



Subject: Repair/Replacement of Missing or Altered Storefronts

- Applicable Standards:
- 2. Retention of Historic Character
  - 6. Repair/Replacement of Deteriorated or Missing Features Based on Evidence
  - 9. Compatible New Additions/Alterations

**Issue:** The storefront is generally the most prominent and important feature in defining the character of a historic commercial building. The design of a historic storefront varies depending on the period, size and scale of the building, but it is usually composed of large glass display windows with transoms and a bulkhead or kick panels below. The entrance may be flush with the storefront, or recessed; it may consist of a single door or a pair of doors, centered or on one side, or it may have multiple entrances in buildings with more than one retail establishment, or with apartments or offices on the upper floors. Historic storefronts are composed of a variety of materials and, although not necessarily an integral part of the building, awnings are often an important element. Because it is so important to a merchant's livelihood that merchandise and the commercial establishment itself appear up-to-date to attract customers, storefronts are likely to have undergone more frequent remodeling over the years than some other kinds of historic buildings.

The *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* provide several options for rehabilitating a historic commercial building that has an altered or missing storefront. (These are the same treatments which should be applied when rehabilitating any kind of historic building with a missing or altered feature.) The existing storefront may be retained, even if it is not historic, or a new storefront may be constructed. A new storefront may be an accurate restoration based on historic pictorial or photographic documentation; or it may be a new design that is compatible with the size, scale, material and color of the historic building.

*Preserving and Repairing a Historic Storefront*



Before rehabilitation (left), the storefronts and the second floor windows were covered by plywood and metal panels. Removal of the panels revealed that the historic storefronts and windows were still intact and could be preserved (right).

**Application 1 (Compatible treatment):** This two-story, brick structure was constructed c. 1876 for commercial use on the first floor and a hotel upstairs. In 1916, the corner portion of the building was "updated" and remodeled in the Craftsman style. Over the next eighty years many more changes, most of them unsympathetic, were inflicted on the building. Transoms above the storefronts, the second floor windows and the first floor windows around the corner were covered with metal cladding. Two of the original 1870s storefront bays on the left side of the building were removed to allow vehicular access into the building when it was used as a parking garage, and the other storefront bays and second story windows were blocked down with plywood. In addition, much of the exterior brick was painted.

When the plywood and metal panels were removed at the start of the rehabilitation, the historic storefront and the second floor

windows with their distinctive Craftsman-style details and muntin configuration were revealed to be intact, needing only minor repairs. On the left side of the building, the 1870s windows on the second floor were also intact and repairable. Although portions of the original storefronts had been removed to create garage door openings, the historic cast-iron frame itself remained, and only the missing display windows had to be replaced to re-establish these historic storefronts.

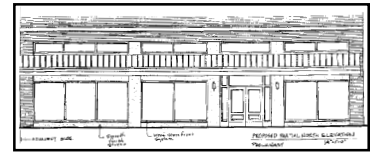
### *Designing Compatible, New Replacement Storefronts*

**Application 2** (*Incompatible treatment later modified to meet the Standards*): The storefront of this three-story, brick, commercial building constructed in 1923, and used as a furniture store with offices and lodge rooms on the upper floors, had also been altered, probably in the 1960s. When rehabilitating the building for offices, the owner opted for a new storefront design to highlight the building's new use. The architect initially proposed large, multipaned display windows flanking a double-door entry topped by an arched awning supported by free-standing metal posts. Neither the storefront, particularly the multipaned windows which are representative of a much earlier architectural style, nor the awning was appropriate for the historic character of this 1923 building.

The revised storefront design included replacing the multipaned windows with three large display windows and a double door entrance. The compatible new design also included a foreshortened transom that alluded to the original transom which could not be exposed in its entirety due to the existence of a later mezzanine. The awning was also redesigned to match the horizontal metal awning (visible in old photographs), which had hung from metal hooks still attached to the facade.



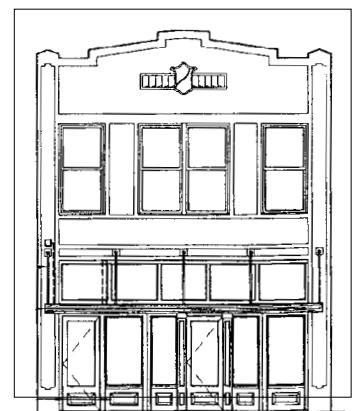
The storefront of this 1923 building had been changed in the 1960s (top left). The initial proposal for large, multi-pane display windows and an awning supported by freestanding posts (top right) was incompatible with the building's historic character. The revised design which simplified both the display windows and the awning is a compatible contemporary replacement storefront (bottom right).



**Application 3** (*Incompatible treatment later modified to meet the Standards*): This small, two-story brick building, originally constructed in 1889 as a newspaper office, had been “modernized” with an aluminum storefront installed in the 1950s. Although no historic photographs were found to show the building's original appearance, the storefront still had two entrances, one on the left leading to the upstairs, and another leading to the newspaper offices on the first floor. As part of a recent project to rehabilitate the building as a sports bar with apartments upstairs, a new, varnished wood storefront had been installed along with a very large awning that concealed the still extant, historic transom above the storefront. This new storefront was incompatible in scale, proportion, color and finish with the character of the historic building.



The storefront of this 1889 building was altered in the 1950s (left). The replacement storefront and awning were incompatible in scale, proportion, color and finish with the historic building (center). Remedial work to make the new storefront compatible will include re-installing a horizontal metal awning, painting the wood, and increasing the glass to wood ratio of the storefront (right).



Remedial work was proposed to bring the storefront into compliance with the Standards. The proportions of the storefront were corrected by lowering the height of the bulkhead panels and lengthening the glass in the display windows and the entrance doors. A traditional metal horizontal awning suspended from the facade would be installed which would once again reveal the transom. And, the new varnished wood of the storefront—the varnish already deteriorating rapidly on this west exposure, would be given a traditional painted finish, more appropriate to the character of the historic building and more protective of the wood.

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These bulletins are issued to explain preservation project decisions made by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The resulting determinations, based on the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#), are not necessarily applicable beyond the unique facts and circumstances of each particular case.