



FROM YOUR STREET TO MAIN STREET

# Design Guidelines

## To Enhance the Downtown Historical District

Developed by the Fredericktown  
Revitalization Initiative's Main  
Street Design Committee

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## Introduction

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These guidelines have been prepared by members of **Fredericktown Revitalization Initiative**, a public-private partnership working to revitalize the Fredericktown commercial district. The guidelines are put forth in an effort to aid the future development of the Fredericktown Downtown area by identifying desirable aesthetic qualities. Guidelines provide consistency and avoid arbitrary design, thereby giving the tools and advice needed to integrate new constructions and remodeling into the surrounding community.

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

The result will be to develop a satisfactory visual impact within the Downtown, preserve taxable values, and promote public health, safety, and welfare. These guidelines will introduce the Downtown community to the future, while maintaining its rich heritage.

The area of coverage being addressed in the Fredericktown Downtown district is from .

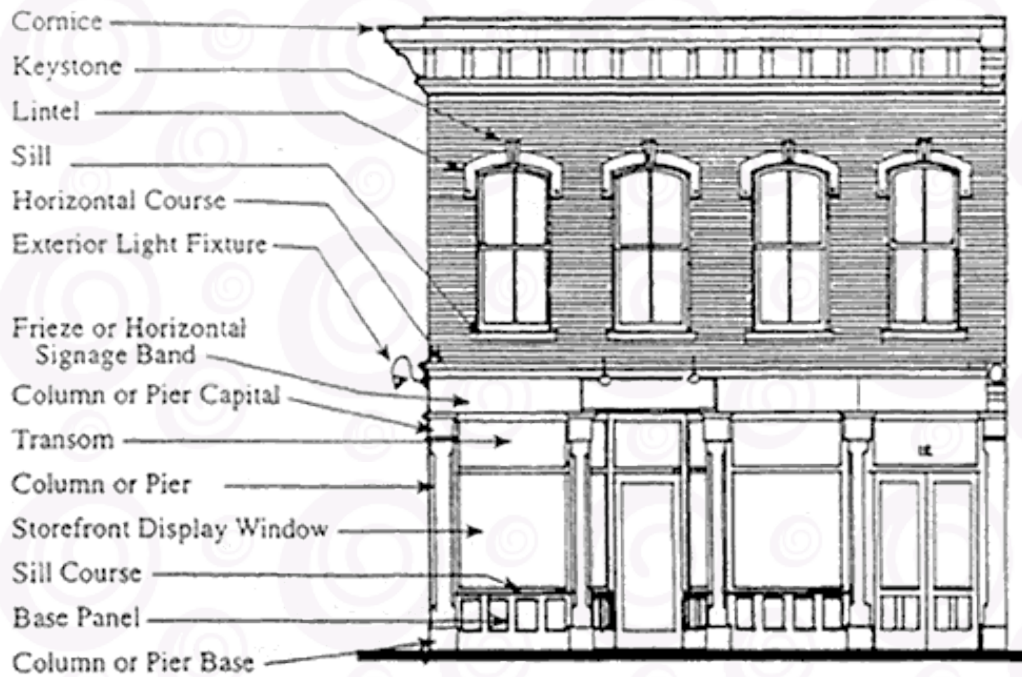
The Fredericktown main street is a vibrant, distinctive, neighborhood offering a variety of goods and services as well as specialty shops and restaurants. The district, which encompasses the extended Brighton Avenue/Harvard Avenue/Cambridge Street triangle and the Harvard/Commonwealth Avenue intersection, has nearly 150 businesses and 125 buildings. Some of the neighborhood's historic buildings have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Fredericktown Revitalization Initiative (FRI) encourages property owners, merchants and residents to recognize, enhance, protect and promote the district's unique character and identity. To assist business and property owners in improving their storefronts as part of this revitalization process, FRI has created these guidelines in conjunction with its Facade Improvement Program and Sign, Lighting and Awning Program, which offer matching grants. The program seeks to develop a more coherent, creative and attractive appearance in Fredericktown. These guidelines provide general information about the renovation of existing buildings and considerations for new development. Additional guidance is available through FRI's Design Committee.

The economic vitality as well as the aesthetic quality of each business enterprise is important, and both are linked in part to the success of surrounding commercial establishments. Studies have shown that thoughtful design improvements often lead to greater sales for a business. Similarly, the physical character of Fredericktown contributes greatly to the overall image of the community for its residents, customers and visitors. By establishing these guidelines, FRI hopes that several important public and private objectives can be met, including:

- Enhancement of the commercial success of Fredericktown by ensuring a pleasant experience for business patrons.
- Preservation and enhancement of Fredericktown's historic buildings, streetscape, and architectural features.
- Recognition that Fredericktown is a community with unique qualities and characteristics which should be reinforced by planning and improvements specific and appropriate to this place.

## Anatomy of a Building Facade



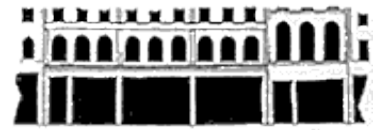
### Overall Goals

The goal of Fredericktown Revitalization Initiative (FRI) is to revitalize Fredericktown, not to gentrify it or change it into a different place. Main Streets hopes to make Fredericktown and its buildings better versions of themselves, not to mimic malls, suburbs or even other commercial districts. FRI encourages renovations and improvements which create a unique and attractive image for each business while respecting the original design parameters of its facade as well as those of its neighbors. Finally, while Main Streets values high design standards and creativity, it also encourages solutions which achieve these goals affordably so that business and property owners are benefited rather than burdened by the revitalization process.

### In general:

- All improvements must be compatible with applicable zoning codes, satisfy permit requirements, and conform to any other regulatory restrictions.
- Creativity is always encouraged.
- If a building has historic or aesthetic merit, improvements should be designed to reveal the building's original style, form, and materials, whenever possible.
- A building's distinguishing elements should be identified and preserved, when possible.
- Previous renovations are sometimes evidence of a building's history and use. In instances where alterations have acquired their own significance and contribute a positive visual quality to the building and the district, they should be recognized and preserved. However, when they are not integrated into the building's design, added elements should be removed.

- In the case where original building elements have been removed or substantially altered, contemporary treatments are suitable. However, they should not appear to be of poor quality, of temporary nature, or ill-suited to the area (e.g., vinyl or aluminum siding).
- Individuality within a standardized or unified appearance is encouraged for single buildings containing multiple storefronts. Separate buildings -- even in cases where several adjacent to each other are occupied by a single tenant or owner -- should remain visually distinct.
- Colors of exterior materials, signs, window frames, cornices, storefronts and other building features should be coordinated. Choice of colors should be determined by the nature of the building. The exterior colors of historic buildings should be chosen with their historic character in mind. More contemporary designs may allow for a larger range of colors.
- Facades should relate to their surroundings and provide a sense of cohesiveness in the district without strict uniformity. Facades should present a visually-balanced composition.
- High-quality materials should be used in order to convey substance and integrity.
- The use of traditional building materials is encouraged. Whether using traditional or non-traditional materials, the quality of the design and durability of materials chosen will be factors in the consideration of all designs.



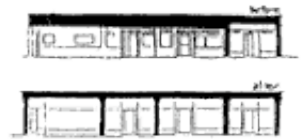
*This block of stores (top) has been transformed from chaos (center) to order (bottom) by thoughtful use of signs, windows and storefront frames.*



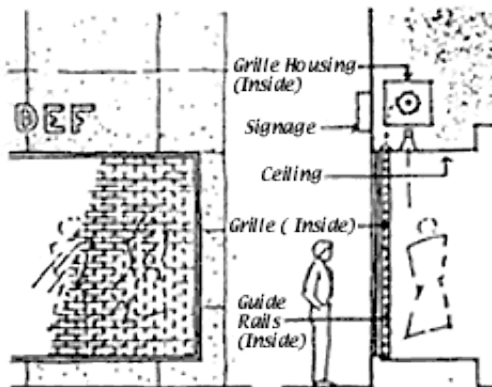
## Guidelines

### Storefront Design and Display

- Most facades consist of an architectural framework designed to identify individual storefronts. Each storefront should respect this architectural framework and not extend beyond it.
- Storefronts' design should be in keeping with a building's overall design. Storefront elements -- such as windows, entrances, and signage -- provide clarity and lend interest to facades. It is important that the distinction between individual storefronts, the entire building facade, and adjacent properties be maintained.



*These examples of storefronts before and after renovation demonstrate the importance of the storefront frame. Consistent emphasis of the frame creates a unifying effect on the streetscape.*



- Individual storefronts should be clearly defined by architectural elements, such as pillars, piers, or separations of glass.
- A horizontal band at the top of each storefront can serve as an appropriate location for business signage.
- Storefront windows should be consistent in height and design with storefront doors to create a cohesive appearance.

- Storefront windows should not be completely obscured with display cases that prevent customers and pedestrians from seeing inside.
- Storefront windows should display products or services, local business logos, hours of operation, and/or publicservice messages. Displays in both retail and non-retail storefront windows that add color, texture, information, and/or visual activity to the pedestrian experience are encouraged.
- "Transparent" storefronts are not necessary for some businesses, such as professional offices. Nevertheless, even for such businesses it is preferable to maintain the size of original storefront windows. Proprietors can provide attractive window displays or install blinds. This solution ontributes to the vitality of the streetscape and is more flexible for future changes than permanently blocking windows.
- Use of solid, roll-down security grates is strongly discouraged. Merchants with grates are encouraged to remove them or, at a minimum, upgrade to the "open-mesh" type. (Alternatives to solid roll-down grates include interior roll-down grates, or other security devices that can be completely concealed during regular business hours.) If a security grate is deemed absolutely necessary, the City of Boston Zoning Code requires all new grates to be the "open-mesh" type and neighborhood zoning requires them to be installed on the interior of windows. (This type of grate provides the same level of security as solid grates, and allows lighted window displays to be seen at night.) Security grate boxes should be recessed or concealed. All facades receiving FRI Facade Improvement Program or Sign, Lighting and Awning Program grants will be required to have their solid, roll-down grates removed. Installing open-mesh grates on the inside of a storefront is one solution which accommodates both design and security considerations.



*Signs with too much information can be confusing. Secondary information can be put on windows, doors or awning valances. Projecting signs are encouraged when their scale and design complement the facade.*



### Signage

- Signage should provide information simply and legibly. Studies show that seven words are the most passersby can effectively read.

- All signs should made be of durable materials.

- Primary signage should be limited to advertising the name of a business and its main goods and services. In general, primary signage should not advertise national brand names or logos.

- Permanently applied or painted window lettering may also be an effective way to advertise a business name, type of business, and/or primary goods and services.
- Window signage should be limited to covering no more than 15 percent of available window space.
- In general, the number of signs per storefront should be kept to a minimum. Limit signage to the number necessary to effectively communicate the business message. Too many signs in one storefront can detract from the overall appearance.



Acceptable



Unacceptable

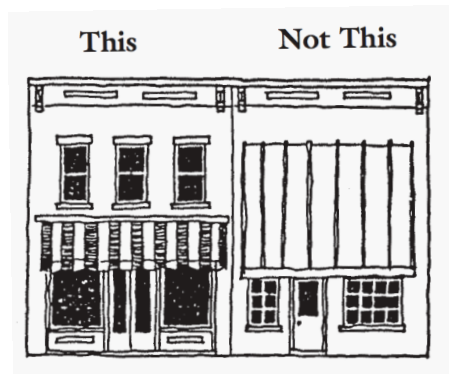
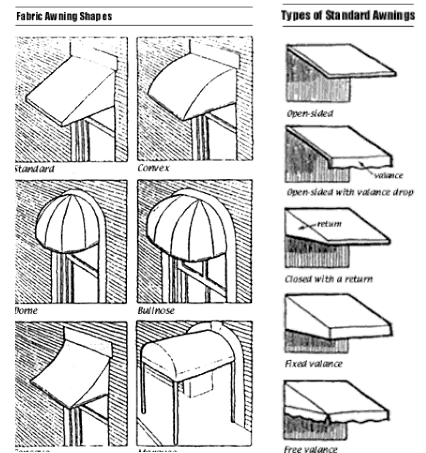
- Signs should be of a size, location and design that does not obscure a building's important architectural details.
- Signage can employ colors and typefaces which are designed to complement the unique character of a storefront, or they can be used creatively to add visual interest without altering a building's primary architectural style. Creativity in color and style is always encouraged.
- Flat wall signs installed above storefronts should form a clearly articulated sign band and be integrated into the overall facade design. Other locations and types of signs could be appropriate depending on the building design and the business owner's interests.
- Temporary signs, such as banners and paper signs in windows, should be removed in a timely manner. The use of temporary signs that outlast the advertised sale or promotion is discouraged.



*When a building contains multiple storefronts housing different businesses, the signs should relate well to each other in terms of height, proportion, color and background value. Maintaining uniformity among these characteristics reinforces the building's facade composition while still retaining each business's identity.*

### **Awnings, Canopies and Marquees**

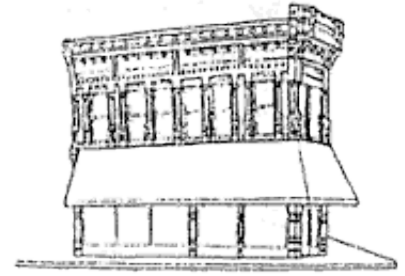
- Awnings, canopies and marquees provide a secondary location for signage. They add color and interest to building storefronts and facades and can be used to emphasize display windows and entrances. They also serve to protect pedestrians and display windows from the sun and rain.
- Awnings, canopies and marquees consistent with local character and building type are encouraged. Awnings should reflect the overall facade organization of a building.
- Awnings should be located within the building elements which frame storefronts.
- Important architectural details should not be concealed by awnings, canopies or marquees.
- Awnings on a multiple-storefront building should be consistent in character, scale, and location, but need not be identical.
- Awning shapes should relate to the shape of the facade's architectural elements. The use of traditionally shaped awnings is encouraged, when appropriate. Creative or unusually-shaped awnings should be designed with considerable care.
- Canvas and fire-resistant acrylic are preferred awning materials. The use of vinyl or plastic as awning materials is discouraged.



### **Doors and Entrances**

- Primary entrances should be clearly marked and provide a sense of welcome and easy passage from exterior to interior. Whenever possible, they should be located on the front of buildings.
- Side entrances should be located as close to the street front as possible.
- Recessed doorways are encouraged; they provide cover for pedestrians and customers in bad weather and help identify the location of store entrances. They also provide a clear area for out-swinging doors and offer the opportunity for interesting paving patterns, signage, and displays.

- By federal law, new store entrances must be accessible to the physically disabled. Renovation of existing entrances is encouraged.
- Loading and service entrances should be located on the side or rear of buildings, whenever possible. They should be screened from public ways and adjacent properties to the greatest extent possible.

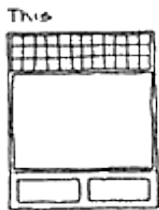


## Windows



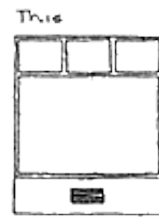
•Whenever possible, a building's original window pattern should be retained. Avoid blocking, reducing the size, or changing the design of windows. (Zoning requires that a minimum of 60 percent of a storefront between 3 feet and 8 feet above grade be transparent glass.)

•Windows should be used to display products and services, and maximize visibility into storefronts.

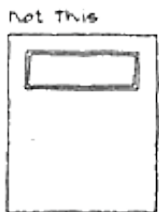


•Commercial storefront windows traditionally tended to be large at the ground-floor level. During renovation or new construction, this approach is encouraged.

•If ceilings must be lowered below the height of storefront windows, provide an interior, full-height space immediately adjacent to the window before the drop in the ceiling. This lets more light into the storefront and allows the retention of larger windows.



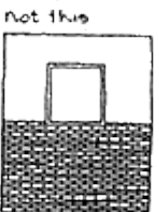
•Try to retain or increase window transparency whenever possible. Replace reflective or dark tinted glass with clear glass, if possible. In general, dark glass alienates pedestrians from the business activity inside a storefront and reduces the impact of window displays.



•Avoid installing opaque panels, such as metal, wood, and/or other materials, to replace clear glass windows.

•Windows with multiple, small-paned windows should be avoided unless they are historically appropriate to the building style, or integrate well into the overall design.

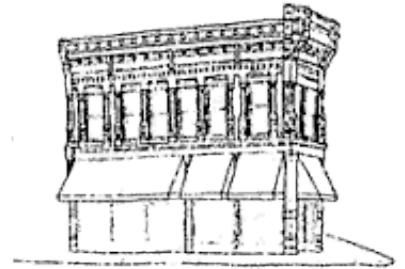
•Do not use Plexiglas or other replacement materials instead of glass. Safety glass is required when windows are 18" or less from the ground.



•Fix broken windows immediately. Broken or boarded windows negatively impact business and the district.

## Exterior Lighting

- Exterior lighting should highlight building elements, signs, or other distinctive features rather than attract attention to the light fixture itself. Lighting that attracts attention to itself, such as neon tubing surrounding display windows, should be avoided.
- In order to maintain an attractive image, exterior building lighting should be appropriate to the building's architectural style.



*The top awning obscures architectural details. Separate architectural details. Separate awnings (bottom) reveal details, maintain the vertical connection between the first floor and upper stories, and create a more dynamic "rhythm" in the streetscape.*



*Gooseneck lights are a popular historic lighting treatment.*

- Building lighting should provide an even illumination level.
- Avoid flashing, pulsating, or similar dynamic lighting that poses a hazard to motorists. Avoid lights which glare onto streets, public ways, or onto adjacent properties.
- Provide indirect lighting whenever possible.
- The creative use of neon in individual circumstances is encouraged. Because these guidelines strive to promote a unique character for Fredericktown, the use of nationally distributed neon signs that promote brand name goods is discouraged.

## **Exterior Materials**

- Facade design should be complementary to a building's original materials as well as to those of adjacent buildings.
- Terra cotta, brick and stone convey permanence and should be used when architecturally appropriate.
- When using new brick, care should be taken to match the color and type of original brickwork.
- Use of decorative concrete block, applied false-brick veneer, vinyl or aluminum siding is discouraged. Other materials made to either imitate exterior finish materials or used to cover original architectural features is also discouraged.
- Materials used near sidewalks and adjacent to building entrances should be highly durable and easily maintained while compatible with other exterior building materials.
- The surface cleaning of structures should be done by the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods, such as chemical washes, that will damage exterior building materials and features should not be undertaken.

## **Building Walls and Roofing**

- Facades and roofing that can be seen by the public should be well maintained.
- The size and configuration of doors and windows should be in proportion to the overall building. Attention should be paid to window heights, glass types, and doors.
- In order to provide a clear design intent, the number of exterior colors should be limited. Use of a large number of colors is not prohibited; however, designs which do so will need to be supported by a strong rationale.
- Building elements, such as awnings, signs, doors, windows, and lighting fixtures, should complement each other.
- Blank walls, if visible from a public way, should be softened by incorporating elements such as signage, murals, art, lighting, pilasters, and the like.

## **Building Systems**

- A building's mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems should be concealed completely from view from the street or sidewalk. If such equipment cannot be concealed, efforts should be taken to minimize their visual impact on building facades.
- Rooftop equipment should be hidden by a screening device so as not to be visible from the street and sidewalk.

- Avoid placing air-conditioning units in windows or any other openings facing onto the street. Units located in non-window openings are acceptable if they are flush with building walls. They should be screened with a decorative grill or any grill appropriate to the storefront design. Air-conditioning units should not drain onto pedestrians passing below.
- Downspouts and other drains should be kept clear and well-maintained.

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