

Chapter 7: Design Standards for Infill Construction

This chapter presents design guidelines for the construction of new buildings within the boundaries of the Historic Business District.

Building Setbacks

A typical building in the Historic Business District also has its primary entrance oriented to the street. This helps establish a “pedestrian-friendly” quality. In most cases, similar entryways are evenly spaced along a block, creating a rhythm that also contributes to the sense of visual continuity. These entrances are also typically recessed from the sidewalk edge.

Structures in the Historic Business District should contribute to a strong “building wall” along the street. A new building should align at the front lot line and be built out to the full width of the parcel (i.e., to the side lot lines). Although small gaps can occur between some structures, these should be considered rare exceptions.

7.1 Respect existing setbacks by maintaining or enhancing the alignment of buildings.

- Locate the front building wall at the sidewalk line.

7.2 Orient the primary entrance of a building toward the street.

- A building shall have a clearly-defined primary entrance. For most commercial buildings, this should be a recessed entryway.
- Secondary public entrances to commercial spaces are also encouraged on a larger building and on corner lots.

Mass and Scale

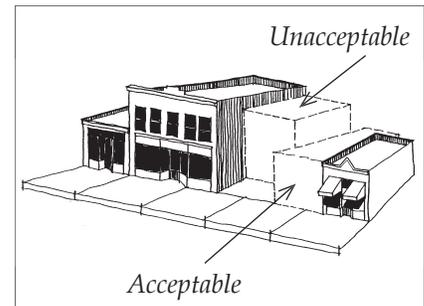
Patterns are created along the street by the repetition of similarly-sized building elements. For example, uniform facade widths evenly spaced in Downtown create a rhythm that contributes to the visual continuity of the area.

Building heights vary in the Historic Business District and yet there is a strong sense of similarity in scale. This is in part because most buildings are one to two stories in height.

7.3 Maintain the traditional range of building heights.

- Traditional floor heights should be expressed with horizontal moldings, alignment of windows and other architectural details, with one-, two- or three-story buildings.

Typically, setbacks within the Historic Business District reflect a commercial land use, especially along Pagosa Street. Lewis Street contains a variety of setbacks due to more diverse land uses. Commercial development should be located along the public right-of-way using a 0'-0" setback. However, hard-scape plazas may be integrated into site designs that link a new structure to the sidewalk but these should be limited to 33% of the overall street facade. See 6.1.



Align the building front at the sidewalk edge.



*This single infill building is divided into smaller building modules that reflect traditional building widths. Upper floors step back from the front, thus maintaining the traditional two-story scale of the street.
(Boulder, CO)*



*False front storefront on Lewis Street
(Pagosa Springs, CO)*

7.4 Buildings shall appear similar in width to those seen historically in the block.

- Traditionally, buildings were built in 25 to 50-foot increments. Buildings should reflect this pattern.

7.5 Consider dividing a larger building into “modules” that are similar in scale to buildings seen traditionally.

- If a larger building is divided into “modules,” they should be expressed three-dimensionally throughout the entire building facade.

7.6 A building shall work to achieve the alignment of horizontal elements along the block.

- This alignment occurs because many of the buildings are similar in height.
- Window sills, moldings and cornices are among those elements that align.
- The windows in a building should appear similar in height to those seen traditionally.

Building Form

One of the most prominent unifying elements of the Historic Business District is the similarity in building form. Commercial buildings are simple rectangular solids, deeper than they are wide. This characteristic is important and should be continued. Also, commercial roof forms appear flat, although there is typically a slight pitch allowing water to drain. This characteristic is important and should be preserved.

7.7 Rectangular forms shall be dominant on commercial facades.

- Rectangular forms should be vertically oriented.

7.8 Use flat rooflines as the dominant roof form.

- Parapets on side facades should step down towards the rear of the building.
- Gable roof forms may be considered along Lewis Street only if they were historically a feature of the site or if they are obscured by a “false front” storefront similar to those seen historically.

Materials

Building materials of new structures should contribute to the visual continuity of the area. They should appear similar to those seen traditionally to establish a sense of visual continuity.

Traditionally, a limited palette of building materials was used in the area—primarily wood, with some brick and stone. This same palette of materials should continue to be predominant. New materials also may be appropriate when they relate to the scale, durability, color and texture of the predominate materials of this area.

7.9 Materials shall appear to be similar to those used traditionally.

- Traditional materials such as wood, brick and stone are preferred.

7.10 A simple material finish is encouraged for a large expanse of wall plane.

- A matte or non-reflective finish is preferred.
- Polished stone and mirrored glass are inappropriate materials.

7.11 Paint colors should be based on historic research of local structures or buildings from the same time period.

- A summary of acceptable exterior color considerations is reviewed in Appendix D.

Architectural Character

The street level floors of traditional commercial buildings are clearly distinguishable from the upper floors. First floors are predominantly fixed plate glass. Upper floors are the reverse: opaque materials dominate, and windows appear as smaller openings punctuating the solid walls.

While it is important that buildings be compatible with the surrounding traditional commercial context, contemporary interpretations of traditional building elements are encouraged. In essence, infill should be a balance in design between the old and new.

7.12 New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged.

- A new design that draws upon the fundamental similarities among older buildings in the area without copying them is preferred. This will allow the building to be seen as a product of its own time and yet be compatible with its historic neighbors.
- Buildings that are similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically are strongly encouraged. This applies to architectural details and the overall design of a building.

7.13 Maintain the distinction between the street level and the upper floor.

- The first floor of the primary facade should be predominantly transparent glass.
- Upper floors should be perceived as being more opaque than the lower floor.
- Highly reflective or darkly tinted glass is inappropriate.
- Express the traditional distinction in floor heights between street level and upper levels through detailing, materials and fenestration. The presence of a belt course is an important feature in this relationship.



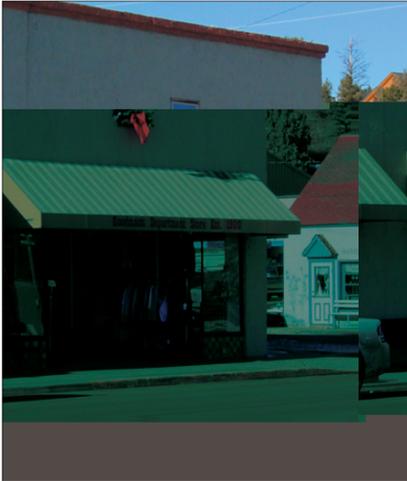
Materials shall appear to be similar to those used traditionally.



Contemporary interpretations of traditional building elements are encouraged. In this case, shed form awnings are stretched across rigid frames. Transom windows are expressed with a metal grill design. (Boulder, CO)



First floors should be transparent by integrating display windows into the front facade of a building or any facade that abuts the public right-of-way. (Pagosa Springs, CO)



Clearly define the primary entrance with an awning, canopy or other architectural or landscape feature.



The ratio of solid-to-void shall be similar to that seen traditionally on commercial storefront buildings, with first floors more transparent and upper floors appearing more solid. (Boulder, CO)

7.14 Upper-story windows with vertical emphasis are encouraged.

- A typical, upper-story window is twice as tall as it is wide. These proportions are within a limited range; therefore, upper-story windows in new construction should relate to the window proportions seen historically.
- Windows, lintels and their trim elements should align with those on adjacent historic buildings and with other buildings in the block.

7.15 Window trim should reflect traditional dimensions.

- Trim should have a dimension similar to that used historically to ensure desirable shadow lines.

7.16 Window dimensions that are similar to those used traditionally are encouraged.

- Many windows are “one-over-one,” in that a single pane of glass is in both the upper and lower sashes. Others are “two-over-one,” with two panes (or lights) in the upper sash and one is in the lower sash. These arrangements are preferred.

7.17 The ratio of solid-to-void shall be similar to that seen traditionally on commercial storefront buildings in the District.

- First floors should be more transparent than upper floors.
- Upper floors should appear more solid than first floors.
- Avoid a blank wall appearance that does not provide interest to pedestrians.

7.18 Building entrances should appear similar to those used historically in the block.

- Building entrances should be recessed.
- Clearly define the primary entrance with an awning, canopy or other architectural or landscape feature.
- A contemporary interpretation of a traditional building entry, which is similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically, is encouraged.
- Secondary public entrances are also encouraged on a larger building or along an alley if there is parking in the rear of the site.

7.19 Front entry doors should be trimmed with wood.

- All doors should include a kickplate.