

# thrive

A GUIDE TO STOREFRONT DESIGN IN THE  
CITY OF CASSELTON



“thrive – 1. to prosper or flourish; be successful, esp. as the result of economical management 2. to grow vigorously or luxuriantly; improve physically – syn. **SUCCEED**”

(Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language)



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Your business has value. As a business owner you know that it is very important that all parts of your business contribute to your bottom line. From a business plan for how your business can grow, to orderly and well-lit aisles stocked with merchandise that attracts new customers, to an exciting storefront, your business makes a difference! As the first point of contact with your business, your storefront and those neighboring businesses define the character of your business and as a group, should attract new customers and sales.

Your storefront image is critical to advertising quality for both your business and the business district.

Through the City of Casselton's 2019 Comprehensive Plan, came the city's commercial revitalization efforts in which stakeholders stressed the need to enhance the community's commercial and retail sectors. Residents are concerned about retail and commercial areas that appear blighted, undercapitalized and marginal. Consumers are increasingly tired of commuting to larger metro areas to purchase quality goods and for services and entertainment.

The community and residents see the potential for our commercial sector to **thrive**. These guidelines were developed to assist asset managers like you in making smart design decisions about investing in the exterior image

of your commercial or retail property. This document was constructed while working with other small business owners like you and is based on the best practices used in similar cities where local government also values maintaining and encouraging the growth of businesses that compete to survive and win.



# objectives of good storefront design

Storefronts are highly visible components of the city's streetscape, with a rich variety of architectural styles and treatments. Variety adds value and is the key to making your business noticeable and exciting.

While some uniformity may be helpful in reducing overall construction costs, business owners are encouraged to imaginatively explore the relationship of their type of business and how that type translates into a unique storefront treatment within your block. For example, an insurance office is clearly not a sports bar, and is clearly not a laundromat. Their purposes and operations (peak periods, business hours, etc.) are different. They need not look the same.

The most successful storefronts are those that:

- Work with the architecture of the larger building,
- Simply and clearly market the name of the business and the type of services offered,
- Allow potential customers visibility into the store's well-stocked and orderly aisles,
- Contribute to a distinctive pedestrian and customer experience, and
- Uniquely enhance the overall business district's integrity and identity.

“Places” derive their identity from storefronts.



Improving the visual appeal of a storefront can often be accomplished with minor improvements and by removing elements that have been inappropriately added over the years. In some cases, however, renovations may require more extensive work due to lack of proper maintenance. In either case, an attractive visual presentation is desirable to draw customers to the establishment.



## ENCOURAGED

- Installing storefronts that complement the existing structural frame of the building (including above floors).
- Repairing, restoring and upgrading storefront materials.
- Changing the pattern and/or texture of storefront materials.
- Repainting and repairing brick or other masonry units.
- Removing old paint from masonry facades using non-toxic, biodegradable processes.

## DISCOURAGED

- Installation of historically inaccurate or incompatible façade or material treatments such as imitation brick or stone
- Removing existing materials that contribute to the original architectural character of the building.
- Painting unpainted masonry, especially in the historic downtown district.
- Using restoration materials that do not closely match (color, size, texture, pattern, quality, etc.) materials of the existing building (i.e. caulk replacing cement mortar.)
- Reducing the size of pedestrian travel paths on sidewalks.
- Covering, altering or damaging architectural elements of the façade with signs, awnings, or other additive elements.
- Sandblasting or using harsh chemicals to clean brick or other masonry.



# storefront components

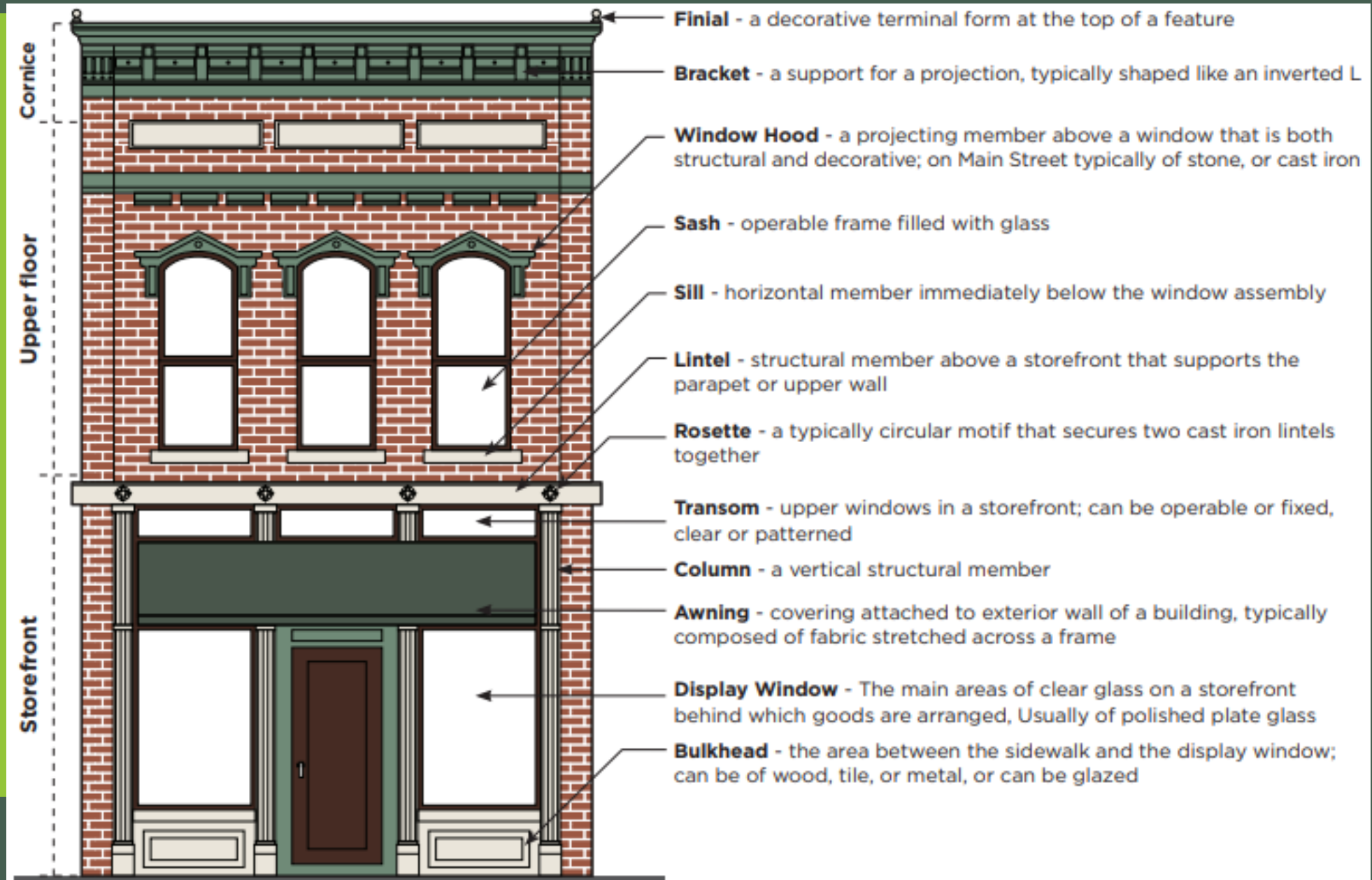
Understanding the components of a building façade will assist you in communicating with designers about storefront renovations. Creatively accentuating each part of a storefront can contribute to making a distinctive image for your business. It is possible to create a distinctive storefront

while working with some of the architectural elements that are consistent (i.e. window base, trim/frieze, etc.) Being distinctive does not necessarily translate into using costly materials to enhance your storefront. In most cases, alternative materials that have the same function and visual effect as expensive

components are available at lower cost. Basic maintenance and upkeep should be a priority for any renovations. Just as you have considered how to grow your business over a period of time, you should have a storefront design strategy that will add value to your business before making piecemeal alterations.



# anatomy of a facade





Most storefronts use a window base to lift display windows to a more visible level for passerby while protecting display windows from damage and weathering. Window bases are typically made of sturdy, easy-to-maintain materials to counter potential wear and tear. Typically materials include brick, concrete, hardwoods, metal panels and other masonry materials.

## ENCOURAGED

- Restoring and/or repairing original, still-in-place window bases.
- Using sturdy, easy-to-maintain window base materials to provide a new and appropriate storefront window base(s).
- Maintaining or designing window bases for multiple storefronts in a building such that the height (not elevation) of the bases is consistent and the bases are of the same material.
- Installing window bases no higher than two feet from the ground.

## DISCOURAGED

- Eliminating a window base that was a part of the original building or that was also used to conceal any portion of a business' mechanical systems.
- Varying window base heights within a storefront or building.
- Using non-durable materials like low-grade plywood which are not easy to maintain.



Well-maintained storefront systems and creative displays are critical to doing good business and attracting more sales. Together, your storefront's doors, display windows and transom are called a "storefront system". Your storefront system is your greatest marketing opportunity so the more storefront windows that people can see through, the better. In general, greater visibility into the store is more inviting and makes potential customers feel more secure.

## ENCOURAGED

- Restoring or replacing doors with appropriate commercial doors.
- Installing storefront doors made of glass or containing significant glass to allow additional visibility into a business.
- Adding new doors when required to meet accessibility laws.
- Maintaining the continuity of storefronts on the primary business street by locating loading and service entrances on the side or rear of a building where possible.
- Installing new and maintaining existing durable wood or metal frame doors that can be painted in a variety of colors to emphasize the business entry while adding visual interest.
- Installing folding/sliding doors that allow the activity of a business to be opened to the sidewalk.

## DISCOURAGED

- Adding new doors that are not required by code and which are inconsistent with the building.
- Sealing or closing off existing entrances or doorways with any material.
- Blocking doors with merchandise or any other obstruction.
- Installing doorways that swing out directly onto sidewalks.
- Covering or replacing glass door panels with any opaque substance or material that would prevent or limit visibility.
- Covering doorways with signage, interior cases or woodwork.



# display windows

Display windows are the greatest marketing opportunity for a competitive business to attract the attention of those passing by and to generate new sales. Highly successful storefronts use transparent glass that allow potential customers who are walking or driving by to see that the store is open for business. Storefront transparency during both daytime and nighttime hours is critical. Visibility during both periods is important for continuous marketing and branding of the business, as well as promoting a sense of safety.

## ENCOURAGED

- Restoring or increasing the percentage or amount of transparent glass on a storefront.
- Replacing dark tinted or textured glass with clear glass when appropriate to increase visibility into the business.
- Matching new windows to originals.

- Preserving historic features such as frames, special glazing and decorative moldings.
- Aligning window heights and unifying window sizes when appropriate.
- Using aluminum or wood frame windows that provide thermal insulation and prevent condensation.

## DISCOURAGED

- Preventing visibility into display area by covering or blocking a display window.
- Obstructing views into a business by using glass block, woodwork, paint, signage, lowered ceilings, shelves, cases, posters or other items except products being temporarily marketed by the business.
- Covering or obscuring existing window trim with metal or other materials.
- Removing historic windows or window components when restoration and maintenance are possible.
- Using less durable materials such as Plexiglass.
- Failing to maintain and repair broken or boarded display windows.





## ENCOURAGED

- Restoring or maintaining the original pattern of transom windows.
- Using the same or compatible material and design that are a part of the storefront system.
- Restoring stained glass panes in transom windows where appropriate and feasible.
- Allowing the transom window to read as a distinctive architectural element by keeping all interior element at least eight inches behind or away from the transom windows.
- Restoring or maintaining transom windows even when they will be hidden by awnings as awnings may be removed at some future date.

Transom windows are the band of windows above display windows and doors. They provide ventilation and allow daylight deeper into the store's interior. Many transom windows throughout the city have been covered by paint or wood to conceal ceiling dropped mechanical systems. Where possible, these windows should be restored in order to enhance the storefront image.

## DISCOURAGED

- Covering transom windows with paint, signs, awnings or wood panels.
- Filling transom windows with masonry, glass block, wood, ventilation/mechanical systems or other non-transparent materials.



The “frieze” or “sign band” is the portion of the façade that is typically just above the storefront on the first floor and below the second floor windows, or building cornice on one-story buildings. The frieze provides an area for building signage and is usually located in a consistent place from storefront to storefront. The frieze should be the first location considered for installing or replacing storefront signage. It should be maintained as a key component of the building design and as the business’ primary means of advertising.

## ENCOURAGED

- Installing or replacing storefront signage within the original frieze or sign band location.
- Maintaining visibility of the frieze by not covering it with awnings or other additions to the façade or storefront.
- Removing air condition, ventilation equipment or other obstruction from the frieze or sign band.
- Using signage to cover A/C units or ventilation equipment or creatively integrating signage with such equipment.

## DISCOURAGED

- Covering or concealing the frieze or sign band area of the façade with anything other than an acceptable sign.
- Installing air conditioning or ventilation equipment in the frieze or sign band.



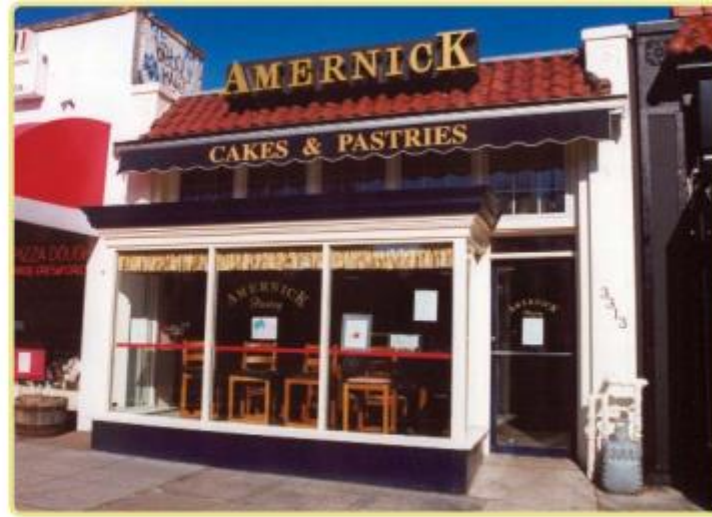
# awnings and canopies



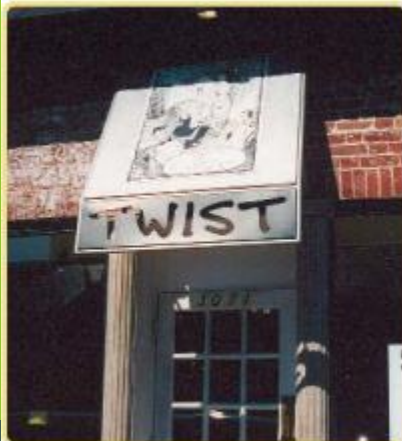
OPEN-ENDED STATIONARY AWNING WITH VALANCE FOR BUSINESS NAME



CLOSED-ENDED STATIONARY AWNING  
CHARLIE'S BAR & GRILL (SHEPHERD PARK)



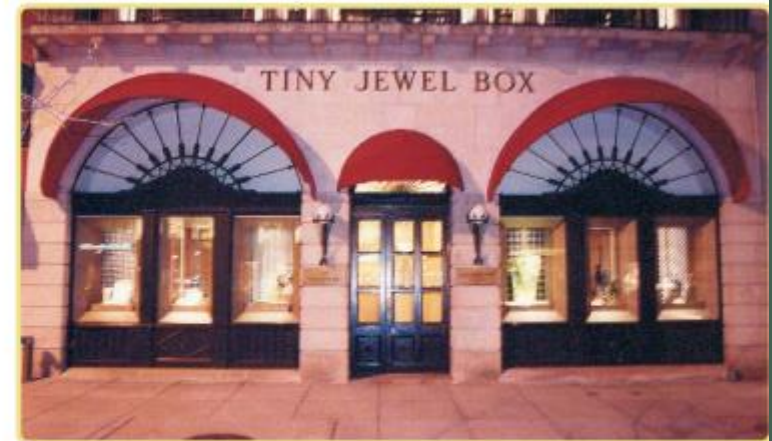
RETRACTABLE FABRIC AWNING WITH VALANCE FOR BUSINESS NAME OR OTHER BUSINESS INFORMATION



EXPRESSIONIST METAL AWNING WITH BUSINESS



OPEN-ENDED STATIONARY AWNING WITHOUT VALANCE



AWNINGS THAT FIT INTO OR THAT ACCENTUATE ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL



## ENCOURAGED

- Replacing, repairing or installing signs that are appropriately scaled for your buildings and storefront.
- Maintaining and restoring historic signs.
- Exploring creative graphics and materials that maintain high standards in legibility and character.
- Build flexibility into signage components to allow for changes or upgrades.
- Establishing a sign band on buildings that may not have a clearly demarcated area for signs.
- Using durable wood, painted plastics, metals or pre-fabricated pin mounted letters.
- Installing painted metal or wood signs.
- Installing fin or blade signs projected from the building wall, to identify a business to those passing by walking or traveling parallel to the storefront.

## DISCOURAGED

- Applying too many signs to your storefront or building.
- Covering windows, cornices or decorative details with signs or any other element.
- Blocking visibility into your storefront with signs, shelves or other obstruction.
- Advertising alcoholic, tobacco or other merchandise in general.
- Installing internally-lit plastic or plastic faced signs.
- Maintaining obsolete advertisements or other temporary signs.
- Painting signs directly onto the build surface.
- Installing signage above the rooftop.

Beyond windows, signage is by far the most important element of your storefront. Signage makes a strong and dynamic first impression. Signage can be a creative demonstration of your business' personality and attitude.

Businesses that have a lot of signs or signs that are big do not necessarily attract new customers. The more signs your building has, the more cluttered and confusing the building façade appears.

On average, motorists can perceive only up to four words or symbols on a storefront. The best signs rely on strong graphic character and few words.

## DISCOURAGED

- Installing flashing, pulsating, or moving lights or lights that cause significant glare.
- Using non-commercial lighting fixtures.
- Using neon tubing to border windows, doors or storefronts.
- Using a lot of light fixtures.
- Installing fixtures that when applied to the building cause to much damage to masonry or other façade material.

## ENCOURAGED

- Illuminating interior display areas to promote merchandise or services inside a business.
- Balancing the amount of building lighting with street lighting.
- Using exterior mounted light fixtures selectively, i.e. sconces or downlights to enhance overall building image.
- Using lighting to illuminate signage.
- Concealing lighting sources as much as possible.

Lighting dramatically enhances your business and storefront appeal. It creates a greater sense of security and can promote your business in the evening hours. Renovations to your storefront could include creative lighting for signage, display windows, architectural details, and dark corners/edges of the property or street. Storefront lighting should be carefully coordinated with nearby street lighting.



# requirements for thrive funded improvements

## EXPECTATIONS

Buildings in the community are generally in good condition, however, over time, the wear and tear that buildings have endured begins to show and the deterioration can effect how potential customers perceive your businesses and our community.

As a priority, businesses and property owners are strongly encouraged to determine if their storefront facades have water or structural damage that would impair improvements funded with these grant resources. Business and/or property owners should act quickly to correct such damages prior to submitting applications to participate in the thrive storefront improvement initiative.

Owners are expected to maintain improvements that are funded by thrive storefront improvement program in “good condition” for a five (5) year period. As a part of its periodic review during this period, the city’s economic development director will survey the condition of improvements with the following expectations in mind.

- Owners should clean and repaint a storefront if needed during the third year following construction completion.
- Visibility into storefronts will be maintained per the guidelines outlined in this document.
- Signage and display windows will be lit during the evening hours as a marketing tool for the business.
- Should an establishment go out of business within the five-year prior, property owners must maintain and/or make all improvements and needed changes in accordance with those guidelines. Proposed changes must be submitted and approved by the city’s Economic Development Committee.
- Sidewalks must be swept and cleaned on a regular basis.
- Outdated signs must be removed immediately.
- Planters, window boxes and any landscaping elements must be properly maintained and free of debris.
- Graffiti must be removed immediately and the façade restore to its prior “improved” condition.
- Any additional improvements to facades within the five-year period should adhere to the guidelines within this document. All additions must be discussed with and approved by the economic developer and must be executed by reputable licensed contractors.
- Any and all improvements must be in compliance with all applicable laws, code and regulations of the state of North Dakota and City of Casselton.



# acknowledgements

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