



HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION OF PITTSBURGH

DESIGN GUIDELINES:
EAST CARSON STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

	PAGE
A. Introduction.....	2
B. Basic Principles.....	3
C. General Guidelines.....	3
D. Building Rehabilitation and Alteration.....	4
E. Storefronts.....	6
F. New Construction.....	7
G. Additions.....	8
H. Demolitions.....	9
I. Site Improvements and Alterations.....	10
J. Non-Contributing Buildings.....	10
K. Review Procedures.....	10
L. 919.04 Neighborhood Business District Sign Regulation.....	11
District Map.....	15

DESIGN GUIDELINES: EAST CARSON STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

A. Introduction

1. The following draft guidelines were adopted by the HRC after they were submitted to property owners in the proposed East Carson Street Historic District (and to other interested parties), revised in accordance with some of their comments, and discussed at a public hearing on May 14, 1993. They were submitted to City Council and incorporated in the designation of the historic district by Council.

2. The HRC uses guidelines when it reviews the appropriateness of proposed exterior alterations in the historic district, if it is designated. The guidelines can also assist property owners in the formulation of plans for the preservation, rehabilitation, and continued use of historic buildings in the district. They apply to all construction and demolition on the exteriors of all buildings in the district, as well as to all proposed exterior new construction in the district.

3. The East Carson Street Historic District is dominated by traditional commercial buildings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These buildings are typically two- to four-story masonry structures with a storefront on the first floor, smaller uniformly arranged windows in the upper stories, and a decorative cornice at the roofline. The storefront was usually framed by masonry side walls and an elaborate horizontal cornice or lintel above the storefront windows. The basic principle in the design of the storefront was to make it as transparent as possible by using as large an expanse of glass as possible, including large transom windows over the display windows. Store entrances were usually recessed behind the plane of the facade, and secondary doorways gave access to the upper floors. The lintel or cornice separated the storefront from the simpler upper floors, in which the masonry wall was usually broken only by the windows and their decorative frames (if any). The stylistic character of the building derived only in small part from the design of the storefront itself. Instead, the architectural style manifested itself mostly in the design of the window frames and moldings and of the buildings cornice. Although their sizes and styles may vary, traditional commercial buildings relate visually to each other because they share the characteristics described above.

4. Commercial buildings of a later date were often shorter, one- or two-story buildings with a storefront at the first floor. Although an occasional commercial building of the twentieth century was elaborately decorated, for the most part buildings of that period bore little or no ornamentation. They related to the earlier commercial buildings, when they did so at all, by the expanse of glass that marked their storefronts. Only in recent years have storefronts been closed up and their window areas reduced to any great degree.

B. Basic Principles

1. The removal or alteration of original building materials or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible, especially if they are important in defining the overall historic or visual character of a building. If the materials and features are original and in serviceable repair, they should be kept as is.
2. Deteriorated materials and architectural features should be repaired, rather than replaced, whenever possible.
3. Materials and architectural features that are too deteriorated to repair should be replaced in kind or with a visually compatible substitute material (if replacement in kind is not technically or economically feasible). The appearance of the replacement should match the appearance of the original material or feature.
4. New features that are designed and installed to replace original features that are completely missing should either be an accurate restoration of the original features (based on photographs, drawings, or physical evidence), or new designs that may be contemporary in character and detailing while they are compatible with the scale, material, and color of the historic building.

C. General Guidelines

1. The HRC does not require, initiate, or propose any work on a building. The review process begins only after the owner proposes exterior (not interior) work that is visible from a public street or way.
2. All buildings and structures are products of their own time. Alterations that attempt to make a building look older than it is, or that try to change the architectural style of the building, should be avoided.
3. Later additions to an old building, or non-original facades or storefronts (especially Carrara glass facades), may have gained significance in their own right as examples of an architectural style or evidence of historical changes to the building. If so, these additions or alterations to the original building should be recognized and respected.
4. The surface cleaning of structures should be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other abrasive techniques shall not be used to clean the exterior of a building, because they will damage the original building materials.

5. Original openings should not be altered on the principal facade(s) of a building, because enlarging, reducing the size, or eliminating openings can dramatically alter the appearance and character of a building.
6. Original building materials and architectural features should not be covered by other materials.
7. Any non-original material or feature on a building that was in existence at the time of the designation of the historic district may be retained as is, repaired, or replaced to match. The HRC shall not require the removal or alteration of any material or features that existed at the time of designation.
8. The rears of many of the buildings in the proposed district, when they are visible from a street or alley appear to have been altered significantly in order to accommodate changes in the uses of the buildings. If the rear of a building is not basically the original design and materials, then proposals for work on the rear, when visible from a public street or way, should be treated as if they were proposals for work on non-contributing structures (see Section J).
9. Concurrent Reviews: When an owner intends to make use of Federal or State funds for the construction of a new building or the rehabilitation or alteration of an existing one in a National Register-listed historic district, he or she is required to submit the proposal to the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation for review (or the City of Pittsburgh, acting for the State in some cases), in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Commission shall work with the owner, the Bureau, and the City to ensure that the reviews are concurrent and that the Commission, the Bureau, and the City concur in their approvals.

D. Building Rehabilitation and Alteration

1. Masonry Exteriors: The exterior surfaces of most of the contributing buildings in the district are predominantly masonry (brick and stone), with stone or terra cotta details. If replacement of deteriorated or missing materials is necessary, the replacements should be new or recycled materials that match the appearance of the original as closely as possible (including these characteristics: color, texture, shape, size, placement, detailing, and type of joint). Masonry surfaces should be cleaned, if necessary, by the gentlest means possible (water with detergent, or a mild acid, with low-pressure water wash not to exceed 600 psi); sandblasting and other abrasive cleaning methods shall not be used (except in extraordinary circumstances). Repointing of masonry should be done with a mortar that matches the original as closely as possible in terms of lime and cement content (to avoid damaging the masonry; Portland cement mortars may damage older bricks), color, and type of joint (to match the appearance). Waterproof and water-repellant coatings should not be used on masonry unless there is actual water penetration through the masonry.

Artificial sidings and stucco (or synthetic stucco) should not be applied over masonry, except on a case-by-case basis when the masonry has been damaged. Unpainted masonry and architectural metals should not be painted.

2. Wood or Siding Exteriors: If the facade of a building has wood siding, the wood siding should be repaired or replaced to match. All wooden trim, including window casings, cornices, and brackets, should be retained and repaired, or replaced to match, if necessary. No artificial siding (aluminum or vinyl siding, insulbrick, etc.), shingles, or stucco should be installed over existing wood siding on the front facades of buildings in the district. Aluminum or vinyl siding may be used on the sides and rears of buildings (except the sides of corner buildings).

3. Doors and Windows: The doors and windows of a building are essential elements of the overall design and architectural style of the building. Original door and window openings should not be altered or filled in, particularly on the principal facade(s) of the building. Original doors and windows should be retained and repaired, wherever possible. If they must be replaced, the new ones should match the originals in size, style, and appearance as closely as possible. Wood windows should be used as replacement windows on the front facades of buildings in the district. Aluminum or vinyl replacement windows may be used in the sides and rears of buildings (except in the sides of a corner building); all metal windows should be anodized or painted, and should avoid a metallic "mill" finish. Window glass may be double-glazed, but reflective and opaque glass, and artificial muntin grids, should be avoided. Storm windows should be installed so as to be inconspicuous: colored to match the window frames, sized to fit the openings, and divided like the windows that are being covered. New door and window openings may be installed only on building elevations of limited historic or visual significance.

4. Roofs: The existing roofline and architectural features that give a building its character, such as roof shapes, towers, dormers, cornices, brackets, and chimneys, should be retained. New features, such as vents, skylights, and rooftop utilities, should be placed out of view from the main street. Slate and tile roofs should be retained and maintained wherever possible, especially mansard roofs which, since they are such prominent features, should be repaired or replaced with new slate or artificial slate. Replacement roofing materials should maintain the visual character of the original materials, and should be black or dark gray in most cases. Flat or low-pitched roofs, if they are not visible from the street, shall not be reviewed by the HRC.

5. Ornamentation: Significant architectural and ornamental features should be retained and maintained.

6. Mechanical Systems: Utility and mechanical systems should be placed inconspicuously, and screened if necessary, so that they are not visible on the principal facade(s) of the building as seen from public streets; they should also be screened from residential uses.

Features that must be added to meet safety and code requirements, such as stairs and elevators, should be designed to be as inconspicuous as possible, and should not alter significant architectural features of the building. Features that must be added to make a building accessible to persons with disabilities should be designed and installed without damaging the historic character of the building. The Commission encourages placement of features on secondary facades if placement on primary facades cannot be done without damage to historic fabric.

7. Painting: The HRC urges the use of original color schemes in the painting of wood and metal elements, but will not ordinarily prescribe paint colors. Unpainted masonry and architectural metals should not be painted.

8. Accessories

a. Signs: The HRC will usually approve all signs that conform in size and material to the sign regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. Signs should not be installed in such a way as to obscure architectural features of the building.

b. Awnings: should be sloping and triangular in section, in most cases (arched awnings should be used only over arched openings); they should be made of canvas or canvas-like materials; and they should not be internally-illuminated.

c. Canopies: (supported in whole or in part from the ground) should not be installed over the sidewalks along East Carson Street; applications for the installation of canopies over the sidewalks of side streets shall be reviewed by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.

d. Security devices: should not be installed on the exterior of a storefront (but may be installed on the inside of the storefront windows and doors). Exterior lighting should be mounted in an inconspicuous and non-destructive manner, and screened from adjoining residential uses.

E. Storefronts

1. General guidelines: Original storefront materials and features should not be removed or destroyed, but should be retained and repaired, if possible. If it is impossible to repair them, they should be replaced with the same material or one that matches the original visually. Storefronts should be located within the original (or new) structural "frame" made up of the sidewalls and lintel that spans the storefront opening. The open commercial character of a storefront should be retained, regardless of the use of the building; the storefront should not be closed-up, but other interior devices to ensure privacy may be employed. A lintel, or cornice, should be maintained or provided above the storefront in order to separate it from the upper facade and to provide a signboard for the first-floor use.

2. Windows: Storefronts should be glazed from the bulkheads under the display windows up to the lintels or cornices over the storefront, including the transom windows over the display windows. Reflective, opaque, or tinted glass should not be used in the storefront, with the exception that opaque glass may be used in transom windows above the display windows.

3. Doors: The main entry door into a commercial space should be a traditional wood-and-glass door (especially if an original or new wooden storefront exists), or a simple metal-and-glass door; in either case, the door should be commercial in character and have a large panel of clear glass. Secondary doors, including doors that give access to the upper floors, should be either paneled wood or wood-and-glass doors, but not solid metal doors (solid metal doors may be used at the rears of buildings). "Natural" mill-finish metal doors, or pseudo-historical doors, should not be used.

4. Materials: Storefronts should be constructed of high-quality; durable materials, similar in type and scale to traditional materials, such as wood, cast iron, structural metal, and glass. Brick may be used, but only if appropriate to the design of the building and only in narrow piers. Corrugated metal panels, aluminum or vinyl siding, synthetic stucco, plywood siding, and concrete block should not be used in storefronts. Storefronts should also not be decorated with half-timbering, shingles, pent roofs, or other pseudo-historical materials or treatments.

F. *New Construction*

1. The general aim of the guidelines for new construction is to encourage the visual compatibility of new construction with the character and quality of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings that give the district its historic architectural significance and visual character. This does not require, although it also does not forbid, replication of the styles of the existing buildings in the district. The review of the design of a new structure will take into account the immediate context of the buildings that surround it, as well as the historic and architectural character of the district as a whole.

2. Materials: Materials should be of a similar color, texture, and scale to building materials in the district's contributing buildings.

3. Scale, Massing, Rhythm, and Siting: The scale, massing, and rhythm of a new building and its individual elements (e.g., windows, doors, roof, and ornamentation) should be compatible with the forms found among the contributing buildings in the district. The ratio of wall surface to openings, and the proportions and direction of the door and window openings, should be consistent with those of the contributing buildings. Glass curtain walls and horizontal strip windows along the principal facades should be avoided, as well as large, flat wall surfaces unbroken by openings, setbacks, or moldings.

4. Detailing: The detailing of new buildings should correspond to the kinds of detailing found on contributing buildings in the district. This does not require replication of the degree of ornamentation found in those buildings but should generally include the following: a cornice or other definition of the roofline; a distinctive storefront or main door surround; window sills and lintels, or other distinctive detailing at the openings; and ornamental features such as moldings.

5. Accessories: The HRC will usually approve all signs for new buildings that conform in size and material to the sign regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. Awnings on new buildings should be sloping and triangular in section, in most cases (although arched windows should have rounded awnings); they should be made of canvas or canvas-like materials; and they should not be internally illuminated. Security devices should not be installed on the exterior of a storefront (but may be installed on the inside of the storefront windows and doors). Exterior lighting should be mounted in an inconspicuous and non-destructive manner, and screened from adjoining residential uses.

6. Rooftop Elements: Structures on the roofs of new buildings, such as elevator or other mechanical housings or devices, vents, utilities, and skylights, should be designed so that they are inconspicuous from the public streets.

G. Additions

1. In general, additions should follow the guidelines for compatibility of new construction.
2. The design of an addition should respond specifically to the architecture of the building to which it is being added. It should be sympathetic to and compatible with the appearance of the original building, but this does not mean that the addition needs to replicate the design of the existing building.
3. An addition should be designed so that it is secondary to the existing building, and does not "overpower" it visually. It should not be located on the principal facade(s) of the building.
4. The connection of the addition to the original building should be designed so that it does not detract from either structure. Significant architectural features of the original building should not be destroyed, removed, or obscured by the addition.
5. Additions to the roof of a building (such as additional floors, elevator housings, decks, terraces, dormers, and skylights) should be designed so that they are inconspicuous from the public streets and do not damage or obscure character-defining elements of the building.

H. Demolitions

1. The HRC shall take all of the following factors into consideration when it considers a proposal for the demolition of a structure in the historic district:

- a. the historic or architectural significance of the structure;
- b. the contribution of the structure to the character of the district;
- c. the structural condition of the building;
- d. the feasibility of renovation and continued use of the building;
- e. the character of the new construction proposed to replace the demolished structure;
- f. the ability of the owner to obtain a reasonable economic return from the use of all or part of the building (if a profit-making venture) or the marketability of the building to another individual or organization;
- g. the ability of the owner to use the structure in a manner compatible with its organizational purposes (if a non-profit organization or corporation) or the marketability of the building to another individual or organization.

2. The Commission shall allow the demolition of an inappropriate addition to a contributing structure in the district.

3. The Commission shall allow the demolition of a non-significant portion of a contributing building, as long as the demolition does not adversely affect significant elements of the building.

4. The Commission shall allow the demolition of a non-contributing structure in the district, as long as the demolition does not adversely affect the character of the district as a whole.

I. Site Improvements and Alterations

1. The HRC will review all construction on building lots within the historic district that are visible from a public street or way. This shall include paving, light standards, walls, fences, and landscaping.

2. Parking lots should be sufficiently screened by structures, screening, or landscaping to minimize the view of the lots and the cars stored there.

3. Significant existing site features, such as steps, walks, and fences, which contribute to the character of the property, should be retained and maintained.
4. New site features should either replicate the original features or be compatible in design.
5. New chain-link fences may only be installed when they will be minimally visible along secondary views or facades. They should not be installed along principal facades or views.

J. Non-Contributing Buildings

1. Additions and alterations to, and rehabilitation of, non-contributing buildings in the district should either be compatible with the style and character of each building, or cause the building to become more compatible with the district.
2. The HRC shall not require that alterations to non-contributing buildings be made so as to make the buildings appear to be older than they are, or designed in a different style.
3. The HRC shall allow the demolition of non-contributing buildings in the district if the demolition will not adversely affect the character of the district.

K. Review Procedures

1. The HRC shall authorize its staff to review and approve all applications to repair or replace exterior building elements to match existing elements and designs, all applications that meet the guidelines for exterior rehabilitations and alterations as described above, and all applications to restore the exterior of a building to a documented original condition. The staff shall conduct its review and issue its approval or rejection of the application within ten (10) days of receipt of the completed application.
2. The HRC shall review all applications for new construction and additions, for demolitions, for major alterations to existing buildings, and for changes in materials. The Commission shall review each application and vote to approve or deny the application within sixty (60) days following receipt of the application. In the case of major new construction projects, the Commission shall review the conceptual or schematic design of the project and vote to approve or deny the design within sixty (60) days following receipt of the application, but it shall also review the details of the project and vote to approve or deny the details of the design at a later date, according to the schedule of the applicant. The applicant may choose to present such a proposal for a single review by the Commission.
3. The time limit for consideration of an application may be extended with the consent of the applicant.

L. 919.04 Neighborhood Business District Sign Regulation

919.04A General

(A.1) *Purpose.* The purpose of these special provisions is to provide control over signage in commercial areas of the City which includes uses which are within and adjacent to residential neighborhoods, where such uses are physically oriented toward pedestrian traffic rather than vehicular traffic, and where the existing general provisions regulating signage allow types and sizes of signs which are not appropriate to these types of districts.

(A.2) *Application.* These regulations shall apply only to those areas specifically listed hereunder, and shall be used in addition to the general provisions for signs found above. Where differences occur between the provisions of Section 919.04 and those found elsewhere in this Chapter, the provisions of this section shall apply. In the Neighborhood Business Sign Districts, there shall be applied the regulations prescribed in this chapter and the qualifying regulations prescribed in other chapters specifically referred to in the following sections of this chapter.

(A.3) *District Classifications.* To carry out the purpose and provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, the following Neighborhood Business Sign Districts are hereby established:

Name	Boundary
1. East Carson Street	That area defined by the A1 Commercial/Residential Associated District along and adjacent to East Carson Street, as defined by ordinance on the City's Zoning District Map.

(A.4) *Special Definitions.*

(1) "Projecting Sign" means any business or identification sign which sole means of support is by attachment to a legal structure on a zoning lot and which projects more than twelve (12) inches into a public right of way. A projection sign shall contain no more than two (2) sign faces, which include lettering, and these sign faces shall be back-to-back.

(1) *Number of Signs.*

A. For each street level business, a maximum of one (1) wall sign, two (2) window signs, and either one (1) awning sign or one (1) projecting sign or one (1) ground sign shall be permitted for each facade of a structure facing a street.

B. For each upper floor business, a maximum of two (2) window signs, one (1) door sign, and either one (1) awning sign or one (1) projecting sign shall be permitted on the facade of a structure facing the street.

C. The maximum area of all signs, including ground signs, shall be fifteen percent (15%) of the area of the face of the building on which the signs are proposed. For ground signs, the area of the face of the buildings nearest to and visible from the ground signs shall be considered for this calculation.

(2) *Size of Signs.*

A. Wall signs shall be a maximum of two (2) square feet in area for every lineal foot of the building frontage, up to a maximum of forty (40) square feet. Maximum lettering size shall be eighteen (18) inches.

B. For each street level business window and doors signs shall be a maximum of twenty percent (20%) of the glazed area of the window or door in which they are placed up to a maximum of eight (8) square feet. For each upper floor business, window or door signs shall be a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the glazed area of the window or door in which they are placed, up to a maximum of ten (10) square feet.

C. Projecting signs shall be a maximum of nine (9) square feet per side. The area of irregular or three-dimensional shapes shall be computed by multiplying the height and the width at the widest points.

D. Ground signs shall be limited to forty (40) square feet, and the sign and sign structure shall be no higher than twelve (12) feet.

(3) *Location of Signs.*

A. No sign or sign structure or support shall be placed onto or obscure or damage any significant architectural feature of a building, including but not limited to a window or a door frame, cornice, molding, ornamental feature, or unusual or fragile material.

B. No sign shall be painted onto any significant architectural feature, including but not limited to a window or doorframe, cornice, molding, ornamental feature, or unusual or fragile material.

C. No sign or structure support shall be located on the roof of a building or structure, nor shall any sign or sign structure or support extend beyond the cornice line of any building structure.

D. Projecting signs shall extend no more than four (4) feet from the front of a building or structure or two-thirds (2/3) of the width of the sidewalk beneath the sign

where such sidewalk exists, whichever is less. The bottom most point of a projecting sign shall be no less than ten (10) feet from above the grade beneath the sign.

(4) *Sign Materials.*

A. The following types of signs and materials shall not be permitted for signs in a Neighborhood Business Sign District:

1. Internally illuminated box signs;
2. Individually illuminated channel letters;
3. Flashing, moving or intermittently illuminated sign;
4. Internally illuminated awnings.

B. Wall signs shall be painted only on to separate material, which is applied to the facade of the building.

C. For awning signs, letters shall be applied or painted onto the valance portion of the awning only.

(5) *Sign Illumination*

A. Internally illuminated signs or letters shall not be permitted.

B. The sign face may be illuminated with small shielded spotlights, which are placed as to not glare onto of the public right of way, or into adjacent properties or neon tubing may be attached to the face of the sign for illumination.

(6) *Historic Plaques.*

A. In addition to the signs permitted above, the City's historic designation plaque and one other historic plaque may be applied to a wall of a building or structure. These historic plaques shall be a maximum of one and one-half (1-1/2) square feet in area.

(1) *East Carson Street Historic District.*

A. *Intent.* This commercial area is an historic district with a unique collection of nineteenth and twentieth century structures, built in a variety of architectural styles, but forming a continuous urban fabric along an important city arterial. The vast majority of structures are attached brick structures built to the property line along the street with narrow sidewalks along a two (2) or three-lane cartway.

The intent of these special provisions is to minimize the possibly adverse effect of signs on these significant architectural resources, to improve the safety of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and improve the communicative value of the signage for the primary users of the district.

A further intent of these regulations is to provide for signage which is compatible with the architectural character of the district, so that the historic characteristics of the district are not adversely impacted by inappropriate signage.

B. Number of Signs.

1. One (1) ground sign shall be permitted per zoning lot and shall substitute for a projecting sign or an awning sign.

C. Size of Signs.

1. Ground signs shall be limited to twenty-five (25) square feet in area, and the sign and sign structure shall be no higher than eight (8) feet.

2. The limitation on the total area of all signs shall not include signs which are determined to be a significant historic element of the building and which are an integral part of the building facade.

D. Location of Signs.

1. Signs for street level businesses shall be located below the sills of the second floor windows and above the frame of the storefront windows.

2. Ground signs shall be located within the buildable area of the lot. Ground signs shall be used only where the building or structure on a zoning lot is set back from the front property line by at least twenty (20) feet. Ground signs shall not be supported by poles, uprights, braces or other means of support, which are not a part of the sign face.

E. Sign Materials.

1. Sign supports and structures shall be designed to be the minimum necessary to safely install the sign. Sign structures and supports shall be designed to be compatible with the architecture of the building.