used on Houston Street:

- Medium-sized, square or rectangularly-shaped signs that projected from the building above the awnings or canopies; printed on both sides.
- Small, horizontally-oriented rectangular signs that protruded from the building below the awnings or canopies but above pedestrians' heads; printed on both sides.
- Medium- to large-sized, horizontally-oriented rectangular signs attached flat against the building, above and/or below the awnings; printed on one side only.
- Medium- to large-sized, horizontally-oriented rectangular signs attached above and to the front of the awnings; printed on one side only.
- Medium- to large-sized, horizontally- and vertically-oriented signs painted on the building; mural signs. (Historically these were mostly located adjacent to the cornice or upper corner of a blank wall on the side of the building.)
- Large "blade" signs (i.e., vertically-oriented, tall signs) that projected from the second or third/fourth floors of a building, above awnings or canopies; printed on both sides.
- Window signs, painted on glass; used at the street level and on upper floors.

Historically, signs that were mounted on the exterior advertised the primary business of a building. This medium sized blade sign projects from the third floor of the building and was the only sign that advertised for this building, in this case the name of the building and the business were the same. The Frost Building still stands today. Photo ca. 1930's.

Historically, signs that were mounted on the exterior of a building advertised the primary business conducted in the building. Typically, these signs occupied a street level space and sometimes upper floors as well. Window signs were the only ones used for businesses above the street level business. In the case of a large structure that included several businesses on upper floors, the name of the building itself was displayed on an exterior sign. Tenants relied on a directory at the street level.

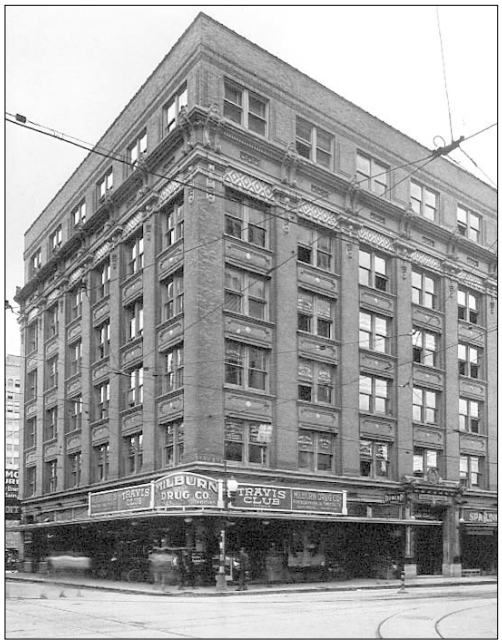
Historically sign sizes varied. Most signs were a few square feet in area, but some of the blade signs were quite large. In general, these larger signs were for a cultural or institutional facilities, such as a theater, or for an office block. In a few instances, major retailers also used them.

The earliest signs had no lights, but in time a variety of methods were used. Many signs in the early twentieth century had incandescent lamps focused on the sign panel. By the 1930s, some were outlined in lights; and by the 1950s, neon appeared occasionally.

Even so, throughout the history of the area signs have remained subordinate to the architecture. While some large signs have existed, they were relatively limited in number, such that one's overall ability to perceive the character of sets of buildings was maintained. Therefore, the key unifying features of the area, including the alignment of first floor elements and the rhythm of building fronts and windows, have remained clearly visible.

In addition, signs were mounted to fit within architectural features. In many cases, they were mounted flush above the storefront, just above moldings. Others were located between columns or centered in "panels" on a building face. This method of sign usage helped enhance the design character of individual structures.

Therefore, the tradition of having a diversity of signs that remain subordinate to the overall context and signs complementing architectural compositions, should be maintained.



As early as 1925, medium- to large-sized, horizontally-oriented rectangular signs attached above and to the front of the awning could be found.

The Sign Context

A sign typically serves two functions: first, to attract attention; and second to convey information, essentially identifying the business or services offered within. If it is well designed, the building front alone can serve the attention-getting function, allowing the sign to focus on conveying information in a well-conceived manner. All new signs should be developed with the overall context of the building and the area in mind.

6.1 Consider the building front as part of an overall sign program.

- Coordinate a sign within the overall facade composition.
- A sign should be in proportion to the building, such that it does not dominate the appearance.
- Develop a master sign plan for the entire building; this should be used to guide individual sign design decisions.

6.2 A sign should be subordinate to the overall building composition.

- A sign should appear to be in scale with the facade.
- Locate a sign on a building such that it will emphasize design elements of the facade itself. On an historic building a sign should not obscure architectural details or features.
- Mount a sign to fit within existing architectural features. Use the shape of the sign to help reinforce the horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street.

Roof mounted signs may be considered.

Appropriate Sign Types

6.3 A flush-mounted wall sign may be considered.

- When feasible, place a wall sign such that it aligns with others on the block.
- When planning a wall sign, determine if decorative moldings exist that could define a "sign panel." If so, locate a flush-mounted sign such that it fits within a panel formed by moldings or transom panels. When mounted on a building with historic significance, a sign should not obscure significant facade features.

6.4 A projecting (blade) sign may be considered.

- A small blade sign should be located near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side of it.
- A large blade sign should be mounted higher, and centered on the facade or positioned at the corner.
- Note that other approvals may be required to allow a sign to overhang the public right-of-way.

6.5 A window sign may be considered.

- A window sign may be painted on or applied to a window.
- A window sign should cover no more than approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of the total window area.
- It may be applied to the glass or hung just inside the window.

6.6 A directory sign may be considered.

- Group small, individual signs on a single panel as a directory to make them easier to locate.

Preserve an historic sign where it exists, when feasible.

Sign Materials

6.7 Sign materials should be compatible with that of the building facade.

- Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs. Their use is encouraged. Unfinished materials, including unpainted wood, are discouraged because they are out of character with the context.
- Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read are inappropriate.
- Painted signs on blank walls were common historically and may be considered.

Using a symbol for a sign is encouraged.

Sign Content

6.8 Using a symbol for a sign is encouraged.

- A symbol sign adds interest to the street, can be read quickly and is remembered better than written words.

6.9 Use colors for the sign that are compatible with those of the building front.

6.10 A simple sign design is preferred.

- Typefaces that are in keeping with those seen in the area traditionally are encouraged.
- Also, limit the number of colors used on a sign. In general, no more than three colors should be used.

6.11 Select letter styles and sizes that will be compatible with the building front.

- Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate typeface styles.

6.12 Preserve an historic painted sign where it exists, when feasible.

Painted window signs were used historically, as shown in this early photo detail, and are appropriate sign types for Houston Street.

Sign Lighting

6.13 Indirect lighting is preferred for a sign.

- Indirect lighting (i.e., that which is directed at a sign from an external, shielded lamp) is preferred.)
- A warm light, similar to daylight, is preferred.

6.14 If internal illumination is used, it should be designed to be subordinate to the overall building composition.

- Internal illumination of an entire sign panel is discouraged. If internal illumination is used, a system that backlights sign text only is preferred.
- Neon and other tubular illumination may be considered. However, use neon in limited amounts so that it does not become visually obtrusive.

Indirect lighting, that which is directed at a sign from an external, shielded lamp, is preferred.

Neon and other tubular illumination may be considered. However, use neon in limited amounts so that it does not become visually obtrusive, as is shown in this image.

Appendix A

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are general rehabilitation guidelines established by the National Park Service. These standards are policies that serve as a basis for design principles presented in this document that address historic properties. The Secretary's Standards state that:

1. A property shall be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, shall not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used.
8. Archeological resources shall be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the his-

toric materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the 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.

Design for alternations and additions to existing properties should not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material. Such design should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood and environment.

Appendix B

Glossary of Terms

Alignment. The arrangement of objects along a straight line.

Appurtenances. An additional object added to a building; typically includes vents, exhausts hoods, air conditioning units, etc.

Association. As related to the determination of "integrity" of a property, *association* refers to a link of a historic property with a historic event, activity or person. Also, the quality of integrity through which a historic property is linked to a particular past time and place.

Building. A resource created principally to shelter any form of human activity, such as a house.

Contributing Resource. A building, site, structure or object adding to the historic significance of a historic district.

Corbelling. A series of projections, each stepped out further than the one below it; most often found on brick walls and chimney stacks.

Cornice. The continuous projection at the top of a wall. The top course or molding of a wall when it serves as a crowning member.

Design. As related to the determination of "integrity" of a property, *design* refers to the elements that create the physical form, plan, space, structure and style of a property.

Dormer. A window set upright in a sloping roof. The term is also used to refer to the roofed projection in which this window is set.

Elevation. A mechanically accurate, "head-on" drawing of a face of a building or object, without any allowance for the effect of the laws of perspective. Any measurement on an elevation will be in a fixed proportion, or scale, to the corresponding measurement on the real building.

Facade. Front or principal face of a building, any side of a building that faces a street or other open space.

Fenestration. The arrangement of windows and other exterior openings on a building.

Form. The overall shape of a structure (i.e. most structures are rectangular in form).

Frame. A window component. See window parts.

Gable. The portion, above eave level, of an end wall of a building with a pitched or gambrel roof. In the case of a pitched roof this takes the form of a triangle. The term is also used sometimes to refer to the whole end wall.

Ganged (windows). Windows that are grouped horizontally and/or vertically.

Glazing. Fitting glass into windows and doors.

Head. The top horizontal member over a door or window opening.

Historic Area. A significant concentration of sites, buildings, structures or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

In-Kind Replacement. To replace a feature of a building with materials of the same characteristics, such as material, texture, color, etc.

Kickplate. The horizontal element or assembly at the base of a storefront parallel to a public walkway. The kickplate provides a transition between the ground and storefront glazing area.

Location. As related to the determination of "integrity" of a property, *location* refers to a historic property existing in the same place as it did during the period of significance.

Mass. The physical size and bulk of a structure.

Masonry. Construction materials such as stone, brick, concrete block or tile.

Material. As related to the determination of "integrity" of a property, *material* refers to the physical elements that were combined or deposited in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

Module. The appearance of a single facade plane, despite

being part of a larger building. One large building can incorporate several building modules.

Molding. A decorative band or strip of material with a constant profile or section designed to cast interesting shadows. It is generally used in cornices and as trim around window and door openings.

Noncontributing Resource. A building, site, structure or object that does not add to the historic significance of a property.

Parapet. A low wall or railing often used around a balcony or along the edge of a roof.

Period of Significance. Span of time in which a property attained the significance.

Property. Area of land containing a single historic resource or a group of resources.

Orientation. Generally, orientation refers to the manner in which a building relates to the street. The entrance to the building plays a large role in the orientation of a building; whereas, it should face the street.

Pediment. A triangular section framed by a horizontal molding on its base and two sloping moldings on each of its sides. Usually used as a crowning member for doors, windows and mantles.

Preservation. The act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity and materials of a building or structure, and the existing form and vegetative cover of a site. It may include initial stabilization work, where necessary, as well as ongoing maintenance of the historic building materials.

Protection. The act or process of applying measures designed to affect the physical condition of a property by defending or guarding it from deterioration, loss or attack or to cover or shield the property from danger of injury. In the case of buildings and structures, such treatment is generally of a temporary nature and anticipates future historic preservation treatment; in the case of archaeological sites, the protective measure may be temporary or permanent.

Reconstruction. The act or process of reproducing by new construction the exact form and detail of a vanished building, structure or object, or part thereof, as it appeared at a specific period of time.

Recessed Entry. A common component of a historic storefront.

Display windows, which contained dry goods and other wares for sale, flanked the recessed entry historically.

Rehabilitation. The act or process of returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions or features of the property which are significant to its historical, architectural and cultural value.

Renovation. The act or process of returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration which makes possible a contemporary use.

Restoration. The act or process of accurately recovering the form and details of a property and its setting as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of later work or by the replacement of missing earlier work.

Roof. The top covering of a building. Following are some types:

- ***Gable roof*** has a pitched roof with ridge and vertical ends.
- ***Hip roof*** has sloped ends instead of vertical ends.
- ***Shed roof*** (lean-to) has one slope only and is built against a higher wall.

Sash. See window parts.

Scale. The size of structure as it appears to the pedestrian.

Setting. As related to the determination of “integrity” of a property, *setting* refers to the physical environment of a historic property.

Side Light. A usually long fixed sash located beside a door or window; often found in pairs.

Sill. The lowest horizontal member in a frame or opening for a window or door. Also, the lowest horizontal member in a framed wall or partition.

Size. The dimensions in height and width of a building's face.

Stabilization. The fact or process of applying measures designed to reestablish a weather resistant enclosure and the structural stability of an unsafe or deteriorated property while maintaining the essential form as it exists at present.

Store Front. The street level facade of a commercial building,

usually having display windows.

Streetscape. Generally, the streetscape refers to the character of the street, or how elements of the street form a cohesive environment.

Traditional. Based on or established by the history of the area.

Transom Window. A small window or series of panes above a door, or above a casement or double hung window.

Vernacular. This means that a building does not have details associated with a specific architectural style, but is a simple building with modest detailing and form. Historically, factors often influencing vernacular building were things such as local building materials, local climate and building forms used by successive generations.

Visual Continuity. A sense of unity or belonging together that elements of the built environment exhibit because of similarities among them.

Window Parts. The moving units of a window are known as *sashes* and move within the fixed Frame. The *sash* may consist of one large *pane* of glass or may be subdivided into smaller panes by thin members called *muntins* or *glazing bars*. Sometimes in nineteenth-century houses windows are arranged side by side and divided by heavy vertical wood members called *mullions*.

Workmanship. As related to the determination of “integrity” of a property, *workmanship* refers to the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture, people or artisan.