

HAMILTON DISTRICT

FAÇADE DESIGN GUIDELINES

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE *GUIDELINES*

For more than a century, the area around Hamilton and Seventh Streets has been the economic and emotional center of Allentown. During much of that time, the area thrived: beautiful buildings were constructed in the latest architectural styles; sidewalks and stores and offices teemed with people. The City, at its core, prospered.

Eventually, decline set in. As structures aged, they were neglected, or carelessly renovated, or knocked down. Shoppers, workers, visitors fled to the suburbs. Attempts at renewal, such as changing traffic patterns or covering the sidewalks, generally failed.

And yet the *Hamilton District*, as we will call it, remains vital. The six short blocks from Fourth to Tenth Street still contain an exceptional number of architecturally significant structures, and a host of important, vibrant organizations and businesses. To name just a few: Allentown City Hall, the Lehigh County Government Center, the Post Office, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Allentown Art Museum, the Baum School of Art, Allentown Symphony Hall, Zion's United Church of Christ, Alvin H. Butz headquarters, PPL headquarters, and many, many restaurants, shops and offices, some new, some long established. The *District* also has a wonderful variety of historic and contemporary public spaces, such as the Civil War Memorial at Center Square, the Arts Park, the ArtsWalk and the PPL Plaza. Finally, there are a number of outstanding residences and small out-buildings that help give the neighborhood its unique character. Although primarily concerned with commercial buildings, many of the recommendations and façade design suggestions in the *Guidelines* can apply to any property, regardless of its use.

The purpose of these *Façade Design Guidelines* is to provide a clear framework for moving forward: for preserving the valuable architectural heritage that remains, and for creating exciting, appropriate new spaces and structures that will help re-establish the area as the beautiful, valuable urban center it once was, and can become again.

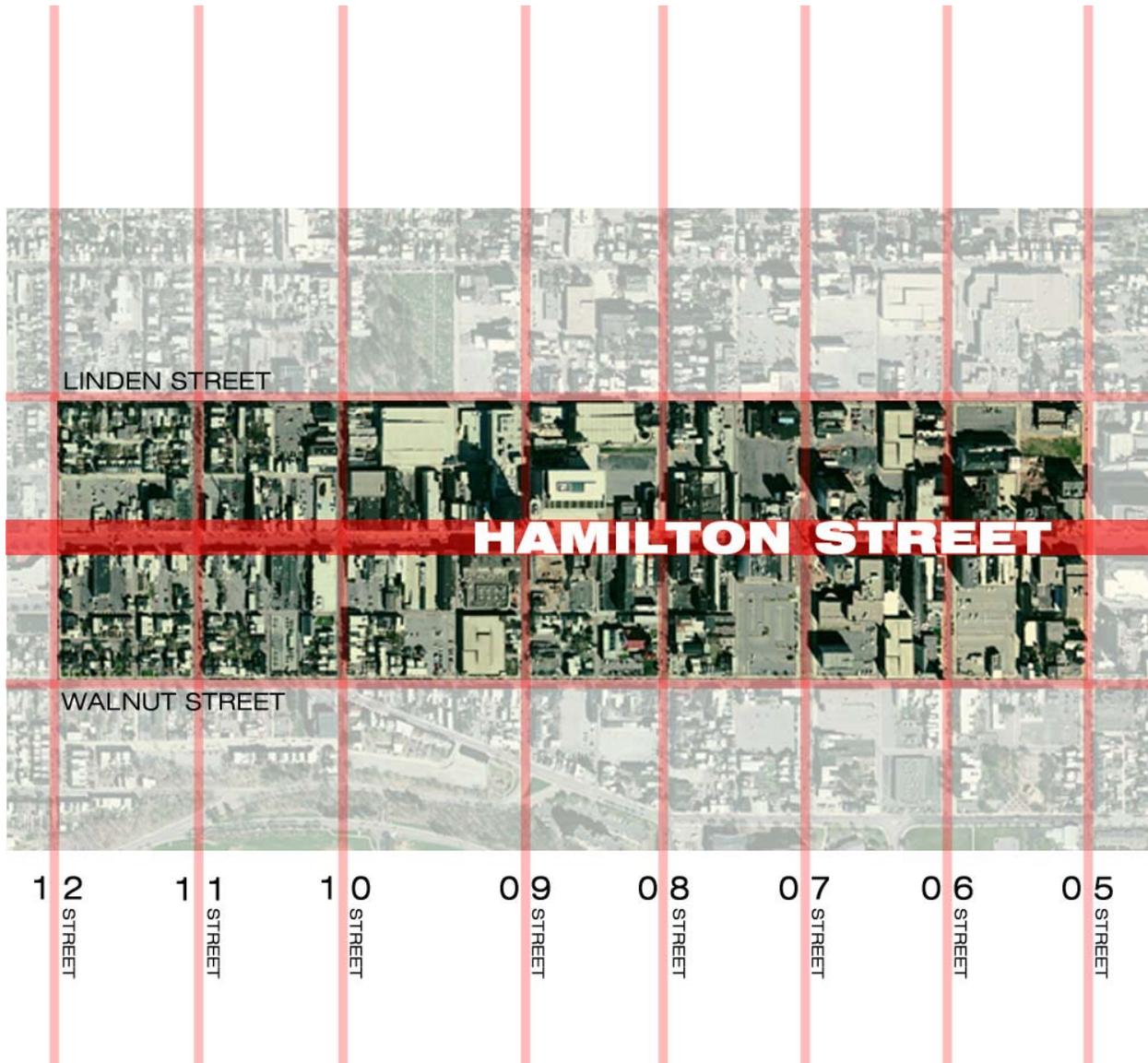


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GUIDELINE BOUNDARIES



THESE *GUIDELINES* APPLY TO ALL THE PROPERTIES IN THE AREA BOUNDED BY LINDEN STREET TO THE NORTH, WALNUT STREET TO THE SOUTH, FIFTH STREET TO THE EAST AND TWELFTH STREET TO THE WEST.

MUST I FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES?

The City of Allentown is committed to good design that will help revitalize the community in the short run *and* help keep it an attractive, economically strong environment for decades to come.

In many cases, the City will be able to provide funding, in the form of loans or grants, to help property owners make improvements. (Note: the term “*property owners*” in these *Guidelines* may also refer to merchants or other renters who are making improvements to their building.) Where City funds are involved, adherence to these *Guidelines* will be required.

Even where no public funds are needed, property owners are urged to follow these guidelines, for the good of their project, their neighbors, and the long-term value of their property. For all but minor façade modifications, an advisory design review will be required. In all cases, projects will be required to conform to applicable zoning and building codes, sign ordinances and other requirements.



APPROPRIATE RENOVATION THE FAÇADE ABOVE MAINTAINS THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING. THE FAÇADE ABOVE MAINTAINS THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING. THE STONE BASE AND STEPS PROVIDE A SUSTAINABLE MATERIAL TO SURVIVE ALL ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS. THE TRADITIONAL RECESSED ENTRYWAY IS MAINTAINED. THE DISPLAY WINDOW ALLOWS PEDESTRIANS A VISUAL CONNECTION INTO THE STORE. THE AWNING ADDS VISUAL DEPTH TO THE FAÇADE. THE LIGHTING IS NOT OVERPOWERING, YET PROVIDES ADEQUATE LIGHT FOR SECURITY AND EASE OF TRAVEL.

WHAT'S WORTH SAVING?

In general, the building facades *above the street level* in the Hamilton District are in fairly good condition, and represent a range of architectural styles that give the street (and the city itself) a strong sense of vitality and architectural character. Buildings date from mid-nineteenth century to late twentieth century. The predominant style (if there is one) is pre-World War I commercial/Beaux Art/Victorian. There are a few attractive Art Deco structures and some indifferent post-World War II buildings. With the exception of the two recently completed office buildings at 9th and Hamilton, there are no significant contemporary commercial buildings.



At the street level (usually up to the sill of the second floor windows), there is very little exposed original and/or valuable façade area that is intact or worth saving.

Most buildings have been renovated in recent decades with aluminum/glass storefronts, or inappropriate masonry veneers that have little to do with the architectural character above, or the storefront architecture that preceded them. It is possible, however, that significant original portions of buildings remain, particularly in the area between the first and second floor openings. In many cases, the original facades are hidden by signage or other added elements of little or no esthetic value.

In analyzing historic photographs of Hamilton Street, a striking visual difference between the past and the present emerges: in the first half of the twentieth century, there was a profusion of building elements projecting over the sidewalk. Canopies, awnings, signage, flags, bunting, banners of every description fought for attention. Most of these have been removed over the years, by the unfortunate sidewalk canopy built (and demolished) in recent years, by zoning and building code changes, by a changing esthetic. The *visual noise* of 75 years ago gave Hamilton Street a certain Times Square-like vitality that is now sadly lacking.

The strategy for revitalizing the Hamilton District is based upon preserving the historic elements of facades that remain while allowing for *compatible* contemporary design in new buildings or those portions of buildings that have been stripped of historic character. Where a historic character exists, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1992) provide a useful framework for design. (A summary of those *Standards* is included in this *Guideline*.) *The Old Allentown Houses: design guidelines for an historic district* (Old Allentown Preservation Association, Inc., 1994) may also be consulted.

The first order of business, then, is to determine: **What's Worth Saving?** Here are some guidelines:

- If you are not experienced in the evaluation and preservation of historic structures, you are urged to consult with an architect, architectural historian, building contractor experienced in preservation and restoration work, or other professional to determine what is architecturally valuable.
- Look at the illustrations in the guidelines to see if your building is described, or if it is similar to other structures that are. The examples below identify typical elements of a historical façade. Many of the other photographs in this booklet describe other traditional design elements that are found locally. **The left photograph was taken on 7th Street in Allentown. All of the other photographs in these *Guidelines* were taken in the Hamilton District.**



- MARQUEE
- TRANSOM
- MASONRY PIER
- DISPLAY WINDOWS
- WINDOW SIGNAGE
- ENTRANCE
- BULKHEAD



- PARAPET
- EAVE CORNICE
- LINTEL
- BAY WINDOWS
- TRANSOM
- ENTRYWAY WITH SIDELITES
- GROCER'S ALLEY DOOR
- STONE BASE AND STAIRS

INTACT HISTORICAL BUILDING FAÇADES

- For buildings constructed before World War II, determine if the façade, or parts of the façade, are original. This may include the basic surface of the structure itself (such as brick or stucco), or such items as fascias, trim around windows, columns, corner moldings, etc. Very often, windows have been replaced, or even relocated or removed. Even so, a historic façade may be essentially intact. (Note: it is almost a given that intact portions of a pre-WWII façade should be preserved or restored.)
- Most post-WWII buildings are not considered historic, and most post-WWII façade renovations may not be worth preserving. However, they should remain intact if they were designed by a significant local or national architect, possess some outstanding architectural features, or are exceptionally well executed, using quality materials and reflecting the architectural qualities of the original building or the era in which the renovations themselves were done. The two buildings below are both post-WWII facades. The façade to the left appears to be a series of precast elements that have little historical or architectural significance. It could be modified or replaced. Also, the façade's materials are not of any architectural style. The façade to the right creates a well proportioned composition in the Art Deco style. This façade should be preserved and maintained.

POST-WWII FACADES



INAPPROPRIATE



APPROPRIATE

FAÇADE DESIGN STRATEGIES

Building facades rarely have only one style. That is what makes a dense urban area interesting; the various styles, architectural elements, historical periods. It is not the intention of this guideline to recreate the past if the original building façade does not exist. However, if the original façade does exist but needs renovation, then the recommendation is to restore the façade. Where exact reconstruction is not practical, new simplified contemporary interpretations are appropriate. The following strategies suggest different categories of necessary façade restoration. The intent of the *guidelines* is to establish a coherent set of design strategies to promote desirable development on Hamilton Street and throughout the community. Please note that these *guidelines* compliment, but in no way supersede, the City’s zoning ordinance, building code, façade grant program or façade loan program. The first step in preserving viable historic elements is to analyze the structure. Once again, a professional is the recommended resource for determining the best ways to do this.

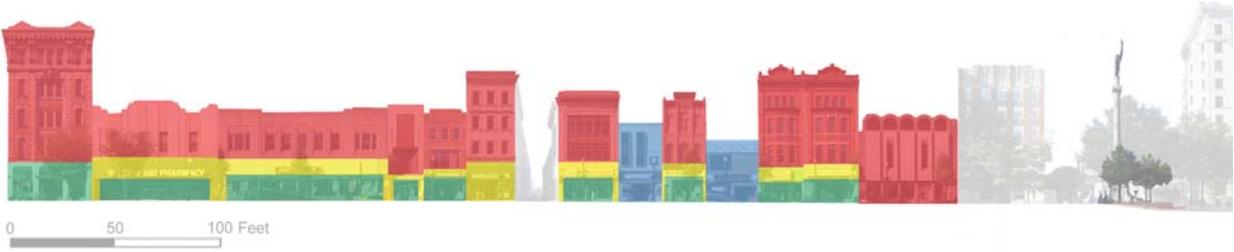
As a way of looking at the design issues involved, the City suggests that each façade, or portion of a façade, be thought of as fitting into one of the following four possible categories:

- I. Preserve/restore viable historic elements**
- II. Explore hidden façade elements**
- III. Partial new façade**
- IV. New building or facade**

The following illustrations below and on the next page provide examples of this analysis.

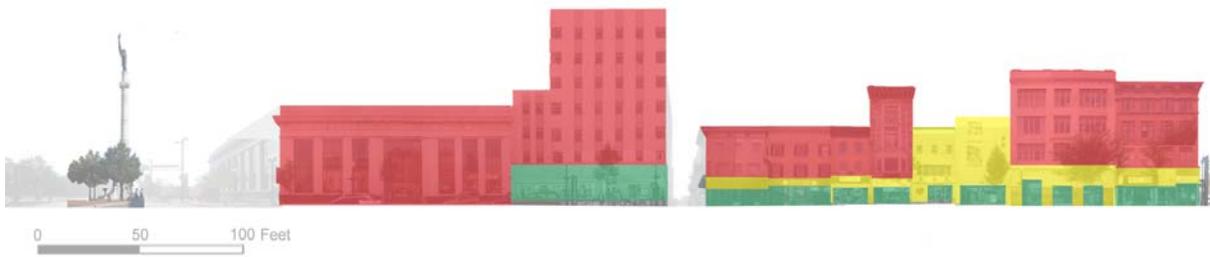


HAMILTON DISTRICT FAÇADE DESIGN GUIDELINES



development categories

- I preserve / restore viable historic elements
- II explore hidden facade elements
- III partial new facade
- IV new building or facade



700 BLOCK OF HAMILTON STREET

As property owners and design professionals develop designs based on the four categories described above, here are some general guidelines for them to follow:

I. PRESERVE OR RESTORE VIABLE HISTORIC ELEMENTS OF EXISTING FAÇADE

Once it is determined that a façade does, indeed, have historic elements worth preserving, the following are steps that should be followed in developing and implementing a design:

- **Retain original elements and overall *unity of design*.** Building facades (or substantial portions of facades) are primarily uniform architectural compositions, representing a particular architectural style or historic point in time. (That point in time is not necessarily when the building was constructed. In some cases, a building may have an intact façade that is a hundred years old, but is vastly altered from its original appearance. It is not the intent of these guidelines to restore any facade to an architectural appearance substantially different from its current predominant style.) This composition is to be retained, and discordant elements (such as window openings of reduced size) are to be removed or renovated to the fullest possible extent. Architectural elements that are partially missing or deteriorated (such as window trim or masonry) are to be restored to the fullest possible extent.



UNITY OF DESIGN UNLESS THEIR NAME IS GRIM, A NEW OCCUPANT MAY WISH TO CHANGE THE SIGN ON THIS FAÇADE, BUT THE TYPE OF SIGNAGE, PORCELAIN PANELS, GLAZING, COLORS, LIGHTING AND OTHER FEATURES OF THIS DISTINCTIVE FAÇADE ALL WORK TOGETHER AND SHOULD BE MAINTAINED IN ANY RESTORATION PROJECT.

- **Preserve and/or restore original materials and forms.** Where economically feasible, all existing materials and/or architectural details that contribute to the baseline appearance of the building shall be preserved or restored. Consideration shall be given but not limited to the following: size, scale, proportion, rhythm, patterns, materials, textures, shape, massing and architectural details (such as porches, cornices, lintels, arches and quoins). In instances where deterioration of existing details is such that restoration is not economically feasible, new designs shall be similar in general character and detail to the elements being removed or to adjacent façade elements that will remain.

- **Preserve and/or restore original details.** Where economically feasible, restored materials and details shall be the same as the baseline (such as 2/2 wood double-hung windows or wood cornices). Where this is not feasible, synthetic or other materials may be substituted. Such materials should be fabricated and painted or otherwise finished to look as much like the original materials as possible. Particular attention shall be paid to preserving or restoring façade penetrations (windows and doors), and to avoiding construction of new penetrations where none currently exist.



FAILURE TO PRESERVE ORIGINAL OPENINGS TWO LOVELY FAÇADES HAVE BEEN MARRIED BY THE REMOVAL OF TRANSOM WINDOWS AND/OR SIDELIGHTS.

- **Avoid damaging original elements.** Structural anchors for signage, canopies, lighting or other new building elements will be permitted on a limited basis. These should be kept to a minimum.
- **Use appropriate colors.** Colors shall be historically appropriate. (Colors may be based on historic color palettes available from many manufacturers of building products. Examples include Sherwin Williams *Exterior Preservation Palettes*, Pratt & Lambert *Williamsburg Palette* and many others.)



THREE-COLOR SCHEME A RENOVATED FAÇADE USING A TRADITIONAL SCHEME OF THREE COMPATIBLE COLORS.

- **Consider energy conservation measures.** Energy conserving improvements (such as roof top solar collectors or insulated windows) shall be permitted, provided their design is as unobtrusive as possible. Mechanical equipment (such as window air conditioners or satellite dishes) may not be installed at windows or on facades. Rooftop installations should be as unobtrusive as possible.

SUNSCREENS ARE USED ON THIS SOUTH-FACING FAÇADE AS BOTH AN ENERGY-CONSERVING MEASURE AND A SIGNIFICANT DESIGN ELEMENT.



- **Follow building code requirements.** In most cases, following these *Guidelines* can be done within the provisions of existing building codes. Property owners are responsible to do so. However, provisions of building codes allowing certain waivers for preservation of historic details and structures may be approved by the building code Board of Appeals, provided no safety or health hazards are created. (This waiver applies to façade issues only.)

II. EXPLORE *HIDDEN* FAÇADE ELEMENTS TO SEE IF PRESERVATION IS APPROPRIATE

In many cases, signage or inexpensive veneer materials have been used to cover valuable and beautiful historic details. Property owners are encouraged to explore what is beneath these veneers before a final determination is made regarding proposed design modifications. Hidden original elements should be exposed and preserved wherever possible.



HIDDEN FAÇADES THE FAÇADE ON THE LEFT HAS BEEN PARTIALLY OBSCURED WITH INAPPROPRIATE BUILDING PRODUCTS THAT HAVE NO REFERENCE TO THE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER, WINDOW AND DOOR SIZES AND MATERIAL OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING. RENOVATION WORK AT PROPERTIES SUCH AS THIS SHOULD INCLUDE “SELECTIVE DEMOLITION” TO SEE IF THERE ARE ELEMENTS BEHIND THESE NEW COVERINGS THAT SHOULD BE EXPOSED, PRESERVED OR RESTORED. THE FAÇADE TO THE RIGHT HAS BEEN RECENTLY UNCOVERED. THE UPPER FLOORS OF THE FAÇADE HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO SHOW ORIGINAL MATERIALS AND CONFIGURATION, WHILE THE STOREFRONT ON THE FIRST FLOOR HAS BEEN RESTORED BY INTEGRATING CONTEMPORARY ELEMENTS, SUCH AS THE WINDOW AND TRANSOM, WITH THE ORIGINAL FAÇADE CONFIGURATION. THIS STRATEGY WILL BE DISCUSSED FURTHER IN THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT CATEGORY.

III. DEVELOP APPROPRIATE DESIGNS FOR PORTIONS OF FAÇADES WHERE NO SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC FEATURES REMAIN

As described below, these *Guidelines* offer flexibility to the property owner seeking to revitalize a façade or portion of a façade consistent with good design practices where no significant historic features remain:

- **Historic or contemporary design solutions are *both* acceptable.** These *Guidelines* do not advocate that a major portion of a façade that currently has no particular character worth preserving be designed to “look old,” *even if the rest of the structure is being preserved or restored.* This applies to most of the first floor facades along Hamilton Street. This area is a commercial district with many valuable historic buildings and details. Good design, by definition, will respond to its surroundings, but may do so by way of contrast or tension, as well as by way of harmony and similarity. The vitality of urban communities derives from diversity and evolution, not rigid conformity to existing styles. This can be true even within a single façade. At the same time, property owners who wish to restore their buildings or renovate them based upon *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards* are free to do so.
- **Designs should be compatible with their surroundings.** In all cases, it is the intent of the City to encourage renovation with professional design, using appropriate, long lasting materials. The design should be compatible, with regards to style, scale, proportions, etc., with any adjacent facades (on the same property or in proximity to it), but need *not* be substantially historic in character. Innovative, contemporary architecture is encouraged.



ACCEPTABLE DESIGN SOLUTIONS THE UPPER STREETSCAPE ILLUSTRATES THE PARTICULAR CONTEXT OF A SERIES OF FAÇADES. TO THE EAST, THE FAÇADES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY HISTORIC IN NATURE, WHILE THE RECENT CONSTRUCTION OF THE PPL PLAZA TO THE WEST GIVES A CONTEMPORARY FEEL TO THE AREA. PLEASE NOTE, EITHER DESIGN STRATEGY, HISTORIC OR CONTEMPORARY, IS ACCEPTABLE. THE ABOVE RENDERINGS ARE JUST TWO OF MANY DESIGN POSSIBILITIES AN OWNER COULD TAKE TO INTEGRATE THE FAÇADES INTO THE URBAN FABRIC OF THE STREETSCAPE. THE FAÇADE TREATMENT ON THE LEFT IS HISTORIC IN NATURE, RECREATING THE TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT ELEMENTS THAT THIS BUILDING MAY ONCE HAVE HAD. THE FAÇADE TREATMENT ON THE RIGHT IS MORE CONTEMPORARY, BUT NEVERTHELESS CAREFULLY PRESERVES THE BUILDING’S FOUR-BAY STRUCTURE, PATTERN OF FIRST FLOOR OPENINGS, ETC. IF NO ORIGINAL OR HISTORIC DETAILS REMAIN, EITHER TREATMENT IS ACCEPTABLE.

- **An analysis of the façade of the existing building shall be done to identify significant design elements that may form the basis of the new design.** This analysis may include adjacent buildings as appropriate. Among the elements that may be considered are original materials, proportions, solids vs. voids, regulating lines (horizontal or vertical banding, base/middle/top), 3-dimensional projections and recesses, “historic” styles or details, etc.
- **Materials, colors and proportions can and should respond to their surroundings, but can do so in non-traditional ways.** Historic restoration or “post modern” design approaches are also appropriate, where compatible with the use of the building, the adjacent façades, or the preferences of the owner.
- **Three dimensional design solutions (employing projecting canopies, awnings, signage, etc. or recessed entries and display windows) are strongly encouraged,** to help restore the dynamic, vibrant Hamilton Street atmosphere of the early 1900’s. (Such architectural features must, of course, be consistent with issues of public safety and security.) Hamilton Street has historically had many design elements projecting over the sidewalk. In recent decades, these have largely disappeared, replaced by an uninteresting flatness. Despite the untidiness of dripping water or visual confusion that can result from projections such as canopies, awnings and signage, they contribute positively to the urban environment, and should be encouraged.



CANOPIES (ABOVE AND LEFT) ENHANCE THE CHARACTER OF THEIR BUILDINGS, AS WELL AS HELP DEFINE THE BUILDING ENTRANCE, PROVIDING SHELTER, AND CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING.

It should be noted that insofar as most or all sidewalks and projections fall into the City right-of-way, the City exercises considerable control over what is permitted in this regard. Poorly designed elements will be rejected, and façade grants will encourage appropriate use of the public rights-of-way wherever possible.



THE NIGHTTIME IMPACT OF SIGNAGE, CANOPIES AND LIGHTING ARE ALL DESIGN ASPECTS THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR ALLENTOWN TO REGAIN ITS CHARACTER AS A SAFE AND LIVELY CITY IN THE EVENING, AS WELL AS DURING THE DAY.

IV. ENCOURAGE APPROPRIATE DESIGNS FOR NEW BUILDINGS

Many historic districts promote the design of new buildings with a “historic character.” The result is often an unfortunate blurring of the distinction between authentic history and pseudo-history. In addition, such practices inevitably result in the elimination of design that reflects contemporary thought and style. (A visitor to many historic districts, a century or more from now, will wonder why architecture stopped evolving in the late nineteenth century.)

The Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Rehabilitation* do not specifically address new buildings. However, with regard to construction of additions to historic buildings, the *Standards* are quite clear, and provide a direction for new, freestanding or attached structures: “New design should always be clearly differentiated so that the addition does not appear to be part of the historic resource.”

With some few Williamsburg-type exceptions, most cities stay alive through an infusion of new ideas and styles. For example, recent construction on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, perhaps the most significant historic area in the nation, is almost entirely contemporary in character. New, contemporary work includes the *Liberty Bell Pavilion, Constitution Center, Visitors’ Center*, etc. Allentown will support this type of innovative design.



CONTEMPORARY DESIGN
THIS DESIGN USES QUALITY MATERIALS, ENERGY SAVING ELEMENTS SUCH AS SUNSCREENS, AND LANDSCAPING FEATURES SUCH AS A PLAZA, FOUNTAIN AND TREES TO CREATE AN IMPORTANT NEW PUBLIC SPACE ON HAMILTON STREET. (IN MANY CASES, THE BUILDING’S SETBACK MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE, BUT WITH ALL THE ACTIVITY THE SITE ALLOWS, IT WORKS WELL ON THIS LARGE, CORNER SITE.)

New structures built along Hamilton Street reflect the owner’s commitment to Allentown. Just as the buildings of earlier eras represent the economic, social and esthetic values of their own times, today’s buildings should reflect 21st century values. Many of Allentown’s older buildings were built of quality materials, and had significant architectural character. Now, fifty or a hundred years later, it is worth preserving them. Likewise, it is hoped that buildings constructed in the coming decades will be viewed a hundred years from now as significant examples of early 21st century architecture, worth preserving for future generations.

New buildings should consider the relationship of height, mass, and scale of adjacent buildings. Buildings that appear similar in mass and scale to other buildings help to maintain the coherent visual image of the downtown character. At the same time, it is important to maintain a variety of heights to create visual interest. While the actual heights of buildings are of concern for zoning and code requirements, the perceived heights of buildings are equally important. The primary building downtown is three or four-story buildings, while taller buildings (PPL Tower, PPL Plaza) are located at corners and key intersections of the city.

The orientation of the building façade should be considered depending on its relationship to the sun. If the façade will receive direct sun, the storefront glass should be shaded with appropriate means. In many situations, a store owner will install interior sunshades which limit visibility into the store. To permit good visibility into storefront windows, and to create pedestrian interest, use awnings or recess the front door. Please refer to the “Projections and Recesses” section in the General Design Considerations portion of the *Guidelines* for more information.

Other recommendations in these *Guidelines*, including materials, transitions, etc are of course as important in the design of new structures as they are in renovation work.

THE USE OF QUALITY MATERIALS AND THE PLAY OF SOLIDS AND VOIDS GIVE THIS BUILDING AN APPROPRIATE CONTEMPORARY CHARACTER.



GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to following the overall analysis and guidelines just discussed, any improvement project should address certain overall design considerations. These include:

- **Sustainable design techniques**
- **Streetscape**
- **Use of appropriate materials**
- **Transitions between new and existing facades**
- **Signage**
- **Lighting**
- **Projections and Recesses**
- **Security Issues**
- **Modern intrusions**
- **Accessibility for people with disabilities.**

Each of these topics are discussed briefly in the following pages.

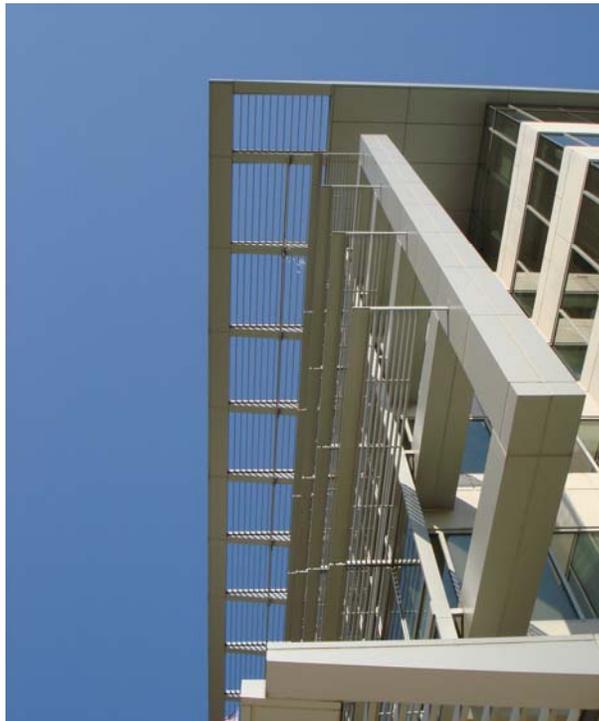


SUSTAINABLE DESIGN TECHNIQUES

The City encourages the use of design techniques that save energy, improve air quality, reduce use of landfills, etc. One of many good sources for further information is www.usgbc.org, the web site of the United States Green Building Council, which sponsors the LEED sustainable design programs.

Here are some sustainable design issues to consider:

- **The use of “sustainable” materials, technologies and building systems is strongly encouraged.** This includes renewable or recycled materials, energy conserving technologies, etc.
- **Conflicts between sustainability and historic preservation should be resolved based upon the overall project, not rigidly one way or the other.** For example, a building may have a number of single glazed, small pane windows that need to be replaced. For energy conservation reasons, the replacement windows should probably be double-paned, but doing this with small pane windows can be prohibitively costly. In this case, the owner might use a high-quality replacement window with similar frame characteristics and a snap-in grid that replicates the look and pattern of the existing windows. Another example might be the wish to replace large window openings with smaller ones, to save energy and replacement costs. This is not acceptable in a historic façade: the original pattern of solids and voids is often a highly significant design feature, and should not be compromised.
- **Installation of sun screens, photovoltaic cells or other energy-saving items should be done in such a way as to not detract from the building’s appearance.** Many such features, particularly sun screens, canopies, etc, can improve the look of the façade if properly handled and detailed.



STREETSCAPE

Major design considerations that can enable a property owner to significantly improve the appearance of a building, often without great expense, fall into the general category of “streetscape.” **(Note: Always check with the City and obtain required approvals before proceeding with any streetscape improvements;** most sidewalks—and the rights-of-way above them—are controlled by the municipality.)

Visual excitement can be added at street level by encouraging sidewalk merchandising, cafes, kiosks, pavement patterning, landscaping, street furniture and so on. The best urban design element is lots and lots of people. A streetscape that promotes activity will give people a reason to be there.

The following checklist should be reviewed as part of any potential improvement project:

- **Street furniture:** benches, tables, chairs
- **Landscaping:** planters, street trees, flower boxes (on upper floors)
- **Litter receptacles** (and routine litter pick-up, sidewalk and curb cleaning)
- **Murals, sculpture and other art work**



ARTS WALK

USE OF APPROPRIATE MATERIALS



- **Quality materials of an *urban character* shall be used.** These include smooth-faced stone, brick, commercial-gauge metal, glass, glass block, wood trim.
- **Materials that are to be avoided include synthetic brick or stone (particularly those applied in panelized form), vinyl or wood siding, asphalt shingles.**
- **Materials should be of a nature to withstand an urban environment.** For example, exterior insulation façade systems should be heavy-duty grade.
- **Materials commonly used on 19th or early 20th century commercial facades are generally acceptable;** for example, brick and stone masonry, wood windows, finished painted metal, ceramic tiles.

TRANSITIONS BETWEEN NEW AND EXISTING FACADES



TRANSITION

- New facades shall include a *transition area* of 12” to 24” between adjacent buildings and upper facades of the same building. This transition area shall be neutral in character, of high quality materials compatible with adjacent facades.
- Penetrations (doors or windows), signage, projections, recesses and lighting should be avoided in the transition area.
- An upper transition area is not needed where a renovation of historic character is proposed.
- The new façade should occupy as great a height as possible, allowing for a 12” to 24” upper transition area. (Wide transition areas, Mansard-type projections or large, opaque bands for signage or simply to allow window heights to be reduced are to be avoided.)
- The use of clerestory windows is encouraged, particularly in buildings that had such a feature at one time. Absent a significant contrary design approach, exterior openings should generally express the maximum ceiling height of the interior space.

SIGNAGE

Signage is one of the most important character-defining design elements of a downtown commercial district, perhaps second only to architecture. This is a reason for Hamilton Street having its own signage regulations: the *Hamilton Street Design Overlay* section of the Allentown zoning ordinance.



APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE THE SIGN ABOVE IS DESIGNED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE OVERALL BUILDING DESIGN



APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE THE SIGN ABOVE IS POSITIONED WITHIN AN ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE OF THE FAÇADE. IT IS POSITIONED TO EMPHASIZE SPECIAL SHAPES OR MATERIALS OF THE FAÇADE.



INAPPROPRIATE SIGNAGE THE SIGN ABOVE IS OVER-LAYED ON A PREVIOUS DILAPIDATED SIGN. THE SIGN NEEDS TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS AND PROVIDE VISUAL INTEREST.

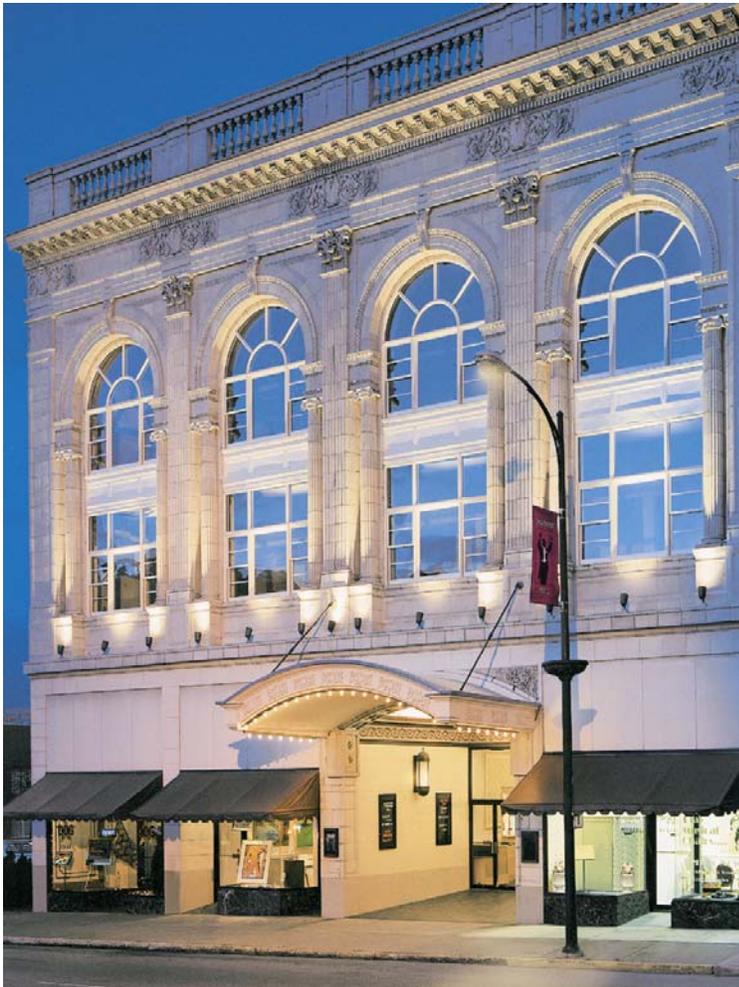


INAPPROPRIATE SIGNAGE THE SIGN ABOVE IS NOT AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE BUILDING FAÇADE. ALSO, THE SCALE IS TOO LARGE, WHICH PROHIBITS PASSING PEDESTRIANS TO READ THE SIGNAGE.

LIGHTING

Lighting is an integral part of façade design. For a retail store, a good lighting design can be an important element in generating walk-in traffic or making one's offerings known to the public, even when the business is closed. Some important design considerations are:

- **The character of visible fixtures should be appropriate to the portion of the façade on which they are located: historic or contemporary.**
- **Illumination of the upper façade is encouraged.** (Façade lights should have automatic timers, to conserve energy and prevent disturbance to upper floor tenants late at night.)
- **Illumination of first floor interiors is encouraged.**
- **Light sources that are visible from above are to be avoided.**
- **Neon lights or signs are permitted; moving or blinking lights are not.**



SYMPHONY HALL (PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE WOLFE) SYMPHONY HALL IS A PROMINENT AND IMPORTANT CITY BUILDING. THE LIGHTING OF ITS FAÇADE IS THEREFORE AN IMPORTANT DESIGN CONSIDERATION. THE CANOPY LIGHTING ADDS VISUAL EXCITEMENT TO THE STREET LEVEL, WHILE THE VESTIBULE PROVIDES ADEQUATE LIGHTING FOR ENTERING AND EXITING THE BUILDING, AS WELL AS FOR SECURITY. THE ADJACENT FIRST FLOOR STOREFRONTS ARE ILLUMINATED FROM THE INTERIOR, WHICH IS PREFERRED OVER LIGHTING FROM THE EXTERIOR. THE UPPER FLOORS OF THE BUILDING ARE ILLUMINATED WITH MODEST FIXTURES THAT ACCENT KEY ARCHITECTURAL ASPECTS OF THE FAÇADE.

PROJECTIONS AND RECESSES

Historically, the urban character of Hamilton Street (and many other successful commercial areas in all parts of the world) was partially derived from the use of elements (such as awnings, canopies, signage) that projected from facades over the sidewalk, or recessed doorways, display windows, etc. The use of such elements in renovations and new construction is encouraged, as are temporary projections, such as awnings, flags or banners.



All temporary or permanent projections into the public right-of-way shall be subject to review and approval by the City, based upon existing ordinances.

Here are some other design considerations related to projections and recesses:

- In general, Mansard-type projections, particularly those running the full width of the façade, are *not* appropriate.
- Support structures for such projections are considered part of the façade design, and should be attentively detailed. Care should be taken in the detailing of all projections to minimize water run-off onto the sidewalk. (In some cases, a degree of run-off may be unavoidable.)
- Projections should be designed to minimize the obstruction of views of significant architectural or advertising features of adjacent properties, particularly as seen from the roadway.
- Temporary seating or barriers (such as for a sidewalk café), landscaping (in containers) or other non-permanent features or street furniture are generally encouraged, subject to applicable ordinances and design approval by the City.
- All recesses, such as doorways set back from the right-of-way line, shall be designed to avoid “blind” corners or other unsafe conditions.
- Flooring materials used in such recesses shall provide durable slip-resistant surfaces compatible with adjacent façade, sidewalk or other walking areas.

SECURITY ISSUES

Hamilton Street does not have a high crime rate, but it may have a high level of *perceived* crime. This perception causes many merchants to install security grills (among other security measures) on the facades of their properties. When open, these grills are, at best, unattractive. When shut, they foster the image of Hamilton Street as a dangerous, uninviting place. The use of these grills should be discouraged, while the incorporation of other, more positive security features can be promoted. (In the design and law enforcement communities, the principles of CPTED—Crime Prevention through Environmental Design—offer many positive alternatives.) Where grills are necessary, standards of good design can still apply.



INAPPROPRIATE SECURITY GRILL

A SECURITY GRILL THAT COVERS THE FAÇADE ADDS TO THE FEELING OF DISCOMFORT IN A DOWNTOWN, AND PREVENTS THE MERCHANT FROM PRESENTING AN ATTRACTIVE APPEARANCE EVEN WHEN THE STORE IS CLOSED. AN INTERIOR GRILL SUCH AS THE ONE AT RIGHT IS UNOBTRUSIVE WHILE STILL PROVIDING A HIGH LEVEL OF SECURITY.



APPROPRIATE SECURITY GRILL

MODERN INTRUSIONS

Common modern intrusions are satellite dishes, utility meters, window air conditioner units, and other mechanical, structural, or electrical appurtenances. These features should be installed in a manner which minimizes disruption of the overall design of the façade. Attempt to hide the obstruction from the street view by either installing it on the rooftop or installing it in a setback with a visual screen in front.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Many of the buildings or shops in the area are not accessible to individuals with disabilities. In some cases, renovation work may require certain improvements be made to address this. In virtually all cases, it is desirable to make improvements, and the City is committed to making properties in the neighborhood as accessible as possible. Common improvements are properly sloped ramps, door and window hardware, accessible light switches or doorbells, etc. The guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act can be found at <http://www.ada.gov/stdspdf.htm>. Property owners or others undertaking projects are urged to discuss potential accessibility improvements are urged to discuss this with their design professional.

Accessibility access should be appropriately designed. Ramps and related elements should be visually integrated with the overall building design and site.



ACCESSIBILITY RAMP ATTRACTIVE, CAREFULLY DESIGNED RAILINGS, ALONG WITH GOOD LIGHTING AND SIGNAGE, CAN HELP MAKE A RAMP A POSITIVE DESIGN FEATURE.



RESIDENCES, CHURCHES AND OUT-BUILDINGS

Most of the examples in these *Guidelines* have addressed commercial buildings. However, the *Hamilton District* contains a number of excellent residences, churches, out-buildings and other structures that should be preserved or restored. In general, most of the *guidelines* provisions should apply to these structures, many of which contribute to the strong urban residential character of the neighborhoods surrounding Hamilton Street itself.



HISTORIC RESTORATION INFORMATION

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN: DEFINITIONS

Adaptive Re-use — Improvements made to a building that render the structure suitable for a purpose for which it was not originally intended. For example, an old school building redesigned and used for senior housing, or an old mill renovated as a conference center and hotel facility.

Architectural Element — A permanently affixed or integral part of the building structure which may be decorative and contributes to the composition of the facade. For example: Cornices, trim boards, brackets, lintels, dentils, columns, capitols, etc.

Architectural Integrity — Refers to staying true to the original style in which the building was designed. Additions should be complimentary to the architectural style of the original building.

Clerestory — A row of windows above eye level that allow light into a space. They are typically used to allow daylight to penetrate a space, while also providing visual privacy.

Infill — New construction where there had been an opening before. Applies to new structures such as a new building between two older structures or new material such as block infill in an original window opening.

Preservation — The act of maintaining the form and character of a building as it presently exists.

Reconstruction — The accurate recreation of a vanished or irreplaceably damaged structure, or part thereof.

Rehabilitation — The process of returning a building to a state of usefulness through repair or alteration which preserves those features that are historically or architecturally significant.

Restoration — The process of accurately recovering the form and details of a building as it appeared at an earlier time.

Scale — A term used to define the proportions of a building in relation to its surroundings.

Setback — A term used to define the distance a building is located from a street or sidewalk.

Stabilization — The essential maintenance of a deteriorated building to weatherproof the structure and establish structural stability.

Streetscape — The combination of building facades, sidewalks, street furniture, etc. that defines the street.

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S *STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION*

The U.S. Department of the Interior is considered an excellent source for information related to preserving and improvement historic structures. In fact, the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* is in many cases a required guideline to be followed for repairs or renovations to historic structures. A useful overview of these *Standards* is provided here. The complete version may be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/>.

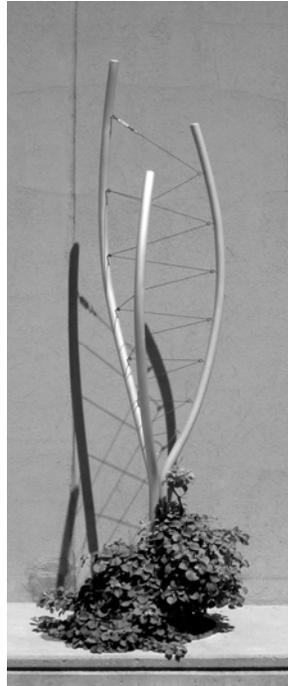
1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of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

GALLERY

The Hamilton District contains many examples of good design. The photographs on the following pages provide an informal survey of local properties that enhance the neighborhood.



GALLERY



SELECTED RESOURCES

City agencies: Allentown City Hall	610 439 5999
Planning Office	610 437 7613
Zoning Office	610 437 7630
Building Permits	610 437 7592

Local historic resources:

Allentown Preservation League	610 437 1989
Lehigh County Historical Society	610 435 1074
Old Allentown Preservation Association, Inc.	610 740 9919
Old Fairgrounds Neighborhood Association	610 351 0977

Local architects

Local builders specializing in restoration

State and federal agencies

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/>

Americans with Disabilities Act:

<http://www.ada.gov/stdspdf.htm>

Hamilton District Façade Design Guidelines

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