

Downtown Dearborn Design Guidelines

for the East and West Dearborn Downtown Development Authorities

Effective June 2019

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW



The design guidelines for Dearborn's east and west downtowns are intended to promote the Dearborn Downtown Development Authorities' (DDDA) set of expectations for building design. These guidelines were developed to complement the City of Dearborn's zoning regulations to provide a graphic representation of their application and a set of guiding principles for rehabilitation and new building design. The design and construction of both new buildings and existing buildings should follow these recommendations to ensure East and West Downtown Dearborn maintain their vibrant, walkable, historic charm while blending new buildings into the fabric of the existing character. The intent of these design guidelines is to support the strategic vision of both the DDDA's and the City of Dearborn's Master Plan.

Conformity with these guidelines will be used as a determining factor for the DDDA to award grants, including facade improvement and sign improvement grants.

Future phases of these guidelines will include new building design and site design principles.



EXISTING DOWNTOWN DEARBORN CHARACTER

Dearborn's downtowns both use Michigan Avenue as their "main street," providing two central hubs for activity. Storefronts line Michigan Avenue and adjacent streets, providing a vibrant, walkable downtown atmosphere for shopping and dining. Many buildings contain upper floors for apartments and offices, contributing to a mixed-use environment emblematic of Michigan's historic downtowns. An overarching goal of these guidelines is to preserve, restore, and rehabilitate Dearborn's historic facades.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Promote an authentic, vibrant downtown atmosphere
- Encourage a walkable, engaging street edge
- Preserve historic structures while promoting compatible infill
- Draw upon local design traditions
- Ensure quality building materials endure over time
- Unify East and West Downtown through their historic attributes and connection along Michigan Avenue to provide consistent and cohesive design
- Improve and reinforce quality building design, upkeep, and renovation that draws visual appeal and interest
- Connect businesses to public space through building form and public space urban design standards



The guidelines should be used in initiating project designs for the East and West Downtown Dearborn districts and for assessing the viability and compatibility of those designs with existing and desired neighborhood patterns.

The type of review necessary for your project will depend on the individual project. The DDDA Office or the City of Dearborn Planning and Economic and Community Development Departments can assist you in determining what review processes are necessary based on your project. If more than one review process is necessary for a project, the order of review is dependent on the scale or type of project, and some review processes can happen simultaneously. Please see the City's [Guide to Development](#) for more information on the City's review processes.

The City of Dearborn and the DDDA strive to meet the needs of an applicant's timeline and avoid unnecessary delays. However, please review the following information to help determine which review may be necessary, and the potential deadlines or timeframes.

Prior to submitting an application to the City's design review committee, the property owner, the property developer, or his authorized agent may request an informal meeting of the DDDA Design/Economic Vitality Committee, or with City/DDDA administration to discuss the proposed development.

At this time, the owner or developer may present a

sketch plan of the proposed development for informal review and comment. The sketch plan should consist of a rough outline of the proposed development, and may be a free-hand, penciled sketch of the parcel, showing the proposed layout of buildings, roads and other features which may be of assistance in fully understanding the nature of the development proposal.

When applying for the Open Door Dearborn incentive program, applicants should refer to the application process outlined in the Open Door Dearborn document. Formal plans are required with final application. Contact the DDDA office for assistance in processing an application.

Applicants for the Open Door Dearborn incentive program shall be encouraged to maintain and restore the existing historic or original character of the building to the furthest extent possible. Relationships of the proposed building to the downtown business district shall be considered. Proposed structures shall be related harmoniously to the terrain and existing buildings in the vicinity which have a visual relationship to the proposed buildings or structures. The DDDA can be contacted per the information provided below:

DDDA Office
13615 Michigan Avenue
Dearborn, MI 48126
313-943-3141
info@downtowndearborn.org

2.0 FACADE FEATURES

FACADE COMPOSITION

DEFINITION

The facade is the portion of the building facing the street. **Facade Composition** is the way the face of the building is organized. A good facade composition is naturally pleasing to the eye and shapes a comfortable street.

GOAL

Create a comfortable and enticing street through balanced building facade shape. Employ strong hierarchy or organization of the building elements to shape a pleasing facade composition.



Elements of Facade Composition:

- A** Defined base
- B** Grid-like organization
- C** Defined middle and top
- D** Consistent scaling of windows and patterns compatible with neighboring buildings

FACADE COMPOSITION

STRATEGIES

Apply some of these tips to achieve a balanced, welcoming facade:

- Define a base, middle, and top
- Use an organizational grid to group and align elements
- Place materials that convey strength at the base of the building
- Align common elements along the street where a distinct alignment pattern already exists
- Use design features such as columns, moldings, and cornices to define facades into distinct building modules or bays
- Organize window size and number to be consistent across multiple building facades, creating a scaled and proportioned appearance
- Allow vertical elements to read, creating a picture frame around the storefront

COMMON MISTAKES

- Splitting the building into two even portions, base and top with no middle. This makes a building feel short, disproportionate and unwelcoming
- Long expanses of one material type, either vertically or horizontally
- Using too many different materials



Expression lines create a vertical articulation of base, middle, and top of a facade



Buildings are organized into horizontally repeated modules to reflect traditional building and lot widths

GROUND FLOOR DESIGN

DEFINITION

Ground Floor Design includes the street face of the building from the sidewalk to the level of the second floor. This includes storefronts and entrances, entrances to upper levels, awnings and canopies. Ground floor design considers materials, proportions, and placement of building elements.

GOAL

Create a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere through transparency, materials, and scale. Ground floor facades should be composed of a mix of glass and traditional high quality building materials.

STRATEGIES

- Keep storefront window sills no more than 2-feet above the interior finished floor
- Extend storefront windows and doors up to the horizontal expression line. Use spandrel panels as necessary above ceiling height
- Provide a high percentage of transparent glass (70% minimum preferred) on the ground floor to engage pedestrians along the sidewalk and provide window displays
- Clearly define the main entrance with a change in material or color, trim, canopy or awning, or a recess in the building facade to allow for door swing
- Orient the primary building facade perpendicular to the street and provide a secondary entrance if abutting an alley or parking lot
- Window and door frames shall be consistent with historical materials and complement the facade

COMMON MISTAKES

- Bringing the sill elevation up too high to screen interior seating. This creates awkward proportions and is not welcoming to passersby
- Closing the Michigan Avenue or primary street-facing entrance
- Covering up historic facades with inappropriate materials
- Long, blank walls without windows, doors, or a change in architectural features
- Ground floor windows may not be made opaque by window treatments (except operable sunscreen devices) or tinted glass. A minimum of 80% of the window surface shall allow a view into the building interior for a depth of at least 12 feet



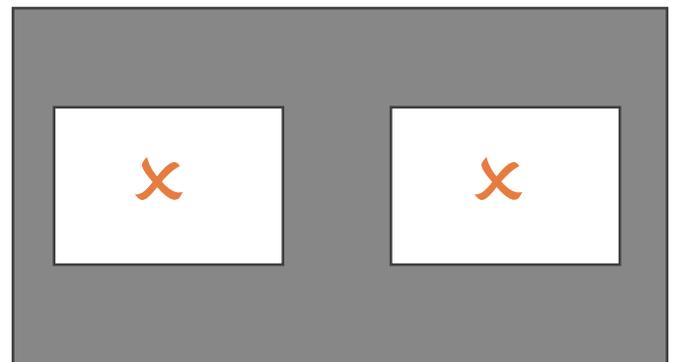
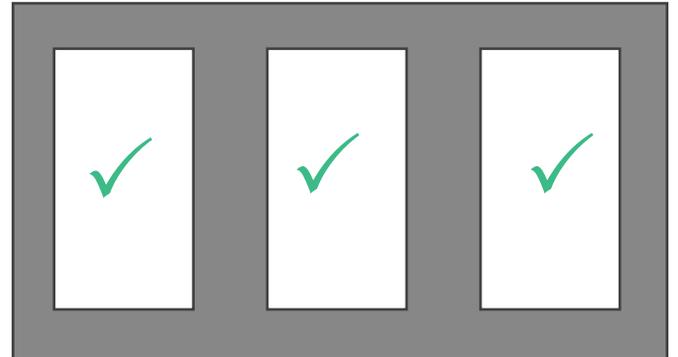
UPPER FLOOR DESIGN

STRATEGIES

- Size and place windows consistently
- Use the same color mullions and framing on windows in the upper story as in the ground floor
- Maintain a continuous rhythm of windows into bays
- Orient windows vertically (see graphic at right)
- Provide at least 25% windows of the upper story facade (50% preferred)

COMMON MISTAKES

- Replacing arched windows with rectangular windows
- Changing the number, location, size by cutting new wall openings, blocking in windows, and installing replacement windows that do not fit the opening
- Using tinted glass



Upper floor windows should be vertically oriented or otherwise subdivided by vertical mullions



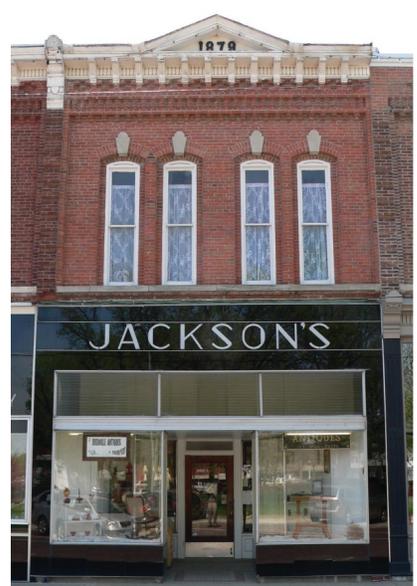
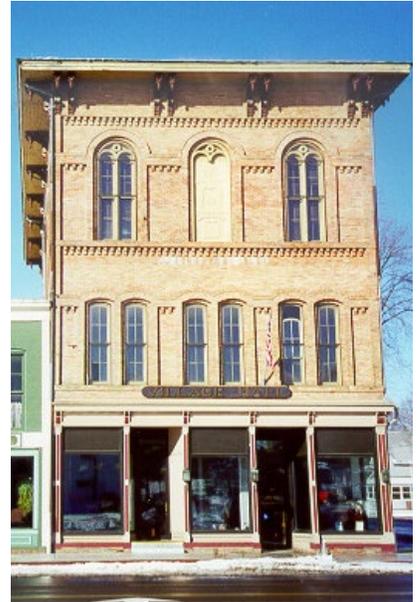
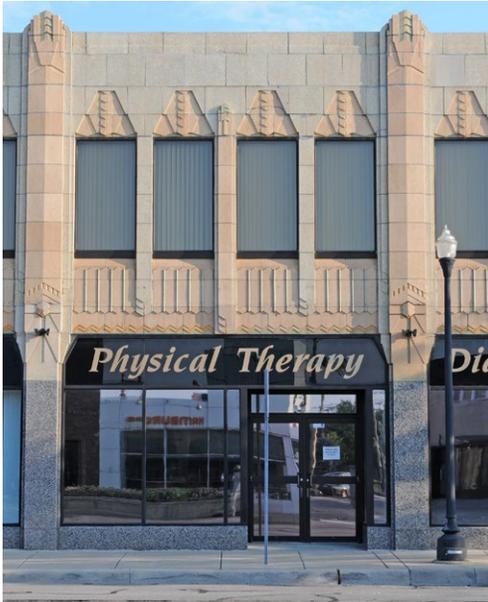
ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

DEFINITION

Architectural Details are features on the building that do not relate to its function, but contribute material texture and visual interest to buildings. They reflect the period when the building was constructed and connect an entire building to the human scale. Architectural details may also be referred to as *embellishment* or *ornament*.

GOAL

Provide layers of visual interest at different distances near to the building. Relate the building to the human scale and historical context. Retain architectural details original to historical structures and introduce complimentary details in new construction.



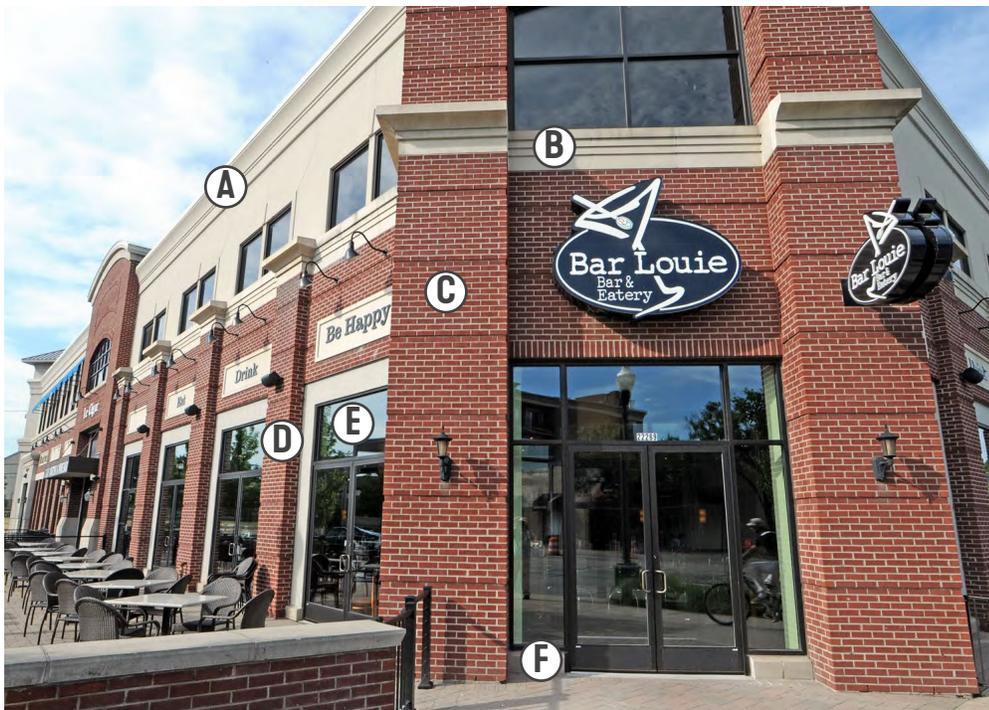
ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

STRATEGIES

- Retain, rehabilitate, or restore detail elements on historical buildings such as cornices, window and door trim, columns, piers, and carved detail work
- Coordinate colors on the building wall, trim and moldings, cornice and parapet, signs, and primary entrance
- Retain the historic integrity of the facade
- Repair deteriorated historic features and replace only those elements that cannot be repaired
- Encourage the restoration of a mid-century storefront (not just Italianate), which has gained architectural significance in its own right
- Replacement elements should be comparable in size, shape, texture, and finish
- Provide preventive maintenance such as rust removal, caulking, and repainting
- Design new additions in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new, while still compatible

COMMON MISTAKES

- Removing or radically changing architectural details that define the historic character of the building
- Failing to treat causes of deterioration
- Using a substitute material for replacement that does not convey the visual appearance of the architectural detail or is physically incompatible
- Adding new architectural details which are not present in the character of the building or are incompatible in size, scale, material or color



Examples of Architectural Detail:

- (A) Cornice
- (B) Lintel
- (C) Brick coursing articulation
- (D) Pilasters
- (E) Transom
- (F) Sill/kickplate

MATERIALS

GOAL

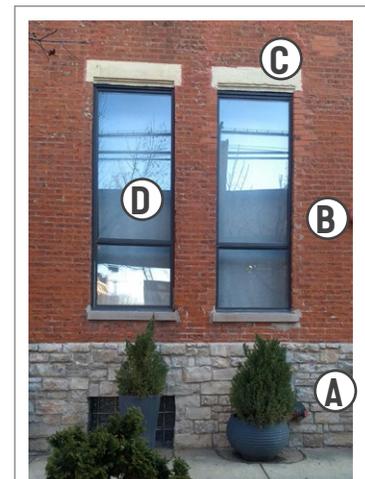
Retain and rehabilitate existing historical materials. Create new buildings with respect to historical context and construction. Select high quality building materials for authenticity and longevity.

STRATEGIES

- Use high quality, durable building materials
- Incorporate materials at the ground floor that will resist frequent contact with the public over time. Exterior Insulation and finish system (EIFS), stucco, and similar materials can be easily damaged when located at ground level
- The type and detailing of building materials shall be consistent on all sides of a structure that are open to public view
- Use complementary materials in terms of color, texture, scale and orientation. Variation in materials should be intentional, providing horizontal and/or vertical expression
- Materials, particularly when synthetic equivalents are used, should provide appropriate depth to the facade and appear structurally accurate
- Use exterior colors, facade or roof materials or the combination of colors and materials that are harmonious in hue, texture, tone and intensity with the existing building, adjacent buildings and surrounding downtown area
- Bright or contrasting colors may be used on trim only. Limit the number of colors to no more than four that are complimentary
- Generally, wall surfaces that have not been painted should remain unpainted, such as brick, cast concrete, block or stone. Restore brick and mortars to original color – do not paint

COMMON MISTAKES

- Removing or radically changing materials that define the historic character of the building
- Layering incompatible new building materials over an existing facade
- Replacing damaged or deteriorating materials without addressing root causes of damage or deterioration, such as water leakage
- Painting masonry which is historically unpainted
- Cladding with siding such as rough sawn wood, aluminum siding, rustic shingles and shakes, and plastic panels
- Varying materials in a non-structural way with too much frequency
- Do not sandblast or high pressure wash brick. Evidence shows that these methods do irreversible damage to wood and masonry surfaces. Use a professional contractor who knows how to apply a chemical wash instead



Materials:

- (A)** Stone Base
- (B)** Brick
- (C)** Stone Lintel
- (D)** Vertically-oriented windows

DEFINITION

Materials are appropriate as delineated in the table below and on the next page.

WALL MATERIALS VISIBLE FROM STREETS	PRIMARY BUILDING MATERIAL (MIN.)	SECONDARY BUILDING MATERIAL AND TRIM (MAX.)
First and Second Floor Elevations	75%	25%
Above second floor	50%	50%

MATERIALS

PRIMARY: MASONRY: BRICK

Brick, including veneer, is a preferred primary material. Synthetic, such as concrete, should be in scale similar to genuine brick. Ceramic tiles are acceptable, especially in historic Art Deco facades.



PRIMARY: MASONRY: STONE

Native stone, or its synthetic equivalent, is appropriate. Synthetic, such as concrete, should be in scale similar to genuine stone.



SECONDARY: SIDING: WOOD, FIBER CEMENT, OR HARDY PLANK

Siding, whether wood or synthetic, is only appropriate as a secondary building material. Aluminum and vinyl siding are not permitted.



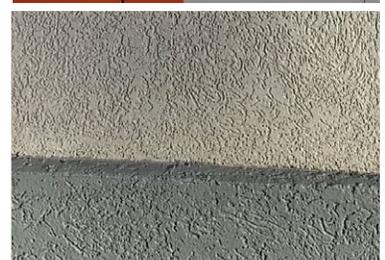
SECONDARY AND ACCENTS: METAL

Historic metal cladding is appropriate as a primary material. Modern metal paneling is only appropriate as a secondary material. Metal trim is appropriate as an accent material.



ACCENTS: SYNTHETIC STUCCO

Stucco and its synthetic equivalents such as EIFS are only appropriate as a secondary material or trim above the ground floor.



ACCENTS: SPLIT-FACED BLOCK

Split-faced concrete block should only be used as a functional trim on piers, foundation walls, or chimneys.



LIGHTING

GOAL

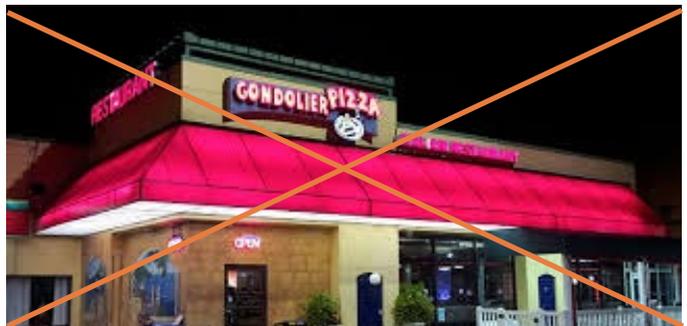
Lighting can contribute to the overall sense of place and cohesion of the downtown districts by highlighting distinctive architectural features and characteristics of a building while improving safety for pedestrians.

STRATEGIES

- Provide shielded and focused lighting that directs light downward
- Provide adequate illumination to provide customer safety at front and rear entries
- Minimize impacts of lighting on neighboring properties
- Choose decorative light fixtures compatible with the building design
- Use warm temperature LED or incandescent lighting
- Direct lighting at signage
- Soft uplighting may be used to highlight unique architectural features
- Interior lighting in window displays should be spot lit at product or display. Keeping a light on throughout the night is important for safety and evening interest
- Consider lighted trees, café/patio or bistro lights with market style lights

COMMON MISTAKES

- Outlining windows or other features with LED rope lighting
- Back lit awnings
- Using lighting that moves, flashes, or makes noise
- Out of scale fixtures
- Aiming light into the eyes of pedestrians
- Halogen or other "cool" lighting



LIGHTING



SIGNS

GOAL

Downtown **Signs** should be scaled for the pedestrian and mounted on the building in the sign band area of the facade. Signs should relate to the architecture in material, shape, and color. All signs must meet the standards of the City of Dearborn Zoning and Sign Ordinances.

STRATEGIES

- The design and scale should complement the intended traditional "main street" character and pedestrian orientation envisioned for the downtown
- Restrict signage to the name of the business located on the site. Buildings with multiple tenants on secondary floors shall be limited to one sign per main floor tenant and one multi-tenant business directory listing

COMMON MISTAKES

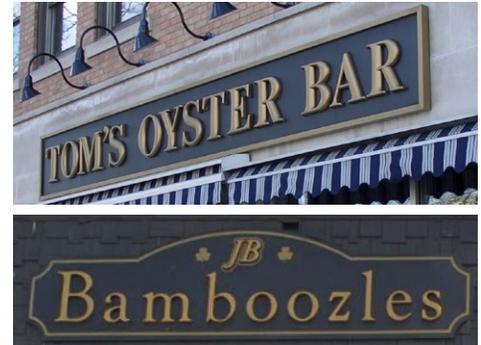
- Signs should not obstruct windows, views of the architectural details of the building, or pedestrian circulation
- Signs with flashing lights, digital displays, and other repetitive illumination. Electronic signs are only permitted as secondary signage to serve a message board function
- Cabinet signs are not permitted



SIGNS

BOARD SIGNS

Individual letters mounted to a board framed with a finished edge and mounted to a sign band area between the first and second floors above awnings.



LETTER SIGNS

Individually mounted letters of metal, acrylic, or individually illuminated letters.



PROJECTING SIGNS

Blade signs hung 90 degrees perpendicular to the facade from ornamental brackets.



AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

GOAL

Awnings and **Canopies** help define the street level for pedestrians, but most importantly provide shelter from the sun and rain for pedestrians and storefront window displays. They are intended to highlight entrances and windows and should generally line up with adjacent awnings and transom windows.

STRATEGIES

- Select 45-degree canvas awnings or horizontal canopies of glass, metal, or wood
- Size awnings to be visually contained within the framework of building elements or architectural details
- Retractable awnings are encouraged as an energy-efficient mechanism for managing light and air
- Replace shingled mansard-style awnings with straight-shed awnings
- Discourage areas for birds to linger
- Structural elements that support canopies shall be primed and painted, anodized, or powder-coated

COMMON MISTAKES

- Relying on the awning as primary signage
- Blocking too much of the window or sign band
- Odd shapes, bullnose, and bubble awnings are prohibited
- Post-supported canopies are not permitted
- Internal illumination is not permitted



AWNINGS AND CANOPIES



SIDEWALK CAFÉS AND PATIOS

GOAL

Outdoor dining helps create vibrancy of the downtown streetscape. An outdoor dining area or sidewalk café is comprised of sets of tables and chairs and umbrellas or canopies for patrons to eat and drink.

STRATEGIES

- Maintain a clear path for pedestrians (5- to 6-feet preferred)
- Maintain clear path between the building entrance and the sidewalk
- Enclose a designated outdoor seating area with a railing, planters or similar barrier along the perimeter
- Ensure shading devices, such as retractable awnings and umbrellas do not project into the clear sidewalk area (minimum 8-foot clearance)
- Use market-style lights to create a sense of atmosphere to illuminate patio areas on private property
- Obtain a sidewalk café permit from the City (and MDOT if along Michigan Avenue)
- Maintain a clean café area with daily cleanings

COMMON MISTAKES

- Placing planters, sandwich board signs, or other street furniture in the clear sidewalk area
- Stacking tables and chairs when not in use
- Permanently attaching chairs and tables to pavement in the right-of-way



SIDEWALK CAFÉS AND PATIOS



Dooryard Sidewalk
6' Min Amenity
 Zone



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Articulation, horizontal. The arrangement and proportion of facade materials and elements (windows, doors, columns, pilasters, and bays) into discreet bays.

Articulation, vertical. A visual distinction between a building's base, middle, and top. A distinct and separated ground floor area is created through the use of a horizontal expression line, such as a string course, change in material or textures, awnings or canopies, or sign band between the first and second stories.

Awning. A roof-like covering cantilevered, projected or suspended from a building, usually of canvas, metal, or similar material and often adjustable, placed over the sidewalk, windows, or doors to provide protection from sun and rain. It is distinguished from a canopy because it is not permanent, nor a structural portion or architectural feature of the building and does not support substantial weight.

Canopy. A bracketed or suspended cover projecting from the building over the sidewalk, or a roof-like covering placed over the sidewalk, windows, or doors, to provide protection from sun and rain and, unlike an awning, it is a permanent, durable, structural portion of the building as opposed to a light covering of canvas, metal or other similar material.

EIFS. Exterior Insulation and finish system. A synthetic alternative to stucco.

Elevation. The exterior face of a building.

Expression line. A line prescribed at a certain level of a building for the major part of the width of a facade, expressed by a variation in material or by a limited projection on such as a molding, balcony or canopy.

Facade. The building elevation built along the build-to line on the Primary Frontage.

Fenestration. Openings in the building wall, including windows, doors and open areas. When measuring fenestration, framing elements (such as muntins) with a dimension less than 1 inch are considered part of the opening.

Ground Floor. The first story of a building with an entrance at street level.

Pilaster. A column embedded into the wall.

Storefront. A frontage type appropriate for the ground floor of commercial / retail buildings. Storefronts provide large windows with transparent views into the building interior.

Street edge. The edge of the built form that establishes the envelope of the street.

Synthetic. Man-made or not natural.

Transom window. A window pane located above a door or main window, oriented horizontally.

Upper stories. Any story above the ground floor.