

Town of Vinton Downtown Façade Grant Program

Program Description

This project will provide grants ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 to assist small businesses along designated areas in the Town of Vinton with building façade and other general property improvements undertaken in accordance with established design guidelines. The design guidelines address architecture, signage, landscaping, walls, lighting, veneers, awnings, etc.

Location

To be eligible for a Façade Improvement Program reimbursement grant, a building must be used in whole or in part for commercial purposes and must be located within the target area. The target area coincides with the area bordered by Madison Avenue, Maple Street, Crestview Avenue, Virginia Avenue, First Street, Walnut Avenue, and Jackson Avenue. This includes properties on both sides of the streets named including East and West Lee Avenue, Washington Avenue, and North and South Pollard Street.



Funding Amounts

Property Owners: 50% reimbursement of qualified expenditures up to a maximum of \$5,000.

Merchants: 50% reimbursement of qualified expenditures up to a maximum of \$5,000.

Program Procedures

All exterior improvements shall conform to the Town of Vinton Commercial Façade Design Guidelines and the applicable ordinances for the Town of Vinton. Interior improvements are not eligible. Replacement of windows and/or doors alone will not qualify. Embellishing design elements such as lintels, sills, keystones, awnings, or flowerboxes or some other element to change the look of the window or door opening is mandatory. Exterior improvements to the backs or sides of buildings are eligible, subject to review by the Advisory Committee.

I. Architectural Design Services and Procedures

- A. Applicant meets with the Town's Commercial Façade Project Planner to review the program guidelines and application process.
- B. Property owner or business owner submits a completed Program Application.
- C. The applicant shall prepare preliminary façade elevations illustrating proposed renovations including signage, color, and materials in conformance with all commercial façade design guidelines and standards. This submittal should be simply prepared, clear and descriptive showing by drawing or narrative the work to be done. Proposal should include working drawings, photographs of the building or storefront, color and material palettes of the proposed project.
- D. As part of the presentation, preliminary costs estimates should be included. A written contractor's bids for work must be included. A contingency of 10% is recommended for overruns and/or unexpected costs. The total amount (budget plus contingency) of the grant requested cannot exceed \$5,000.
- E. Consultation meeting is arranged between the property owner and Project Planner. Discussion will address the buildings architectural style, structural recommendations, significance, and conformance with the Town of Vinton Design Guidelines and Town zoning requirements.

II. Project Plan Review and Rebate Procedures

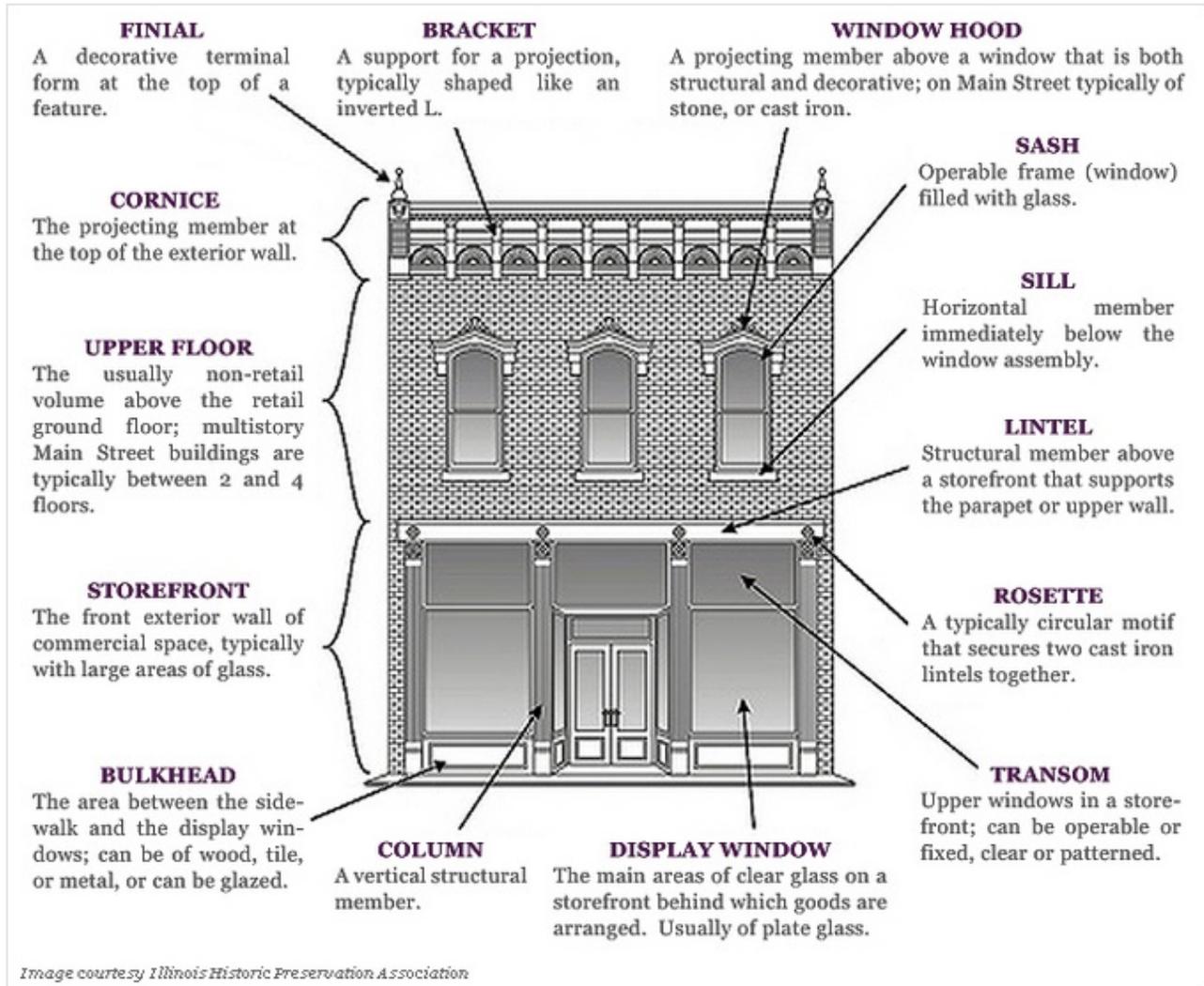
- A. Project Planner shall review the application and determine if proposed improvements conform to the Design Guidelines. If application is approved, staff will direct the applicant to commence work.
- B. An approved project packet must include: 1) signature by Town; 2) any written conditions of approval; 3) the amount of eligible grant funds available once all work is performed satisfactorily. Work cannot begin until the project has been approved by the Town.
- C. Final plans and specifications shall be submitted to the Planning Department for issuance of a building permit. All new signage shall require issuance of a sign permit by the Planning Department.
- D. Changes to the originally approved design shall require re-approval by the Town and in most cases re-approval by the Planning Department. **Failure to have alterations, revision or changes approved in advance by the Planning Department will result in the termination of the Agreement and forfeiture of the grant funds.** Project Planner will make periodic informal inspection of work to assure compliance with approved design and

conformance with Design Guidelines.

- E. For reimbursement, once work is completed, applicant shall submit to the Town detailed cost documentation, which may include canceled checks, paid invoices, or payroll reports.
- F. Project Planner will make a final on-site inspection to confirm improvement compliance. If all work has been completed in compliance with the improvement plans and the required building permits have been finalized, the Town will process a request to the Roanoke County Economic Development Authority (EDA) for payment to disburse reimbursement funds in accordance with the approved application.

Design Guidelines

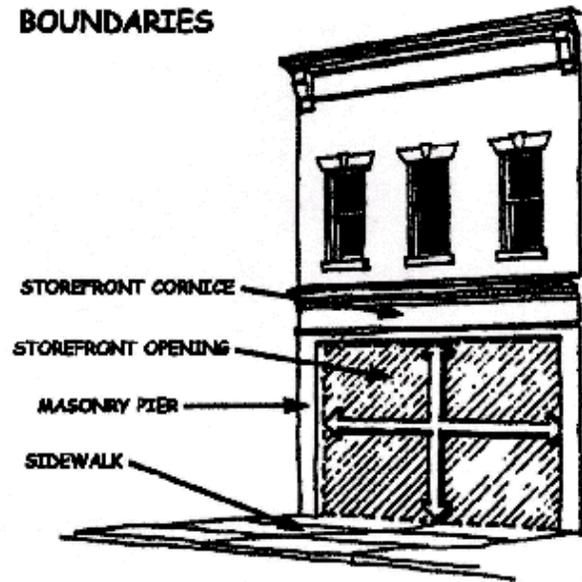
Anatomy of a Building Facade



Storefront Design and Display

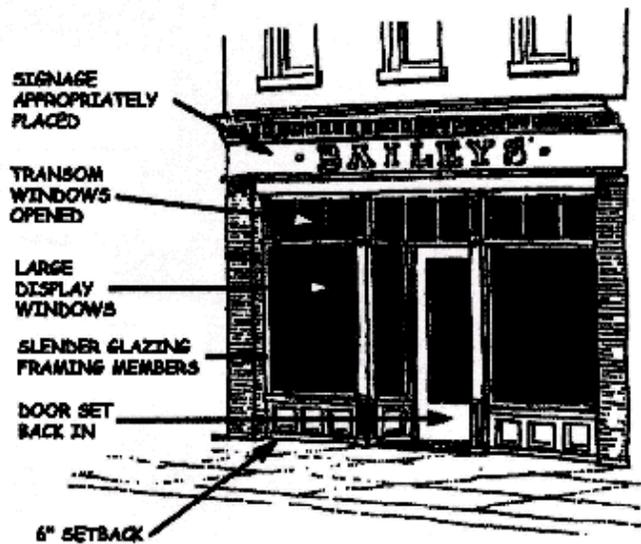
- Most facades consist of an architectural framework designed to identify individual storefronts. Each storefront should respect this architectural framework and not extend beyond it.
- Storefronts' design should be in keeping with a building's overall design. Storefront elements -- such as windows, entrances, and signage -- provide clarity and lend interest to facades. It is important that the distinction between individual storefronts, the entire building facade, and adjacent properties be maintained.
- Individual storefronts should be clearly defined by architectural elements, such as pillars, piers, or separations of glass.
- A horizontal band at the top of each storefront can serve as an appropriate location for business signage.
- Storefront windows should be consistent in height and design with storefront doors to create a cohesive appearance.
- Storefront windows should not be completely obscured with display cases that prevent customers and pedestrians from seeing inside.
- Storefront windows should display products or services, local business logos, hours of operation, and/or public service messages. Displays in both retail and non-retail storefront windows that add color, texture, information, and/or visual activity to the pedestrian experience are encouraged.
- "Transparent" storefronts are not necessary for some businesses, such as professional offices. Nevertheless, even for such businesses it is preferable to maintain the size of original storefront windows. Proprietors can provide attractive window displays or install blinds. This solution contributes to the vitality of the streetscape and is more flexible for future changes than permanently blocking windows.

STOREFRONT BOUNDARIES



TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT DESIGN

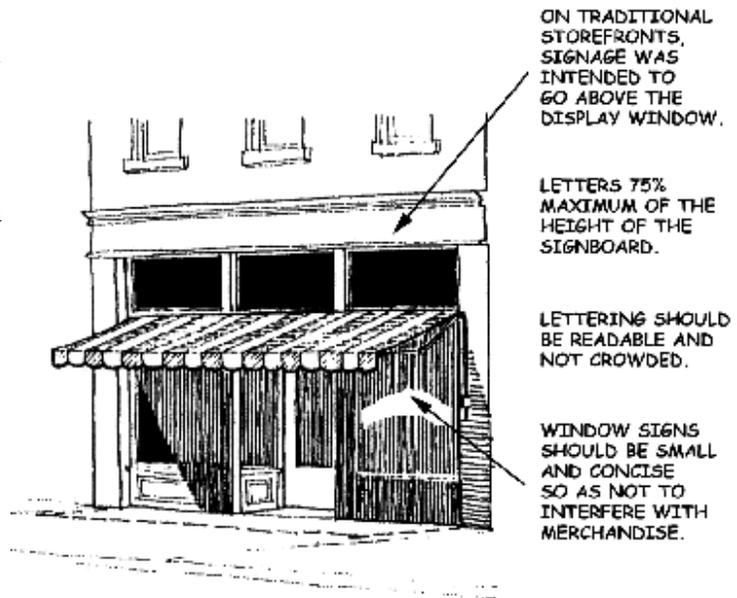
STOREFRONT FITS WITHIN BOUNDARIES



Sign Guidelines

Shoppers use signs mainly to identify the names and locations of businesses but signs can also convey an image as well as a direct message. Restrained and tasteful signs suggest a high-quality business. A jumble of oversized and competing signs- even on a single downtown façade- can confuse the customer. With signs, bigger is not always better. Signs are to meet the Town of Vinton sign ordinance.

- Wall signs shall not exceed the height of the building cornice. On street façade signs and display ads shall not exceed 10% of each main floor façade area.
- Wall signs should be flush-mounted or painted directly upon the flat surface of the building.
- Wall signs should be placed in traditional locations in order to fit within architectural features for example:
 - Above transoms
 - On cornice fascia boards
 - Below cornices
- Brackets for projecting signs should be located under a second floor windowsill or a maximum of 15 feet from the street level.
- Projecting signs shall be no larger than 12 square feet in area.
- The use of sign symbols, logos, and cutouts, particularly in projecting signs is encouraged.
- Symbolic and historic three-dimensional signs such as barber shop poles and appropriately-sized projecting signs are encouraged. Signage should have the capability of being lit in the evening, although the source of light must not be visible to motorists or pedestrians.
- Signage permanently painted on glass is encouraged when up to 10% of glass area.
- When more than two businesses occupy the same building, identifying signs should be groups together in single panel. Similar letterforms and backgrounds to make up a directory should also be used.
- Sign materials should be compatible with materials used in the building. Painted wood and metal are particularly encouraged because these materials convey durability. Individual letters affixed directly to a sign frieze may be used.

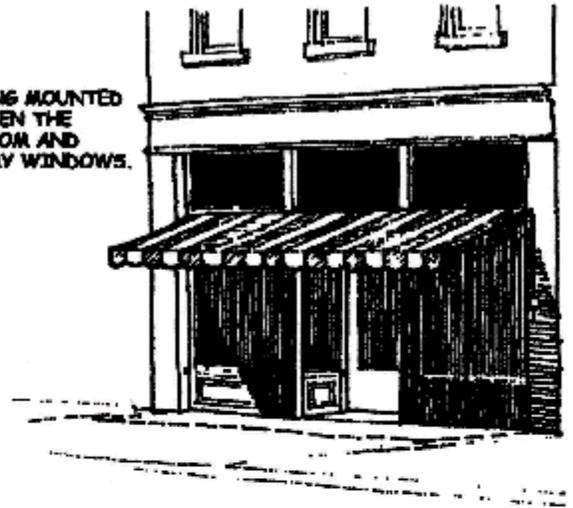


- Signs shall be directly or indirectly illuminated, or shall have separately backlit letters. Internally illuminated signs are strongly discouraged.
- Neon signs shall be used in building interiors only. The use of neon on the building exteriors is strongly discouraged.
- Spot lighting to draw attention to sign and architectural details is encouraged.
- Light spillage on adjacent properties is strongly discouraged.
- Signs based upon designs, materials or features in use earlier or later than the construction date of the building, are discouraged.

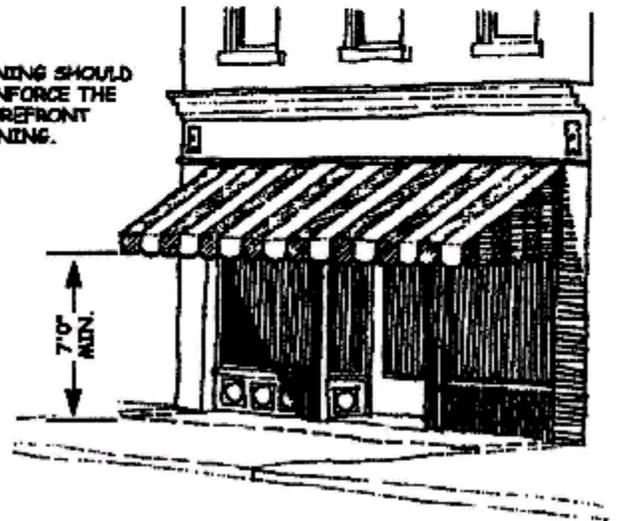
Awnings, Canopies and Marquees

- Awnings, canopies and marquees provide a secondary location for signage. They add color and interest to building storefronts and facades and can be used to emphasize display windows and entrances. They also serve to protect pedestrians and display windows from the sun and rain.
- Awnings, canopies and marquees consistent with local character and building type are encouraged.
- Awnings should reflect the overall facade organization of a building. Awnings should be located within the building elements which frame storefronts.
- Important architectural details should not be concealed by awnings, canopies or marquees.
- Awnings on a multiple-storefront building should be consistent in character, scale, and location, but need not be identical.
- Awning shapes should relate to the shape of the facade's architectural elements.
- The use of traditionally shaped awnings is encouraged, when appropriate.
- Creative or unusually-shaped awnings should be designed with considerable care.
- If possible, top edges of awning shall be mounted to align with the top of the transom or with the framing above the main display window.
- Fabric awnings are encouraged. Canvas and fire-resistant acrylic are preferred awning materials. The use of vinyl or plastic as awning materials is discouraged.

AWNING MOUNTED BETWEEN THE TRANSOM AND DISPLAY WINDOWS.



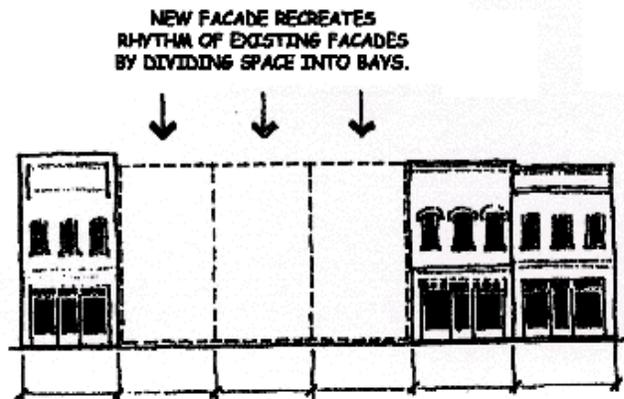
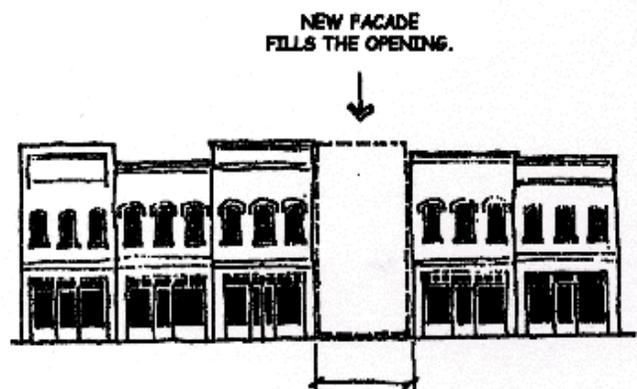
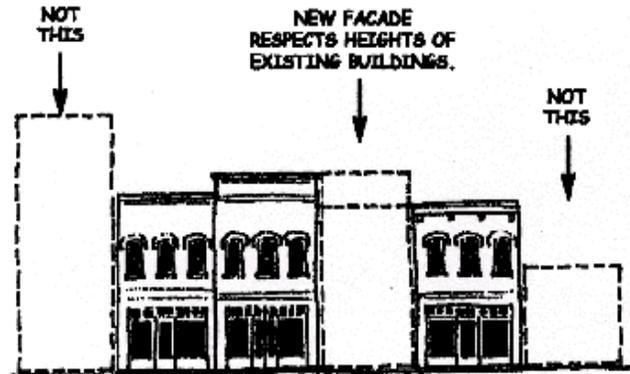
AWNING SHOULD REINFORCE THE STOREFRONT OPENING.



- The use of awning valances for signs is encouraged.
- Retractable or operable awnings are not encouraged.
- Long expanses of awning should be broken into segments that reflect the door or window openings beneath them.

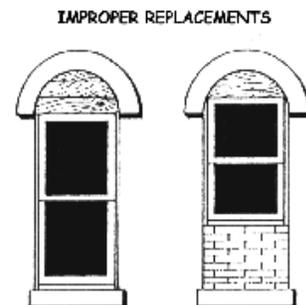
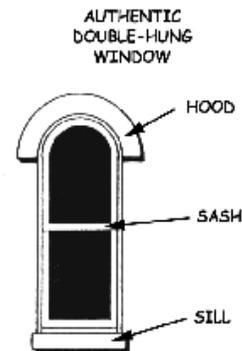
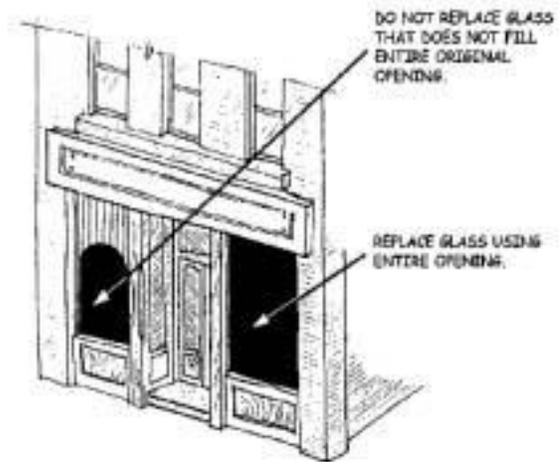
Roofs and Parapets

- Rooflines should mimic the separate yet complementary rhythm of historic buildings.
- Flat roofs (slightly sloped to drain) are preferred with parapets that articulate the rhythm of the buildings. Parapets should be embellished with brick detailing and stepped or sloped to achieve a visually interesting yet harmonious sequence along the building façade.
- Sloped roofs are not allowed unless the roof form is concealed by a parapet or false front. Exceptions may be granted if the sloped roof is used on top of a multi-story building to help reduce the overall height of the façade and define the residential character of the upper floors.



Windows

- Whenever possible, a building's original window pattern should be retained. Avoid blocking, reducing the size, or changing the design of windows. Windows should be used to display products and services, and maximize visibility into storefronts.
- Window openings that have been blocked or screened by concrete block, brick or plywood etc. should be reopened to reestablish the original rhythm of the façade.
- Commercial storefront windows traditionally tended to be large at the ground-floor level. During renovation or new construction, this approach is encouraged.
- If ceilings must be lowered below the height of storefront windows, provide an interior, full-height space immediately adjacent to the window before the drop in the ceiling. This lets more light into the storefront and allows the retention of larger windows.
- Wood is strongly recommended as replacement doorframe and window frame material.
- Try to retain or increase window transparency whenever possible. Replace reflective or dark tinted glass with clear glass, if possible. In general, dark glass alienates pedestrians from the business activity inside a storefront and reduces the impact of window displays.
- Avoid installing opaque panels, such as metal, wood, and/or other materials, to replace clear glass windows.
- Windows with multiple, small-paned windows should be avoided unless they are historically appropriate to the building style, or integrate well into the overall design.
- Do not use Plexiglas or other replacement materials instead of glass.
- Safety glass is required when windows are 18" or less from the ground.
- Fix broken windows immediately. Broken or boarded windows negatively impact business and the district.
- Avoid using window openings for mechanical equipment (such as air conditioners, louvers, air exhausts).



Doors and Entrances

- Primary entrances should be clearly marked and provide a sense of welcome and easy passage from exterior to interior. Whenever possible, they should be located on the front of buildings.
- Side entrances should be located as close to the street front as possible.
- Recessed doorways are encouraged; they provide cover for pedestrians and customers in bad weather and help identify the location of store entrances. They also provide a clear area for out-swinging doors and offer the opportunity for interesting paving patterns, signage, and displays.
- New store entrances must be accessible to the physically disabled. Renovation of existing entrances is encouraged.
- Loading and service entrances should be located on the side or rear of buildings, whenever possible. They should be screened from public ways and adjacent properties to the greatest extent possible.

Exterior Lighting

- Exterior lighting should highlight building elements, signs, or other distinctive features rather than attract attention to the light fixture itself. Lighting that attracts attention to itself, such as neon tubing surrounding display windows, should be avoided.
- In order to maintain an attractive image, exterior building lighting should be appropriate to the building's architectural style.
- Building lighting should provide an even illumination level. Avoid flashing, pulsating, or similar dynamic lighting that poses a hazard to motorists.
- Avoid lights, which glare onto streets, public ways, or onto adjacent properties.
- Provide indirect lighting whenever possible.
- The creative use of neon in individual circumstances is encouraged. These guidelines strive to promote a unique character for the Town of Vinton; so therefore, the use of nationally distributed neon signs that promote brand name goods is discouraged.

Exterior Materials

- Facade design should be complementary to a building's original materials as well as to those of adjacent buildings.
- Terra cotta, brick, and stone convey permanence and should be used when architecturally appropriate.
- When using new brick, care should be taken to match the color and type of original brickwork.
- Painting brick is not encouraged but will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Use of decorative concrete block, applied false-brick veneer, vinyl or aluminum siding is discouraged. Other materials made to either imitate exterior finish materials or used to cover original architectural features is also discouraged.
- Materials used near sidewalks and adjacent to building entrances should be highly durable and easily maintained while compatible with other exterior building materials.

- The surface cleaning of structures should be done by the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods, such as chemical washes, that will damage exterior building materials and features should not be undertaken.
- Existing cornices and/or building caps should be retained where possible and repaired as needed.
- When applied cornices have been removed, encourage replacement of the historic cornice if feasible. If replacement is not feasible, design a simplified cornice to define the top of the building and maintain the visual unity of building tops along the block.

Building Systems

- A building's mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems should be concealed completely from view from the street or sidewalk. If such equipment cannot be concealed, efforts should be taken to minimize their visual impact on building facades.
- Rooftop equipment should be hidden by a screening device so as not to be visible from the street and sidewalk.
- Avoid placing air-conditioning units in windows or any other openings facing onto the street. Units located in non-window openings are acceptable if they are flush with building walls. They should be screened with a decorative grill or any grill appropriate to the storefront design. Air-conditioning units should not drain onto pedestrians passing below.
- Downspouts and other drains should be kept clear and well-maintained.

Landscaping

- Landscaping treatments should be used to enhance the pedestrian experience, complement architectural features and/or screen utility areas.
- The use of flower boxes, planters, and hanging flower baskets is encouraged.

Acceptable Colors:

- A façade design should employ a limited palette of complimentary colors, which if possible do not clash with the schemes of adjacent buildings. Extremely bold, intense color schemes and primary colors should be avoided.
- A color palette of earth tones, such as rich burgundy, taupe, rose shades, clay brick tones, beiges, and greens is desired.
- Program participants may choose up to four colors for a single building (one or two body colors, one or two trim colors, and one accent color; these may be the same or different). Architectural elements on the building facade, such as canopies, balconies, and arcades, shall be in the same color as one of the four chosen building colors, except where constructed with a permitted material such as stone or brick that is left unpainted.

The Use of the Following is Strongly Discouraged:

- Internally lit and or plastic awnings
- Internally lit signs
- Flashing signs
- Pedestal signs and pole-mounted plastic signs
- Mass-produced blow mounted plastic signs
- Billboards of all types and sizes attached or free-standing
- Portable trailer signs
- Historically incompatible canopies, awnings, and imitation mansard roofs made of metal, rough-sawn wood, plastic, shakes, or asphalt roofing
- No vending machines dispensing food or drinks shall be permitted on the exterior of any structure.

Strongly Discouraged Materials on Visible Surfaces:

- Vinyl or aluminum siding
- Asphalt, or fiberglass shingles
- Structural ribbed metal panels
- Corrugated metal panels
- Plywood sheathing
- Plastic sheathing
- Structural glass, unless used to replicate a 1940s-1950s storefront design
- Reflective or moderate to high grade tinted glass