

STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Design Guidelines



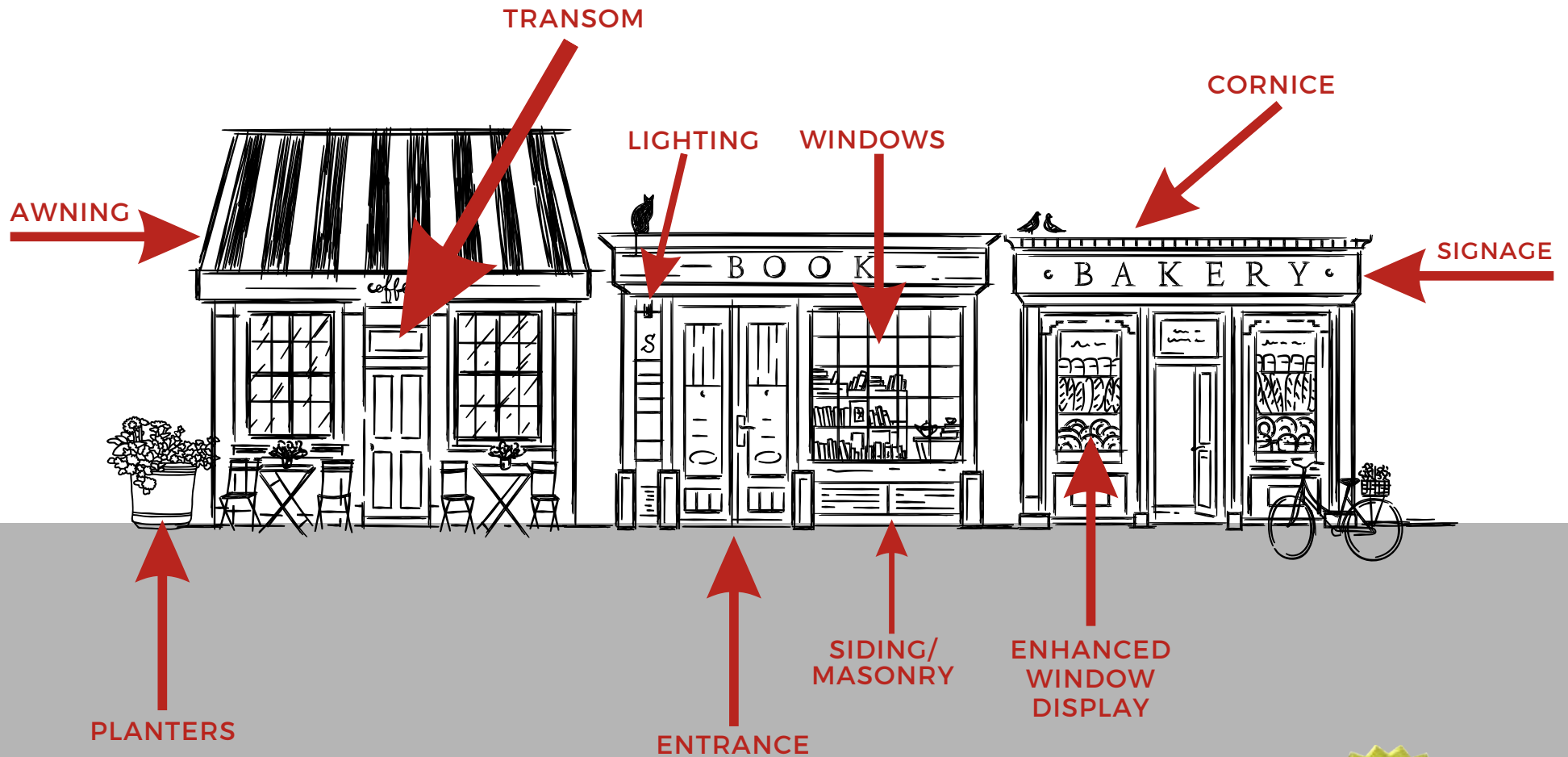
City of East Providence
Office of Planning
& Economic Development

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ELEMENTS of a STOREFRONT



Why a Storefront Improvement program?

East Providence was once a city filled with vibrant, beautiful business corridors and connection spaces-- places for people to shop, socialize, meet-up with their neighbors, and enjoy the outdoors.

And it can be again.

This program's intent is

- to provide business owners impacted by the Pandemic a boost to their visibility and increase their foot traffic;
- to honor nostalgia by restoring the small-town look and feel that people in East Providence remember and love;
- to reverse the damage done by decades of disinvestment and neglect.

The purpose of these Design Guidelines is

- to help business owners learn about the kinds of storefront improvements that are available to them;
- to provide easy-to-understand standards of what improvements are eligible;

This program is part of a larger strategy to reinvest in our business corridors and the neighborhoods that surround them. If we're successful, the next decade will bring an East Providence that feels a lot like the old East Providence--one that is filled with restaurants, cafes, breweries, small shops, arts, entertainment, parks, and places to gather with friends, family, and neighbors.



Taunton Avenue



Watchemoket Square



Alhambra Ballroom, Riverside



Theatre on Taunton Avenue



Crescent Park beach, Riverside

AWNINGS

Awnings are welcoming; they create a sense of charm and timelessness. They also have a functional purpose: awnings provide protection from the sun and rain.

These are real before and after photos of Rose House Salon in New Bedford.



RECOMMENDED

- ✓ Use fabric awnings. Dyed acrylic that looks like canvas (Sunbrella fabric) is very durable. Solid colors or simple striped patterns often work best.
- ✓ Size new awnings in proportion to display windows.
- ✓ Use retractable awnings whenever possible.
- ✓ Metal may be appropriate if the overall design is industrial-modern.



New Bedford, MA

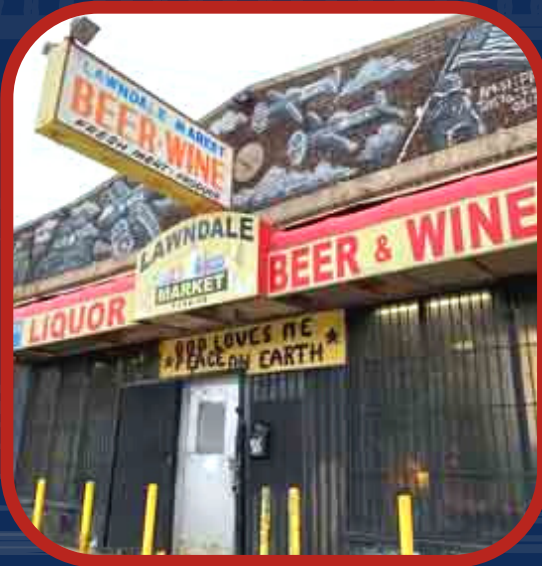
NOT RECOMMENDED

- ✗ Do not cover historic features with awnings.
- ✗ Do not use rigid dome shaped awnings.
- ✗ Do not use oversized awnings.
- ✗ Do not use illuminated awnings.

👉 Remember--we offer free design assistance!

SIGNAGE

Signs improve visibility and attract customers. Signs can be wall mounted, projecting, or window applied.



RECOMMENDED

- ✓ Use high-quality, raised lettering or carved signs.
- ✓ Repair and restore historic signs.
- ✓ Repair and restore vintage neon signs.
- ✓ Use applied window lettering and graphics on storefront windows.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- ✗ Do not clutter signage and cover windows in signage.
- ✗ Do not cover historic features with signage.
- ✗ Do not use backlit box signage or plastic box lighting.

DIFFERENT KINDS of SIGNS



FLAT SIGN

A flat sign is mounted flush to the face of a building. These signs should be attached within a designated sign band area (which most older commercial buildings have) or similar flat area of the storefront if no designated sign area exists. This type of signage can continue over the whole storefront. Flat signs are sometimes called panel signs, wall signs and flush-mounted signs.



PAINTED SIGN

Painted signs include words and sometimes logos that are painted on a building. The painting can be made into a larger mural-type design.



BLADE SIGN

A blade sign projects out from the storefront over the sidewalk perpendicular to the building. Blade signs are sometimes fin signs or projecting signs. Blade signs are mounted on a bracket that is perpendicular to the building. The bracket can be simple or decorative. It should be mounted near the entry of the business.



MOUNTED LETTERS

Letters are mounted directly onto the face of a building in the place of a flat sign. They can also be mounted on a sign backer board. These letters are normally dimensional and sometimes use a spacer to give help them sit off the building.



BANNERS

More temporary than other sign styles, banners can still be useful signage. Know that they will need more frequent replacement, however. They may be useful if a business has promotions.



AWNING AS SIGNAGE

For businesses that don't have a definite sign band area and want front-facing signage, using an awning as signage is a good alternative. The shape of the awning should conform to the architecture of the building as in fit over doorways or window openings. Text and logos can be applied to the awnings surface. Awnings should be made of dyed acrylic that looks like canvas (like Sunbrella).



WINDOW GRAPHICS

Window graphics are text and/or graphics that are applied to the window as a supplement to standard signage. Window graphics can be used as a sole source of signage if the store has large windows. The graphics are usually made of applied vinyl and are sometimes referred to as window decals or vinyl decals. Window graphics are a great way of making windows artful and creative, while also leaving them open for light.

GOOD SIGNS



EXTERIOR LIGHTING

Lighting is important to promote a safe and secure environment. Lighting also brings attention to a business and creates interest.

RECOMMENDED



Skeff's East Providence, RI

NOT
RECOMMENDED



- ✓ Use lighting fixtures that are compatible with the building's style and scale.
- ✓ Provide shielded and focused light sources that direct light downward.
- ✓ Use interior lighting in storefront display windows.
- ✓ Repair and restore historic light fixtures whenever possible.

- ✗ Do not use backlit or plastic signage
- ✗ Do not use high intensity light sources or cast light directly upward.
- ✗ Do not discard historic lighting fixtures
- ✗ Do not mix styles. For example, do not put historic-looking lighting on a contemporary building, and vice versa.

EXTERIOR SURFACES

Wood siding in the form of clapboard, cedar shakes, shingle, and brick add charm and warmth to a storefront and allows architectural elements to be seen. In some instances, metal and other composite materials may be considered when the overall design is reviewed and deemed appropriate.



This is a before and after of this eatery.



Philadelphia, PA

RECOMMENDED

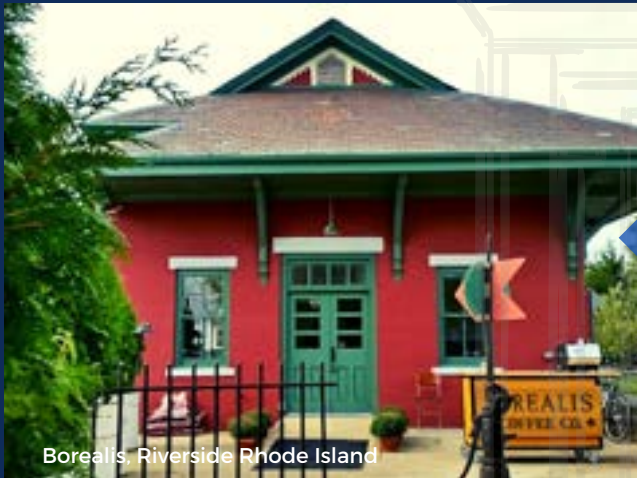
- ✓ Use natural materials like wood, brick, stone. Metal and composite materials may be appropriate.
- ✓ Remove vinyl siding to expose the architectural detail of the building.
- ✓ Repair and restore historic wood siding, trim, and decorative elements. Replace only the deteriorated elements to match.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- ✗ Do not cover the original surface of the storefront with vinyl siding or brick veneer.
- ✗ Do not use vinyl siding or veneer in your design.
- ✗ Do not cover trim with aluminum.

PAINT

Paint is a relatively inexpensive but dramatic way to define a business or storefront. Color selection is the owner's choice, but we encourage you to choose a color scheme that is compatible with neighboring businesses and the integrity of the building. You can incorporate painted signs and murals into your paint design.



Borealis, Riverside Rhode Island

RECOMMENDED

- ✓ Choose colors that fit the integrity of the building and are compatible with neighboring businesses.
- ✓ Choose durable, high-quality exterior paint.
- ✓ Paint trim and cornices in a contrasting color to highlight intricate details.
- ✓ If the building is historic, or the area is historic, use colors that fit the time period.



NOT RECOMMENDED

- ✗ Do not choose a color scheme that clashes with neighboring buildings.
- ✗ Do not diminish the integrity of the building or neighborhood with the wrong paint colors.
- ✗ Do not use low-quality paint.

MURALS



mural created by Walldog

This painted mural acts as both signage and art. The mural draws attention to the business. The style reflects and respects the integrity of the building and neighborhood.

This mural on a dairy works as both art and advertisement. The mural draws in visitors who then frequent the business.



Munroe Dairy in East Providence, RI

mural created by Greg Was Here

ENTRANCES

A warm and welcoming entrance can attract customers while also providing security and a weathertight exterior. Improvements to your entrance can include doors, trim and steps. Doors, transoms, sidelights, and trim are important defining features to your storefront's entrance.



This is a before and after of this auto parts store.



Attica, NY Storefront Improvement Program

RECOMMENDED

- ✓ Replace doors and trim when necessary. New doors should either match the original or be of a compatible design and material.
- ✓ Repair and restore historic doors and decorative elements. Replace only the deteriorated elements to match.
- ✓ Retain transoms over doors

NOT RECOMMENDED

- ✗ Do not board-up or cover over original entrances.
- ✗ Do not use residential style doors for commercial buildings.
- ✗ Do not block transoms with air conditioning units.

A warmer, more welcoming entrance

This sports bar wanted to expand their customer base to include families. Their stark, closed exterior did not feel family-friendly. Restoring the original central entrance, adding windows, along with the addition of new paint, signage, and an outdoor patio helped create a warm and welcoming entrance (and improved their bottom line).



DISPLAY WINDOWS

A well displayed window is inviting and builds interest, boosting visibility and increasing foot traffic. They are the most character-defining element of a retail or commercial building. The original size and shape of display windows should be preserved when possible. Neglecting windows that are broken or boarding them up for any period of time results in a negative image for both the business and the neighborhood.



Sanctum Folklorica, New Bedford, MA

RECOMMENDED

- ✓ Use transparent glass.
- ✓ Use interior lighting to create interest and draw attention to your window display.
- ✓ Repair and restore historic storefront elements including display windows, transoms, wood trim, etc. Replace only the deteriorated elements to match.
- ✓ When using aluminum windows and doors, use the best quality aluminum to insure thermal insulation and prevent condensation.



NOT RECOMMENDED

- ✗ Do not reduce the amount of window area.
- ✗ Do not use Plexiglas instead of glass.
- ✗ Do not clutter windows with signs and paper.
- ✗ Do not use vinyl windows.
- ✗ Do not remove or cover historic elements.

REMOVAL of EXCESS ASPHALT

This program allows for the removal of excess asphalt in street-facing parking lots and front of buildings. Once the asphalt is removed, trees, shrubs, plants, and mulch or stone can be added.

This practice, sometimes called de-paving:

- decreases the runoff of storm water and helps lower the impact on sewers,
- improves water quality,
- adds needed green space,
- fosters behavioral change in the community,
- decreases the heat island effect and help cool urban areas, and
- adds beauty and interest to your storefront.



This building in Ontario was surrounded by a sea of asphalt. Half of the asphalt was cut away and plantings and mulch were added. Beauty and interest were added along with energy savings and improved water runoff.



PLANTERS

If you have an outdoor dining space, you may find large planters helpful in delineating the space for dining. Planters provide a more pleasing boundary than the standard Jersey barrier. Planters used in this way also create a sense of privacy and help reduce noise from the street. Planters draw the eye and provide beauty and interest to storefronts.



Use plants that perform well in planters.

Trees: Arborvitae, river birch trees, and small ornamental trees do very well in containers.

Grasses: Sea grasses do very well in planters.

Flowers: look for annuals and perennials that are big performers that don't need too much attention and care.



Note: if you are worried about attracting stinging insects, stick to greenery only, as in these photos.

REGULATIONS & RESOURCES

Projects must comply with all City of East Providence regulations including zoning, building codes, and fire code, etc., as well as all Rhode Island State Building Codes and Federal guidelines for accessibility. The East Providence Planning & Economic Development office can provide information on these regulations.

HISTORIC ASSISTANCE

The following institutions have archives which contain historic photographs of neighborhoods and buildings. These resources can be very helpful in helping you design your storefront.

- The East Providence Library's archives
- The East Providence Historic Society

FREE DESIGN ASSISTANCE

The City's Planning and Economic Development office offers free design assistance to successful applicants. This includes: logo and sign development, paint and color choices, and general storefront design.





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The City of East Providence
Department of Planning & Economic Development
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