



# **Commercial Façade & Roof Grant Program**

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*Community Development & Redevelopment*

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

*Effective  
January 1, 2018*

The City of Huntington Commercial Façade & Roof Grant Program (CFRG) is intended to assist commercial property owners in making certain improvements to building facades and roofs, to promote reinvestment, strengthen commercial activity, and enhance the economic vitality in unique areas of our community. These Design Guidelines are intended to help applicants propose the type of improvements that the City desires to support. The City is particularly interested in funding projects that address the following goals:

## 1. Design Goals

- A. Improve the appearance and condition of building facades visible from the public right-of-way.
- B. Improve the condition of roofs to maintain structural integrity of the building stock.
- C. Support and encourage local commercial businesses and entrepreneurship within the Economic Development Target Areas (EDTA)
- D. Promote synergy between businesses in established commercial areas in order to attract additional investment.
- E. Rehabilitate commercial buildings in a manner that is attractive, compatible with the area, and historically appropriate.
- F. Create functional, safe, and accessible buildings.
- G. Increase the use of buildings through business activity.
- H. Eliminate building elements that convey a sense of abandonment, disrepair, or neglect.

## 2. General Design Standards

- A. Structural Integrity: The applicant should be able to demonstrate that the subject building is structurally sound or will be made structurally sound based on proposed improvements.
- B. Compliance with Codes: All proposed improvements must obey City Codes (zoning, building, fire, and nuisance) and other applicable local, state, and federal regulations.
- C. Respect for Original Design: Improvements must obey a building's original style, form, and materials whenever possible and applicable.
- D. Building Scale: Building improvements must be compatible in scale and proportion to other buildings in the area, the original building design, and to pedestrians. Existing buildings of different sizes can be made architecturally compatible through skillful design as illustrated in **Figures 3 & 4**. Special attention should be given to create architectural interest that relates to the pedestrian scale without appearing overwhelming. Specific desirable elements to achieve this scale include:
  - 1. Form visual connections between entrances and associated pedestrian areas of individual buildings through visual and physical integration into a strengthened "sense of place."
  - 2. Have "step-down" articulation of building features adjacent to pedestrian routes and building entrances in order to minimize the mass and bulk of the building, bringing it into the pedestrian scale in these areas.
  - 3. Include pedestrian-oriented wall articulation detail at ground level (i.e. insets, canopies, display windows, trellises, etc.).
  - 4. Incorporate multi-planed, pitched roofs with meaningful overhangs and arcades.
  - 5. Feature contemporary or historic (as appropriate) window rhythms to scale the building appropriately.





Figure 1: Non-pedestrian scale building



Figure 2: Pedestrian scale building



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- E. Previous Renovations: Most properties change over time through renovations, additions, etc. Changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right – such as distinctive features, finishes, construction technique or fine craftsmanship – should be retained and preserved.
- F. Individuality within Multi-tenant Buildings: Individuality within a unified appearance is encouraged for single buildings containing multiple storefronts. Separate buildings – even in cases where two or more adjacent buildings are occupied by a single tenant or owner – should remain visually distinct.
- G. Cohesive Design: Facades should relate to their surroundings and provide a sense of architectural cohesiveness and compatibility with the block or area without strict uniformity.
- H. Colors: Selected colors must be compatible with the building colors in the block or area. Quality materials such as unpainted brick or stone are most aesthetically appealing when left unpainted. If these features have previously been painted, it is wise to remove the paint to showcase the natural material. These materials provide texture and scale, enhancing the pedestrian-oriented setting. The colors of brick and stone can be starting points for an exterior color scheme.

Color choices can also be driven by a business’s marketing or image plan, using site colors to reinforce branding efforts. Color should be used responsibly when focusing attention to essential parts of the building, such as entries and displays. Less intense and more natural colors are effective in creating a backdrop for other building areas that need more attention. Contrast in color, such as light/dark, bright/dull, pale/intense, can cause features to stand out or fade back. Color contrasts should be chosen with a focus on what features of the building are most appropriate to accentuate.

Fluorescent and intense colors in large areas should be avoided and may be prohibited. They often cause a building to appear overstated or out of context with the block or area. Therefore, such color palettes must be avoided.

### 3. Storefront Design and Display

- A. Original Façade Preservation: Façade elements help to define a building’s visual character. The original design and materials of the building must be respected, even when a building’s use changes. Theme designs that alter the original character, such as coach lanterns, mansard roofs, rustic wood shakes, and small pane windows, should not be used unless they can be documented historically. The basic façade elements of traditional storefronts, with functional descriptions, are illustrated in **Figure 3**.

If original façade elements have been removed or covered over, but documentation exists (such as historical photos) showing the original elements, then restoring the original façade is recommended. Where exact reconstruction is not practical, new, simplified, contemporary interpretations of the original details are advised as long as the mass, scale, and character of the original detail is retained.

Preservation or restoration of ornamental cornices (shown in **Figures 3 & 5**) is specifically encouraged. Other important façade elements to be respected include belt courses (a continuous row or layer of stones, tile, ect. in a wall), pilasters (slightly projecting columns built into or applied onto the face of a wall), window arches, and frames. Adding more elaborate ornamentation than was originally found on the building façade is inappropriate.



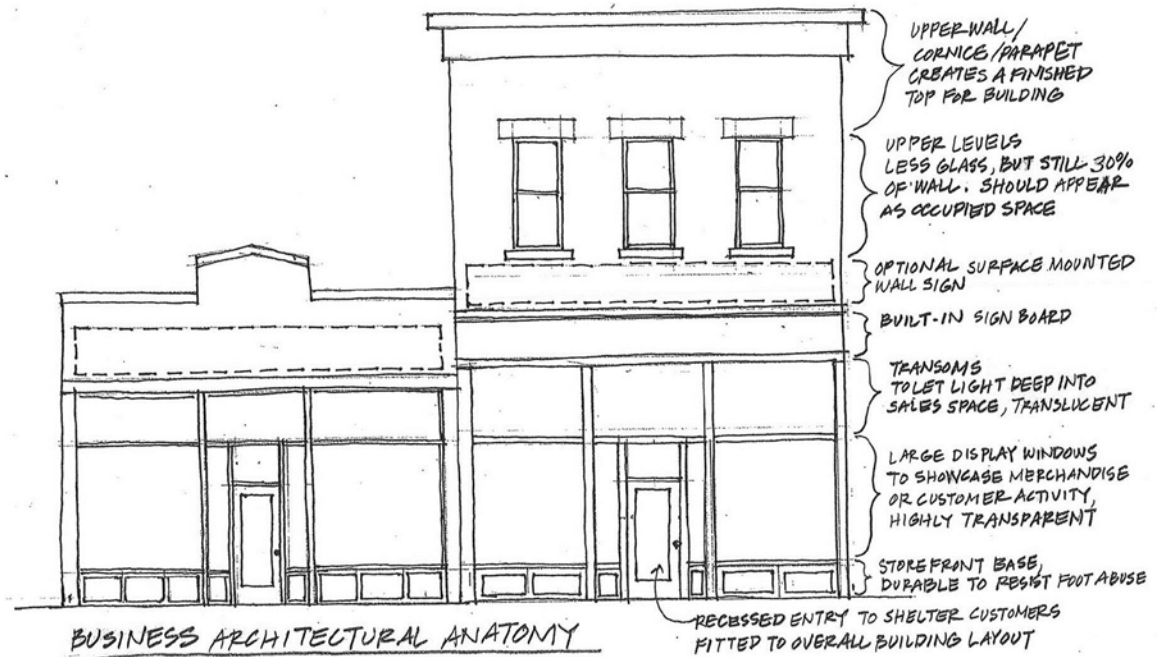


Figure 3

- B. Alignment of Architectural Features: Restore, retain, or recreate the alignment of architectural features with other buildings on the block. The alignment of architectural features from one building to the next creates visual continuity and establishes a coherent visual context throughout a commercial corridor. On commercial buildings, they create patterns along the face of the block that contributes to the overall character of the area. Individual storefront identities should be reinforced using the storefront module for an organizational framework. These concepts are illustrated in **Figure 4**.



Figure 4



- C. Windows: Whenever possible, a building's original window pattern should be retained. For most traditional commercial buildings, large panes of glass at the ground level with solid wainscot below are most appropriate. Designs using multiple panes of glass that divides storefront display windows into small components should only be used if it restores a documented historic element and original openings. The preferred wainscoting style is raised or flat (recessed) solid panel wainscoting, meaning square or rectangular picture frame style paneling with edging (framing) around a flat solid central panel.

The first floor of a commercial building should be primarily transparent, with a pedestrian orientation and traditional storefront appearance. Mirrored glass shall not be allowed as part of this grant program under any circumstances. Tinted glass shall not be allowed for use in first story windows where the glass is used in display windows, dining areas of food establishments, public entryway doors (including transoms and sidelights), or in any other public areas containing windows. Clear glass must always be used in these areas in order to enhance both the patron and pedestrian experience.

The City, through this grant program, may allow tinted glass (not mirrored glass) in first floor windows that are not open for the public to view and in upper story windows. Specific instances where tinted glass may be approved for use, includes kitchens, storage rooms, and restrooms.

Storefront windows must not be obscured with displays, coverings, or other elements that prevent customers and pedestrians from seeing inside, because transparent storefront windows promote both safety inside and outside of the building. They allow passing traffic to see activity inside the business while also allowing building occupants to observe people and customers as they approach or depart from the building, creating a safe and inviting atmosphere. It also enhances the community experience by reducing barriers between the indoor and outdoor realms, allowing interactions between indoor patrons and pedestrians at the sidewalk level.

Storefront windows should be consistent in height and should be designed to complement storefront doors in order to create a cohesive appearance. If first floor ceilings must be lowered below the height of storefront windows, then provide an interior, full-height space immediately adjacent to the window before the drop in the ceiling. This allows more light into the storefront and retains the use of larger windows. Preferred window design elements, together with options for awning and sign placement are illustrated in **Figure 5**.

Some businesses, such as professional offices, may not have the functional need for large storefront windows. Nevertheless, it is important to maintain the size of original storefront windows, as the building may not always contain the same use. Proprietors can provide attractive interior window coverings to add privacy while allowing sunlight into the space.

Upper floors should incorporate traditionally vertically proportioned window openings within a more solid façade treatment. Using windows similar in size, height, and shape to those used originally helps to maintain the façade pattern of the block. Upper story windows should feature at least one operable lower sash and must not hinder required egress standards, especially for windows serving apartment units. When possible, original windows should be maintained or repaired to increase functional longevity. When such is not possible, wood, metal, or clad replacement windows should be pursued above vinyl. Requests for windows that narrow an original window opening will not be approved.



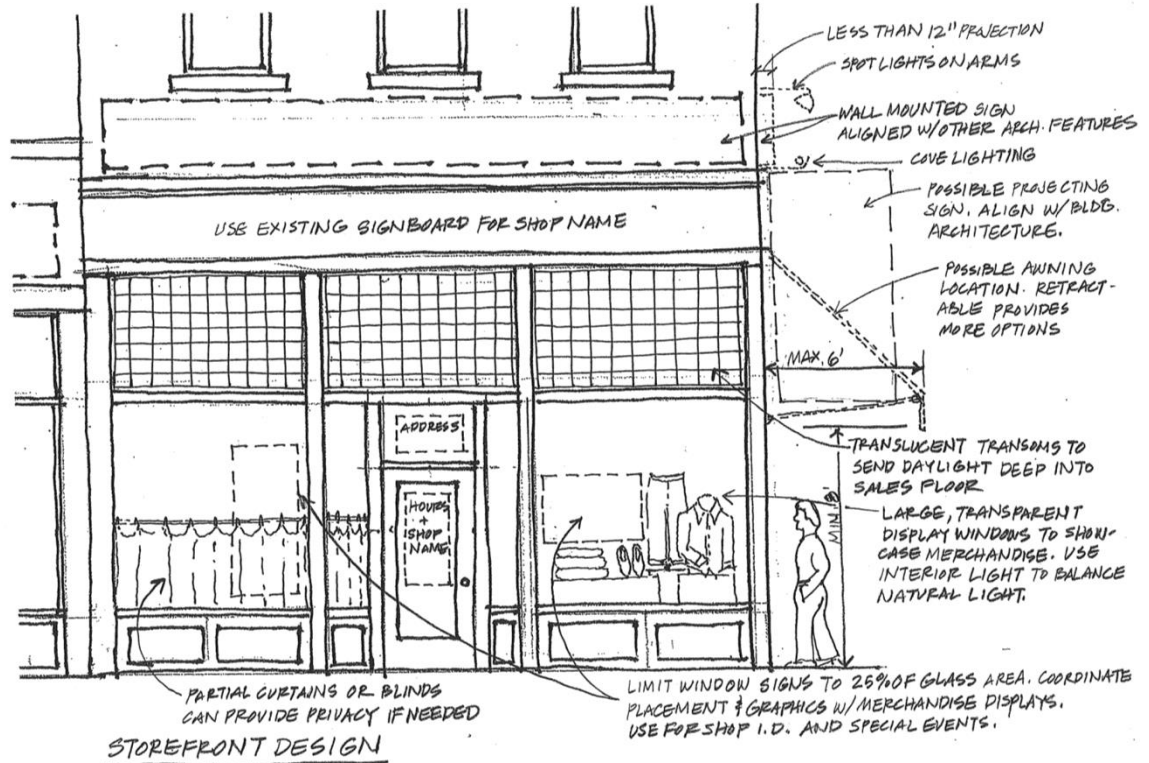


Figure 5

- D. **Awnings:** The preferred awning type for most buildings is the conventional “wrapped” awning, featuring closed ends. These awnings start at the top of a display window or transom and drop at a 30-50 degree angle to a point that is 3 to 5 feet from the building’s face. The awning must maintain a clearance height of 8 feet for safe pedestrian activity (see Figure 6). The same general type of awning, but with open ends is called a “shed” awning, is also an acceptable alternative. Other awning styles are reviewed on a case by case basis and approval thereof are based on compatibility with the architectural features of the building.

Awnings should be designed to project over individual windows (or a small clustering of windows, on a case by case by case basis) and over individual entryways. Awnings should not project as a single continuous feature extending over architectural piers or arches. Woven fabric, such as canvas or woven acrylic, is the preferred material for awnings, but other materials will be considered if architecturally compatible with the building. Solid, smooth, vinyl material is not an acceptable option due to appearance and durability.

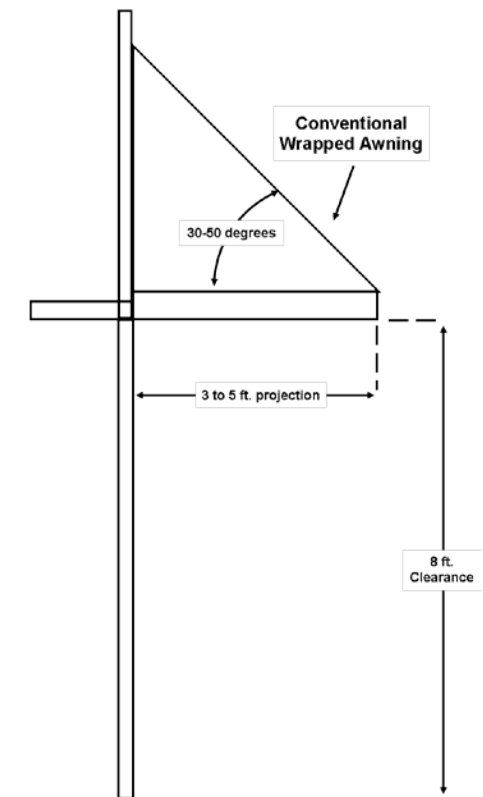


Figure 6



Text and graphic are allowed on the awning and/or the awning valance, but they must comply with applicable signage regulations (including requiring a sign permit). In general, they should not comprise more than 20% of the total exterior surface of the awning face and valance.

Awning colors should enhance and complement the building and adjacent awnings. Internally lit awnings are discouraged, but may be approved on a case-by-case basis. An awning's supporting frame structure should be finished to match the metal storefront system or awning fabric color. Operable awnings are also encouraged on historic buildings. Awnings should also be designed to maintain a consistent bottom valance height throughout the block. Awnings on multiple storefronts should be consistent in character, scale, and location, but need not be identical.

- E. Doors and Entrances: Main entry doors should be located on the street side (façade) of buildings whenever possible. For existing buildings undergoing renovation or restoration, recessed doorways are encouraged and should be maintained when they exist.

The rhythm of recessed entrances on the street contributes to visual continuity and historic character. Recessed entries identify a building's entrance and provide shelter, while corner entries on corner buildings are a welcoming feature to pedestrians. The recommendation of door style, especially for existing buildings, is a commercial-grade door comprised of  $\frac{3}{4}$  glass (or more) above a solid panel of wood, metal, or fiberglass at the bottom. If documentation of the original entry door is available, the recommended alternative is to restore the entry door to its original form.

Loading and service entrances should ideally be located on the side or rear of buildings, whenever possible. They should be screened so that they are not visible from the street.

Grant applications for door and entrances are required to comply with accessibility standards (ADA). These standards include closing speed, opening force, lever/push hardware, and thresholds (among others). If your project includes a door or entrance, you should consult the City for guidance prior to completing your scope of work. If your building has a step-up entryway, the City can also provide you with input on how the entrance may be made accessible. Some of these requirements are not applicable to designated historic buildings.

- F. Exterior Lighting: Exterior lighting of a building should be appropriate to the building's architectural style. It should provide an even illumination level while also highlighting building elements, signage or other distinctive features, rather than attracting attention to the light fixture itself. Lighting that attracts attention to itself, such as neon tubing surrounding display windows should be avoided and may be prohibited. The creative use of neon in individual circumstances may be approved. Remember that signage, including neon signs, are not eligible for grant funding. Lighting that uses flashing, pulsating, or similar dynamic means is prohibited.

Exterior lighting of the ground must be design to appropriately light the site to enhance the safety of patrons without creating glare or being too dimly lit. Exterior lighting that creates light trespass on adjacent streets, public ways, adjacent properties, or into the night sky is prohibited. Light trespass can be avoided by choice of light fixture head, by using light shields within the fixture head, and by positioning the direction of the fixture appropriately. Wherever possible, indirect lighting (light reflected from a wall, ceiling, or ground) should be used, as it provides a softer and more even type of illumination.





- G. Architectural Details: Buildings with interesting, well designed, and well crafted architectural features should have these features retained and highlighted. Features that are original to the building should be preserved and/or restored whenever possible.

Building materials must be durable. Residential-grade materials are often not sufficiently durable for more aggressive commercial uses, and therefore, should not be utilized. Impact resistant materials should be used in high wear or abuse-susceptible areas, especially at a building's base. Synthetic stucco (EIFS) and vinyl or sheet aluminum materials damage easily and create maintenance problems. Therefore these materials are prohibited in such areas.

There are numerous ways to create supplemental interest for a plain building façade. Authenticity and design that focuses on existing quality features are preferable over adding elements that deny or compete with significant historical building features.

1. Roofline - A flat cornice (see **Figure 7**) at the top of a façade wall can be made more interesting by varying its height, shape, color, and materials. On multiple-tenant buildings, this helps create a distinct identity for each storefront, particularly when seen at close range. Where multiple tenant spaces have been combined, providing a unified scheme among disparate architecture helps to strengthen the business's identity. Original architectural features should never be sacrificed in the name of diversifying or unifying a façade when more transient devices, such as paint, fabric features, and signage, can create the same effect.
2. Moldings and Applied Decorations - There are many types of decorative moldings, brackets, cornices, shutters, turnings, columns or piers, and sidings, as seen in **Figure 7**. They can add rich detail to a plain building and help enliven a facade. It is important to appropriately apply style elements that correlate to an architectural period. More modern decoration should use form and composition distinctive to the present.

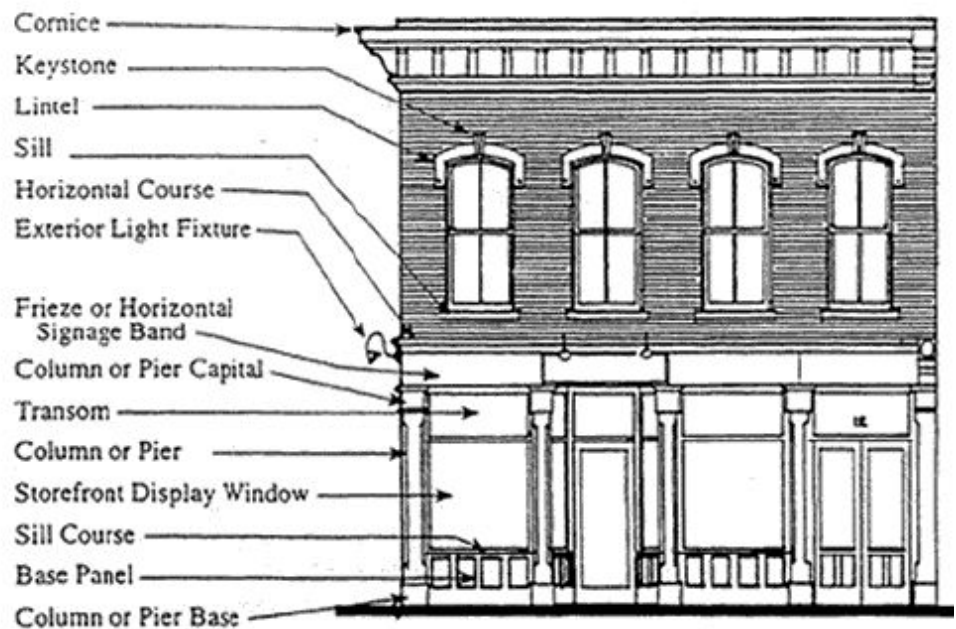


Figure 7

