

SECTION 6

Business District Standards

Introduction

Located twenty-three miles from downtown Rochester in a suburban area, the Village of Palmyra remains a working example of a traditional village downtown. The historic center of the village comprises one of the earliest and best-preserved collections of nineteenth-century architecture in the region. The community library, parks, schools, banks, churches, lodgings, shops, doctor's offices, a grocery store, and restaurants, and Village offices are all within walking distances of the Four Corners.

The following standards in this section were developed to assist property owners and village merchants located in the village business district with common changes, such as display signs, as well as more significant changes that may arise during repairs and alterations. Most problems occurring during a rehabilitation project arise from a property owner's decision to alter, obscure, or remove a feature (s) rather than to leave the feature(s) in place and repair it (them). These design standards identify common rehabilitation and remodeling mistakes that should be avoided to preserve the appearance of the historic building and reduce maintenance costs.

Signs

Signs in the village's business district should be sized to the pedestrian, not to the automobile, and should convey only the essential message, and not display excessive advertising. Essential messages include the name of a business and a brief descriptor, such as "Realty," "Accountant," "Men's Clothing." Information such as hours of operation or types of merchandise is best displayed in less prominent locations, such as on a storefront window.

The following types of signs are not permitted in the Village of Palmyra:

- Internally illuminated signs.
- Signs projecting above eaves, cornice, or rooflines.
- Flashing, intermittently lighted, or moving signs.
- Sign lighting which creates glare for pedestrians or drivers.
- Neon signs.
- Back-lighted opaque letter signs.
- Projecting or freestanding signs (in most locations).

In addition:

- Painted or applied signs on glass shall occupy no more than 20 percent of any storefront window.
- One square foot of sign is allowed for each lineal foot of frontage, up to a maximum of 30 square feet.

For complete information on village sign regulations, refer to Chapter 168 "Signs" of the Village Code. The HPC may reduce the size and number of signs to below that permitted by the Zoning Code. Please check with the Code Enforcement Officer on the applicable code requirements before planning your sign size and location.

Sign Design Considerations

- Appropriate sign materials include wood, metal, medium density fiberboard, and heavy duty urethane foam. While plastic is not a traditional material, some plastic signs may be appropriate.
- The thickness of the sign material should be enough that the appearance of depth is created, and the sign does not look like a temporary poster; otherwise, a frame might be suggested.
- Highly reflective material is not appropriate. Paper or cardboard signs set in windows are discouraged, as they block views inside and often appear disorderly.
- Lighting for hanging and wall signs should come from wall-mounted gooseneck lamps or spotlights, with light directed away from viewers' eyes as much as possible. Any electrical conduit to these fixtures should be as hidden as possible. The fixtures need to be submitted to the HPC for review along with the sign application.
- The method of attaching signs to walls should avoid damaging the building. If the sign is to be attached to a masonry building, the anchors should be installed into the mortar joints, rather than into the brick or stone. Likewise, attaching an electrical conduit should be done carefully to avoid damaging the building, and the conduit should be concealed as much as possible.
- Signs should not overwhelm the facade or cover any significant architectural features of the building, such as windows, transom windows above doors, and trim.
- Signs on neighboring buildings should be similar in scale and design. The signs should not be the same; indeed, variety in signage adds to the flavor of the commercial districts. But signs should be coordinated in style, location, and material.
- Hanging signs inform pedestrians on the sidewalk, as well as occupants of vehicles on the street, and add character to a streetscape. The brackets can be highly decorative, and won't cover or damage architectural details.

Recommended for Lawn or Ground Signs

- Lawn or ground signs should be as simple and as small as possible, conveying only that information needed to guide a first-time visitor to the site. Essential information would include the name of a business and the street number, not the street name. Tall flag or pole signs are usually not appropriate.
- As with all signs, a lawn sign should fit with the style of the building and the other signs on the street. For example, a sign in front of a building with arched windows might also have the arch motif. A wood sign is appropriate to a wood building, and a stone sign to a stone building.
- The colors of the sign should relate to the colors of the building behind it.
- Wood or wood-like lawn signs should be supported by posts with moderate decoration.
- Common posts are 4-inch square, painted wood.
- Plantings around signs are appropriate, provided the size of the plants does not cause the sign to appear higher.
- If a sign is to be illuminated externally, the lighting fixtures must be submitted as part of the HPC application.

Storefronts

Historic storefronts should be retained. An important feature of storefronts is transparency, which encourages window-shopping, and which adds life to a streetscape. Transparency is encouraged.

Any new storefronts, or any modifications to existing storefronts, should permit maximum

visibility into the space. Window transoms above doorways and storefronts, also prominent features of traditional storefronts, should be retained and not concealed. Windowless, blank walls are prohibited. Changes that reduce transparency and mask the building's architectural features are not permitted. The front facade of a commercial building consists of two parts: the lower facade, which serves as the building's mercantile expression, and the upper facade, which expresses the upper-floor activities of the building. It is important to realize that successful rehabilitation of a commercial building involves the entire facade or storefront. Too many insensitive remodels have resulted in a lower facade denuded of its historic character, while the upper facade has a new paint job and a restored cornice.

Pedestrian entrances animate the public realm of the street. Village zoning requires that main entrances must face the public street and connect by sidewalk to the public sidewalk. Closing the existing front entrance to a building or moving the main entrance to the side or rear is prohibited.

Repairs and Rehabilitation for Storefronts

- Retain and repair existing storefronts, including windows, sash, doors, transoms, signage, and decorative features around windows, doors, and along the cornice, where such features contribute to the architectural and historic character of the building.
- Repair storefronts by reinforcing the historic materials. Repairs should be limited to replacement in-kind (or with compatible substitute materials) of deteriorated or missing parts of storefronts where there are surviving prototypes.
- Where original or early storefronts no longer exist or are too deteriorated to save, retain the commercial character of the building through contemporary design that is compatible with the scale, design, materials, color, and texture of the historic buildings. Although more costly, owners may also consider an accurate restoration of the original storefront design based on historical research and physical evidence.
- Avoid removing or radically changing storefronts and those features that are important in defining the overall character of the building, resulting in a watered-down version of the original.
- Base the rehabilitation work on sound historical evidence, and avoid creating a false historical appearance. Avoid such hackneyed "colonial" features as carriage lamps, eagles, bay windows, broken-arched pediments, and dentiled cornices, where none are known to have existed.
- Do not remove a storefront that is not repairable without replacing it, and do not replace it with a storefront that does not convey the same visual appearance as the original.
- Always try to repair or replace on a limited basis, rather than embark on wholesale replacement. Do not introduce a new design that is incompatible in size, scale, material, and/or color with its surroundings.
- Pay attention to the materials used on the storefront, their age and architectural integrity, and their relationship to other storefronts. Stripping storefronts of historic materials, such as wood, cast iron, terra cotta, glass, and brick, to create a smooth "modern" appearance is not encouraged. Even worse is using substitute material as replacement parts when these replacement materials fail to convey the same visual appearance as the surviving parts.
- In traditional storefronts, the large glass panes are usually held in narrow frames. These are made of wood, iron, or steel, and have some degree of detail. Modern aluminum window frames are usually much broader and deeper than traditional frames, and lack detail. The look of the traditional frames is highly preferred.

- Traditional storefront doors, like the storefronts themselves, are typically as transparent as possible. Commonly, traditional doors have wood panels on the lower half and large glass panes in the upper half, or are all glass. They typically have 6-inch rails and stiles, and a 10-12 inch bottom rail. Modern aluminum storefront doors should be avoided in historic storefronts.
- False or simulated windows, which commonly use tinted, frosted, reflective, smoked, or opaque (spandrel) glass, are inappropriate. Windows on upper floors should be of historic design, and should fill the original openings. The openings should not be filled in or blocked in any manner.

Awnings

Installation of awning(s) requires a permit. The color, size, and type of fabric are subject to approval by the HPC. The exclusive use of roll-type, sloped awnings was typical from the mid nineteenth-century until 1970. Fixed, rounded awnings did not become popular until the late 1970s. Because they are historically inappropriate, the use of fixed, rounded awnings on historic buildings is prohibited. The use of rigid-frame, rounded entrance canopies is permitted only where it is deemed architecturally compatible with the building to which it is attached.

Recommendations and Requirements for Awning Installation

- Awnings are appropriate over entrances, storefronts, large first-floor windows, and upper-floor windows.
- Awnings should be made of low-sheen fabrics with a traditional appearance, such as canvas or acrylic. Common traditional colors include black, dark green, navy, and maroon. Vertical stripes are an appropriate option. The use of rigid, reflective, and translucent materials is prohibited.
- Wood, metal, and internally illuminated translucent awnings are prohibited.
- Awnings may be retractable or fixed. Fixed awnings must be structurally capable of withstanding both high winds and winter snow loads. Any awning situated over a public walkway or drive in the village must be a retractable, roll-type fabric awning.
- Placement should be in a traditional position, and should not conceal significant architectural features.
- When an appropriate location on the building is not available, sign lettering is permitted on the lower front flap of the awning. All lettering and graphics count toward a building's allowed signage under the Zoning Code. Lettering on other surfaces of an awning is prohibited.
- The shape of the awning should fit the opening behind it. The flap or valence is typically no wider than 12".
- On both fully extended roll-up awnings and fixed awnings, the lower flap of the awning shall be at least 7'-6" above the sidewalk.
- Awnings on a house should be placed in a logical pattern, such as on all windows on a facade, or on just the windows on the first floor; they should usually not span across multiple openings. Be aware that awnings can conflict with shutters.

Refuse and Mechanical Equipment Enclosures

Dumpsters - Dumpsters are not permitted in residential areas of the village. All dumpsters require a building permit and require a screening enclosure that is subject to approval by the Code Enforcement Officer.

Code Requirements

- No dumpster may be placed, and no existing dumpster shall remain, in any location, unless the dumpster is screened by an enclosure consisting of a solid fence or other approved screening material. The enclosure shall exceed the height of the dumpster so that the dumpster is entirely screened from view. The enclosure shall at all times be kept closed and in good repair, so as not to create an unsightly condition.
- Dumpsters and their enclosures shall be set back a minimum of 20 feet from a public right-of-way or a residential property line, and a minimum of 50 feet from a residential structure. The location of dumpsters on sites with constraints or conditions that do not allow the minimum setbacks shall be subject to the approval of the Village of Palmyra Planning Board.
- All dumpsters shall be kept in good repair and shall be structurally sound and leak proof.
- All dumpsters shall have watertight doors or covers that securely close all openings and that are easily opened and closed. Dumpsters shall be painted as required to prevent the show of rust and deterioration and be so constructed to stand firmly and safely upright.
- All dumpsters shall be clearly identified with the name of the owner of the dumpster.
- The dumpster lessee shall be responsible for removing any litter, debris, or other matter related to the use of the dumpster, including in the immediate vicinity of the dumpster and the surrounding area. The ground or pavement in the area of the dumpster shall be kept clean and sanitary. Foul odors emanating from the dumpster or the surrounding area shall be eliminated. Vermin shall be exterminated.
- All dumpster doors and covers shall remain securely closed, except when being filled or emptied. Overflowing conditions are prohibited.
- Food waste that is placed in a dumpster shall be in securely sealed plastic bags. Loose refuse other than food waste that may become windblown shall be bagged.
- No dumpster may exceed seven feet in height above grade.
- No dumpster may be placed in any location without a permit and the approval of the Code Enforcement Officer. Unauthorized dumpsters shall be removed by the owner of the dumpster upon the order of the Code Enforcement Officer.
- The design, materials, and location of a required dumpster enclosure shall be subject to the approval of the Code Enforcement Officer. No enclosure may be constructed without such approval.
- On properties with multiple commercial uses, the sharing of dumpsters shall be encouraged and preferred when practical.
- The provisions of this article shall apply to the owner of the dumpster, as well as to the user or lessee of the container. The Code Enforcement Officer may revoke the permit for any dumpster that is in violation of this article, and any such dumpster shall be removed
- by the owner upon the order of the Code Enforcement Officer.

Recommendations for Dumpster Enclosure Design

- Enclosures must be constructed with quality materials of sufficient strength and assembly to withstand environmental elements and normal daily use. Plan a buffer zone of a minimum of 12" around all dumpster dimensions, including the inside gate post dimensions to accommodate manufacturing variations between dumpster sizes and to facilitate movement of the dumpsters in and out of the enclosure.
- The height of the enclosure wall should be at least 6" taller than the refuse container but no less than 6' in height for adequate screening.
- Anchor posts with concrete.

- Any masonry components should not be unfinished block; however, stucco in certain locations of the enclosure may not hold up to daily wear and abuse.
- Vertical wood slats should be tightly spaced to provide maximum screening and should be painted or stained. Slats woven through chain link fencing is not a permitted screening.
- There should be two entrances--one (non-gated) for tenants, and one (gated) for the hauler to remove the dumpsters.
- Enclosure gates must be opaque and of metal frame construction. Gates should be attached to metal posts, each a minimum diameter of 3" and set in concrete with a minimum of 3 hinge attachments per post; under no circumstances should the gates be attached to the enclosure walls.
- Allow room for multiple dumpsters (if any) to sit side-by-side rather than one in front of the other.
- Allow access for refuse trucks, even if all adjacent parking spaces are occupied.
- Locate the dumpster for clear, straight service truck access with no curbs or overhead wires.
- Include devices that lock into the pavement to hold service gates open in windy conditions.
- Pave the enclosure with concrete or asphalt at least 24" larger than the dumpster.
- Slope the floor slightly outward so that water from melting ice drains properly.
- Line your enclosure with a wooden "chair rail" or bumper at dumpster height to minimize wear.
- Use curb stops or angle iron bolted to the pavement to keep the dumpster from slamming into the enclosure.
- Use signs to discourage midnight dumping and contamination of recyclables.
- Verify that the pavement outside the enclosure is sturdy enough to support a 27-ton truck.
- Leave doors 6-8" off pavement to allow opening in snow and snow removal from inside the enclosure.
- Designate a place to plow snow away from the enclosure entrance.

Mechanical Equipment

The Village Code requires all mechanical equipment to be concealed from view. The placement, location, and size of any mechanical equipment located outside of any building in any district is subject to review and approval by the HPC, whether or not the equipment can be seen from a public way. Any screening enclosures designed to minimize or hide mechanical equipment are also subject to review and approval by the HPC.

Recommendations for Screening

- To the maximum extent practical, all roof-mounted and ground-mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened from view or isolated, so as not to be visible from any public right-of-way or residential district.
- If possible, it is preferable to locate roof-mounted equipment in such a manner as to minimize the need for roof screens.
- Roof screens, when used, shall be coordinated with the building to maintain a unified appearance.
- Mechanical equipment and open storage areas shall be screened from public streets, alleys, paths, private streets, and abutting lots to a minimum height of six feet. When solid screening is used, the materials shall be compatible with the building.

Lighting

Common contemporary site lighting practices do not consider the quality of lighting, and usually prescribe far more lighting than is actually needed. Most exterior lighting needs are met with high-intensity light sources, including high-pressure sodium, and metal halide lamps. These fixtures are efficient and long-lived, but can create glare, harsh industrial lighting conditions, and light pollution when not used carefully.

Building-mounted light fixtures require HPC approval. Site lighting fixtures require both Planning Board and HPC approval.

In general, **the Village of Palmyra HPC and Planning Board do not recommend the use of high-pressure sodium light fixtures because of the poor color rendition.** The use of other high intensity lights should be limited to commercial areas. All high-intensity fixtures must be cut-off style shields or shades to prevent light trespass and eliminate glare. For more information on the village's lighting regulations, refer to Chapter 117 Exterior Lighting of the Village Code.

Exterior light fixtures should be individual point lights. Fixtures should be compatible in style with that of the building on which they are mounted or installed. Strip fluorescent light fixtures are not acceptable. Flood and spotlights should be "full cutoff" types directed at the ground of the structure. Light levels should be kept below the minimum acceptable. Consider using incandescent or warm fluorescent fixtures at entrances, pedestrian paths, decorative lighting, and other areas where glare and intensity will pose a nuisance.

Handicap Accessibility

Providing handicap accessibility and barrier-free access, while at the same time preserving the historic character of a building, are not incompatible goals. Because there is no one way for incorporating barrier-free access in historic buildings, the HPC will work with a property owner to find a solution to achieve both goals of access and preservation. Note that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not apply to single-family homes, churches, or private clubs. The ADA does not require the destruction or alteration of character-defining features of an historic building.

Recommendations for Handicapped Accessibility

- Handicap ramps and lifts need not be relegated to the rear of the building. However, if they are placed at the front of a building, it is essential that the ramp or access design include materials that match the building. A location on the side of a building is usually preferred.
- Respect the scale, height, material, and character-defining features of the historic building in designing the handicap ramp or lift.
- Use materials that are compatible with the existing building.
- The use of unpainted, pressure-treated wood is prohibited, because it appears unfinished and temporary, and is not visually compatible with most existing buildings.
- Railings should be simple in design. Using balusters and posts with a slender profile diminishes the visibility of railings.
- Investigate different options to identify a plan that minimizes changes to architecturally significant features.
- Ramps must be designed in accordance with the provisions of the Building Code of New York State and other applicable codes.