

GUIDELINES FOR STOREFRONTS

These Guidelines were developed in collaboration between the Gloucester City Urban Enterprise Zone (GCUEZ) and the Gloucester City Historic Preservation Commission (GCHPC) in order to enhance the visual aesthetics in the Gloucester City commercial and historic districts.

Program Overviews:

The GCHPC reviews Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications for proposed exterior alterations to properties within the historic districts visible from a public way. The applicant is responsible for complying with the provisions of the Zoning and Building Codes at the time of application. The applicant must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) as well as all necessary permits prior to proceeding with any work. For more information, or to obtain permit applications, please call the Administrative Zoning Officer at (856) 456-7689.

The GCUEZ program promotes economic growth by helping neighborhood businesses succeed through offering incentives which encourage growth while stimulating the local economy. One of these such programs is the GCUEZ signage and matching façade grant program where UEZ businesses only can receive up to \$10,000 in matching facade grants as well as \$1,000 in signage grants to enhance their business storefronts. For more information, contact the UEZ Coordinator at (856) 456-6075 or via email at uez@cityofgloucester.org.

Using the *Guidelines*:

Please review this information during the early stages of planning your project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money.

Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics and application forms are available at the Municipal Building and on the City's web site at www.cityofgloucester.org.



Commercial storefronts are an important part of the historic character of Gloucester.

PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES

The Gloucester City Urban Enterprise Zone (GCUEZ) and the Gloucester City Historic Preservation Commission (GCHPC) encourage the economic development and revitalization of Gloucester's retail areas and the commercial properties within it. The GCUEZ and the GCHPC recognizes Gloucester's vibrancy is linked to the viability of its businesses. They make every effort to assist commercial building owners and tenants to revitalize older retail areas helping to attract new customers while promoting an appreciation of local history.

Commercial storefronts can:

- Attract potential customers with eye-catching merchandise displays
- Serve a key role in a commercial building's identity
- Define a pedestrian's visual experience and create a sense of transparency at the ground floor

It is not intended that these guidelines should replace consultation with qualified architects, contractors, the GCUEZ, the GCHPC, and/or the applicable ordinances.



This represents one of the few three-story, commercial buildings located in Gloucester. It has three distinct vertically stacked zones:

1. *A projecting storefront topped by a pent roof runs along the ground floor with large display windows topped by transom windows.*
2. *Upper floor, operable windows appear to be “punched” through the flat, relatively solid, brick wall surface in a regular pattern that does not coincide with the storefront openings below.*
3. *The bracketed ornamental building cornice provides a visual cap or termination at the top of the building.*

Also note the paired corner entrance doors, a distinctive feature of commercial this building.

COMPOSITION OF COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Generally, there are two types of commercial buildings, those that were constructed as commercial buildings, and residences whose lower level were converted for commercial use. In the City of Gloucester, the majority of all commercial buildings were constructed with residential space above.

Residential buildings adapted for commercial uses tend to have one to one-and-a-half stories above the storefront that retain their residential character. Because of their dual use, these buildings tend to have very different characters on their lower and upper floors. Additionally, residences vary stylistically, and the vertical divisions between parts of a residential building adapted for commercial use are not as consistent as those constructed as commercial buildings.

The GCHPC and GCUEZ encourage:

- Retaining residential characteristics of upper floors of residences converted into commercial buildings
- Retaining the characteristic elements of the three distinct zones of all commercial buildings
- Retaining and maintaining all building cornices, features and details
- Maintaining the rhythm, size and shape of upper floor windows and associated trim and moldings
- Reopening previously infilled windows

The GCHPC and GCUEZ discourage:

- Enclosing or removing elements, such as building cornices and storefronts
- Locating air conditioners in street elevation windows or creating new openings for thru-wall air conditioners that are visible from the street
- Infilling or altering window openings
- Removing a building cornice without providing a compatible new cornice of similar scale and detailing



The lower floor of this residence has been modified for commercial use. Similar to buildings constructed as commercial buildings, converted residences have three distinct zones:

1. *A commercial area has been added to the ground floor of this former residence by enclosing and adding onto the former entrance porch.*
2. *The upper floor has a residential appearance with operable windows and in some instances in Gloucester City, projecting bays.*
3. *The roof and building cornice are residential in design with an intersecting gable roof form with a central brick chimney and a residentially scaled cornice that acts as a transition between the wall surface and roof edge.*



- 1. Storefront Cornice
- 2. Transom Windows
- 3. Display Windows
- 4. Entrance Door
- 5. Structural Support
- 6. Apron

STOREFRONT DEVELOPMENT

A storefront is typically defined as a ground-level façade constructed with large sheets of glass to display merchandise. The development of storefronts was linked to the desire to increase commercial visibility and merchandise display possibilities.

As technology progressed through the middle of the nineteenth century, the configuration of storefronts was also modified. Smaller windows in commercial buildings were replaced with larger sheets of glass and new materials such as cast iron were introduced into architecture. Advances in technology also allowed new configurations of buildings including corner entrances with wrap-around storefronts to maximize commercial visibility.

STOREFRONTS

The storefront is one of the most significant features of a commercial building whether it was originally constructed for commercial purposes or converted from another use. Most people experience buildings at the ground floor level and the attractiveness and overall maintenance of a storefront can greatly influence a casual observer’s perception of a building and the business within. Because a positive impression can help draw potential customers, regular maintenance and careful design can be positive on the bottom line.

Although the specific configurations of storefronts can vary greatly at different building locations, the typical construction includes large expanses of glass to display merchandise and one or more entrances. Historic storefronts were typically constructed of wood, metal (cast iron, bronze, copper, tin, galvanized sheet metal, cast zinc, or stainless steel), masonry (brick or stone) and clear, translucent or pigmented glass at transoms.



The storefront cornice separates the storefront from the upper building levels. This example features paired brackets and stenciled decorative patterns.

1. Storefront Cornices are projecting moldings at the top of storefront, providing a visual cap or termination to the storefront and a separation with the upper floors. Cornice materials can vary widely and include wood, pressed metal, limestone, terra cotta or decorative brick patterns. Cornice details can include brackets, dentils and panels as well as decorative paint highlighting.

2. Transom Windows are located above display windows and doorways to provide additional daylight, and can be either fixed or operable for ventilation. They can be either single or multi-paned and are often leaded, stained, pigmented or textured glass. Historically transom windows could also include signage, lettering or other ornamental details.



These fixed leaded transom windows provide additional light to the interior and additional detail to the exterior storefront.

3. Display Windows are typically large expanses of glazing to present the available merchandise within a shop. Display windows typically flank the entrance alcove to a store and can include additional advertising to further entice potential customers.



Prior to the development of plate glass, some of the earliest storefront display windows feature multi-pane configurations.

4. Entrances at storefronts can be located flush with the outside of the building or recessed within an alcove providing additional display areas and shelter from the elements. In addition to commercial entrances, there are often secondary entrance doors that provide access to upper building levels.



This wood entrance door has a large window to encourage visibility into the store and is topped by a large transom window.

5. Structural Supports at storefronts are necessary to carry the weight of the building and roof above and are often decorative, reinforcing the storefront's style. Typically, structural supports flank entrance doors and display windows and can be constructed of wood, cast iron or masonry.



The wood vertical supports flanking the storefront glazing has fluted detailing that complements the architectural style of the storefront and building.



The brick apron provides a base for the storefront window glazing system.

6. Aprons act as the base for the display windows and at the interior can provide a raised platform for merchandise display. Historically, aprons were constructed of a variety of materials with different finishes including paneled wood, brick, marble, granite and tile. More recently, some store owners have begun covering aprons with stucco.

STOREFRONT ENTRANCE ALCOVES

A storefront's entrance alcove acts as a transitional space from the sidewalk to the commercial entrance. It provides shelter from the weather, and is often designed to increase the display area of the storefront to entice potential customers. Entrance alcoves tend to include a decorative ceiling and floor, and be flanked by large storefront display windows leading to a central entrance door.

Decorative Ceilings within entrance alcoves were often articulated with patterns, textures or materials that included lighting and reinforced the architectural style of the building and geometry of the space. The materials used within the entrance alcove ceiling may be repeated on the ceilings of the flanking display windows. Historically these materials included paneled wood, beaded board, and pressed tin, with flatter surfaces such as stucco gaining in popularity in the early twentieth century.

Decorative Flooring within storefront entrance alcoves were often composed of small ceramic tiles in square or hexagonal shapes, a stone stoop, or in the early twentieth century terrazzo became a popular option. Historically, the configuration of tile or terrazzo was only limited by the creativity of the installer, and often included decorative borders and patterns of various colors. It was not uncommon for the tiles to include the name of the business occupying the store within the alcove flooring.



This entrance alcove ceiling features a wood beaded board panel system with a focal point of the central entrance door.



This tiled entrance alcove floor has a solid color center surrounded by a black tile border.

The GCHPC and GCUEZ encourage:

- Retaining the characteristic elements of the entrance alcoves including the floor, ceiling, flanking display windows, and entrances
- Retaining the entrance alcoves and corner entrances as exterior space rather than enclosing them as part of the interior of a store
- Retaining and maintaining historic storefront details and elements including cornices, transom windows, display windows, structural supports and aprons
- Reopening previously infilled windows

The GCHPC and GCUEZ discourage:

- Enclosing or removing elements, such as building cornices and storefronts
- Enclosing or removing historic elements or materials of a storefront such as cornices, transom windows alcove ceilings, floors or display windows
- Locating air conditioners in street elevation windows or creating new openings for thru-wall air conditioners that are visible from the street
- Infilling or altering display window openings

STOREFRONT TREATMENT OPTIONS

Making changes to storefronts can be a costly endeavor that if not properly planned might negatively impact a business. Prior to considering alterations, it is recommended that property owners take the time to identify the key storefront elements and consider alternatives prior to proceeding with the work. By carefully studying alternatives, property owners tend to be much happier with the finished results.

When contemplating storefront work, the following approach is recommended.

- a. **Identify Key Historic Elements:** Develop an understanding of the architectural character of the storefront including the overall size, major divisions or bays, placement of components such as alcoves, doors, windows and distinctive elements. This can be based on selective removals or documentation such as old photographs or drawings.
- b. **Retain, Preserve and Repair:** Once important historic elements have been identified, they should be incorporated into the storefront design. Deterioration of some historic elements might require stabilization, replacement in-kind, or replacement with a similar substitute material utilizing the historic material as the guide.
- c. **Replacement:** Replacement of a historic storefront is only encouraged when the existing storefront materials are too deteriorated to be repairable, or a historic storefront has been encased in a newer storefront and the historic form and detailing are still present allowing for an accurate representation. Replacement of historic storefronts with modern storefront systems is strongly discouraged.
- d. **Reconstructing a New Storefront With Historic Documentation:** If there is no physical evidence of a historic storefront, there might be sufficient historical or pictorial evidence to allow for appropriate reconstruction. Appropriate research is strongly encouraged to ensure the greatest degree of accuracy feasible in the reconstruction.
- e. **Installing a New Storefront Without Historic Information:** If there is not sufficient information and documentation to accurately reconstruct a storefront, the new design should be compatible in size, pattern, scale, material and color as the overall building and similar storefronts from the period, but have distinctly contemporary characters that reflect rather than copy historic storefronts.



This reconstructed storefront includes some of the features typically found in a historic storefront including a recessed entrance alcove and display windows with transoms above.

DETERMINING THE HISTORIC APPEARANCE OF STOREFRONTS

For property owners hoping to restore the appearance their storefront to an earlier period, there are a number of places where you can find information that can guide the effort. Often remnants of earlier storefronts or “ghosts” of earlier materials are concealed under newer storefront materials and careful selective removals can reveal elements or clues. In cases where historic materials are revealed, property owners are encouraged to incorporate the materials into the new storefront. In addition to potentially uncovering storefronts, it can also be beneficial to look for old building materials stored in attics or basements.

Another potential source for information is old records, photographs or drawings. These can be advertisements or articles, newspapers, promotional materials from earlier businesses, postcards or paintings. Please keep in mind that some drawings and paintings include a certain amount of artistic license and might not be entirely accurate depictions. Local sources for historic documentation, photographs and drawings are:

- **Gloucester City Historical Society;** 34 North King Street; Gloucester City, NJ 08030; (856) 456-3487
- **Gloucester City Library;** 50 North Railroad Avenue; Gloucester City NJ 08030; (856) 456-4181; www.gloucestercitylibrary.org
- **Camden County Historical Society;** 1900 Park Boulevard; Camden, NJ 08103; (856) 964-3333; www.cchsnj.com

Some local residents and business owners might also have private collections of historic photographs from the area.

MERCHANDIZING

Storefront display windows are a key means of attracting potential customers. The potential merchandizing area of a storefront can extend as much as four to five feet within the store area, therefore merchandizing and storefront display materials should be designed to be as transparent as possible to highlight the merchandise being offered. In addition, this area should have flexible lighting within the display area to feature various arrangements.

The GCHPC and GCUEZ encourage:

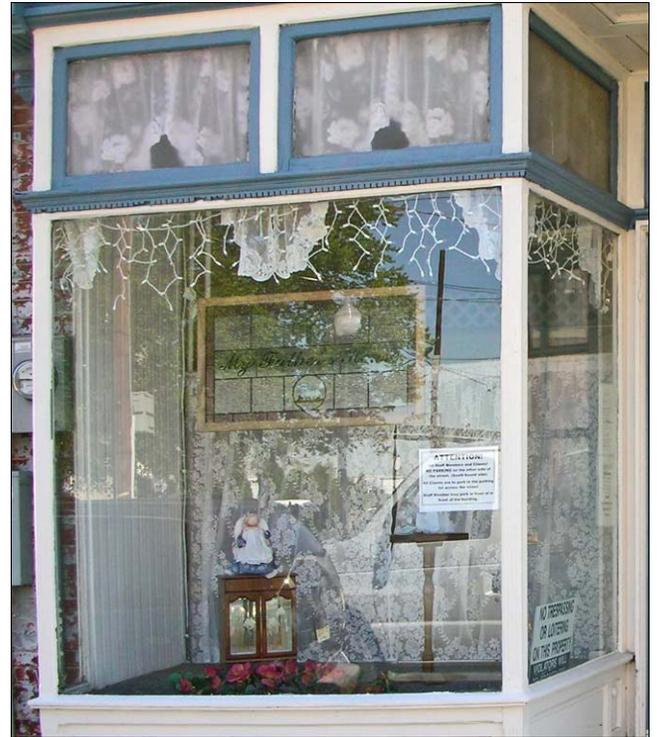
- Using simple graphics and clean appropriately large scale displays to keep the windows transparent and maintain views into the store
- Maintaining a minimum of 75% of the glazing area unobstructed to keep the windows transparent and maintain views into the store
- Using seasonal or holiday decorations to accentuate the storefront, particularly fresh decorations such as pumpkins and pine swags
- Constructing storefronts display areas of high quality, durable materials
- Installing flexible lighting within the display area and keeping the lights on until 9:00 pm to maintain pedestrian interest

The GCHPC and GCUEZ discourage:

- Cluttered signs and posters on doors and windows
- Infilling or installing solid displays or walls within five feet of the interior of display windows
- Obstructing views into the store
- Installing carpet, drop ceilings, slatwall or solid fixtures within merchandizing zone



This storefront features bright, colorful, seasonal displays to attract potential shoppers.



In the case of occupancy of storefronts by non-retail businesses, it can become necessary to balance the need for privacy while maintaining historic display windows. This can be achieved using semi-transparent or translucent screening such as lace curtains or blinds. The occupants of the space are encouraged to install display materials, plants or seasonal decorations within the merchandizing zone and change them regularly.

NON-RETAIL STOREFRONTS

Some non-retail businesses and residential use also can be found in former commercial buildings with storefront windows including restaurants, and professional offices.

Although many of these uses do not require large display windows, business owners are encouraged to retain the historic storefront and display window configuration, display items related to their business and use alternate means of providing necessary privacy.

- Install display materials related to the business or service being offered
- Install semi-transparent or translucent screening that can be opened or closed during the course of the day such as blinds or lace curtains
- Install plants and seasonal displays in merchandizing area



This storefront window has been infilled with wood reducing the window opening size and changing the character of the building.

STOREFRONT DO'S AND DON'TS

Although each storefront is unique, the following lists provide general recommendations when addressing storefronts. Property owners are invited to consult with the GCHPC and GCUEZ early in the process when contemplating storefront modifications. In some instances the GCHPC and GCUEZ can suggest less costly new or alternate materials that can simulate the details and appearance of historic storefronts.

The GCHPC and GCUEZ encourage:

- Understanding the historic character of the storefront through investigation and documentation prior to making changes and reconstructing storefronts based upon evidence of original materials or pictorial documentation
- Retaining historic character and elements of storefronts including building material and forms
- Retaining original entrances, windows, display alcoves and their locations
- Retaining storefront windows and installing blinds or translucent curtains if privacy is desired
- Opening previously closed windows
- Retaining historic building materials where feasible – appropriate suitable alternate materials that convey the same visual appearance can be used where the use of historic materials is not technically or economically feasible
- Respecting the scale and proportion of the existing building when contemplating a new storefront and not extending beyond the original in height or width
- Maintaining the planes of the historic storefront relative to the building façade including flush, projecting or recessed areas

- Considering merchandizing needs when modifying a storefront design
- Although the GCHPC and GCUEZ do not review paint, they recommend that a paint scheme be selected that complements the style and features of a storefront and building

The GCHPC and GCUEZ discourage:

- Enclosing or removing elements, such as building cornices and storefronts
- Altering size or shape of major building forms such as window, door and transom openings
- Installing stylistic elements from periods that are different from the storefront or building and do not complement the overall stylistic expression
- Altering a façade from commercial to residential character unless the building was previously residential and there is sufficient evidence or documentation to provide an accurate representation
- Installing inappropriate materials at storefronts including vinyl siding, some types of wood siding, artificial brick, masonry and mirrored glass
- Installing any material other than clear glass within a display window
- Installing built-in furniture or walls visually blocking the inside of display windows
- Altering an existing residential building into a commercial building
- Installing window air conditioners in transom windows or thru-wall air conditioners that are visible from a public way
- Introducing a new storefront or element that alters or destroys historic building materials
- Creating an incompatible design or false historic appearance based upon insufficient documentation
- Adding a false front or false story to a building



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