



# Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA)

**Monday, July 7, 2008**  
**Regular Meeting**

## **Item X2**

### **Facade Improvement Guidelines**

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# Downtown Grand Island Design Guidelines



Developed by the Grand Island  
Main Street Design Committee  
2008

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction ..... 3
- Boundry Map ..... 3
- Overall Goals ..... 3
- Anatomy of a Building Facade ..... 4
  - Definitions ..... 4
- Architectural Requirements ..... 5
  - General ..... 5
  - Setback and Infill ..... 5
  - Cleaning Stone and Masonry Surfaces ..... 5
  - Paint ..... 5
  - Stucco ..... 5
  - Building Walls and Roofing..... 5
  - Mechanical and Electrical Items ..... 5
  - Windows and Doors ..... 5
  - Entrances and Storefronts ..... 6
- Materials Used For Construction ..... 6
- Signage..... 6
  - Location and Size ..... 6
  - Roof Signs..... 7
  - Wall and Window Signs..... 7
  - Billboards..... 7
  - Banner Signs ..... 7
  - Animated LED and Electronic Moving Message Signs ..... 7
  - Neon Signs..... 7
  - Sandwich Board Sign ..... 7
  - Murals ..... 7
  - Projecting Signs ..... 7
  - Pole or Ground Signs ..... 7
  - Non-Conforming Signs ..... 7
  - Color ..... 7
  - Illumination ..... 8
- Maintenance and Abandoned Signs ..... 8
- Awnings and Canopies ..... 8
  - Size and Scale ..... 8
  - Material..... 8
  - Lighting ..... 8
  - Color..... 8
- Landscaping ..... 8
- Resources ..... 9

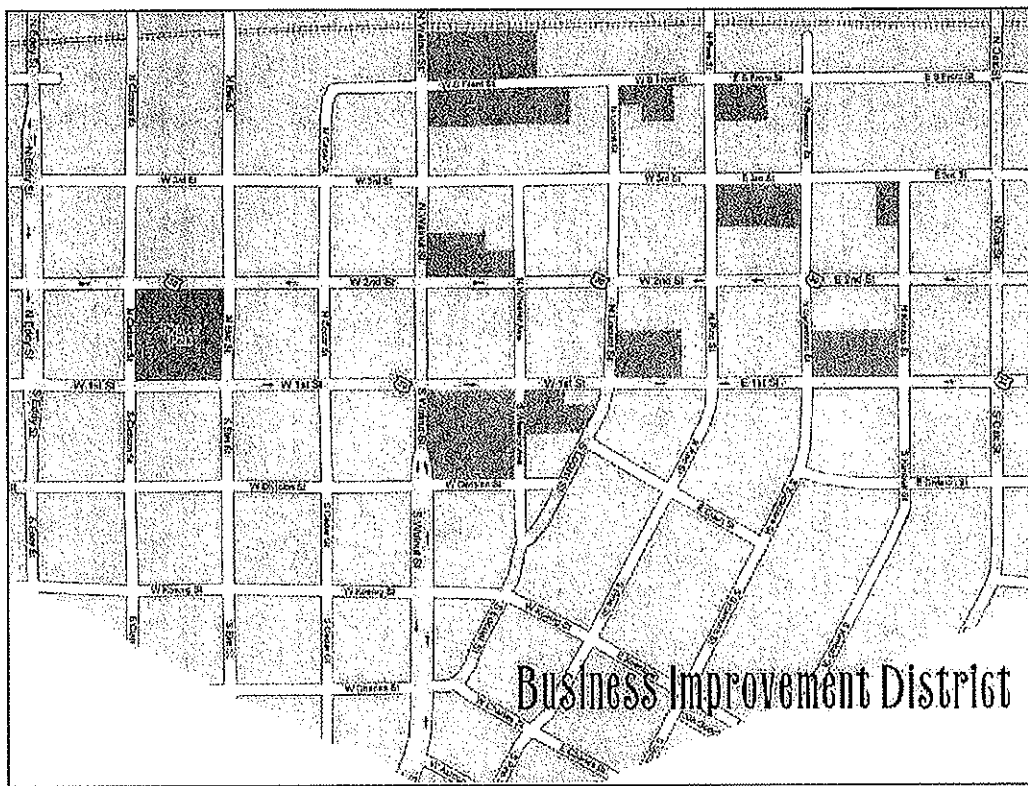
# INTRODUCTION

The Business Improvement District covers 28 blocks and includes 156 buildings, 189 businesses or government offices and 81 residential units. Within the district, there are 6 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally there are 3 buildings on National Register just outside of the district.

Façade improvement incentives include the CRA Façade Grant Program and Nebraska Lied Main Street Design Assistance Program. Design consultation is also available from Downtown Grand Island Main Street Design Committee.

Guidelines are intended to convey desirable elements. They are recommendations and not requirements, unless public financing is involved in the construction or rehabilitation of the building.

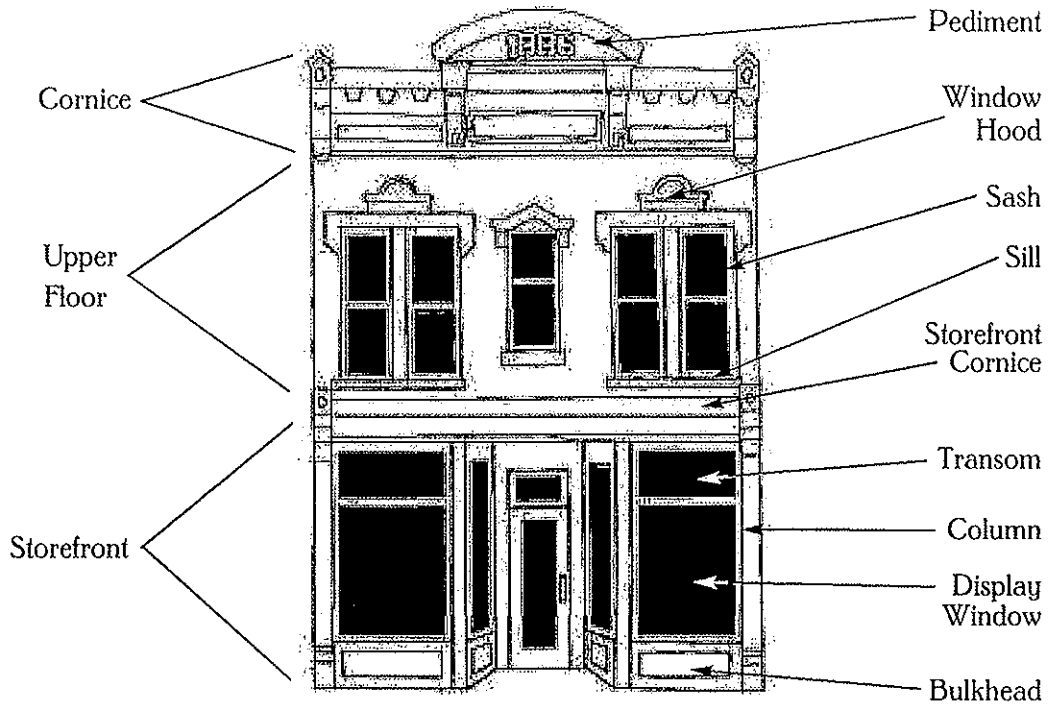
The purpose of the following guidelines is to assist in the future development of Downtown Grand Island by identifying aesthetic qualities that are desirable for the district. Guidelines provide consistency and help protect the district's unique character and identity.



## OVERALL GOALS

1. Recognize quality building designs from the past and encourage appropriate improvements to buildings both new and old.
2. Encourage proper restoration techniques to help insure the long-term preservation of a property's historical, architectural, and cultural significance.
3. Preserve the historical nature of downtown's buildings to enhance the physical characteristics of the district.
4. Create an atmosphere that attracts customers, visitors, employees and residents.

# Anatomy of a Building Façade



## DEFINITIONS

**ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS** - The unique details and component parts that together form the decorative style of a building's facade.

**CORNICE** - A horizontal decorative molding that crowns a building or storefront.

**BULKHEAD** - The areas that support the display windows

**COLUMN** - A vertical structural member.

**CORNICE** - The projecting member at the top of the exterior wall.

**DISPLAY WINDOW** - The main areas of clear glass on a storefront.

**FACADE** - The face or main front of a building.

**INFILL** - When a structure is built on an empty lot between two existing buildings.

**PEDIMENT** - A triangular shaped gable or decorative piece on top of a building or a doorway.

**SASH** - A frame for glass to close a window.

**SETBACK** - The distance a building is built from the property line.

**SILL** - Horizontal member immediately below the window.

**STOREFRONT** - The front exterior wall of commercial space.

**STOREFRONT CORNICE** - The projecting member at the top of the storefront.

**TRANSOM** - Smaller windows above a door or window; can be operable or fixed.

**UPPER FLOOR** - The floors above the ground floor; usually non-retail.

**WINDOW HOOD** - A projecting structural member above a window.

# ARCHITECTURAL REQUIREMENTS

## GENERAL

Comply with all codes and ordinances adopted by the City of Grand Island.

## SETBACK AND INFILL

New construction and infill buildings should maintain the alignment of facades with adjacent structures. Building height should also be comparable to adjacent structures.

Infill construction should reflect some of the detailing of the surrounding buildings in size and window shape, cornice lines and brick work and other detailing.

## CLEANING STONE AND MASONRY SURFACES

Do not sandblast, water blast, or use other abrasive or corrosive methods to clean stone or brick. These harsh cleaning methods will severely damage the stone or masonry and will lead to accelerated deterioration.

## PAINT

Painting previously unpainted brick is not allowed. When painting any surface, colors should be compatible with the building facade and adjacent buildings and surroundings. Bright and flashy colors are not recommended.

## STUCCO

Materials similar in texture and perception either synthetic or natural including stucco, plaster and EIFS should not be used as the only other finish material besides glass on a facade. The amount, proportion and location should be carefully considered.

## BUILDING WALLS AND ROOFING

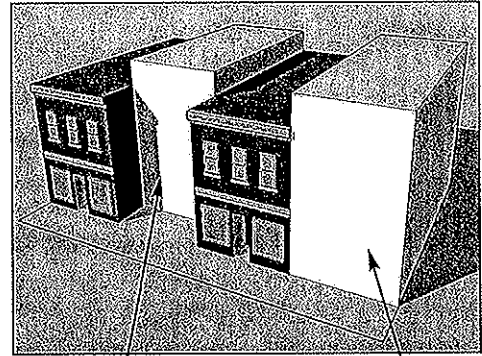
Flat or sloped roofs with parapet walls shall be used.

## MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL ITEMS

Utility areas and mechanical equipment should be designed so that they do not detract from the aesthetic appeal of the district. Locate all mechanical and electrical items out of view as is possible.

## WINDOWS AND DOORS

The restoration or renovation of a building's storefront should attempt to return the facade to its original character. Preserve original materials or details and the shape and size of original openings. It is not appropriate to replace windows or doors with stock items that do not fill the original openings or duplicate the unit in size, material and design. Replace missing original elements such as transom windows.

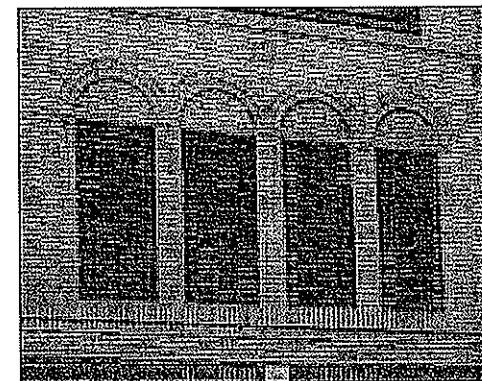


Inappropriate Setback

Appropriate Setback



Windows should be larger to fill the entire opening, not filled in with paneling.



Windows provide a visual connection to the inside of a building, enhancing the pedestrian experience. This connection is lost when windows are bricked or filled in.

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Upper floor windows should be vertically oriented. Arched tops and decorative lintels are encouraged. The enclosing or bricking in of windows shall not be permitted. When upper floor windows must be replaced, match the original in configuration and materials.

A minimum of 30% of the ground level facade and sides of buildings adjacent to public right of ways shall be transparent (windows and doors). A minimum of 15% of the building's rear facade facing a public right of way, parking area or open space shall be transparent. This does not include alleyways. Reflective or glass tinted more than 40% is not allowed.

Burglar bars shall not be used on storefronts.

### ENTRANCES AND STOREFRONTS

Changing the storefront so that it appears residential rather than commercial in character is not permitted. Doors should contain a large amount of glass to allow pedestrians to see inside the building. Doors that are more suited for residential use should be avoided for commercial entrances.

## SIGNAGE

Signs should be viewed as part of an overall graphics system for the building. They do not have to do all the "work" by themselves. The building's form, name and outstanding features, both decorative and functional, also support the advertising function of a sign. Signs should work with the building, rather than against it.

Sign placement is important. New signs should not obscure significant features of the historic building. (Signs above a storefront should fit within the historic signboard, for example.) New signs should also respect neighboring buildings. They should not overpower adjacent structures.

New signs should respect the size, scale and design of the historic building. Often features or details of the building will suggest a motif for new signs. Sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic building. Materials characteristic of the building's period and style, used in contemporary designs, can form effective new signs.

New signs should be attached to the building carefully, both to prevent damage to historic fabric, and to ensure the safety of pedestrians. Fittings should penetrate mortar joints rather than brick, for example, and signloads should be properly calculated and distributed.

### LOCATION AND SIZE

The sign should be clearly visible but should never dominate a building facade and should not cover the upper facade or important architectural elements.

## MATERIALS USED FOR CONSTRUCTION

### UNLIMITED USAGE

The following materials may be used in unlimited quantities on buildings: facades:

- Brick
- Stone
- Terra Cotta

### LIMITED USAGE

The following should be used in limited quantities and locations:

- EIFS
- Stucco

### NOT ALLOWED

The following materials are not recommended in any quantities or locations:

- Metal Panels or Currugated Metal
- Cement or Vinyl Siding
- Prefomed Panels
- Porcelain or Baked Enamel Panels
- Asphalt Shingles
- Wood Shingles and Siding.
- Concrete Masonry Units

Also not allowed are materials that attempt to mimic traditional building materials. An example would be fiberglass panels that are molded to look like brick.



A storefront is an important part of the image of a business and the business district. Boarding up display windows and using residential style doors is not recommended.

**ROOF SIGNS**

Roof signs are not permitted.

**WALL AND WINDOW SIGNS**

Wall signs shall not exceed 10% of the wall area, and in no case shall wall signs exceed 10% of the area of the first 15 vertical feet of wall area.

Window signs shall not exceed 25% of the storefront window areas.

**BILLBOARDS**

Also referred to as "off premise outdoor advertising signs". Construction of new billboards shall not be permitted.

**BANNER SIGNS**

Signs that are printed on fabric or other flexible material shall be allowed on a temporary basis and shall not be permitted to remain in place for a period exceeding thirty days.

**ANIMATED LED AND ELECTRONIC MOVING MESSAGE SIGNS**

Animated or electronic moving signs shall be prohibited.

**NEON SIGNS**

Neon signs are permitted on the exterior of the building and in display windows, if not covering more than one-third of the window surface area.

**SANDWICH BOARD SIGNS**

Sandwich board signs may only be displayed during business hours. The size shall be limited to a maximum height of 48 inches and a maximum width of 36 inches in order to maintain visibility for pedestrians. Only one sandwich board sign is allowed per business or storefront.

**MURALS**

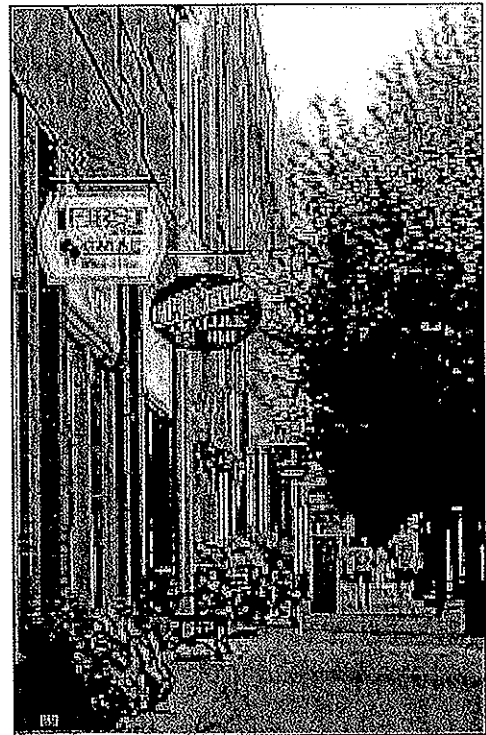
Signs painted directly to the brick surface of a building shall not be permitted. Murals are not considered signs if they serve an artistic or historic function and therefore are permitted. Mural advertising is not allowed. Ghost signs (old painted signs that have faded over time) that do not advertise existing businesses or products may be restored in such a way that they maintain the appearance of a ghost sign and not a new sign.

**PROJECTING SIGNS**

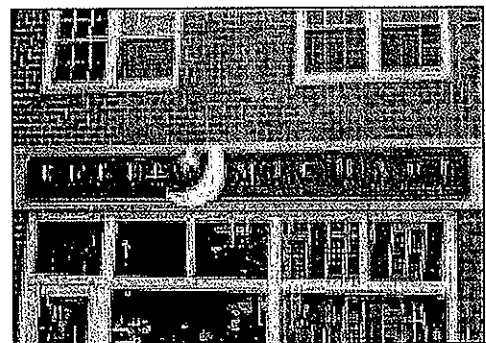
Signs that project out from a building must be a minimum of eight feet above the ground and must be no larger than 1 square foot for each linear foot of the side of the building to which the sign is attached. It is not to exceed 40 square feet per face.

**POLE OR GROUND SIGNS**

The pole sign or ground sign must be located entirely on private property and only one pole or ground sign allowed per building.



Appropriate signage, park benches and planters can help attract customers and encourages them to stroll around and shop in other stores.



Signs can do more than identify a business. They can project an image - good or bad.



NON-CONFORMING SIGNS

All Non-Conforming signs shall meet the requirements of city ordinances.

COLOR

Sign colors must be compatible with the building facade and adjacent signs and surroundings.

ILLUMINATION

The use of internally lit signs (back-lit plastic) is permitted as long as the light source is designed to only illuminate the copy, logo, or other graphic design and decoration and not the background format of the sign.

## AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

SIZE AND SCALE

Awnings and canopies should remain within the proper scale with the building to achieve balance. Awnings and canopies should not obscure the architectural features of the building and reinforce the frame of the storefront. Awnings and canopies should be located within the building elements which frame storefronts. The bottom of the awning or canopy shall not be less than 8 feet off the ground.

MATERIAL

Awnings must be constructed of durable, protective, and water repellent material, however, plastic or fiberglass awnings are not allowed.

LIGHTING

Awnings or canopies that are illuminated internally are not permitted.

COLOR

Consider the character and color of the building and others on the block. Awning or canopy colors should enhance the existing building features.

## LANDSCAPING

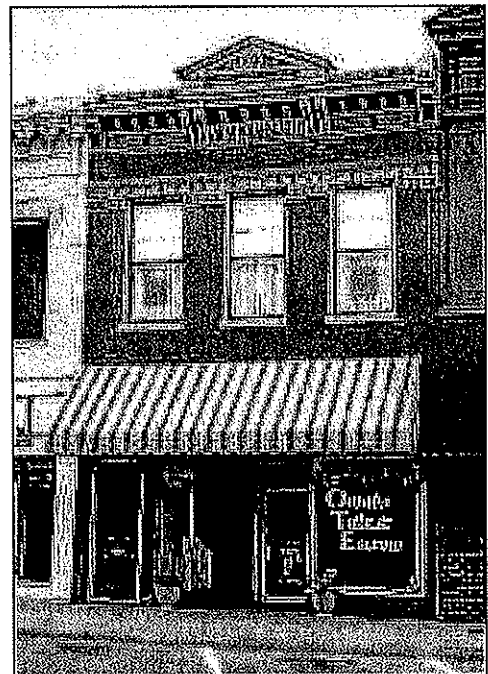
Landscaping treatments should be used to enhance the pedestrian experience, compliment architectural features and conceal utility areas. The use of flower boxes, planters and hanging flower baskets is encouraged.

If it is necessary to remove or repair the sidewalks, the trees and surrounding grates in the sidewalks shall match the existing trees and grates in the Business Improvement District. In areas where the sidewalks have a brick accent it is recommended to use matching brick pavers for replacements and repairs. The existing pavers are made by Endicott Clay Products and the colors are a blend of Medium Ironspot No. 77 and Medium Ironspot No. 46.

### MAINTENANCE AND ABANDONED SIGNS

The owner of the sign or the property owner must remove within 90 days, any sign not utilized for advertising or identification of an operating business at that location. This includes the sign, framework, electrical conduit, brackets and poles used to support the sign.

All signs including the brackets, supports, anchors and braces must be kept in good repair and in proper state of working order.



Awnings add color and interest to building storefronts. They also serve as an energy saver by keeping unwanted sunlight out and provides shade and shelter for pedestrians.

# RESOURCES

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Illustrated Guide to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/>

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Technical Preservation Services Division

Preservation Briefs

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>

## MAIN STREET NEWS

November 2005

Inappropriate Building Materials On Main Street

Written by Joe Lawniczak

City of Grand Island

City Codes Chapter 31 - Signs