This chapter presents design guidelines for the preservation of individual historic building elements in Georgetown. The guidelines are organized into a series of relevant design topics. Within these design topics are individual policy and design guideline statements upon which the City will base its decisions. Although these design guidelines are intended primarily for those historic resources located in Area 1, property owners in Area 2 are also encouraged to review them when considering a rehabilitation project.

**Commercial Facades**

Ornamentation and details of elements such as cornices and parapets are original components that “dress up” a building and give it a sense of style and character. Ornamental items include hood molds, trim at doors and windows; plaques and medallions; signboards or sign panels; date or name stones; and simple geometric shapes in metal, stone, or concrete.

Cornices, which are usually found at the top of building walls, and ornamental moldings or belt courses, which are located just above storefronts, are horizontal projecting elements that provide a visual break in or termination to a wall. A parapet is an upward extension of a building wall above the roofline, sometimes ornamental and sometimes plain, used to give a building a greater feeling of height or a better sense of proportion.

Cornices are most apparent on late 19th century commercial structures, when several ornate, bracketed types were used. Early 20th century buildings were, as a rule, less decorated and had simpler ornamentation. Rather than cornices, they tend to have parapets, some low and some extending several feet above the roof surface. A parapet may be capped with brick, stone or tile, and frequently decorative elements or panels are placed in it.
Windows & Doors

Windows and doors are some of the most important character-defining features of historic structures. They give scale to buildings and provide visual interest to the composition of individual facades. Distinct window and door designs in fact help define many historic building styles. Windows and doors often are inset into relatively deep openings or they have surrounding casings and sash components which have a substantial dimension that cast shadows which also contributes to the character of the historic style.

Although the function of a roof is to protect a structure from the elements, it also contributes to the overall character of the building. The Downtown Overlay District have seen the construction of various roof forms, as illustrated below.

Porches

Many residential styles and building types developed with the porch as a prime feature of the front facade. Because of their historical importance and prominence as character-defining features, porches should be preserved and they should receive sensitive treatment during exterior rehabilitation.

Porches vary as much as architectural styles. They differ in height, scale, location, materials and articulation. Some are simple one-story structures, while others may be complex with elaborate details and finishes. These elements often correspond to the architectural style of the house and therefore the building’s design character should be considered before any major rehabilitation work is begun.

Roofs, Gutters & Downspouts

The character of the roof is a major feature for most historic structures. When repeated along the street, the repetition of similar roof forms contributes to a sense of visual continuity for the neighborhood. In each case, the roof pitch, its materials, size and orientation are all distinct features that contribute to the character of a roof. Gabled and hip forms occur most frequently in residential areas while flat roofs appear on most historic commercial buildings in Georgetown.

Typical Roof Types

- Gabled roof
- Cross-Gabled roof
- Hipped roof
- Shed roof
- False front (pediment)
- Mansard roof
- Flat roof with parapet
Policy: **Maintain an historic storefront and all of its character-defining features.**

6.1 For a commercial storefront building, a rehabilitation project shall preserve these character-defining elements:

- **Display windows:** The main portion of glass on the storefront, where goods and services are displayed. This will help maintain the interest of the street to pedestrians by providing views to goods and activities inside first floor windows.
- **Transom:** The upper portion of the display window, separated by a frame.
- **Kickplate:** Found beneath the display window. Sometimes called a bulk-head panel.
- **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.
- **Cornice molding:** A decorative band at the top of the building.

These features shall not be altered, obscured or removed.

6.2 Maintenance of storefronts.

- Wash display windows.
- Repair damaged kickplates.
- Re-caulk display windows to reduce air infiltration.
- Install weather-stripping around doors.

6.3 If a storefront is altered, restoring it to the original design is preferred.

- 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.
- Note that, in some cases, an original storefront may have been altered early in the history of the building, and may itself have taken on significance. Such alterations should be preserved.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts*, published by the National Park Service.
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. (Boulder, CO)

6.4 Alternative designs that are contemporary interpretations of traditional storefronts may be considered.
- Where the original is missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses the traditional elements may be considered.
- However, the new design should continue to convey the character of typical storefronts, including the transparent character of the display window.

6.5 Retain the kickplate as a decorative panel.
- The kickplate, located below the display window, adds interesting detail to the streetscape and should be preserved.
- If the original kickplate is covered with another material, consider exposing the original design.

6.6 If the original kickplate is missing, develop a sympathetic replacement design.
- Wood is an appropriate material for replacements on most styles. However, ceramic tile and masonry may also be considered when appropriately used with the building style.

6.7 Preserve the character of the cornice line.
- Most historic commercial buildings have cornices to cap their facades. Their repetition along the street contributes to the visual continuity on the block.
- Many cornices are made of sheet metal. Areas that have rusted through can be patched with pieces of new metal.

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

Retain the kickplate as a decorative panel.
6.8 **Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.**
- Use historic photographs to determine design details of the original cornice.
- Replacement elements should match the original in every detail, especially in overall size and profile. Keep sheet metal ornamentation well painted.
- The substitution of another old cornice for the original may be considered, provided that the substitute is similar to the original.

6.9 **A simplified interpretation is also appropriate for a replacement cornice if evidence of the original is missing.**
- Appropriate materials include stone, brick and stamped metal.

6.10 **Retain the original shape of the transom glass in historic storefronts.**
- Transoms, the upper glass band of traditional storefronts, introduced light into the depths of the building, saving on light costs. These bands should not be removed or enclosed.
- The shape of the transom is important to the proportion of the storefront, and it should be preserved in its historic configuration.
- If the original glass is missing, installing new glass is preferred. However, if the transom must be blocked out, be certain to retain the original proportions. One option is to use it as a sign panel or decorative band.

6.11 **A parapet wall should not be altered, especially those on primary elevations or highly visible facades.**
- When a parapet wall becomes deteriorated, there is sometimes a temptation to lower or remove it. Avoid doing this because the flashing for the roof is often tied into the parapet, and disturbing it can cause moisture problems.
- Inspect parapets on a regular basis. They are exposed to the weather more than other parts of the building, so watch for deterioration such as missing mortar or excessive moisture retention.
- Avoid waterproofing treatments, which can interfere with the parapet’s natural ability to dry out quickly when it gets wet.
Policy: Historic windows and doors significantly affect the character of a structure and should be preserved.

The size, shape and proportions of window and door openings are important features. They give scale to buildings and provide visual interest to the composition of individual facades. These features are inset into relatively deep openings in a building wall or they have surrounding casings and sash components that have substantial dimensions. They cast shadows that contribute to the character of the building.

6.12 Preserve the position, number, size and arrangement of historic windows and doors in a building wall.
- Enclosing an historic opening in a key character-defining facade is inappropriate, as is adding a new opening.
- Do not close down an original opening to accommodate a smaller window. Restoring original openings which have been altered over time is encouraged.
- Historically, windows had a vertical emphasis. The proportions of these windows contribute to the character of each residence and commercial storefront.

6.13 Preserve the functional and decorative features of an historic window or door.
- Features important to the character of a window include its clear glass, frame, sash, muntins, mullions, glazing, sills, heads, jambs, moldings, operation, location and relation to other windows.
- Features important to the character of a door include the door itself, door frame, screen door, threshold, glass panes, paneling, hardware, detailing, transoms and flanking side-lights.

6.14 Maintenance of windows.
- Wash upper story windows.
- Clean debris from-upper story windows.
- Replace loose or broken glass in kind. This will reduce air leaks.
- Install weather-stripping. This will enhance energy conservation significantly.
6.15 Repair wood features by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the wood.
- Avoid the removal of damaged wood that can be repaired.
- See also Preservation Briefs #9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows, published by the National Park Service.

6.16 Glazing in doors should be retained.
- If it is broken or has been removed in the past, consider replacing it with new glass. If security is a concern, consider using wire glass, tempered glass, or light metal security bars (preferably on the interior).

6.17 Installing window air-conditioners in windows on building fronts is inappropriate.

6.18 Maintain recessed entries where they are found.
- The repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of shadows along the street, which helps establish a sense of scale.
- These recessed entries were designed to provide protection from the weather and the repeated rhythm of these shaded areas along the street helps to identify business entrances. Typically, recessed entries were set back between three and five feet.
- Restore the historic recessed entry if it has been altered.
- Avoid doors that are flush with the sidewalk, especially those that swing outward.

6.19 Where entries were not recessed historically, maintain them in their original position.
- However, one may also need to comply with other code requirements, including door width, direction of swing and construction.
- In some cases, entries must comply with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Note, however, that some flexibility in application of these other regulations is provided for historic properties.
- See also Preservation Briefs #32: Making Historic Properties Accessible, published by the National Park Service.
Policy: A new or replacement window or door should match the appearance of the original.

While replacing an entire window or door is discouraged, it may be necessary in some cases. Although wood is preferred as a replacement material, metal is common on the market today and sometimes is suggested for replacement. It is possible to consider alternative materials, if the resulting appearance matches the original as closely as possible. The substitute also should have a demonstrated durability in this climate.

6.20 When window or door replacement is necessary, match the replacement to the original design as closely as possible.
- Preserve the original casing, when feasible.
- If the original is double-hung, then the replacement window should also be double-hung, or at a minimum, appear to be so. Match the replacement also in the number and position of glass panes.
- Very ornate windows or doors that are not appropriate to the building’s architectural style are inappropriate.
- Using the same material (wood) as the original is preferred.

6.21 Maintain the historic ratio of window and storefront openings to solid wall.
- Significantly increasing (or decreasing) the amount of glass will negatively affect the integrity of a structure.
- On traditional storefronts, first floors should be more transparent than upper floors.
- Upper floors should appear more solid than first floors.
- Avoid a blank wall appearance that does not provide interest to pedestrians.
- Large surfaces of glass are inappropriate on residential structures and on the upper floors and sides of commercial buildings.
- If necessary, divide large glass surfaces into smaller windows that are in scale with those seen traditionally.

Maintain the historic ratio of window openings to solid wall.

On a commercial building, first floors should be more transparent than upper floors. Upper floors should appear more solid than first floors. (Washington, MO)
Policy: Preserve the original form and scale of a roof.

6.22 Preserve the original roof form of an historic structure.
- In residential areas, most roof forms are pitched, such as gabled and hipped. Most commercial buildings, on the other hand, have flat, or slightly sloping roofs.
- Avoid altering the angle of a historic roof. Instead, maintain the perceived line and orientation of the roof as seen from the street.
- Retain and repair roof detailing.
- Often repairing a basically sound roof can be much less expensive than a complete replacement. If a new roof is necessary, try to match the color, material, and pattern of the old as closely as possible.

6.23 Locate downspouts to minimized impacts on historic canopies and other facade details.
- Water from downspouts should drain away from the building properly.
- Ideally, a downspout should empty into an underground drainpipe that takes the water to the sewer or street.
- If this is not possible, a downspout should empty onto a metal or concrete splashblock that slopes downward and away from the building.

6.24 Regular maintenance and cleaning is the best way to keep your roof in good shape.
- Inspect the roof for breaks, or holes in the surface, and check the flashing for open seams.
- Many commercial buildings have shallow sloping flat roofs that are hard to see, so there is a tendency to forget about them until problems develop.
- Clean debris from gutters and downspouts to prevent the backing up of water.
- A roof should not hold water.
- Patch leaks in the roof. This should be a high priority for ongoing building maintenance.
- Replace deteriorated flashing.
- Re-solder downspout connections to prevent water from leaking into walls.
Policy: Maintain a porch and its character-defining features.

Historically, porches were popular features in residential designs. A porch protects an entrance from rain and provides shade in the summer. It also provides a sense of scale to the building and provides a space for residents to sit and congregate. A porch provides stylistic details to the house, and in some cases is an integral part of an architectural style.

6.25 Maintain an historic porch and its detailing.
- Do not remove original details from a porch. These include the columns, balustrade and any decorative brackets that may exist.
- Maintain the existing location, shape, details, and columns of the porch.
- Missing or deteriorated decorative elements should be replaced with new wood, milled to match existing elements. Match the original proportions and spacing of balusters when replacing missing ones.
- Unless used historically, wrought iron porch posts and columns are inappropriate.
- Where an historic porch does not meet current code requirements and alterations are needed or required, then retrofit it to meet the code, while also preserving original features. Do not replace a porch that can otherwise be modified to meet code requirements.

6.26 Avoid enclosing an historic front porch with opaque materials.
- Enclosing a porch with opaque materials that destroy the openness and transparency of the porch is inappropriate.
- When a porch is enclosed or screened, it shall be done with a clear transparent material. This material should be placed behind porch columns.

This porch has experienced an inappropriate alteration; wrought iron supports have replaced wood piers. Compare it with its "twin" in the photo below. (Spartanburg, SC)

When replacing porch posts, use supports that are of adequate size. This porch reconstruction was based on neighboring houses of similar character and age. (Spartanburg, SC)

When a porch is enclosed or screened, it shall be done with a clear transparent material. This material should be placed behind porch columns. (Memphis, TN)