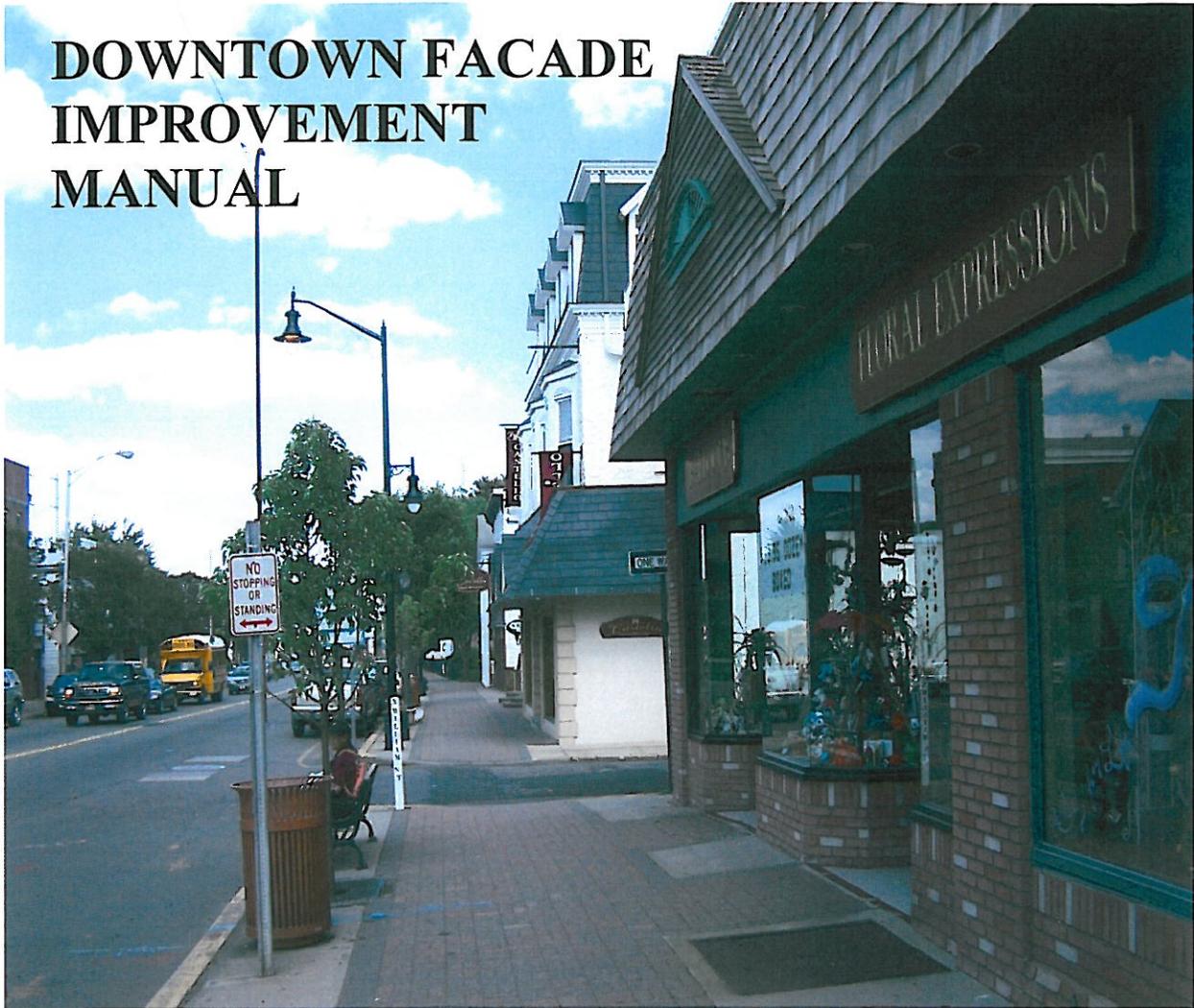


DOWNTOWN FACADE IMPROVEMENT MANUAL



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Township of Woodbridge

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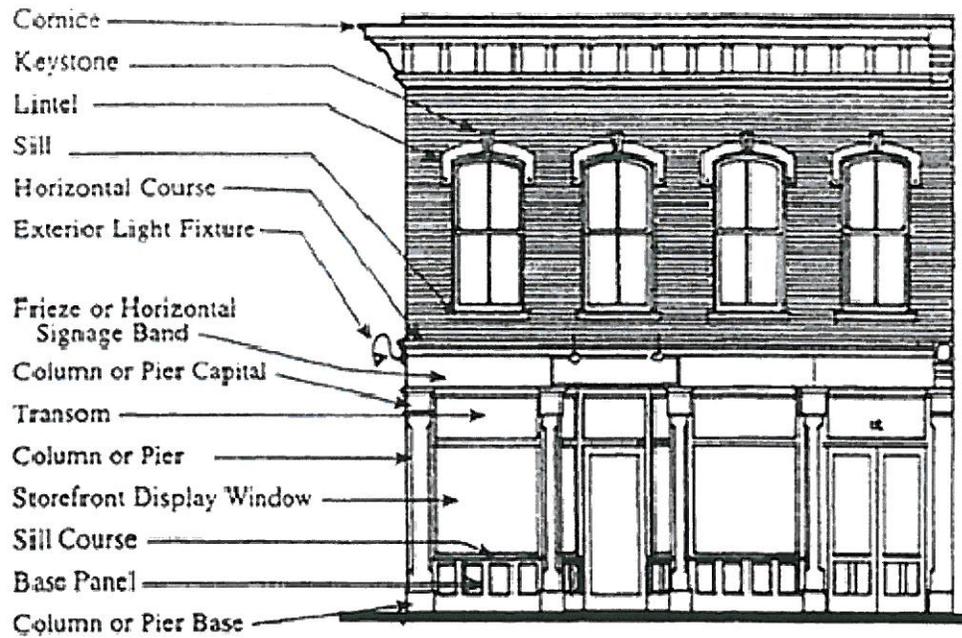
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Downtown Façade Design & Improvement Manual

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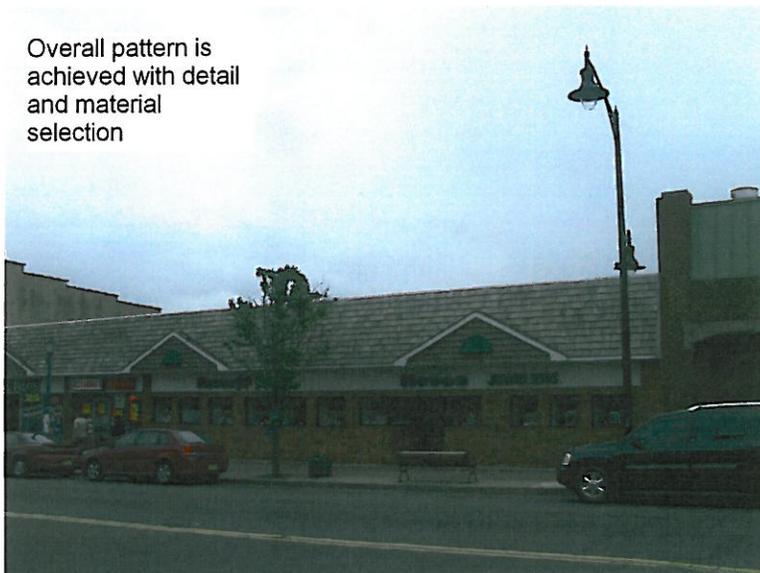
Elements of a Facade



This document, the Downtown Woodbridge Façade Design & Improvement Manual has been produced to assist building and business owners planning façade improvements and shop front renovations. The challenge is to encourage variety, vitality, and creativity in design.

This Façade Design & Improvement Manual is, like our downtown, a work-in-progress. Modifications are likely as practical applications of the Manual reveal their cumulative lessons. The structure of the manual, like the structure of our town, can accommodate creative contributions while becoming more responsive, relevant and vital.

I. Materials



Overall pattern is achieved with detail and material selection

There are two basic sets of materials on each building façade: 1) the material that covers most of the building, and 2) all of the elements of trim and ornamentation. Given the common building type (i.e., the Main Street bearing wall commercial structure) that dominates the downtown area, the

variety that is the overall pattern is achieved in details and material selection.

The following materials are *acceptable* for the basic façade material. They are “real” and allow for the creation of variety, and they are consistent with the other buildings in downtown:

- Brick (and mortar);
- Painted brick;
- Limestone;
- Granite (but not polished: realness implies solidity, not a shiny, thin appearing look);
- Certain materials that effectively simulate stone: glass fiber reinforced concrete panels, when detailed well, can be an effective substitute for stone. Details are the key. Color, texture, mortar and corners are to look like stone details. Note that the similarity to stone is less apparent when seen up close, so it is inappropriate to use these materials at the ground floor.

Given this list of acceptable materials, there are other materials that do not meet the reality test for the base façade materials and that are inconsistent with the solid masonry traditions of downtown. They are therefore considered *unacceptable* for use here:

- Aluminum and vinyl siding;
- Brick face;
- Stucco (and fake stucco, commonly called ‘EIFS’);
- Metal panels;
- Any other shiny materials (glazed tile, polished stone, spandrel glass panels, etc.);

- Natural, unpainted wood (note that, although this material is “real”, it is inconsistent with the tradition of painted wood in the rest of downtown).

Materials for the building trim, window trim, and ornamentation should be those that are used in traditional details. They are to be composed in a way that contribute to the variety that is so much a part of the character of downtown:

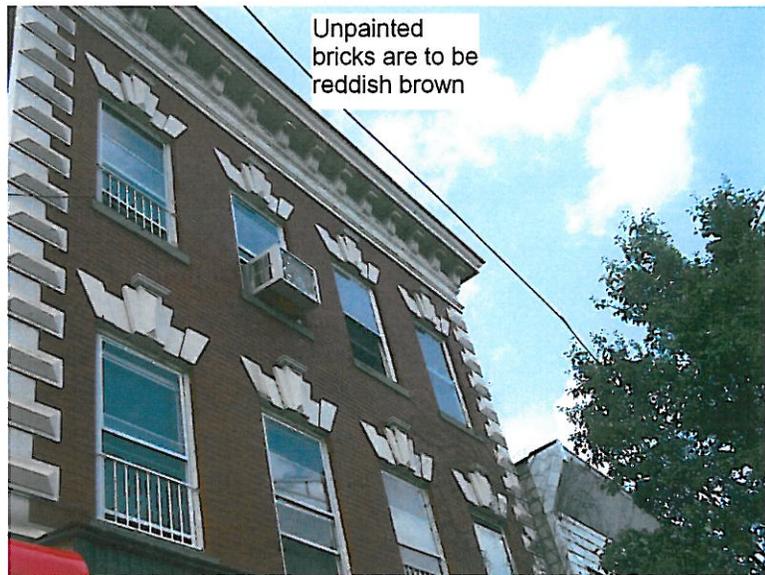
- Painted wood and painted metal (this is especially common on window frames and on some storefronts);
- Unpainted metal, which can be acceptable in the storefronts;
- Vinyl clad window and storefront frames (which look like painted wood or metal);
- Pressed and painted metal sheets, which have been used in the creation of cornices, pilaster, and other large trim areas;
- Cast Iron;
- Terra-cotta;
- Fiberglass, which is now often used as a substitute for painted wood, metal, and terra-cotta in the creation of large trim;
- Glazed tile and polished stone (which are acceptable here, but not as a base material).

These are only a few materials that do not meet the criteria for appropriateness for use in the trim and other details:

- Plastic;
- Unpainted aluminum (except for storefront mullions);
- Sheet metal and vinyl panels.

II. Colors

Colors are used in two essential ways: on painted surfaces and as the natural color of masonry or metal materials. The basic façade materials in downtown are masonry. In selecting colors for the masonry materials, these criteria are to be followed:



- Unpainted bricks are to be reddish brown in hue-not bright red, not brown-similar to the other natural bricks in downtown;
- The mortar of the bricks is to be natural beige, in keeping with the mortar used elsewhere in downtown;
- Limestone is limestone, however, very rough cut and striated textures are inconsistent with the expectation for solidness in materials and for compatibility

with the character of downtown;

- Granite comes in many colors: the lighter colors, when rough cut, are the most compatible with the bricks, limestone and painted colors of downtown.

In selecting paint colors, whether for the painted bricks of the overall façade or the trim and other details, the various paint companies have special “historic” series of colors for exterior use, which generally offer excellent and varied palettes. These colors tend to be consistent with the colors of downtown and with the needs of preservation of the historic character of the downtown.

More specifically, the colors for the painted brick of a basic façade should be in the earth tone range, without the use of very bright colors. On the other hand, trim colors should be used to accent, highlight, and complement the base color (whether that is painted or the color of masonry) and could complement the base wall color in a wide spectrum, ranging from contrasting earth tones to some that are more intense.

III. Windows

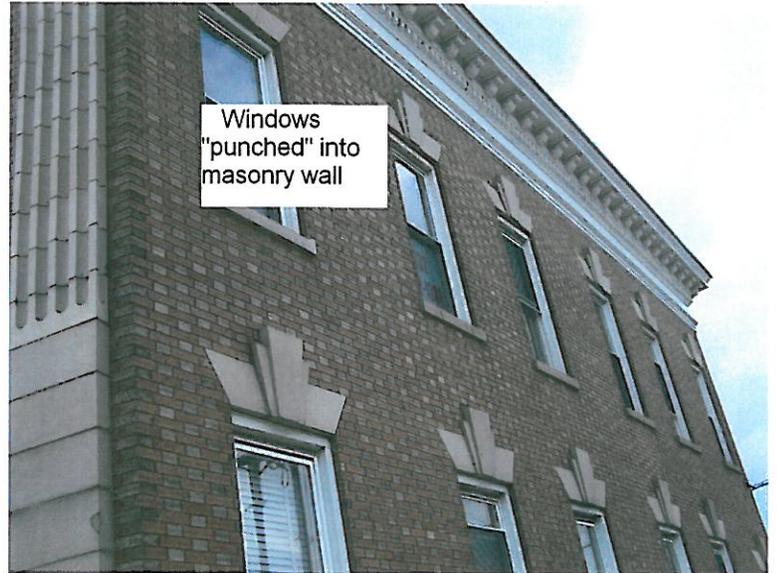
There are two basic building window types in the upper floors of the older buildings of downtown; these windows are quite distinct from the windows in ground floor storefronts:

- The masonry bearing wall, where the windows are “punched” into the wall, and where a large and ornamented beam carries the masonry over the wide

storefront. A great majority of the smaller and older buildings in downtown are of this type;

- The façade consisting largely of a structural frame of piers and large beams.

Various conditions are required in both the renovation of existing buildings and in the design of new buildings for each of these two window types:



1. Windows that are “punched” into masonry walls should be vertical in shape and be of similar proportions of height to width of windows in the older buildings. Do not “fill in” any or all of an existing window opening. The basic proportions of the older buildings are to be maintained.
2. Overall height and width of the “punched” type windows are to be established to create a vertical appearance. The common proportion of height to width is ranges for 2:1 to 3:1.
3. The proportions and rhythms of the series of punched windows are to be established so that there is more masonry than window. In a typical upper floor this proportion is often about 1/3 window and 2/3 masonry.
4. The size and patterns of the glass pieces in any single window-whether a punched window or a fill-the-frame window should be set so that no window is

made of one pane of glass in an opening. The punched windows are often divided into four panes (“two over two”), while the fill-the-frame windows are divided to complement the rhythms of the overall building design and the storefront below. In buildings that have historic certification, the details of these patterns are established by historic certification, the details of these patterns are established by historic preservation criteria.

5. Windows in frame buildings should fill the frame, even if some opaque panels are included in the window area, ceilings or at floors.



6. The color of the glass should be clear, just as in the shop fronts. Mirror glass, like other shiny materials is not acceptable.

7. The details of the mullions are dependent on the materials chosen, the window type, and the sizes of the glass panes. Some can be simple, with no trim or ornamental configuration, while some are more appropriate as detailed, fluted, and so on, and can therefore be painted more than one color. The determination of this design condition is based on the overall character of the façade and its historic status.

8. The colors of the mullions are some of the highlights and accents that are possible. As stated above, the design of the mullion affects the color decision as does the overall color and material of the basic façade.
9. The colors and materials of spandrel panels are part of the whole window design and color choice. Spandrels are generally used only in fill-the-frame type window. Opaque glass is not acceptable in downtown in any other condition.

IV. Shop Fronts

The best shop fronts are also designed to be compatible with the façade above, and with the general small-scale pedestrian-friendly quality of the area.

- One small building, which contains one shop front;
- One large building, which contains several shop fronts for one shop;
- One building, which contains several different shops, and several shop fronts;
- Two buildings, which contain one shop behind the shop fronts of two buildings.

In order to maintain the pedestrian scale of the whole shopping area, and to establish a consistent design relationship with the entire building

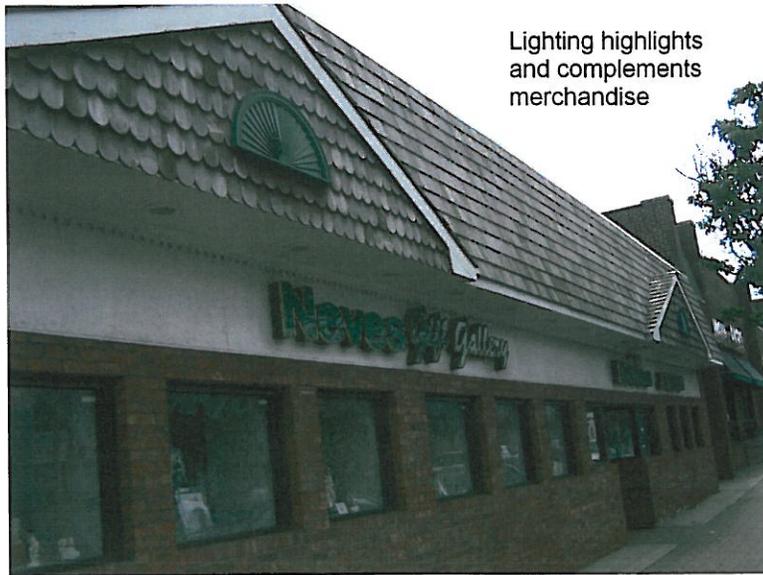


façade, these shop front design conditions should be met:

1. The shop front can not obscure the basic structure and frame (the "bones") of the building.
2. On the other hand, a shop front should fill the space between the structural frame: blank walls are not desirable on this shopping street.
3. The windows are to be transparent to give views into the shop.
4. If the required height of the shop front does not fully fill the building frame, the panels and materials that fit between the window and the frame are to appear as part of the window; the essential frame is not to be changed.
5. The glass sizes can be treated in one of two ways: as large, typical store windows which clearly show the inside of the shop; or, as smaller panes (approximately 2' square has been a successful proportion) that fill the shop front area and give a smaller scale to the street.
6. The mullions can be either simple in detail, or ornamented with smaller details and more than one color, the decision should be based on the overall detail and color palette of the façade.
7. There definitely should be a clear design relationship between the mullion pattern and door location of the shop front with the window pattern of the upper floors. The entire façade should be studied as one composition and not merely as the expression of various internal planning decisions.
8. A shop front in a new building should not exceed the height of the first floor so that the horizontal beam or trim band at the second floor level is always revealed.

9. If one building contains more than one shop, and therefore more than one shop front, the shop fronts can either have identical designs (which reinforces the building design) or varied designs that express the different businesses.
10. On the other hand, if one shop is located in two adjacent buildings, it is definitely desirable to have the same style shop front design in all shop front openings.

11. It is very important that the lighting inside the shop windows has two characteristics:
 - 1) it must highlight and complement the merchandise (a high wattage type of light),
 - and 2) it should also



- have a low wattage light that illuminates the merchandise when the shop is closed, to act as a "night light" for the street and thereby to create a sense of safety.
12. If security shutters are found to be absolutely necessary in any shop (although they certainly convey a sense of insecurity to the street) it is essential that they are very open and preferably located behind the glass. This permits the police to observe the shop, lets the "night light" of the shop front illuminate the sidewalk, and gives a greater sense of a place of high quality and safety.
13. Signs may be painted on the glass of the shop front, but they should not be so large as to obscure the view of the shop and the merchandise inside. They should

also be visible at night in front of the “night light”.

Street Walls

Although this general principle is essential for the sense of enclosure on the street, for the continuity of the retail experience, and for the interest and comfort of the pedestrian, the detail of exactly how much the building meets the street wall requires definition. In order to accomplish those objectives, these design conditions and options apply:

- The basic façade, if it falls within 24” of the sidewalk line, will accomplish the sense of enclosure, continuity, interest and comfort;
- A portion of a building can also be set back to create a shopping or dining courtyard, and still maintain the sense of the street wall continuity. These courtyards must be designed to continue the pedestrian experience of the sidewalk. Therefore, they should not be too wide (a maximum of 25’ in width is recommended) and should include retail shops and shop fronts on all courtyard walls. It is also possible to include some architectural features at the street wall line-such as an arcade or trellis-that reinforces the pedestrian experience along the sidewalk;
- Bay windows that project over the street wall line are acceptable and, in some situations, desirable. The limitations on their width and length are covered in the zoning regulations.

Window and Storefront Details:

- In upper floor windows, the expression of real materials, and of establishing a quality in the details, requires that the minimum depth of window recesses in masonry walls should be



at least "2" (not flush). Windowsills should include drip details that project and create shadows on the wall below;

- Store front mullions should appear to have some thickness and depth and not be flat; ornamental shapes are also possible. Transoms above, and panels below the storefronts are often necessary. They can include special materials and details that add to the visual richness and to the quality of the details.

Cornices at Storefronts:

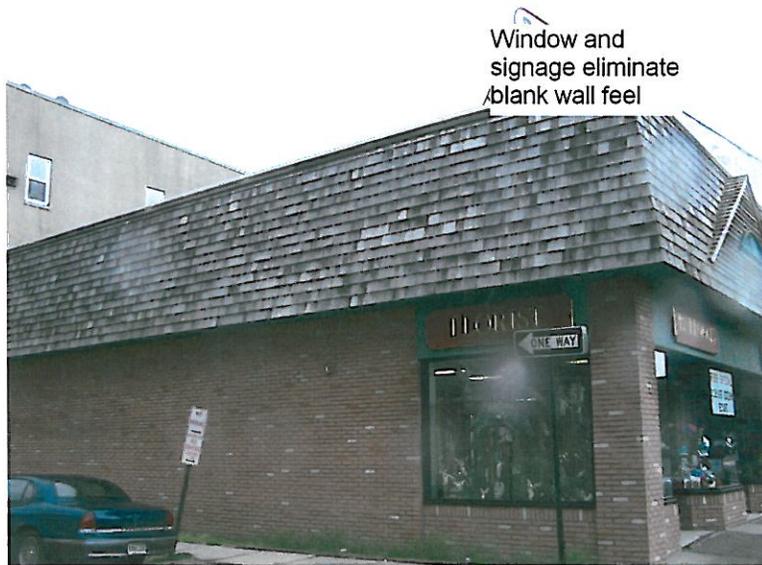
- An ornamental cornice sign beam over the storefront is a requirement in masonry wall facades. This detail gives a sense of the structural integrity of the building and adds considerably to the pedestrian scale of the street. Such a cornice should

have a real thickness and include ornamental detail of some kind, not merely be flat boards. Remember also that it is an appropriate place for some signs and is the frame for awnings below;

- This sign beam is not required in frame facades, but the area over the store front remains an excellent location for a sign. The ornamental distinction between this horizontal frame and the frame above also gives a building comfortable proportions for the pedestrian.

Blank Walls

It is absolutely essential that no ground floor blank walls face any shopping street, including the side streets. A major goal of this Design Manual is to create a downtown shopping area that is a welcoming place for the pedestrian shoppers, therefore increasing business for the merchants. Blank walls of any size disrupt the interest, visual variety, shopping choice, and the general “flow” of the shopper movement.



This design characteristic applies in three ways:

- Long blank walls that are located around the corner from the main shopping façade can completely eliminate effective shopping for the rest of that side street. These blank walls are as unacceptable here as on the Main Street façade;
- Small shop windows facing the sidewalk leave blank walls around them. The smaller blank walls are as disruptive to pedestrian flow as the long ones described above. The expectation for storefronts that consist of about 70% clear glass is a companion with this design recommendation. Note that the expectation for large window areas applies to all ground floor uses, including retail, banks pharmacies, and so on. The particularities of a given use cannot cause an exception to this design characteristic;
- If the ground floor of a building facing the retail street is occupied by offices rather than shop, banks, or restaurants, the pedestrian flow is interrupted even if larger windows are provided. They do not generate pedestrian activity from the sidewalk (many are usually entered from a – private – rear parking area). After occupancy, the blinds in the ground floor windows are usually closed for “privacy”; windows in this situation are the same as blank walls. Offices should be located on upper floors unless they can demonstrate that a significant portion of their business relies on pedestrian movement to and from the sidewalk.

V. Lighting

Light fixtures mounted on the facades of a downtown building can serve several purposes: to illuminate various sign types, wash the building wall in light, highlight building details such as cornices, and add to the sidewalk illumination-especially at sidewalk cafes. Light fixtures mounted inside the building (behind the storefront glass) are also valuable. Not only will they be part of the lighting of the displays and the shop, but also-if some are left on at night-will wash both the shop window and the sidewalk when the shop is closed, therefore giving a feeling of brightness and safety to the street at night. This is a simple step to be taken by all merchants that will create value to the shopping area far beyond the low cost of electricity. These lighting opportunities should be considered when designing a renovation or a new building.

The design of the fixtures, however, must also be attractive and appropriate to the building and to the street during the day. Since many of the older buildings were constructed before the use of the electric light, new light fixtures should find some symbolic way to recognize this remarkable historic fact. Some contemporary fixtures are more effective than the "traditional" types; some traditional design are better than new styles.

The design of the entire façade and all of the attached elements (signs, awnings, etc.) are to be considered when selecting light fixtures, particularly when selecting the color and intensity of the illumination itself. It all becomes one design, for both day and night. Although the design choice can be complex, there are only two recommendations:



- The design, size, and location of the visible fixture should be compatible with the overall building design. Because this is a commercial area, fixtures must not be of a residential size, scale or character;
- The kind of light that shines from the fixture must also be very carefully selected. The best light is that which fully reveals the true colors and textures of the building (e.g., mercury vapor makes things appear too blue and sodium makes things appear too yellow). Ornamental light (points of light, lines of light, etc) has the same light responsibility; neon, for instance may not normally meet this condition, while flashing lights definitely do not.

VI. Signs

Signs are the most dominant visual characteristics of a downtown shopping area. In Woodbridge, where there is a combination of an overall feeling that has a consistent scale and character with a great deal of design variety, the signs must reflect both the consistency and the variety. The quality of the shops is also a determining factor: large signs on building faces, and taped paper signs in windows speak of low quality and low price businesses. Smaller signs that are well crafted and relate to the character of the buildings are evidence of a higher quality shopping district. Woodbridge definitely aspires to the latter: a place of considerable quality, which has a great deal of shopping choices.

There are several sign types: some will help the ongoing aspiration for quality; others will not. Those that are acceptable should be designed with the individual building design as well as the overall shopping district character in mind. Characteristics of acceptable sign types should meet these criteria:

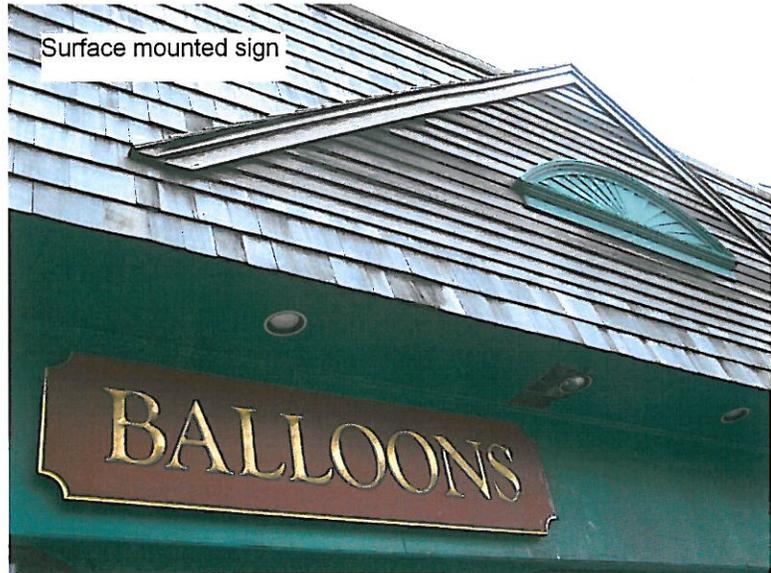
1. *Shingle signs, at the first and second floors:*

The maximum area should not exceed 4 square feet, the materials should be either painted wood or painted metal, and they should include ornamental metal brackets of some kind. They should only be externally illuminated and the message should only give the symbol or the name of the business.

2. *Surface mounted, on the first floor cornice/sign band:*

The maximum area and height are restricted by Ordinance.

In general, the signs should consist of individually mounted letters or symbols and not be a large board sign that obscures the cornice and its details. They should only be externally illuminated and



the message should only contain the name or the symbol of the business.

3. *Surface mounted, on the upper floors*

(Not permitted above first floor.)

4. *Painted on the shop front window:*

The sign must not be so large as to obscure the nature and goods of the shop inside.

Therefore, it is recommended that the sign be made of individual letters not exceeding 12" in height. If they are illuminated in any way, they should only be lit externally. Like the other signs, the message should only include the name or symbol of the business.

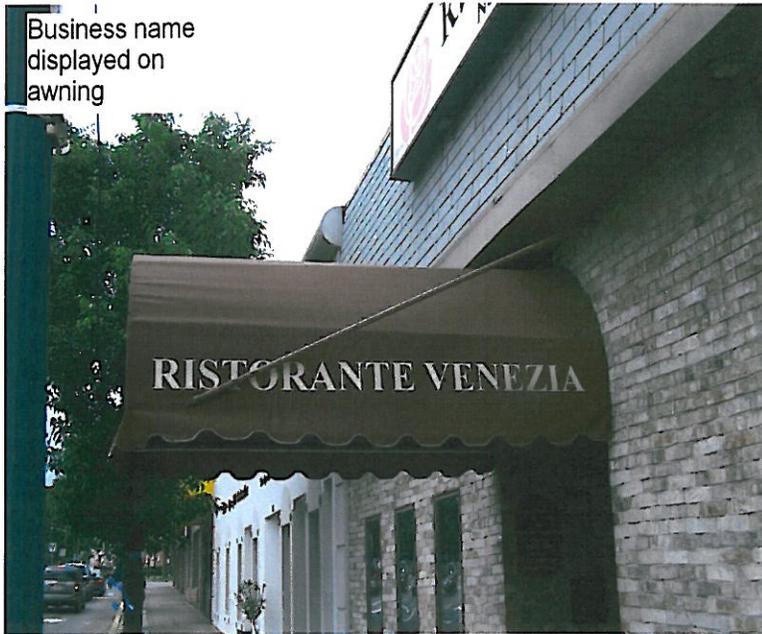
5. *Hanging behind the shop front window:*

Unlike the painted signs, these should be limited to 3 square feet in area, having letters no more than 12" high. They should hang from small chains or ornamental brackets, should be made of painted wood, painted or ornamental metal (e.g.,

wrought iron) and should only be externally illuminated.

6. *On the awnings:*

The size and area of these signs is limited by the size of the fringe or the main area of



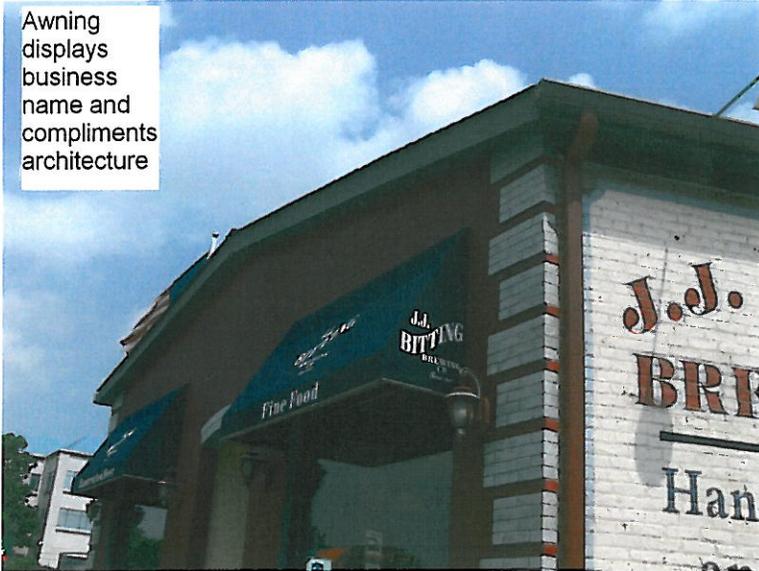
the awning, depending on the location of the sign. In neither case should the sign cover the awning; it is therefore recommended that the message only be made of individually painted letters. The colors of the letters must be coordinated with those of the awnings itself.

7. In all events of proposed signage, the maximum permitted to the front façade is ten (10%) percent; the maximum glazed window coverage is the ten (10%) percent.

It should also be noted that there are certain sign types that are not acceptable here: taped paper on the shop front, large billboard-like signs, internally lit (plastic) signs, and neon.

VII. Awnings

Awnings are a prominent part of the visual landscape in a thriving downtown shopping area. Like the signs, their designs are evidence not only of a community's attention to aesthetics, but also the quality of the shopping. The building's architecture is the most



important part of the design fabric of the district; the awnings therefore should fit within the frame work and character of the building facades. There are only a few types of awnings that should be used in this type of situation:

- The typical rectangular, sloped, awning that extends over the sidewalk and the shop front;
- The nearly vertical (and rectangular) awning that acts more as a sign than as a shelter;
- The awning that covers only parts of the shop front;
- The awning that covers parts of the building façade.

In order to use awnings that meet the basic objective of honoring the building design rather than dominating the building, these conditions are to be met:

1. The awning must fit within the frame of the building at the first floor-it must not overlap any of the masonry.
2. The slope of the awning should be sufficient to let water run off.
3. If an awning slopes over the sidewalk, it must be high enough to permit headroom for pedestrians.
4. If an awning is so steeply sloped that it serves as a sign rather than as shelter, the sign must meet all the criteria (size, message, lighting, etc.) for wall signs that could be above the first floor.
5. Color (s) and patterns of the awning must be designed as part of the entire building/signage appearance. They should not only express the image of the business inside.
6. Two types of supports are acceptable: the loose and movable bars, which permit raising and lowering; the fixed metal structure to which the awning is firmly attached.
7. Fringes and skirts at the leading edge are acceptable, they can also contain a sign.
8. All types of colors and patterns are acceptable if they meet the criteria for colors and signs: plain, striped, patterned, decorative, and so on. They must however, be compatible with the overall building.
9. In general, all awnings should be rectangular; the only condition in which a waterfall awning could be found acceptable is if set within arched windows. This awning type is generally so large that it dominates the façade, and often is located over parts of the masonry, both of which are unacceptable. The fact that dirt shows so clearly on the flat top also diminishes the feeling of quality of the street.

10. Two special awning conditions can exist in several locations. In each case they should meet these conditions: 1) If a single building contains more than one shop front and more than one shop, the two awnings can either be identical to complement the building, or they can differ, to add variety and to express the identity of the individual shops. 2) If a single shop occupies the ground floor of two adjacent buildings, the awnings in each building can be identical, since the objective of maintaining the identity of the two buildings is met by the building designs.

VIII. Café Seating

Outdoor seating for dining is a great addition of life and vitality to the shopping street. The chairs and tables selected must speak to the aspirations of quality that the community has for its downtown. Materials that are light in weight, easily damaged, and quick to fade and scratch, are not acceptable. Materials that can stand the rigors of outdoor use in a public setting are absolutely necessary. The designs of the furniture must also be of the highest quality. The recommendations are as follows:

- Tables, chairs, umbrellas, small private trash containers are all desirable elements of the street furnishings;
- All furniture should be made of painted metal, painted wood, stained wood, or of some combination of these materials;
- The size of the table and chair groupings is limited to that which will maintain

a 5' 0" clear walking path on the sidewalk-a sufficient width to permit pedestrians to pass but also to create the slightly crowded feeling of a truly vibrant place;

- The character of all furniture should complement the design of the building and and the business that they adjoin. Their colors (whether stained, metallic, or painted) must also be coordinated with the palette for the building and the shop front;
- Overhead elements, such as umbrellas, should allow for clearance for passing pedestrians. A 7'-0" clearance height is required which is adequate for most pedestrians, and yet preserves the sense of intimacy and shelter that an umbrella gives to a seated group.

IX. Planters

Planters are among the elements that are part of the building and sidewalk composition.

All of these elements, which are not part of the building itself, should be designed together as one arrangement. Planters are pure ornament and, when filled with healthy and attractive plants, add grace and beauty to the pedestrian sidewalk.

There are a few recommendations for these simple gifts that a merchant makes to the community:

1. Planters that sit on the sidewalk should be made of durable materials. Plain ceramic pots and ornamental ceramic pots are the most common style, but stone, some ornamental concrete designs and certain large fiberglass pots

can also be appropriately attractive. (Note-however, that pots having the appearance of plastic pots are to be avoided.)

2. The size of these pots should allow a walking clearance on the sidewalk of at least 5' 0". This is a width that is sufficient for two or three people to pass comfortably.
3. The design and character of pots and planters should complement the building and business they are associated with, and they must be selected as part of the overall design theme of all of the outdoor elements.
4. Pots can be located either along the storefront or at the curb; if at the curb they cannot be in the way of swinging car doors – 1'-6" clear of the inside face of the street curb.
5. Wooden window boxes under the storefronts are another attractive planter type. Since the use of wood on the buildings is recommended to be painted-not natural finish-paint is also appropriate for window boxes. The color of the boxes should obviously be compatible with the range of colors on the building.
6. Plants should be selected which can stand the downtown climatic conditions and which need a minimum of maintenance. Flowers are desirable because of the beauty and color they provide. Large plants that interrupt the view of the sidewalk and store windows are not appropriate.
7. The most important recommendation is that the merchant and/or building owner accept full responsibility for careful maintenance. There is no plant that will survive without regular watering, feeding, trimming, etc. The gift of beauty to the street comes with the obligation for care. Dead plants are unacceptable

to the quality of shopping in downtown Woodbridge.

Building Backs

Many commercial buildings in downtown face parking lots or streets in the rear. They therefore have a very important public face that, although very different from the front on the main shopping streets, should be designed with that public nature in mind. They are, perhaps more complex than the store fronts since they can include store entrances from parking lots, entrances to offices or residences on the upper floors, signs for all of the businesses, and truck service areas (including both delivery and trash/garbage pick up). They should meet these design and planning criteria:

1. It is essential that the service areas are screened from the shop and upper floor entrances; they should also be screened as much as possible -within the limits of maintaining truck access – from the parking lot or street. Remember that this will act in some ways like a front entrance, with pedestrians walking from their parked cars.
2. Doors should have windows accompanying them to create a modest transparency, for both visual interest and security. Some interior store lights can remain on so the police can see into the store at night.
3. In addition to doors with windows, storefronts, however modest are encouraged as a way to open up the shop to view from the parking lot, and to enliven the pedestrian experience in this area.

4. Signs can be larger and bolder than on the shopping streets since they generally face an automobile area and need to complete with the appearance of the service functions in these areas. Wall murals are acceptable if approved by the Township: many rear walls are blank and the ornament of color can enliven the whole area.
5. Mechanical equipment (cooling towers, fuel tanks, etc.) are to be screened from all views, especially if they are located on the ground.
6. The entire rear area should be landscaped with shrubs and trees to soften the effect of the adjacent parking lot, to help screen the service areas, and to raise the overall design quality of these parts of downtown wherever possible.