

# FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

## Downtown New Castle, PA

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

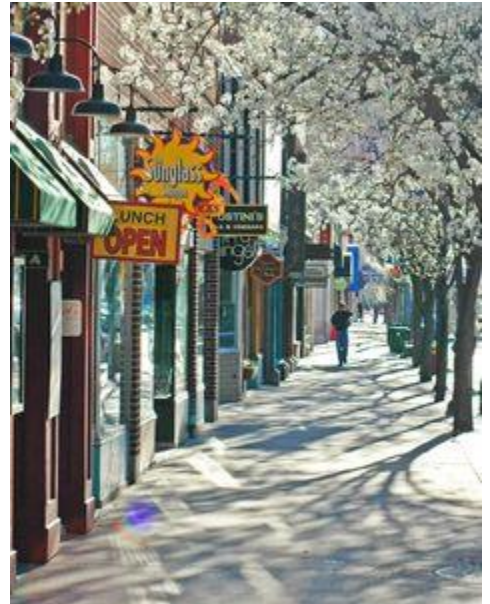
#### Purpose of the Façade Improvement Program Design Standards and Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to provide a sound frame of reference for consistently encouraging a higher aesthetic standard for redevelopment in New Castle PA, which can improve the image, character, and built environment of the City and tap the full community and economic development potential available to it. The intent is also to present best practices in design and execution that highlight the significance of New Castle businesses, and to assist the community in consistently applying these best practices to guide planning, pre-design phases for rehabilitation and renovation of building facades, along with maintenance of existing buildings, including historic and architecturally significant structures.

As you think about your design, please consider this community vision for the future of downtown New Castle, and how your storefront can feed the ‘hometown vibe’.

*It's the weekend before Thanksgiving and the kick-off to the annual 'Hometown Holiday Season' in New Castle, PA. Thousands of people from across the region have flooded the streets of downtown New Castle to enjoy the largest holiday parade in the area featuring marching bands, giant balloons, floats, and more. Between the procession, the traditional lighting of the Christmas tree, and fireworks, visitors are patronizing pop-up shops and a new open air market featuring handcrafted goods from dozens of makers and budding restaurateurs. Families are enjoying the seasonal activities and jumping from one family friendly attraction to another at the Library, YMCA, Warner Theater Museum, and a couple of churches. The Confluence café is hosting live music and selling out of their signature soups and hot chocolate. Tasty libations are available at the newly refurbished pub, with indoor and outdoor seating. Young and old are cuddled up in a new outdoor plaza to watch scenes of 'White Christmas' projected on a giant wall (adjacent to the newest mural). People are abuzz about the new restaurant in the former Huntington Bank lobby and the possibility of a new boutique hotel in the floors above, offering downtown visitors the option of overnight stays. Parking is a concern but the city has cleverly connected the nearby parking garage to the bustling activities of E. Washington St. with an artistic light and mural display through "Apple Alley Pedestrian Way."*

*It is clear from the crowds that New Castle has been re-discovered as a charming bedroom community to nearby Pittsburgh PA and Youngstown OH. Diverse populations are attracted to the area for the Victorian architecture on the North Hill, as well as, the up and coming East Side Elm Street Neighborhood. Newcomers are finding it easy to open a business here, affordable to raise a family, and an ideal community to retire in comfort. New Castle has become everyone's hometown.*



As we collectively strive to create a charming downtown, the importance of how a visitor feels when they walk through or thinks of our community, is in large part shaped by the aesthetics of storefronts, landscaping features, signage, and more. The following pages offer some guidance for storefront owners who are seeking to help build this vision and create a charming downtown destination. To realize this vision, please consider the following elements when selecting your design...

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**TRANSPARENCY** speaks to the ability to see into a building or storefront. Transparent/clear glass allows more daylight than tinted/reflective glass. Transparency enlivens the street by giving prospective customers a clear view of your products and services and adds safety for building users who can see outside and be seen from the outside. The more transparent and unobstructed the glass is, the more visual connection we perceive between the interior and exterior, boosting these positive benefits. Shading elements like awnings, sun screening or energy-efficient glass can mitigate heat build-up to interior space in summer days, allowing you to maximize transparency, not temperatures.

**Objective:**

- To promote visibility and transparency where applicable between the interior and exterior
- To visually link and enliven the street with commercial activities of interior spaces
- To minimize visual clutter and present an organized, inviting experience for pedestrians and visitors

**Guidelines:**

- Use clear or spectrally selective glazing such as Low-E glass or glass with selective coatings of blue or green tint to maximize transparency
- Minimize the use of spandrel or opaque glass (common in curtain wall systems) when screening structural elements of the building or mechanical systems on building facades exposed to public view
- Subdivide large areas of glazing with frames and mullions to complement and express the architecture of the building
- Keep entryways, sidewalks, exterior walks and public rights-of-way clear of for-sale items. These items present safety hazards and contribute to blight. Further, items exposed to the elements are perceived to have low quality by customers, reducing the likelihood of their sale.

**Not Recommended**



**Recommended**



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**COLOR & FINISH** is intended to evoke responses from people and can enhance the collective image of a district if it is context-sensitive. Colors that reflect tasteful and responsible artistic expressions are context-sensitive. Finish refers to how smooth or rough a surface is- how it feels to the touch; or may refer to the sheen of a material, such as a matte or glossy finish.

Objective

- To reinforce traditional color palettes and analogous colors or permanent building materials
- To establish positive district character by achieving continuity and coordination in colors and finishes

Guidelines

- For exterior surfaces, use coordinated and subdued colors such as neutral or earth tone colors. Extremely bright colors are not recommended.
- Use a color scheme that limits the number of colors to two- a major and coordinating secondary color for trims and accents
- Allow the natural color of materials such as stone or brick, to dominate the majority of façade surface as its base color
- Use trim and accent secondary colors for elements such as pilasters, horizontal bands, cornices, and window frames to complement the shade of the base color



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**AWNINGS, CANOPIES, AND MARQUEES** serve many functions and enhance building facades and sidewalks. They provide store entrances and sidewalks with a sun screening element and shelter from the rain. They unify the building appearance, articulate the storefront and entryways, and provide a surface to place a business name. Careful design, including: selection of shapes, forms, and integration with the building façade design are important considerations to prevent clutter and façade distractions.

**Objective**

- To improve the visual qualities of major thoroughfare’s commercial frontage
- To contribute to district identity and visual continuity of commercial frontage

**Guidelines**

- The use of exterior sun control devices that integrate with light shelves for interior spaces that contribute to the energy efficiency and improving the indoor environmental quality of buildings is encouraged. This would include installing sun shading and control devices for day-lighting and increasing the natural light intake through the building by also incorporating clear glazing for transom windows.
- The use of photovoltaic (PV) or solar panels is also encouraged. Awnings, canopies, and marquees provide a green design opportunity- surface – for incorporating such elements to capture solar energy to generate electricity for lighting or water heating purposes. Solar panels should be designed so to fit well within the overall design of building and building major architectural elements without being or having the appearance of an afterthought addition of elements that are only green superficially, or by appearance.
- Do not conceal building features or elements such as pilasters/transom windows with awnings/canopies
- Use color schemes that coordinate with façade colors. Shiny, glittering colors are not recommended
- Use simple and triangular shape awnings with valance face not to exceed ten (10) inches



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**LIGHTING** is essential for functioning and security of a building and its site. It is used to illuminate the building interior and exterior, including parking areas, signs, sidewalks, and streets. Lighting fixture selection involves both the science of engineering as well as the flare of artistic expression. Lighting serves a variety of purposes; it has varied intensity levels, coverage areas and casts different illumination schemes and colors. Along with providing illumination, light fixtures can be decorative when placed on a building façade or used to illuminate a landmark or a significant building, or to draw attention to special building features and details such as cornices or pilasters.

**Objective**

- To improve the character and safety of the commercial thoroughfares while reducing light pollution

**Guidelines**

- The use of LED (light emitting diodes) and other energy efficient light fixtures such as energy efficient fluorescent lighting should be encouraged over conventional lighting
- Use solar or PV panels to provide electricity for light fixture poles to illuminate parking lots
- Incorporate display window lighting and lighter interior colors to illuminate storefronts at night and reflect natural light during the day
- Use coordinated design to illuminate architectural features, entries, sidewalks, parking, signage and alleys
- Use halo illumination around dimensional letters as a source of illumination in lieu of individually lit dimensional or channel letters
- Where off-street parking occurs, adequate complementary lighting should be provided

**Recommended**



**Not Recommended**

**SIGNAGE & COMMUNICATION ELEMENTS** are those elements that are placed on the site, on the exterior building façade, or on the rooftop. These include graphics and signs for a business name, address or logo, business or product advertising; flagpoles, antennas, satellite dishes and cellular panels. These are necessary but often unattractive components of business operations. The goal of this section is the reduction of visual clutter in the built environment, while allowing for reasonable signage visibility and responsible placement of necessary communication elements.

**Objective**

- To reach a visual balance between the objective of businesses- to draw pedestrian and vehicular attention- and the goal of creating an attractive commercial district free of visual clutter
- To create an attractive district free from the visual clutter that can result from the arbitrary placement of satellite dishes, antennas and other telecommunication elements on sites and buildings

**Guidelines**

- Design business signage and its lighting on buildings to fit within the storefront design
- Design ground signage to be compatible with the site context and building architecture
- Use external or halo lighting to illuminate building and/or storefront signage
- With internally illuminated channel letters, use LED type lighting source in lieu of fluorescent or neon tube lighting
- Use cast or fabricated metal dimensional graphics- letters and logos- in lieu of plastic/vinyl graphics
- Use metal dimensional graphics- letters and logos
- Locate satellite dishes and antennas in the rear roof space and away from public view
- Conceal all cellular panel antennas through camouflage

**Recommended**



**Not Recommended**



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**UTILITIES, SERVICE AREAS AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT** Mechanical equipment is necessary to the functioning of a building. It provides heating, ventilation, and air conditioning for building interiors and is often located on the roof or to the sides or rear of the building. Mechanical equipment can be very unsightly if visible from the street level or from adjacent buildings with views from higher floor levels that overlook the roof. It can negatively impact the appearance of building facades and may produce noticeable noise if not properly located and screened.

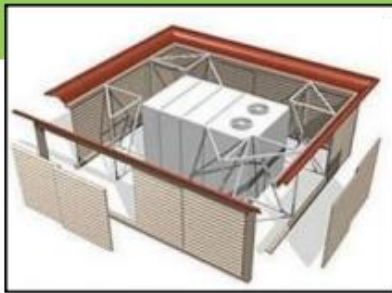
**Objective**

- To screen mechanical equipment from public view
- To reduce bulk, visual clutter and noise impact of mechanical equipment
- To enhance the overall appearance of building and its relationship to the skyline

**Guidelines**

- Provide a decorative metal screen wall with the necessary height to screen or enclose the rooftop equipment
- Integrate the screen wall including building parapet with the overall building design and material. If applicable, paint the screen wall to match or complement the building color

**Recommended**



**Not Recommended**



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**MATERIALS** The selection of appropriate materials in construction of buildings has great impact on the built and natural environment, as well as, on occupants, users, and others. Building materials of the exterior and interior may affect the aesthetics and appearance of the buildings. Building materials of the interior like carpets, wall boards, paints and wood also affect the air quality of the building interior. Materials that can be recycled in the end of their life cycle are considered environment-friendly because they do not take up landfill space and the energy to reproduce such materials is diverted.

**Objective**

- To support the use of environmentally safe construction materials and methods
- To promote the use of durable and high quality construction materials
- To encourage the use of recycled content construction materials

**Guidelines**

- Use recycled content building materials
- Use open grid or porous pavement for parking and landscaped areas
- Incorporate construction materials that are locally or regionally extracted, produced, or manufactured locally or regionally (regionally defined as within a 500 mile radius)
- Use environmentally safe and non-toxic materials for building exterior/interior





**ARCHITECTURALLY/HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT, EXISTING BUILDINGS** Many of downtown New Castle's buildings are architecturally and historically significant commercial buildings. These existing buildings may fill entire city blocks forming a continuous street wall that encloses and decorates the street space with their architectural details, high quality materials and display windows. Their positive physical qualities, potential economic return for the neighborhoods and the energy invested in creating them are among the many rationales for their preservation. New developments and additions near these significant buildings should also address and respect the urban, physical and spatial qualities created by such buildings.

**Objective**

- To promote conservation of resources by preserving architecturally, historically significant and structurally sound buildings
- To maintain the architectural character and integrity of existing well-designed buildings.

**Guidelines**

- Where necessary, replace traditional building elements such as original window framing, doors and windows, hardware, transom or base panel item or building wall material such as brick, stone or metal, and substitute with the same architectural and material quality and craftsmanship. If not possible, replace with a style-neutral replacement item and better material quality, but compatible with the architecture and character of the building and district
- Maintain in good repair the exterior of all major and accessory commercial structures; and use good maintenance procedures to protect all exterior surfaces by painting or other protective coating or materials



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## **DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS**

Keep in mind the following questions as you consider design elements for your façade:

- Does the design reflect an overall scheme that complements existing façades in the district as well as buildings in close proximity of the project?
- Does the design result in a significant enhancement of the existing façade relative to the investment of funds?
- Are color schemes thoughtful and reflect color tones in the district?
- Does the project use durable materials, particularly at street level?
- If the project uses wood, is it a high quality material?
- Is the design helping to foster a quintessential hometown vibe and feeling?