



Great Streets Akron

Storefront Design Guidelines

Design Inspiration for Small Business Owners



DANIEL HARRIGAN, MAYOR



**KNIGHT
FOUNDATION**





Great Streets Akron Storefront Design Guidelines

These Design Guidelines are for Akron business owners making improvements to their storefronts, with a particular focus on illustrating project ideas that would be eligible for the Great Streets Matching Facade Grant Program. Use these Guidelines alongside the information in the Application Packet to develop a competitive proposal for grant funding through the program.



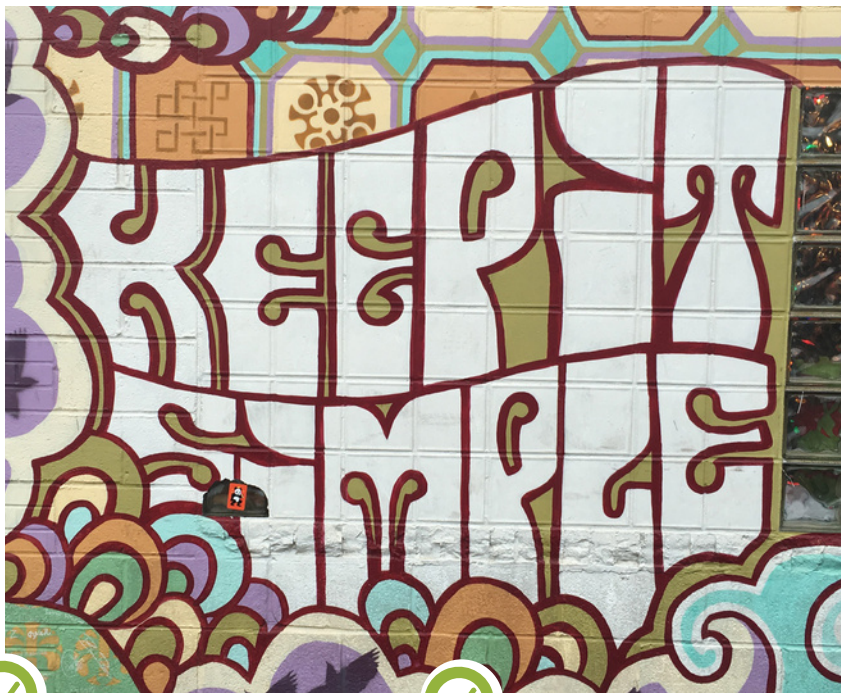
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The Big Picture

For any storefront improvement project, keep these broad recommendations in mind. Each tip helps advance the goals of the Matching Facade Grant Program and the Great Streets program in general: fostering lively streets that are welcoming, safe, and appealing to residents, business-owners, and visitors alike.



Keep It Simple

Limiting the number of materials, signage, colors, additions, etc. on your storefront will keep distractions at a minimum so the focus stays on your business's goods & services.



Celebrate Akron's History

Whether they are housed in an individual historic structure or are part of a designated historic district, many businesses are impacted by historic design review requirements and can benefit from the unique opportunities historic structures provide.



Know the Resources Available

City, state, and federal resources are available to support Akron business owners making improvements—many of them can be found here in this guide.



Invest in Quality

Both your personal investments and grant funding will have much greater impact if long-lasting materials and high-quality contractors are used.



Maintenance

Account for short- and long-term upkeep when selecting materials for improvements, and consider including important (but perhaps deferred) maintenance in your grant funding proposal.

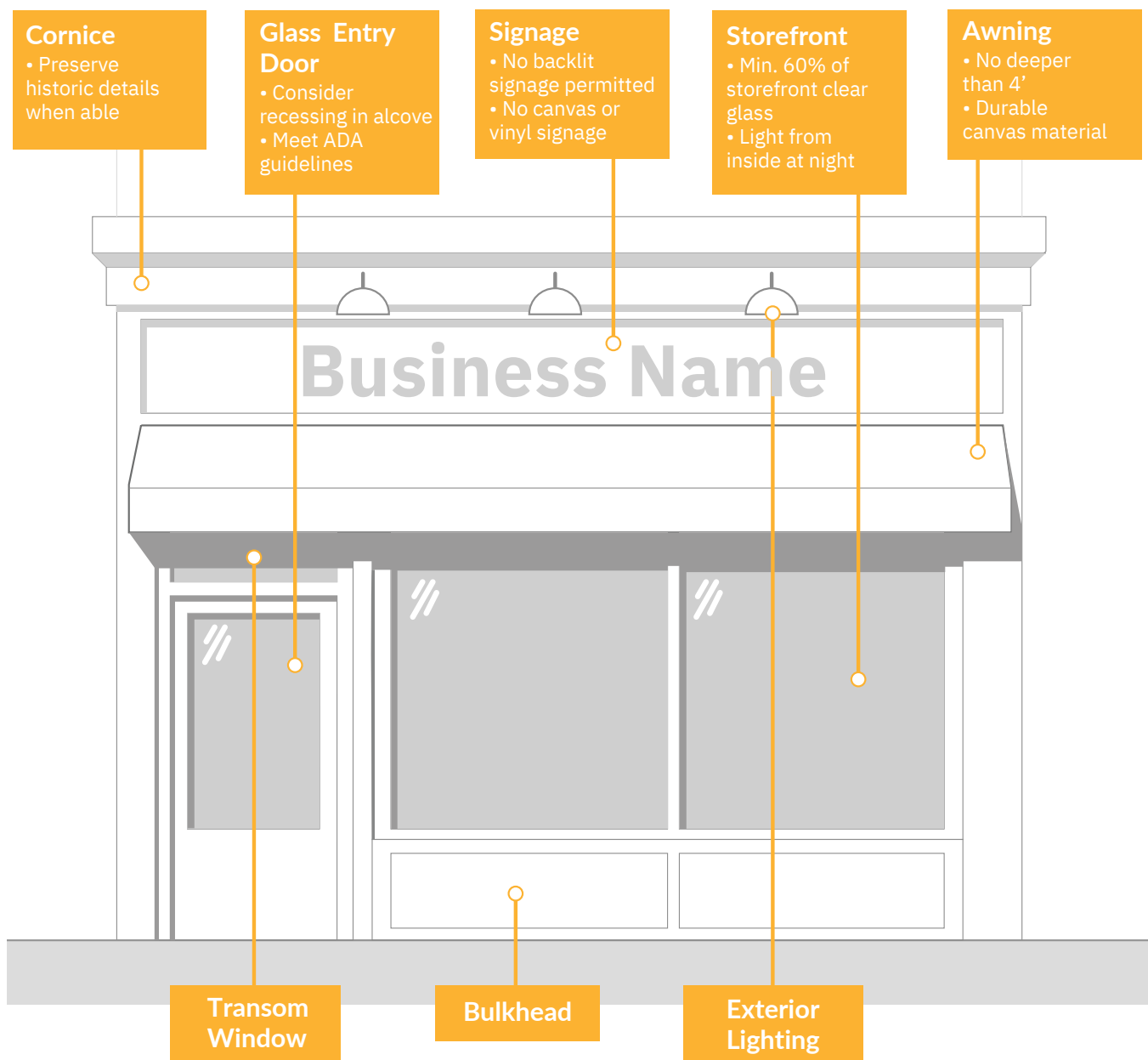
Maintenance tasks may include:

- Clean window glass
- Repoint masonry
- Powerwash awnings/building
- Check for peeling paint
- Check lightbulbs
- Sweep walkway, clear weeds
- Maintain landscaping



Storefront Summary Sheet

A grant application does not need to include improvements of every type illustrated below, but incorporating multiple elements as part of a cohesive overall storefront redesign is encouraged. More detail on different types of improvements can be found throughout this document—the graphic below is a quick reference of key terms and guiding principles.



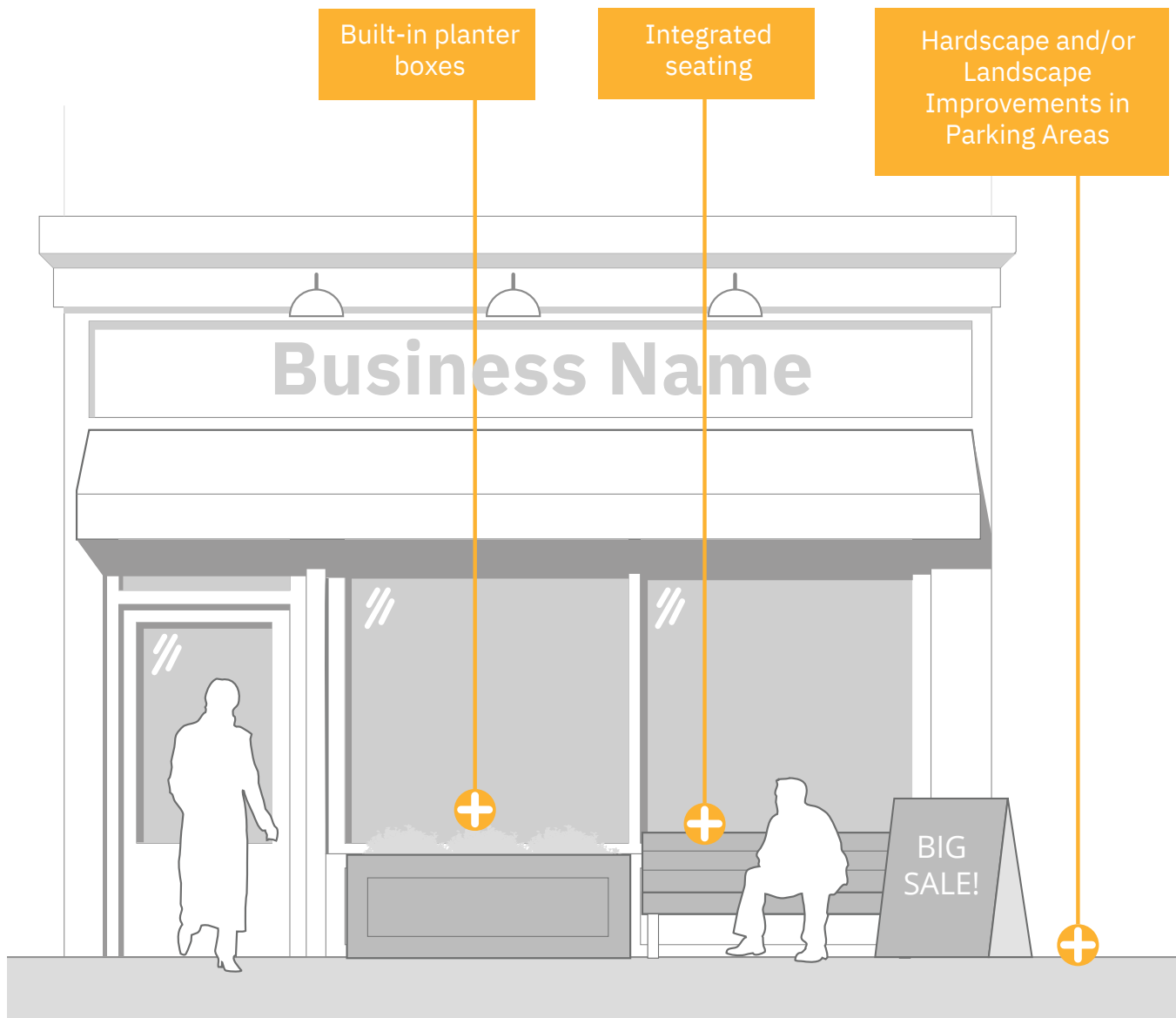


Streetscape Improvements

Renovations can extend beyond the front facade of the building—paving, landscaping, and hardscaping of on-site parking areas are eligible improvements. Greenery, seating, shade structures, and other amenities integrated into the storefront are also encouraged to increase comfort and walkability.



Screen parking areas from the street with plantings and/or a low wall





Streetscape Add-Ons

These improvements are more temporary/flexible in nature and don't require permanent alterations of the building or streetscape. Strategies seen here can be a good way to make high-impact changes that are also low-cost and quick while waiting on funding to pursue more permanent improvements.



Cafe Seating

Outdoor seating and other furniture in front of the business encourages patrons to linger



String Lighting

Create a quick but charming outdoor room on a patio or on the streetscape with string lights



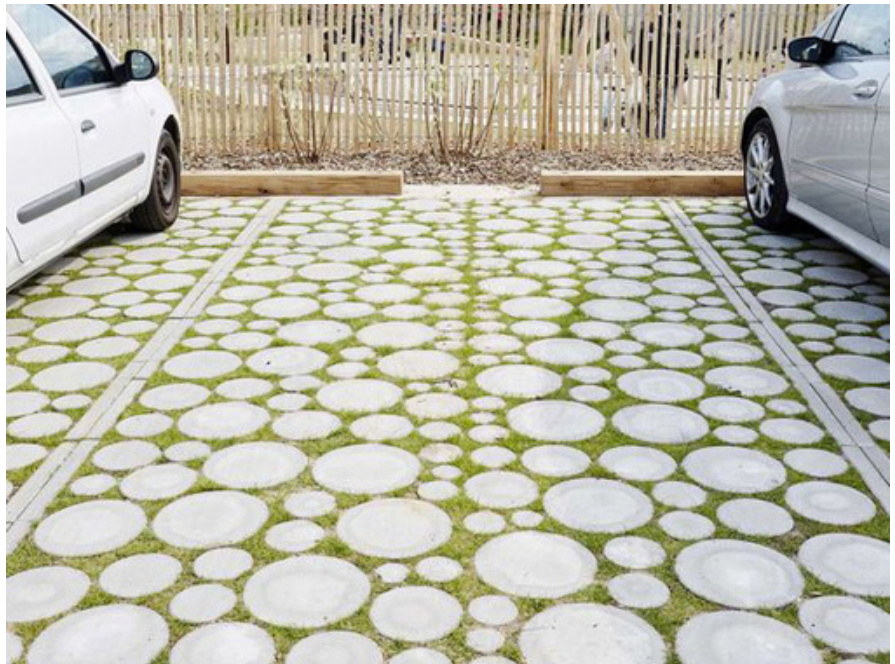
Sandwich Board Sign

Mobile, changeable, and eye-catching, sandwich boards are a great affordable way to increase the visibility of your business on the streetscape



Parking Areas

Expenses for paving and landscaping of on-site parking areas are eligible for grant funding. Consider incorporating materials and design elements that not only beautify parking areas but also lessen their environmental impacts and make them more hospitable for pedestrians walking nearby, or to and from their vehicles.



Landscape Design

Plantings and other landscape strategies can screen parking areas from the street, help with drainage issues, and make lots cooler in the summer

Permeable Pavers

Instead of paving lots in standard asphalt, consider options like pavers that allow stormwater runoff to drain more effectively



Bollard Lighting

Bollard lighting improves safety and visibility in parking areas and on paths



Signage Types

Consider updating storefront signage as part of overall improvements. Use this list as a reference when considering signage design options.



Window: Decal / Painted

An affordable and quick way to update a storefront



Neon

Unique, colorful, and bright signs that can add character to storefronts and are visible both day and night



Three Dimensional Letter

The depth of the letterforms adds texture and interest to the storefront



Channel Letter

Internally lit, 3-dimensional letterform signs made of metal or plastic



Blade

Sign that projects out at a right angle from the building; also called a shingle



Flat Panel

Simple flat sign of wood, metal, acrylic, or other durable materials



28" maximum
width print

Material Options:
Removable Vinyl
Clear & White Static Cling
Permanent Adhesive
Vinyl Banner Matte & Gloss
White Paper Gloss

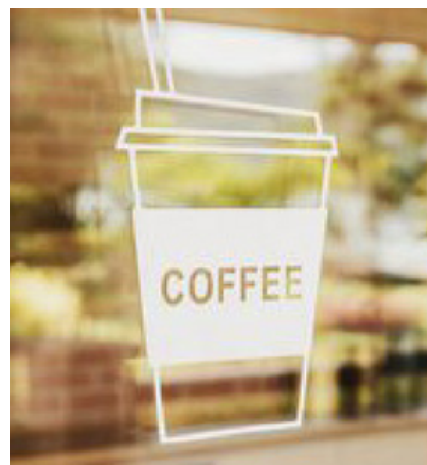
Cost:

\$2 / linear foot +
\$1 set up fee



DIY Signage @ TechZone

The TechZone at the Akron Main Library (60 South High Street) has a vinyl printer available for public use. An appointment is required to use the equipment, and you must provide your own artwork files in .pdf, .eps, or .jpg format.





Signage Do's & Don'ts

New, restored, and/or improved signage is a great way to enhance the visibility of a business's brand and services while also brightening and activating the streetscape. References to applicable signage codes can be found in the Resources section on page 15 of this document—any proposed signage that does not meet code requirements will have to go through additional review to receive an exemption. Take the following tips into consideration to make the most of any investments in storefront signage.



Signs cannot extend above the roof line or parapet



Don't cover windows more than 60% with signage, or go overboard with text, colors and images

Too many busy signs cluttering the storefront actually distracts and overwhelms potential customers—it's better to provide a clear view inside instead so people can see what you have to offer



Avoid flashing, animated and/or rotating signs



Canvas signs & temporary banners are not eligible for grant funding



Restore historic signage if possible

Consider refurbishing or reconstructing historic signage to preserve their iconic and unique presence on the streetscape



Lighting

Well-lit storefronts attract attention to the business and make visitors to the area feel welcome and safe. The following are ideas for lighting strategies that can enhance the impact of improvements to other storefront components, like signage and display areas.



Interior Lighting



Accent



Sconces



Gooseneck Lamps



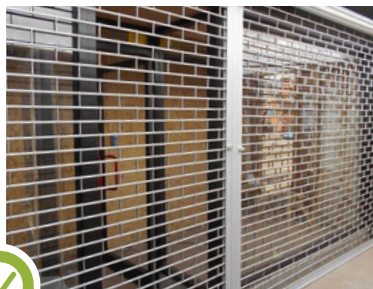
Security

The best strategies for storefront security keep the business secure without making the streetscape feel unwelcoming or desolate.



Consider using security cameras rather than metal gates or grating

Cameras act as a crime deterrent without hiding storefronts from view from after-hours window shoppers



If a security gate is required, use open-grille style gates, or consider painting a mural on an existing solid panel gate if replacement isn't feasible

These semi-transparent gates prevent break-ins while still allowing visibility into the store at night, which actually makes it easier for police to keep an eye out for anything out of the ordinary happening inside



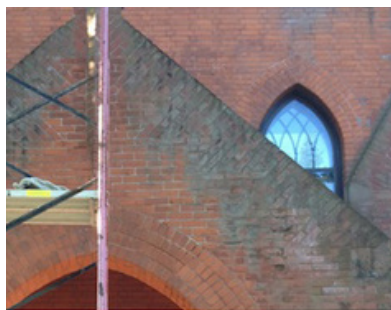
Avoid using solid panel gates, or any grating with less than 70% transparency

Solid panel gates attract graffiti, hide storefronts from after-hours window shoppers, and make the streetscape appear less welcoming



Historic Buildings

If your building is more than 50 years old or within a Historic District, coordination with architects and contractors with historic renovation expertise is required to receive grant funding. See page 14 for more details on Historic Districts that overlap with designated Great Streets.



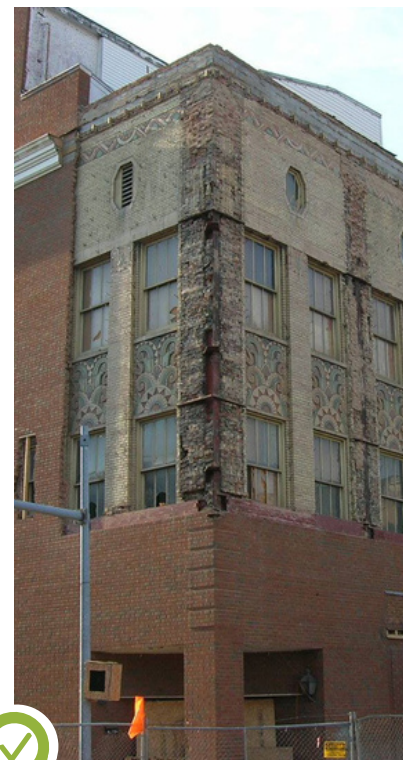
Brick & Masonry cleaning *are* eligible expenses for grant funding

The building may just need cleaning to look its best, but masonry repairs and fresh tuck pointing may also be in order. Work with contractors who have experience with historic structures, since aging masonry and facade details can be delicate and/or irreplaceable



Consider using traditional hand-crafted signs to complement the building's historic character

Hand-painted signs—like this gilded window sign by Old Soul Sign Co. in Cleveland—are experiencing a resurgence in popularity, and are an especially great fit for historic areas



Remove storefront additions that hide historic materials & detailing

Often the additions are of lesser quality materials and cover important historic details and storefront windows

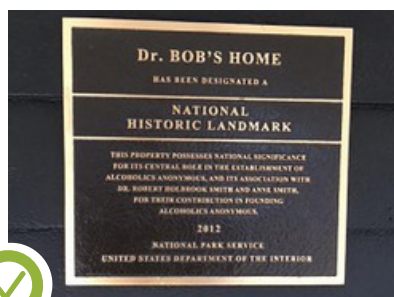


Historic Districts

Storefronts on Kenmore Boulevard and Aster Avenue are designated as both Great Streets AND Historic Districts. Any structure—whether historic or not—in these Districts will require coordination with architects specializing in historic renovation and approval by the local Design Review.

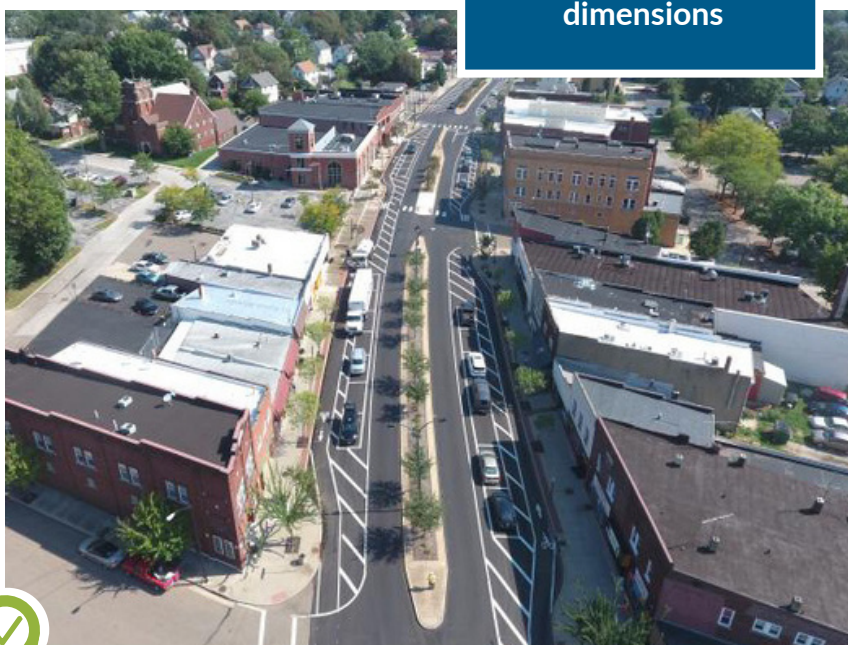


If a storefront cannot be repaired or has been severely altered, if possible replace the original storefront using the same materials and dimensions



Incorporate plaques with historically significant information about the building

Tablets, with the name of a building, date of erection, or use of the building, when built into the walls of the building and constructed of bronze, stone, or similar noncombustible material are encouraged



Structures on Kenmore Boulevard must comply with that district's independent Design Guidelines

All exterior improvements need to be reviewed by the Kenmore Boulevard Design Review



Resources

Below are online resources and links to other funding sources that may be helpful in storefront improvement projects. Business owners should check to confirm applicable zoning districts, overlays, and restrictions for their specific properties—most Great Streets businesses are zoned 'U-3 Business,' and many are also subject to the Urban Overlay designation.



Web Resources

Great Streets Akron:
<https://www.greatstreetsakron.com/resources>

Great Streets Akron Matching Facade Grant Application Portal:
<https://akronohio.submittable.com/submit>

Akron Zoning Code documentation:
https://library.municode.com/oh/akron/codes/code_of_ordinances

Code excerpts referenced in this document's recommendations are sourced from:

- U-3 Retail Business [Section 153.280]
 - On-Premises Exterior Signs [Title 15, Chapter 153, Article 8]
 - Special Development Conditions for Urban Overlay (UO) Areas [Section 153.310 (O)]

Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits
<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/rehabilitation-tax-credit-real-estate-tax-tips>

Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credits
https://development.ohio.gov/cs/cs_ohptc.htm



Questions?

Contact Great Streets
Administrator LaTonda Mobley:
lmobley@akronohio.gov
330-375-2377



**Send completed applications to:
City of Akron, Office of Integrated Development
166 South High Street Room 401
Akron, Ohio 44308**

Check website for upcoming application deadlines