



DESIGN GUIDELINES:
MARKET SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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DESIGN GUIDELINES: MARKET SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

A. Introduction

1. The following "Guidelines for Rehabilitation and New Construction" shall be used by the HRC of the City of Pittsburgh, (as constituted under City Council Ordinance #20 of 1979) when determining a recommendation for issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness by the City Council of the City of Pittsburgh.

2. These "guidelines for Rehabilitation and New Construction" have been developed by the HRC. These guidelines substantially incorporate the "Standard for Rehabilitation" used by the Secretary of Interior when determining if rehabilitation projects qualify as "certified rehabilitation" pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976 (Section 36, Code of Federal Regulations Part 67) and the guidelines for the "Market Square Proposal for the Redevelopment Area Plan" dated April 1979.

3. The general guidelines are designed to help individual property owners formulate plans for the rehabilitation, preservation, and continued use of old buildings consistent with the intent of the Secretary of Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation". The guidelines pertain to buildings of all occupancy and construction types, sizes and materials. They apply to permanent and temporary construction on the exterior of historic buildings as well as new attached or adjacent construction, although not all work implied in the guidelines is relevant to each project.

4. These design review guidelines are based on existing design characteristics commonly observed in the Market Square Historic District and will serve as a baseline description against which plans for rehabilitation and for new construction can be judged for harmony, compatibility and appropriateness. The intent of these guidelines is not to require particular architectural feature or to dictate architectural style. Rather, it is to identify a range of design options which will encourage development compatible with the existing character of Market Square and which will discourage introduction of incompatible features. Contemporary designs and materials, used in a manner compatible with the sense of the past that is being preserved, are not only permitted but encouraged. Economic feasibility and durability of proposed improvements, along with aesthetic harmony, are primary concerns. The general design approach should encourage a blending of new development with existing surroundings.

5. The following guidelines will apply to all buildings within the Market Square Historic District. These guidelines are designed to establish minimum restoration levels, which will secure the historic integrity of individual structures as well as of the Square itself. These guidelines supplement the Housing code and the Building Code of the City of Pittsburgh, and Pittsburgh Zoning Ordinance, dated March 1974, as well as codes of the Allegheny County Health Department, the Fire Prevention Bureau, the U.S. Department of Labor and other applicable laws and standards.

6. A strict interpretation of these guidelines may be waived by the HRC if the applicant develops a design solution, which meets the spirit and intent of the regulations in a better manner. In the same sense, the guidelines presented here are not fixed and immutable

through time, but are subject to continuing study and revision by the HRC as the desirability for such modification becomes apparent.

B. General

1. The desirability of a solution will be reviewed in relation to the integrity and appearance of the individual structure in question and its immediate neighbors.
2. The foregoing, while recognition of variety and change, will not be interpreted as approval of continued unsympathetic alteration of structures or the character of the commercial buildings shall be encouraged.
3. Period storefronts may be retained and restored, or the facade may be rebuilt to the original proportions. Use of materials compatible with the surrounding character of the commercial buildings shall be encouraged.
4. Architectural appointments shall be retained where repair is necessary; appointments may be restored or duplicated to existing or similar appearance. The repair to existing features with inappropriate materials, such as aluminum jamb casing and bracket tinwork shall be avoided.
5. Rehabilitation work shall not destroy the distinguishing qualities or character of the structure or the commercial character of the square. The removal or alteration of any historic material or architectural features should be held to a minimum. Elements of detail or fenestration that have been removed or covered over shall be restored if possible. The existing commercial character of the ground floor should be maintained.
6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired, rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in the composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of original features, substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural features from other buildings.
7. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize historic structures and often predate the mass production of building materials shall be treated with sensitivity.
8. Changes, which may have taken place in the course of time, are evidence of the history and development of the structure and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.

Alterations to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged. However, buildings may be restored to their own period of construction.

9. Contemporary design for additions to existing structures or landscaping shall not be discouraged if such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the Square, structure or its environment.

10. Existing additions may be removed or replaced only with HRC approval.

11. There shall be no demolition of any structure without the approval of the HRC.

12. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structure shall be done in such a manner that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original structure would be unimpaired.

13. Owners of one-story structures, who are planning to rehabilitate their buildings, should consider increasing the height to a more appropriate scale.

14. Rehabilitation and restoration efforts within the Square shall maintain a scale which, when viewed in the context of the Square, will enforce the closure and containment that presently exists.

15. Distinctive features such as the size, scale, mass color and materials of buildings, including roofs, that give Market Square its unique character should be retained.

16. Building setbacks, which have traditionally linked the buildings to the Square, should be respected. New buildings are built to the property line.

17. New construction in the area should be compatible with the character of the district in scale, size, color and materials.

18. Due to the delicate balance between neighboring structures and the effect of additional structures on existing light and air, the construction of new additions beyond the existing structure should be carefully studied and considered.

C. Building Site: Landscaping and Screening

1. All open space areas on a lot not occupied by structures, parking, walls, drives, and other improvements shall be suitably landscaped. The intent of such landscaping shall be to visually and functionally enhance surrounding buildings, pedestrian ways, and open spaces, to screen parking and loading areas visible at grade, and to control erosion and dust, and maintain an "edge" between the street and the parking area.

2. The open space of each property shall be provided, where necessary, with appropriate paved and properly constructed walks, exterior steps, landscaping and proper site drainage.
3. Surrounding grounds may be enclosed by masonry walls of the same material as the principal structure on the property, or by a durable fence of approved design. No chain-link or metal slat fences will be permitted. Metals other than copper, brass and oil finish wrought iron shall be integrally colored or painted an approved color.
4. Commercial trash receptacles shall not be permitted at front of buildings and shall be screened in the rear from view.

D. Masonry

1. The original masonry surface and mortar should be retained, whenever possible, without the application of any surface treatment.
2. Deteriorated masonry work shall be repaired to be inconspicuous and compatible with the existing. Old mortar should be duplicated in composition, color, texture, joint size, method of application and joint profile. Repointing with a mortar of high Portland cement content can create a bond that is often stronger than the building material. This can cause deterioration as a result of the differing coefficient of expansion and the porosity of the material and the mortar and should be avoided.
3. Stucco should be repaired duplicating the original as closely as possible in appearance and texture.
4. Cleaning masonry will be approved only when necessary to halt deterioration and always with the gentlest method possible, such as low pressure water and soft natural bristle brushes.
5. Brick work shall not be sandblasted. Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. In some cases, stonework, which has no significant architectural detail, may be approved for sandblasting.
6. Using chemical cleaning products can also have an adverse chemical reaction with the masonry surface (i.e. acid on limestone and marble) but brick work may be cleaned with hydrofluoric acid in a concentration of not more than 5% or equivalent, as recommended by the National Park Service.
7. Applying waterproof or water repellent coatings or other treatments is discouraged except to solve a specific technical problem that has been studied and identified, is frequently unnecessary, expensive and can accelerate deterioration of the masonry.

8. Existing unpainted masonry surfaces should remain unpainted. However, masonry surfaces have been painted in the past should, in most cases be repainted. If such walls are dirty or stained in such a way that the color is not uniform, they shall be cleared and painted. If painting is required, brick should be prepared properly and not less than two (2) coats of exterior grade paint shall be applied.

9. Applying new material, which is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial brick siding, artificial cast stone or brick veneer shall be discouraged. When such surface coverings have been previously installed, the owners will be encouraged to remove them and restore the underlying brick surface.

E. Wood

1. Removing architectural features such as siding, cornices, brackets, widow architraves and doorway pediments is prohibited. These are, in most cases, an essential part of the building's character and appearance, illustrating the continuity of growth and change.

2. Repairing or replacing, where necessary, deteriorated material with new material should attempt to duplicate the old as closely as possible, as should efforts to replace missing architectural features such as cornices, brackets, railings, and shutters.

3. Owners are encouraged to repair, restore and if necessary, replace existing wood siding with similar wood siding materials. However, replacement using other materials, such as wood paneling, aluminum or vinyl siding in appropriate scale, finish and color is not prohibited. Where those materials are used, appropriate trim details such as corner boards and fascia boards shall be retained or duplicated.

4. Asbestos siding will not be approved as a siding material for new work and owners are encouraged to remove existing asbestos siding and restore or replace the underlying wood surface.

F. Architectural Metals: Cast Iron, Steel, Pressed Tin, Aluminum and Zinc

1. Retain original material whenever possible.

2. Removing architectural features that are an essential part of a building's character and appearance is prohibited.

3. Clean when necessary with the appropriate method. Do not use cleaning methods, which alter.

4. Paint or metal surfaces which are discolored or on which the finish is peeling, flaking, chalking, rusting or eroded shall be cleaned or refinished.

G. Roofs and Roofing

1. The original roof shape shall be preserved. Existing dormers and chimneys shall be retained and repairs or reconstruction shall be retained.

2. Retain the original roofing material, whenever possible. When replacing deteriorate roof covering, do so with new materials which do not differ to such an extent from the old in composition, size, shape, color and texture that the appearance of the building is altered.

3. Roofs, if sloping and visible from a public street or walkway should meet the following requirements. If metal, other than copper, they shall be painted or integrally colored an approved color. Roofing material of any kind, shall be black, gray, brown or dark red. All visible metal work in such roofs, except copper, shall be painted or integrally colored an approved color.

4. Preserve and replace, where necessary, all architectural features which give the roof its essential character, such as dormer windows, cupolas, cornices, brackets, chimneys, and crestings. New dormers shall be compatible in size, placement and overall construction to their neighbors.

5. All box gutters shall be retained. All facade downspouts shall be copper or aluminum (painted or anodized) or galvanized and painted appropriately.

H. Windows and Doors

1. Existing window and door openings which are architecturally significant to the design of the building, shall be retained, including all window sash, glass, lintels, sills, architraves, shutters, doors, pediments, hoods, steps and hardware. Owners of structures whose windows and door openings have been altered in the past to reduce glass area or to provide picture windows or standard door openings shall be encouraged to restore these openings to their original sizes or to approximate those of their neighbors (duplicating the material, design and hardware of the older window sash and door if new sash and doors are used).

2. All window and door casings, sashes, and muntins should respect that of the original glazing of the building and shall be painted, stained or vinyl clad wood. The use of aluminum replacement windows is not encouraged but may be approved on a case by case basis.

3. Infilling of window and door openings to accommodate smaller or stock window units shall not be permitted on the front facade. Under no circumstances shall mill finish aluminum be permitted.
4. Exterior mill finish aluminum storm windows shall not be permitted on the facade. Vinyl clad and others may be permitted if the basic shape of the original window is not altered.
5. Windows on the front facade may be replaced with units historically compatible with neighboring buildings and the existing facade. Upper story fenestration may be altered from their original design without prior approval.
6. Introducing new window and door openings into the principal elevations or enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock windows sash or new stock door sizes is general prohibited. Altering the size of windowpanes or sash changes and destroys the scale and proportion of the building. Inappropriate new window combinations that require the removal of original windows and doors or the installation of plastic or metal strip awnings or fake shutters that alter the character and appearance of the building are also prohibited.
7. Existing transoms and other embellishments characteristic of the structure shall be retained, restored or duplicated.

I. Criteria for Review of Aluminum Replacement Windows

1. In reviewing an application for the installation of aluminum replacement windows, the Historic Review Commission is primarily concerned that the aluminum windows be a visual match for the original windows. To help ensure that, the Commission reviews the following criteria:
 - a. the economic or technical feasibility of replacing the windows in kind;
 - b. identical arrangement and shape of the window sashes and muntins;
 - c. identical sightlines (widths of window elements and expanse of glass);
 - d. sash detailing (including beveled recreations of the window putty, at sash and muntins);
 - e. custom panning, to match the original window framing in profile;
 - f. custom color(s);
 - g. clear, unwarped glazing (yielding unwarped reflections).

2. The Commission requires the submission of drawings that show, in detail, the existing profiles of the window sash and frame and the profiles of the proposed aluminum sash and panning. After its approval is given, the Commission requires the submission of a sample of the panning and sash to its staff for final review before a Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued.

J. Awnings

1. Awnings are appropriate, but may only be constructed of a canvas-like material. They should be retractable, sloping and angular rather than rounded and may be utilized on all windows on the front facade of the building.

2. Color and replacement of awnings shall be reviewed to insure that installation does not obscure existing architectural elements and therefore relates to the existing architecture and its environs.

3. Aluminum awnings shall be prohibited.

K. Color and Exterior Finishes

1. All buildings in an area have color. Each element of the facade has a color and thus is another important aspect in establishing the image of a district. Color selection becomes important in the maintenance of the architectural details such as trim, sills, headers, metal work, storefronts, signs, etc. In general, color will emphasize the details; intense colors detract from a harmonious design; light colors bring out details while dark colors obscure them; a gloss or semi-gloss paint which can be easily cleaned should be utilized and professional advice should be sought before painting.

2. Retain the original or early color and texture of masonry surfaces wherever possible (brick or stone surfaces may have been painted or whitewashed for practical and aesthetic reasons). The indiscriminate removal of paint from masonry surfaces may subject the building to harmful damage and may give it an appearance it never had.

3. Keep masonry natural and clean it, including sills and headers if masonry, and select colors for the trim, etc. which harmonize with the masonry. Scrape down on the trim and other painted surfaces to find out what the original colors were, as these will usually relate best to the building as a whole.

4. Select colors for the trim that contrast with the brick.

5. Keep within the guidelines.

6. Carry facade colors into storefronts and signs. Utilize trim color for lettering of signs.

7. Sign colors should relate to trim above. An effective combination is light letters on a dark background. Most striking and appropriate for traditional buildings is gold letters on a black or dark colored similar source.

8. It is suggested that exterior body and trim colors be selected from historical selections, such as "Pittsburgh Paint Historic Colors" or a similar source.

9. Repainting with colors which cannot be documented through research investigation to be appropriate to the building period or architectural style or the historic district in general, is not recommended.

L. Storefronts

1. Storefront design should convey directly what is offered inside.

2. Existing pilasters should be carried through and not covered up.

3. Storefront materials should be compatible with the overall building facade. The use of masonry, glass and wood is encouraged.

4. Materials, which cover traditional elements, should be removed.

5. The storefront should relate to the traditional elements of the facade above.

6. If appropriate the re-establishment of the lintel (s) and cornice above the storefront, which define the building, should be considered.

7. All exterior appurtenances or accessory structures which serve no useful purpose, which are not in economically repairable condition or which do not contribute to the overall appearance and architectural integrity of the building, may be removed.

M. Signs

1. The purpose for sign guidelines is to encourage, protect and preserve the historic, architectural and cultural amenities that prevail in the Market Square Historic District. It is the intent of these guidelines to protect property values, create a more attractive business climate and to enhance and protect the physical appearance of the area.
2. The design of signs within the Historic District must be approached with care. Great importance is placed on the relationship of a sign to the facade on which it is located. A sign must be designed for careful integration with the architectural features and its size and proportions must relate to the fenestration and detailing of the building.
3. Signs communicate the identity of a business and also create an image for a district. A district with a clutter of signs and with large, uncoordinated graphics tends to give an area a poor image.
4. Signs should be easily seen and clearly intelligible, without being garish or loud. Materials and design should relate to the architectural features of the building, the storefront and/or other buildings, signs and storefronts in the area.
5. No sign may be located on a structure so that it obscures any architectural features such as a cornice, unless the sign consists of individual letters.
6. The registered trademark of a specific commodity shall occupy no more than fifteen (15) percent of the area of a sign, except that if the sale of said commodity is the major business conducted on the premises, there shall be no such restriction.
7. A sign may bear lettering only to indicate the street number, the name and kind of business, service or facility conducted on the premises, the year the business was established, a slogan, hours of operation, time and temperature and lettering which is part of a trademark.
8. All illumination shall be shielded and directed solely at the sign and be steady, stationary and of reasonable intensity.
9. Back-lighting of signs will not be permitted in the Market Square Historic District, with the following exceptions. Individual letters of a sign may be back-lit. Back-lit marquees advertising changing performance or shows may be permitted for a theater or cinema. All such signs shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
10. No support for a sign shall extend above the cornice line of a lining of a building to which the sign is attached.

11. The following signs shall not be permitted, constructed, erected or maintained: signs which incorporate any manner of flashing, moving or intermittent lighting, excluding public service signs showing time and temperature; any signs which no longer advertise a business or product previously sold, unless it is of cultural, aesthetic or historical significance to the Market Square area; portable signs; signs erected so as to obstruct any door, window or fire escape on a building; roof signs; and large wall signs painted on the side of buildings which are taller than the surrounding buildings.
12. Wall signs for first floor establishments shall have an aggregate square footage not exceeding two square feet for each foot of building face. Where a building fronts on more than one street, the aggregate footage for each frontage shall be calculated and used separately.
13. Tops of wall signs for street level establishments may not protrude above the tops of second story windowsills.
14. Wall signs may not be placed above the top cornice line of a building. Placement of signs on the end gable of a building will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
15. Wall signs placed above the window sills of the second floor will be allowed for a business establishment located on an upper floor. Total wall sign area allowed for a business establishment located on an upper floor shall not exceed 1.5 square feet per foot building face. Business establishments occupying more than one floor shall be allowed a maximum aggregate wall sign area of two (2) square feet for each foot of building face.
16. Any signs above the top of the second floor window sills shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with particular attention to other signage on the building. Upper floor business establishments are encourage to use window signs. In no case shall upper floor wall signs obscure or detract from architectural details.
17. The bottom of any projecting sign must be at least eight (8) feet above the sidewalk. The sign may project no more than four (4) feet from the face of the building, 2/3 of the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less. Tops of projecting signs may not protrude above the tops of seconds story window sills.
18. No projecting sign or its supporting frame may extend above the top cornice line of a building.
19. No business establishment will be allowed more than one projecting sign per entrance door or set of entrance doors.
20. Total area of projecting sign(s) shall not exceed four (4) square feet per foot of building face.

21. The area of windows signs shall not exceed 25% of the window area visible from the exterior. Etched or painted signs on glass, cover no more than 30% of the glazing area, are appropriate.

22. One awning sign will be permitted for each display window on the first floor of a business establishment.

23. One directory of the occupants or tenants of the building will be allowed at each entrance, not exceeding an area determined on the basis of one (1) square foot for each occupant, or ten (10) square feet, whichever is less.

24. Freestanding signs will generally not be allowed in the Market Square Historic District except as directory signs at the entrance to a complex of commercial establishments or as signs for open-lit uses such as parking. All freestanding signs will be reviewed individually to insure that views necessary for protection of health, safety and welfare of pedestrians and vehicular flow are not obstructed.

N. Illumination

1. Exterior illumination of buildings and public or semi-public spaces shall be designed and executed with particular attention to the following factors: color rendition, light quality and distribution. These considerations must be balanced with the objective light efficacy so as to sufficiently illuminate areas while avoiding the runaway glare and light pollution of mass-lighting.

2. All sources of illumination for outdoor area lighting or signs shall be directed away from adjacent properties and shielded in such a manner that only reflected or refracted light is visible.

3. Building exteriors shall be lighted in such a way that light sources are concealed from both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

O. New Construction

1. New construction fronting on Market Square should complete the enclosure of the Square and be comparable in height, scale, and character existing buildings fronting on the Square. This containment is to be accomplished primarily through designs incorporating the dominant textures and rhythms of the Square. Rather than replicating architectural styles of the past, design continuity and harmony is to be affected through recall of the proportions, fenestration and textures of the existing buildings.

2. Contemporary designs should be compatible with the character and mood of the building or the neighborhood. Avoid imitating an earlier style or period of architecture in new additions, except in rare cases where a contemporary design would detract from the architectural unity of an ensemble or group of buildings. Especially have a completely contemporary function such as a drive-in bank or garage.
3. Buildings fronting on the square shall be not less than thirty-six (36) feet, nor more than sixty (60) feet in height, or ten percent taller than the tallest adjacent structure, whichever is less.
4. Facades must be articulated to achieve proper scale and avoid a blank wall effect. The use of glazing on the 1st floor facade is most in keeping with commercial storefront character of the Square.
5. Surfacing materials utilized for facades must be in harmony with the existing character of the Square.
6. Where applicable, elements of the facade salvaged from the demolition of structures in the area should be re-used.
7. New construction shall conform to the existing cornice lines, bay rhythms, scale, and texture of adjacent structures.
8. To help assure a continuity in scale from one building to the next, existing cornice and soffit lines should be preserved, and they should be respected on new construction. The height and depth of these lines dimensions of adjacent buildings.
9. On new construction, the first floor elevation above the street curb, the entrance door sill elevation and the floor-to-floor elevations within the adjacent buildings.
10. Basic to the character of a block face is the rhythm and proportion of facades along a street that an ordered recurrent alteration of building masses, and it comes from uniformity both in the proportion of the facades along a street and in the spacing of the buildings. These elements should be considered in remodeling and in new construction; and along a street, such harmony should be encouraged.
11. In these terms fenestration of new construction should be compatible with that along the block face, and the existing pattern should be preserved in remodeling.

P. Safety and Code Requirements

1. Comply with code requirements in such a manner that the essential character of a building is preserved intact.

2. Install adequate fire prevention equipment in a manner, which does minimal damage to the appearance or fabric of a property.
3. Provide access for the handicapped without damaging the essential character of a property.
4. Add new stairways and elevators which do not alter existing exist facilities or other important architectural features and spaces of the building.

Q. Mechanical Services

1. Place mechanical equipment, such as air conditioners, where they are not visible from the street. Permanent air conditioning units shall not be permitted on front facades.
2. Install necessary building services to areas and spaces that will require the least possible alteration to the plan, materials and appearance, of the building.
3. Install the vertical runs of ducts, pipes and cable in closets, service rooms and wall cavities where they will not be visible on the exterior elevations.
4. Avoid cutting holes in important architectural features, such as cornices, decorative ceilings and paneling.
5. Installing "dropped" acoustical ceilings to hide mechanical systems sometimes has the effect of destroying the proportions and character of a building and should be avoided if it will be visible or detract from the facade.

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