

walk this way



A guide to building
and facade restoration
for the Town of Richmond Hill



SOURCES OF INFORMATION

References & Resources:

Town of Richmond Hill CAUSE 1998, Community Assist for an Urban Study Effor t

Town of Richmond Hill Village Core Task Force Report 1998

Town of Richmond Hill Central Business District Master Parking Plan Study 1997

Early Days in Richmond Hill, Author: Robert M. Stamp, Richmond Hill Public Library Board 1991

Orangeville's Central Business District "Take a Good Look", Maintaining, Restoring and Constructing Building Facades

Main Street Planning and Design Guidelines, Author: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Reviving Main Street, Heritage Canada Foundation

Portions of this document were extracted from:

Main Street Lacombe, Alberta Historical Resources Foundation

Fore word

In 1851, Richmond Hill boasted eight storekeepers, three doctors, a distiller, three wagon makers, six carpenters/cabinetmakers, three black smiths and five innkeepers. The Mill Pond housed a sawmill and the streams supported gristmill and sawmill enterprises. The village of 1851 provided an optimum mix of retail, service, commercial, industrial, entertainment, accommodation and green space. This timeless success formula has recently been reintroduced across Canada as a strong catalyst for downtown revitalization.

In consideration of our desire to re-establish our historical foundation, Richmond Hill Council responded to the needs of community members and committed resources to establish a complete framework for a program of urban renewal in the heart of the village. Richmond Hill's facilitative approach provided people driven rather than design driven recommendations as the foundation for revitalization.

By 1998, the program gathered momentum. The completion of the Village Core Master Marketing Plan, the Community Assist for an Urban Study Effort and the comprehensive Village Core Task Force Reports established working relationships between the Town of Richmond Hill, the Commercial Business District and the community.

Architectural guidelines for new construction and restoration as outlined in this guide have been designed in concert with the directives of affected and participating community members. We trust that this resource document will encourage you to move towards a vision of excellence for the village core.

On behalf of Council, we are proud to present *Walk This Way*, our guide to downtown commercial building and facade restoration.



William F. Bell
Mayor

Guidelines for Downtown

Many studies have been commissioned on behalf of the town of Richmond Hill Commercial Business District (CBD). “Walk This Way” provides a comprehensive summary of many of the recommendations acknowledged in the study process.

Before you start, please ensure that you research and understand all applicable regulatory processes. By-laws and procedures are often subject to change without notice. Town staff are available to answer your procedural questions

New Construction/Restoration in Downtown

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2. Guidelines For New Construction

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Background

The Program:

A village reminds us of a traditional, homey, pleasant place to visit; a place where one wants to meander through interesting shops, enjoy a leisurely lunch and perhaps take life at a slower pace than one would in the city.

The citizens of the village provide knowledge, ideas and aspirations from which physical design and marketing concepts flow. To facilitate existing programs, villagers are encouraged to make modifications and spend monies on capital renovations. A commitment to work as a team will pay off for all members of the village as we develop and maintain ambiance and a sense of community!

The objectives of the village core program are as follows:

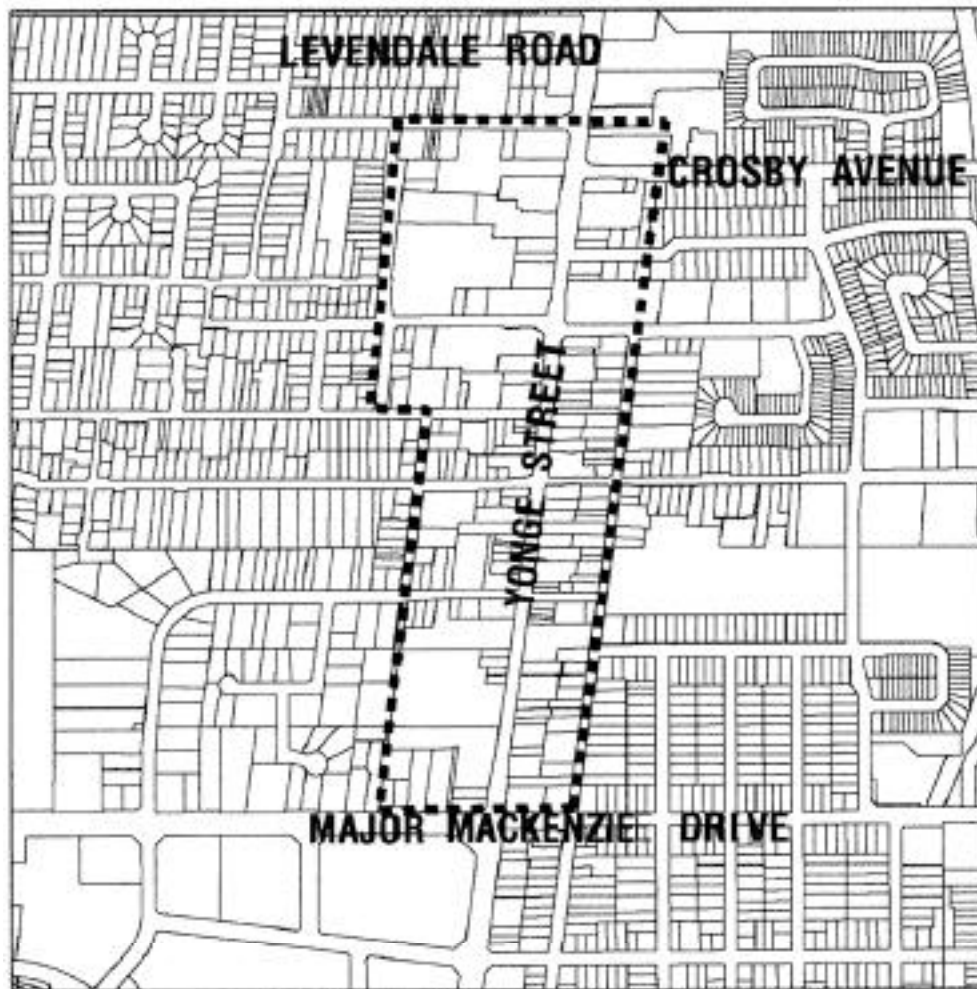
- To assist in the rehabilitation and ongoing preservation of the village core of Richmond Hill
- To aid in the co-ordination and orderly development of this area in order to enhance the value
- To provide special financial assistance to private sector businesses that use this program
- To promote the commercial revitalization of the main street area by encouraging the location of businesses that would attract local residents as well as visitors to the downtown core



Why Richmond Hill Village Revitalization?

In recent years, the residents of Richmond Hill have diligently worked to strengthen the special identity of the community by preserving the heritage that exists in the downtown core. The downtown contains a collection of buildings spanning from its roots in the 1800s and the old village core has retained some of its visual identity. The two 19th century churches and the McConaghy Centre contribute to the unique skyline for which Richmond Hill is noted. Heritage buildings within the village core represent a wide variety of ages and styles and reflect the gradual evolution of the village core over time. It is the Town's intent, through its Official Plan, to preserve the district identity of the historic core and any redevelopment.

Like many downtown areas, Richmond Hill's village core has been in decline with competition from regional malls, plazas and office commercial development outside of the core. While it is the historic core of Richmond Hill, it has not functioned as the central destination place for some time in terms of pedestrian activity, shopping, business and services, culture and entertainment.



New Construction In Downtown

1. Introduction

The following guidelines are intended to encourage building design that ensures compatibility with the existing character of the downtown village core. It is not the intent of the design guidelines to establish a ‘theme’, but rather, buildings should be designed to complement the traditional downtown architectural styles. New buildings can use up-to-date material and technologies as long as the design respects the following guidelines which have been developed to maintain and enhance the visual continuity of the streetscape.

2. Guidelines for Construction

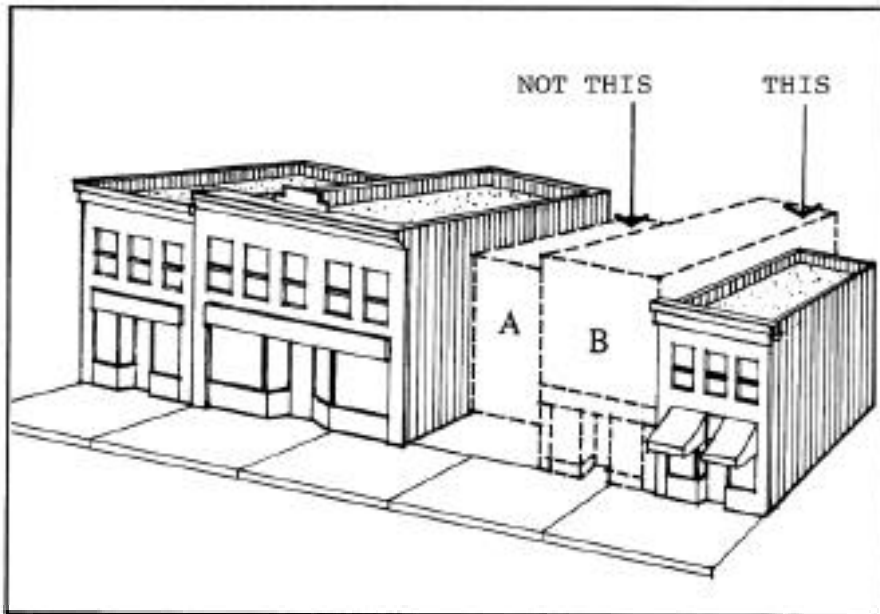
2.1 Visual Continuity

The optimum visual continuity of the downtown streetscape would be characterized by:

- Construction to the property lines
- Shop entrances at sidewalk level

It is critical that this visual continuity and pedestrian scale be retained in any new development. Site specific development and re-development applications will be approved in accordance with the normal planning process.

Maintain continuity of storefronts along the street. Note that building A breaks the line of the street edge. Building B reinforces the street edge.



Setback Guidelines:

New buildings on downtown Yonge Street should align with adjacent development or be constructed to the front property line. Setbacks are not to exceed 6 feet (1.83m) and must be formed by abutting buildings to maintain the prevailing sense of enclosure. Buildings must be constructed to the side property lines where feasible.

Setbacks are not encouraged and shall be considered only in exceptional circumstances where the use of the setback will significantly enhance the activity of the street (such as a sidewalk café) and or, where the break in the building line does not detract from the appearance of the streetscape. The recommended maximum setback should not exceed 4 feet (1.22m). The setback shall not exceed 6 feet (1.83m) under any circumstance.

New buildings 4 stories in height may be built on large lots along Yonge Street, but the upper stories shall be set back a minimum of 20 feet, so as to maintain the visual identity and unique skyline for which Richmond Hill is noted. Buildings with small frontages — up to 20-25’ feet (6.1m - 7.62m) ideally should only be 2-3 stories in height.

To further facilitate the visual integrity and scale of the streetscape, if setback is a consideration, the conditions must include provision for further enhancement, approved awnings, porches rich in detail and exceptional landscaping.

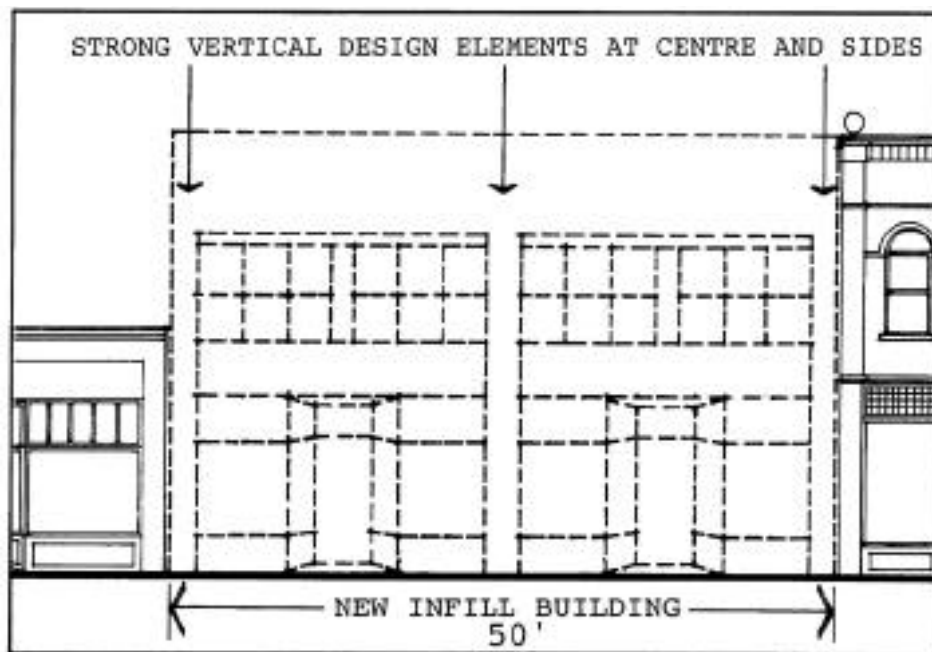
2.2 Patterning of Building Components

New construction and additions should reflect the traditional building patterns of the downtown Richmond Hill village core.

Guideline:

- Store entrances are to occur at approximately 25 foot (7.62m) intervals or less. Where building width exceeds this dimension, the design of the storefront should incorporate major vertical elements or other acceptable design devices to maintain the rhythm of the typical building front pattern.

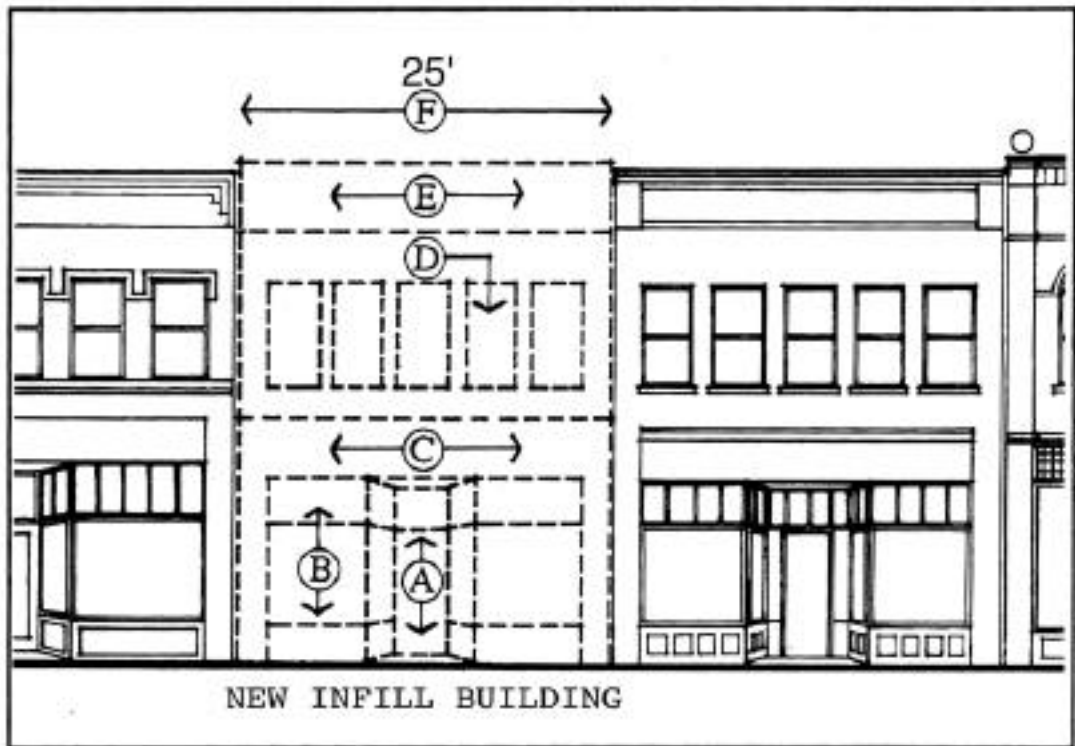
Storefronts should respect the existing pattern of building widths along the street. A new infill building that is several lots wide should be designed to maintain the typical 25 foot (7.62m) wide pattern.



- Store entrances shall be recessed no less than 3 feet (.91m) from the face of the storefront. This will ensure that open doorways to the street do not encroach on the sidewalk.

- Display windows shall be as large as practical with minimum partitioning at eye level. Window sills shall be between 1.5 and 2.5 feet (.46m - .76m) above the level of the sidewalk and allow for a bulkhead panel below.
- Upper windows shall reflect the repetitive, vertical pattern along the street.

Maintain the pattern of building components along the street.



A Recessed front door

B Large ground floor display windows

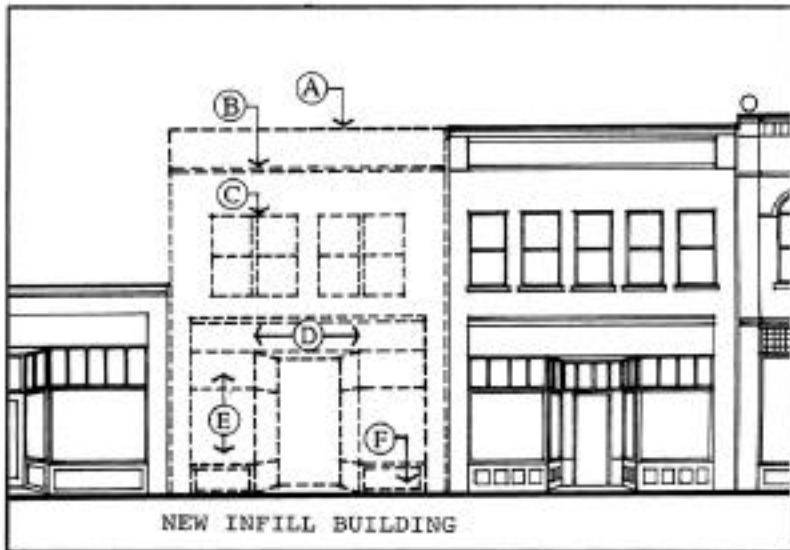
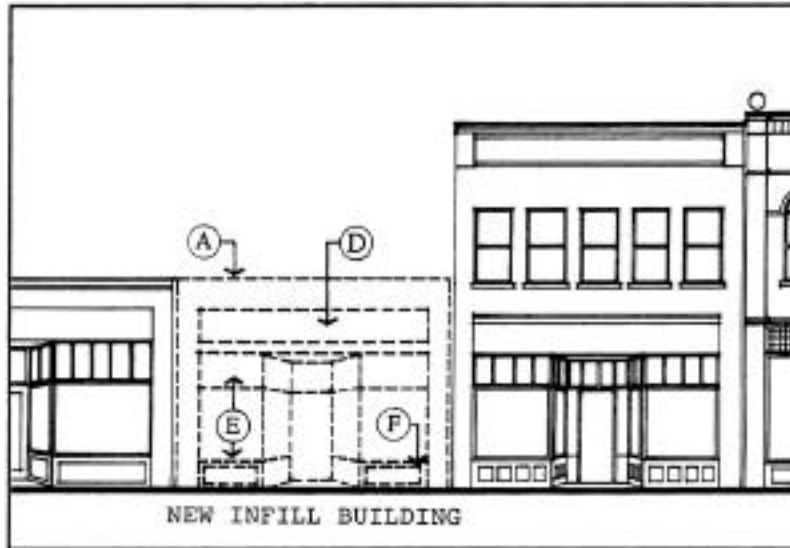
C Location of the signband above the storefront windows (sign overall height shall not exceed 3 feet (.91m) and where possible shall line up with neighbouring signage)

D Repetitive vertically proportioned upper windows

E Upper cornice or special roof line treatment

F Pattern of building widths is approximately 25 feet, (7.62m) when lot width will allow

Maintain important alignments with neighbouring buildings.



A Roof line

B Facade ornament

C Upper windows

D Signband

E Storefront

F Bulkhead Panels

2.3 Horizontal and Vertical Alignments

The streets of the downtown village core are lined by buildings sharing similar façade components which create a strong vertical rhythm and horizontal alignments. Many of the buildings are of similar width and height.

Horizontal Elements Guidelines:

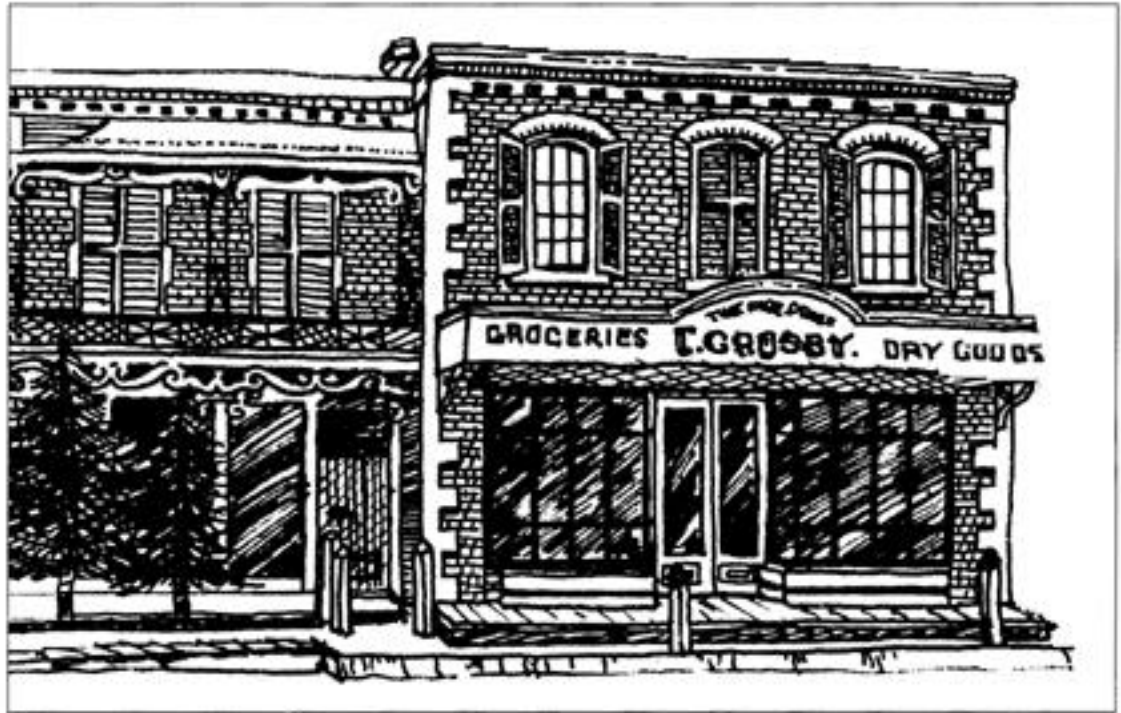
- New construction shall respect and enhance horizontal alignments where feasible.
- Decorative details and facade articulation shall respect or make continuous the horizontal features of neighbouring buildings.
- Signbands, storefront windows, canopies and awnings shall be aligned with similar features on neighbouring buildings.

Vertical Elements Guidelines:

- When lot size will allow, major vertical elements shall be introduced into the façade design of new buildings at approximately 25 foot (7.62m) intervals to maintain the traditional vertical pattern of building facade design.

Window Guidelines:

- Second floor windows shall align with those on neighbouring buildings.
- Upper windows generally shall be of ‘punched’ design and vertically proportioned. Horizontal strip windows are not in keeping with traditional patterns of design and are to be avoided.



The historical account: Note continuity, setback, patterning, horizontal and vertical elements, details, materials, colours and signage.



2.4 Building Height

The maximum height of the buildings in the historic downtown village was 3 stories.

Guideline:

- Buildings with small frontages up to 20 - 25' feet (6.1m - 7.62m) ideally should only be 2-3 stories in height.

2.5 The Details of Building Facade Design

Along with a consideration for the general pattern of vertical and horizontal elements, a consideration for appropriate detailing is necessary to enhance the overall character of the village core. It is the intention of this guideline to provide for restoration and new construction that complements the existing historic buildings in the village core of Richmond Hill.

Material Guidelines:

- Traditionally, there has been a limited range of building materials in the village core. Consideration shall be given to maintaining the existing predominant building facade material for new building facades: brick, painted wood or stucco material, unpolished granite or other durable stone may be used at first floor level.
- New building facade design should incorporate up-to-date building technologies and incorporate current building materials which meet the objectives of these guidelines.

Colour Guidelines:

- The colours for the new building facades should respect the traditional range of colours that have been used in downtown Richmond Hill.

2.6 Parking

Parking is a critical issue that must be addressed. To promote retail shopper parking, short term target lots will be demarcated at strategic locations along Yonge Street in the heart of the village core. The development of parking lots and parking strips in front of newer development has blurred the historic distinction between the street and pedestrian environments.

The Payment-In-Lieu of Parking By-law may support relief from parking requirements in the CBD (Commercial Business District) for commercial/retail development.

In the future, rear lane-way parking, circulation and site designs shall be encouraged to facilitate the pending recommendations of the proposed Village Core Transportation and Urban Master Plan.

Please review specifications for emergency service and operational system vehicles. (Engineering and Public Works Department)

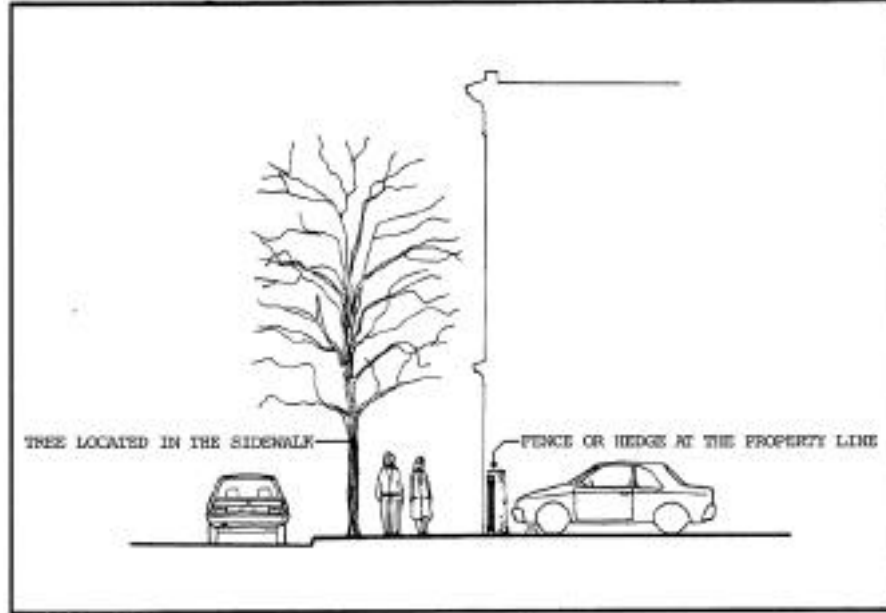
Screening Guidelines:

- Parking lots shall be framed by regularly maintained fences or screening vegetation (i.e. trees or shrubbery). Treatments will be approved in accordance with the normal planning process.

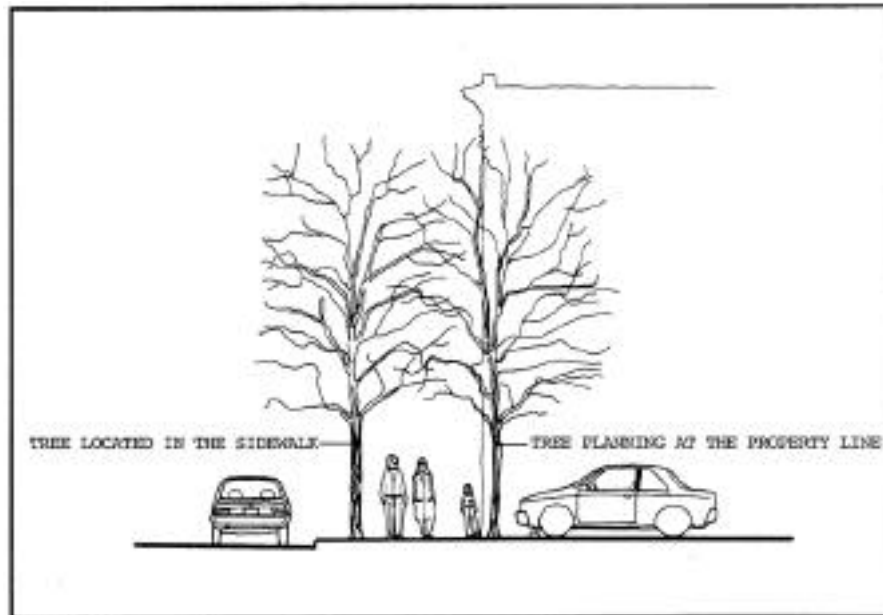


Sidewalk tree planting. Parking lots should be screened or framed to maintain the integrity of the street edge.

Option A: The parking lot is screened by a low fence or hedge on the property line.



Option B: The parking lot is edged by tree planting on the property line.



Note: Trees at the curb within the historic Main Street area are recommended only to screen parking lots. The selected trees will not grow more than 20 feet (6.1m) in height.

2.7 Paved Surfaces

At the turn of the century, sidewalks were wooden and streets unpaved. Concrete paving and asphalt were introduced after World War I.

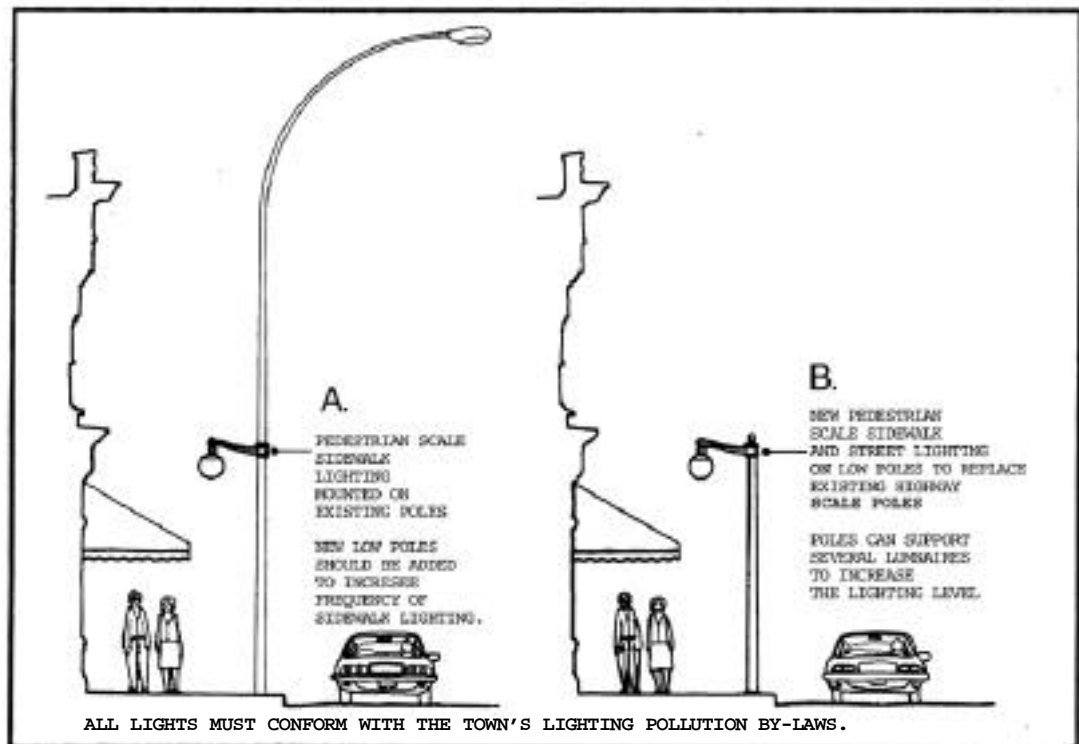
Guideline:

- The Town of Richmond Hill has invested heavily in new sidewalk materials. As a result, the character of the village core has evolved and the new imagery should be maintained. Pressed brick and interlocking concrete pavers in village core colours are preferred over other alternatives.

2.8 Street Lighting

The scale of pedestrian street lighting is extremely important to the character of the downtown village core. Our more recent history reflects that streetlights were accommodated on utility poles above grade. The Town of Richmond Hill has an established set of lighting specifications that is more in keeping with the early ambiance of the village core. Top-mounted decorative lantern specifications are available from the Engineering and Public Works Department.

Streetlighting



Guideline:

- Pedestrian scale street lighting shall be sympathetic to the historic character of the village core area and of a style and character type similar to historic lighting precedents in Richmond Hill.

2.9 Open Spaces and Parks

The treatment of open spaces and parks is an important factor in defining the historic area of downtown. At the turn of the century and into the 1920s a common green existed along the Yonge Street corridor. The loss of green space to facilitate improvement has contributed to the decline of the village core sense of place.

The Town of Richmond Hill recently applied simple landscaping treatments to the gate ways of the village. Further definition of edges and boundaries will knit the sections of Yonge Street and adjacent neighbourhoods together. Edges can continue to be defined by low brick walls, wrought iron rails and trees to draw the eye to a focal point along a vista.

**Guideline:**

- Landscaped treatment including shrubbery, tree planting, pedestrian paving and fencing shall enhance and be compatible with the historic character of downtown.

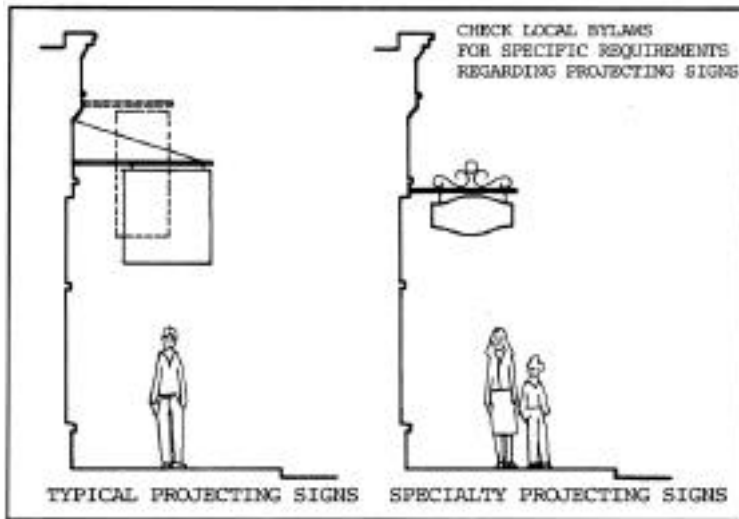
2.10 Signs

The character of signage should complement the existing architectural development and aspire to create a harmonious flow. The goal of this process is to have consistency in signage and eliminate back lit and internally illuminated projecting signage from the village core.



Photo courtesy of:
Valley Forge Iron Bed Company
10148 Yonge Street, Richmond Hill

Projecting signs.



Guideline:

Projecting Signage

- Projecting signage shall project over the sidewalk no more than 5 feet (1.52m) and shall be no closer to the sidewalk than 8 feet (2.44m) from the bottom of the sign. If illuminated, projecting signage shall be lit from an external source.

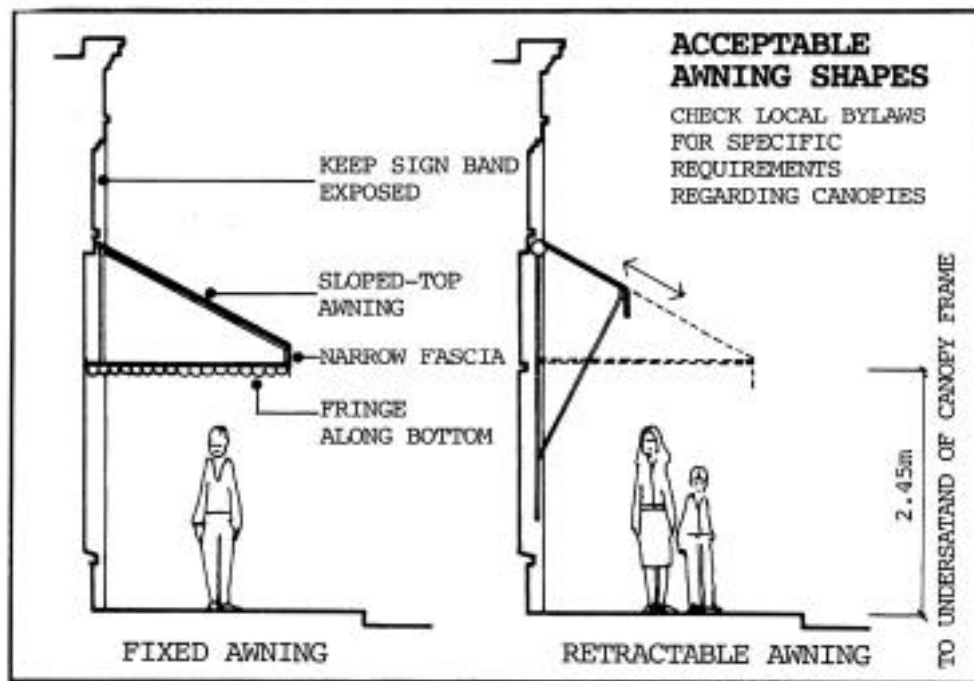
Fascia Signage

- Fascia signage shall be located within the traditional signband of the building. If illuminated, fascia signage shall be lit from an external source.

2.11 Awnings

The style and type of awning affixed to new development or re-development in the downtown is critical to the enhancement and character of the historical area.

Examples of fixed and retractable awning styles.



Guideline:

- New awnings shall have the traditional profile and may be fixed or retractable with a skirt (valence) utilizing high quality canvas or acrylic solid or striped material.
- Bubble awnings and awnings of less than 5 feet (1.52m) depth, which function as signage, are acceptable but sloped awnings as shown above are preferred.
- New awnings shall be mounted between the wood or masonry piers that frame the storefront and align horizontally (where structurally possible) with neighbouring canopies.

Design Guidelines for Downtown Heritage Quality Buildings

Many studies have been commissioned on behalf of the town of Richmond Hill Commercial Business District (CBD). “Walk This Way” provides a comprehensive summary of many of the recommendations acknowledged in the study process.

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The Buildings in Downtown

1. Getting to Know the Buildings
 - 1.1 The Traditional Facade Elements
 - 1.2 Alterations to the Buildings

2. Why Rehabilitate?

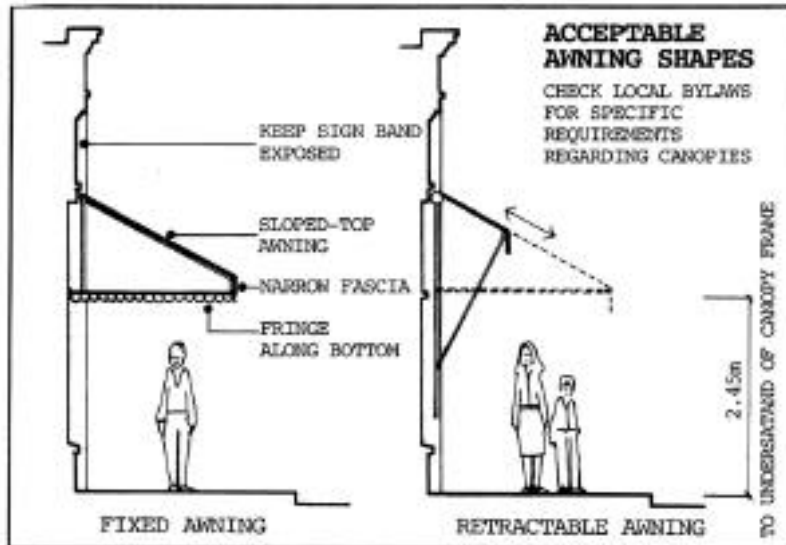
3. The Principles of Facade Rehabilitation

The Buildings In Downtown

The heritage quality building section outlines the traditional elements of a commercial facade. Then discusses the alterations to facades that have taken place over time, proceeds to outline the principles of historic facade rehabilitation and concludes with guidelines for historic facade rehabilitation.

Getting to Know the Buildings

1.1 The Traditional Facade Elements



Alterations to the Buildings

Building styles and their alterations indicate the passage of time. As new businesses wanted to update their image, they chose derivations of “modern” architectural styles when altering the original building stock. Over the years, many of the original facades were also altered due to deterioration as a result of poor maintenance of materials. In order to assist a property owner to make decisions about the building façade, it is useful to classify the degree of alteration in the following manner:

- **Minimal**

In a minimally altered building the character of its origins is still clearly evident.

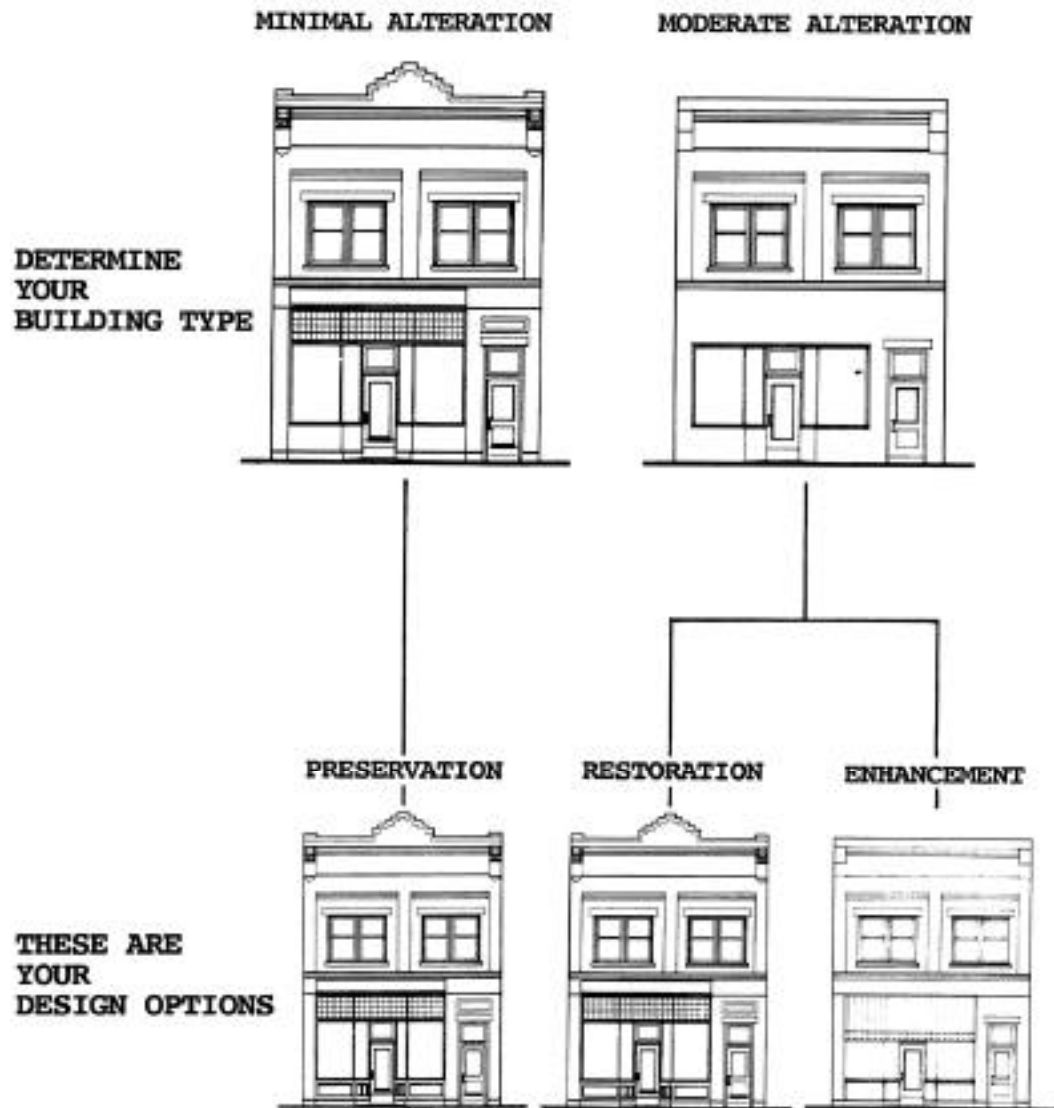
- **Moderate**

In a moderately altered building a number of changes have occurred, however the original character of the building is still evident.

- **Significant**

In a significantly altered building the character of the original construction is no longer evident.

Design Options



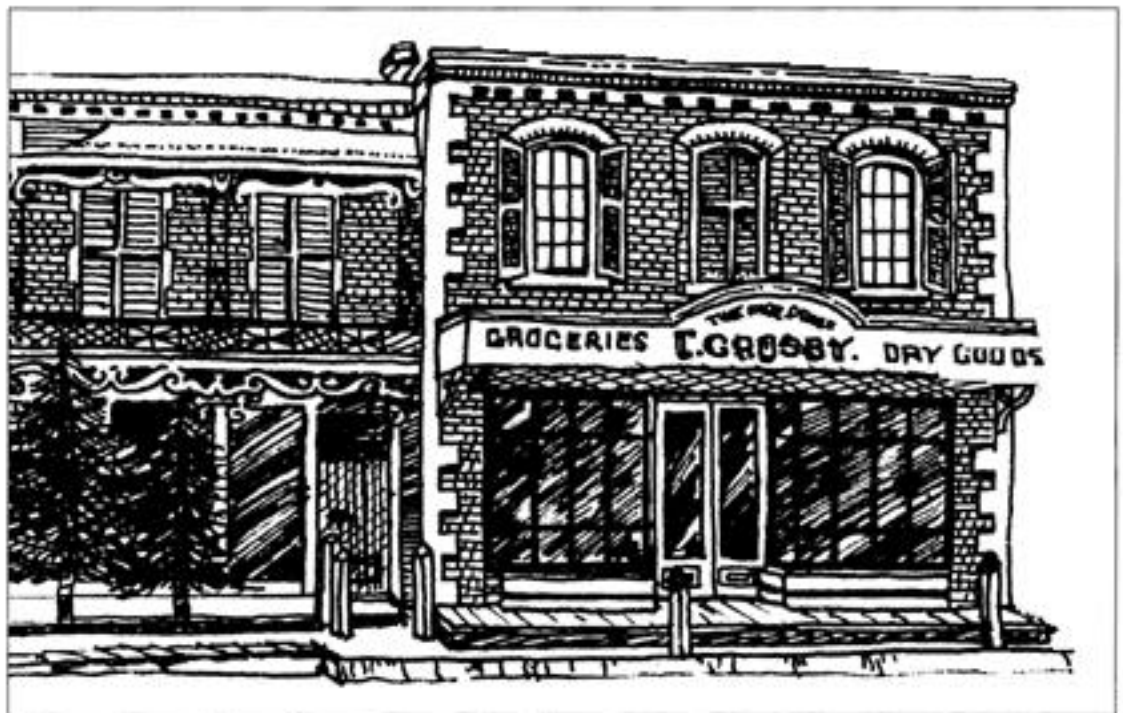
Thorough research and documentation of the history of the building is required before preparation of any design options. Many stores have frontages of 25 feet (7.62m) or less and a central entrance.

2. Why Rehabilitate?

Community Pride

Downtown is the place where traditionally the greatest number of heritage buildings are found. These buildings represent the social and economic history of Richmond Hill from its roots in the 1800s to present day. This special character is the village core and it is a treasure that should be enhanced to provide a unique and important symbol of community pride. We have an amazing foundation and any improvement to the village core and its heritage buildings is an investment in the future of Richmond Hill.

Parker Crosby owned a dry goods store destroyed in the disastrous fire of April 1866.



Following the fire, Crosby rebuilt and renamed his emporium the Fire Proof Store — known to succeeding generations of village shoppers simply as “The Fire Proof.” Here the store is shown bearing the name of his son and successor Isaac Crosby.

3. The Principles of Facade Rehabilitation

The historic commercial buildings in the Richmond Hill village core are an important local and regional resource. Any future work proposed for buildings located within the designated area should be processed in accordance with these guidelines. The following principles are the basic categories for rehabilitation of building facades in the downtown core.

Maintenance and Repair

Good maintenance is preventative and cost effective in the long term. This is usually a minimal approach preventing further deterioration including repainting, re-pointing, flashing, or the repair of broken items such as windows.

All building materials require maintenance. The life expectancy of materials can vary significantly depending on the material used and the setting. Life expectancies can be extended considerably with proper and regular maintenance.

Repair of wood cornice.



Mason re-pointing.



Rehabilitation of block parapet wall.



Colour

- Select colour for large areas of the facade (store front, upper facade walls) consistent with or complementary to those prevalent in the area.
- Use a limited number of colours: two or possibly three.
- Use the original colour scheme of the facade where possible.

The careful use of colour is traditionally one of the simplest and most visible expressions of individuality. Colours also help to define the specific look of a commercial area and help to further tie the various facades together. It can also unify the parts and components within any one of these facades.

The physical problems and procedures of painting various parts of the facade, particularly the masonry of the walls, should be evaluated according to guidelines before painting. As a rule, masonry surfaces that have not been painted should be left in their natural state.

For stores that have expanded into neighbouring buildings, paint can be used to create a single image (Waterdown).



The results of repainting a facade are both immediate and dramatic. While this type of improvement allows for a degree of experimentation not possible with other techniques, the immediacy and power of its impact requires careful consideration of colour schemes.

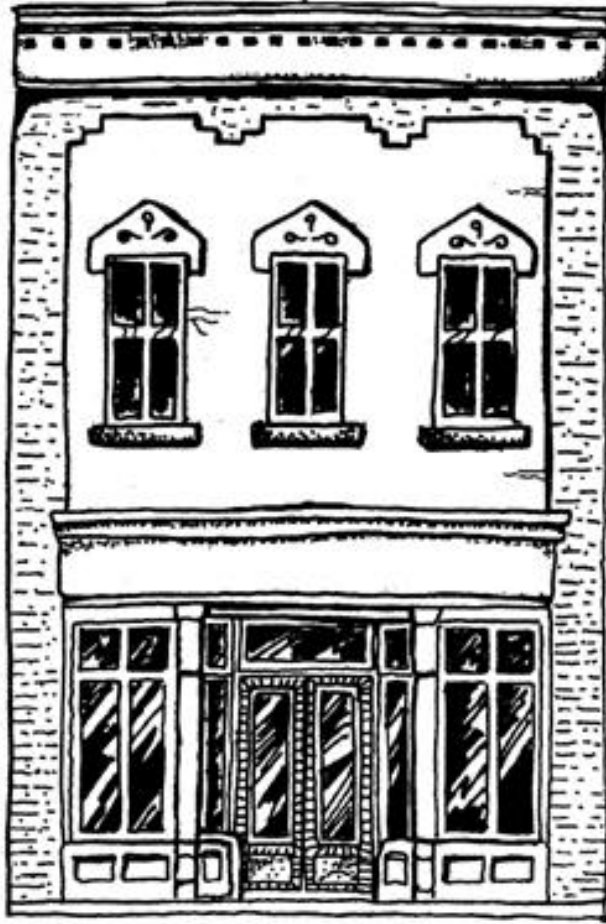
The simplest and safest approach is to paint the facade one colour. This will clearly provide a unified appearance, particularly useful where crude patching of the walls has previously occurred. A colour should be selected that is subdued and relates to the surrounding buildings. (It should be remembered that paint colours on large surfaces come out much brighter than they do on small paint chips).

A problem with painting is that valuable features, such as cornices, can be obscured. If such valuable features do exist, and are made from materials other than those of the facade's walls, a second contrasting colour can be used to highlight them. This approach requires a little more care in selecting both paint colours and what should be painted.

One of the advantages offered by painting is the visual linking or unification of the building components. These features should be selected from across the entire facade. This could include the store front (basepanels, columns, window frames, doors, store front cornice and, if they are made of a material different from the upper facade walls, the store front piers/pilasters). Also included would be the upper facade windows (decorative lintels, sills, and frames) and the building cornice. This approach can also be followed for those facades where the walls are left unpainted.

The colour for this highlighting should complement the background colour of the unpainted masonry or the paint colour selected for the bulk of the facade. If some features on unpainted walls (such as windowsills and/or decorative lintels) exist as unpainted stone, colour should be used as the paint colour for the remaining features which are to be painted. Frequently the use of a contrasting colour, but still complementary to the background, creates dramatic results.

What To Paint



While two colours should be sufficient for most facades, the use of one more carefully selected colour for only a few smaller details could be considered. This approach could effectively be used to make the display windows seem larger and more generous, thereby reinforcing one of their key qualities. Usually a dark shade of the highlight colour works best. In addition to the frames of the display windows, some other facade components that could receive this third, dark colour could include: the store front door, sash frames of the upper storey windows and a few small details of the cornices, decorative lintels and base panels. If a bright colour is desired, it should complement the other colours in the facade and be used sparingly only on these latter features. However, care should be taken not to over-decorate the facade.

It is worth noting that in skilled hands some missing facade features can be literally painted on, at least one-dimensionally. It is rarely a good idea to create fake history by introducing elements clearly out of place with the existing facade.

Notwithstanding these concerns, dramatic and strategic use can be made of paint to create murals, unique images or recreate long-gone facades.

To complement traditional commercial architecture, original colour schemes can be discovered by scraping away the accumulated layers of paint from small representative areas of the facade. Over time, the paints will have discoloured slightly, but a light sanding and wetting of exposed paints should reveal original colours. The LACAC Committee would be able to offer colour suggestions appropriate to specific buildings. In general, local paint suppliers have colour charts and will be able to assist in the selection of suitable colours and type of paint.



Mural, 10160 Yonge Street



RICHMOND HILL

Roaring into the 21st Century

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