

# SECTION 5: COMMERCIAL DESIGN

## SITE AND SETTING

The streetscapes in Bowling Green and Warren County's commercial areas are made up of streets bordered by concrete sidewalks and limestone curbing. Buildings are situated with zero setbacks and are generally between one and three stories high. Sections 5.1 through 5.2, seen in italics, are not restricted. These recommendations are designed to help maintain an appropriate historic and aesthetic character in each district.

### 5.1 LANDSCAPING (not restricted)

*5.1.1 Preserve original landscape patterns and features, both natural and man made, such as vegetation, street furniture, walks, drives, retaining walls, curbs, and paving materials.*

*5.1.2 Commercial streetscapes should be enhanced by complementary landscaping.*

*5.1.3 New trees and other vegetation should be of limited height and canopy at maturity so as not to conceal or obscure the façade.*

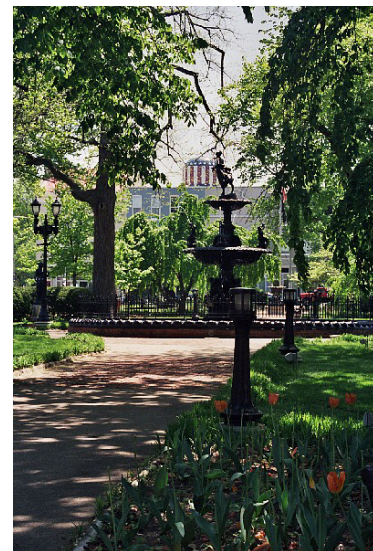
*5.1.4 Low planters, flower boxes, hanging baskets, or low shrubs are preferable to trees.*

*5.1.5 Wooden fences or combinations of stone, brick, and ironwork should be used where security is required. Chain link fences should not be used.*

*5.1.6 Where separation is needed simple iron fences, painted or stained picket fences, or shrubs should be utilized.*

*5.1.7 Topping of trees is not an appropriate pruning method.*

*5.1.8 Street furniture should be of a material and design that is compatible with the district. Plastic furniture is not recommended.*



Note: Street trees and other plantings were a historic part of many commercial centers, but usually were restricted to particular buildings or spaces. Info: *KY Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts.*

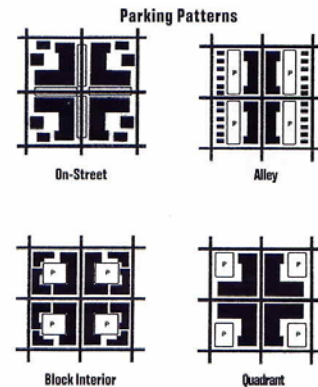
## 5.2 LIGHTING (not restricted)

- 5.2.1 *Original light fixtures should be preserved (repaired or maintained, not replaced) in their original place.*
- 5.2.2 *If replacement of original fixtures is necessary, concealed fixtures, fixtures of plain design, or fixtures appropriate to the period of the building should be used. Fixtures from an earlier period, i.e. colonial carriage lamps, should not be used.*
- 5.2.3 *If street lamps are to be replaced or added, the original type and design should be duplicated if possible. If original fixtures are not known, then fixtures appropriate for the period of the historic district should be used, or fixtures of a simple contemporary design.*



## 5.3 PARKING

- 5.3.1 Parking lots should be screened from street view with low shrubs and trees at the periphery, entrances, exits, and interior medians.
- 5.3.2 Parking provided on vacant lots between buildings should have buffer screenings of plantings, or appropriate fencing aligned with the front facades of adjacent buildings.
- 5.3.3 Parking areas should be small, well-defined areas versus single large expanses.



Organizational patterns suggested by the Kentucky Heritage Council include on-street parking, block interior parking, along arranged alleys, in a consistent pattern of quadrants in several downtown blocks. Info: *KY Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts*.

## 5.4 SIGNS

### Types & Locations

- 5.4.1 The following types of signs are appropriate: signs on glass elements, hanging signs, freestanding signs, awning signs and plaques. Please see following regulations for more information about each.
- 5.4.2 The following are some examples of the types of signs that are not appropriate: roof-top signs, plastic, over-scaled, back-lit, internally-lit fluorescent signs or awnings, signs that flash or move, holographic, LED, billboards, and reader boards.
- 5.4.3 Signs may be on glass windows, glass doors or glass transoms and should be painted; silk screened, gilded or may be vinyl lettering and should utilize traditional fonts.
- 5.4.4 Hanging signs should project from the face of the building and be placed between the first and second levels. Lettering should be raised and be of traditional fonts. Mounting brackets should be simple in design and mounting methods should not damage the historic building.
- 5.4.5 Freestanding signs are not appropriate around Fountain Square but may be appropriate in other commercial districts. See Residential—Design.
- 5.4.6 Graphics on awnings may be painted, silk screened or sewn into the material. Graphics may be on the valance or the sloping surface of the awing. (See also Awnings, section 3.16.)

- 5.4.7 Wall mounted plaques of metal, wood or metal frame acrylic are most appropriate located at entrances or in vestibules.
- 5.4.8 Temporary signs that do not meet the *Guidelines* are permitted as long as they are not affixed to the building in a permanent manner and remain up no more than 30 days and are used no more than three times a year. This regulation is intended for new businesses and to allow business owners to advertise sales and promotions.

### General Design

- 5.4.9 Signs should not obscure significant architectural features of a property or the district.
- 5.4.10 Signs should not have bare untrimmed edges.
- 5.4.11 Design of signs should complement their surrounding and be pedestrian oriented. Signs should be integrated into the architectural design of the building and should not dominate the façade or interfere with adjacent buildings.
- 5.4.12 The number of graphic elements shall be held to the minimum needed to convey the sign's major message, generally the name of the business and any identifying logo or symbol.
- 5.4.13 Signs should be of a style appropriate to the period of the building. For example, Colonial Williamsburg or New England type would not be appropriate for a nineteenth century Bowling Green or Warren County building.
- 5.4.14 Backgrounds should be a dark color.



New owners have kept this historic wall sign.



Appropriate sign locations and types are board over storefront, hanging sign over storefront, on awning or on window. Above is an example of a hanging sign and below is an example of a sign on an awning.

5.4.15 Signs should be limited to no more than two (2) or three (3) colors, with colors coordinated with the overall building colors; however in the case of company colors, they may be used for the company logo, which may or may not be the entire sign. Fluorescent, day-glo, holographic and photo printed letters and backgrounds are examples of design styles that are not allowed.

5.4.16 Do not light signs in a harsh manner. Lighting should enable the sign to be easily read, but should not be overdone. Concealed incandescent lighting is recommended. Internally-lit, plastic box signs, bare spot lights, or high-wattage metal halide lights and inappropriate and should not be used.

5.4.17 Preserve and maintain historic wall signs on masonry walls.



Backlit signs are not appropriate for a property with Local Historic Designation. New owners have replaced this inappropriate sign with a sign on their awning.

## REHABILITATION

### 5.5 MECHANICAL UNITS, STORAGE AREAS, AND TRASH RECEPTACLES

5.5.1 Locate mechanical units, dumpsters, large trash receptacles, and storage sheds at the rear of the buildings, and conceal them with painted or stained wood board fences, or evergreen shrubbery.

## 5.6 STORE FRONTS

Significant storefronts from the early twentieth century including those displaying decorative tile, glass, or marble should be preserved.

- 5.6.1 Preserve (maintain or restore, not remove or alter) existing original storefronts. Deteriorated storefront features should be repaired rather than replaced.
- 5.6.2 If replacement is necessary due to significant deterioration, replace with features to match original in design and materials.
- 5.6.3 Storefronts altered after 1950 should be reconstructed based upon pictorial or physical evidence of the original.
- 5.6.4 Where original storefront design and features cannot be determined, a traditional storefront arrangement with features, materials, and proportions typical of similar structures of the same (not earlier or later) architectural style or period should be installed.



## 5.7 ENTRANCES

- 5.7.1 Original, existing entrance designs should be preserved, maintained, or repaired utilizing historically appropriate materials.
- 5.7.2 The original location and arrangement of entrances, whether recessed or flush with sidewalk, should be retained.



## 5.8 DOORS

- 5.8.1 Original doors should be retained, whenever possible. Missing doors should be replaced with doors to match the original in design and materials. Solid wood doors without glass should not be installed on front facades.
- 5.8.2 When the original door design cannot be replicated, it should be replaced with plain wood doors in a single light design, not solid paneled doors, decorative doors, or any kind of door based upon a different historical period or architectural style (Colonial, Gothic church doors etc.).
- 5.8.3 Replacement doors should generally use glass proportionate to display window glass and kick plate panels proportionate to bulkhead panels. Although wood is preferable, metal with a dark or bronze anodized finish and with a wide stile may be substituted. Raw aluminum or other silver-colored metals are not appropriate.

DEFINITION: In the case of windows, "light" refers to the glass area.

DEFINITION: "Bulkheads" are the panels below shop windows.

## 5.9 DISPLAY WINDOWS

*Also see Section 5.13 "Windows"*

- 5.9.1 Preserve, maintain, or repair original display windows. If a storefront is missing display windows, new windows should match the original in location, design, size, and materials.
- 5.9.2 If the original window design is unknown, replacement windows should be traditionally scaled with large glass lights and with as few structural divisions as possible to keep the traditional transparent storefront look.
- 5.9.3 Window mullions or framing should use wood, copper, or bronze metal.



DEFINITION: A Mullion is a large vertical member separating two casements; the vertical bar between coupled windows or multiple windows; the central vertical member of a double-door opening. Info: *Old House Dictionary*

- 5.9.4 For glazing (glass areas) clear (not tinted) glass should be used. Where privacy or shade is required, interior shades or blinds may be utilized.
- 5.9.5 Original transoms should be preserved (maintained or replaced, not removed, concealed or enclosed, or altered).
- 5.9.6 Historic transom materials i.e. prism glass, leaded glass, etc., should be retained.
- 5.9.7 Where it is necessary to replace transoms, the design should be based on the original configuration (whether a band of transoms or individual transoms). Use glass where possible. If not, use space for signage or a plain panel. When replacing missing transom glass, clear (not tinted) glass should be used.

DEFINITION: A "transom" is a small window or series of panes above a door, or above a casement or double hung window. Info: *Old House Dictionary*.

## 5.10 BULKHEADS

Many of Bowling Green's buildings were built with marble or concrete bulkheads.

- 5.10.1 Original bulkhead panels should not be removed, concealed, or altered.
- 5.10.2 If the original bulkheads must be replaced they should match the original in design, size, and materials.
- 5.10.3 Where the original bulkhead material is unknown, replacement maybe of wood, brick that matches the original, painted brick, stone such as marble, or smooth concrete.

## 5.11 BELT COURSES

- 5.11.1 Original belt courses of metal, brick or other materials should be retained.
- 5.11.2 Belt courses should not be concealed or removed.
- 5.11.3 Where a belt course must be replaced; it should closely match or imitate the original in general design, location, material, detailing, and scale.

DEFINITION: A "belt course" also known as a "stringcourse" is a continuous horizontal band of brick, stone, or wood on the exterior wall of a building; used for decorative purposes, or as a means of breaking up a large expanse of wall surface. Info: *Old House Dictionary*.

## 5.12 UPPER FACADES

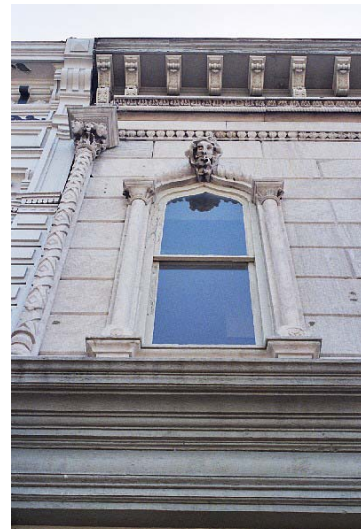
- 5.12.1 Upper facades should not be concealed or covered with modern materials.



## 5.13 WINDOWS

Also see Section 5.9, "Display Windows"

- 5.13.1 The original windows including sash, size, number, and arrangement of lights, materials, and decorative detailing should be preserved (maintained, restored). Windows should not be concealed, enclosed or covered.
- 5.13.2 Windows should be repaired rather than replaced. Missing windows should be replaced with windows which match the original in size, number, and arrangement of lights, and materials.
- 5.13.3 Where all original windows are missing, rectangular one-over-one wood sash windows are most appropriate in Bowling Green. If wood cannot be used, anodized or baked-on enamel aluminum, in white, dark, or bronze finishes are more appropriate.



- 5.13.4 Flush or snap-on muntins should not be used. These materials do not replicate the appearance of historic windows.
- 5.13.5 Window shutters should not be added to commercial buildings unless there is physical or pictorial evidence that they originally existed on the building. Wood shutters may be used to conceal blocked-in or bricked-in windows until restoration of windows occurs.
- 5.13.6 Missing shutters should be replaced with a louvered wood design and sized to fit the opening. When closed they should just cover the window opening.
- 5.13.7 Original window surrounds and detailing such as sheet metal hood molding, brick, or stone lintels and sills should be retained.
- 5.13.8 Storm windows may be added if they are of full view (single light) design or if they match the dimensions of the upper and lower sash with matching meeting rails. Aluminum storm windows should be anodized or of baked on enamel finish.

## 5.14 CORNICES

- 5.14.1 The original appearance and details of brick, sheet metal, or terra cotta cornices should be preserved, maintained, or restored. Cornices should not be concealed or covered with modern materials.
- 5.14.2 If cornices are missing, replacements should be based upon physical or pictorial evidence. If no such evidence exists, a simple wood cornice in keeping with other cornices in the downtown area is appropriate.

DEFINITION: A "cornice" is a projection at the top of a wall; the top course or molding of a wall when it serves as a crowning member. Info: *Old House Dictionary.*

## 5.15 ROOFS

The majority of commercial building roofs in downtown Bowling Green have flat or sloping roofs which are not visible from the street facades.

5.15.1 Preserve, maintain, or repair original roof configuration and materials.

5.15.2 New roofs of rolled or asphalt roofing materials are appropriate. If new roofs are added they should not be visible above the roof parapet wall.

5.15.3 Copper flashing should be installed along brick parapet walls to prevent new roofs from leaking.

5.15.4 Roof parapet walls and features such as concrete or stone piers should not be altered or removed.



This commercial structure in Oakland has a false front and a gable roof.  
DEFINITION: A "parapet" is a low wall or protective railing; often used around a balcony or balconet, or along the edge of a roof. Info: *Old House Dictionary*.

## 5.16 ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

5.16.1 Original architectural features and decorative features such as cast iron pilasters, brick corbelling or inlaid patterns, terra cotta, window hoods, and cornices should be preserved. Architectural features should not be removed or concealed.

5.16.2 Features which have been removed should be replaced based upon the original design, materials, proportion, and details.

5.16.3 Decorative architectural features should not be added to a building where none originally existed.

5.16.4 When repairing existing features, materials compatible with the building should be used.

5.16.5 Original cast iron columns or pilasters should be preserved, maintained, or restored; not concealed or obscured.



Window hoods and surrounds are architectural features that help give an historic building its unique character.

**DEFINITION:** A "pilaster" is a rectangular column or shallow pier attached to a wall; quite frequently decoratively treated so as to present a classical column with a base, shaft, and capital.  
Info: *Old House Dictionary*.

5.16.6 Cast iron columns or pilasters on storefronts should be cleaned using chemical agents. The use of abrasive cleaning methods such as sandblasting should not occur.

## 5.17 PAINT

5.17.1 Unpainted masonry surfaces should not be painted unless the masonry is mismatched or extremely deteriorated.

5.17.2 When painting an unpainted building, choose a color that matches the color of the brick.

5.17.3 Colors should be complimentary to the reds, browns, and grays found on most masonry buildings. Muted hues should be used to highlight window frames, cornices, and detailing.

5.17.4 Bright tones or hues may be used to highlight entrances, signs, and awnings.

5.17.5 Historic colors are recommended. Loud, bold, or arresting colors should not be used on buildings.

5.17.6 Color selection should be simple using no more than four colors total on the building exclusive of signs and awnings.

## 5.18 AWNINGS

5.18.1 Original historic awnings of glass and metal should be preserved.

5.18.2 Where historic evidence shows awnings were in existence, new awnings may be constructed in appropriate materials and design.

HINT: The most important issue in sign design is how an individual sign relates to the building on which it is placed. Info: *KY Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts.*

5.18.3 When adding awnings to a building, traditional awning designs, materials, and placement should be used.

5.18.4 Awnings may be retractable or fixed in place and should be formed to fit the opening. Shed awnings are best for rectangular openings while arched awnings are best for arched openings.

5.18.5 Awnings should be of canvas, acrylic, or vinyl coated material. The use of fixed metal or wood awnings is discouraged.

5.18.6 Shed awnings are most appropriate for the downtown area. The use of bubble, concave, or convex forms is discouraged.

5.18.7 Modern metal awnings or backlit awnings are discouraged.



Narrow plastic awnings are incompatible with the materials of historic commercial buildings, and provide no weather protection benefit. Image & Info: *KY Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts*.

## 5.19 SECONDARY FAÇADE FEATURES

5.19.1 Original doors, windows, and architectural detailing on side and rear elevations should be preserved, maintained, or repaired.

5.19.2 When utilizing side or rear elevations as entrances, signs, awnings, and lighting should be related to that on the main façade.

5.19.3 Rear elevations should be kept cleared of debris. HVAC units and dumpsters should be screened with lattice panels, wood fences, or with landscaping.

5.19.4 New staircases, balconies, elevator shafts, and additions should be placed on rear elevations. Porches, staircases, and balconies should not be added to primary facades where none originally existed.



It is not appropriate to cut an historic masonry wall for a heating or cooling unit or even a new window.

DEFINITION: A "baluster" is one of a series of short pillars or other uprights that support a handrail or coping. Info:

5.19.5 New staircases or balconies on the rear elevations should be of frame construction with simple square railings and balusters.

5.19.6 Handicapped ramps should be placed at rear elevations. Wood construction is preferred with plain rails and square balusters set no more than three inches apart.

## 5.20 MASONRY, WALLS, AND FOUNDATIONS

5.20.1 For masonry repointing, the original tooling configuration, joint width and depth, and mortar color should be maintained.

DEFINITION: "Pointing" is the treatment of masonry joints by filling with a high quality mortar; used to protect against the weather or simply to improve the appearance of a masonry wall. Info: *Old House Dictionary*.

5.20.2 *Do not sandblast* or use any abrasive method to clean masonry. Sandblasting or high-pressure cleaning methods are not acceptable for brick. These methods remove the outer patina or "crust" of the brick and expose the soft inner core which can lead to deterioration. High-pressure water cleaning methods which exceed six hundred (600) pounds per square inch should also never be used on brick.

5.20.3 Masonry cleaning should be with detergent cleansers or with appropriate chemical agents. Low pressure water cleaning is acceptable if the pressure is kept between two hundred (200) and six hundred (600) pounds per square inch (PSI). Steam cleaning of brick is also a good method but also requires a professional. The use of chemicals for the removal of exterior paint is also appropriate if the work is preformed by a qualified professional.

5.20.4 Water sealants on brick are not generally recommended. Despite these sealants water vapor can still enter the brick and can cause spalling.

- 5.20.5 Mortar should never be removed with electric power saws. Mortar should be hand raked and repointed with mortar to match the original or composition such as one part lime to two parts sand.
- 5.20.6 Brick should not be painted unless it is extremely mismatched or so deteriorated that it cannot withstand weather. Where painting is necessary, the original natural color of the brick should be used.
- 5.20.7 Stone should not be painted.
- 5.20.8 Original stone or brick foundation's materials and design should be preserved, maintained and repaired.

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