

Historic Preservation Commission

New Britain, Connecticut



Design Guidelines/Rehabilitation Standards for Commercial Historic Properties



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1. Storefronts

Overall Approach: Storefronts help define the historic character and style of the building. Historic storefronts and their components should be retained, maintained, and, if needed, repaired. They should not be covered or concealed.

Typical Storefront Components:

- Awnings
- Display Windows
- Bulkheads
- Pilasters
- Entrances
- Beltcourses
- Cornices

A. Design Standards for Storefront Components

a. Display Windows and Bulkheads:

- Traditional storefronts of the late 19th century to mid-20th centuries have bulkheads of wood or brick at the foundation of the buildings.
- Original display windows should be preserved, maintained, and if needed repaired.
- Original bulkhead panels should not be altered, removed, or covered with non-historic materials.
- Select replacement display windows and bulkheads that match the originals in location, design, size and materials.
 - If original is unknown, replacement windows should mimic the traditional scale with large glass lights and few structural divisions.
 - If original bulkhead material is unknown, replacement may be of wood, brick, metal or other material that is appropriate with the façade.
- Wood, copper, bronze metal, steel, or aluminum window mullions or framing is appropriate.
- If privacy is required, interior shades or blinds are preferable to tinted glass (unless used historically).



Bulkheads and display windows at 44 Broad Street.

b. Awnings:

- Prior to the 1940s, canvas fabric was most commonly used.
- After 1940s, metal awnings became prevalent.
- Original awnings should be preserved and maintained.
- Select awnings of traditional design.
 - Shed awnings are most appropriate for commercial buildings.
 - Arched awnings are appropriate for arched openings.

- Flat, metal awnings were the common design for mid-century storefronts.
 - DO NOT use bubble, concave or convex designs.
 - DO NOT use internally lit awnings and vinyl awnings.
 - May be retractable or fixed in place.
 - Color should complement the appearance of the storefront.
- Place awnings so that they do not cover or detract from architectural details and elements.
 - If pilasters or columns define the storefront, awnings should be placed within the spaces instead of overlapping the entire storefront.
 - Upper façade windows are an appropriate location.
 - DO NOT cover transom lights of prism glass or stained glass.
- DO NOT place solar panels on the awnings.



Canvas awning located at 115 West Main

c. Doors and Entrances:

- Doors and entrances of late -19th and early-to-mid-20th-century commercial buildings are important visual elements.
- Common door design features a single, large light set in wood that could vary from simple flush or panel designs to more elaborate decorative designs.
- Double doors were common.
- Transoms are an important design element above the door and display windows.
- Important to preserve and maintain original doors and entrances.
- If a door needs replacement use a historically appropriate door.
 - Should have the same number of panels and have a frame of the same dimensions.
- Historic door openings should not be altered.
- Do not install new door openings where none existed.
 - New openings may be located on side or rear elevations.
 - New openings shall be compatible in size, scale. Proportion, placement, and style to historic openings.
- Use historic materials when repairing deteriorated or damaged historic doors.



The building at 77 Arch Street retains its original, single-light glass and wooden door.

d. Staircases and Steps:

- Exterior steps or staircases that are a part of the original design should be preserved and maintained.
- If damaged beyond repair, they should be rebuilt to match the original design.
- When making repairs use materials that match the original material used.
 - Wood and concrete stairs should be repaired with matching materials.
 - Tile is appropriate is used historically.
- Do not add exterior steps or staircases to buildings that historically did not have one.

- Wood or metal handrails may be added to historic stairs or steps.
 - Simple design no larger than 1-1/2" in diameter.

e. Lighting:

- Original light fixtures should be preserved and maintained.
- Fixtures introduced to the exterior should be simple in design and appropriate to the character of the building.
 - If modern light fixtures are to be used as replacements or where lights previously did not exist, they should be unobtrusive, conceal the light source, and direct light towards the building.
- Light features should not damage or obscure architectural features or other building elements.

2. Primary Materials

Overall Approach: Primary historic building materials, such as brick, wood siding, stone or metal should be preserved whenever possible.

A. Design Standards for Primary Materials

a. Brickwork and Masonry:

- Brick and stone have been typical primary building materials in New Britain since its founding.
- Preserve and maintain original brick, stone, terra cotta, cast concrete, mortar, and other masonry original to a building.
 - Should not be covered or concealed with non-historic materials such as stucco, metal, adobe or vinyl.
- When repairing historic masonry it is important to match the original materials as closely as possible.
- Color, texture, and joint profile of historic mortar are also important characteristics.
- Key to preservation is to keep water out and apply the correct type of mortar when repairs are needed.
 - Soft mortars are appropriate for buildings constructed prior to the mid-20th century.
- Historic masonry should be cleaned only when necessary to prevent deterioration or to remove graffiti and stains and should never be subject to any kind of harsh, abrasive cleaning such as sandblasting or forceful pressure-washing.
- Use mild detergent cleaners to remove dirt and grime from masonry.
- Masonry buildings shouldn't be painted unless:
 - Brick is extremely mismatched from previous repairs.
 - Buildings that have been sandblasted and show masonry and mortar erosion may be painted to restore a protective surface.
- Do not use silicone-based sealants.
- Avoid using power tools on historic masonry.



This terra cotta panel at 246 Main Street is a primary material as well as a decorative architectural feature.

b. Siding:

- In instances where wood is the original exterior material, it should be preserved.
 - If replacement of siding is necessary due to deterioration, new siding should match the original in size, placement, and design.
- Original siding should never be covered with new materials.
- Vinyl and aluminum poorly match the appearance and texture of wood siding.
 - Could damage the building by not allowing the building's siding to "breathe".
 - Moisture and condensation can become trapped in the wood underneath, leading to rot and structural problems.

- Synthetic or substitute materials such as vinyl, aluminum, and asbestos are not compatible materials to historic buildings built prior to about 1950.
- Regular maintenance of siding will ensure its longevity.
 - Wood siding should be painted or opaque stained to provide a finished surface.
- Cleaning methods such as propane-torching, sand-blasting, or pressure-washing should never be employed, as they are destructive, dangerous, and/or abrasive.

c. Cast Iron and Metal:

- Many historic commercial buildings feature decorative cast iron and other metals including copper, tin, and steel.
- Exterior metals may have both structural and decorative uses and may be found in the following:
 - Cornices
 - Window Hoods
 - Capitals
 - Columns
 - Lintels
 - Sills
- Metals should be cleaned by the gentlest means possible and kept rust free.
 - Clean soft metals such as bronze, lead, tin, and copper with appropriate chemical methods to ensure they will not become damaged or discolored.
- Cast iron and metal original to the building should be preserved and maintained.
- Repair metal features by patching, splicing, or otherwise reinforcing the metal using recommended preservation methods.
 - Missing elements should be replicated with new metal to match the original as closely as possible in texture, profile, and appearance.
 - In some situations it may be appropriate to use materials such as aluminum, wood, plastics, and fiberglass, which are painted to match the metal.
 - Substitute materials shall be compatible and not create a galvanic reaction.



These original cast iron pilasters at the entrance on 191 Arch Street should be retained and maintained with gentle cleaning.

d. Paint:

- Select colors in keeping with the building's architectural style and period.
- Selected color schemes should be compatible with surrounding structures to create a sense of visual continuity.
- Removal of exterior paint should be avoided unless necessary.
 - Remove to the next sound layer using gentlest method possible.
 - If new coat of paint is required, the old paint should be completely removed before repainting.

- Non-abrasive methods such as chemical cleaning, hand-scraping, or hand-sanding should be used in removal.
- If stripped to bare wood, priming should take place within 48 hours.
- Avoid painting masonry or brick buildings that have not been painted previously.
- Paint may be applied to masonry walls that have been sandblasted in order to form a protective surface.

e. Tinted Glass, Marble and Stone Veneers, Concrete Panels, Porcelain and Aluminum:

- During the mid-20th century materials such as tinted glass, aluminum and stainless steel were used for display window surrounds, porcelain panels, concrete panels, and glass curtain walls were also common.
- Some of these materials are no longer manufactured.
- Preferred to repair than replace original elements.
- Use materials that match the original as closely if possible if it must be replaced.
- If repair is not an option, consult salvage companies or internet sources for replacement materials.

3. Windows

Overall Approach: Original windows should be preserved, maintained, or repaired. Historic windows should not be concealed, enclosed or covered. If deterioration of original windows warrants replacement, new windows should match the historic window in size, and number arrangement of panes, or lights. The frames of the replacement windows should also be of the same material, such as wood or metal, as original windows. Window openings on facades should not be altered.

A. Design Standards for Windows

a. Treatment of Historic Wood Windows:

- Preserve and maintain original windows.
- Repair deteriorating wood windows as needed. When possible, replace missing panes or damaged sashes rather than entire windows.
- Epoxy may be used to strengthen deteriorated wood.

b. Treatment of Historic Steel, Aluminum, Bronze and other Metal Windows:

- Preserve, maintain and repair original windows.
- Energy performance of metal windows can be improved without their replacement.
 - Apply weather stripping and security fittings.
 - Use spring-metal, vinyl strips, compressible foam tapes and sealant beads.
 - You may replace only the window panes with thermal glass panes (3/8" to 5/8" thick), provided that the rolled metal sections are at least 1" wide and the original window frame is retained.

c. Replacement Windows:

- Replace windows only if they are beyond repair, and replacements should match the original in size, materials, and number and arrangement of lights.
- If windows must be replaced, wood is the material of choice; however, other acceptable alternatives include aluminum clad wood or aluminum.
- Anodized or baked-on enamel aluminum, in white or dark finishes is also appropriate.
 - For multi-story buildings, the historic character is best preserved by having wood windows installed on the second story and baked or anodized aluminum windows on the floors above.
- Windows should match historic wood or metal window in



Original wood frame windows, like this example at 52 Main Street, should be kept in good repair.



Metal windows, like this example at 222 Main Street, should also be preserved.

appearance, dimensions, depth of frame, and arrangement of divided lights.

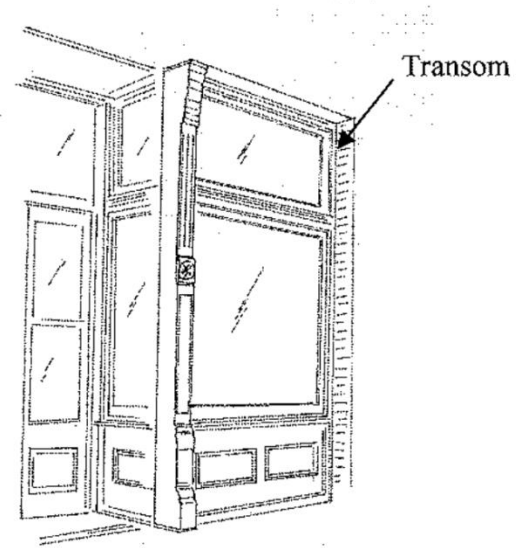
- True divided lights are recommended, or windows with lights that are bonded to the glass with spacers and appropriate grid profiles.

d. Transoms:

- Original transom glass and framing should be preserved and maintained.
- Transom lights should not be obscured.

e. Storm Windows:

- Should be of appropriate material and design so as to not detract from the building's historic appearance.
- Appropriate materials include: Wood, baked-on enamel or anodized aluminum.
- Should fit within the window frame and not overlap the frames.



f. Security Doors and Windows:

- Security doors are most appropriate for rear and side elevations.
- Security doors and windows should be full-view design or have a central meeting rail that matches the historic door or window.

4. Architectural Details

Overall Approach: Historic architectural details and features are important stylistic elements that help to define a building's character and should be preserved and maintained. Do not remove or conceal historic architectural details. Repair of such details is preferred to replacement; if it is necessary to replace historic architectural details, the material, design, color, and texture of the replacements should match those of the original features as closely as possible.

A. Design Standards for Architectural Details

a. General:

- Historic architectural details and features should be retained and maintained, and not covered or concealed.
- Only serious staining should warrant cleaning.
 - Water, mild detergent, and brushes are appropriate cleaning agents and tools.
- When repairing deteriorated or damaged historic architectural features, use the methods that allow them to retain their historic appearance and as much of the building's historic fabric as possible.
 - Epoxy can be used to strengthen damaged areas and fill small openings for wood features.
 - For large areas of decay, it is appropriate to exercise rotted material and fit new wood in the resulting gap.
 - For metal features that have become lightly corroded, appropriate methods of rust and flaking paint removal involves the use of a wire brush.
 - If corrosion is heavy, alternative methods include low pressure grit or sand blasting, flame cleaning, and chemical treatment.
 - Upon completion of rust and paint removal, the metal pieces should be painted.
- Architectural features should not be added to buildings where none historically existed.
- Replace missing or severely damaged historic architectural details and features with examples that replicate the original.
 - When replacing historic architectural features, property owners are encouraged to use the same materials; however, if substitute materials successfully match the appearance of the original detail, they may be appropriate.



Architectural feature found at 24 Washington Street.

b. Cornices:

- Historic cornices should be preserved and maintained.
- Cornices should not be added to a building if the building appears to have never had such a feature.
- When replacing a missing cornice, match the original in style, materials, size, and design.



The cornice at 272 Main Street is highly detailed.

5. Roofs

Overall Approach:

Roofs can help define building style and are important elements of historic appearance. The shape of the historic roof should be retained. If modern features are added, they should be shielded from public view.

A. Design Standards for Roofs

a. General:

- Historic roof shapes and features should be retained.
 - Preserve roofs in their original size, shape and pitch, and also their original features.
 - Roof features, such as parapets, cornices, and chimney flues, should be retained and preserved.
- The introduction of new roof elements should not detract from the building's historic appearance and character.
 - Modern roof additions such as skylights, solar panels, decks, balconies, and satellite dishes, should be concealed from public views.

b. Chimneys:

- Original chimneys should not be removed or altered.
 - Should be retained and maintained, even if no longer functional.
 - Do not cover original chimneys with stucco or other veneers that are not original.
 - Concrete, slate, unglazed terra cotta and stone caps are appropriate, if original bonding agent.
- Chimneys should be cared for following the guidelines for brickwork/masonry.
- If chimneys become unstable and need to be rebuilt, they should match the original as closely as possible.
 - If an original chimney becomes damaged or unstable, it may be rebuilt or supported.
 - Physical structural supports may include metal straps or brackets anchored to the roof framing.
 - Care should be taken to match repairs to historic materials, shapes, mortar, material color, and brick patterns.

c. Gutters and Downspouts:

- Gutters, downspouts, and splash blocks should be used and maintained.
- If original gutters are beyond repair, replacement gutters of an appropriate type should be installed.
 - The most appropriate design for hanging gutters on buildings to the mid-20th century is half round.
 - Beginning in the 1940s, ogee gutters came into use, and this design would be appropriate on buildings from that period.



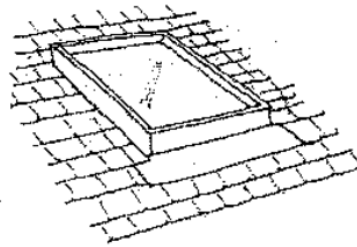
This downspout helps contain rain water and diverts it away from the building at 66 West Main Street.

- Locate downspouts away from architectural features and on the least public elevation of the building.

d. Skylights:

- Skylights that are original to a building should be preserved and maintained.
- Skylights should be laced in inconspicuous areas where they will not detract from the historic appearance of the building.
 - Skylights should be installed on rear rooflines or behind gables, parapets, or dormers, where they are not visible from the street.
- Use appropriate skylight design.
 - Only skylights that lie flat or flush with the roofline are appropriate; convex or “bubble” designs are not permitted, as they detract from the historic character of the building.

Skylights which are flush with the roof and not readily visible from the street are appropriate for commercial buildings.



6. Foundations

Overall Approach: Foundations of historic commercial buildings in New Britain are most often of brick, stone, or concrete masonry. Preserve original foundation materials through proper maintenance. Repair foundations using masonry guidelines.

A. Design Standards for Foundations

a. General:

- Original foundations should be preserved and maintained.
 - Do not cover original foundations with concrete block, plywood panels, corrugated metal, or wood shingles.
- Follow masonry guidelines for cleaning, care, and repair of masonry foundations.
- If replacement foundations are necessary, they should match the original as closely as possible.
- Water should be kept away from foundations as much as possible.
 - Irrigation systems should direct spray away from foundations; water from irrigation nozzles should not come within 3' of foundations.
 - Keep woody ornamental shrubs and trees away from foundations, as shrubs can hold moisture, and tree roots can protrude and damage foundations.
 - Use splashblocks, drains, and site grading to direct water away from foundations.

7. Additions

Overall Approach: Minimize the effect of additions to appearance of historic buildings and districts through complementary design, materials, and placement. Additions should be compatible in size, scale, and design with the historic building.

A. Design Standards for Additions

a. Decks:

- Decks have no historical precedent on commercial buildings, and their addition to such buildings is rare.
- If a deck is to be built it is imperative that the deck not damage or obscure significant historic architectural features, nor cause a negative visual impact to the historic appearance or character of the building.
- Locate decks where they are not visible from the street.
 - Should be added to rear elevations of buildings.
 - A deck added to the side elevation of a building should be screened from view through either placement or existing roof parapets.
- Decks should be simple in design.
 - Wood balusters should be less than three inches apart.
- Decks should be constructed with materials similar to those used on historic buildings, however, decks of alternative materials may also be acceptable if not readily visible from the street.
- Stain or paint decks in colors that are compatible with those of the building.

b. Rear Additions:

- Most favorable, and spatially logical, location for an addition on a historic commercial building is the rear elevations.
- Additions should be compatible with the original building in scale, proportion, rhythm, and materials.
 - The addition's materials, roof pitch, window design, window placement and rhythm, ratio of solids to voids, and general form should complement those of the original building.
- Rear additions should be smaller and simpler in design than the historic building.
 - Addition should complement not eclipse the building.
 - Should not be readily visible from the street.
 - While the addition should be visually compatible, it should also be distinct from the historic building. Subtle differences in materials or styles can help distinguish an addition from the original building.
- Rear additions should not obscure or damage significant architectural features.



Rear addition at 66 West Main Street. It matches the original building in height, mass and scale.

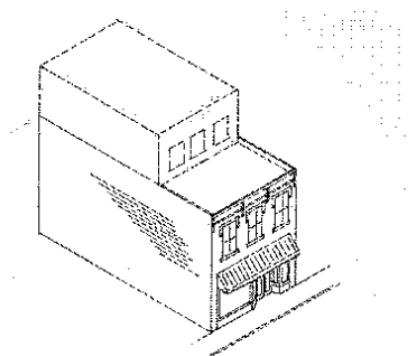
- Additions should not obscure, alter, or conceal cornices, architectural details and other important elements.
- Additions should not damage or remove historic walls or roofs.

c. Lateral Additions:

- Lateral additions should be compatible with the original building in scale, proportion, rhythm, and materials.
 - The addition's materials, roof pitch, window design, window placements and rhythm, ratio of solids to voids, and general form should complement the building.
- Mass and scale of lateral additions should be subordinate to that of the historic building.
 - Lateral additions should be recessed significantly.
 - It should not detract from the historic form and character of the original building.
- Design lateral additions so that they will not obscure or damage significant architectural features.
 - Construction of additions should not result in damage or removal of historic walls or roofs.
 - Original door openings should be preserved and used to access the addition.
- Additions should be distinguishable from the historic building and be a product of their own time.
 - Additions should be visually compatible while also being distinct from the historic building.
 - Subtle differences in materials or styles can help distinguish an addition from the original building.
- Dimensions of a lateral addition should be lesser than those of the original building.
 - Should complement not overshadow the building.

d. Roofline Additions:

- Mass and scale of rooftop additions should be subordinate to that of the historic building.
 - Should be smaller and simpler in design than the historic building.
 - Upper stories should not overhang the lower floors.
- Rooftop additions should use similar roof forms to the buildings to which they are attached.
- Additions should not cause the removal of character-defining materials and features.
- Rooftop additions should be recessed and not be readily visible from the street.
 - Original profile of the historic building should be maintained.
 - Rooftop addition should not overwhelm the original façade.
 - Mass and scale of the original façade should be preserved.
 - Rooftop additions should not be readily visible from the street level.



Rooftop additions should be recessed so that they are not readily visible from the street.

e. Fire Escapes:

- Retain original fire escapes when possible.
 - Repair of historic fire escapes if preferable to replacement.
 - If repair is not possible, a fire escape should be replaced in kind as closely as possible.

8. Accessibility

Overall Approach: The primary entrance of commercial buildings should be ADA-compliant. If this is not possible, an alternative entrance should be available, clearly marked, and maintained to the same standards as the primary entrance. If it is necessary to add access ramps, use a simple design that respects the building's historic character.

A. Design Standards for Accessibility

a. General:

- Accessibility solutions must meet all state and local accessibility requirements as well as ADA mandates.
- Accessibility solutions should provide the highest level of access and the least impact on the building's historic character.
- Locate access ramps where they will have the least visual impact on the building's historic character.
- Access ramps should be simple in design.
- Avoid use of temporary ramps.
- If historic doors do not allow for universal access, they should be retrofitted to meet standards.
 - The use of automatic door openers with push plates is also an alternative to meet ADA door requirements on commercial buildings.



This ramp and railing at 66 West Main Street is an appropriate rear design.

9. Signage

Overall Approach: Existing historic signs should be retained and maintained. New signs and significant alterations to existing sign should be compatible with the historic building and streetscape. Signs should be installed in such a manner that no damage occurs to historic materials. All signs must meet the specific requirements of New Britain's sign ordinance.

A. Types of Signs

a. Walls Signs:

Wall signs lay flat and are applied directly to an exterior wall surface of a building, or signs that are painted directly on the wall of a building.

- Determine if architectural elements exist that could define a "sign panel." If so, locate signs so they fit within these panels.
- The size and proportions of a wall sign shall be similar to those seen historically on the building, adjacent streetscape and district.



Appropriate wall sign at 103 West Main Street.

b. Painted Window Signs:

Signs that are painted directly onto either the interior or exterior of windows.

- Metal leaf and subdued colors are historically appropriate window sign materials.
- The maximum area of a window sign shall not exceed 25% of the window area, or eight square feet, whichever is lesser.



Painted window sign located at 83 West Main Street.

c. Awning Signs:

Lettering and/or logos that are incorporated into awnings.

- The maximum area of an awning sign shall not exceed 20% of the awning panel or eight square feet, whichever is the lesser amount.
- Awnings should be compatible in size and shape with the character of the building and streetscape.
- Awnings should be of shed roof design, not curved or round unless the opening itself is curved or round such as an arched window or door.
- Backlit awnings, metal awnings, and vinyl awnings are not appropriate for historic buildings, but are acceptable for modern buildings or new infill.

d. Projecting/Hanging Signs:

Signs that extend from a small pole or post that is attached to the exterior of a building. These include cloth banner signs as well as signs of wood, metal, or other materials.

- Projecting signs should be in compliance with the zoning ordinance.
- The bottom of a projecting sign should be at least ten feet above the sidewalk.
- In size, the sign should not dominate the building's façade.

e. Free Standing or Monument Signs:

Signs that are not attached to a building but stand alone on the grounds of a property.

- Freestanding or monument signs may be used as an alternative to a sign on the building, if the latter is inappropriate.
- Freestanding and monument signs should be pedestrian in scale (not exceeding four feet in height) and blend in with the architectural of the building and streetscape.

f. Inappropriate Types of Signs:

- Signs that are out of character with those seen historically and that would alter the historic character of the street.
- Backlit plastic panel signs and backlit awnings.
- Oversized signs that dominate the visual appearance of the building.
- Signs attached to a building in such a way as to obscure significant architectural detailing.
- Animated signs and electronic changeable signs.

B. Design Standards for New Signs on Historic Buildings

a. Number and Location:

- May be located in a variety of places on buildings, including storefront belt courses, upper façade walls, side walls, or on awnings or canopies.
- Signs may hang or be mounted in windows, or project from the building's façade.
- Signs may be painted on windows or the glass areas of doors.
- Free standing signs may be placed on the lot of the building, or in the case of removable sandwich board type signs, on the sidewalk, taking care not to block pedestrian traffic or the visibility of motorists.
- No more than three signs should be used per building, in addition to painted window signs.
- Wall signs should not exceed 20% of the overall wall surface.



13 Beaver Street makes use of several appropriate sign locations, while adhering to the recommendation of limiting the number and colors of signs to three.

b. Materials:

- For 19th and early 20th century buildings, this may include wood, glass, copper, or bronze.
 - Finished wood signs are appropriate.
 - Plastic, substrate, or unfinished wood signs are not recommended.
 - Signs of metal such as aluminum and brass are not recommended.
- For mid-20th century buildings that do not retain their original signs, new signs may be of materials traditional to their period such as backlit fluorescent or neon signs of glass or plastic, metal letters, or glass and metal projecting signs.

c. Illumination:

- Fixtures for lighting for signs should be simple and not detract from the historic character of the building.
- Simple spot lighting or up-lighting is most preferable for signs.

C. Design Standards for Signs on Historic Buildings

a. New Signs for Historic Buildings:

- New signs should be of traditional materials.
 - Construct new signs out of materials such as wood and glass, and metals such as copper, bronze or aluminum.
 - Metal signs should have matte or subdued finishes.
 - Sandblasted wood signs are appropriate.
 - The use of plastic, neon, or applied letters may be appropriate for mid-20th century storefronts.
- Signs should be sized in proportion to the building.
- Signs should have no more than two or three colors.
 - Colors should be compatible with overall building colors.
- Signs that resemble logos or symbols for businesses are encouraged.
- Buildings should have no more than three signs, not counting signs painted on windows.
- Use traditional lettering styles for signs.
 - Appropriate fonts for sign include Serif, Sans Serif or Script.
 - Letters should not exceed 18 inches in height or cover more than 60% of the total sign area.



Appropriate light fixture design for illuminating a sign at 105 West Main Street.



Appropriate wall sign and light fixtures located at 222 Main Street.

b. Signs for New Construction and Adaptive Reuse:

- Place signs in traditional locations.
 - Traditional sign locations include storefront beltcourses, upper façade walls (not to exceed 20% of the overall wall surface), hanging or mounted inside windows, or projecting from the face of the building.
 - Moveable sandwich boards or “menu easels” are also appropriate.
- Install signs so that no damage occurs to historic fabric.
 - Mounting brackets and hardware for signs should be anchored into mortar, not masonry.
- Conceal lighting for signs.
 - Spot or up lighting is appropriate for signs.
 - Internally lit or back lit signs are not appropriate except for mid-20th century buildings.

c. Signs for Commercial Buildings/Offices in Residential Neighborhoods:

- Signage should complement the historic character of the building.
 - Commercial buildings located in residential neighborhoods should use signs that are compatible with the architectural and historical character of the streetscape.
- Historic locations such as sign panels and cornices should be considered first when adding signage.
- Signs should not obscure or conceal architectural features.
- One sign per building is acceptable. The building may also have window signs and one additional awning sign.
- Appropriate sign types are flat signs, wall signs, projecting signs, awning signs and window signs.
- Signs should be non-illuminated or indirectly illuminated.

d. Signs for Adaptively Reused Buildings:

- Residential buildings adapted for commercial or office use should have signs that respect the building’s original character.
 - Should not detract from adjacent residential properties.
- Signs should be located on the building itself, or as close to the building as possible for freestanding signs.
 - Signs for residential buildings may include letters along a fascia board above the entrance, wall signs adjacent to the main entrance or freestanding signs in front yards.
- One sign per building is acceptable.
- Signs should either be non-illuminated or indirectly illuminated within a discreet light source, such as in-ground or hidden lighting.

10. New Commercial Construction

Overall Approach: New construction in New Britain’s commercial areas should be compatible with adjacent buildings in scale, mass, and height; materials, orientation, shape, placement, and rhythm and proportion of openings should also be considered. The architectural of an infill building should not strive to imitate historic counterparts, but stand as a product of its own time and blend harmoniously with the surrounding historic built environment.

A. Design Features to Consider

a. Site Design:

- When planning new construction, it is important to consider issues such as street patterns, building orientation, street lighting, and parking as part of the overall site plan.

b. Street Patterns:

- Street patterns influence how buildings are sited and lots developed.
- Traditional street patterns should be preserved when planning new construction.

c. Building Orientation:

- Commercial buildings traditionally have store fronts and primary entrances oriented to the street and sidewalk.
- Entrances are often regularly spaced along a street, which imparts visual cohesiveness to the streetscape.
- New construction within a historic district should maintain this visual continuity by locating entrances of new buildings in a similar rhythm to the established pattern.

d. Street Lighting:

- New street lamp design should be compatible with the surrounding historic commercial area and with other elements of the streetscape.
- Light fixtures should be subtle and unobtrusive.
- They should not detract from the visual appearance or the architectural character of the surrounding area.
- Do not install light fixtures that suggest an inaccurate time period for the historic district in question.

e. Parking:

- Parking areas should be located at the rear of commercial properties.
- They should be screened with attractive and regularly maintained landscaping.
- Parking garages should be sensitive to the surrounding historic neighborhood and streetscape.
- Mass and scale should be comparable to historic structures, and the building should not compromise the visual continuity of the street.

B. Building Scale

a. Building Height:

- The height of newly constructed buildings should be within a similar range of heights of historic buildings in the surrounding area.
- Prominent decorative features such as cornices or parapets should be of similar height as those traditionally found in the neighborhood.
- New buildings should not overwhelm surrounding historic structures in height.

b. Building Width:

- New construction within a historic district should reflect the established pattern of building width.
- It is acceptable for new buildings to be wider than existing buildings if they convey a perception of width similar to historic buildings.
- Incorporating vertical divisions in the building's design can create the appearance of traditional widths.

c. Mass and Scale:

- Newly constructed buildings should respect the traditional scale of buildings in the surrounding area.
- It is acceptable for new buildings to be larger than historic ones, but should not be dramatically greater in mass and scale that has been established in the neighborhood.

d. Solid to Void Ratio:

- Refers to the relationship between exterior solid wall surface and windows and door openings.
- Traditionally the façades of commercial buildings have a balanced ratio of wall surface and windows and doors.
- New construction design should have a similar solid to void ratio as that of historic buildings in the area.

e. Lighting:

- Traditionally, lighting was limited to subtle fixtures that illuminated entrances and/or signage on the building.
- Exterior lighting for new buildings should be similarly reserved and follow the existing patterns of position, style, and frequency of lights.
- Lighting on new buildings should not detract from the historic streetscape and should be subtle and simple in design.

C. Site Design Standards

a. Street Patterns:

- Respect historic patterns of building development.
- Preserve historic street patterns.

b. Building Orientation:

- New construction should be oriented toward the major street.
- Setback of a new building should be in line with existing buildings to create a continuous façade wall.
- New construction should respect uniform setbacks along a block.

c. Street Lighting:

- Street lighting should be simple in design and unobtrusive.
- Street light design should be compatible with the surrounding streetscape.
 - In residential areas, this may mean very subtle or minimal lighting.

d. Parking:

- Protect historic buildings and structures when planning and constructing parking lots.
- Place parking areas where they are least visually obtrusive.
 - Parking areas are most recommended behind commercial buildings.
- Screen new parking areas with landscape materials.
 - Landscaping should have the same setback and location as the front walls of adjacent buildings.
 - Large parking areas should be divided with plantings.
 - Keep landscaping trimmed for visibility of pedestrians and vehicles.



The two images above show appropriate methods for screening parking.

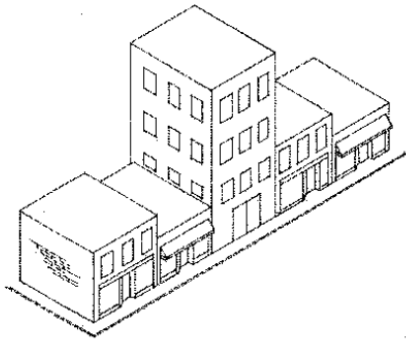
D. Building Scale Standards

a. Mass and Scale:

- New buildings should be compatible with adjacent buildings in terms of scale and proportion.
- New building should not be dramatically larger than historic buildings so as to overwhelm the streetscape.
 - New buildings of a larger mass should be visually subdivided into smaller visual units that are similar in size to historic structures in the area.

b. Height:

- The height of new buildings should be compatible with that of adjacent historic buildings.



New buildings that are not compatible in height to surrounding historic buildings, such as that shown in the image at left, disrupt the sense of visual continuity along the street, and thus compromise the character of the streetscape.

c. Width:

- New buildings should be designed to appear similar in width to surrounding historic buildings.
 - For construction plans that will infill a footprint wider than that of a single building, the design should incorporate visual divisions that give the appearance of multiple building widths.
 - This can be accomplished with vertical divisions within the building design.

d. Solid to Void Ratio:

- Window size and proportion of openings should be consistent with adjacent historic buildings.
 - The new building should follow the established patterns of rhythm, size, and spacing of window and door openings as seen on surrounding historic buildings.



Solid to void ratio: The top sketch at left illustrates new construction that maintains traditional solid to void ratio through appropriate number and size of windows. The bottom sketch illustrates inappropriate window size and placement.

E. Building Form

a. General:

- New buildings should possess forms that are similar to those of existing historic buildings along the blocks on which they are sited.
 - Typically, commercial buildings in New Britain have been constructed in simple rectangular forms of varying heights.
- The roof form of new commercial buildings should match those of adjacent historic buildings.
 - Flat roof are most common for commercial buildings, but new construction should have roof forms consistent with surrounding buildings on the block.
- New buildings should maintain the traditional separation between storefronts and upper facades.

- Ground floor storefronts are visually separated from upper floors through design patterns and window placement.
- New construction should follow this pattern, and the separation should be in alignment with adjacent buildings.

b. Rhythm and Spacing:

- Proportions of window and door openings should be similar to those of surrounding historic buildings.
 - Spacing of window and door openings strongly imparts visual rhythm to a group of buildings.
 - A spacing pattern applies to display windows along storefronts as well as upper level windows.
 - New buildings should maintain a pattern similar to that already established in the district.

F. Design Standards for New Commercial Buildings

a. Materials:

- Use of traditional building materials that are compatible with adjacent buildings is preferred.
 - Using traditional construction materials such as wood, brick, and metal in new buildings will help provide a sense of visual continuity and flow to the street.
- New materials that are similar in character to traditional materials may be acceptable with appropriate detailing.
 - Alternative materials may be appropriate if their appearance is similar in scale, proportion, texture and finish to historic building materials.
 - Metal products are allowed for soffits and eaves only, or when adjacent historic buildings incorporated these materials in the original design.

b. Architectural Character:

- Building components of new construction that are similar in size and shape to those found historically along the street are preferred.
 - New commercial buildings should include traditional storefront components such as windows, doors, bulkheads, and display windows that are compatible in size and shape to those of historic buildings.
- The scale of decorative elements similar to that of surrounding historic examples is preferred.
- New buildings should be contemporary but compatible in design to historic buildings.
 - New construction design should distinctly express its own period and not try to mimic historic styles.
 - New buildings need to be visually compatible with neighboring historic buildings, yet be representative of their own time.
 - Similarities in mass, scale, and established patterns of features such as windows, doors, and storefronts collectively promote visual harmony.
- Contemporary interpretations of traditional details are encouraged.
 - Some decorative elements of historic buildings can be incorporated into contemporary designs.
 - These provide visual continuity for the group of buildings, while the updated version still conveys that the construction is new.
- The imitation of historic styles is discouraged.

c. Windows:

- Windows similar in size and orientation with those in adjacent historic architecture are encouraged.
 - Traditionally, windows on upper stories of historic commercial buildings are rectangular in form with vertical emphasis.
 - Arched windows are also common.
 - Transoms are both rectangular and arched.
- Storefront display windows should reflect historical examples in size, scale, and proportion.
- Windows shall be simple in shape.
 - Odd-shaped windows such as octagons, circles, diamonds, etc. are not recommended unless there are examples in neighboring historic commercial buildings of the recent past.

d. Entries:

- Entries should be similar to surrounding historic examples in size, shape, and placement.
 - Historic commercial buildings have a wide variety of entrances, including recessed entries, central and corner entries, and both single and paired (double) doors. New construction design should follow these entrance design patterns to create a unified sense of scale and rhythm along the street.

e. Awnings and Canopies:

- Awnings and canopies should be of traditional materials.
 - Cloth, canvas, or metal awnings or canopies are best for commercial buildings. Vinyl or other synthetic materials are not recommended.
- Awnings should fit the opening(s) to which they are attached.
 - Rectangular openings should have rectangular awnings, and arched openings should have curved awnings.

f. Lighting:

- Exterior lighting should be subtle and unobtrusive.
- Lighting should be compatible with the building and the streetscape and not be visually dominant or intrusive.
 - Lighting should be a subtle addition to the property and not dominate the overall site or spill over onto adjacent properties.
- Light fixtures should not suggest a false sense of history.
 - Contemporary interpretations of historic light fixtures designs are appropriate, but fixtures should not be duplicate styles of earlier architectural periods.
- Sight lighting should be compatible and appropriate for the surrounding area.
 - For commercial buildings in residential neighborhood, lighting should not have an adverse impact on surrounding residences.

g. Datestones/Cornerstones:

- New construction should be identified through datestones or cornerstones.
- The use of datestones or cornerstones in new buildings will aid in the differentiation of new construction from adjacent historic buildings.

11. Streetscape Elements

Overall Approach: The addition of elements such as light fixtures, planter boxes, street furniture, bike racks, and sidewalks, enhance the streetscape. Investment in streetscape improvements is recommended in commercial areas. Streetscape elements such as benches, planters and landscaping; level sidewalks and their sloped egresses improve accessibility. Future streetscape improvements should respect the historic character of the area and follow traditional designs and landscaping. Modern interpretations of streetscape elements may also be appropriate.

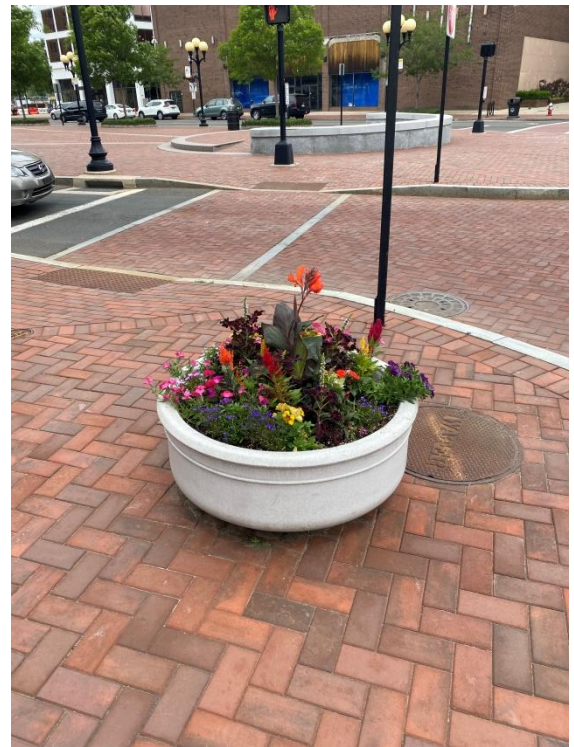
A. Design Standards for Streetscape Elements

a. General:

- Commercial areas should be enhanced through streetscape elements.
 - Elements such as benches and planters make commercial areas more attractive and enjoyable. They encourage people to spend more time doing business in historic commercial areas.
- Major street improvements considered in the future should be consistent with the historic character of the commercial area.
- Landscaping should not damage historic buildings or conceal historic elements.
- Outdoor furniture should be uniform appearance, appropriate materials and not impede pedestrian flow.



Public bench located on Main Street.



Planter located on Main Street.

12. Mechanical Equipment and Fire Escapes

Overall Approach: Mechanical equipment, service utility devices, and fire escapes should be concealed from public view. They should be placed in inconspicuous areas and be as unobtrusive as possible. Screening with landscaping or fencing is recommended. Any devices affixed to a historic building should be installed to avoid damaging the property. Paint conduits to blend with the color of the building.

A. Design Standards for Mechanical Equipment and Fire Escapes

a. Satellite Dishes:

- Satellite dishes should be placed in inconspicuous areas where they are not readily visible from the street.
 - Locate these appliances on the rear elevation or rear roof slope; do not mount them on building facades.
- Satellite dishes that are small in size are more appropriate than larger ones.

b. Solar Devices and Systems:

- Solar devices and systems should be located where they are least visible and obtrusive and cause the least impact to the integrity of the historic building.
 - It is recommended that solar panels be located on rooftops, in rear lots, or on accessory buildings behind the commercial buildings, where they are not readily visible from public right-of-ways (except alleys).
 - Another option is a side lot in a location not readily visible from the street. If readily visible, solar panels are most appropriately placed in roof lines.
- It is preferred that solar panels be located where they are least visible from the street.
 - Solar panels should never be mounted on the façade of a building.

c. Utilities:

- Ground-mounted mechanical systems should be located behind or on top of buildings.
 - Mechanical systems on the ground should be screened from view using fencing or landscaping.
 - If on top of buildings, they should be set back or installed behind a parapet, not visible from the street.
 - Screening may also be necessary to reduce the noise from mechanical systems, especially in residential areas.
- Window-mounted mechanical systems should be located on the side or rear elevations; their visibility should be as minimal as possible.
- Meters, conduits, and other equipment should be located on rear elevations.



Satellite dish located at the rear of 59 Arch Street.

d. Trash and Recycling Storage Areas:

- Place garbage containers behind buildings and screen them from view.
 - Dumpsters and other garbage containers can be concealed with fencing or plants.
 - In residential areas, locate these to have minimal impact on adjacent residences.

e. Fire Escapes:

- Fire escapes should be located on rear elevations or otherwise located so they are not visible from the street.
- The addition of fire escapes should not damage historic architectural features.
- Fire escapes may be either open or enclosed.
 - If enclosed, fire escape surfaces should be of materials matching or compatible with those used on the historic building.
 - If open, fire escapes surfaces should be of metal or alternative materials.



Screened dumpster located at 66 West Main Street.