Storefronts

At its early 19th-century beginning, downtown Troy was defined by the Hudson River, where goods were imported and exported, filling riverfront warehouses with cotton and wool, housewares, and even pharmaceuticals. Remarkably, many of these warehouses still exist between First and Congress streets. As Troy grew, downtown became more sophisticated, with "retail palaces" such as the G.V.S. Quackenbush and Frael's department store, offering a huge variety of clothing and household goods, in buildings ornamented in marble and terra cotta. Entertainment flourished in competing venues, including the monumental Troy Savings Bank Music Hall. Large iconic buildings—now business incubators, office and stores—are stand-outs, but the commercial row building was responsible for decades of retail success and today sets the stage for downtown renewal. Commercial row buildings of the late 19th and early 20th century are traditionally made up of three horizontal components: storefront, upper façade and cornice.

The composition is a simple but inviting way to attract customers. Expansive sheet glass on the first floor allows for maximum display of merchandise and a recessed, sheltering entrance funnels consumers into the store. The design creates an inviting and orienting experience for pedestrians.

Downtown streetscapes and small town main streets are being restored to the purpose for which they were intended: to offer a well-scripted, walkable experience that can’t be matched by the mall.

Features associated with a doorway’s character should be retained, such as hardware, fanlights, pilasters, entablatures, columns, balustrades, and steps.

Successful storefronts bring interest to the streetscape

APPROPRIATE TREATMENT GUIDE

All repairs and replacement are subject to HRC review. Submit photos of your property with your application review. Reviewers can help you determine whether repair or replacement is appropriate.

- Preserve existing historic storefront features whenever they still exist, even when they have been damaged or covered by later treatments.
- Preserve the character of existing storefronts even when internal use has changed.
- When large buildings are divided among different owners or tenants, treat the façade consistently.
- Contemporary materials may be allowed if they replicate historic character.
- Missing elements should be replaced in kind and the door’s original size, profile, and configuration should be preserved.
- Recessed entries should be retained.
- Replacement doors should match the original design, placement, and materials.
- Solid doors are not allowed.
- If a storefront is used as offices, do not block the windows with furniture. Have window displays that are interesting to passersby.
- Set storefront lighting on timers for safety and marketing even when the business is closed.

1960’s alterations modernized downtowns by trying to emulate malls, and much historic character was destroyed

Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts

Storefronts that use signage and appropriately.

TYPICAL STOREFRONTS

Early in Mid-1800s
- Pont and beam frames
- Divided display windows
- Simple decoration

Add to Late 1800s
- Bulky, dismember cupolas
- Cast iron columns
- Turkish display windows

Late 1800s to Early 1900s
- Simple cornice
- Transom arched
- Arched entrance

Early 1900s to 1930s
- Modern window frames
- Structural elements
- Reformed entrance

Decorative cornice

Window hood

Display window

Masonry cornice

Regency entrance

Aluminum may be allowed if it emulates wood, but don’t replace wood with aluminum.

Decorative cornice

Window hood

Display window

Masonry cornice

Regency entrance

Aluminum may be allowed if it emulates wood, but don’t replace wood with aluminum.

Decorative cornice

Window hood

Display window

Masonry cornice

Regency entrance

Aluminum may be allowed if it emulates wood, but don’t replace wood with aluminum.

Decorative cornice

Window hood

Display window

Masonry cornice

Regency entrance

Aluminum may be allowed if it emulates wood, but don’t replace wood with aluminum.

Decorative cornice

Window hood

Display window

Masonry cornice

Regency entrance

Aluminum may be allowed if it emulates wood, but don’t replace wood with aluminum.