



Ashland



Mahanoy City



Shenandoah

improve

A GUIDE TO STOREFRONT AND PROPERTY DESIGN
IN UPPER SCHUYLKILL DOWNTOWNS



Girardville



Ringtown



Frackville

“improve—to enhance in value or quality: to increase the value of property by making it more useful — Better: bringing to a more desirable state.”



upper schuylkill downtowns—a summary

What is the Upper Schuylkill Downtowns Initiative?

Upper Schuylkill Downtowns is a PA State designated Regional Main Street Program with offices located in the Mahanoy Area Downtown Center in Mahanoy City, PA. The program is funded by State Senator James J. Rhoades and The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Main Street Program, PPL Utilities and Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area. The initiative began in 2004 and is lead by a full-time director. The program is designed to help strengthen economic life through downtown revitalization in the participating communities while enhancing tourism opportunities for the region.

The Upper Schuylkill Region will strive to make the most of the natural beauty, heritage, and recreational assets that currently exist.

What is the Upper Schuylkill Vision for the Future?

Located in the anthracite region of east central Pennsylvania, Upper Schuylkill County is an area rich in cultural, historical, and natural heritage. The region is mostly bordered by the surrounding ridges and spacious farmland. Upper Schuylkill is interspersed with many towns and villages, including Ashland, Frackville, Girardville, Mahanoy City, Ringtown and Shenandoah. These six regional communities are committed to maintaining their "small town" character while encouraging economic growth within their downtown areas.

Each of the communities within the Upper Schuylkill Region shall capitalize on their individual strengths. These six communities, while maintaining their own distinct identity, as a whole, comprise a full service "Regional City". These communities will expand their regional potential for 21st Century industry and economic development and will create clean, attractive, and vibrant downtowns where people want to work and live.

The Upper Schuylkill Region will strive to make the most of the natural beauty, heritage, and recreational assets that currently exist. These towns shall encourage family friendly and visitor related activities throughout the region and within their downtowns. Many of these activities will support tourist related activities for the day visitor or the weekend traveler.

Upper Schuylkill County is a collection of communities that have the interest and capacity to band together as a larger regional "economic" community. The communities see the value and possibilities of working together on a regional scale. This progressive outlook and vision is the catalyst for the region's future.

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introduction

The Upper Schuylkill Design Challenge Grant Program provides funding to Local Property Owners or Business Owners (with property owner approval) to encourage restoration projects of building facades and to enhance the building's overall exterior appearance, thus creating a more improved Central Business District (CBD) in the communities of Ashland, Frackville, Girardville, Mahanoy City, Ringtown and Shenandoah.

Upper Schuylkill offers grants through funding received from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Main Street Program. Design challenge grant funding must be matched dollar-for-dollar by the individual owner of the property. The Design Challenge Grant Program is designed to stimulate private investment in downtown properties; foster an attractive shopping environment; and preserve the architectural heritage of downtown.

Upper Schuylkill offers a comprehensive publication of Design Guidelines to serve as a reference guide. The Design Guidelines cannot cover every situation nor solve every

Attractive and energetic downtowns are essential to the success of the Upper Schuylkill revitalization program.

problem; however, they offer basic information about physical improvements, which have proven to be effective in the revitalization of other Central Business Districts throughout Pennsylvania. In addition the Design Guidelines establish a set of principals to ensure that improvements are consistent with the scale, character and history of the Central Business District. These principals stress good property maintenance and preservation of original architectural features and encourage

the compatibility of any replacement architectural elements and building additions.

Storefront improvements do not need to be costly. Often, a fresh coat of paint or a new sign, awning, lighting fixtures or flower boxes and planters are all that is needed. The Design Challenge Grant enables property owners to reverse alterations that did not preserve the original architectural character of a building and threatened the economic viability of the Central Business District. In cases where more than one storefront exists within the same façade, each storefront can receive its own grant for eligible grant activities. A storefront shall be defined as having its own unique entrance, interior space, and display window. The façade is the part of the building facing the street or streets. It includes the entirety of the face of the building from the ground up.

An attractive and energetic Central Business District is essential to the success of the Upper Schuylkill Downtown Revitalization program and to the communities in which it serves. Implementation of the Upper Schuyl-

kill Design Challenge Grant Program will result in a more competitive and economically viable downtown in each of our Six Great Towns.

A strong and lasting impression depends upon the appearance of individual properties and the assets with which they were originally constructed.



VACANT AND UNATTRACTIVE STOREFRONT



DOWNTOWNS ARE IMPROVING AS OUR BUSINESSES CONTINUE TO ADD VALUE

purpose

The purpose of establishing design guidelines is to help revitalize our main streets and downtown areas. In communities across the nation, maintaining, preserving and enhancing our architectural heritage has fostered community pride and helped establish healthy business environments. Historic architecture in most of our Upper Schuylkill communities is one of our strongest assets. Working to restore and improve these buildings in a sensitive manner will be key to future community revitalization.

These design guidelines have been developed to respect the original features of historic buildings and their streetscapes and at the same time encourage creativity. The guidelines should be used to assist in the design of high quality and creative rehabilitations. Design solutions should also be affordable and flexible so that business and property owners benefit from the revitalization process.

In time, all business and property owners will come to learn that good design makes economic sense. Not only do sensitive rehabilitations improve property values and the aesthetic quality of the community, they also build community pride and spur revitalization projects involving nearby buildings. Also, tax credits for rehabilitation can offset the cost of many projects and ensure high-quality design.

The establishment of these guidelines is an integral part of the Upper Schuylkill Downtowns Initiative, a regional revitalization effort of the PA Department of Economic and Community Development and Area Revitalization and Development Corporation. One component of the initiative makes available financial incentives for central business district properties in our six primary communities—Ashland, Frackville, Girardville, Mahanoy City, Ringtown and Shenandoah. Services, matching grants for building design and improvements to business signage, storefronts, commercial and property building facades will be made available. The Upper Schuylkill office hopes to also provide referrals for low-interest loan opportunities for property owners. In order to qualify for the grant and loan assistance listed above, applicants will be required to comply with the guidelines set forth in the application and this publication. Depending on a building's design and condition, there are three basic approaches to consider prior to undertaking work on historic resources in the downtown areas.

Restoration is the exact duplication of the original exterior appearance, including architectural details. Original color scheme and sign placement should also be duplicated. Restoration is ideal if a building has undergone only minor changes. In such cases restoration is relatively inexpensive.



Renovation involves retaining existing historic features whenever possible and constructing new features using materials that are appropriate to the building. Renovation is employed when inappropriate alterations have destroyed original elements or duplication of details is cost-prohibitive or based solely on conjecture.

Rehabilitation of historic buildings usually requires basic maintenance, the removal of any extraneous materials, and the completion of simple improvements. Cosmetic treatment, such as an appropriate paint scheme or the addition of new signage, is often all that is needed to make a building compatible with its historic streetscape.

application parameters

ELIGIBLE COMMUNITIES AND CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS:

Ashland—Centre Street from 1st to 13th

Frackville—Lehigh Avenue from Catawissa to Spruce; Oak from Middle to Balliet

Girardville—Main Street from Richard to 3rd; North Second From Main to Mahanoy Avenue

Mahanoy City—Centre Street from 2nd to Catawissa; Main Street from Railroad to Maple; Mahanoy Avenue from Main to Locust

Ringtown—Main Street from 4th to 12th (Ringtown Mill)

Shenandoah—Main Street from Washington to Laurel; Centre Street from Jardin to White

The total reimbursement, per applicant, will not exceed 50% of the total project cost up to a maximum of \$5,000 per storefront or as otherwise noted. The grant cannot be used to pay for work that is currently in progress or completed. Up to 10% of the grant dollars may be used for professional design renderings and assistance. (See page 20 of design guidelines.) Eligible projects and their reimbursable dollar amounts are as follows:

SIGNS AND AWNINGS

Maximum reimbursement of \$1,500

This category is for the maintenance and repair of, or removal and replacement of existing signage and awnings, as well as the installation of new signage and awnings. This category includes lighting fixtures that provide direct lighting on signage or provide area lighting under awnings.

MURALS

Maximum reimbursement of \$3,000

This category is for new historic depictions or repairs and renovations to any pre-existing, historic murals and artwork. The design and artwork of new murals must be rendered by a professional artist or studio.

EXTERIOR PAINTING AND RESTORATION

Maximum reimbursement of \$5,000

This category refers to the repair, cleaning, refinishing, painting, restoration, or replacement of exterior woodwork, architectural sheet metals and cast iron elements. This category includes exterior masonry repairs, restoration, re-pointing, repainting (only if originally painted), or low-pressure water or steam cleaning.

ADDITIONS AND ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

Maximum reimbursement of \$5,000

This category refers to the construction of new additions. With respect to existing structures, the repair, replacement, installation, painting or restoration of windows (including display, ornamental and upper-story windows), shutters and exterior doors as part of storefront entrance ways is also included. This category includes repair, replacement, installation, painting or restoration of cornices, parapets or roofs when part of a façade.

CORNER, STAND ALONE, OR END OF ROW BUILDINGS

Maximum reimbursement of up to \$10,000 per building per five years.

Work may be performed on a storefront and, in the case of a stand-alone or corner building, one highly visible side façade. An applicant **must** renovate the primary storefront in order to be eligible for a side façade grant. Should one building have one or more storefronts, each storefront qualifies for up to the maximum of \$5,000, but in no case will the maximum amount of \$10,000 per building per five year period be exceeded.

EXTERIOR LIGHTING

Maximum reimbursement of \$1,000

This category is for the maintenance and repair of, or addition of exterior lighting to building sites. Exterior lighting may include building mounted fixtures, lamp posts on the sidewalk and parking area lighting.

The Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act (43 P.S. 165-1 et seq.; 34 Pa. Code 9.101 et seq.) may be applicable to this project if total project cost exceeds \$25,000. If applicable, the grant recipient is responsible for including prevailing wage rates in all bid documents, specifications, and construction contracts pertaining to the Project. The Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) has final authority to make all prevailing wage applicability determinations.

application and approval process

Applicants are required to meet with the Design Committee of their local downtown organization to discuss their project prior to completing the application process. The local Design Committee and Board of Directors reserve the right to recommend projects that make the most impact in their downtown areas and recommend those projects for design assistance. Consideration will be given to the number of properties that can be assisted. For maximum impact, the central business district boundaries can be reduced by the local Board of Directors and Design Committee to include a portion of the Main Street target area.

Generally, only commercial properties are eligible. However, if single family owner occupied units within the target area are deemed important to the overall Main Street program the local board and Design Committee can decide to include them as eligible for grants with only external improvements eligible. For example, landscaping and site improvements such as sidewalk and paving, though important aspects of revitalization programs, are ineligible expenditures for Main Street Design Challenge Grant assistance.

Applications will be accepted for review at any time throughout the year. The awarding of grants is dependent on funding from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and is based on the allocation of funds for the Upper Schuylkill Design Challenge Grant from DCED. There is no certainty that funds will be available at any given time.

The Design Challenge Grant application form is provided in the Design Guidelines

packet or can be obtained from the Upper Schuylkill Office and the local Downtown Design Committee.

A Façade Grant Application requires the following to be considered:

- Applicant identification
- Property owner identification
- Location/address of the property
- Copy of paid Real Estate Tax Receipt
- Three(3) complete copies of the following:
 - ➔ Written project description
 - ➔ Design plan(s), drawings
 - ➔ Paint color samples and finishing material samples
 - ➔ Schematic(s), photographs for each eligible project
 - ➔ Contractor and material cost estimates for each eligible project
 - ➔ Matching fund verification, proof of financial responsibility
 - ➔ Signatures of the applicant and property owner

Grants will be awarded based upon the level of improvement(s), the accuracy of historic preservation and the vitality and significant impact the project will make to the downtown environment. Only complete applications will be accepted for processing. The grant application will be reviewed by the Local Design Committee of the Downtown Organization for the completeness of information and supporting documents.

After the grant application is reviewed and recommendation has been made by the local organization, it will be submitted to Upper Schuylkill Executive Director for review and final approval. If the Upper Schuylkill guidelines are being used by the local downtown organization for their own Design Challenge Program then all

applications and approvals will go through the local organization for processing.

Applicants are required to meet all codes and ordinances of their Borough and real estate taxes must be paid current. Applicants are also required to secure any necessary permit (s) from the Borough before work can commence.

The approved applicant must deposit the 50% matching funds into an escrow account with Upper Schuylkill Downtowns prior to the commencement of work. Reimbursement to the project applicant/contractor(s) requires the following:

1. Adherence to the design plan and/or project as submitted, reviewed and approved by the local downtown organization and Upper Schuylkill Downtowns;
2. Pre-approval by the local Design Committee and Upper Schuylkill of any changes of work-in-progress, and;
3. The completion of final inspections, if required by the Borough. There will be no reimbursement if Borough code or ordinance violations exist.

Important: only approved work will be eligible for the Design Challenge Grant. Project work may not commence until the applicant/property owner receives a notice to proceed from the Upper Schuylkill Executive Director.

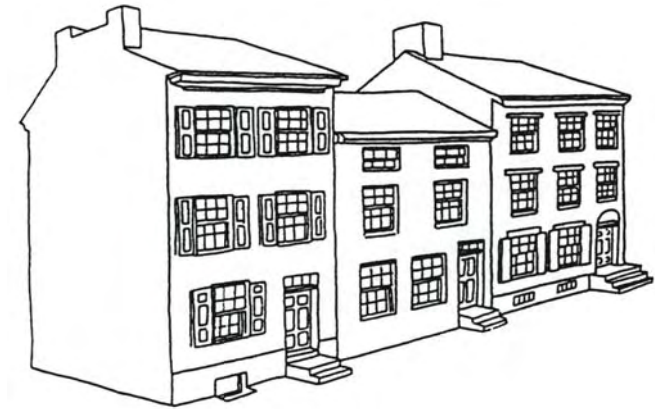
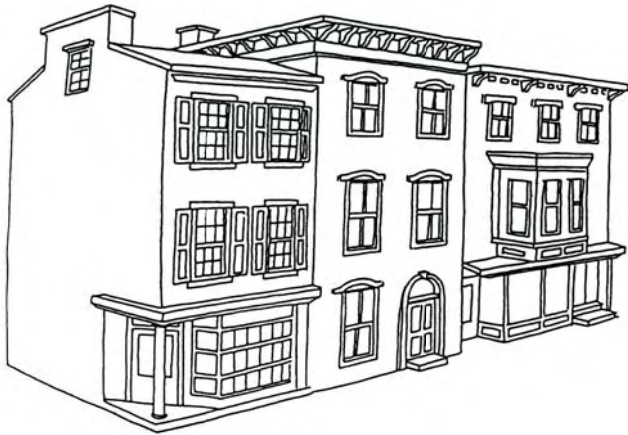
Once the project has been completed in a timely fashion, the applicant and/or contractor will send a letter of project satisfaction and all invoices to the Upper Schuylkill Director. Once work is completed and reviewed by Upper Schuylkill and the Local Design Committee, the funds will be released.

architectural styles and vocabulary

The commercial centers of the Upper Schuylkill Downtowns developed for the most part in the second half of the 19th century. A variety of architectural styles are evident, including local examples of Federal, Greek Revival, Second Empire, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival. These buildings are constructed of brick, stone and clapboard and have a variety of decorative elements that create visual interest and make each building unique.

1820-1860 — Greek Revival

Greek Revival buildings have rectangular transoms above the main doors, often with classically inspired elements such as pilasters or columns. Windows are elongated on the first floor, and eyebrow or short windows are found in the attic or third floors.



1850-1870 — Early Victorian Era

Early Victorian buildings in the Upper Schuylkill area include elements from a number of popular architectural styles, most notably the Italianate and Gothic Revival modes. These buildings often have bracketed cornices, low pitched roofs, pointed-arched or round-arched attic windows and main floor windows with double hung sash and two-over-two lights.

1865-1910 — Late Victorian Era

Late Victorian buildings employ a range of architectural elements from various styles. French Second Empire buildings are identified by their Mansard roofs with dormers. Queen Anne buildings have irregular plans with towers, bay windows and porches. Colonial Revival buildings, common by the 1890-1910 period, employ traditional elements such as multi-paned windows and classical details, including molded cornices and doorways and porches with columns inspired by earlier buildings.



the storefront

When main streets became important commercial centers in the 19th century, buildings often shared a consistency of design that created a strong visual image. The vitality of the street and the architecture were closely linked. Changes and new additions to main streets' buildings during the late 19th and early 20th centuries honored the original architecture. Although these changes often altered the original shops, they were consistent in scale and proportion. In recent years, late 19th and early 20th century additions have come into their own right and are considered important elements of earlier buildings.

With new merchandising techniques and changing traditions in main street importance in the mid to late 20th century, many alterations to shop fronts did not take into account original design concepts. Some changes were inappropriate because they tried to copy architectural features found at new competing strip malls or created false historical references. Often, upper floors and signage were covered to hide the architectural character of the original design or to require little or no ongoing maintenance.

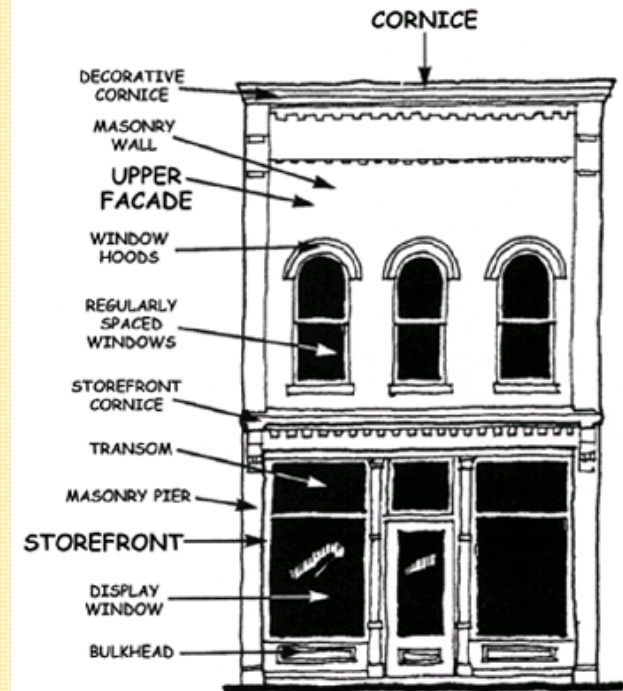
The majority of commercial buildings in the Upper Schuylkill Downtowns are made up of similar parts. These include a storefront on the first floor with store entry and possibly another entry for the upper floors, the body of the building consisting of the upper floors with windows, and top with cornice and roof structure. Some key terms are identified at right.

ENCOURAGED

- Installing storefronts that complement the existing structural frame of the building.
- Repairing, restoring and upgrading storefront materials.
- Changing the pattern and/or texture of storefront materials.
- Repainting and repairing brick or other masonry units.
- Removing old paint from masonry facades using non-toxic, biodegradable processes.

STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Installation of historically inaccurate or incompatible façade or material treatments such as imitation brick or stone.
- Removing existing materials that contribute to the original architectural character of the building.
- Painting unpainted masonry, especially in historic districts or on historic landmarks.
- Using restoration materials that do not closely match (color, size, texture, pattern, quality, etc.) materials of the existing building (i.e. caulk replacing cement mortar.)
- Covering, altering or damaging architectural elements of the façade with signs, awnings, or other additive elements.
- Sandblasting or use of harsh chemicals to clean brick or other masonry.



TRADITIONAL
FACADE
COMPONENTS

objectives of good storefront design

Your business has value. As a business owner you know that it is **very** important that all parts of your business contribute to your bottom line. From a business plan for how your business can grow, to orderly and well-lit aisles stocked with merchandise that attracts new customers, to an exciting storefront, your business makes a difference! As the first point of contact with your business, your storefront and those of your neighboring business owners define the character of your business district and as a group should attract new customers and sales.

Your storefront image is critical to advertising quality and diversity in both your business and central business district.

Storefronts are highly visible components of our communities historic streetscape, with a rich variety of architectural styles and treatments. Variety adds value and is the key to making your business more noticeable and exciting.



BOARDED
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BACK TO LIFE.



Storefronts are highly visible components of our communities historic streetscape, with a rich variety of architectural styles and treatments.

While some uniformity may be helpful in reducing overall construction costs, business owners are encouraged to imaginatively explore the relationship of their type of business (i.e. restaurant, bookstore, office, flower shop, etc.) and how that type translates into a unique storefront treatment within your business district. For example, an insurance office is clearly not a jazz bar, and is clearly not a laundromat. Their purposes and operations (peak periods, business hours, etc.) are different. They need not look the same.

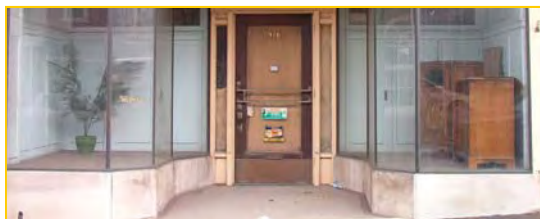
The most successful storefronts are those that:

- Work with the architecture of the larger building,
- Simply and clearly market the name of the business and the type of services offered,
- Allow potential customers visibility into the store's well-stocked and orderly aisles,
- Contribute to a distinctive pedestrian and customer experience, and
- Uniquely enhance the overall business district's integrity and identity.

A WELL DESIGNED STORE-
FRONT COMPLIMENTS THE
ARCHITECTURE OF THE
BUILDING.



Understanding the components of a building façade will assist you in communicating with designers about storefront renovations. Creatively accentuating each part of a storefront can contribute to making a distinctive image for your business. It is possible to create a distinctive storefront while working with some of the architectural elements of the building that are consistent (i.e. window base, trim/frieze, etc.) Being distinctive does not necessarily translate into using costly materials to enhance your storefront. In most cases, alternative materials that have the same function and visual effect as expensive components are available at lower costs. Basic maintenance and upkeep should be a priority for any renovations. Just as you have considered how to grow your business over a period of time, you should have a storefront design strategy that will add value to your business before making piecemeal alterations.



CEMENT



METAL

Window Base

Most storefronts use a window base to lift display windows to a more visible level for passersby while protecting display windows from damage and weathering. Window bases are typically made of sturdy, easy-to-maintain materials to counter potential wear and tear. Typical materials include brick, concrete, hardwoods, metal panels, ceramic tiles, and other masonry materials.

MATERIALS FOR BASES



STONE



MARBLE



PAINTED WOOD

storefront components

ENCOURAGED

- Restoring and/or repairing original, still-in-place window bases.
- Using sturdy, easy-to-maintain window base materials to provide a new and appropriate storefront window base(s). (Sturdy materials include brick, concrete, hardwoods, metal panels, ceramic tiles, and other masonry materials.)
- Maintaining or designing window bases for multiple storefronts in a building such that the height (not elevation) of the bases is consistent and the bases are of the same material. Installing window bases no higher than two (2) feet (2 inches) from the ground.

STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Eliminating a window base that was a part of the original building or that was also used to conceal any portion of a mechanical system of a business.
- Varying window base heights within a storefront or building.
- Using non-durable materials, like low-grade plywood, which are not easy to maintain.

doors and windows

Doors and Windows

Well-maintained storefront systems and creative displays are critical to doing good business and to attracting more sales. Together, your storefront's doors, display windows and transom are called a "storefront system." The system works together as a unit. Therefore the use of materials, colors and window glazing should be consistent or compatible. They allow those passing by to see your merchandise or service and attract potential customers into your store. Your storefront system is your greatest marketing opportunity so the more storefront windows that people can see through, the better. In general, greater visibility into the store is more inviting and makes potential customers feel more secure.

DOORS

Storefront doors are best recessed from the storefront wall so that customers are shielded from weather upon entering or leaving your business.

DOOR EXAMPLES



ENCOURAGED

- Restoring or replacing doors with appropriate commercial doors.
- Installing storefront doors made of glass or containing significant glass to allow additional visibility into a business.
- Adding new doors when required to meet disabled accessibility laws.
- Maintaining the continuity of storefronts on the primary business street by locating loading and service entrances on the side or rear of a building where possible.
- Installing new and maintaining existing durable wood or metal frame doors that can be painted a variety of colors to emphasize the business entry while adding visual interest.
- Installing folding/sliding doors that allow the activity of a business to be opened up to the sidewalk.

STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Adding new doors that are not required by code and which are inconsistent with the building and/or storefront image.
- Sealing or closing off existing entrances or doorways with any material.
- Blocking doors with merchandise or any other obstruction.
- Installing doorways that swing out directly onto sidewalks.
- Covering or replacing glass door panels with any opaque substance or material that would prevent or limit visibility.
- Covering doorways with signage, interior cases or woodwork.

display windows

Display windows are the greatest marketing opportunity for a competitive business to attract the attention of those passing by and to generate new sales. Highly successful storefronts use transparent glass that allow potential customers who are walking or riding by to see that the store is open for business and that the business owner is competitively offering quality merchandise. Storefront transparency during both daytime and nighttime hours is critical. Visibility during both periods is important for continuous marketing and branding of the business, as well as promoting a sense of safety in the business district.

Frequently changing displays help to market the variety of goods and services offered in your business while also giving your business and business districts character and interest. The original size, division, and shape of display window areas should be preserved when possible. Creative and thoughtful innovation, however is desired and strongly encouraged.



ENCOURAGED

- Restoring or increasing the percentage or amount of transparent glass on a storefront.
- Replacing dark tinted or texture glass with clear glass when appropriate to increase visibility into the business.
- Matching new windows to originals.
- Preserving historic features such as frames, special glazing, and decorative moldings.
- Aligning window heights and unifying window sizes when appropriate.
- Painting window frames in order to add visual variety and interest.
- Using aluminum or wood frame windows that provide thermal insulation and prevent condensation. Non-traditional colors are encouraged for either frame type.
- Using upper floor windows that might be boarded up as retail display areas.

STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Preventing visibility into display areas by covering or blocking a display window.
- Obstructing views into a business by using glass block, woodwork, paint, signage, lowered ceilings, shelves, refrigeration units, cases, posters, or other items except products being temporarily marketed by the business.
- Covering or obscuring existing window trim with metal or other materials.
- Removing historic windows or window components when restoration and maintenance are possible.
- Using less durable materials such as Plexiglass.
- Failing to maintain and repair broken or boarded display windows.

transom windows

Transom windows are the band of windows above display windows and doors. They provide ventilation and allow daylight deeper into the store's interior. Many transom windows throughout our downtowns have been covered by paint or wood to conceal ceiling dropped mechanical systems. Where possible, these windows should be restored in order to enhance the storefront image. For a number of businesses, the amount of light penetrating deep into the storefront may have an adverse effect on business operations and temperature, particularly for westward facing storefronts. There are creative solutions.



ENCOURAGED

- Restoring or maintaining the original pattern of transom windows.
- Using the same or compatible material and design that are a part of the storefront system.
- Restoring stained glass panes in transom windows where appropriate and feasible.
- Allowing the transom window to read as a distinctive architectural element by keeping all interior elements at least eight (8) inches behind or away from the transom windows. Concealed mechanical systems in a ceiling should be dropped no lower than the height of the display area or windows.
- Restoring and maintaining transom windows even when they will be hidden by awnings as awnings may be removed at some future date.
- Retain original colored glass and stained glass in upper panes above doorways and windows.

STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Covering transom windows with paint, signs, awnings or wood panels.
- Filling transom windows with masonry, glass block, wood, ventilation/mechanical systems or other non-transparent materials.

Selection of color is one of the most important improvement decisions that you can make for your business and property. The color selection ultimately becomes an integral part of your marketing strategy for your business. Your color choice should complement the larger building and that of other businesses within your business district. The number of different colors used should be kept to a minimum.

Selection of color is one of the most important improvement decisions that you can make for your business and property.

Painting masonry that has not been painted before is strongly discouraged. However, for those buildings that have been painted, a simple change of color is a visual but inexpensive way to dramatically improve your business and property. Painting your building or your storefront, however is not always necessary or desirable. Resources are best used to improve the quality of materials used for storefront enhancements.



PAINTING TIPS

- Maintain exterior wood elements with primer and preferably oil-based paint for maximum protection and longevity.
- Never apply paint over deteriorated wood. Paint failure is usually due to insufficient surface preparation. Painting over poorly repaired surfaces can accelerate damage to rotted wood.
- Wall surfaces that have not been painted should remain untouched unless paint is necessary to seal a porous surface. Generally, brick, stone, concrete or other non-wood surfaces should not be painted.
- Repaint using original colors if known. Consider undertaking a paint analysis to determine original color scheme.
- Avoid using inappropriate color schemes or colors inappropriate to the historic character of the building or neighborhood. Color schemes should complement adjoining buildings and add to the streetscape. Color should never be used as an advertising element and/or to attract attention to the building.
- Paint colors should tie the architectural elements together. In general, paint schemes should consist of no more than three colors. A base or body color for walls is the main color and should be found on all levels. The body color is often neutral and complements adjoining stone or brick buildings. A trim color should be used on doors, windows and cornice and/or to trim the façade. A third accent color can be introduced but should be limited — applied to small details or used on shutters. Too many colors on the wrong elements will usually detract from the building and streetscape.

ENCOURAGED

- Selecting paint colors that complement the color of the larger building.
- Coordinating the colors of all storefront components as a marketing tool for your business.
- Using paint colors to accentuate architectural details such as dentils, rosettes, cornice lines, etc.
- Exploring how painting storefronts or buildings in selective locations might increase the visibility of a business without seeming inconsistent or out of character with others in the district.

STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Painting masonry that has not been painted before, especially in historic districts.
- Failing to maintain painted or other colored storefront elements that have faded, peeled or flaked due to weather conditions.
- Selecting colors that detract from the overall image of the storefront and building.



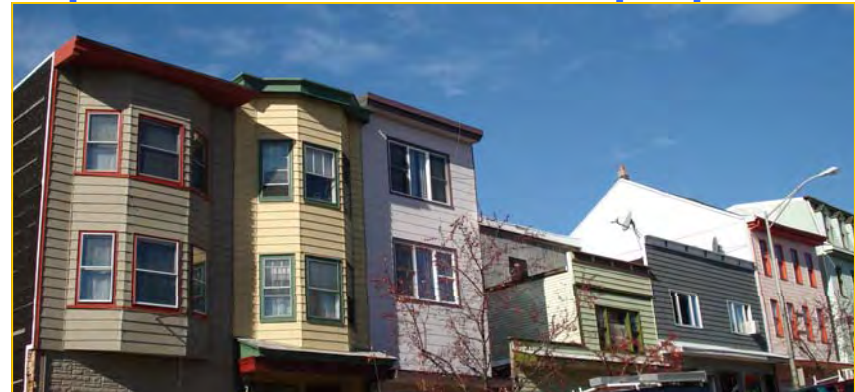
painted storefronts and properties



Before



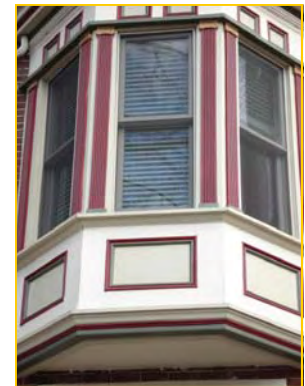
After



Before



After



painted storefronts and properties



exterior walls and materials

Most historic buildings in the region are of masonry construction, with brick or stone exteriors. Frame buildings in Upper Schuylkill downtowns originally employed clapboard or shingle walls. Paint colors and other materials, such as wood trim and detailing, terrazzo tiles, glass and steel, provide accents and variety that gives each building character. Maintaining these historic materials and complementing them with appropriate paint colors is essential to maintaining their historic integrity.

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Key points to maintaining masonry buildings:

- Retain original brick and stone and mortar whenever possible.
- Repair or replace deteriorated material only if necessary. If replacement is deemed necessary, make sure the new materials duplicate the old as nearly as possible.
- Clean masonry walls with the gentlest method possible. Low-pressure washing and or brush scrubbing will usually clean the surface adequately. Avoid chemical washes unless deemed necessary by an expert. Never sandblast.
 - Never apply waterproofing or repellent washes unless determined necessary to solve a technical problem.
 - Never remove paint from masonry surfaces. Often paint was applied to solve water problems. Removal of paint can cause damage to the masonry surface. Consult an expert if paint removal is necessary.
 - Retain original and/or old historic color scheme.
 - Moisture is the main culprit for the deterioration of masonry surfaces. Solving drainage problems along gutters, downspouts and foundations will correct most moisture problems.



- Minor cracks in mortar can be easily repaired. Match mortar, color and joint size. An analysis of the mortar composition should be completed to ensure adequate moisture barrier and to ensure that the masonry surface does not fail. Never use strong cement mortar for repairs. Inappropriate mortar can damage the masonry and/or allow water penetration.
- Avoid unnecessary repainting. Only repaint joints that are deteriorated.

- Determine cause of cracks prior to repair. Cracks that run through masonry may be a sign of structural problems. Consider consulting an engineer to find the source of the problem.

For wood frame buildings:

- Retain and preserve original or old clapboard or shingles. Replace sections and/or deteriorated portions rather than entire siding/shingles.
- Replace materials that match the original or old in size, shape and texture.
- Covering wood frame buildings with new surfaces should be avoided. Aluminum, vinyl, brick-and-stone-like veneers, asphalt and asbestos should not be introduced.
- Paint existing asbestos shingles as an economical way to improve the exterior appearance.
- Resurfacing of clapboard/shingle can trap moisture and cause deterioration and future structural problems that are not detectable behind the modern material.



signs

The character of your storefront signage and that of your neighboring businesses contributes tremendously to how your business and your business district are perceived. Beyond windows that allow customers to see what you are offering, signage is by far the most important element of your storefront. Signage makes a strong and dynamic first impression. Signage can be a creative demonstration of your business' personality and attitude.

Businesses that have a lot of signs or signs that are big do not necessarily attract new customers. The more signs that a building has, the more cluttered and confusing the

building façade appears. On average, motorists can perceive only up to four (4) words or symbols on a storefront. The best signs rely on strong graphic character and few words. The best graphic character is achieved when there is a definite contrast between background and text

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colors. The best location for signs is typically centered over the storefront or the door into the business.



ENCOURAGED

- Replacing, repairing or installing signs that are appropriately scaled for your buildings and storefront.
- Maintaining and restoring historic signs.
- Exploring very creative graphics and materials that maintain high standards in legibility and character.
- Building flexibility into signage and components to allow for changes or upgrades.
- Installing signs on the sign band, windows, doors, awnings or other architecturally appropriate location.
- Establishing a sign band on buildings that may not have a clearly demarcated area for signs.
- Using durable wood, painted plastics, metals, or pre-fabricated pin mounted letters.
- Installing painted metal or wood signs.
- Installing fin or blade signs, projected from the building wall, to identify a business to those passing by walking or traveling parallel to the storefront.

- Exploring bold and vibrant colors, still according to the good graphic design practice, as a method of distinguishing a sign while relating the sign to the storefront design and business type or project.
- Painting window signs that act as a secondary signage location or that provide an additional level of information about the businesses, such as store hours or types of services.
- Recommending three-dimensional, fixed signs that include an icon of the business type, business name and/or logo.
- Illuminating signs from behind. (Backlit box signs are strongly discouraged.)
- Using neon signs to indicate a business name or trade, but not to advertise products or sales.
- Complying with signage regulations of Borough.



STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Applying too many signs to your storefront or building.
- Covering windows, cornices or decorative details with signs or any other element.
- Blocking visibility into your storefront with signs, shelves or other obstruction.
- Advertising alcoholic, tobacco or other merchandise in general.
- Installing internally-lit plastic or plastic faced signs.
- Maintaining obsolete advertisements or other temporary signs.
- Painting signs directly onto the building surface.
- Installing signage above the rooftop.



awnings

Awnings are canopies made of canvas, metal and other materials and are used to shelter people, merchandise and the display windows. They are typically installed above storefronts, doors and/or windows. Awnings should fit within the overall storefront and building's organization. Ideally, they should fit within or just over window openings. Awnings are particularly useful in shielding south facing storefronts, outdoor seating areas, and entrances from heavy sunlight exposure. Awnings used on north facing facades are not the best use of funds given

a business district. Other methods for achieving sunlight control and weather protection, such as blinds or shades, should be explored. This helps to increase visual diversity within a block and/or business district.

Awnings can be used to effectively enhance a storefront by adding color, pattern and texture. As with all storefront elements, particular attention should be given to maintaining the awning and information to displays.

As with signs, excessive use of awnings can significantly reduce the appeal and diversity of storefronts in a building or a business district.

the negligible amount of northern sunlight exposure. As with signs, excessive use of awnings can significantly reduce the appeal and diversity of storefronts in a building or

Awnings should not be used to conceal bad building conditions, i.e. water damage, broken windows, etc. which should be corrected.



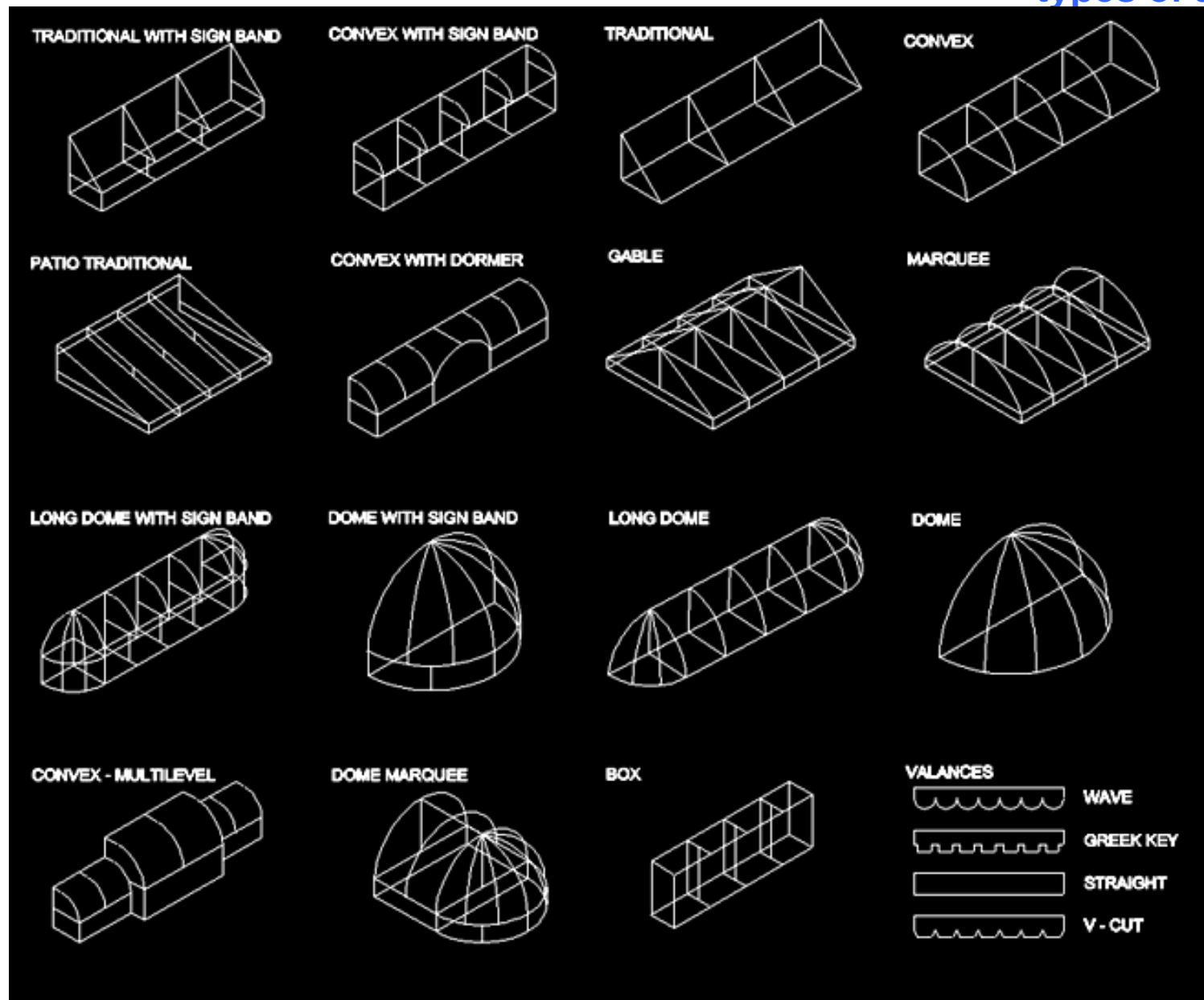
ENCOURAGED

- Installing canvas or metal awnings.
- Using individual awnings for individual storefronts in a building so that the building's structural frame, detail and rhythm are readable. This also helps to define the extent of an individual store and to establish better business identity.
- Installing retractable or fixed type awnings.
- Illuminating storefronts and sidewalks from beneath an awning.
- Using a consistent size, profile and location or awnings on a single building with multiple storefronts. Font styles may vary from business to business.
- Designing creative awning shapes that are complementary to the overall building.
- Locating signage on the valance of the awning. Letters should be not more than 12" tall.

STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Backlighting or internally illuminating plastic awnings.
- Applying large signage on the sloped portion of an awning.
- Concealing architectural details including transoms and storefront cornices with awnings or other elements.
- Using a material other than canvas or metal, including vinyl

types of awnings



lighting

Lighting dramatically enhances your business and storefront appeal. It creates a greater sense of security and can promote your business in the evening hours. Renovations to your storefront could include creative lighting for signage, display windows, architectural details, and dark corners/edges of the property or street. Storefront lighting should be carefully coordinated with nearby street lighting.

ENCOURAGED

- Illuminating interior display areas to promote merchandise or services inside a business.
- Balancing the amount of building lighting with street lighting.
- Using exterior mounted light fixtures selectively, i.e. sconces or downlights to enhance overall building image.
- Using lighting to illuminate signage or special architectural details.
- Concealing lighting sources as much as possible.

STRONGLY DISCOURAGED

- Installing flashing, pulsating, or moving lights or lights that cause significant glare.
- Using non-commercial lighting fixtures.
- Using neon tubing to border windows, doors and storefronts.
- Using a lot of light fixtures.
- Installing fixtures that when applied to the building cause too much damage to masonry or other façade material.



design assistance

Design assistance through digital images is strongly encouraged so the property/business owner has a visual of building improvements before the work begins. Graphic renderings are a great way to choose color combinations and improvements along with the local design committee and a graphic artist to ensure a successful project. The following picture is a graphic rendering of a proposed design project along Lehigh Avenue in Frackville.

BEFORE



AFTER



requirements for design funding improvements

Buildings in the Upper Schuylkill downtowns are generally in good condition, but many are a part of the region's older building stock. Some buildings have not been maintained properly for decades. Over time, the wear and tear that buildings have endured begins to show and the deterioration can effect how potential customers and visitors perceive your business and business district.

As a priority, business and property owners are strongly encouraged to determine if their storefront facades and properties have water or structural damage that would impair improvements funded with Upper Schuylkill grant resources. Business and/or property owners should act quickly to correct such damages prior to submitting applications to participate in the regional Design Challenge Grant Program.

As an eligible participant within the initiative, owners should work with designers to select the materials that best meet their storefront and property image needs while understanding the maintenance requirements of those materials. Expensive materials are not always the best.

Owners are expected to maintain improvements that are funded by the Upper Schuylkill Design Challenge Grant Program for a five (5) year period. As a part of its periodic review during this period, the local design committee and regional director will survey the condition of improvements with the following expectations in mind.

EXPECTATIONS

- Owners should clean and repaint a storefront/property, if needed, during the third year following construction completion.
- Visibility into storefronts will be maintained.
- Signage and display windows will be lit during the evening hours as a marketing tool for the business.
- Should an establishment go out of business within the five (5) year period, property owners must maintain and/or make all improvements and needed changes in accordance with the Upper Schuylkill Design Guidelines. Proposed changes must be submitted and approved by the local design committee.
- Sidewalks must be swept and cleaned on a regular basis.
- Storefront windows must be cleaned on a regular basis.
- Outdated signs and window postings must be removed immediately.
- Planters, window boxes and any landscaping elements must be properly maintained and free of debris.
- Graffiti must be removed immediately and the façade restored to its prior "improved" condition.
- Any additional improvements to facades within the five (5) year period should adhere to the Upper Schuylkill guidelines. All additions must be discussed with the local Design Committee.
- Any and/or all improvements must be in compliance with all applicable laws, codes and regulations of the borough.



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US
UPPER SCHUYLKILL
One Regional City

application parameters

ELIGIBLE COMMUNITIES AND CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS:

Ashland—Centre Street from 1st to 13th, 3rd/Hoffman Blvd. from Chestnut to Walnut

Frackville—Lehigh Avenue from Catawissa to Spruce; Oak from Middle to Balliet

Girardville—Main Street from Richard to 3rd; North Second From Main to Mahanoy Avenue

Mahanoy City—Centre Street from B to 4th; Main Street from Railroad to Maple

Ringtown—Main Street from 4th to 12th (Ringtown Mill)

Shenandoah—Main Street from Washington to Laurel; Centre

The total reimbursement, per applicant, will not exceed 50% of the total project cost up to a maximum of \$5,000 per storefront or as otherwise noted. The grant cannot be used to pay for work that is currently in progress or completed. Up to 10% of the grant dollars may be used for professional design renderings and assistance. (See page 20 of design guidelines.) Eligible projects and their reimbursable dollar amounts are as follows:

SIGNS AND AWNINGS

Maximum reimbursement of \$3,500

This category is for the maintenance and repair of, or removal and replacement of existing signage and awnings, as well as the installation of new signage and awnings. This category includes lighting fixtures that provide direct lighting on signage or provide area lighting under awnings.

MURALS

Maximum reimbursement of \$3,000

This category is for new historic depictions or repairs and renovations to any pre-existing, historic murals and artwork. The design and artwork of new murals must be rendered by a professional artist or studio.

EXTERIOR PAINTING AND RESTORATION

Maximum reimbursement of \$5,000

This category refers to the repair, cleaning, refinishing, painting, restoration, or replacement of exterior woodwork, architectural sheet metals and cast iron elements. This category includes exterior masonry repairs, restoration, re-pointing, repainting (only if originally painted), or low-pressure water or steam cleaning.

ADDITIONS AND ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

Maximum reimbursement of \$5,000

This category refers to the construction of new additions. With respect to existing structures, the repair, replacement, installation, painting or restoration of windows (including display, ornamental and upper-story windows), shutters and exterior doors as part of storefront entrance ways is also included. This category includes repair, replacement, installation, painting or restoration of cornices, parapets or roofs when part of a façade.

CORNER, STAND ALONE, OR END OF ROW BUILDINGS

Maximum reimbursement of up to \$10,000 per building per five years.

Work may be performed on a storefront and, in the case of a stand-alone or corner building, one highly visible side façade. An applicant **must** renovate the primary storefront in order to be eligible for a side façade grant. Should one building have one or more storefronts, each storefront qualifies for up to the maximum of \$5,000, but in no case will the maximum amount of \$10,000 per building per five year period be exceeded.

EXTERIOR LIGHTING

Maximum reimbursement of \$1,000

This category is for the maintenance and repair of, or addition of exterior lighting to building sites. Exterior lighting may include building mounted fixtures, lamp posts on the sidewalk and parking area lighting.

The Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act (43 P.S. 165-1 et seq.; 34 Pa. Code 9.101 et seq.) may be applicable to this project if total project cost exceeds \$25,000. If applicable, the grant recipient is responsible for including prevailing wage rates in all bid documents, specifications, and construction contracts pertaining to the Project. The Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) has final authority to make all prevailing wage applicability determinations.

AMENDED 2/6/08

VISIBLE ROOFS

Maximum reimbursement of \$3,500

Façade program funds are intended to increase the aesthetic quality of a business district where the façade program is operating. As roof repair is not normally an aesthetic issue, the use of Design Challenge Grant Funds for roof repair is generally **not** permitted. The use of Design Challenge Grant Funds for roof repair may only be used in those cases where the roof in question is clearly visible to a pedestrian from street level. In such cases, reimbursement may be made for **that portion of the roof that is visible**, not the entire roof. In such cases where the roof is visible from the street level, the award of grant funds may be allowed by the regional program.

- "Visible roofs" are included as an eligible activity in the façade program design guidelines;
- The roof repair must be undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the architectural style of the building, including sensitivity to historic preservation issues.

This roof is visible



These roofs are not visible



application and approval process

Applicants are required to meet with the Design Committee of their local downtown organization to discuss their project prior to completing the application process. The local Design Committee and Board of Directors reserve the right to recommend projects that make the most impact in their downtown areas and recommend those projects for design assistance. Consideration will be given to the number of properties that can be assisted. For maximum impact, the central business district boundaries can be reduced by the local Board of Directors and Design Committee to include a portion of the Main Street target area.

Generally, only commercial properties are eligible. However, if single family owner occupied units within the target area are deemed important to the overall Main Street program the local board and Design Committee can decide to include them as eligible for grants with only external improvements eligible. For example, landscaping and site improvements such as sidewalk and paving, though important aspects of revitalization programs, are ineligible expenditures for Main Street Design Challenge Grant assistance.

Applications will be accepted for review at any time throughout the year. The awarding of grants is dependent on funding from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and is based on the allocation of funds for the Upper Schuylkill Design Challenge Grant from DCED. There is no certainty that funds will be available at any given time.

The Design Challenge Grant application form is provided in the Design Guidelines

packet or can be obtained from the Upper Schuylkill Office and the local Downtown Design Committee.

A Façade Grant Application requires the following to be considered:

- Applicant identification
- Property owner identification
- Location/address of the property
- Copy of paid Real Estate Tax Receipt
- Three(3) complete copies of the following:
 - ⇒ Written project description
 - ⇒ Design plan(s), drawings
 - ⇒ Paint color samples and finishing material samples
 - ⇒ Schematic(s), photographs for each eligible project
 - ⇒ Contractor and material cost estimates for each eligible project
 - ⇒ Matching fund verification, proof of financial responsibility
 - ⇒ Signatures of the applicant and property owner

Grants will be awarded based upon the level of improvement(s), the accuracy of historic preservation and the vitality and significant impact the project will make to the downtown environment. Only complete applications will be accepted for processing. The grant application will be reviewed by the Local Design Committee of the Downtown Organization for the completeness of information and supporting documents.

After the grant application is reviewed and recommendation has been made by the local organization, it will be submitted to Upper Schuylkill Executive Director for review and final approval. If the Upper Schuylkill guidelines are being used by the local downtown organization for their own Design Challenge Program then all

applications and approvals will go through the local organization for processing.

Applicants are required to meet all codes and ordinances of their Borough and real estate taxes must be paid current. Applicants are also required to secure any necessary permit (s) from the Borough before work can commence.

The approved applicant must pay the project cost above and beyond the grant amount. The balance of the project is then paid by Upper Schuylkill. All checks paid by Upper Schuylkill will be made out to both the property owner and the contractor. The property owner must endorse the check to the contractor. Project applicant/contractor(s) requires the following:

1. Adherence to the design plan and/or project as submitted, reviewed and approved by the local downtown organization and Upper Schuylkill Townships;
2. Pre-approval by the local Design Committee and Upper Schuylkill of any changes of work-in-progress, and;
3. The completion of final inspections, if required by the Borough. There will be no reimbursement if Borough code or ordinance violations exist.

Important: only approved work will be eligible for the Design Challenge Grant. Project work may not commence until the applicant/property owner receives a notice to proceed from the Upper Schuylkill Executive Director. Once the project has been completed in a timely fashion, the applicant and/or contractor will send a letter of project satisfaction and all invoices to the Upper Schuylkill Director. Once work is completed and reviewed by Upper Schuylkill and the Local Design Committee, the funds will be released.