

**Opelika Historic Preservation Commission**

**Design Review Guidelines**

**for**

**The Downtown Historic District**

**Part 2: Rehabilitation, New Construction & Demolition**

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## DESIGN GUIDELINES

### *What Design Guidelines Can Do:*

1. Help maintain the character of the District.
2. Improve the quality of growth and development.
3. Protect a property owner's investment by preventing undesirable intrusions.
4. Preserve the integrity (authenticity) of existing buildings.
5. Provide an objective basis for design review.
6. Serve as an educational tool for property owners, contractors, and designers.

### *What Design Guidelines Can Not Do:*

1. Limit change or growth. They can only address the visual aspects of growth.
2. Control how space is used within a building. Only the publicly visible portion of a building or site is governed by guidelines.
3. Restrict. They can only guide.
4. Review ordinary maintenance or color selection.

## STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation have served for many years as the "10 Commandments" for historic preservation projects. These standards are used to certify historic rehabilitations and are also used for grant—funded projects. The basic standards, listed below, are incorporated into the Alabama Main Street Design Guidelines.

**STANDARD #1:** A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

**STANDARD #2:** The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

**STANDARD #3:** Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

**STANDARD #4:** Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

**STANDARD #5:** Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be retained and preserved.

**STANDARD # 6:** Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

**STANDARD #7:** Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

**STANDARD # 8:** Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

**STANDARD # 9:** New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

**STANDARD # 10:** New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

## LIST OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

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## **REHABILITATION GUIDELINES - OPELIKA**

Opelika has many fine commercial buildings dating from the late 19th through the early 20th century when it was the trade and railway center of east Alabama. Rehabilitation Guidelines address issues dealing with changes in appearance of existing buildings: Style, Storefronts, Awnings, Signs, Upper Story Windows, Access, Doors, Rear Entrances, Roofs, Cornices, Materials, Wood, Masonry, Metals, Canopies, and Color.

### **STYLE**

A basic premise of historic rehabilitation is “to thy building’s own style be true.” In other words, do not attempt to make a building look earlier or more ornate than it is. In appearance, the district consists of one and two story red brick buildings. Building forms are simple with flat roofs and projecting cornices. The solid, but simple, style which characterizes Opelika’s downtown reflects its slow, but steady, economic base.

### **STOREFRONTS**

Through time, many of the historic commercial buildings in Opelika have been altered to create a more up-to-date look in keeping with changing trends and fashions. For example, one trend, which swept through Main Street cities across the country in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, was concealing the ornamental details and materials of the historic facade behind a plain front in order to make the building appear modern and streamlined. In Opelika, change occurred more often on the storefront than on the upper level of the facade. The first approach, in rehabilitation, is to uncover the original facade, and storefront whenever possible. When the original facade no longer exists, either leave it as it is or recreate the facade and storefront based on historical or physical evidence. If documentation does not exist about the appearance of the original facade one option is to create a new design composed of traditional features which are compatible with nearby buildings. A few storefronts have evolved over the years and have acquired their own sense of identity. For example, a glass art Deco storefront, added to a Victorian building, may have achieved importance and should be preserved. For more detailed information on Storefront Rehabilitation, refer to Technical Brief #11, which is included in this notebook.

### **AWNINGS**

Historic photographs of Opelika show that canvas awnings were a common feature on Main Street. In addition to being an inexpensive way to add color and vitality to the streetscape, awnings are practical. Retractable canvas awnings are energy efficient. They can reduce heat gain in the summer by as much as 50 to 70 percent. Storefront awnings provide shade for merchandise in the display window and a sheltered entrance for customers. When reviewing awning applications, location, material, and shape are key features.

### **SIGNS**

Signs are not only a means for identifying individual businesses, but they also add to the general character of Opelika’s Main Street. Signs provide color, vitality, and interest. They can create a sense of unity and definition to the streetscape. The signage design guidelines should be used as an overlay, or in addition to Opelika’s existing sign ordinance. Signs should be evaluated based on design, location, type, material, lighting, and size.

## **REHABILITATION GUIDELINES - OPELIKA**

### **UPPER STORY WINDOWS, ACCESS, DOORS, AND REAR ENTRANCES**

In Opelika, and other Main Street towns across America, commercial activity was focused on the first level while the second level often provided storage space, office space for professionals, and/or living space for merchants. The rhythm created by the pattern of vertical upper story windows is a very important unifying feature of downtown. Today, many upper floors in Opelika's downtown are unoccupied, and the closed windows create a negative image. Better access to these upper stories may be an important design issue in the future. Rehabilitation of back entrances is increasingly important for public use as off-street parking lots are developed behind buildings. Use material and colors that coordinate with the main facade. Refer to Preservation Brief #3, for technical information on "Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings."

### **ROOFS AND CORNICES**

A distinguishing feature of commercial buildings is their roofline. In Opelika most commercial buildings have flat roofs and parapets which often display corbelled brick work. This upper part of the facade is an especially important ornamental feature of Opelika's many one story buildings. The ornamental cornice at the top of the facade gives the building a "finished" look. The repetition of cornices along the street creates a horizontal line which visually unifies the block.

### **MATERIALS, WOOD, MASONRY, AND METALS**

As downtowns evolved, early frame buildings were replaced with fire resistant masonry construction. In Opelika, after the fire of 1868, one and two story brick buildings replaced the original frame buildings. Masonry encompasses a wide variety of natural and manufactured materials, including, but not limited to: brick, tile, terra cotta, stone, cast stone, and concrete, as well as mortar. Color, texture, mortar joints, and bond patterns define the overall character of downtown buildings. Brick is the dominant material in downtown Opelika. In several cases brick buildings have been covered with inappropriate materials. Another key issue in Opelika may be the maintenance of brick, including repointing. The Preservation Briefs, included in the Main Street Design Guidelines notebook, provide technical information on issues such as: Brief #1 - The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings, Brief #2 - Repointing Mortar Joints, Brief #6 - Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings, Brief #7 - The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra Cotta. It is important to preserve other materials found on historic commercial buildings, such as plate glass windows, cast iron supporting columns, stamped metal, and decorative woodwork.

### **CANOPIES AND COLOR**

In the 1970s a continuous wood shingled canopy was attached to Opelika's downtown buildings. This inappropriate canopy, which visually bisected the buildings and altered the character of downtown, and was recently removed. Color is an inexpensive practical way to breathe new life into downtown buildings. Do not paint a brick building which is unpainted because it turns a low maintenance material into a high maintenance one. Although design review boards generally do not dictate color, the use of color can have a dramatic positive or negative impact on the district. Therefore, a few guidelines have been included. Merchants can receive color specifics through the Alabama Main Street office at the Alabama Historical Commission.

# ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

## STYLE - #1.

*Respect the original design of the building.*

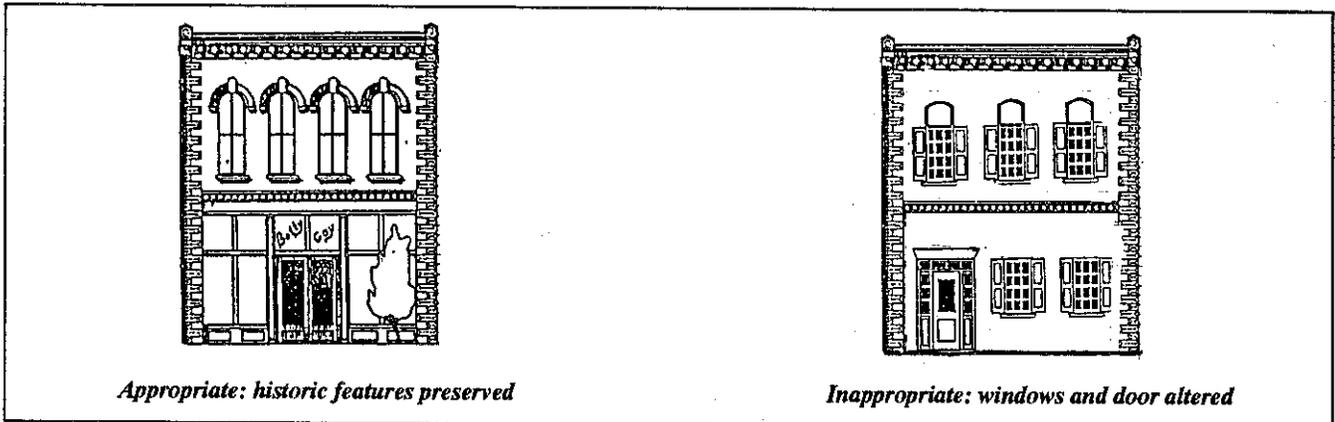
**PRESERVATION:** Preserve and retain architectural details and character—defining features of a building. (See Preservation Brief #17) Repair, rather than replace, the existing historic details and ornamentation.

**ALTERATIONS:** Preserve older alterations that have achieved historic significance based on their age (older than 50 years) or design character. More recent alterations that are not historically significant may be removed.

**REPLACEMENT FEATURES:** Replacement of missing architectural elements should be based on accurate duplication of original features. Avoid adding details which make the building appear older, younger, more ornate, or plainer than it originally was.

**REPLACEMENT MATERIALS:** When repairing or replacing lost or deteriorated features, it is always best to use the same material as the original feature. If a substitute material is employed, it should visually duplicate historic materials, with particular attention to color and texture. Choose a substitute material that has physical properties similar to historic material and take into consideration factors such as durability, thermal expansion, and moisture penetration. (See Preservation Brief #16)

**REPLACEMENT DESIGNS:** Where reconstruction of an element is impossible because of a lack of historical evidence, then a new design that relates to the building in general size, scale, and material may be considered. Do not add fake historic designs or theme images such as the “wild west” or the “ye olde Colonial” look.

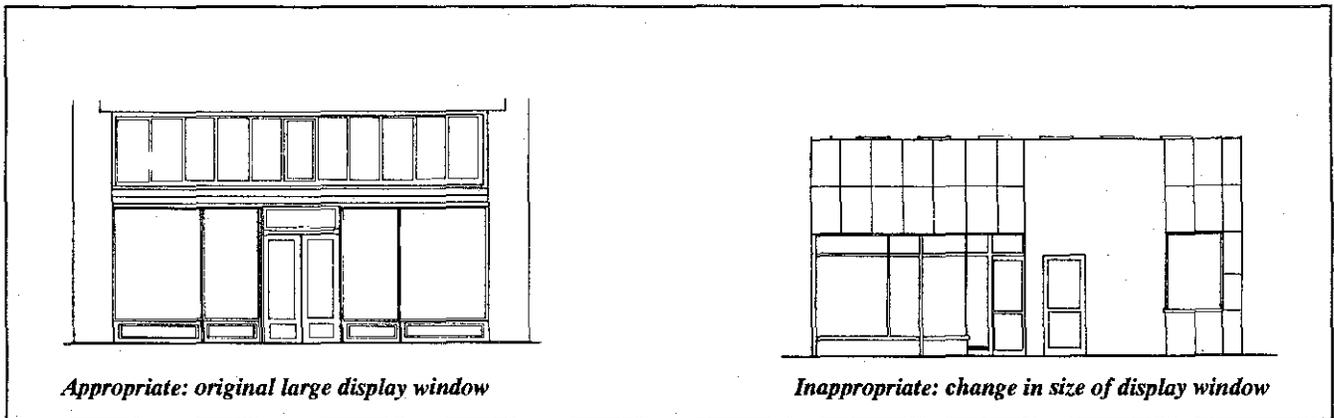


# ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

## STOREFRONT - #2.

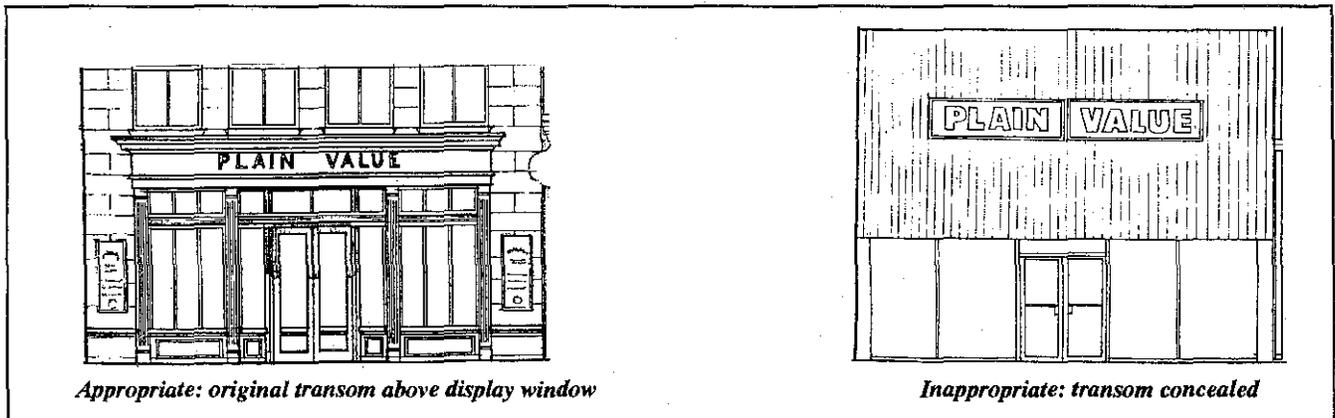
*Preserve existing historic storefronts. Retain characteristic storefront features.*

**DISPLAY WINDOW:** Maintain the original dimensions and transparent nature of the display window. Do not add small paned windows or reflective glass.



**COLUMNS:** Maintain cast iron columns and brick and stone piers which frame the storefront.

**TRANSOM:** Retain original shape and transparency of the transom. Do not place a sign over the transom, If an interior ceiling has been lowered below the transom, it should be recessed from the storefront. Do not place air conditioning units in the transom.

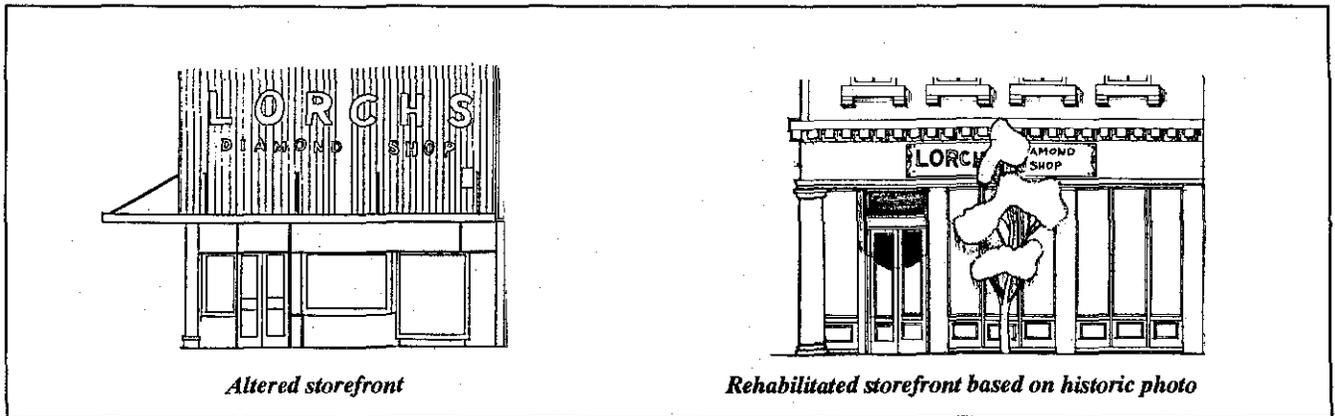


# ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

## RECONSTRUCTED STOREFRONT -#3

*Reconstruction of a historic storefront should be based on physical evidence and historical documentation such as photographs.*

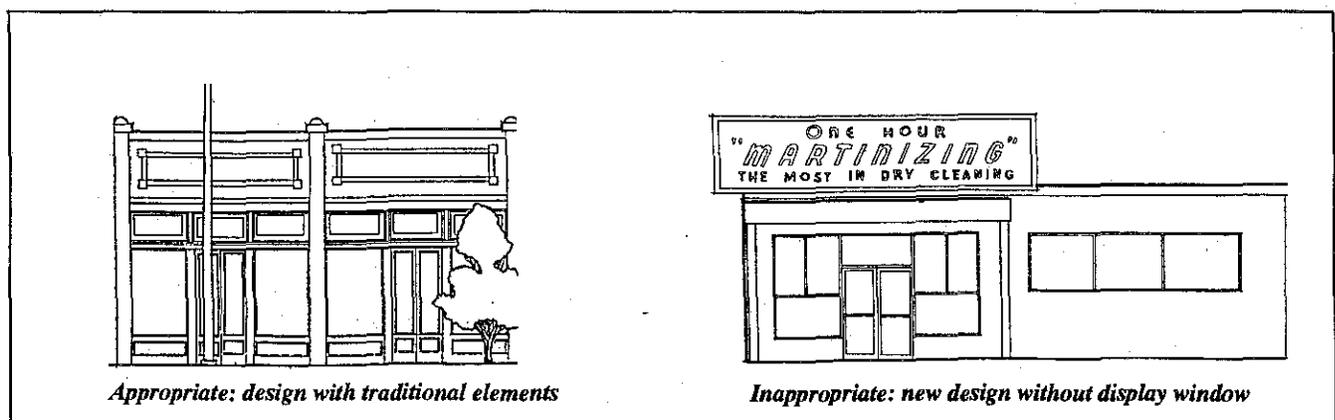
**RE-CONSTRUCTION:** Obtain historic photographs, post cards of downtown, and historical background about the building by contacting the historical society, library, and/or state archives.



## NEW STOREFRONT #4.

*If documentation of the original storefront does not exist, design a new storefront that is compatible with the materials, size, scale, and character -defining features of nearby buildings.*

**NEW DESIGN:** Respect the original design of the building and visual character of the district. Do not add early colonial features, attempt to create a theme, or make a building more ornamental than it originally was. The new design should incorporate characteristic elements of a traditional storefront, including the display window, transom, recessed entrance, and bulkhead using compatible materials. (see Preservation Brief #11)



## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

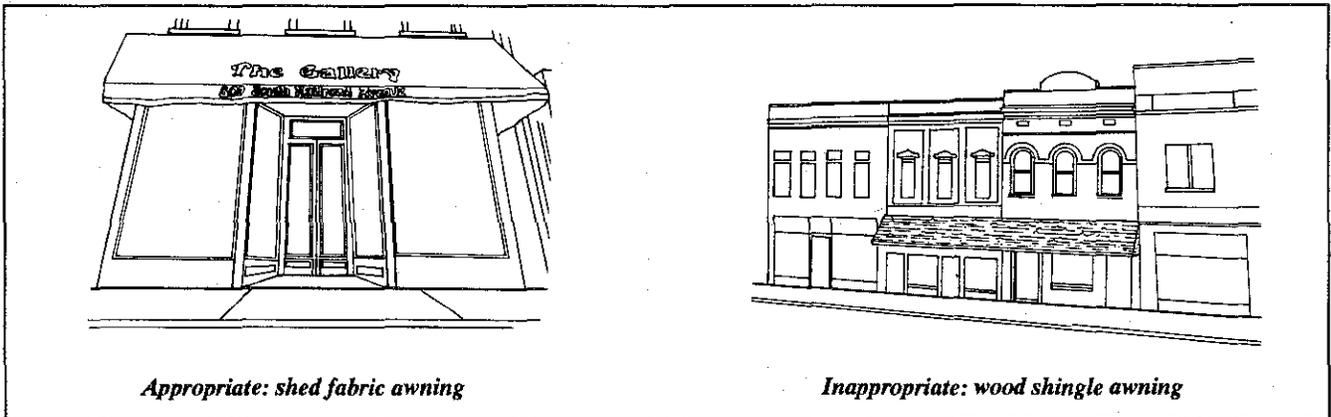
### AWNINGS - #5.

*Awnings should be compatible with the design of the building and the streetscape.*

**PRESERVATION:** Preserve original canopies and awning hardware where feasible.

**MATERIALS:** Fabric awnings are appropriate. Vinyl coated canvas and acrylic awnings may be acceptable. Metal awnings may be appropriate in a few instances, but rough sawn wood, plastic, or asphalt shingle awnings give an immobile, hard, mansard—like appearance and are not appropriate.

**DESIGN:** Retractable or fixed standard shed—type canvas awnings are appropriate. Fake mansard roofs and rustic wood shingle awnings are inappropriate. Carefully coordinate the awning color with other building design features.



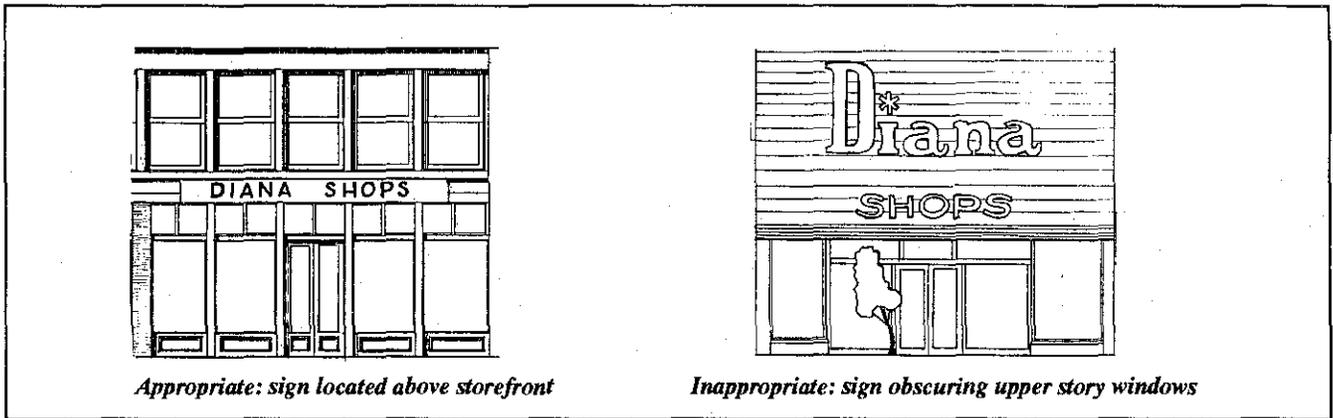
**LOCATION:** The awning should fit the dimensions of the storefront within the masonry opening and should not obscure architectural details. Mount the awning just above or just below the transom. Where feasible, align the awning so that it is the same height as others on the block. Upper story awnings should fit inside the window surround. Arched windows should have awnings shaped like the curvature of the arch, and rectangular windows should have rectangular awnings.

## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

### SIGNS #6.

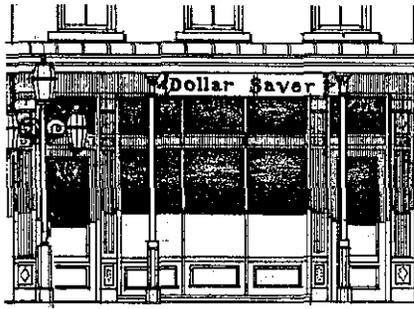
*Signs should complement, rather than compete with, the character of the building and downtown.*

**LOCATION:** Signs should not cover or obscure architectural features of a building or neighboring buildings. Locate signs on flat unadorned parts of the facade or paint directly onto the glass storefront. Hanging signs should not project more than 40 inches beyond adjoining buildings or obscure the view of the streetscape. A hanging sign should be at least 8 feet off the ground. Signs should not be located on the roof. They should be aligned with others in the area in order to create a more uniform appearance.



**TYPES:** A variety of signs may adorn a building, but, as a general rule, a business should not have more than three signs. Awning signs and small facade sign panels can attract the attention of passing motorists or pedestrians across the street. Signs painted on storefront windows and doors attract the attention of pedestrians. Hanging signs should be attached so that they do not damage the wall surface. Attach signs through joints in the masonry rather than the to brick itself. Moveable or portable signs are not appropriate.

**SIZE:** Size should be determined by the scale of the building, not whether the sign is meant to be viewed by a passing motorist or pedestrian. Generally, lettering should not exceed 18 inches high.



*Appropriate: sign in scale with building*



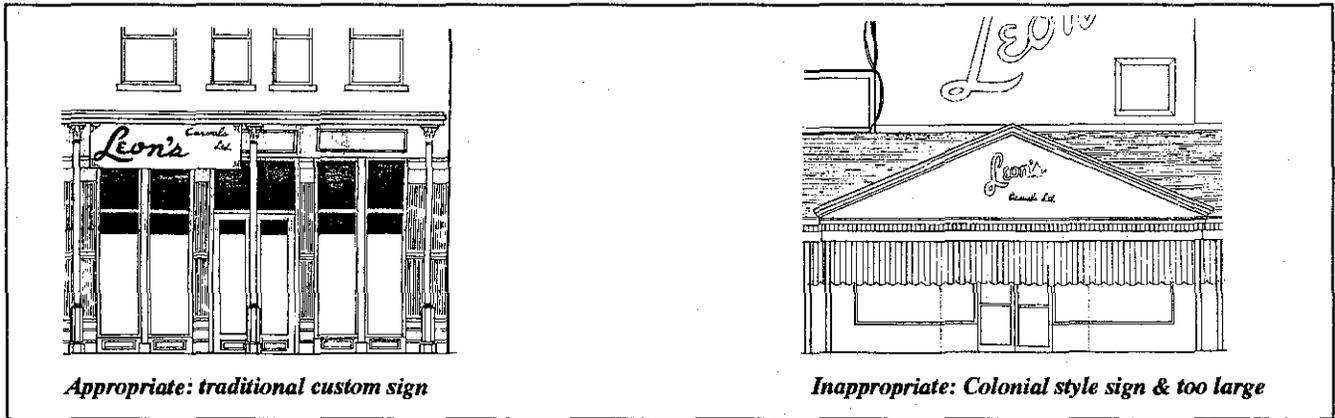
*Inappropriate: sign and lettering too large for building*

## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

### SIGNS cont.

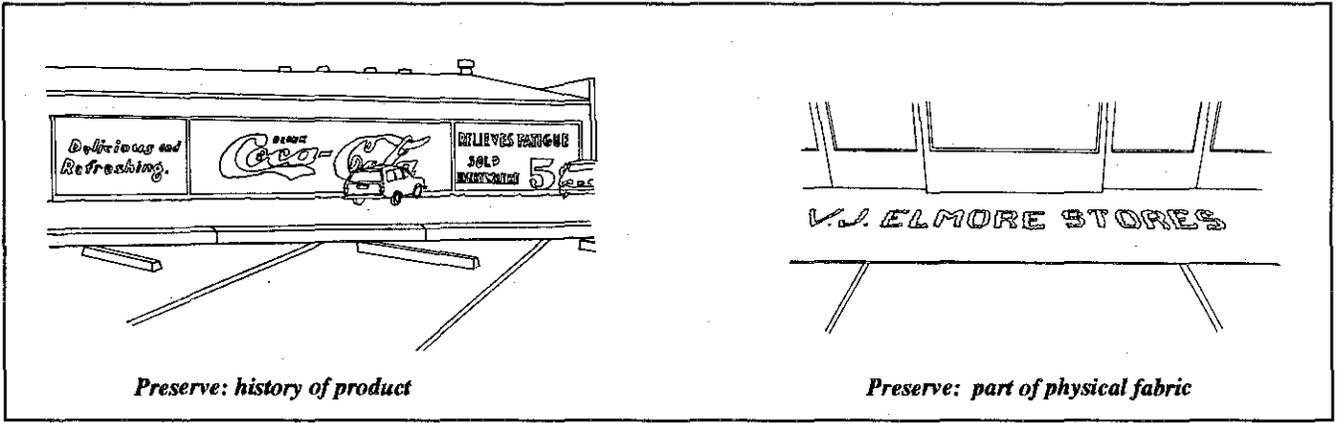
**MATERIALS:** Sign materials should be compatible with those of the historic building. Traditional signs were often painted on finished wood or metal panels. Signs painted onto fabric awnings are effective. Unfinished plywood and plastic signs may not be appropriate in the downtown.

**DESIGN:** New signs should not attempt to look older than the building. Colonial designs are not appropriate on Victorian buildings. Custom signs are preferable to mass-produced, standardized signs. Simple designs which are subordinate to the building are appropriate. Where several businesses occupy a building, it is best to coordinate the signs. The use of symbolic, three dimensional signs, such as the red and white barbers pole, is encouraged.



**LIGHTING:** Sign lighting should be subdued or indirect. Internally lit plastic signs are not appropriate, although, in some cases, neon signs may be appropriate. Incandescent lights are preferable to the harsh, cold appearance of fluorescent lights. Flashing lights are not appropriate.

**HISTORIC SIGNS:** Retain historic signs whenever possible. (See Preservation Brief #25.) Preserve signs that: reflect the history of a building or district; are characteristic of a particular historic period or style; are associated with events, people, or places; are evidence of the history of a product or business; display excellent craftsmanship, use of materials, or design; are incorporated into the buildings design or physical fabric.



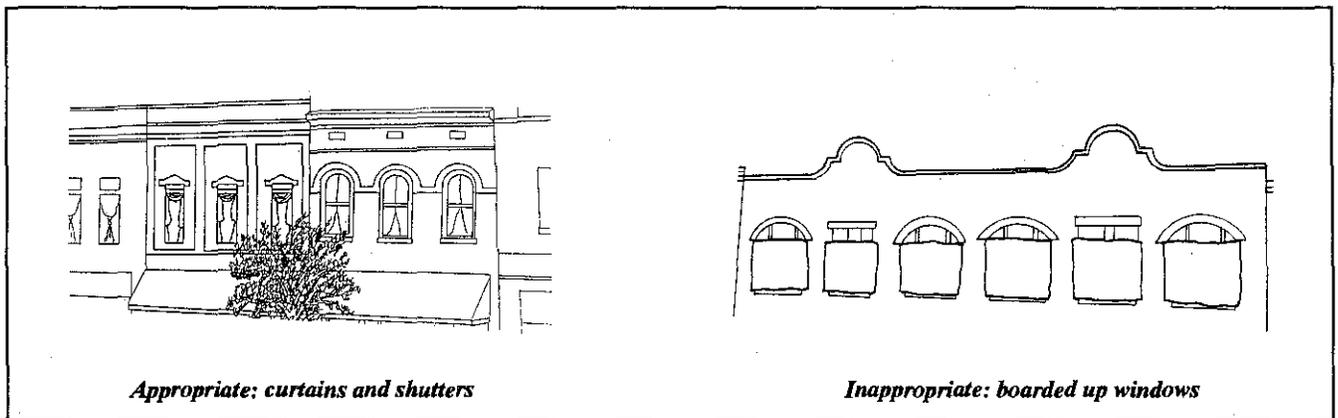
## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

### UPPER STORY WINDOWS #7.

*Preserve the size, shape, details, and transparency of upper story windows.*

**PRESERVATION:** The glass, sash, hardware, and window surrounds, including the lintel or decorative window hoods, should be preserved and maintained. Add shutters to the exterior only if they originally existed. Shutters should be operable or should at least appear to be operable; when closed over an opening, they should fit the size of the opening. (see Preservation Brief #9, 10)

**RE-ESTABLISHMENT:** Consider reopening closed or blocked windows. In some cases, closed exterior shutters may be used to define original window dimensions. Instead of boarding up windows when the second story is not in use, hang curtains or interior shutters to give the building an occupied appearance. Reflective and dark, tinted glass is not appropriate.



**REPLACEMENT:** Replacement windows are only recommended when historic windows can not be rehabilitated. When replacement windows are installed, they should match the historic window in size, style, and materials and have the same number of panes. Interior storm windows are preferable to exterior ones. Wood windows are recommended, but painted metal windows may be acceptable. (see Preservation Brief #3)

### UPPER FLOOR ACCESS - #8.

*Improve access to the upper floors where feasible.*

**LOCATION:** New stairs, elevator shafts, and balconies should be located on the rear or side facade. Consider opportunities to combine exit stairs with adjacent buildings. New stairs should be of a simple design and should not attempt to create a historical appearance.

# ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

## DOORS - #9.

*Preserve the original front doors and opening.*

**PRESERVATION:** The original size and shape of door openings should be maintained, not in-filled. Original doors and door hardware should be repaired and maintained. Replacement doors, when necessary, should be compatible with the original doors in terms of style, size, material, and glass panel configuration.

**NEW OPENINGS:** When the creation of new openings is necessary in order to meet fire codes, they should be located on sides or to the rear of buildings, rather than on the front. New openings, when permitted, should be compatible in scale, size, proportion, and placement to historic openings.

**CLOSING AN OPENING:** If the blocking of an opening is allowed, infill materials should be compatible with the building and should be placed 2" to 6" back from the building face. Use of fixed reflective glass is not recommended.

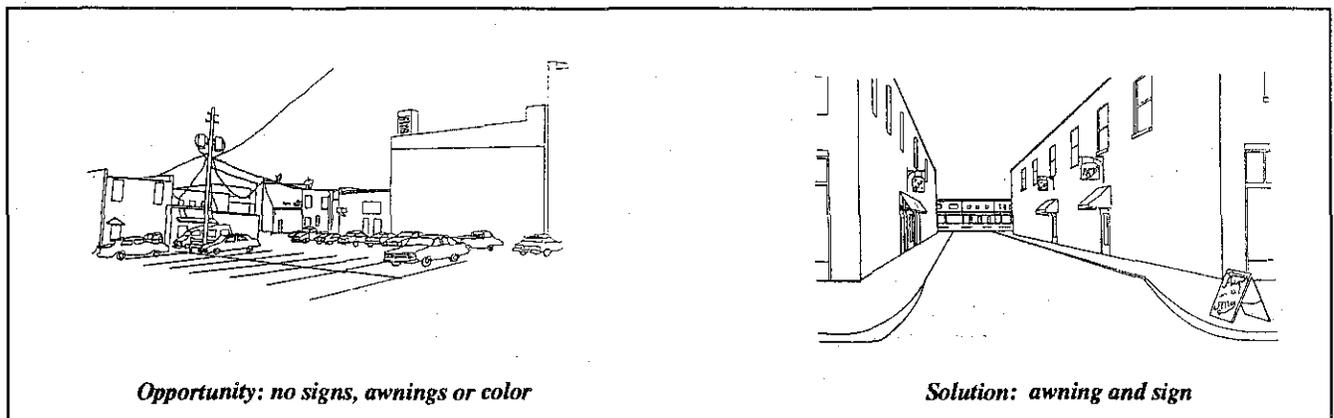
## REAR ENTRANCES - #10.

*Develop rear and alley entrances for public and service use where feasible.*

**SIGNAGE:** On rear and alley entrances use a smaller version of the main sign to identify the entrance. Improvements to rear facades and entrances can be important. When the rear facade of a building is visible from a parking lot, the addition of an awning or signage that designates the point of access and identifies a building is important.

**LIGHTING:** Provide lighting at the rear entrance.

**MATERIALS & COLORS:** Employ materials and colors that coordinate with the main facade so that customers will learn to recognize both entrances as related to the same business.

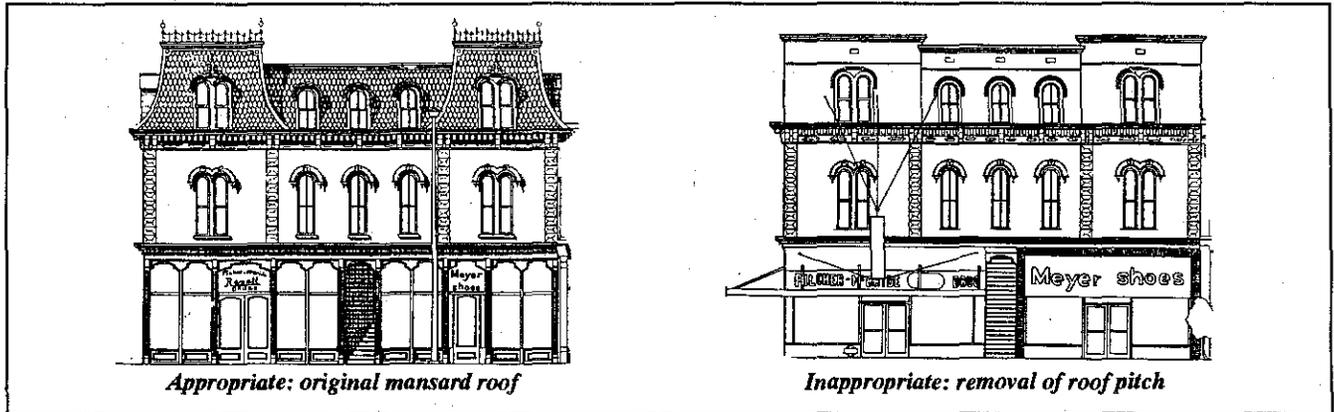


# ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

## ROOFS - #11.

*Preserve the original roof form.*

**SLOPE:** Preserve the pitch of the original roof. Roofs of most commercial buildings have a parapet wall in front of a flat roof; however in some cases historic commercial buildings have gable, hip, or Mansard roofs. Adding a new fake mansard roof is not appropriate. Skylights and roof decks not visible from street may be acceptable.

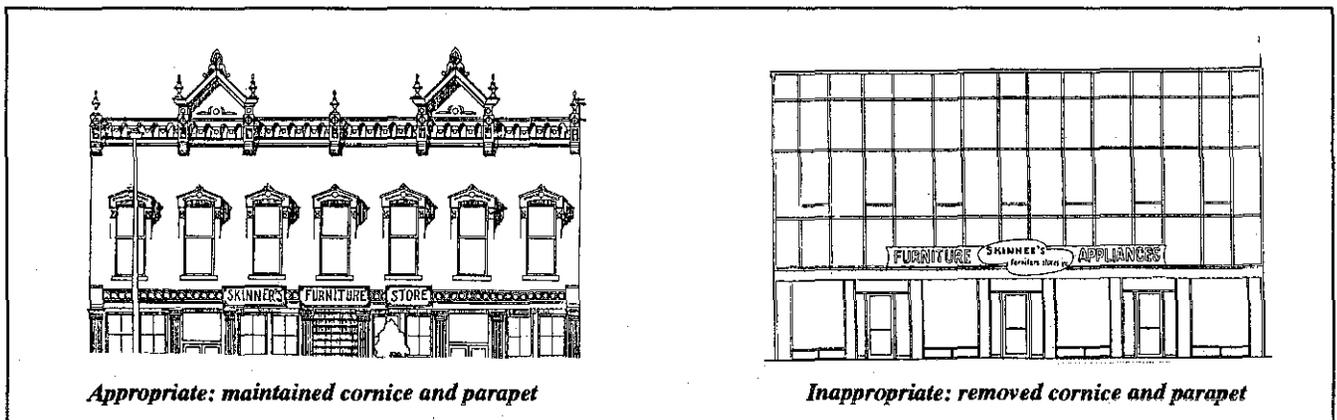


**MAINTENANCE:** Retain and preserve original roofing materials where feasible. Regularly maintain your roof as a shelter against water penetration. Clean and maintain the roof drainage system.

## CORNICES - #12.

*Preserve the ornamental cornice and parapet.*

**MAINTENANCE:** Brick, stone, or metal cornices and parapets should not be altered or removed.



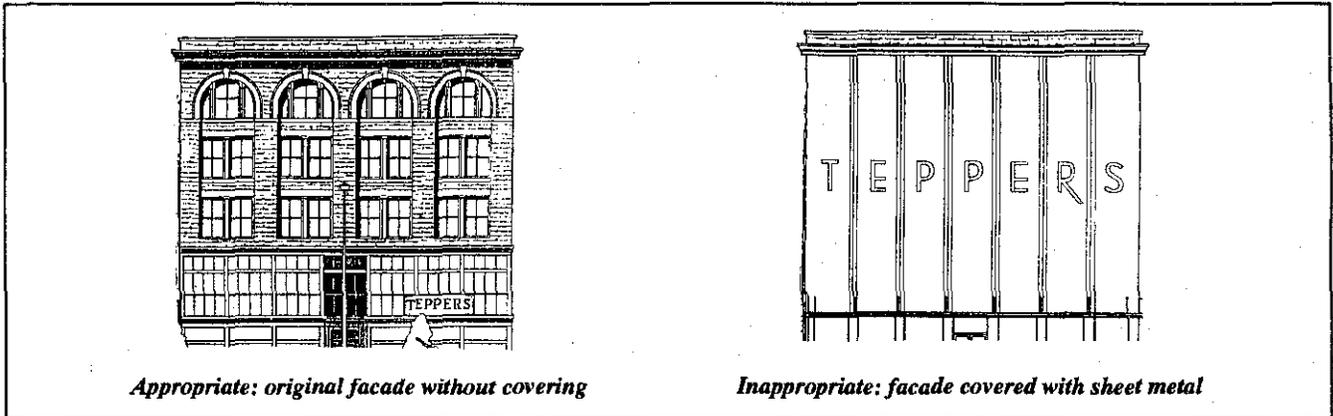
**RECONSTRUCTION:** Reconstruction of a cornice should be based on documentation. When exact reconstruction of details is not feasible, consider developing a simplified interpretation of the original. Missing sections or parts should match the profile of the original. The cornice should be positioned so that it is aligned with the others on the block. Where feasible, replacement cornices should employ the original materials. Fiberglass and other synthetic materials may be acceptable substitutes. (see Preservation Brief #16)

# ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

## MATERIALS - #13.

*Uncover original exterior materials where feasible.*

**UNCOVERING:** Exterior walls and details should not be obscured, covered, or removed. Rustic wood, synthetic and metal siding, and stucco should not be used to cover masonry walls or details. When possible, material covering original wall surfaces should be removed in such a way that the original structure is not damaged.



## WOOD - #14.

*Exterior wood details and original siding should be preserved.*

**PAINTING and CLEANING:** Keep a protective coating of paint on wood. Only remove paint down to the bare wood when absolutely necessary. Paint should be removed from wood using the gentlest means possible. Do not sandblast or use high pressure water to remove paint. Do a test patch prior to undertaking any cleaning method. (See Preservation Brief #10)

**SIDING:** Deteriorated wood should be repaired or replaced with material that duplicates it in terms of size, shape, and texture. Never cover original wood siding with aluminum, vinyl siding, or other veneers.

## MASONRY - #15.

*Original masonry including brick, stone, terra cotta, and stucco walls and details should be preserved and maintained.*

**CLEANING:** Cleaning of masonry should be done by the gentlest means possible. Never sandblast a masonry building. Do a test patch prior to undertaking any cleaning method. Do not paint unpainted masonry. Once painted, it is often better to repaint rather than remove paint. Carefully investigate the condition of masonry before removing stucco. (See Preservation Brief #1, 6, 7)

**REPAIRING:** Waterproofing sealants should not be used on masonry, unless they are vapor permeable. Repairs should match the historic masonry in size, shape, texture, and color. Repointing of existing masonry should incorporate the same mortar mix, tooling, and color as the historic masonry pointing. (See Preservation Brief #2)

# ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: REHABILITATION

## **METALS - #16**

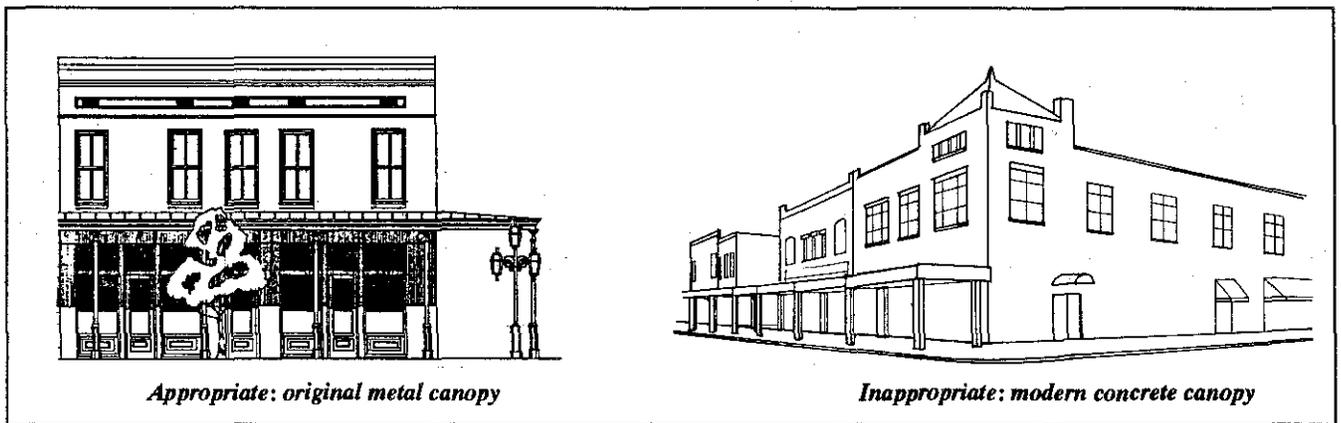
*Architectural metals such as cast iron columns, steel, and decorative stamped metal should be retained and preserved.*

**CLEANING:** Remove rust from metal. While abrasive techniques may be appropriate for the removal of paint and rust from iron, soft metals such as zinc, lead, tin, and copper should be cleaned with chemicals. Do a test patch prior to undertaking any cleaning method. After cleaning, metals should be primed and painted. Do not expose unprotected metal.

## **CANOPIES - #17.**

*Maintain original canopies and balconies.*

**PRESERVATION:** Although canopies, porches, and balconies are not commonly found on commercial buildings, when they exist, they are distinctive features. Original materials, details, shape, outline, and roof height should be retained. Enclosing canopies and balconies is not appropriate if it destroys the visual openness of the porch appearance. Concrete canopies or covered walkways are not appropriate.



## **COLOR - #18.**

*Employ color schemes that will complement neighboring buildings and coordinate facade elements in an overall composition.*

**COMPATIBILITY:** Use colors that are historically appropriate or compatible. Study the colors on nearby buildings and incorporate, not copy, them into your schemes so that your building is compatible and complementary with neighboring buildings.

**NATURAL TONES:** The natural colors of brick and stone are more appropriate than bright hues. Start with the natural color of the building itself as the base.

**TRIM:** Built -in features of the facade such as doors, window frames, molding, and cornices can be contrasted with an accent color a shade lighter or darker than the base.

*Contact the Alabama Main Street Program for specific color advice.*

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## **ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: SITE**

Site guidelines deal with issues relating to the streetscape and overall downtown environment. Downtown Opelika is unique, and it derives its identity, not from individual buildings, but from the overall setting and the relationship between buildings. The “frog” crossing of two tracks and depot provide a visual reminder that the railroad played a critical role in the development and history of Opelika. The tower of the Lee County Courthouse, sited on high ground two blocks south of the railroad, commands the skyline of the city. The Railroad Avenue Historic District, as the city’s business center is labeled in the National Register nomination, consists of one complete block and parts of eleven other blocks. The district consists primarily of one and two story brick commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings

Aspects of the streetscape that can enhance or detract from the overall environment of Main Street include: City Plan, Parking, Lighting, Walls, Paving, Landscaping, Street Furniture, Equipment, and Archaeology. In 1989, Richard C. Rome created a plan entitled “Downtown Opelika Streetscape Management Plan.” This streetscape plan provides specifications for addressing many of the issues outlined in the Design Guidelines.

### **CITY PLAN, PARKING**

The Western Railway of Alabama divides downtown into a northern and southern section, a pattern typical of southern railroad towns. Opelika was laid, out in a grid plan with a series of rectangular blocks created by roads and a network of alleys. At the center of the district, buildings are tightly massed and set back only 10 feet. Opelika’s courthouse square does not conform to the pattern of other small towns organized around similar buildings. Here, a parking lot lies opposite the courthouse, and beyond that stands the backline of buildings which face 8th Street. A notable recent civic improvement, the “breezeway” park, which provides access from 8th Street to the parking area in front of the courthouse, is part of phase I of Opelika’s streetscape plan. Opelika has both on—street parking and ample parking lots. It is important that parking lots be screened from public view.

### **LIGHTING**

The first street lights appeared in Opelika in 1877. Lights are important because they can make the buildings and streets look interesting to pedestrians and motorists at night. Good lighting creates a positive image about downtown, and people are encouraged to return during business hours. Fences in the downtown district should be located to the rear of the lots and should be compatible with other aspects of the district in terms of materials, size, and design.

### **WALLS, PAVING**

Presently, Opelika has concrete sidewalks. Most of the downtown’s wide roads are asphalt paved, but some areas on Railroad Avenue are paved with brick.

## **ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: SITE**

### **LANDSCAPING**

Landscaping adds to the appearance and aesthetics of downtown areas. In terms of landscaping, the green lawn to each side of the railroad tracks provides a park—like open space. Currently, Opelika's Main Street does not have trees planted along the sidewalks, although historic photographs show that such trees did exist at one time. The primary drawback of trees in a downtown area is that they tend to obscure building facades and signs as they grow. This problem can be alleviated by planting ornamental tree varieties of smaller height and dimension than shade trees. Trees should be maintained and regularly pruned as necessary.

### **ARCHAEOLOGY**

Earthworks, railroads, sites of demolished buildings, and even old privies can yield important information about lifestyles of the past. Archaeological sites should not be excavated by nonprofessionals. It is far better to leave a site untouched than to explore it.

### **STREET FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT**

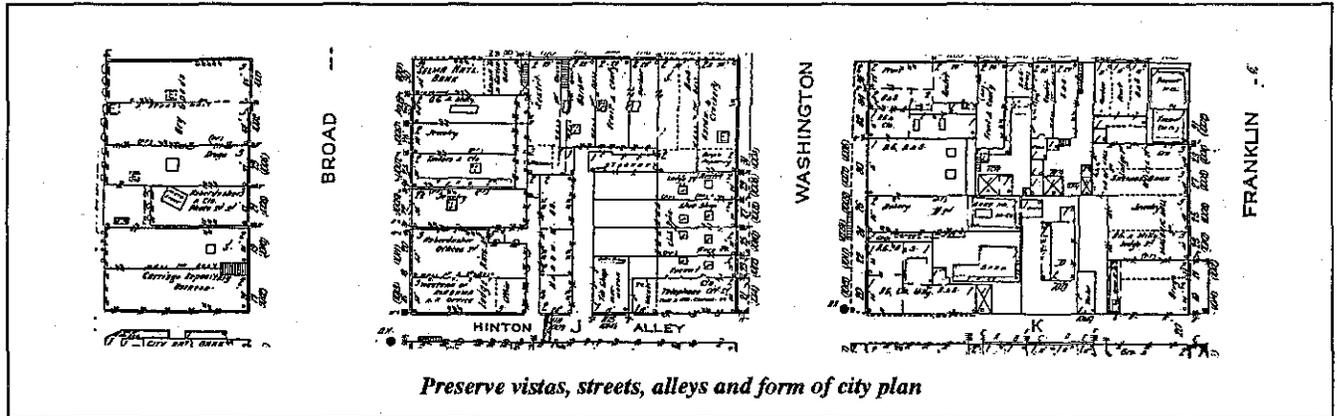
When selecting street furniture, comfort, durability, and compatibility with the district are important. On-going maintenance is key to the success of any landscaping effort.

## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: SITE

### CITY PLAN - #19.

*Maintain characteristic features of the city plan including layout, streets, alleys, pattern of blocks, and lots.*

**PRESERVATION:** Streets within the historic district should not be widened. The network of side and rear alleys should be maintained. Planned open spaces and important views and vistas should be maintained.

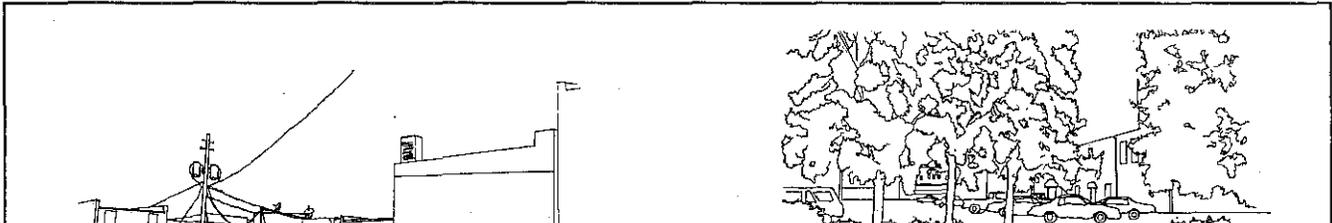


### PARKING - #20.

*Parking lots should be screened from public view.*

**LOCATION:** Off—street parking should be located behind, or to the side of, commercial structures, not in front of the building. If a parking lot fronts the street, it should maintain that blocks' established setback through the alignment of landscape elements with the facades of buildings.

**DESIGN:** Parking lots should be screened from public view either by a wall or by landscaping that is only high enough to screen cars. Parking lots with a large capacity should consider landscaped islands with trees to divide the lot into small areas so that the visual impact of a large paved area is reduced. The front of a multistory parking deck should be compatible with building facades in the block and have street level retail or office space.



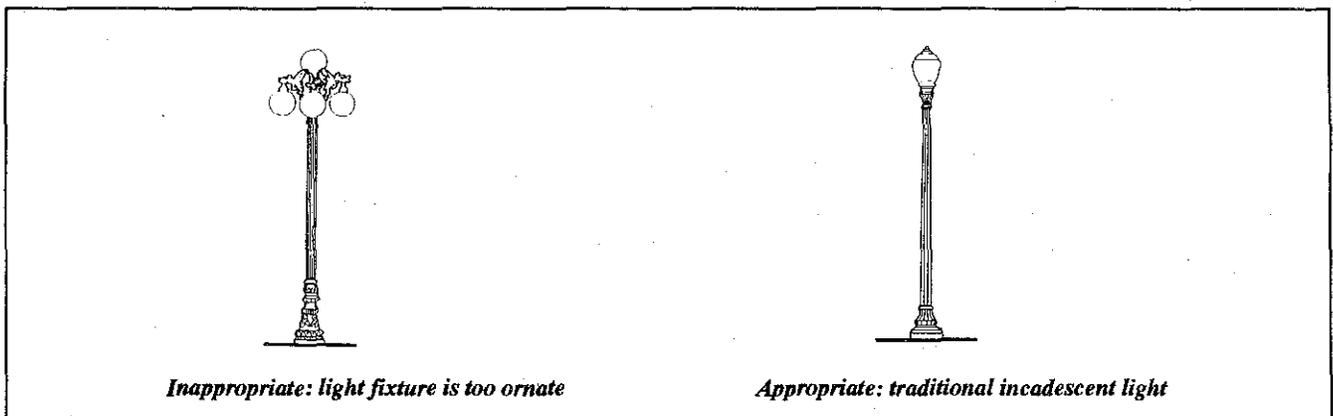
## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: SITE

### LIGHTING - #21.

*Use light fixtures to unify the streetscape and accent the buildings at night.*

**STYLE:** Period street lighting, such as free—standing lamp posts, is presently available in several styles and forms. Traditional or modern designs are appropriate and ornate designs may be appropriate if they are based on documentation. Fake—looking “colonial” lamp posts are not appropriate for most historic commercial areas.

**TYPE:** Incandescent, gas lighting, and vapor lighting are appropriate. Harsh cold fluorescent lighting should be avoided.



### WALLS - #22.

*Walls and fences should be compatible with the buildings and the streetscape.*

**LOCATION:** Ideally, walls or fences should be located to the rear of a property. The height, location on the site, visibility, and materials are key factors in determining the appropriateness of fencing.

**MATERIALS:** Materials such as wood pickets, wrought iron, brick, or stone may be appropriate, whereas, chain link, bamboo, plywood, concrete block, and tubular steel fences may not be appropriate. Existing chain-link could be masked by vegetation or dark paint. As in residential areas, squared log or “railroad tie” retaining walls would not be considered appropriate.

### PAVING-#23.

*Paving materials should be compatible with the district.*

**MATERIALS:** Concrete, brick, and hexagonal pavers are typical historic materials, whereas loose gravel may not be appropriate. Newly paved surfaces should not be visually dominant, intrusive, or suggest a false sense of history. Consider breaking up large expanses of paving with changes in texture or decorative features such as stamped hexagonal imprints on concrete. Try to preserve historic paving materials where they exist, or consider using similar materials for new paving.

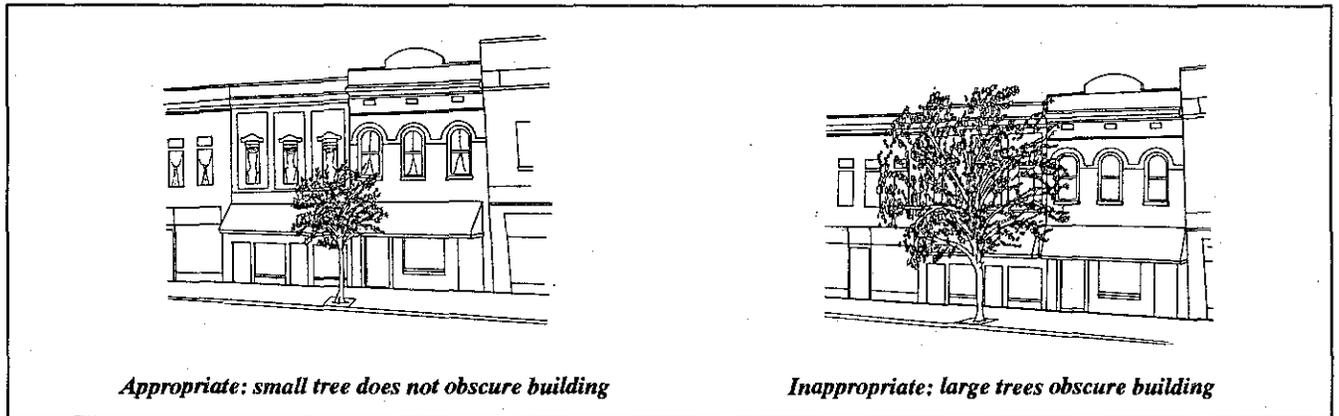
## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: SITE

### LANDSCAPE - #24

*Use traditional frees and plants which unify the district and do not obscure the buildings.*

**PLANTING MATERIALS:** New trees should be similar to varieties already planted. Trees with limited height and dimensions which do not completely mask signs and buildings are recommended. Low maintenance, drought resistant native varieties are more appropriate than ubiquitous Bradford Pear trees. Where overhead power lines are present, plant materials should “crown out” beneath the power lines. Shrubs and small trees which do not obscure the buildings as they grow are preferred. Potted trees, plants, and flowers are acceptable but should not impede pedestrian traffic and should be maintained.

**MAINTENANCE:** Maintenance of street plantings is very important. Replace and remove dead, dying or poorly maintained plants. Prune mature trees which obscure signs. Water and mulch plants regularly.



### ARCHAEOLOGY - #21

*Known and potential archaeological sites of importance should be protected.*

**UTILITIES:** Installation of underground utilities or any grading or excavation work should not take place in areas that may be of archaeological importance. Contact the Alabama Historical Commission.

**LANDSCAPE:** Altering the contours of archaeological sites or earthworks should not be permitted. The areas should not be paved or landscaped and the use of heavy equipment should not be permitted.

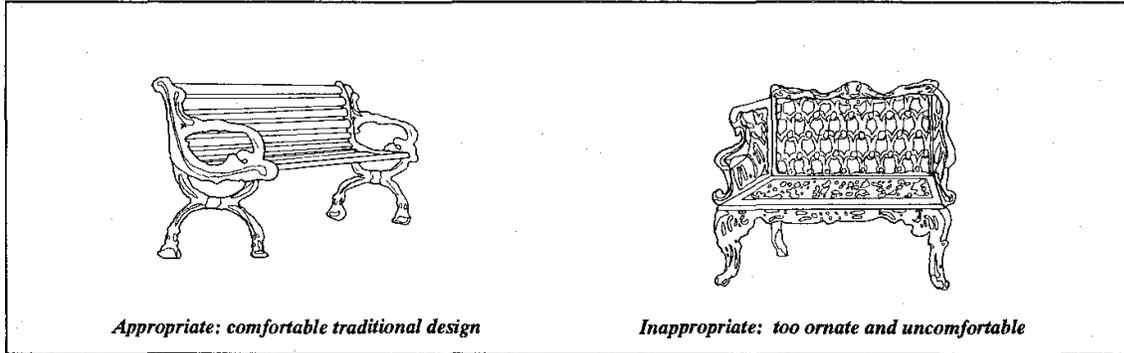
**CONSTRUCTION:** If an archaeological site is discovered during construction, cease work and immediately notify the archaeologist at the Alabama Historical Commission. It is against Alabama Law for non-approved professionals to excavate archaeological sites, and a permit from the Alabama Historical Commission is required for excavation in Alabama.

## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: SITE

### STREET FURNITURE - #26.

*Street furniture should be chosen for its comfort, durability, and compatibility with the district.*

**LOCATION:** Street furniture, such as trash receptacles and benches, should be added where they will be most used, as at corner areas and parks, and where they do not clutter sidewalks.



**STYLE:** The design of street furniture should be compatible with the downtown and not overly ornate, unless based on documentation. Designs should be consistent throughout the district.

**MATERIALS:** Street furniture made of materials such as iron and wood is more compatible to a downtown area than plastic or concrete furniture.

### EQUIPMENT - #27.

*Mechanical equipment, utilities, and public works should be concealed from view.*

**GARBAGE CONTAINERS:** Dumpsters and trash receptacles should be located to the rear of a building and neatly shielded from public view. Attempt to screen garbage from public view as unobtrusively as possible. Keep a fresh coat of paint on the dumpster, and keep area clean.

**UTILITIES:** Equipment should not be visually dominant or intrusive. Utilities should be placed where least visible and least intrusive on the site. It is recommended that utility wires be placed underground. New utility equipment or alterations to existing utility equipment should be compatible with adjacent and surrounding historic properties and principal and/or secondary structures on the property. Utilities may also be placed on rooftops if not visible from the street or taller buildings.

**SECURITY DEVICES:** Security alarms, doors, windows, and gates should be unobtrusive.

**HEATING, VENTILATION, AND AIR CONDITIONING EQUIPMENT:** Air conditioning units should be placed so that they are not visible from the street. Do not place units in windows on the front facade of the building.

## **CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION GUIDELINES - OPELIKA**

Guidelines which address issues concerning New Construction, Relocation, Additions, and Demolition are extremely important. The intent of historic district zoning is not to freeze an area in time, but rather to encourage new, complementary buildings on vacant sites on the Main Street.

### **NEW CONSTRUCTION**

Opelika has several vacancies located within a block of commercial buildings. This configuration has been described as looking like a missing tooth. Open space that adjoins the street should be developed in scale, use, and character with the neighborhood. New designs, which express changing tastes and needs, tell the on—going story of a downtown’s evolution. New designs should not attempt to create a false “historic” appearance. New designs are evaluated in terms of how well they relate to neighboring buildings’ composition, materials, size/scale, rhythm of openings, orientation/alignment, setback/site, style, and landscape.

### **RELOCATION**

Relocation of a building is generally not as common an issue within downtown commercial areas as it is in residential areas. Moving a historic building from its original location and setting will very likely impede its eligibility for, or result in its removal from, the National Register of Historic Places. In such cases, a building may not be eligible for Federal tax incentives. Moving a contributing building out of the district or to another site within the district is discouraged. To decide the appropriateness of moving a building into the district, the guidelines defining new construction should be applied.

### **ADDITIONS**

As buildings change and grow to satisfy diverse purposes and needs, it is important that additions to historic commercial buildings be designed in such a way that they do not overpower the original building. Additions should be built so that they could be removed at a later date without damaging the original structure.

### **DEMOLITION**

A historic building is an irreplaceable document of our past. Once gone, it is lost forever. It is also a recyclable resource that we can use today as well as in the future. Historic buildings within downtown Opelika should not be demolished. The demolition guidelines outline several factors for the review board to take into consideration before permission to demolish a building is granted. Tearing down a building is one form of demolition; another is demolition by neglect.

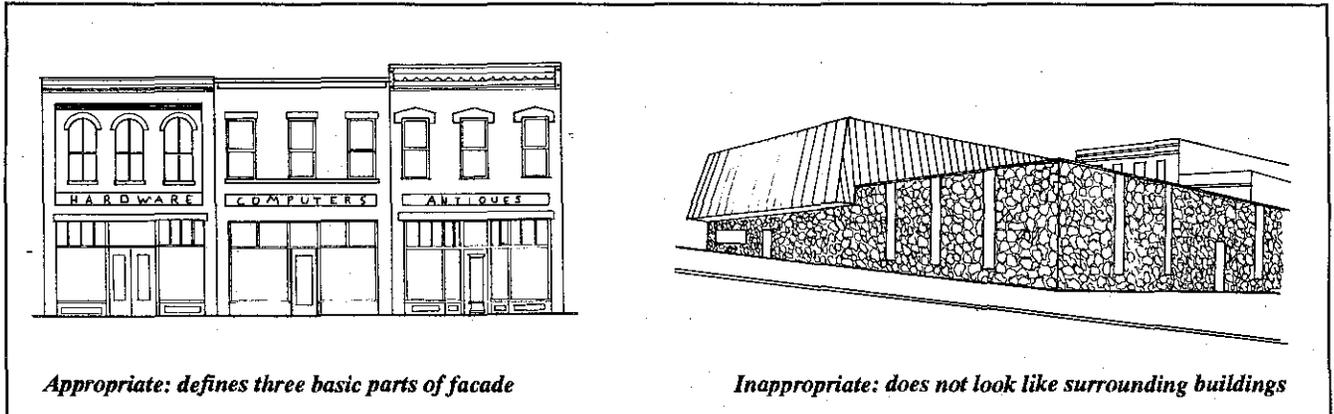
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# CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION GUIDELINES - OPELIKA

## NEW CONSTRUCTION - #28.

*New construction should be compatible with neighboring buildings.*

**COMPOSITION:** New buildings should define the three basic divisions of a commercial facade: a top which is typically a flat roof with a parapet and decorative cornice; a middle area defined by the upper story windows which are vertical and regularly placed; and a bottom which is transparent and has the elements of a storefront, including a bulkhead, a display window, and a transom.



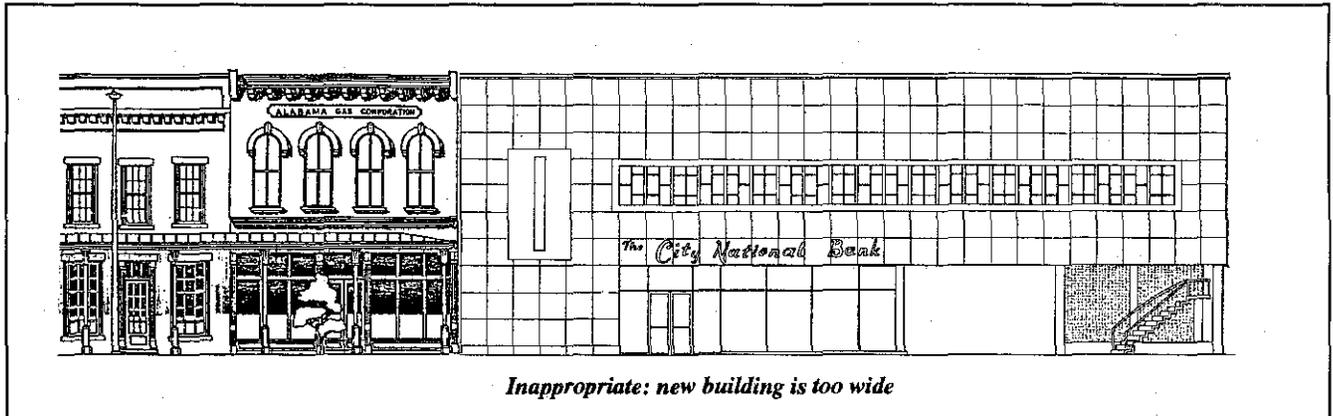
**MATERIALS:** New materials should relate to the historic materials in terms of texture, scale, color, and composition. New buildings should utilize the same materials as those on existing historic structures. Masonry, particularly brick, is an appropriate material. Inappropriate materials are plywood, composition panel, plastic, imitation brick or stone, vinyl or synthetic siding, sheet metal, and stone veneer. Neither stucco nor concrete block impart the same scale or texture as brick.



## CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION GUIDELINES - OPELIKA

### NEW CONSTRUCTION - cont.

**SIZE / SCALE:** New buildings should be in scale with existing buildings. This means that they should not be appreciably taller, shorter, wider, or narrower than the buildings adjacent to them. Multi—story buildings should have a vertical emphasis, meaning that they should be taller than they are wide. The scale of key elements and details should refer to nearby buildings.



**RHYTHM OF OPENINGS:** The design, scale, and placement of openings in buildings, which provide a visual rhythm along the street, should be continued. Walls should be divided into bays by windows. New construction should avoid creating long unrelieved expanses of wall along the street. Window openings should be vertically proportioned and placed symmetrically on the facade. They should be slightly recessed back from the surface. Windows should be defined by sills, lintels, or decorative surrounds.



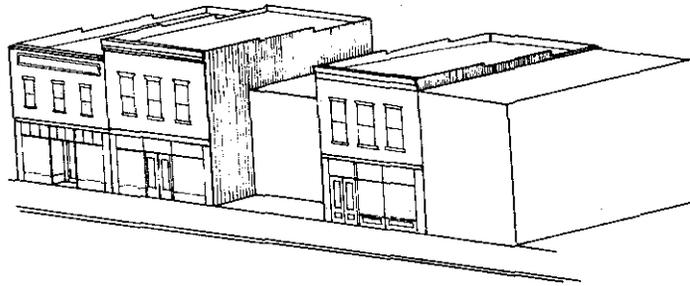
*Inappropriate: placement, size, and lack of detail in upper story windows*

## CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION GUIDELINES - OPELIKA

### NEW CONSTRUCTION - cont.

**ORIENTATION / ALIGNMENT:** Orientation of new construction should match that of existing adjacent buildings. Facades should face the same direction as those of neighboring buildings. The similar heights of buildings are emphasized by the alignment of cornices and/or horizontal bands of second story windows. New construction should continue the visual continuity of horizontal elements.

**SETBACK / SPACING:** New buildings should conform with adjacent or surrounding buildings in terms of their setback and the spacing between buildings. Historically, blocks of commercial buildings directly fronting the sidewalk are attached to each other, sharing a party wall. New buildings should create a continuously walled complex that holds the lines of the streets. Generally, avoid buildings designed as free standing objects.



*Inappropriate: new building is setback more than adjacent buildings*

**STYLE:** The design of new buildings should complement existing historical architecture rather than attempt to imitate it. The new construction should be distinguishable from the old so that the evolution of the Main Street district can be visually read. New designs should creatively draw on the important characteristics of existing buildings.

**LANDSCAPE:** Site planning should respect the precedents set by other buildings in the block. In areas where many trees form a bower across the streets, new plantings should be planned to achieve a similar effect. For walls, fences, and paving, use materials consistently found in the district. (refer to Design Guideline #22)

## CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION GUIDELINES - OPELIKA

### RELOCATION - #29.

*Buildings should be retained on their original sites.*

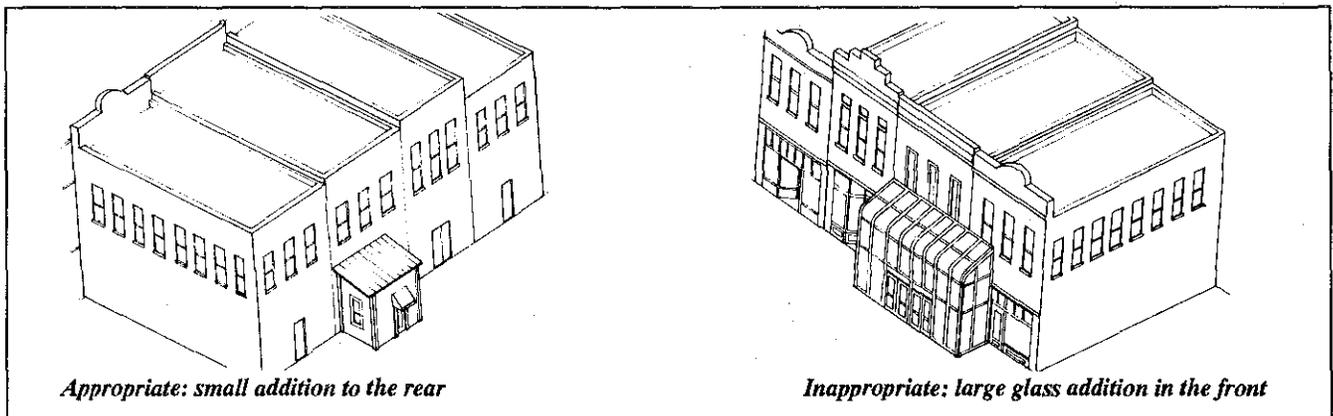
**REMOVAL:** Moving a contributing building out of the district or to another site within the district is discouraged. Relocation should be considered only as an alternative to demolition.

**RE-SITING:** To decide the appropriateness of moving a building into the district or to another site within the district, the guidelines defining new construction should be applied. A building should be moved into a setting similar to its original site.

### ADDITIONS - #311

*Additions to commercial buildings should be secondary and should not overpower the original building.*

**LOCATION:** Additions should be located so that the original building commands the most attention. Additions should be added to the rear or side of the building. While generally discouraged, rooftop additions may be permitted if they are not visible from the sidewalk across the street.



**MATERIALS:** Materials should either match or compliment those of historic buildings.

**STYLE:** An addition should not be an identical copy of the historic structure. It should refer to the original design but not duplicate it.

**REVERSIBILITY:** Additions should be built so that, if removed at a later date, there would be as little damage to the original structure as possible.

**SIZE / SCALE:** The addition should not overwhelm the original in terms of height or scale.

## ALABAMA MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES: DEMOLITION

### DEMOLITION - #31.

*Historic buildings should not be demolished.*

**NEGLECT:** Property owners should not allow their buildings to deteriorate by failing to provide ordinary maintenance. This is considered to be demolition by neglect. When failure to maintain a property creates a public safety hazard, the city may condemn the property. Depending on local law, the city may stabilize the building at the owner's expense.

**ECONOMIC HARDSHIP:** If a request for demolition based on economic hardship is documented in a financial report detailing the costs of rehabilitation and evidencing that the existing building is incapable of producing a reasonable economic return on the investment, then the demolition may be approved.

**STRUCTURAL INSTABILITY:** If a request for demolition is based on structural instability or deterioration, a technical report, prepared by an architect or professional engineer, should be submitted. This should detail the nature and extent of the specific problems and provide cost estimates for their correction.

**CONSTRUCTION PLANS:** An application for demolition should be accompanied by a complete plan for the new development proposed for the site, a timetable, a budget for both the demolition and new construction, and evidence that adequate financing is available.

**DOCUMENTATION:** Prior to demolition, the building should be documented by measured drawings and photographs of the building's elevation and architectural features. Parts and materials should be salvaged and recycled if possible.

**PUBLIC SAFETY:** When in the interest of public safety, the removal of part of a building or complex may be required.

**NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS:** Demolition may be appropriate when a building has lost its integrity of design or is not a contributing building within the historic district, and its removal would result in a more positive effect on the district. In such cases, new construction should relate better to the historic district than the existing building. The requirements listed above should be satisfied, if applicable.