



Corridor Storefront Improvement Program

Design Guidelines

GOOD DESIGN MAKES A GOOD APPLICATION

The CSIP is, first and foremost, about the outward appearance of businesses on State and Main Streets in Springfield. Evaluation of all applications will be based primarily on the quality of design.

To create a strong application for DevelopSpringfield funding, it is critical that you are familiar with the Design Guidelines before you decide what improvements you would like to make to your storefront.

The CSIP requires you to meet with the program's Design Consultant before submitting an application for two reasons:

- To discuss the improvements you plan to make and review any specific design ideas you have
- To strengthen your application and increase the chance of being awarded a grant quickly

It is most helpful if you familiarize yourself with the CSIP Design Guidelines (see below) thoroughly before meeting with the Design Consultant to ensure as strong an application as possible, especially as there are some design considerations that weaken or disqualify your application, such as:

Prohibited items:

- Vinyl or plastic awnings
- Interior lit (back lit) awnings
- Interior lit (back lit) signage

Discouraged/compelling reason required:

- Pole signs

It is also critical that you make sure your improvements are consistent with the Springfield zoning codes – this will be your responsibility and should be done before an application is submitted.

HOW TO USE THESE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Applicants should read the General Information section as the information included could be applicable to any project.

The subject matter of subsequent sections are identified by the headings in bold. Applicants can easily refer to those sections that relate to the improvements they intend to apply for. Nevertheless, it is recommended that you at least skim the entire Design Guidelines to ensure a streamlined and successful application process.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM IN GENERAL

PURPOSE

The Design Guidelines are **intended to offer direction** by suggesting design requirements specific to storefront alterations and improvements that will enhance architecturally and physically cohesive areas. These guidelines are meant to **foster identities for the Main Street and State Street corridors** as distinctive places to shop, visit, work, and live.

Improvements funded by the CSIP are intended to make properties **more visually interesting**, and to **showcase the interior business activity**; accordingly, **emphasis will be based on quality workmanship and materials, attention to detail, and quality design**.

While DevelopSpringfield values high design standards and creativity, it also encourages solutions that **achieve these goals affordably**.

When possible, a design professional should be utilized to ensure a positive outcome.

General Considerations

Storefronts should be oriented to pedestrian and street activity and should provide visual interest both during the day and at nighttime. Storefront access should be from the primary street frontage, and should be engaging to a passerby. The following improvements are **encouraged**:

- Restoration of architectural details, including removal of obstructions or elements which hide such detailing.
- Removal or diminishment of design elements which do not support the building's character and are not in keeping with the character of adjacent properties. Unnecessary or distracting elements should be removed, whenever possible.
- A building's distinguishing elements should be identified and preserved or otherwise enhanced when possible.
- When a contemporary treatment is appropriate, it should be of good quality and should remain visually suited to adjacent properties and the broader neighborhood character.
- Facades should relate to their surroundings and provide a sense of cohesiveness in the district without strict uniformity. Creativity is encouraged.
- High-quality materials should be used in every case to maintain quality and durability.
- The use of traditional building materials is encouraged. In any event, the quality of the design and durability of materials chosen will be factors in the evaluation of an application.
- Color selections of exterior elements should be coordinated and color choices should be appropriate to the nature and style of the building and adjacent properties. Historic buildings, in particular, should utilize era-appropriate colors.
- Window treatments should enhance the exterior look, creating visual appeal for passing foot traffic. Consideration should be given to the look both during the day and at nighttime.
- Window replacement and framing should be appropriately scaled to the building.

- Signage should be attractively prepared and should integrate with the character and architecture of the building. This includes including the window area, awnings or canopies, and entryways.
- Lighting fixtures should be visually appealing and in concert with the building's character, should provide appropriate illumination for passersby and patrons.
- Awnings or canopies, which are functional and visually appealing, are encouraged.
- Landscaping features, such as window boxes or planters, are encouraged.
- Building exteriors may be cleaned, repainted or re-sided to improve appearances.
- Street entrances should foster pedestrian flow as well as encourage access to the building.
- New storefront construction or addition of design elements should be appropriately scaled within an existing building and with adjacent buildings of like style.
- Architectural barriers or impediments which limit or constrict public accessibility should be removed.

Historic Buildings

Improvements funded by the CSIP will be compatible with the character and architecture of the subject building as well as, ideally, with adjacent buildings. This is particularly important for historic buildings. The restoration and maintenance of architectural features is strongly encouraged. All approved improvements are intended to substantially enhance the appearance of the subject building(s).

INFORMATION ABOUT SPECIFIC DESIGN ELEMENTS

Improvements must be compatible with applicable zoning codes, must satisfy permit requirements, and must conform to other applicable regulatory restrictions. **Again, it is your responsibility to make sure that any relevant codes, requirements, or regulations are met.**

Storefront Design and Display

- Storefront design should be in keeping with a building's overall character and design.
- Storefront elements—such as windows, entrances and signage—should provide clarity and lend interest to facades.
- Individual storefronts should have defining architectural elements to separate and distinguish abutting units, such as pillars, piers, or separations of glass.
- A horizontal band at the top of each storefront can serve as an appropriate location for business signage.
- Storefront windows should not be completely obscured by interior window signage or display cases that prevent customers and pedestrians from seeing inside.
- Storefront windows should display products or services, local business logos, hours of operation and/or public-service messages. Displays in storefront windows that add color, texture, information and/or visual activity to the pedestrian experience are encouraged.
- Original storefront windows should be maintained, even if window treatments are utilized for professional offices which prefer limited interior visibility.
- Roll down grates are considered visually detrimental to attractive storefronts, and will diminish an application's merit. Funds may be requested to replace solid, exterior roll-down grates with

open-mesh grates, preferably interior, which allow lighted window displays to be seen at night. Security grate boxes should be recessed or concealed.

Signage

All signage must comply with applicable zoning regulations. The following guidelines are meant to be general in nature to guide the design process.

- Signage should provide information simply and legibly. Studies show that seven words are the most that passersby can effectively read.
- All signs should be made of durable materials.
- Primary signage should be limited to advertising the name of a business. In general, primary signage should not advertise national brand names or logos.
- Permanently applied or painted interior window lettering also may be an effective way to advertise a business name, type of business, and/or primary goods and services.
- Window signage should cover no more than 25 percent of available window space.
- In general, the amount of signage per storefront should be kept to a minimum. Signs should be limited to the number necessary to effectively communicate the business message. Too many signs in one storefront can detract from the overall appearance.
- Signs should be of a size, location and design that do not obscure a building's important architectural details.
- Signage can employ colors and typefaces designed to complement the unique character of a storefront, or used creatively to add visual interest without altering a building's primary architectural style. Creativity in color and style is encouraged.
- Flat wall signs installed above storefronts should form a clearly articulated sign band and be integrated into the overall facade design. Other locations and types of signs could be appropriate depending on the building design and the business owner's interests.
- Temporary signage is discouraged and will not be eligible for CSIP funding.
- Internally lit and back lit plastic signs are discouraged.

Awnings, Canopies and Marquees

- Awnings, canopies and marquees that are used to identify the business shall be treated as signs (see the signage section above).
- Awnings, canopies and marquees can add color and interest to building storefronts and facades and can be used to emphasize display windows and entrances. They also serve to protect pedestrians and display windows from weather elements.
- Awnings, canopies and marquees consistent with local character and building type are encouraged.
- Awnings should reflect the overall scale of a building and should be located within the building elements that frame storefronts.
- Awnings, canopies or marquees should not conceal important architectural details.
- Awnings on a multiple-storefront building should be consistent in character, scale, and location, but need not be identical.
- Awning shapes should relate to the shape of the facade's architectural elements. The use of traditionally shaped awnings is encouraged when appropriate. Creative or unusually-shaped awnings should be designed with considerable care.
- Canvas and fire-resistant acrylic are preferred awning materials. Vinyl or plastic as awning materials will not be eligible for CSIP funding.

Doors and Entrances

- Primary entrances should be clearly marked and provide a sense of welcome and easy passage from exterior to interior. Whenever possible, they should be located on the front of buildings.
- By federal law, new store entrances must be accessible to the physically disabled. Renovation of existing entrances to meet this criterion is encouraged.
- Loading and service entrances should be located away from the primary entrance and should be screened from public view to the extent possible.

Windows

- Windows should be used to display products and services and maximize visibility into storefronts.
- A building's original window pattern should be retained. Blocking, or reducing the size of windows is strongly discouraged.
- Window transparency should be retained or increased whenever possible. Reflective or dark-tinted glass should be replaced with clear glass if possible, and opaque panels such as metal, wood or other materials is strongly discouraged. In general, poor visibility alienates pedestrians from the business activity inside a storefront and reduces the impact of window displays.
- Windows with multiple, small-paned windows should be avoided unless they are historically appropriate to the building style, or integrate well into the overall design.
- Plexiglas or other replacement materials should not be used instead of glass.

Exterior Lighting

- Exterior lighting should highlight building elements, signs or other distinctive features rather than attract attention to the light fixture itself. Lighting that attracts attention to itself, such as neon tubing surrounding display windows or strobe lights, should be avoided.
- Exterior building lighting should be appropriate to the building's architectural style.
- Building lighting should provide an even illumination level. Flashing, pulsating, or similar dynamic lighting is strongly discouraged.
- Overly strong or high intensity lights that glare onto streets, public ways or adjacent properties should be avoided.
- Indirect lighting should be provided whenever possible.
- The creative or artistic use of neon in individual circumstances is encouraged. An example would be a neon coffee cup in the window of a coffee shop. Neon letters, such as signs or "open" signs, and neon tubing that serves to attract attention to itself, such as a window border, should be avoided.

Exterior Materials

- Facade design should complement a building's original materials in color and style, as well as those of adjacent buildings.
- Use of materials made to imitate exterior finish materials or used to cover original architectural features is strongly discouraged, unless the materials are of good quality and durability, and retain the character of original materials.
- Materials used near sidewalks and adjacent to building entrances should be highly durable and easily maintained while compatible with other exterior building materials.
- The surface cleaning of structures should be done by the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods, such as chemical washes, that will damage exterior building materials and features should not be undertaken.

Building Walls and Roofing

- The size and configuration of doors and windows should be in proportion to the overall building as well as to adjacent properties. Attention should be paid to window heights, glass types and doors.
- The number of exterior colors should be limited. Using a large number of colors is not prohibited but designs that do so will need to be supported by a strong rationale and should provide an overall appealing presentation.
- Building elements, such as awnings, signs, doors, windows and lighting fixtures, should complement each other.

Building Systems

- A building's mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems should be concealed completely from view from the street or sidewalk. If such equipment cannot be concealed, efforts should be made to minimize its visual impact on building facades.
- Rooftop equipment should be hidden by a screening device so as not to be visible from the street and sidewalk.
- Placement of air-conditioning units in windows or any other openings facing onto the street should be avoided. Units located in non-window openings are acceptable if they are flush with building walls. They should be screened with a decorative grill or any grill appropriate to the storefront design. Air-conditioning units should not drain onto pedestrians passing below.
- Downspouts and other drains should be kept clear and well-maintained.
- Outdoor refuse areas should be totally enclosed and concealed from view from the street or sidewalk.

Examples of Storefront Improvements Before and After

Castro Valley Project Area

