

SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS

Storefronts

INTRODUCTION

Storefronts are composed of individual parts; the basepanel display windows, transoms, entryways, columns, piers or pilasters, and a cornice.

The storefront is one of the most important features of a commercial facade. The storefront serves to attract customer attention, provide display space and to let natural light and a view into the store.

The storefront, like the building facade, has a uniform organization of base, middle and top. The storefront provides a visual linkage with its neighbours, and provides the base for the rest of the facade composition.

Generally, it is desirable to maintain the alignment of a storefront with adjacent shopfronts. The strongest lines of a shop front are usually horizontal, with vertical lines being secondary. Key vertical elements, such as columns, pilasters, and doorways are usually aligned with similar parts of the upper storeys.

The storefront is the element of a commercial facade that has most commonly been altered from original appearances.

If the original remains largely intact, preserve and repair it.

Where alterations are out of character, probe into the more modern veneers to determine what, if anything, of the original remains. In many cases the original cast-iron columns and

other major elements are still in place, concealed by the later additions.

The shop front should be renovated in keeping with the original building design, using those elements that are intact, and replacing the missing features.

Photographic evidence is available for most commercial facades in Saint John to assist in recreating the original design.

PRESERVATION

Saint John has a rich variety of nineteenth century buildings that form the character of our city. Individually, many of them are excellent examples of a particular style of architecture.

The treatment of particular building elements such as windows, doors, and roofs should be considered in relation to the design of the building as a whole.

Preserve the original historic fabric. Repair, rather than replace deteriorated architectural features. When replacement is necessary, match the original. Replacement of missing features should be based upon historical accuracy.

Do not remove or alter original material or distinctive architectural features.

Recognize buildings as products of their own time, and avoid alterations without historical basis, or that create an earlier appearance.



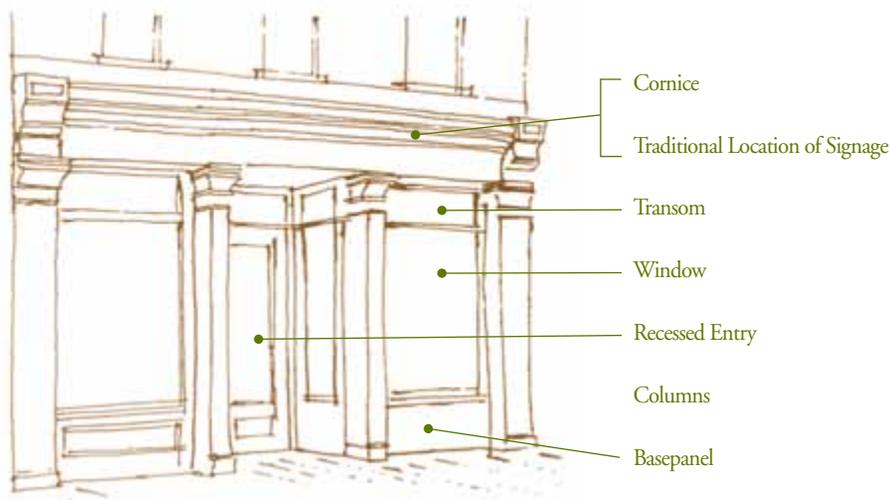
SAINT JOHN





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PARTS OF A TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT



MAINTENANCE

Basepanel

The basepanel provides a visual and functional base for the storefront, separating the shop windows from the sidewalk. Maintain the originals when they exist. Use materials of the same colour and texture as the display window frame or the pilaster materials.

Display Windows

As the largest element of the shop front, the display windows establish the character of the storefront. Avoid breaking the continuity of the streetscape of large display windows. If smaller windows are desired, paint out or otherwise obscure the transparency with display cases behind the glass, curtains or blinds, while maintaining the image of large display fronts.

Avoid breaking the continuity of the sidewalk by recessing display windows, except at entryways.

Traditionally, windows are usually framed in wood. Repair and repainting of the existing

frames will be cheaper than replacement. Consider installing insulated glazing if replacing glass.

Transoms

The display front is often divided near the top into transom windows. This served to focus attention on the displays while letting more light into the shop, and occasionally was used as an operating ventilator.

The transom was often glazed with patterned or obscure glass. Maintain the transoms as an important element of the display window.

Entryways

The store entrance was usually recessed from the streetline, affording an opportunity for more display window, focusing attention on the doorway, and providing shelter at the entry.

The sides of the entry recess were often angled or splayed to avoid crowding the doorway.

Maintain or restore these recesses as an important part of the streetscape rhythm.



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The floor of the recess forms part of the visual impression of the store, and should be treated carefully. The floor surface provides an opportunity for signage. Maintain the original material when possible. Otherwise use materials that "fit", that are durable, non-slip, and simple in colour and pattern.

The Door

Maintain the original door. A new door should match the original and should usually have a large glass area, and a dark frame.

Columns, Piers and Pilasters

Made of either masonry or cast-iron, these elements support the upper storeys, and are the primary vertical elements on the shop front. Their locations frame the display windows or establish the rhythm of the lower facade.

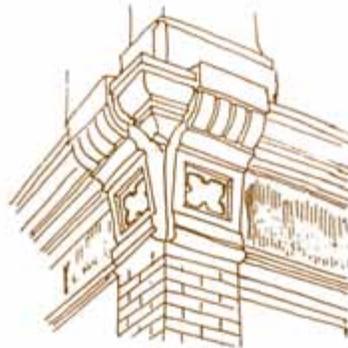
Maintain the originals when they exist. If missing, install new columns aligned to suit the upper storeys.

Cornice

The cornice plays an important role of visually capping the storefront. If the cornice has been removed and simplified, the facade will appear incomplete.

If your cornice is beyond repair, complete replacement is appropriate. Measure the existing carefully for duplication, replicate the shape, dimensions, materials and style and rebuild the cornice.

Usually made of galvanized sheet metal, the existing should always be painted. Caulk the joints periodically, and patch small holes with auto patching kits. Never sandblast the cornice to remove paint.



Preserve decorative features such as sheet metal column capitals.

References

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Hanson, Shirley, and Hubby, Nancy. Preserving and Maintaining the Older Home, New York: Macgrawhill, 1983

London, Mark, and Bambaru, Dinu. Traditional Window. Montreal: Heritage Montreal 1985

Du Toit, Roger. Planning and Design for Commercial Facade Improvements: Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1985

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Practical Conservation Guidelines, application forms for Grants and Certificates of Appropriateness and other useful information for fixing up your older building is available from:

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Property Owners! Contact Heritage Staff before you begin to make any plan purchase supplies or hire contractors. Advice on ways to save you time, money and energy will be offered free of charge.