

CITY OF CORTLAND

DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In. Site: Architecture was engaged by the City of Cortland to facilitate the formalization of Central Business Historic Overlay District regulations and the development of the “Term Sheet” - An outline of the priorities and needs, which the City Lawyer and Code Enforcement Officials can use to develop and adopt a Design Ordinance, with teeth for enforcing the City of Cortland’s new standards.

We’ve worked closely with Historic District Commission representative, Linda Kleine, to create the draft Facade Handbook which must directly feed new city ordinances. The handbook and term sheet are included in the following sections.

CLARITY AND ENFORCEMENT OF OVERLAY DISTRICT STANDARDS

A Historic Overlay District has been in place in downtown Cortland since 2010 and the Commission continues to develop tools and methods for protecting the historic fabric and character of Cortland, preserving and enhancing Cortland’s heritage, and better serving long-term community development goals.

The ability to *share* and *enforce* design standards for the Overlay District has been an identified concern of the City and the Historic District Commission. To address these issues, simple improvements have been identified - **Design standards should be:**

- Consistent
- Easily digestible
- Readily available to applicants early in the process
- The approvals process should be clear and accessible to applicants

FAÇADE RENOVATION HANDBOOK

The *Cortland, NY façade Renovation Handbook* provides a flowchart to help applicants navigate the steps involved in proposing a design. The handbook is a tool for applicants within the district to develop their façade design proposals per § 300-47 of Cortland’s local laws. The recommendations within this façade handbook are intended

to directly coordinate with, and should not conflict with, any adopted local laws that govern façade designs within the district.

The façade Renovation Handbook and the local laws together will streamline the approvals process by clearly conveying design standards for applicants and providing a method by which the commission can directly cite and enforce standard regulations.

TERM SHEET

Significant additions can be made to the existing *Overlay District Rules of Order and Procedure* to aid with execution and enforcement. Certain façade design features can be regulated with minimum and maximum dimensional requirements and prerequisites (must-do's).

NEXT STEPS

1. After final revisions, the Façade Renovation Handbook should be adopted by the commission for official use and distribution to applicants. With the general guidelines in-hand, applicants can begin developing proposals that fit the spirit of the overlay district from day one.
 2. The final phase to implementation is the adding to and amending the existing overlay district local laws to better enforce the standards and prevent flagrant violations. The Commission and city zoning officials should work together to prioritize and develop more specific regulations that should be directly integrated into the current zoning laws.
 3. Both the Facade Handbook and Zoning Laws should continue to be developed and refined over time. Additions and revisions to design standards should be internally consistent between the Handbook and Zoning Laws to prevent confusion or misinterpreted standards.
-

2.

**CORTLAND, NY FAÇADE RENOVATION
HANDBOOK**



Cortland, NY
Façade Renovation Handbook
2016



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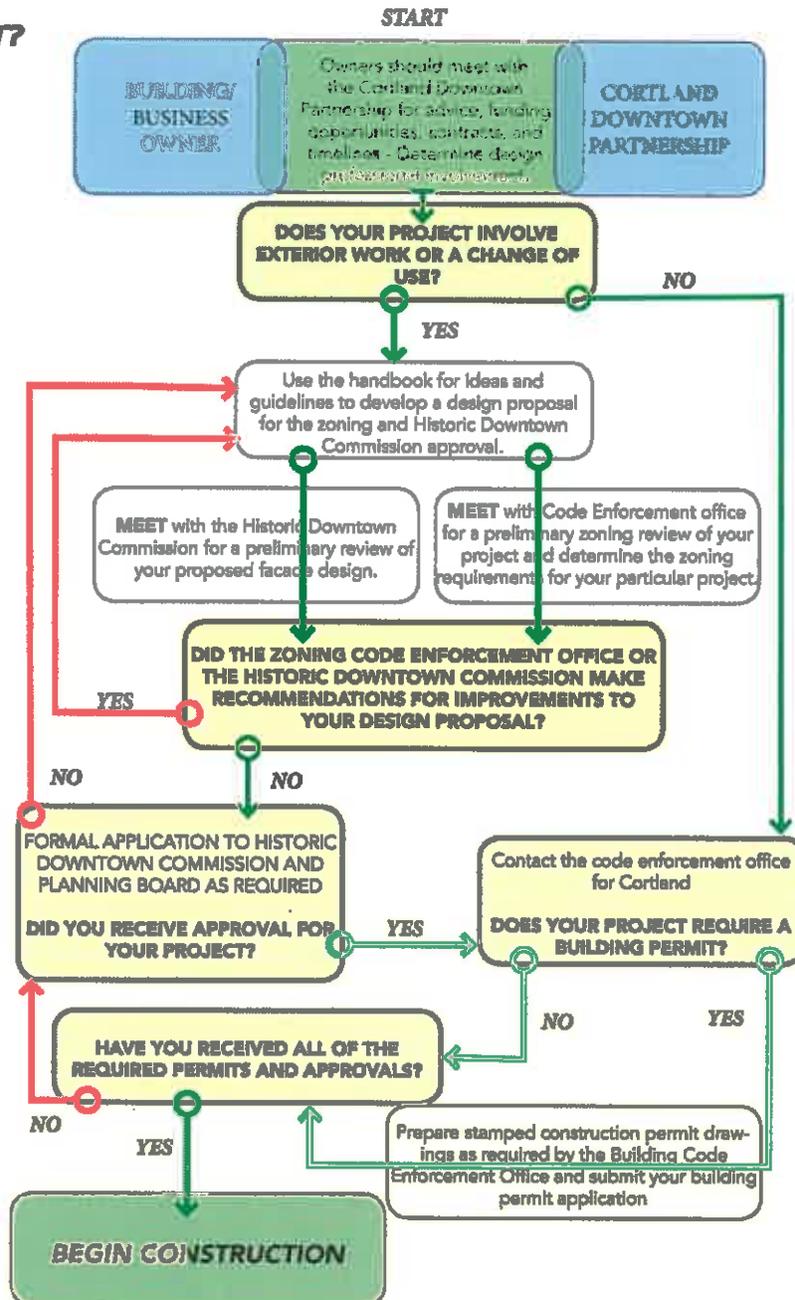
OVERVIEW

This overview represents the broader aims of the program. Specific design aids follow in the next section. The City of Cortland and the Historic District Commission have created this document to better serve the community. The building and business owners within the Historic Overlay District may utilize this tool to help move their facade renovation projects through the design, application, and approval process.

CLARITY | CONSISTENCY | CHARACTER

By establishing a clear & transparent process from the inception of a project through approval to completion, the handbook should aid building and business owners. Historic Overlay District building and business owners will have to meet the requirements of the City of Cortland Code, NYS Building Code, and Historic District Commission. By moving through a more consistent process, certain additional funding opportunities may be relevant and/or available for your project. For projects within the Historic Overlay District:

HOW DO I START?

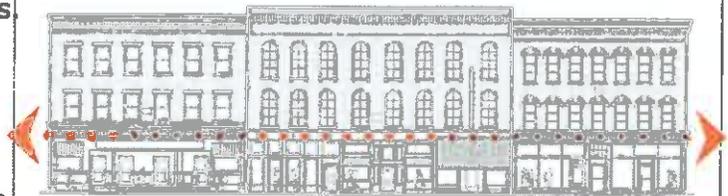


DISTRICT BRANDING & COHESIVENESS

This Façade Handbook is intended to aid owners of buildings undergoing façade renovations, in contributing to the development of a vibrant and pedestrian-friendly downtown. Façade elements such as signs, colors, lighting, awnings, windows and doors, siding materials, and detailing all make a significant contribution to the character and identity of the street. Not only can this handbook help building owners with design decisions, they also can be used to highlight and enhance existing characteristics of Cortland's Downtown. The existing Historic Overlay District is responsible for establishing design standards.

SIGNAGE

- Signs are an important part of marketing your business and are the most common façade element for the Historic District Commission to review. The signage section of this handbook will help you establish your presence within the district, while promoting the traditional character of Cortland's Central Business District.



COLORS

- Historic Colors & color schemes can often be a difficult variable to balance within overlay districts - Businesses in the district should consider customizing a color palette as a tool to facilitate a unified character and community cohesiveness. Colors should allow you to differentiate your business without detracting from the cohesive character of the district as a whole. By defining a breadth of acceptable colors, owners could navigate the approval process with more confidence, establish their unique brand, and contribute to the cohesiveness of the Historic Overlay District.

(address/date)



DETAILING

- Cortland's Historic Overlay District boasts an abundance of period detailing and materials. The facade handbook should aid owners and the commission with maintaining and enhancing these details as they contribute to the unique character of Cortland's Historic District.



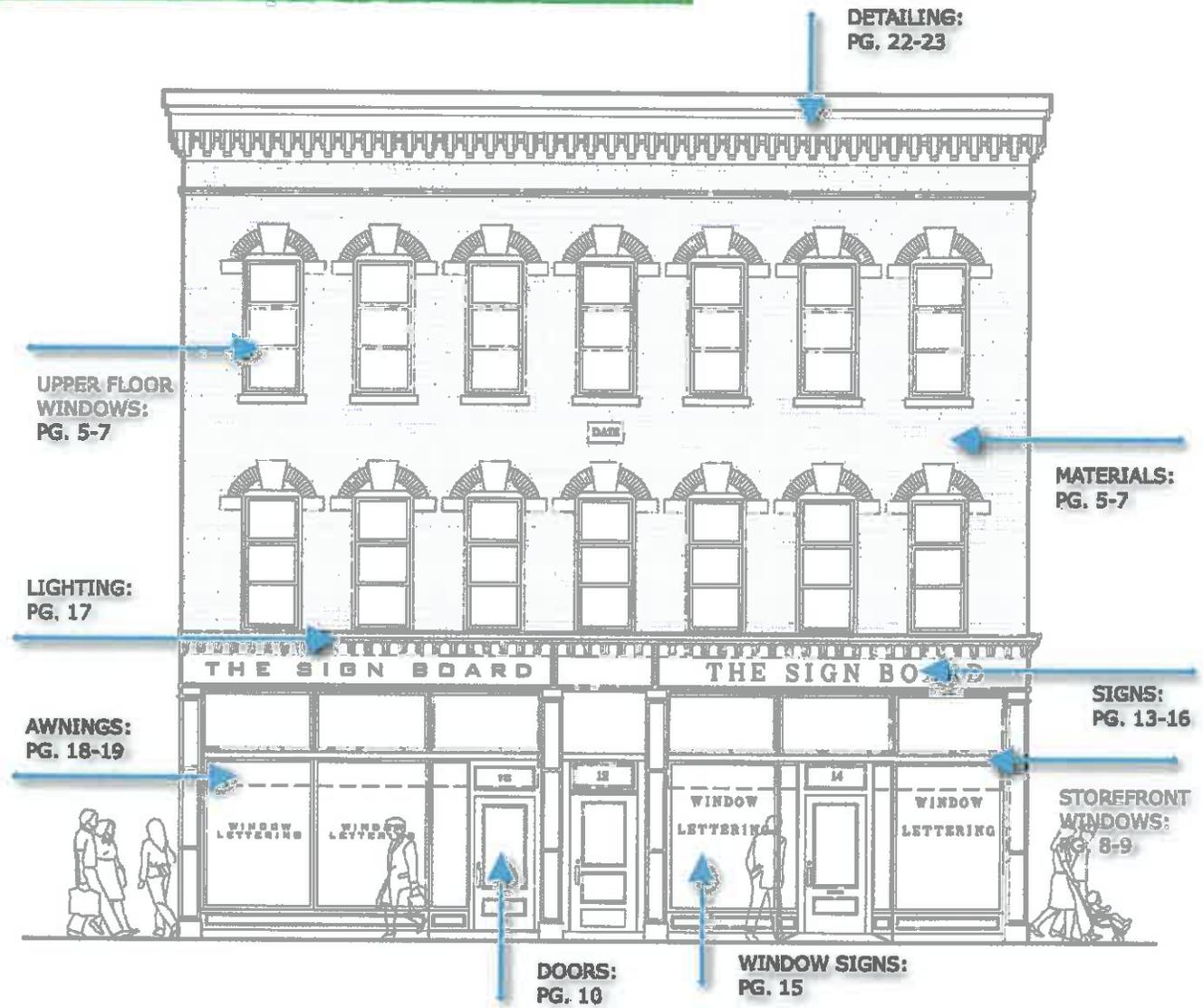
(address/date)

The façade Handbook promotes designs that aid in creating a better defined urban experience on one's approach by addressing the specialized needs of these facades.

Graphic Table of Contents

Handbook for Commercial Buildings: This graphic table of contents will direct you to the section of the Handbook that will address each of the following façade elements.

This handbook emphasizes facade elements. The Historic District Commission will also review and approve site and landscape designs. Some of these items include but are not limited to: Ramps, balconies, plantings, paving, setbacks, roofing materials, railings, and other constructed site improvements. Special care should be given to ensure that pedestrian needs are being met with site and landscape improvements.



This Handbook may not comply with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

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1. Materials

- a) Whenever possible, repair original materials before replacing them with new materials. In some cases, old brick buildings will require repairs to the brick and mortar.

Brick restoration requires special attention. Power-washing and sandblasting can damage the surface of the brick. After the surface has been cleaned of debris or old paint, bricks may need replacing and mortar joints repaired. Brick sealer can be applied to protect the restored brick. Always consult a professional before performing any masonry and brick work or reference the National Parks Service, Technical Preservation Services - preservation briefs for more information on brick, mortar types, and restoration practices.

(<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>)

PLEASE NOTE: Some brick types are required to be sealed or painted.

Buildings may already have painted brick. In these instances it would be appropriate to repaint the existing brick.

- b) Do not use thin veneer/fake brick or stone applications when they do not accurately represent the building or the material. Do not use vinyl or metal siding. Many of these materials have unnatural trim, lintel and edge conditions that cause the façade to look too uniform and massive. Façade design proposals should never include covering original materials or column, cornice, sill, lintel, window, bulkheads, or panel detailing.



✓ DO repair and restore original materials whenever possible

ACCEPTABLE MATERIALS:

- wood
- fiber-cement board
- brick
- metal (depending on application)



✗ DO NOT use fake or thin veneer brick or stone



✗ DO NOT use vinyl or metal siding to cover original facades

- b) If materials are beyond repair - Use materials that don't require replacement as the only option for maintenance. **Products such as brick, wood, or fiber-cement board can be painted and are easily maintained – colors for painted surfaces can be changed as required.** Smooth fiber-cement clapboard would be an acceptable wood substitute because it can be painted, it can be used where wood is used, and it's very durable when installed per manufacturer's specifications.

Some buildings may require gutters and downspouts on their street sides. For these buildings, all gutters and downspouts should be galvanized steel, aluminum, copper or an approved substitute with a period and style-correct shape, such as "half-round." Residential "K-style gutters" create unwanted horizontal lines that may detract from the building trim and detailing, and should not be used. Ensure that gutters and downspouts are of adequate size to manage the volume of water that flows from the roof that it serves.



✓ **DO** use wood or fiber-cement clapboard siding and trim



✓ **DO** use copper gutters and downspouts where appropriate



✓ **DO** use half-round gutters



✗ **DO NOT USE** residential, K-style gutters



d)

✓ **DO** use box box gutters



roofing materials that are visible from the street. Whenever possible, it is preferred that period-correct materials are used, such as real cedar, slate, or standing-seam metal. Standing-seam metal roofing has a long life span when properly installed and will help maintain cooler roof temperatures, helping to reduce mechanical cooling costs.



✓ **DO take cues from historic precedent and use standing seam metal roofing or cedar shingles**

Asphalt shingles are less durable, will produce more heat and are not historically accurate.

✓ **DO use standing seam metal roofing**

✗ **DO NOT USE asphalt shingles.**



- b) Paving: When decorative concrete, brick pavers, or other high quality grade finishes are distributed, the original materials should be replaced as was originally constructed.
- c) Decks: The Commission also regulates constructed decks within the district. Wood species should be carefully considered; Pressure treated lumber maybe used for structural, concealed locations in direct contact with concrete, masonry, or the ground. For finish decking and handrall materials, certain untreated, stained, painted, or natural species should be used: fir, cedar, ipe, and others. Composite decking may be considered upon special approval.



2. Storefront Windows and Doors Windows:

- a) Windows allow for pedestrian safety and flow in addition to easy viewing of merchandise for mercantile businesses. **Original openings should be maintained.** Design proposals should not reduce the glazed area of the storefront unless it is historically accurate. **Window openings that were previously reduced or enlarged should be restored** - 60%-80% of the storefront "pedestrian zone" (2'-8' above the sidewalk) should be clear glass, window area. This may vary depending on what is historically accurate for each specific building.

Maintain a three feet (3') minimum visual access into storefronts from the pedestrian zone and avoid using displays and signs that prohibit views in and out, including large shelving units with their backs facing the window. Proposals should not use vertical blinds or other elements that will block views into storefront windows. In some cases, storefronts may contain professional offices. For these storefronts, alternate privacy and shading elements may be appropriate. Use storefront awnings for shade control. **Do not use opaque or tinted glass on commercial storefronts.**



DO NOT reduce storefront window openings or have less than 60% clear glass

DO restore window openings and create visual access into businesses



DO create and maintain large, glass, street level storefronts - 60%-80% clear glass

DO create large storefront windows to allow 3' minimum visual access into storefronts



Storefront displays should be lit at night



DO NOT block view into storefronts with window shades or oversized window signs



- b) Frame and sash profiles should be large enough to complement trim elements. For traditional façades, trim elements should be wood or approximately the same dimensionality and character of the original design.

The windows should be sized to fit with existing vertical and horizontal elements when available. Large areas should be broken up to address human scale as shown.

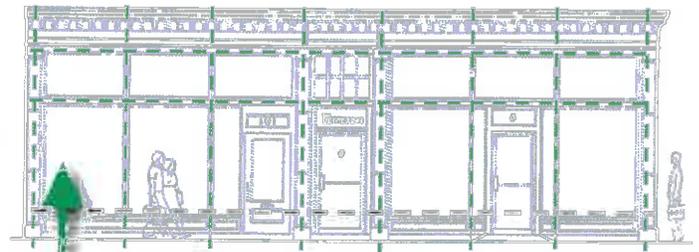
Using transom windows adds visual interest by creating a horizontal line to break up the storefront and address door heights relative to overall height of the storefront. Transom windows should be restored if they were previously removed or hidden. Existing transom windows should be maintained. Maintain the window and door proportions across the entire façade.

For commercial storefronts, use of wood or aluminum-clad wood windows is preferred. In special cases, using dark, anodized-aluminum windows with appropriately dimensioned frame and sash profiles would be considered.

Vinyl windows are prohibited. In general, color options for vinyl windows are limited and vinyl is a less dimensionally stable product.

MATERIALS:

- wood
- aluminum-clad wood
- dark anodized aluminum or painted aluminum with appropriate sash & frame profiles



✓ **DO break up storefronts with horizontal and vertical elements**

✓ **DO establish a rhythmic pattern to break up large areas**



✓ **DO use transoms to add horizontal lines that break up the height**



✓ **DO use wood or aluminum-clad wood windows for storefronts**

Doors:

- c) Uninterrupted full-glass and half-glass doors allow for visibility in and out.

Exterior doors that lead to residential second floors may be stile-and-rail doors without glass. The goal is that half-glass doors and doors without glass should appear as "secondary" doors to pedestrians as compared to the full glass doors that lead to 1st floor businesses.

Transoms above doors to second floors should be restored to allow for light to enter into the stairway.

For standard commercial storefronts, doors should be wood or approximate wood in profile and character. Vinyl is not an acceptable alternative. Steel doors should be used only when historically appropriate.



X DO NOT use aluminum storefront doors



X DO NOT use residential type doors for commercial storefronts

✓ DO use full glass entry doors for storefronts



✓ DO use stile-and-rail type doors for second floor access doors and restore transoms above doors



✓ DO use half-glass doors for second floor access entry doors and restore transoms above



3. Upper Floor Windows

- a) Restore original openings. Use wood or aluminum-clad wood windows, depending on the degree of historic character that has been maintained or is desired. **Original window frames, sashes, transoms and arch tops should be restored.** Interior, removable storm windows can be used to increase the energy efficiency of existing single-pane windows. Storm windows should have minimal profiles so that original divided lights are clearly visible.

Dark, anodized aluminum windows with historic frame and sash profiles might be considered. **Vinyl windows are prohibited.**

A minimum of 25% of the façade for the upper floor should incorporate transparent glass openings



✓ **DO** maintain or restore original window openings



✗ **DO NOT** reduce window openings

✓ **DO** keep a minimum of 25% of upper level façade area for window openings



✗ **DO NOT** cover window openings



✓ **DO** restore window openings



For upper level windows that have been blocked and cannot be opened up, spandrel glass should be used to maintain window openings. In special situations openings may be filled in to match the exterior finish with brick or fake shutters.

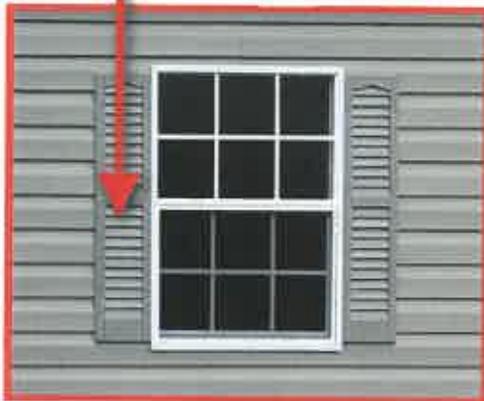
Do not place window unit air conditioners or satellite dishes on street side façades.

Original shutters should be restored. If not present, shutters are discouraged. However, if new shutters are proposed they should be made of wood, composite wood or a dimensionally similar, or paintable alternative. Do not use vinyl. Shutters should be located and sized to fit the window they serve. Though shutters may be fixed, the shutters should be large enough to fully cover the window if they were to be closed.

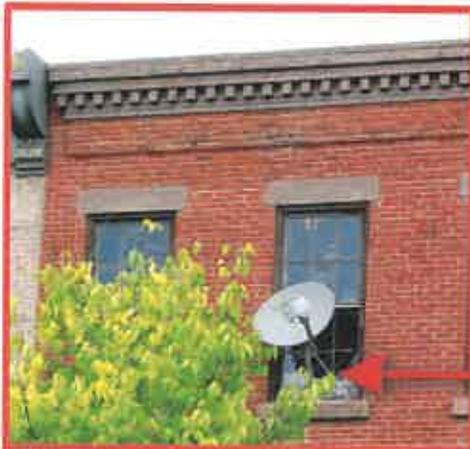


DO properly infill upper floor windows when necessary, coordinate with zoning restrictions.

X DO NOT use vinyl, undersized, or monotone shutters



✓ DO restore original shutters



DO NOT block any window openings with air conditioners and do not mount satellite dishes to the facade



4. Signage

- a) A variety of signs and fonts around Main Street is acceptable. Signs will identify and define individual businesses. Each business is allowed maximum square footage of sign space which can be made up of wall signs, perpendicular signs, awning lettering, and window lettering.

Sign boards:

The scale and placement of the lettering and sign boards is important. Sign boards above storefront windows or awnings should not cover second floor windows and should be in proportion with the overall height of the building.

Sign board height for multiple-story buildings should be within 5%-7% of the overall building height. This rule does not apply to single-story facades. The business name should fit within the allotted sign board space; additional words and descriptions can appear as lettering on canvas awnings, window lettering and perpendicular signs.

Do not place lettering or sign boards at the second floor portion of the façade and do not use lettering or signage that is over-sized for the particular façade.

Sign boards should be wood or fiber-cement board panels for mounting raised letters or signs.

Do not use internally lit signs or light up digital LED signs.

MATERIALS:

- carved solid wood
- cut metal
- raised letters: acrylic or metal
- "aluma-bond"



DO make sign board size proportionate to building height



DO NOT cover second floor windows with sign boards



DO NOT oversize sign boards relative to building height



DO use raised lettering or carved signs on sign boards

- b) Perpendicular signage of various shapes and sizes is another option for business identification. Carved, dimensional signs are preferred. Sign board lettering should have a minimum depth of 1/2".

Perpendicular signs should not project more than four feet (4') from the building façade. There should be a minimum of eight feet (8') from the sidewalk to the bottom of the sign and the top of the sign should not be higher than twelve feet (12') above the sidewalk. Perpendicular signs should not exceed a surface area of twelve square feet (12 ft²) per side, but may take on various shapes. Perpendicular signs should have dimensionality; carved signs are preferred.

Perpendicular signs can be externally lit. Do not use internally lit perpendicular signs.

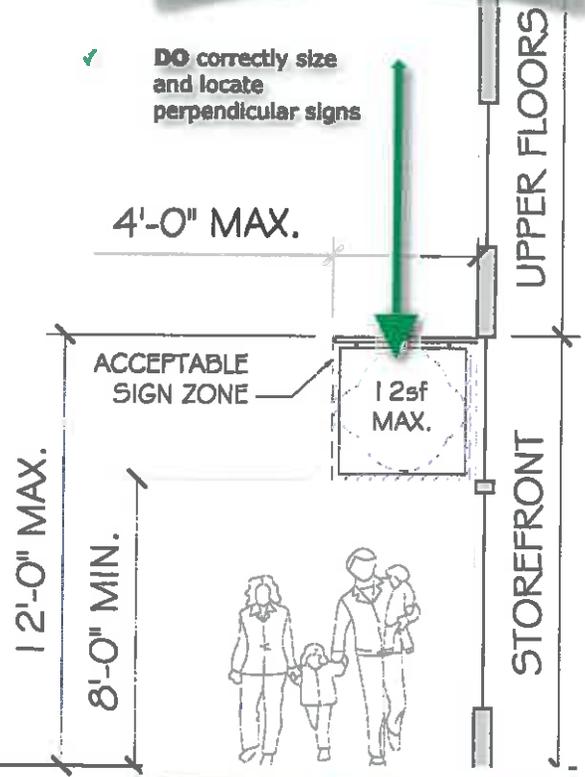
Signs should be suspended from horizontal standards or brackets mounted to the building. The actual sign board should not touch the building face.

If both an awning and sign are used they should be placed so as to not interfere with visibility to the sign.

DO use properly sized perpendicular signs in various shapes



✓ DO correctly size and locate perpendicular signs



a variety of designs and shapes encouraged within size and location requirements



✗ DO NOT use oversized, backlit, or plastic perpendicular signs



- c) Window lettering should be carefully organized and applied so as to not clutter or prohibit viewing into the business, and should relate to the color scheme and other fonts for the business. Window signs should not be more than 25% of each window area and if solid, no more than four square feet of area per window.

Neon "open" signs are discouraged. In special cases, vintage neon signs would be deemed acceptable. Any new and creative use of neon signs could be considered on a case by case basis to ensure that the spirit of the district is met.



DO use window lettering without cluttering the view in and out – cumulative lettering area should be less than 25% of the glass area



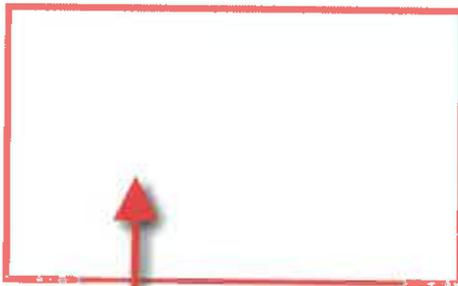
DO use window lettering without blocking view



DO use window lettering without blocking view



DO use flags as an alternative to window signs



DO NOT block views in and out with posters, signs, advertisements, greater than 25% of the glass area or 4 square feet, whichever is least.



Additional Sign Types

- d) Freestanding lawn signs, Wall mounted signs near the entry door, and hanging signs at porches and entrances: Sign colors should coordinate with the building's color scheme.

Free standing lawn signs should be used for converted residences. By keeping the sign height above knee level and below eye level it can be easily seen without blocking views. Lit signs should have lighting cast onto the surface of the sign and should not be backlit.

Hanging signs should be used on porches and should be hung in a location that does not disrupt the view of the main entrance

Wall mounted signs should be carved wood and should be mounted near the main entrance. Ensure that wall mounted signs do not cover windows.



DO use free standing, carved wood lawn signs

✓ **DO** use carved wood hanging signs



✓ **DO** use wall mounted, carved wood signs



5. Lighting

- a) Sign boards can be lit with either fluorescent linear or goose neck lights. Fluorescent linear lights should match the traditional incandescent range of warm, consistent colors (2,000K-4,000K).

Do not use Internally lit signs. Perpendicular signs should be lit from both sides.

For some storefronts, Neon signs may be appropriate for original character of the business or facade

If your building has unique details and facade depth consider highlighting these details with exterior facade lighting to create shadow and interest at night.

✓ **DO** use gooseneck fixtures to light signs

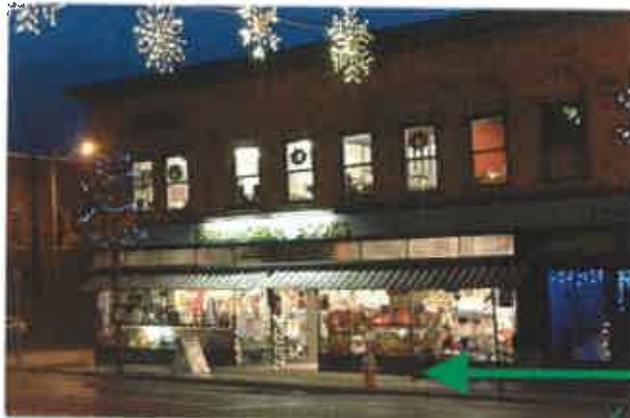


✗ **DO NOT** use internally lit signs



- b) Use Interior lighting for display windows and exterior entry lighting for security. Interior lighting at night will also draw attention to your business indicating that it is occupied and operational space on Main Street. Interior lighting should also be used for security purposes.

✓ **DO** use linear fluorescent fixtures with incandescent color ranges (2,000K-3,000K).



✓ **DO** light storefronts at night. Window displays, entry vestibules, and signs

✓ **DO** light storefronts at night for security and marketing



6. Awnings

- a) Awnings should be fabric and coordinate with the proposed color scheme. Any awnings should be sized relative to the window openings that they are sheltering to maintain vertical separations. Awnings may have a triangular or curved profile and may be fixed or retractable. The shape of the awning should be determined by the style of the building and the area that it is shading. The bottom of awnings should be a minimum of eight feet (8') high from the sidewalk and should not project more than five feet (5') or one-half of the width of the sidewalk, whichever is smaller.

Prefabricated metal awnings are not acceptable. Non-historic, structured overhangs should be removed and hidden details restored.

- x** **DO NOT** use metal awnings that simulate fabric awnings on historic buildings.



- DO NOT** attach structured overhangs to original facades - remove whenever possible to restore original transoms and signboards.



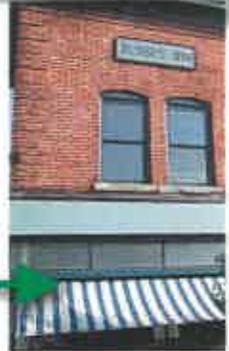
- DO** coordinate awnings colors with the proposed building color scheme.

- DO** use awnings at upper floors - colors should coordinate with the overall color scheme.

- DO** use fixed or retractable awnings in triangle or curved profiles on non-historic buildings.



- DO** match awning size and location to vertical and/or horizontal separations - reference section 2B



- DO** coordinate awning colors with the building color scheme.

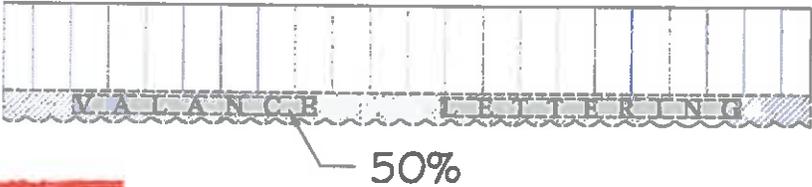
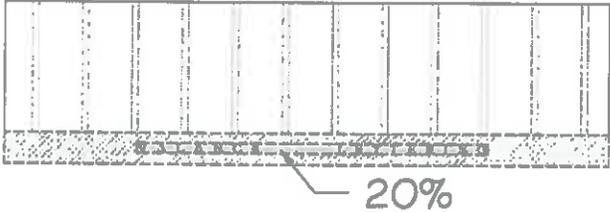
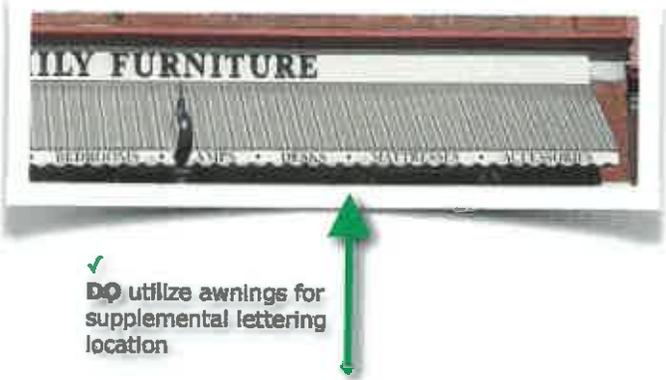


- DO** match awning size and location to vertical and/or horizontal separations and coordinate color schemes.



b) Awnings can provide an opportunity for supplemental sign information. Placing lettering on the awnings allows businesses to share more information without using up other signage locations such as windows and sign boards.

- Lettering area should fit within 20%-50% of the total valance area.
- Letters should not be in a bold face font.
- DO NOT incorporate lighting into fabric awnings.
- Letters and words should be evenly spaced across the overall length of the valance to prevent it from appearing cluttered.



DO NOT place lettering and text on the top of the awning. Lettering should appear on the valance only.

7. Color

- a) **For buildings that have retained substantial historic character, historic color palettes should be used.** When choosing a color scheme for a building, ensure that complementary colors are chosen. Maintain consistent tones when assembling colors to prevent awkward contrasts.

Many paint manufacturers offer a historic preservation color palette (Benjamin Moore, Sherwin Williams, Behr, Valspar, etc...)

Design proposals should also consider the colors of adjacent buildings or buildings shared between multiple tax parcels to ensure that complementary colors are being used across the streetscape. For a building with multiple tax parcels, an alternative is for the owners to agree on the upper level base color. Avoid duplicating the colors of adjacent buildings. Consider developing a cohesive palette for Cortland.

Note: Color options are not limited to this selection. Colors as printed here do not accurately reflect the true paint colors. Please consult paint chips for true representation.



Sample of acceptable combinations. The colors shown are from the Benjamin Moore Historic Preservation Color palette - other manufacturers are acceptable.



- a) For buildings that are completely painted, choose 2-3 colors for different building elements. One color will act as a base color for the majority of the façade (for painted brick or wood facades). The second color should be used for secondary elements like sign boards or medium sized elements such as columns or bulk head panelling. The third color should be used to pull out cornice and/or column detailing. Do not use uncomplimentary colors, too many, too few, or monotone colors.

Where the brick condition allows, the brick should not be painted on these buildings. The natural color of the brick should be considered in the overall color scheme. Some brick restoration may be required. National Park Service’s preservation briefs discuss masonry sealers in greater detail.

Colors and stains for window trim and frames should be considered as part of the proposed color scheme.

✓ **DO** use 2-3 colors to create a base and highlight details



✓ **DO** leave exposed brick and consider the natural brick color in the overall color scheme



✓ **DO** coordinate window trim and frame colors with building color scheme



✗ **DO NOT** use a single color or colors that blend too closely



Base Color (Red)

Windows and trim elements (Orange)

Accent and detailing (Beige)

✓ **DO** use multiple colors for highlighting new trim details and panels



8. Detailing

a) When feasible, a proposal should reference original fragments of the existing façade in order to re-establish its own recognizable, authentic identity. Details should be highlighted through careful color selection. Do not cover or remove column, lintel, or parapet details that provide historic character and address human scale.

✓ **DO** restore and highlight intricate details with careful color selection



✗ **DO NOT** paint detailing the same color as the building base color

✗ **DO NOT** cover original detailing for cornices, lintels or columns

✓ **DO** restore and highlight cornice, bracket, and column details with careful color selection



✗ **DO NOT** cover original facades with metal siding.

✓ **DO** restore and highlight cornice and column details with careful color selection



- b) Provide visual separation between first and second stories. This separation may consist of decorative trim, awnings, or a change of material with added relief to create a shadow line that delineates the top of the first story.



Original trim, cornices, columns, lintels, brackets and other details should not be removed.



- c) Building owners are encouraged to study their building's history, date built, the original owner/builder and their potential influence on Cortland. Original building dates and carved stone work should be maintained and enhanced as required.

✓ **DO** create or enhance existing carved date blocks or signs



✓ **DO** use plaques to share building history



- e) Residences require different approaches to detailing. Unlike their brick counterparts, they are more likely to have the eave side of a gable roof facing the street. Special attention should be given to how trim is treated around eaves and gutters. Restore original trim detailing.

✓ **DO** restore trim details and brackets at eave overhangs

✓ **DO** use snow guards for roofs that shed toward the street



Given that these buildings will shed snow to the street side of the building, snow-guards and snow-ralls are an acceptable way to prevent large piles of snow from falling onto pedestrians.

Original shutters should be restored. If not present, artificial fixed shutters are not necessary or encouraged. However, if new shutters are proposed they should be made of wood, composite wood or a dimensionally similar, or paintable alternative. **Do not use vinyl.** Shutters should be located and sized to fit the window they serve. Though shutters may be fixed, the shutters should be large enough to fully cover the window if they were to be closed.



✓ **DO** restore existing shutters

DO use appropriately proportioned trim detailing for eaves, gable-ends, and wall terminations



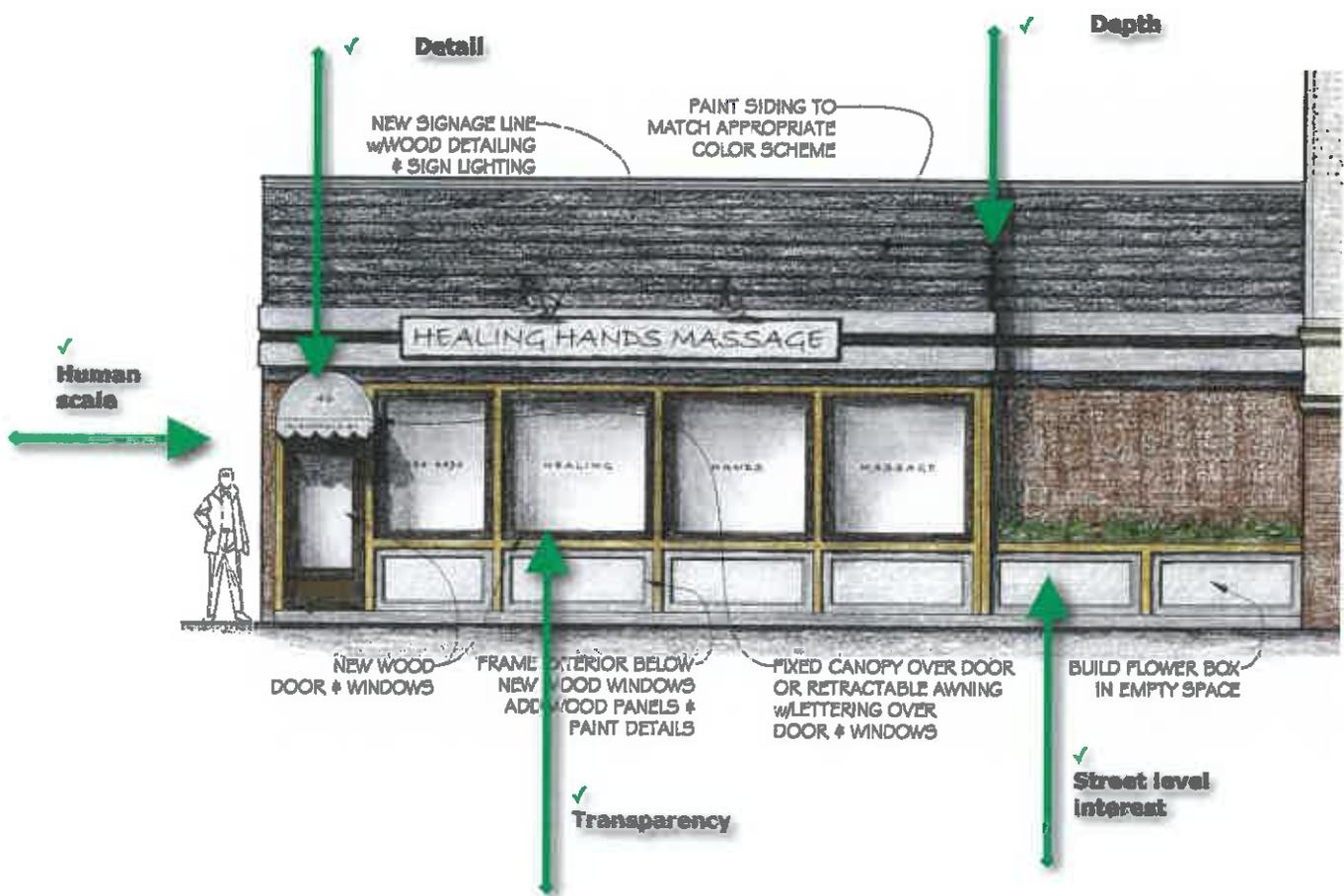
9) Single-Story Facades & Non-historic Facades

There are elements of façade design that are transposable onto different kinds of structures, from venerable 19th century edifices to utilitarian concrete-block warehouses and buildings of various sizes. This sensitivity to creating an inviting, layered, pedestrian-scaled façade represents the starting point for single-story buildings. This sensitivity to creating an inviting, layered, pedestrian-scaled façade represents the starting point for “non-historic” or substantially altered buildings.

Design Elements

- Depth and “layering” of façade elements
- Focusing on human scale
- Street-level interest
- Transparency
- Detail
- Material Quality & Durability

owners are encouraged to utilize these principles in new and creative ways to ensure their storefront contributes to the richness and quality of the existing district



- a) Traditional proportions for sign boards and their locations on two-story facades may not be appropriate for single-story facades. Signboards should run the full length of the building and the height of signboards should be within 10%-25% of the overall building height. Applied lettering or signs within this zone should be no taller than two feet (2') or 80% of the signboard zone, whichever is smaller.

After appropriate proportions for signboards are established, upper portions of the wall may be left as a uniform material. Using the parapet or cornice detailing to establish rhythm can create visual interest. Considering the heights of adjacent single-story buildings will help Cortland's single-story facades create a contiguous block.



DO use parapets to create rhythm and add visual interest while maintaining pedestrian scale windows and signs for storefront proportions



DO use parapets with cornice detailing on single-story facades to add visual



- b) By having an overhanging, 3-dimensional element, the owners can extend the presence of a business onto the sidewalk, making the business more inviting, increasing sales space, seating, etc, and protecting customers from the elements. Single-story buildings create additional dimensional interest at street level. Fabric awnings can help add detail and dimension to facades that lack the cornice, lintel and column detailing that may not be as prevalent.

DO introduce fabric awning variations to engage the pedestrian zone

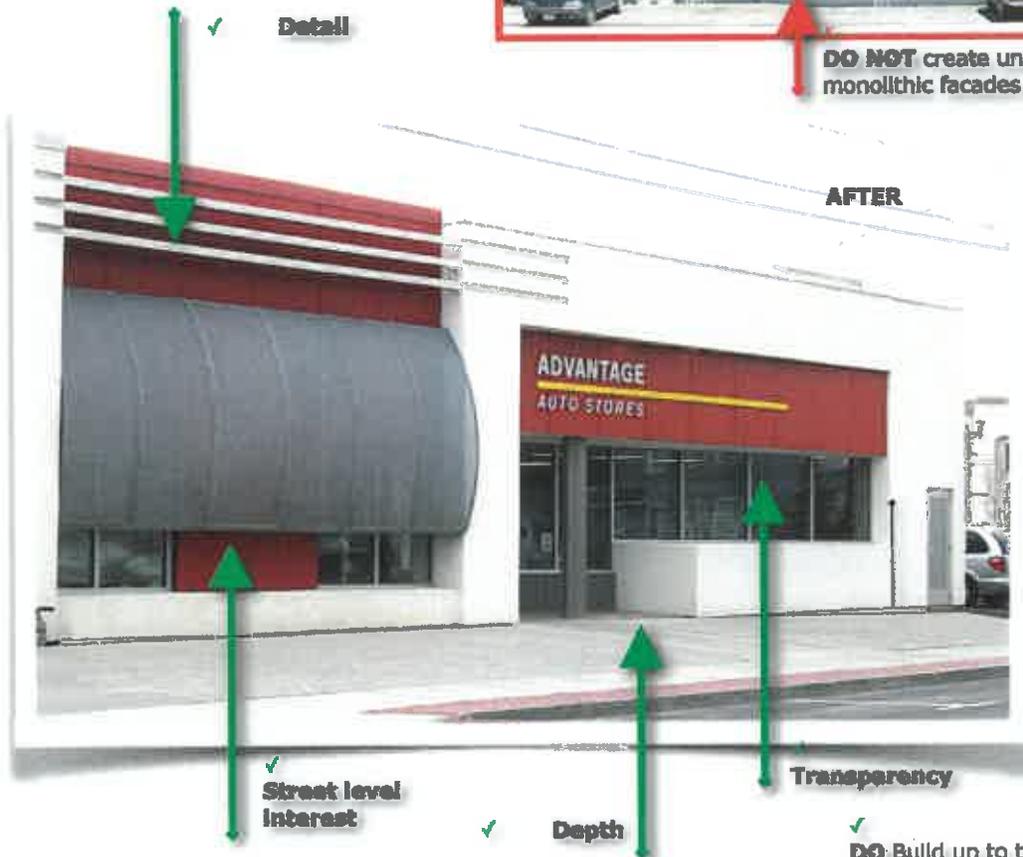


Non-historic Buildings or New Infill Construction: Large, empty, windowless facades deter walking, make pedestrians feel small and unwelcome. By making larger window openings and adding depth to a storefront one can make the business more sheltering and welcome for pedestrians. In some cases it may not be viable to increase the number of windows or visually break up the mass of a façade. Consider using different exterior finish materials to break up a large façade or painted murals that speak to characteristics of Cortland, or the business occupying the space.

BEFORE



DO NOT create uniform, monolithic facades



AFTER

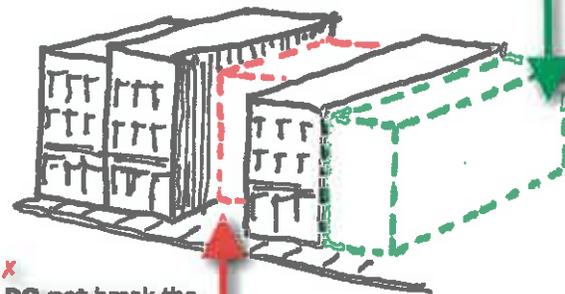
✓ **Street level interest**

✓ **Depth**

✓ **Transparency**

✓ **DO** Build up to the lot line and continue the storefront rhythm.

For infill construction, owners should ensure that buildings in the commercial districts are built up to the sidewalk, zero-setback, on primary streets.



✗ **DO not** break the continuity of the streetscape

- a) Historically, awnings helped reduce direct sunlight, protect from rain and snow, and attach businesses to the sidewalk and street. By having an overhanging, 3-dimensional element, the owner can extend the presence of a business onto the sidewalk, making the business more inviting, increasing sales space, seating, etc, and protecting customers from the elements.

For buildings not limited by historic character, custom designed and fabricated awnings are permitted. Work with a designer to create a unique element that can welcome passing pedestrians. Three-dimensional elements may require additional structural support.

The Historic District Commission will review and approve these design elements.

DO Introduce awning variations and 3-dimensional elements to engage the pedestrian zone



Maintenance

To avoid blight conditions in Cortland:

- Ensure that any exterior lighting lamps are not blown out and replace when required
- As paint begins to deteriorate, scrape clean and apply a fresh coat of primer and paint. When painting masonry – repair masonry, allow for the masonry to dry out before applying fresh coats of paint
- For brick buildings, over time the brick and mortar joints may need repair. By keeping the brick and mortar joints in good condition you will extend the overall life of the building while keeping the building looking clean
- Windows should be kept clean. When windows crack or break they should be replaced. Verify that caulking around windows and other openings is in good condition to extend the life of the windows and adjacent building materials
- Lettering should be replaced if letters are missing or damaged.
- Do not board up damaged windows.
- Do not leave scattered, disorganized, or abandoned utilities attached to buildings.
- Given the setbacks from the street that occur at converted residence, maintenance for landscaping elements should be planned for. Sidewalks should be kept clean, free of clutter, and in good condition.
- Outdoor furniture should be kept clean and repaired in good condition as required.
- Miscellaneous Items: Plantings in flower boxes and planters should be attentively maintained. Seasonal decorations should be placed and removed when appropriate and kept neatly organized while displayed.
- Monitor your facade for unwanted graffiti and clean in a timely manner.
- Boarding up windows with plywood or other materials is not permitted.
- Maintain sidewalks and paved areas by removing weeds.
- Ensure that temporary banner signs are permitted and removed by limited deadline.
- Ripped or tattered awnings should be repaired or replaced and faded awnings should be replaced.

3.

TERM SHEET

Cortland's existing overlay district laws are limited to the the creation of overlay districts and Rules of Order and Procedure. The rules lay out the general scope and limits of the regulatory body as well as the method by which permit applications are reviewed, processed, and challenged.



a. SUMMARY OF EXISTING LAWS

i. RULES OF ORDER AND PROCEDURE

Supplemental district regulations exist above and beyond the standard use districts...

§ 300-40. Applicability

And the Historic District objectives are defined...

§ 300-41. Historic and/or Architectural Design District

A basic administrative structure for the commission is outlined...

§ 300-42. Creation of Historic District Commission

That commission can propose districts that meet aesthetic values and represent eras of significance for common council approval...

§ 300-43. Requirements to establish historic district or landmark site.

For districts or landmarks proposed by the commission, a historic survey must be completed and clearly located on the zoning maps...

§ 300-44. Designation of historic district or landmark site on Zoning Map; historical resources survey.

The commission will be considering these basic variables in the applicant design proposals...

§ 300-45. Required project approvals for Historic District.

Applicants may propose to create a historic district or landmark...

§ 300-46. Procedure to establish Historic District or Landmark Site.

The Commission has other administrative duties and tools to better assist the community and achieve its goals...

§ 300-47. Additional powers of the Historic District Commission.

Uses and areas that are permitted by the underlying district are permitted within the historic district...

§ 300-48. Historic District permitted uses.

§ 300-49. Historic District area regulations.

Any aggrieved person may pursue a basic appeals process...

§ 300-50. Appeals from decisions of Historic District Commission.

ii. **SPECIFIC DESIGN ELEMENT REGULATIONS**

At the heart of problem is the lack of design specifications within Cortland's zoning laws that an applicant can reference for developing their façade renovation proposals, resulting in little room for defensible enforcement by the Commission.

For example, one existing section of the zoning laws where an applicant may find specific design guidance and requirements related to façades is *Article XI - Signs*. Within Article XI, there is a precedent for very specific and measured regulations; this could be applied similarly to façade requirements and specific signage types - awning sign, business sign, wall sign, window sign, marquee sign, swinging sign (perpendicular sign); The current regulation:

§ 300-112 Signs in Historic District.

All signs in the Historic District shall be approved by the Historic District Commission pursuant to Article VI.

For specific design guidance the local law directs you to a separate document:

§ 300-47. Additional powers of the Historic District Commission.

A. The Commission shall:

(1) Develop guidance standards for all projects subject to its jurisdiction. Any such standards may not be adopted until a public hearing is noticed and conducted in a manner similar to the hearing that is required to consider any amendment to the Zoning Code...

This regulation permits the creation of the façade Guideline Handbook, section "D" of this document. Where specific requirements and regulations will not fit within the structure of the local laws, the façade handbook is the *go-to* document for applicants to formulate their design proposals for Commission approval.

The handbook will help guide applicant's design proposals but specific regulations should be outlined whenever possible within the zoning laws to ensure that critical, baseline standards are met and can be explicitly enforced.

b. SAMPLE ZONING LAWS, LANGUAGE & PRECEDENTS

This section makes recommendations for topics that should be included in the Overlay District zoning laws and shares sample language used by other communities to regulate their own overlay districts.

The City of Cortland Zoning Department should work closely with the Historic District Commission to create language that will best aid the Commission clarify and enforce the design standards.

DEFINITIONS

Any adopted overlay district regulations may utilize standard terms and definitions of measurement; these must be explicit so that compliance can be objectively evaluated. As each new section of law is created, these definitions will have to be identified and listed for reference at the beginning of the Overlay District regulations.

A similar overlay district identified several key terms. This excerpt is from the *Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission, Government of Nashville and Davidson County*:

- **Certified Local Government:** *A Certified Local Government (CLG) is a city or county that has been "certified" by the State Historic Preservation Office as eligible to apply for federal grants for historic preservation.*
- **Compatible:** *Designed to be in harmony with elements such as surrounding architecture and landscape in terms of massing, design, scale and siting.*
- **Contributory Status:** *All buildings and structures within an overlay are considered 'contributing,' meaning they contribute to the historic character of the district; or 'non-contributing,' which means that they do not contribute to the historic character and integrity of the district because of age, condition and/or alterations.*
- **Design Guidelines:** *Written tenets, based on the Secretary of Interior Standards, according to which the MHZC interprets the standards of the zoning overlay for alterations, new construction, demolition, and moves. Design Guidelines include specific instructions for how to meet the standards of the ordinance, guide the applicant's planning, and guide the MHZC's decisions.*

- **Elevation:** A drawing showing the vertical elements of a building. When referencing the sides of the building itself, not the drawing, we use the term “façade.”
- **Floor Plan:** A simple line drawing showing rooms from a “top down” perspective. At a minimum, a floor plan will show the location of walls, doors and windows.
- **Historic Context:** Historic contexts are those patterns or trends in history, architecture and development that create a setting for a particular place and help to give a place meaning.
- **Perspective:** A graphic representation of a building or part of a building shown as it would appear three-dimensionally.
- **Rendering:** A perspective or elevation with artistic delineation of materials, shades, and shadows.

RULES OF ORDER AND PROCEDURE

The current rules of order and procedure should be expanded upon. Some possible areas for consideration include:

- Documentation of interactions between the commission and applicants
- A list of specific documents to be submitted
- Contributing or non-contributing designation of a building or project
- Violations, fines or citations

Similar communities used standard language to address many issues that may arise for Cortland’s Commission:

National Trust for Historic Preservation; Sample Conservation District Ordinance Provisions, Preservation Law Reporter, Apr. - Jun. 2002-03

1. **Ensure proper documentation of correspondence with applicants and any recommendations or suggestions made to the applicant:**

Because the Commission is a quasi-judicial body they may not be permitted to discuss specific cases outside of a public hearing. Any preliminary meetings and recommendations should be documented in minutes, approved by the Commission, and provided to the Applicant. When applications are rejected they should indicate which design elements are deemed as harmful to the contiguous character and fabric of the district and recommend acceptable solutions.

2. **State what drawings or documents will be required for review:**

“...plans, elevations, renderings, specifications, material and other information, including in the case of demolition or removal a statement of the proposed condition and appearance of the property thereafter, as may be reasonably deemed necessary by the Commission to enable it to make a determination on the application.”

3. Consider a certificate of non-applicability for certain, non-historic and non-contributing façade renovations where alternate proposals may not meet specific guidelines but still should not detract from the district fabric.

“In case of a determination by the Commission that an application for a certificate of appropriateness or for a certificate of non-applicability does not involve any exterior architectural feature, or involves an exterior architectural feature which is not then subject to review by the Commission in accordance with the provisions of Part G., the Commission shall cause a certificate of non-applicability to be issued to the applicant.”

4. Clearly convey the submission steps, timeline, and meetings to help applicants manage their design decisions at the beginning of the process:

- a. *“The Commission shall determine promptly, and in all events within fourteen days after the filing of an application for a certificate of appropriateness, a certificate of non-applicability or a certificate of hardship, as the case may be, whether the application involves any exterior architectural features which are subject to approval by the Commission. If the Commission determines that such application involves any such features which are subject to approval by the Commission, the Commission shall hold a public hearing on such application unless such hearing is dispensed with as hereinafter provided. The Commission shall fix a reasonable time for the hearing on any application and shall give public notice of the time, place and purposes thereof at least fourteen days before said hearing in such manner as it may determine, and by mailing, postage prepaid, a copy of said notice to the applicant, to the owners of all adjoining property and other property deemed by the Commission to be materially affected thereby as they appear on the most recent real estate tax list, to the Building Inspector, to the Planning Board of the Town, and to any person filing written request for notice of hearings, such request to be renewed yearly in December, and to such other persons as the Commission shall deem entitled to notice.”*

- b. *“As soon as convenient after such public hearing but in any event within sixty days after the filing of the application, or within such further time as the*

applicant may allow in writing, the Commission shall make a determination of the application. If the Commission shall fail to make a determination within such period of time the Commission shall thereupon issue a certificate of hardship. "

- c. *"A public hearing on an application need not be held if such hearing is waived in writing by all persons entitled to notice thereof. In addition, a public hearing on an application may be waived by the Commission if the Commission determines that the exterior architectural feature involved is so insubstantial in its effect on the Historic District that it may be reviewed by the Commission without public hearing on the application, provided, however, that if the Commission dispenses with a public hearing on an application a notice of the application shall be given to the owners of all adjoining property and other property deemed by the Commission to be materially affected thereby as above provided, and ten days shall elapse after the mailing of such notice before the Commission may act upon such application. "*

5. Consider Issuing a formal "Certificate of Appropriateness"

"If the Commission determines that the construction or alteration for which an application for a certificate of appropriateness has been filed will be appropriate for or compatible with the preservation or protection of the Historic District, the Commission shall cause a certificate of appropriateness to be issued to the applicant. In the case of a disapproval of an application for a certificate of appropriateness, the Commission shall place upon its record the reasons for such determination and shall forthwith cause a notice of its determination, accompanied by a copy of the reasons therefore as set forth in the records of the Commission, to be issued to the applicant, and the Commission may make recommendations to the applicant with respect to appropriateness of design, arrangement, texture, material and similar features. Prior to the issuance of any disapproval, the Commission may notify the applicant of its proposed action accompanied by recommendations of changes in the applicant's proposal which, if made, would make the application acceptable to the Commission. If within fourteen days of the receipt of such notice the applicant files a written modification of his application in conformity with the recommended changes of the Commission, the Commission shall cause a certificate of appropriateness to be issued to the applicant."

6. **Violations, fines, or citations should be made clearly established.** New language within the Overlay District section can direct applicants to other areas of the local laws (§ 300-t) or be unique to the Overlay District itself.

“Any willful violation of the provisions of this article [by willfully performing or allowing to be performed any work without first obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness, failing to comply with a Final Notice issued pursuant to this article, or disregarding a decision of the Commission will be in violation of this article. A violation of this article] shall be a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$_____ and imprisonment up to ___ year(s), and shall be subject to such civil penalties as provided in Article_____, Section _____ of the Code for zoning violations. Each and every day that the violation continues may be deemed a separate offense. “

REGULATIONS BY DESIGN FEATURE

There are some elements of façades that can be regulated very clearly using dimensions, percentages, proportions, or any other method for measuring typical historic character. In limited instances the diversity of the building stock and future construction may require exceptions to be considered by the board for proposals that do not comply with the guidelines for local laws specifically. Often, the phrase “technically infeasible” is used by the National Park Service and State Historic Preservation Office as a way to weigh the potential added cost of a regulation against the cost or visual impact of the overall project, or general scope, or where a condition renders a regulation physically impossible. The commission has the authority to make exceptions that minimize the negative impact of a proposal on the fabric of the historic district. The following bullet points reflect the spirit of the façade handbook and should be used as an outline - and the basis for - creating and expanding specific zoning laws for the historic overlay district:

1. **General Evaluation of Architectural features - Town of Wellesley Massachusetts Regulations SECTION XIV.D. HISTORIC DISTRICTS.**
 - a. *“In passing upon matters before it the Commission shall consider, among other things, the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design arrangement, texture, and material of the features involved, and the relation of such features to similar features of buildings and structures in the surrounding area. In the case of new construction or additions to existing buildings or structures, the Commission shall consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the building or*

structure, both in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is situated and to buildings and structures in the vicinity, and the Commission may in appropriate cases impose dimensional and set-back requirements in addition to those required by other applicable Bylaws. The Commission shall not consider interior arrangements or architectural features not subject to public view.

- b. The Commission shall not make any recommendation or requirement except for the purpose of preventing developments incongruous to the historic aspects or the architectural characteristics of the surroundings and of the Historic District.*
- c. The Commission may after public hearing set forth in such manner as it may determine the various designs of certain appurtenances, such as light fixtures, which will meet the requirements of an Historic District and a roster of certain colors of paint and roofing materials which will meet the requirements of an Historic District, but no such determination shall limit the right of an applicant to present other designs or colors to the Commission for its approval. “*

The following sections are sourced from the draft of the *Cortland, NY Facade Renovation Handbook, 2016.01.22:*

2. Material Durability

- a. Restore original materials whenever possible - masonry repairs should consider the mortar types appropriate for the brick or stone type. See: National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, Brief #2 Repointing Mortar Joints.*
- b. In new or infill construction, or if materials are beyond repair as approved by the commission, durable materials that don't require replacement as the only form of repair should be used - such as brick, wood, fiber-cement board and other resilient, easily repairable and/or paintable materials.*
- c. Language should be developed for construction materials and methods that may not yet be commercially available but may still be appropriate or meet the goals of the overlay: “Unlisted or alternate methods and materials may be accepted upon specific approval by the Historic District Commission.”*

3. Storefronts - Windows & Doors

- a. 60%-80% of the the storefront within the pedestrian zone (2'-8' above the sidewalk) should be clear glass window area with 3' minimum visual depth into the storefront.*

- b. For new and infill construction, storefronts shall be visually separated from upper floors with horizontal detailing and be similarly aligned with adjacent properties. Original storefronts shall retain or restore cornice lines and detailing.*

4. **Upper Floor Windows**
 - a. *A minimum of 25% of the façade at upper floors should incorporate transparent glass openings.*
 - b. *Infilling original fenestrations is prohibited*
5. **Signs** - See page 13-16 of the *Cortland, NY Facade Renovation Handbook, 2016.01.22.*
 - a. *Multistory buildings shall have sign board zone heights that are 5%-7% of the total building height.*
 - b. *Sign boards shall not cover storefront or upper floor windows.*
 - c. *Perpendicular signs:*
 - i. *Must be two-sided and shall be less than 12 square feet per side*
 - ii. *Shall not extend beyond 4' from the façade*
 - iii. *The bottom of said sign will be no lower than 8'-0" and the top no higher than 12'-0" above the sidewalk.*
 - iv. *Brackets shall hold the perpendicular sign at least 4" away from the façade.*
 - v. *Various shapes are permitted upon approval by the committee.*
6. **Lighting**
 - a. *Sign boards shall be lit with either linear or gooseneck lights. Lamp color rendering shall be 2,000K-4,000K regardless of lamp type. Internally lit signs are not permitted though some backlit sign types may be accepted by the commission.*
 - b. *Perpendicular signs shall be lit from both sides.*
 - c. *Vintage neon signs are only permitted by special approval.*
7. **Window Signs & Letters**
 - a. *Vinyl window lettering shall not consume more than 25% of each window area.*
 - b. *Window signs shall not be lit and may not block more than 4sf of each window area.*
8. **Awnings and 3D Projections**
 - a. *The bottom of which shall not be lower than 8'-0" above the sidewalk.*
 - b. *Should not project more than 5'-0" into the public way or one-half the width of the sidewalk, whichever is smaller.*
 - c. *Shall not cover sign boards.*
 - d. *Shall be permitted to contain valance lettering within 20%-50% of the valance length.*
 - e. *Shall not contain lettering on the sloped awning surface.*

9. Historic Details and Elements

- a. *Such as original parapets, columns, lintels, brackets or parapet details shall not be covered or removed.*

10. New Construction, Infill, and Non-Historic façades

- a. *New and infill construction must build to the front lot line, "zero setback."*
- b. *Shall meet the standards for storefront glazing, signs, lighting, upper floor windows, awnings and projections, material durability and repairability.*

11. Maintenance and anti-blight Sample Language

Town of Wellesley Massachusetts Regulations SECTION XIVD. HISTORIC DISTRICTS. , City of Schenectady, NY, Chapter 264: Zoning, Article X Historic Districts, and Maryland Historical Trust; Sample Historic Area Zoning Ordinance for Municipalities and Non-Charter Counties in Maryland

- a. *"Routine Maintenance. Nothing in this Article shall be taken or construed to prevent maintenance that does not alter the exterior fabric or features of a designated landmark, site, or structure, customary farming operations, or landscaping which will have no material effect on the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of a designated landmark, site, structure, or district.*
- b. *Ordinary Maintenance, Repairs or Replacement. Nothing in this Section shall be construed to prevent the ordinary maintenance, repair or replacement of any exterior architectural feature within an Historic District which does not involve a change in design, material, color or the outward appearance thereof, nor to prevent the landscaping with plants, trees or shrubs, nor construed to prevent the meeting of requirements certified by a duly authorized public officer to be necessary for public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition, nor construed to prevent any construction or alteration under a permit duly issued prior to the adoption of this Section.*
- c. *Maintenance and repair. Nothing in this article shall be construed to prevent the ordinary maintenance and repair of any exterior architectural feature of a historic site or structure or property within an historic district which does not involve a change in design, material, color or outward appearance. No owner or person with an interest in real property designated as an historic site or structure or included within an historic district shall permit the property to fall into a serious state of disrepair so as to threaten to result in the deterioration of any exterior architectural feature which would, in the judgment of the Commission, produce a detrimental effect upon the character*

of the historic district as a whole or the life and character of the property itself.

d. Examples of Such Deterioration Include:

- i. Deterioration of exterior walls or other vertical supports.*
- ii. Deterioration of roofs or other horizontal members.*
- iii. Deterioration of exterior chimneys.*
- iv. Deterioration or crumbling of exterior stucco or mortar.*
- v. Ineffective waterproofing of exterior walls, roofs or foundations, including broken windows or doors.*
- vi. Deterioration of any feature so as to create a hazardous condition detrimental to the public safety. Such a building structure or part thereof found to be in disrepair, in an unsafe or unusable condition or in any condition that may threaten the perpetuation or integrity of the same shall be in violation of this chapter.*
- vii. Lighting must be repaired and replaced as lamps fail;*
- viii. Sign letters must be replaced if missing or repaired if damaged;*
- ix. Boarding up storefront windows is not permitted."*

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

1. Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission, Government of Nashville and Davidson County
2. City of Schenectady, NY, *Chapter 264: Zoning, Article X Historic Districts*
3. *Town of Wellesley Massachusetts Regulations SECTION XIVD. HISTORIC DISTRICTS.*
4. Maryland Historical Trust; *Sample Historic Area Zoning Ordinance for Municipalities and Non-Charter Counties in Maryland*
5. National Trust for Historic Preservation; *Sample Conservation District Ordinance Provisions, Preservation Law Reporter, Apr. - Jun. 2002-03*
6. City of Cortland, NY: *Chapter 300*