

18.4.2.060 Downtown Ashland

A. Purpose, Intent, and Background.

1. Purpose and Intent. The purpose of the Downtown Design Standards is to respect the unique heritage and to enhance the appearance and livability of the area as it develops and changes. Section 18.4.2.060 implements the Ashland Downtown Plan. The design standards contained in this section are based on the Downtown Plan; where the intent of this section is unclear, the approval authority shall refer to the Downtown Plan in interpreting this section.

Based upon common features found in the downtown, the standards provide a foundation for prospective applicants, citizens, and community decision makers to direct change in a positive and tangible way. It is not the intent of the Downtown Design Standards to freeze time and halt progress or restrict an individual property owner's creativity, but rather to guide new and remodeled proposals to be in context with their historic surroundings. Personal choice should be and can be expressed within the framework of the standards.

While many communities across America are attempting to create or re-create an urban downtown of their own, the Downtown Design Standards attempt to preserve what Ashland already has; a main street historical district with diverse individual buildings that collectively create an organized, coordinated, and ageless rhythm of buildings. As a collective group, the downtown can retain its sense of place, its economic base, its history, and its citizen's vision.

2. History. Ashland's downtown is without doubt the most important 55 acres in the city. For over 100 years, it has been the community's economic center. The downtown boasts one of the most beautiful parks in the country, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival annually draws thousands of theater goers. Ashland's charm, cultural offerings, and lovely location have not been lost on those who visit, and during the last two decades the City's population has risen from 11,000 to 16,000. However, downtown economic growth has significantly exceeded population growth. The downtown retail spaces have increased, office spaces have doubled and tourist traffic has grown over 600 percent. Downtown automobile traffic has nearly doubled and pedestrian traffic counts have risen over 200 percent to 900 percent.

Such growth demands changes in planning and development, but Ashland's citizens insist that these changes allow the downtown to maintain its integrity and its unique character. Community participation has always been integral to Ashland's development. Citizens' affection for the city and desire to increase the culture, physical grace, and the economy have encouraged residents to support Southern Oregon University, Lithia Park, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and numerous other community enterprises and improvements.

Historically the city center, the downtown began at the Plaza area and extended southeast along East Main Street. Only about one-half mile long, the area now extends from the intersection of Helman and North Main Streets on the northwest to the Ashland Library on the southeast. It is approximately one-quarter mile wide and extends from Hargadine Street to "B" Street. Main areas are the Plaza, including the entrance to Lithia Park and Guanajuato Way, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival theaters, the East Main Street business district, the business area around the Ashland Library, Lithia Way/"C" Street, the property surrounding the old armory, and the Newbry property – the large vacant parcel of land bounded by the viaduct and by Helman Commercial, and Water Streets, known as the Water Street Annex.

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Three large historic buildings will probably see more intense uses in the next twenty years – the Masonic Lodge, the Elks Lodge, and the Mark Anthony Hotel. Other buildings will undoubtedly redevelop, and conformance with both the city’s historic guidelines and the downtown development criteria should insure that the developments are positive.

This downtown area is the employment center of the community, and in 1988 employed 25 percent of all city employees. Sixty-three percent of these were employed by restaurants, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and retail businesses which cater primarily to tourists in the summer months.

With 197 businesses, the downtown is also a thriving business center. The businesses are diverse ranging from light manufacturing and auto repair to tourist gift shops and law offices. Retail businesses comprise most of the square footage and are concentrated along Main Street. Many of these retail businesses are specialty stores which attract consumers throughout southern Oregon and northern California. Catering to the local tourist and regional markets has preserved the downtown’s economic vitality and health.

In addition to being the employment and business center, the downtown is also the community’s social and arts and entertainment center. Increased pedestrian amenities and bike paths have encouraged residents and tourists alike to enjoy the downtown by foot or bicycle or simply by sitting on the many benches and planters which have been furnished. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, several smaller theatres, nightclubs, and restaurants provide tourist and residents with numerous opportunities for a pleasurable night out.

The combination of these factors – economic health, cultural artistic offerings, attractiveness, location, and a pleasant pedestrian and bicycling environment – have endowed Ashland with the attractive qualities of a tourist town and the advantages of being a real center for a rural town.

There are, of course, some problems which exist as a result of growth and change. The major problems which have been identified are:

Economic: The need to be less dependent on the tourist industry, particularly a single facet of that sector – the Oregon Shakespeare Festival – and to promote growth in the retail and services sectors, especially those that service the local, tourist, and regional markets.

Automobile and Traffic: Parking is a problem throughout the year, but particularly during the peak tourist summer months. Although facts indicate that parking demand is not entirely met by existing facilities, it may not be financially or environmentally wise to accommodate the highest peak days. As traffic congestion continues to increase, the city and residents will have to adapt to different traffic patterns and use alternative forms of transport in order to alleviate the problem.

Pedestrian Traffic: The substantial increase in pedestrian traffic has spurred improvements in pedestrian amenities such as benches, planter, and fountains to encourage pedestrian flow through the length of the downtown. Ongoing renovation will be needed to help accommodate the ever-growing number of people.

3. Background. The Downtown Design Standards were adopted by the City Council on August 7, 1998 (Ordinance No. 2825).

B. Applicability. Chapter 18.4.2.060 applies to all development within the Downtown Design Standards overlay as shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.B.

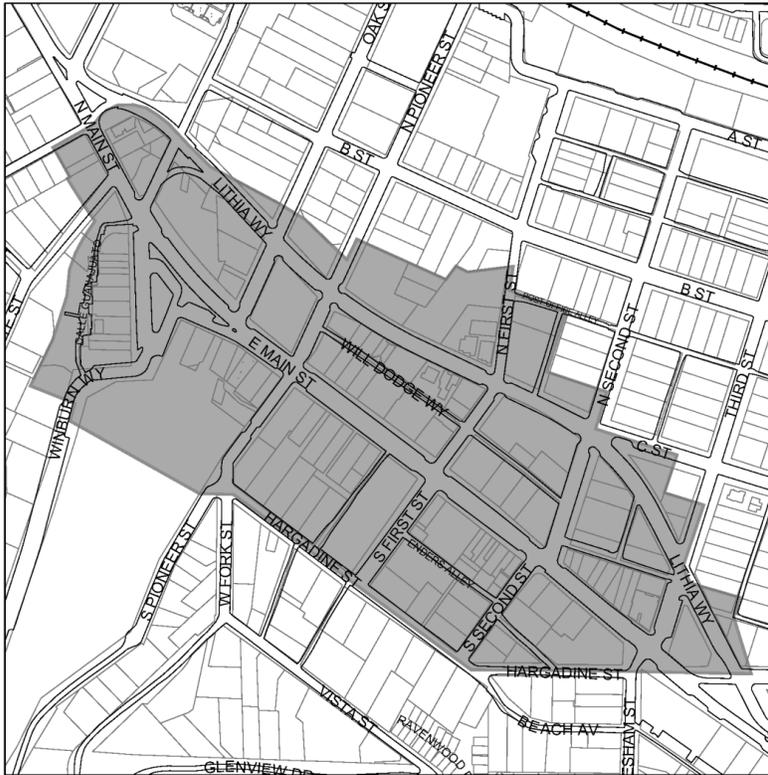


Figure 18.4.2.060.B
Downtown Design Standards Overlay

C. Downtown Design Standards.

1. **Height.** Building height shall vary from adjacent buildings, using either stepped parapets or slightly dissimilar overall height to maintain the traditional staggered streetscape appearance as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, and 10. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.3. An exception to this standard would be buildings that have a distinctive vertical division/façade treatment that visually separates it from adjacent buildings. Multi-story development is encouraged in the downtown as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C 1, 5, 6, and 10.

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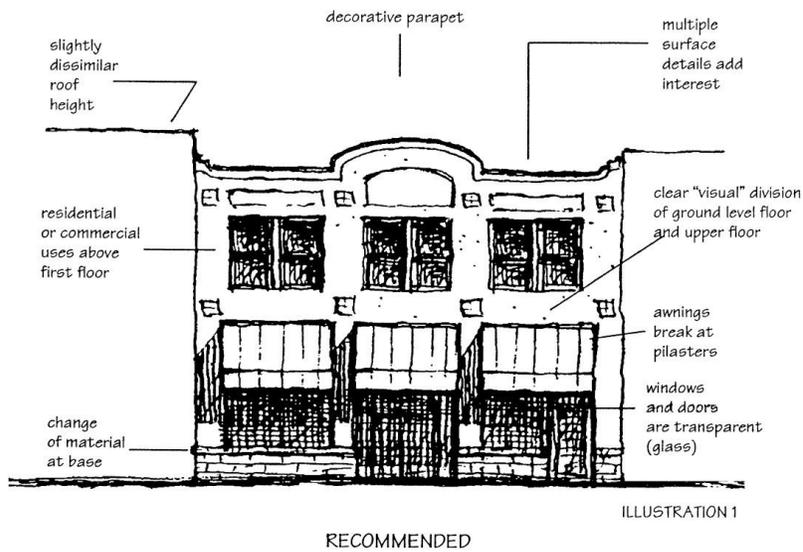


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.1

2. Setback.

- a. Except for arcades, alcoves, and other recessed features, building shall maintain a zero setback from the sidewalk or property line as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.2, 5, 6 and 10. Areas having public utility easements or similar restricting conditions shall be exempt from this standard.
- b. Ground level entries should be recessed from the public right-of-way and have detailing and materials that create a sense of entry as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.2, 5, 6, and 10. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.3.
- c. Recessed or projecting balconies, verandas, or other useable space above the ground level on existing and new buildings shall not be incorporated in a street facing elevation. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 7.

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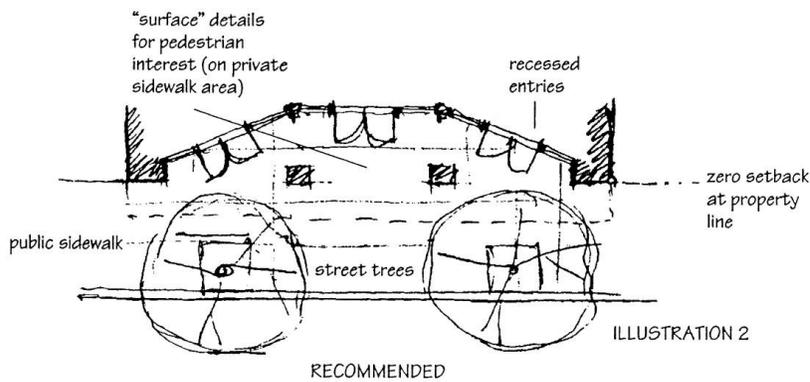


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.2

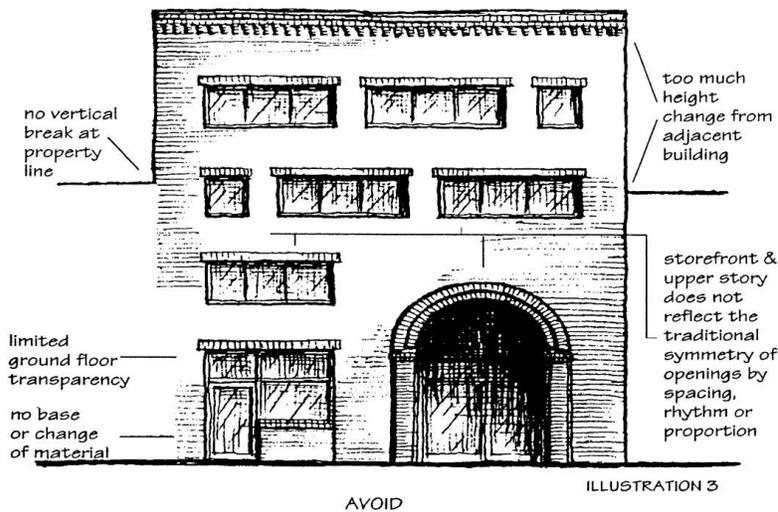


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.3

3. Width

- a. The width of a building shall be extended from side lot line to side lot line as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.5. An exception to this standard would be an area specifically designed as plaza space, courtyard space, dining space, or rear access for pedestrian walkways.
- b. Lots greater than 80 feet in width shall respect the traditional width of buildings in the

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downtown area by incorporating a rhythmic division of the façade in the building's design as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.5, and 10. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.3.

4. Openings

- a. Ground level elevations facing a street shall maintain a consistent proportion of transparency (i.e., windows) compatible with the pattern found in the downtown area as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, 6, and 10.
- b. Scale and proportion of altered or added building elements, such as the size and relationship of new windows, doors, entrances, column, and other building features shall be visually compatible with the original architectural character of the building as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.5 and 6. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 9.
- c. Upper floor windows orientation shall primarily be vertical (height greater than width) as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, and 6. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.8.
- d. Except for transom windows, windows shall not break the front plane of the building as illustrated in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.5.
- e. Ground level entry doors shall be primarily transparent as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.10. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4.
- f. Windows and other features of interest to pedestrians such as decorative columns or decorative corbelling shall be provided adjacent to the sidewalk as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1 and 5. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 7. Blank walls adjacent to a public sidewalk are prohibited.

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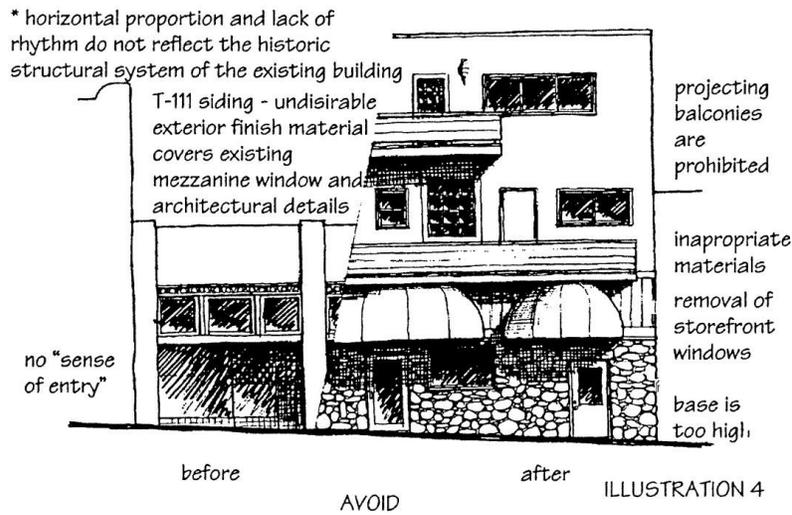


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4

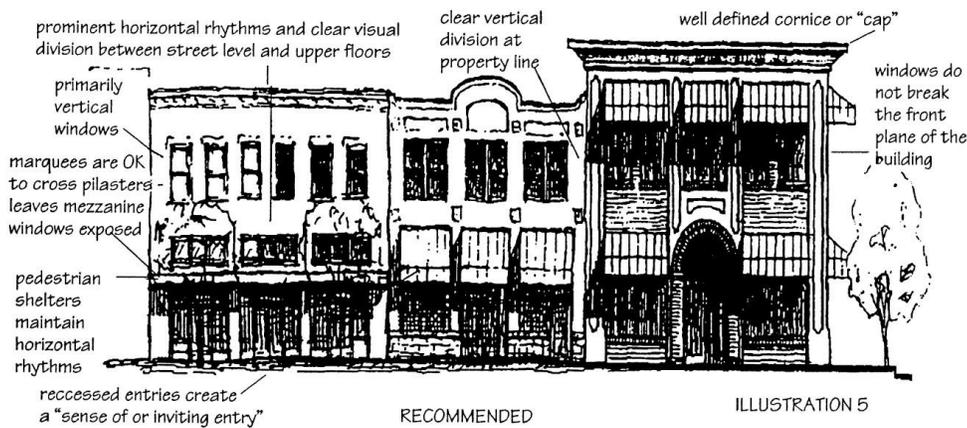


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.5

5. Horizontal Rhythms

- a. Prominent horizontal lines at similar levels along the street's street front shall be maintained as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, 8, and 10. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 8.

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- b. A clear visual division shall be maintained between ground level floor and upper floors as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, 6, and 10.
 - c. Buildings shall provide a foundation or base, typically from ground to the bottom of the lower window sills, with changes in volume or material, in order to give the building a sense of strength as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, and 10. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 8.
6. Vertical Rhythms
- a. New construction or storefront remodels shall reflect a vertical orientation, either through actual volumes or the use of surface details to divide large walls, so as to reflect the underlying historic property lines as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.5 and 6. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.3.

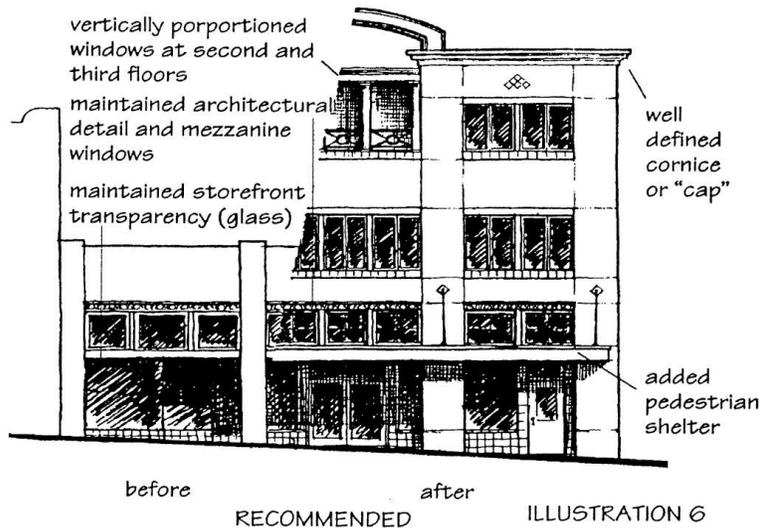


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.6

- b. Storefront remodeling or upper story additions shall reflect the traditional structural system of the volume by matching the spacing and rhythm of historic openings and surface detailing as illustrated in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.6. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 9.
7. Roof Forms. Sloped or residential style roof forms are discouraged in the downtown area unless visually screened from the right-of-way by either a parapet or a false front. The false front shall incorporate a well defined cornice line or cap along all primary elevations as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, and 10. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.7.

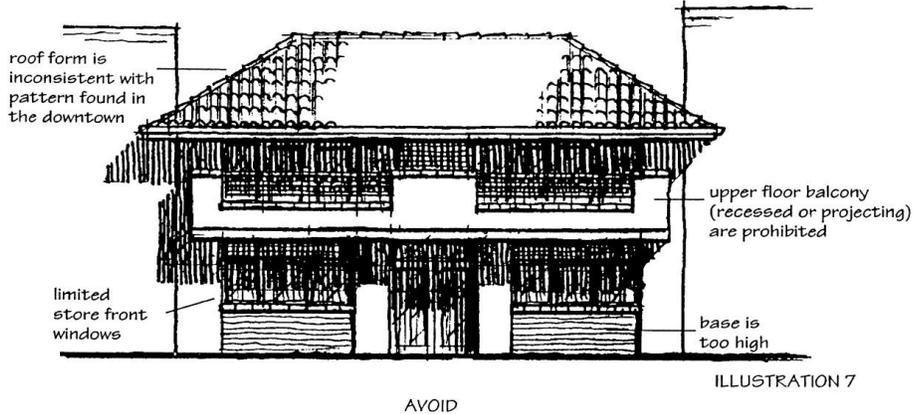


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.7

8. Materials

- a. Exterior building materials shall consist of traditional building materials found in the downtown area including block, brick, painted wood, smooth stucco, or natural stone. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 9.
- b. In order to add visual interest, buildings are encouraged to incorporate complex paneled exteriors with columns, framed bays, transoms, and windows to create multiple surface levels as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, and 10. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.7, 8, and 9.

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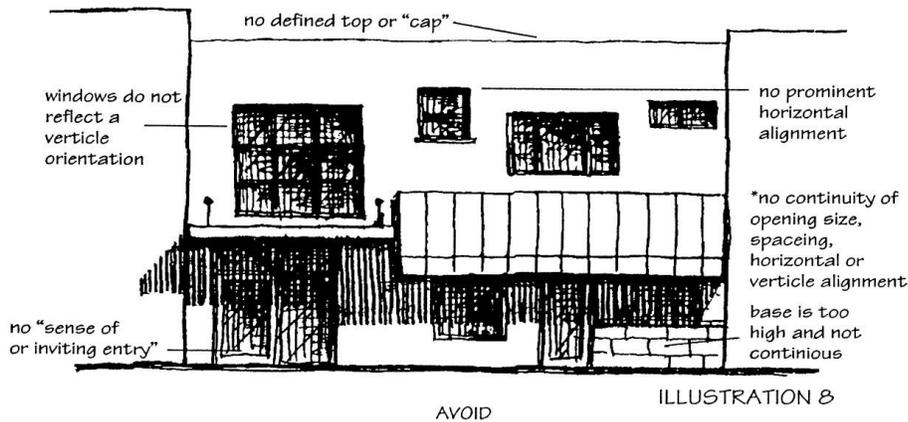


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.8

9. Awnings, Marquees, or Similar Pedestrian Shelters

- a. Awnings, marquees, or similar pedestrian shelters shall be proportionate to the building and shall not obscure the building's architectural details. If mezzanine or transom windows exist, awning placement shall be placed below the mezzanine or transom windows where feasible as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1, 5, 6, and 10. Avoid treatments shown in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 9.
- b. Except for marquees, similar pedestrian shelters such as awnings shall be placed between pilasters as illustrated in Figures 18.4.2.060.C.1 and 5. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.9.
- c. Sidewalk coverings along storefronts shall have prominent horizontal lines at similar levels as illustrated in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.5. Avoid treatment shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.8.

10. Other

- a. Non-street or alley facing elevations are less significant than street facing elevations. Rear and sidewalls of buildings should therefore be fairly simple (e.g., wood, block, brick, stucco, cast stone, masonry clad, with or without windows).
- b. Visual integrity of the original building shall be maintained when altering or adding building elements. This shall include such features as the vertical lines of columns, piers, the horizontal definition of spandrels and cornices, and other primary structural and decorative elements as illustrated in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.6. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 9.

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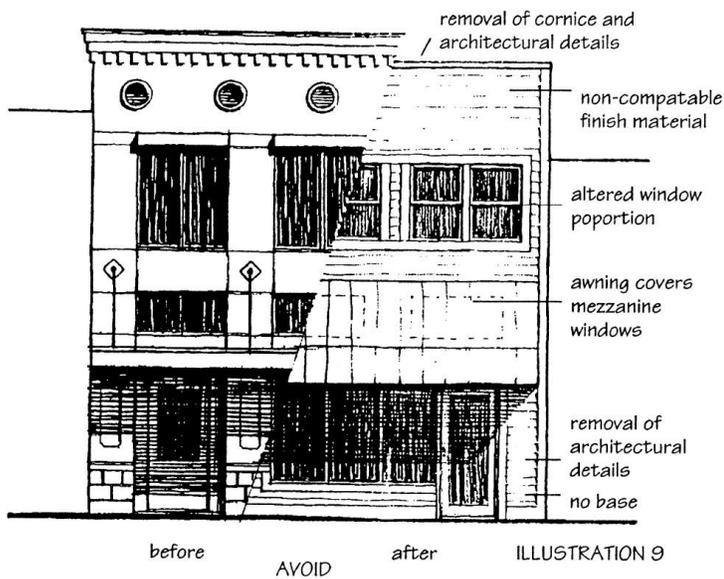


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.9

- c. Restoration, rehabilitation, or remodeling projects shall incorporate, whenever possible, original design elements that were previously removed, remodeled, or covered over as illustrated in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.6. Avoid treatments shown in Figure 18.4.2.060.C.4 and 9.
- d. Parking lots adjacent to the pedestrian path are prohibited. An exception to this standard would be paths required for handicapped accessibility.
- e. Pedestrian amenities such as broad sidewalks, surface details on sidewalks, arcades, alcoves, colonnades, porticoes, awnings, and sidewalk seating shall be provided where possible and feasible.
- f. Uses that are exclusively automotive such as service stations, drive-up windows, auto sales, and tire stores are discouraged in the downtown. The City shall use its discretionary powers, such as Conditional Use Permits, to deny new uses, although improvements to existing facilities may be permitted.

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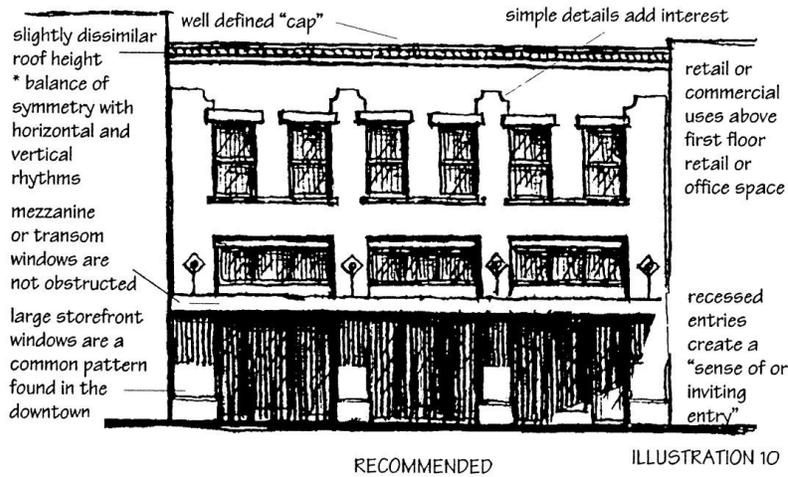


Figure 18.4.2.060.C.10

11. Exception to Standards. An exception to the Downtown Design Standards may be granted pursuant to 18.5.2.050.E Exception to the Site Development and Design Standards.

Figure 18.4.2.060.C.11

