

9.5 Commercial Features and Streetscape Elements

9.5.1 Commercial Signage Design

Commercial signage is one of the most constantly changing aspects within the District. It is a means by which businesses are able to convey a message.

Signs are not a modern phenomenon, and early photographs of the area show signs on many of the stores. Most were painted by the local sign painter and were generally wood signs with plain or three dimensional lettering.

Trends in modern signage tend to be bigger, brighter, and more obtrusive to get people's attention. Within a heritage conservation district, the heritage atmosphere itself attracts attention, and as such is a virtual sign.

In order to maintain the unique environment, it is important that commercial signage be more reflective of traditional signage, and complements both the building and the streetscape. In this regard, the number of signs should be kept to a minimum and those signs that detract from heritage buildings should be removed or modified. Encouragement should be given for businesses to recreate older, individual and distinctive, traditional signs.

Guidelines

Sign By-law

1. All signage will be subject to the Special Sign District provisions detailed in the Town of Markham Sign By-law.

Sign Placement

2. Signs should not block architectural features such as windows and ornamentation and should be attached such as to do the least amount of damage to the façade.
3. Buildings and business external identification signs should be limited to the traditional location above the storefront.

Sign Design

4. The use of traditional materials such as wood, brass, or bronze is preferred.
5. Letter styles appropriate to the period of the structure will be encouraged. Historically appropriate letter styles such as Roman, Clarendon, Egyptian, and sans serif styles will be encouraged. Typeface or lettering should project the image of the particular business, reflect the building itself, and harmonize with the style of the structure.
6. Capital letters are generally more legible than lowercase letters. The total message, including letter forms and designs, should generally not occupy more than two-thirds of the total sign area.
7. Fluorescent or very bright colours are not considered appropriate. The heritage palette of colours described in Section 9.2.4.7 is recommended. Uncomplicated colour schemes are also preferred.
8. Symbols are often more recognisable than lettering and good design often includes both.

Sign Types

9. The following signs are permitted in the District subject to the provisions of the Town of Markham's Sign By-law: canopy sign, ground sign, soffits sign, wall sign, directory sign, and window sign.
10. The following signs are not permitted in the District: animated sign, billboard, internally illuminated sign, neon sign, portable sign, roof sign, sign painted directly onto a wall surface, strings of lights (except Statutory Holiday decorations), and temporary signs such as banners, spinners, pennants, and streamers.
11. Inappropriate decorative signs such as broken pediment heads will be discouraged.

9.5 Commercial Features and Streetscape Elements

9.5.1 Signage Design cont'd

Number of Signs

12. The number of signs permitted per premise is detailed in the Sign By-law (Special District Signs).

Sign Illumination

13. Internally illuminated signs are not allowed in the District.
14. Sign illumination should be achieved using external means of illumination.
15. Owners of internally illuminated signs will be encouraged to replace them.

Financial Assistance

16. Town staff should be consulted for information on assistance programs such as the Commercial Signage Replacement Grant Program.

9.5 Commercial Features and Streetscape Elements

9.5.1 Signage Design cont'd

The following types of signs are not supported in the District:

- Internally illuminated signs
- Neon signs
- Bubble awning signs
- Signs painted on walls
- Round hood awning signs
- Plastic or vinyl signs

The following are among the types of signs which are generally acceptable in the District (subject to compliance with the Town Sign By-law):

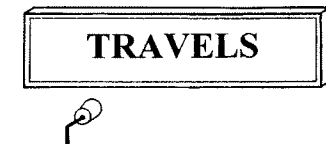
- Externally illuminated wooden signs (overhead or ground lights)
- Traditional retractable canvas awnings with signage at end of awnings
- Triangular canvas awnings that closely resemble traditional awnings



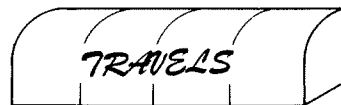
Not Appropriate: internally illuminated



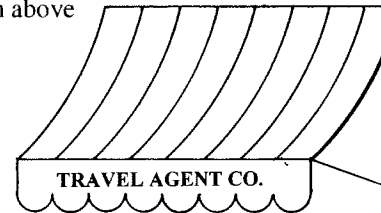
Appropriate: externally illuminated from above



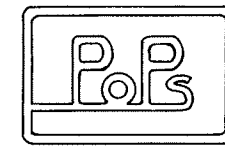
Appropriate: externally illuminated from below



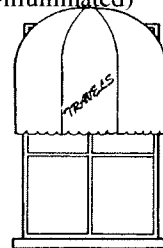
Not Appropriate: vinyl bubble awning (illuminated and non-illuminated)



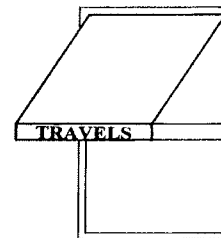
Appropriate: retractable canvas awning



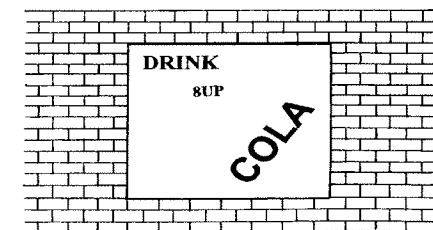
Not Appropriate: neon sign



Not Appropriate: round window awning sign



Appropriate: triangular awning which resembles retractable awning with discreet signage



Not Appropriate: signs painted

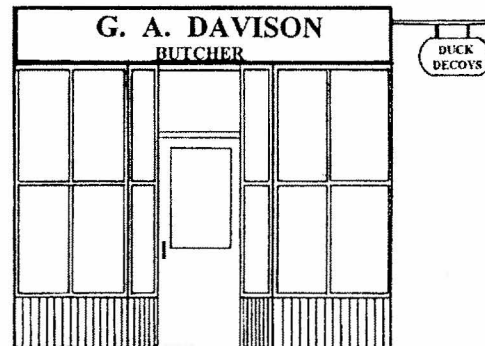
9.5 Commercial Features and Streetscape Elements

9.5.2 Storefront Design

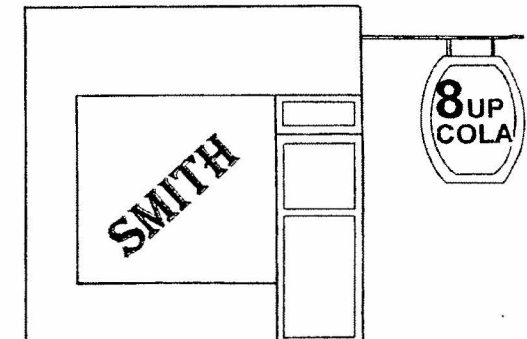
Storefronts, including the upper storey windows of the commercial buildings, are an integral part of the character of the streetscape. Historic storefronts generally consist of large divided glass windows on either side of a central, recessed entry. Upper façades traditionally present a more typical rectangular window form.

Guidelines

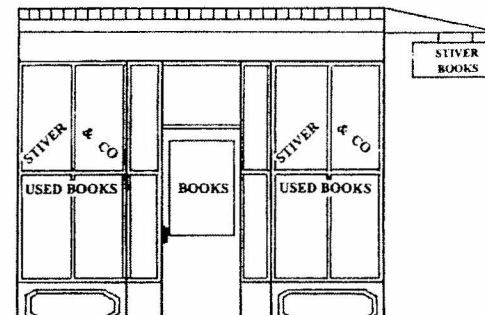
1. Physically sound historical storefronts, compatible with the District character, should be maintained and restored rather than replaced.
2. Existing storefronts which do not harmonize with the heritage character of the area should be improved to be more compatible with the District.
3. Historic photographs should be used as the basis for storefront design and/or restoration.
4. Town staff should be consulted for information on façade assistance programs.



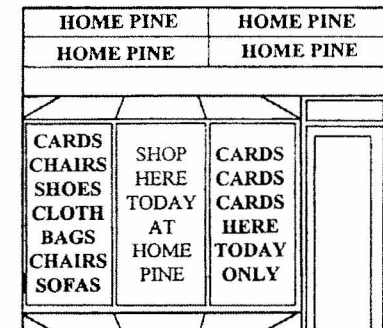
Appropriate: traditional storefront and signage



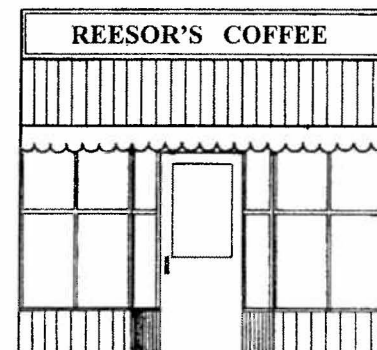
Not Appropriate: non-traditional storefront and signage



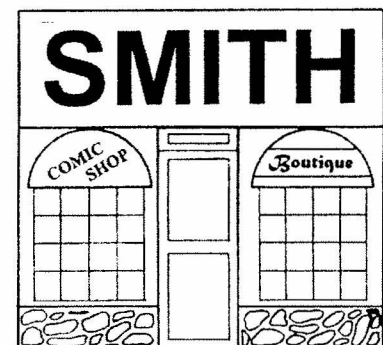
Appropriate: traditional subtle gold-leaf



Not Appropriate: excessive window signage



Appropriate: traditional awning and signage



Not Appropriate: excessive signage, inappropriate awnings and storefront decoration

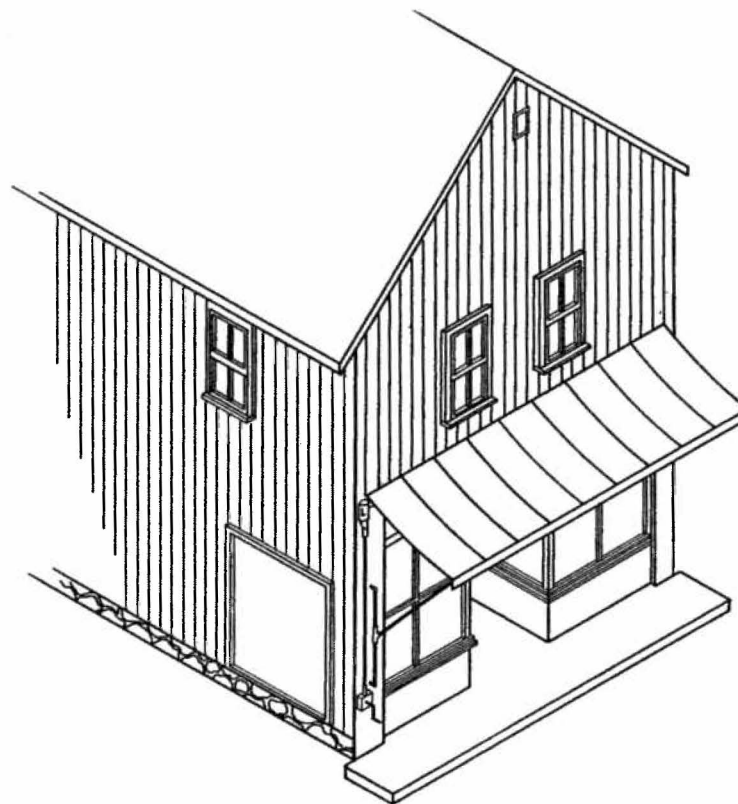
9.5 Commercial Features and Streetscape Elements

9.5.3 Awnings

On commercial buildings, traditional canvas awnings are only appropriate where the proportion and design of the buildings lend themselves to that kind of detail. In the example at right, the awning fits well over the storefront and is compatible with the building's proportions and designs.

Guidelines:

1. Where they are appropriate, traditional awnings may be acceptable on commercial buildings.
2. On new buildings, awnings should complement the design as well as relate to the historical context surrounding it. The retractable canvas awning commonly used in the heritage area is most appropriate.
3. Modern awning designs such as semi-circular, bubble, and cascade, of non-traditional materials such as vinyl, are not considered appropriate in the District.
4. Commercial awnings are subject to Building Permits and the requirements of the *Ontario Building Code*.



Appropriate: historic retractable canvas storefront awning

9.5 Commercial Features and Streetscape Elements

9.5.4 Commercial Patios

Successful commercial patios can greatly contribute to the character of the street. Care should be taken, however, in their design to ensure that they complement and not detract from the street in terms of visual appearance and interaction with the surrounding environment.

Commercial patios which serve alcohol are by law required to be separated from the street. A key way of integrating the patio into the street is through the use of traditional landscape features such as a wood picket fence to serve as its boundary. Similarly, furniture, awnings, umbrellas, and landscape treatment should all be compatible with the character of the street and should comply with the spirit of the District Plan.

Guidelines:

1. Commercial patios are required to comply with the Town of Markham Commercial Patio By-law.
2. All patios should reflect and enhance the existing streetscape. Features such as wood picket fences and furniture that is compatible with the Heritage District is encouraged.
3. Commercial rooftop patios are not appropriate for the District.
4. Umbrellas which have advertising are not permitted.
5. Outdoor patios that include structural elements such as a raised roof or floors require permits under the *Building Code Act*.



The use of traditional picket fencing as the enclosure for commercial patios maintains the character of the streetscape while providing a modern amenity that didn't exist a century ago. This example is at 175 Main Street in Unionville.

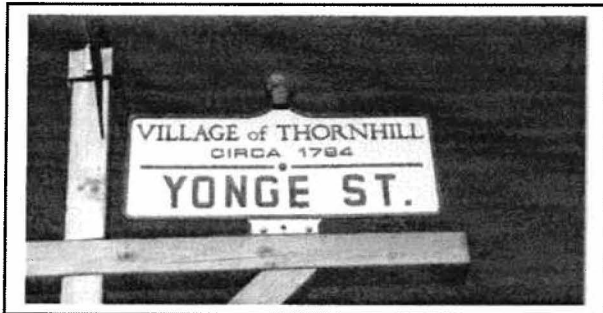
9.5 Commercial Features and Streetscape Elements

9.5.5. Public Information Signage

The Thornhill Heritage Conservation District already has a unique series of complementary public information signs including heritage district identification signage at key entrances to the district and street name signage.

Guidelines

1. The design, colour and materials of public information signage should be consistent with the existing heritage district entry signs.
2. The use of the tan and brown colour scheme, and the wheat sheaf logo should continue to be used.
3. When the existing metal street name signs need to be replaced, the new street name signs should conform to the approved 'Markham Heritage District Street Sign' design which is used in the other heritage conservation districts in the Town.



Existing Street Signs (above). New Town of Markham heritage area street name design (right)



Heritage District Entry Signs (above)

