

Commercial Design Guidelines

**Dothan Historic Preservation Commission
Dothan, Alabama**

ADOPTED/AMENDED

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DESIGN GUIDELINES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DOTHAN, ALABAMA

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

1. These guidelines shall apply to the exterior portions of buildings that are either facing a street or are visible from the public right-of-way, as for instance along an alley. There will no intent in these guidelines to monitor interior arrangements, design, or decor.
2. A primary objective of the guidelines is good maintenance of properties. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to be counterproductive to maintaining a building according to the City's codes.
3. General tenets of historic preservation and rehabilitation are at the center of these guidelines. Changes to historic buildings within the district will be considered with consistent emphasis on appropriate applications of the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation* as set forth in these guidelines: See Attachment "A"
4. For exterior painting and ordinary maintenance not involving changes in materials, style or other exterior applications, the applicant may petition the Historic Preservation Commission for an expedited review procedure as described in Dothan Code, Chapter 50. And State of Alabama law reference, Code of Alabama 1975, section 11-48-1. See Design Guidelines, Facades and Storefronts, sections 5 & 6 below.
5. Only in cases of demonstrable and irreversible damage to original material will its covering or replacement be considered.

FACADES AND STOREFRONTS:

1. **Masonry: Brick, Stone, Terra Cotta, Concrete, Stucco and Mortar.**
 - (a) Masonry that is unpainted shall be kept clean and in good repair, with no loose or extraneous elements adhering. Any patching to a masonry surface must be in keeping with the material and color, resembling the original as closely as possible, and, in the case of patches to brickwork, should match the original bonding and pointing.
 - (b) A historically unpainted masonry surface shall not be painted. Exceptions to this may be in the case of side or rear walls that have uneven color or texture due to removal of party walls, previous patching, or other visually disparate elements. In approved exception cases, paint on masonry shall match the color of the unpainted portions of the building as closely as possible.

- (c) Decorative masonry such as brackets, cornices, honeycomb brick patterns, etc., must be maintained in as close to original condition as possible. In cases where these have been damaged, replacement or repair should be in either the original or a modern material (such as fiberglass or epoxy filler, etc. Where replacement is not feasible, consultation with a preservation architect should precede any plans to remove or cover decorative elements.
- (d) Existing facing materials such as metal screens, Masonite panels, fiberboard or plywood panels, etc., must be kept in good repair or removed to expose the original material underneath. No new facing material over original material will be approved under these guidelines.

2. Storefronts

- (a) The storefront is defined as the entrance, show windows, sign panels or transoms, and any other elements of the building up to a height of 14' from grade.
- (b) Glass show windows and transoms, where still intact, shall not be obscured or covered with any other material. Transoms should be uncovered or faced in a manner to reflect their original framing elements and proportions within the historic storefront.
- (c) Proposed changes to the original style and character of a storefront which are inappropriate for the period of the building's original architectural style will not be permitted. Examples of such inappropriate changes would be false colonial designs with multi-pane windows, false western designs, Mansard canopies, or any other architectural style that is not consistent with historically accurate or typical design of the period. Changes to storefronts must be compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the building. Such a design should be undertaken based on a thorough understanding of the building's architecture and, where appropriate, the surrounding streetscape. The creation of any new design element which alters the architectural and historic character of the building and its relationship with the street is not permitted. For example, just because upper floor windows are arched is not sufficient justification for designing arched openings for the new storefront. All requests for storefront alterations or design changes must be submitted with documented historical precedents for HPC's review and consideration.
- (d) Aluminum storefront framing elements in historic buildings shall be finished in a color appropriate to the architectural style of the building.

3. Windows

- (a) On building faces, all windows must be glazed and at least translucent. No street windows will be permitted to be painted or otherwise blocked by metal, plywood, masonry, or any other material. Alternatives such as closed shutters will be considered if appropriate to the building's other elements.

- (b) Blocking of windows is discouraged unless documented interior arrangements require it. Approved exception cases for blocking of windows on non-street walls will require openings to be covered with materials appropriate to the architectural style of the building.
- (c) Replacements of windows must resemble the window's historic architectural style, original profile, and original materials as closely as possible. Window components including the window's depth, profile, mullion, styles, and frames must represent the dimensions and profile of the building's original windows.
- (d) On historic buildings, modern metal-frame windows will not be permitted. Also, window grids which are placed between the glass components will not be permitted.

4. Temporary Replacement of Broken Windows

As per Chapter 50, Section 50-127 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, all broken window glass in all structures must be replaced.

All replacements of broken window glass in designated historic districts must duplicate the original glass in color, size, and installation technique, with the following exceptions:

- (a) Where the original window glass installation does not meet current building codes and/or safety standards in materials or installation, owners or their agents must meet current codes, following standard installation practices, while visually replicating the original window.
- (b) In street front windows of commercial buildings not currently occupied, or where final use plans are pending, where large sheets of broken specialty glass would have to be replaced, building owners may replace glass as follows:
 1. Use minimum 1/2" thick exterior grade plywood, OSB, or similar material cut to the same dimensions as the sheet of glass to be replaced;
 2. Replacement material must be fixed in the existing opening in place of the missing glass, securely anchored so as to meet all code requirements;
 3. *All edges* must be neatly trimmed with exterior grade trim material and caulked;
 4. All replacement materials and trim must be primed with exterior grade primer, then painted with two coats of standard exterior grade paint.
 5. On upper story, multi-pane windows, if the breakage is less than 50 Percent (50%) the broken panes must be replaced. If the window

breakage is 50 percent (50%) or more, the entire window must be boarded using the same standards as the lower story windows.

- (c) The steps above may be used to replace broken glass in cases of rear, side, and other windows similarly located in places not commonly in public view.
- (d) The temporary replacement of broken windows shall only be valid for a period of six months from the date of repair.

5. Paint

Color schemes must take into consideration both the architectural period of the building's construction, and the architectural style of the building. Color schemes shall not be redundant with respect to existing color schemes on adjacent buildings.

6. Maintenance

A property owner in the historic districts may complete a Maintenance Affidavit at the Planning Department Office (Dothan City Hall, Room 305). In accordance with Section 50-126 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, such maintenance work is to be done to correct deterioration, decay, or damage, or to sustain the existing form of the building that does not involve observable change in design, material or outer appearance of the structure. Materials not in keeping with the original construction of the building are prohibited under this affidavit. In order to execute a maintenance affidavit, the following information must be provided:

1. Identify damaged part of structure to be repaired.
2. Provide photograph of damage
3. Identify type of existing material comprising damage to be repaired
4. Identify type of material proposed for repair of damage
5. Provide date for completion
6. Upon completion, provide photograph of finished repair

Once the affidavit is approved, the property owner is authorized to proceed with maintenance work.

7. Metal Trim and Downspouts

- (a) Metal scuppers, downspouts, gutters, copings, etc., must be securely fastened to the building and in good condition. They must be painted to harmonize with other elements of the building face.
- (b) Any miscellaneous elements no longer in use, such as conduit, sign brackets, light fixtures or fasteners, etc., must be removed from the building.

8. Awnings and Canopies

- (a) Canvas or vinyl awnings are appropriate and desirable to shade storefronts and upper windows. Awnings can be fixed or retractable.
- (b) Awnings may project up to the full width of the sidewalk, given there is no

obstruction with any element in the public right of way.

- (c) Awnings cannot descend lower than 9' above the sidewalk. Care should be taken that the awnings take up a proportional section of storefront and do not obscure too much of the building surface.
- (d) Flat canopies of the type popular in the '30s and '40s are acceptable and appropriate if kept in good condition.
- (e) Fake Mansard or colonial canopies are inappropriate and should be removed. These guidelines do not permit the addition of fake canopies to any building in the district.

9. Entrances and Porches

- (a) Recognizing that porches can define an architectural style or a building's historical period, care should be taken to retain or restore original details and shape, outline, roof height, and roof pitch.
- (b) When it is necessary to replace deteriorated pieces, the new material must match the original in, texture, shape, size, and color. Existing features must be repaired rather than replaced. The addition of ornate decoration not appropriate to the architectural style of the building is not permitted.
- (c) Enclosing of front porches is not permitted.

10. Miscellaneous

- (a) Roofs must be kept in good condition and free of debris, standing water, or other elements tending to deterioration. Mechanical equipment on the roof should be screened if possible, or painted a dark color to minimize its visibility.
- (b) Rear loading docks and entrances must be kept in good condition and should be identified by appropriate signage (see Signage below).
- (c) Vacant lots and parking lots must be kept clean and in good repair.
- (d) Electrical equipment such as junction boxes, electrical & gas meters, transformers, ballast switches, etc., must be hidden from view as much as possible, and must not in any case be installed on the street face of a building.
- (e) Neon lighting, as a design element or as an accent, will be considered by the Commission for Certificate of Appropriateness requests that apply only to buildings of an appropriate and corresponding historical style as supported with historical documentation.

11. Signs

Property owners must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness for the placement,

erection or installation of any sign in this district before placement, erection or installation occurs. Following are specific guidelines to assist merchants and building owners with development of plans and specifications for proposal to the Dothan Historical Planning Commission.

- (a) Size Allowance: Refer to the Downtown Overlay District (DOD) Zoning Ordinance, section (10), (f), (1-6).
- (b) Signs consistent with the historic period of the building to which they will be attached are encouraged. The primary criteria for approval of a new sign are:
 1. Quality of Materials
 2. Craftsmanship
 3. Appropriate Size (as specified in DOD ordinance, section (10), (f), (1-6).
- (c) Signs shall be in keeping with the character and proportions of the building to which they are attached; they should not overpower the building or obscure any significant architectural features as addressed in DOD ordinances.
- (d) Projecting signs will be carefully reviewed for their size and appropriateness, but they can be considered acceptable if they do not overpower or obscure their own building or neighboring buildings.
 1. They must not be longer than 8', and the overall projection cannot exceed 9½' from the face of the building. They must be kept in good repair and working order, and must be finished on both sides.
 2. Projecting signs shall not be lower than 10' above grade. However, the Historical Preservation Commission may at its discretion, allow small, non-mechanical signs displaying only a business name to hang at 8' above grade.
 3. Ground-floor businesses in multi-story buildings cannot mount signs higher than 14' above grade.
- (e) Lighting
 1. Lighting of signs must be context-appropriate.
 2. Externally lighted signs shall use focused, low intensity illumination. Such lighting shall not shine or create glare at pedestrian or vehicular traffic, nor shall it shine into adjacent areas. Light fixtures mounted at ground level shall be screened from view.
 3. Internally lighted signs are prohibited except if all the following requirements are met:
 - a. Sign face is primarily an opaque material with routed or cut out text or graphics of minimal size, as determined context-appropriate by the HPC.

- b. Sign face material is of appropriate material and minimum 1/8" thickness at cutouts. Acceptable materials include durable corrosion resistant metals or composite resins.
 - c. Signs with entire face covered with translucent materials are not permitted.
- 4. Reverse lighting or "halo" lighting of graphics or text is permitted when determined context-appropriate by the HPC.
 - 5. Neon lighting is permitted when determined context-appropriate by the HPC.
 - 6. Flashing, blinking, revolving, or rotating lights are not permitted on any type of sign.
- (f) Business identification sewn or painted on awnings or canopies is permitted. The area of space used to identify the business must be 25% or less of the total surface area of the awning or canopy.
 - (g) Sandwich Board signs shall be allowed, but shall not be an impediment to pedestrian traffic.
 - (h) Temporary advertising adhering to store windows requires approval by the Design Review Committee. After review of the style and circumstances of the promotion. There will be a 30 day delay limit on such promotional signs.
 - (i) Day-Glo signs, are prohibited.
 - (j) Billboards and portable signs are prohibited.
 - (k) Signs mounted on the roof of a building or rising above the parapet line shall not be permitted, unless determined appropriate by the HPC.
 - (l) Historic wall paintings should be retained and restored to the greatest extent possible. Any new wall signs should conform in style and content to the historic precedents. Approval of new wall painting will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with close attention paid to surrounding signage, architectural features and other pertinent building and contextual elements.
 - (m) All signs shall be fabricated by a professional sign-maker and be of good quality and appearance as deemed acceptable by the Historic Preservation Commission under these guidelines. Any exception to this general standard can be made by the Commission only upon presentation by the applicant of acceptable plans and/or samples, assuring that non-professionally made signs will be of good quality as defined above.
 - (n) All signs must meet current adopted building codes for construction.

12. New Construction

- (a) New construction in the historic district must be compatible and harmonious with the existing scale, materials and setbacks of the existing blocks. This should not be interpreted as an attempt to inhibit modern building style or technique, whether utilitarian or decorative. The intent is to maintain a sense of continuity and wholeness that out-of-scale or jarringly variant structures would compromise or destroy.
- (b) New structures should respect the masonry facings and fenestration rhythms of their neighbors.
- (c) No new construction will be permitted in front of the building line of the existing buildings on the block.
- (d) Uses of new buildings are governed according to the City's Zoning Code and not by any provision of these guidelines.

13. Demolition

- (a) Except as provided below, (paragraph (c)) demolition of any structure for purposes of surface parking is not permitted.
- (b) Except in cases of extreme deterioration and potential danger to the public safety as determined by the City Building Inspector, demolition within the historic district will be discouraged and requests to demolish will be considered only upon presentation of plans for the building's replacement with another structure acceptable under these guidelines (see 8 above).
- (c) An owner must demonstrate extreme economic hardship and inability to redevelop before being allowed to demolish a building for other purposes than redevelopment of the property. The City of Dothan Historic Preservation Commission or other agencies of the City of Dothan shall have the option to seek other avenues for rehabilitation of a building in danger of demolition; this option will be in effect for no longer than six (6) months after the date of the request for a demolition permit.
- (d) Surface parking lots must be accompanied by landscaping, facades, street fixtures or other treatments which, in the opinion of the Commission, contribute to the historic character of the neighboring buildings and the Historic District.

ATTACHMENT "A"
U.S. Secretary of the Interior
STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

These standards are used to certify historic rehabilitations and are also used for grant-funded projects. The basic standards, listed below, are incorporated into Dothan's Design Guidelines.

STANDARD NO. 1:

A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

STANDARD NO. 2:

The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

STANDARD NO. 3:

Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

STANDARD NO. 4:

Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

STANDARD NO. 5:

Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be retained and preserved.

STANDARD NO. 6:

Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

STANDARD NO. 7:

Chemical or physical treatments, such as sand-blasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

STANDARD NO. 8:

Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

STANDARD NO. 9:

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

STANDARD NO. 10:

New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

I, Kimberly Vann, as Secretary to the Historic Preservation Commission, Dothan, Alabama, do hereby certify that these Commercial Design Guidelines of the Dothan Historic Preservation Commission are true and correct on this the 9th day of June, 2016.



Kimberly Vann, Secretary