

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Façade Improvement Program is enacted to preserve the properties with historic structures as well as those with original architectural character providing aesthetic value to the city of Lansing by improving the façades in non-downtown areas across the city.

Restoration, rehabilitation and replacement of the facades shall be considered appropriate for this program. The City of Lansing's Façade Improvement Program is a Grant program that empowers Lansing based business owners to enhance their aesthetic appeal, strengthen their brand and benefiting the community.

Restoration of a building's façade will bring the façade to its original appearance using authentic materials and the faithful replication of missing and deteriorated components. This approach will be most applicable to historic structures in which there has been little changes to the appearance of the building over time.

Rehabilitation will redefine the appearance of the facades conserving the original character remains that are sensitive to historic details and materials. Typically, remedial work will be carried out to redefine the historic features. This approach may be applied to any structure. The objective of this approach to façade improvement shall be a return in the appearance to the appropriate period architecture of the building.

In terms of design, façade projects for buildings that still contain significant historic features shall reflect the original appearance of the building to the maximum extent possible. Buildings currently listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places shall be eligible based on treatment approaches defined under restoration or rehabilitation, except where it can be demonstrated that adherence to these design principles is not economically feasible. Buildings on the State or National Register must be restored or rehabilitated according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

Replacement approach is only appropriate when most of the original façade is missing or has been previously altered so as to make restoration or rehabilitation impractical, or the original façade was of no significant historical interest. This treatment approach should attempt to select materials, dimensions and architectural character or details that are similar or compatible to the ancillary buildings. The architecture does not need to be identical, only sympathetic or compatible with the surrounding buildings in terms of façade height, window size and spacing, materials, colors, etc.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

- If you are improving a building that includes façade work, use the guidelines to inspire your architectural designs.
- If you are considering minor changes to your building's façade including light fixtures, signs or paint, be sure to consult the recommendations of the design guidelines.

GENERAL TIPS

- Non-original siding which covers original architectural detailing should be removed whenever possible.
- Storefront improvements will require compliance with barrier free design requirements pertaining to latch side clearance and sloped entry.
- Glass replacement at hazardous locations will require safety glazing in compliance with the current building code.
- Replacement glass should be similar in size, color and reflectivity to the original.
- Existing historic light fixtures should be repaired and maintained. Replacement light fixtures should complement appropriate historic styles.
- Existing historic decorative features should be restored and retained when possible. Missing decorative features should be recreated only if documentation exists to justify the addition. Application of inappropriate decorative features and faux recreations is discouraged.
- When repainting masonry, the existing deteriorated mortar should be removed with hand tools and replaced with new mortar similar in color and texture. It is important to use the appropriate mortar for the job – an inappropriate mortar may expand or contract too severely, causing the brick to crack (brick replacement is costlier than repainting). There are labs that can test the existing mortar to recreate the identical recipe.
- Before making any improvements, it is important to have the structure checked for hazardous materials such as asbestos, PCB or lead. If present, these substances should only be handled by professionals.

ELIGIBLE VS. INELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

Eligible Improvements include, but are not limited to:

- External painting
- Masonry/brick work
- ADA compliance improvements
- Signage and awning replacement
- Walkway improvements

Ineligible Improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Internal improvements
- Landscaping improvements alone
- Detached signage
- Parking lot resurfacing
- Non front-facing improvements
- Roof replacements
- Non-permanent fixtures

STOREFRONTS

- Original historically significant storefronts should be restored with as little alteration to their physical appearance as possible.
- Over time, many storefronts were updated to reflect modern architectural styles. This sometimes resulted in a mix of different styles which may not be architecturally pleasing or compatible. Changes to a storefront reflect different yet equally important time periods, all of which are worthy of preservation. Note that the oldest features are not necessarily the most important when determining which style to represent. Often it costs less to settle upon the style that is dominant. This ensures the least amount of replacement and retention of the most original features.
- When the entire original storefront is missing, a reconstruction of the original storefront is recommended for consideration, if historic documentation exists and appropriate materials are available to adequately replicate the original façade. If the original storefront was not of significant historical character or adequate documentation does not exist, or if appropriate materials are not available, every attempt should be made to recreate the overall scale and proportions of storefronts on surrounding or similar buildings.
- The storefront should not allow for direct basement entry unless historic documentation suggests otherwise.
- Acceptable materials for storefront improvements are brick, wood, cast iron, clear or stained glass, steel, stone, clay masonry or concrete. Use of the following materials is generally discouraged. Incompatible materials for storefront construction generally include aluminum or vinyl siding, faux brick, asphalt or cedar shingles, fiberglass or stucco systems such as EIFS (Exterior Insulation Finish System).
- If storefronts or façades have been completely modernized or replaced, they should at least be made to reflect the window proportions of adjacent buildings and colors or materials selected to blend with the other materials on the block.

CLEANING

- Sandblasting and high-pressure chemical washes are never options for cleaning historic building surfaces. The building materials cannot withstand these harsh procedures and will result in severe, irreplaceable and costly deterioration of the surface.
- Warm water and soap, masonry detergent, natural bristle brushes and low-pressure water washes are the gentlest and safest means of cleaning a historic building surface.
- Chemical waterproofing is not an acceptable procedure for historic masonry surfaces. In many instances, the chemical traps water inside the wall and ends up hastening rather than preventing the deterioration of the structure.
- Lead-testing must be undertaken before any paint removal occurs. Consult a professional for proper removal procedures.

- Paint that is in good condition, and not peeling, should not be removed from a brick building; repainting is the best option.
- Before repainting wood and other similar surfaces, peeling or loose paint should be thoroughly removed and the exposed areas primed.
- Brick will discolor with age and there is no reason to clean this patina. Old buildings should be well maintained but should not look brand new.
- If a chemical paint remover or stripper must be used, it should be tested first by applying a small amount to the rear of the building. Allow some time to pass to see what the results of the process will look like.